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Curricular Insights into Translingualism as a Communicative Competence

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***Abstract*—Translingual communicative competence remains underreported within recent research on multilingualism and plurilingualism. The outcomes of the MULTICOM curriculum development project, a European thematic network in multilingual communication aimed at providing university students with the translingual and transcultural skills needed to operate effectively at an international professional level, provide insights into the profile of translingualism as a communicative competence. The teaching and learning materials created to accompany the proposed curriculum framework reveal a significant departure from academic traditions in which language teaching has tended to neglect translingualism and the impact of multilingual settings in the interpretation of information. As discussed throughout the paper, rethinking the purpose of tasks and materials allows for awareness training, without which translingual communicative competence cannot be achieved. However, the implementation of an ecology-of-language approach to enhance plurilingualism and pluriculturalism requires rethinking the strategies that make for successful communication in multilingual settings and the definition of a translingual CEF in which partial competence and semilingualism is addressed.**

***Index Terms*—multilingual settings, translingual communicative competence, partial competence, language teaching**

I. Introducing a Thematic Network in Multilingual Communication

MULTICOM is a Thematic Network project (1333996-LLP-1-2007-1-FR-ERASMUS-ECDSP) for curriculum development in multilingual communication. Building on the outcomes of previous projects launched by the European Commission, the project (2007-2010) aimed at designing a curricular framework which provided higher education language students with the translingual and transcultural skills needed to operate effectively at an international professional level. In focusing on domains other than teaching and translating, the project intended to broaden the career prospects of language graduates while addressing the ever increasing demand of highly-skilled multilingual experts who can mediate in a globalised scenario. As Busch (2009) states, "the European Union's Bologna Process currently urges universities to re-design their range of courses of study as bachelor and master programmes. In this process, universities are supposed to create courses enhancing their students' future job employability . . . With a rapidly changing society and concomitant changing patterns in employment, employability becomes a new moral duty" (p. 431).

Departing from a needs analysis, the MULTICOM project proceeded with the identification of professional competence profiles in multilingual communication, the definition of learning outcomes for a bachelor degree programme derived from such profiles, the actual outline of a curricular framework in multilingual communication and the design of teaching and learning materials, all of which feeds an online resource platform (http://www.multicom-cdp.eu/) that, when fully uploaded, will provide users with the tools for mastering the components within the curriculum.

Given the heterogeneity that remains within the European Higher Education Area almost a decade after the inception of the Bologna Process, the curricular framework resulting from the MULTICOM project does not aim at being implemented as is, but rather to provide a set of components which may be ingrained in various programmes, existing or prospective. The full set is meant to bring students to understand the nature, the principles and the channels of multilingual communication in a global context; to acquire the skills required to identify and process multilingual information relevant to specific knowledge areas and themes; to acquire the language-related IT skills needed to make efficient use of existing information searching and processing tools; and to use advanced oral and written mediation skills in a variety of multilingual professional contexts. Upon completion of the programme, students should have acquired professionally-oriented translingual and transcultural competences which involve, on the hand, the ability to produce, organise and disseminate information in three languages, adapting content to audiences from different backgrounds and using different media; and on the other hand, advanced mediation skills, such as the ability to organise multilingual meetings and produce minutes and conclusion reports in several languages; to draft synopses of multilingual documents; to assess translation and localisation needs for multilingual documentation; to interface with external language service industries, and the like.

A set of resource packages with plurilingual, transferable materials aimed at fostering the acquisition of translingual

and transcultural competence accompany the five curriculum components, namely, multilingual and intercultural communication; documentation and terminology processing; IT skills for multilingual communication; multilingual oral mediation skills; and multilingual written mediation skills. The accompanying resource packages are not pr êt-à-porter readers, but flexible sets of materials (in different languages, for different purposes, aimed at different target groups) to be used in different ways in different programmes. Together with the customary items in course descriptions (aims, required proficiency levels, expected learning outcomes, performance criteria and assessment procedures, teaching and learning methodology…) each of the resource packages includes transversal, multi-skill activities targeted to the learning outcomes so as to train students to bring to bear multilingual competences in professional situations, as well as plurilingual source documents for hands-on work.

In all cases, the proposed activities encompass, on the one hand, the combination of at least three languages and, on the other, a focus on professional realism in multilingual settings. A token to illustrate the point: "You work for whatever international corporation. You have to locate and analyse documents to evaluate whatever aspect of the company in the various national locations where it is set. Then (i) write a report of your findings in language 1 (corporate language); (ii) produce a PowerPoint presentation summarising the report in language 2 (local language); (iii) deliver an oral presentation in language 3 (language of the target customer) with the aid of a plurilingual handout; (iv) produce leaflets and advertising materials (printed press, social networks, audiovisual…) in languages 1/2/3 adapting them to the relevant conventions; and (v) write the content of a plurilingual website for the corporation.

II. Bridging the Gap between Monolingual Classrooms and a Multilingual Global Scenario

The EU language policy highlights intercultural skills and communicative competence in foreign languages as key factors of employability and success in the global marketplace; mutual understanding and integration; and the joint creation of cultural identities. Nowadays, new emerging needs within the language industry demand plurilingual professionals, while increasing people flows demand intercultural strategies that allow communicative success in a globalised world. In this respect, de Angelis (2008) notes that "among the reasons for the growth of interest in multilingualism and multilingual education are the understanding of the importance of language learning for business and communication, and the awareness of the value of minority languages for a healthy and balanced society. Government and educational institutions are in general becoming more supportive of multilingualism, and the knowledge of foreign languages is increasingly being recognised as an asset for individuals" (p. 138).

According to the 2007 MLA report "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World" (quoted in Kramsch, 2008, p. 390), "the goal [of college and university foreign language majors] is translingual and transcultural competence. The idea of translingual and transcultural competence places value on the multilingual ability to operate between languages." However, overt training in multilingual and intercultural skills is still rare in language-related degrees. Admittedly, engagement with otherness in the contemporary world is simultaneous to classroom learning, and therefore the dichotomy of 'classroom' and 'real world' is a false one (Byram, 1997, p. 65). However, for students to attain translingual communicative competence, an urgent diversification of language-related tasks to overtly address the linguistic and cultural constraints in the interpretation of information in multilingual and intercultural settings is a must. The impact of the interpretation of information in communication, or "savoir interprétatif", as Zarate (quoted in Kramsch, 1998, p. 29) puts it, is well-known in the literature: "the defining criterion of communication is interpretation; only when there has been interpretation has there been communication" (Kress, 2010, p. 85); "Contrary to what we might initially think, certainly contrary to what we teach students from grammar textbooks, 'interpretability is at the core of communication and is more important than the mere intelligibility or comprensibility'" (Smith, 1998, p. 274, quoted in Kachru & Nelson, 2001, p. 22); "In order to interpret the features which are actually present in a text, it is generally necessary to take account of what other choices might have been made" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 110).

Current teaching practices, however, tend to lack awareness of translingualism as a distinct communicative competence centred on the interpretation of messages, and fail to focus on a wide range of language-related activities (editing to and from different languages, formats and environments; localisation; verbal and non-verbal mediation, and the like) that take place on a daily basis in the global marketplace. One of the MULTICOM tasks, "re-translation", is proposed as a token of how to bridge the gap between the monolingual focus of foreign language classrooms and translingualism communicative competence, and one which shows that a significant departure from traditional approaches may come just from rethinking the purpose of teaching and learning materials.

A "re-translation" task is simple enough: a student reads a document in language 1 and translates it into language 2. The translation is given to another student, who knows it is a translation from language 1 to 2. The second student must re-translate the document back into language 1. The original and the translations and compared to identify the information lost, gained or modified in the process. Students are asked to analyse the results of the experience focusing on the role of ambiguity and misunderstanding when transiting from one language to another, as well as on the factors that play a role in the re-translation process. As Bellos (2009) reminds, "one way or another, any utterance can be made to jump over any language barrier. What's interesting is what else takes place when something is reformulated, recontextualised, readjusted, glossed, explained, summarised, expanded or deleted while still remaining acceptable in the receiving culture as a statement of the "same thing" (p. 404).

In order to raise awareness of the challenges posed by switching between languages, students may be asked to identify (i) the differences between the original and the translation; (ii) the differences between the translation and the re-translation; (iii) the differences between the original and the re-translation; (iv) the reason for those differences; (v) the information that has been altered in the process, and the reasons for such changes; (vi) the decisions students made while re-translating because they knew they were re-translating from whatever language; (vii) any amendments in the re-translation that brings it closer to the original than the translation; and (viii) which of the amendments are the result of knowing the language in which the original was written. The task may conclude with a reflection on serial transmission effects and the role of context in misunderstandings. Kachru & Nelson (2001) stress the role of contextual constraints as follows: "one must be familiar with the context in which the utterances are produced – not merely the immediate conversational context but the broader sociocultural context underlying it. It is not reasonable to think that … any … pluricentric language can in itself have such force as to establish identical situational interpretations across cultural boundaries" (p. 20).

Among the techniques most commonly associated with the promotion of language awareness (LA) in the classroom, Svalberg (2007) cites "languaging" about language, which not only enables students to learn foreign languages, but also to learn about language itself – a metalinguistic knowledge without which translingual communicative competence cannot be achieved; open-ended discussion tasks, which promote student interaction; and text reconstruction tasks, which encourage learners to arrive at and justify their own solutions, hence fostering student autonomy (p. 291f). All of them are present in a "re-translation" task, which also meets the LA requirement of simulating engagement with the language in a specific context. It is therefore a task that departs from traditional classroom practices without demanding strenuous effort from the language teacher, and one which brings translingualism to the fore while promoting language awareness among students. Language awareness, defined as explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use (Association of Language Awareness, http://www.languageawareness.org, quoted in Svalberg 2007, p. 288) is much needed in educational contexts, for as Roberts (2007) reminds, "the capacity to reflect consciously on language and to develop a metapragmatic awareness is not a regular part of people's analytic repertoire" (p. 413). The good news from the MULTICOM project is that very simple tasks can enhance awareness. Just telling a student: "if you do not know how to answer to me in language 1, say it aloud in language 2 to a classmate: s/he will pour it into language 1 and tell me" may be enough to make students reflect upon the translingual process "on the spot."

III. Rethinking Translingualism with a Focus on Multilingual Settings

While devising the MULTICOM tasks, a number of problems emerged which evidenced the need to further profile the notion of translingualism. While communicative competence has been successfully addressed with the definition of the CEF "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp) and intercultural communicative competence has also been exhaustively investigated (http://www.incaproject.org/; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Kotthoff & Spencer-Oatey, 2007; Martin, 2007; Gudykunst & Mody, 2002), the notion of translingualism (and hence that of translingualism communicative competence) remains problematic. As Kramsch et al. (2008) highlight, "linguistic and cultural pluralism is more than the mere coexistence of various languages. It is primarily about the transcultural circulation of values across borders, the negotiation of identities, the inversions, even inventions of meaning, often concealed by a common illusion of effective communication …. The teacher trainers of tomorrow will need to operate in a globalised space where verbal exchanges will be increasingly plurilingual and pluricultural" (p. 15).

At one point, "gathering information in at least two languages and then communicating it through the medium of another language" emerged as a working definition of translingualism which, in turn, evidenced the need to address the concept of "multilingual setting", since understanding translingualism cannot be severed from the actual situations in which is it likely to occur. These are not only theoretical questions: they are bound to have an impact on actual teaching practices too. Traditionally, language degrees have aimed at turning students into near-native speakers of the foreign language, unsuccessfully in the main since few students of foreign languages go on to attain linguistic proficiency (Johnson & Nelson, 2010, p. 35). To complicate things further, multilingual settings are scenarios in which communication is mediated by a language which is not the L1 of most/some/any of the participants, and so being a native speaker with full linguistic competence in the language chosen for the multilingual exchange may be an obstacle for communication rather than an advantage. It is a well-known fact that non-native speakers often understand other non-native speakers better than native ones, and therefore, a system with a monolingual focus on the native speaker is not likely to render communicative success in the translingualism and transcultural settings in which students are increasingly likely to get engaged. Kramsch (1998) stresses the point as follows: "if . . . 'the basis of culture is not shared knowledge, but shared rules of interpretation', it would make more sense to view speakers acquiring over their lifetime a whole range of rules of interpretation that they use knowingly and judiciously according to the various social contexts in which they live and with which they make sense of the world around them. That, one could argue, is the characteristic of a 'competent language user': . . . the adaptability to select those forms of accuracy and those forms of appropriateness that are called for in a given social context of use. This form of competence is precisely the competence of the 'intercultural' speaker, operating at the border between several languages or language varieties, manoeuvring

his/her way through the troubled waters of cross-cultural misunderstandings. That, not the untroubled mythical native speaker, then, should be our model" (p. 27).

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that, in multilingual settings, participants make strategic adjustments in order to enhance communication with speakers from various backgrounds, i.e., resourcing to the knowledge of a given language to understand another one, as shown by the EuroCom network project (http://www.eurocom.uni-frankfurt.de/english/compact/kurs/text_seite_1468.htm), or deploying strategies such as the occasional switch from one language to another or pidginisation. The CEF (2001) provides a number of insights into the dynamics of translingual exchanges: "the plurilingual approach . . . does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor. For instance, partners may switch from one language or dialect to another, exploiting the ability of each to express in one language and to understand the other; or a person may call upon the knowledge of a number of languages to make sense of a text, written or even spoken, in a previously 'unknown' language, recognising words from a common international store in a new guise. Those with some knowledge, even slight, may use it to help those with none to communicate by mediating between individuals with no common language. In the absence of a mediator, such individuals may nevertheless achieve some degree of communication by bringing the whole of their linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression in different languages or dialects, exploiting paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.) and radically simplifying their use of language" (p. 4).

In multilingual scenarios, mastering the language for the exchange is not as relevant as achieving effective communication by means of strategies that go beyond communicative competence in any given language. A number of differences have been tentatively described between monolinguals and multilinguals (Cenoz, 2000): the latter display a preference for mnemonic strategies for memory tasks, of linguistic strategies for rule-discovery ones, a disposition to modify strategies in language learning, a superiority in the use of implicit learning strategies and an increased motivation for learning an additional language (p. 49). However, the actual strategies deployed in multilingual settings are still underexplored, as these have tended to be neglected within the study of multilingual individuals and societies. As Roberts (2007) puts it, the multilingual workplace (which, just as the multilingual classroom, is a paradigmatic translingual setting of increasing pervasiveness in our evermore globalised societies) "is a strategic but underresearched site for exploring multilingual language use and for examining the process of second language socialisation" (p. 414), even though "increased use of technologies, more multi-tasking, more flexible work practices, flattened structures and a more textualised workplace have created new language and literacy demands which affect even the manual worker" (Roberts, 2007, p. 406).

Translingualism, which at first sight seems an intuitive notion, soon proves to be a matter of degree rather than a sharply delineated phenomenon, and hence a slippery one, both at an individual and at a societal level. Such slipperiness is even more significant in multilingual settings, mostly if the notion of individual plurilingualism is severed from that of societal multilingualism, since multilingual settings are fuzzy scenarios which need not involve plurilingual individuals as such, but speakers of two languages (in one of which fluency will typically be compromised) who are confronted with a communicative challenge which may or may not be part of their daily experience. When individuals get together with other individuals with whom they only share fragments of language and culture, strategies that go beyond language proficiency have to be deployed, and it is these strategies that define multilingual settings. As a communicative competence, translingualism will therefore be an evolving one, departing from "semilingualism" (Coste et al., 2009) and always on the making.

Let us think of a lecture delivered in Spanish with consecutive translation in French. In the audience, a speaker of Portuguese and a speaker of German, both with a B1 competence in French and none of them speakers of Spanish. Arguably, the Portuguese speaker will be likely to understand the lecture significantly better than the German one, because Spanish, with no instruction, remains opaque for Germans, but not to the same extent for speakers of Portuguese, since both Spanish and Portuguese are Romance languages. The scenario is thought to encompass a multilingual experience for the Portuguese speaker, inasmuch as s/he is resourcing to an integration of competences and taking advantage of a L3 of which s/he is not a speaker, but which can be put into play in order to make sense of the communicative exchange. Multilingual settings, therefore, do not require near-native speakers of any given language, but efficient communicators able to make use of every resource available at hand, and well aware of the radical difference between communication and information.

In translingualism communicative processes, significant pieces of information are likely to be lost and/or altered, but communication may nonetheless remain successful as long as strategies to secure the exchange are brought into use. Information interpretation having been established as a focus question for translingualism, "what is interesting is not so much whether the non-native speakers . . . were 'right' or 'wrong' in reading [a text] . . . differently from educated native speakers, but, rather, how different sociocultural contexts elicited different readings" (Kramsch, 1998: 18). Besides, in a global context in which mediation often takes place by means of a lingua franca, multilingual scenarios will often involve communication in English among speakers of many different languages. This is therefore a setting in which none of the participants can adjust to any one language or culture, but to the common communicative arena. As

Ansaldo (2010) points out, "peculiar to multilingual linguistic ecologies . . . is a dynamic linguistic profile that periodically realigns itself according to the needs of the shifting ecology, [which] proves that any identification between the community and a single linguistic code would be not only simplistic but ultimately also temporary, as languages are constantly negotiated" (p. 619). Language competence therefore remains a necessary but not sufficient condition for success in such situations, and in order to understand the ways in which strategies emerge to bridge the gap, multilingual settings deserve further attention. This, according to Lüdi (2010) is happening already, even if slowly: "company managers are beginning to realise that their "gibberish Esperanto" . . . can be an asset for including employees across the world in an emotional way, for facilitating the construction of new knowledge, and for promoting creativity and innovation through improving cognitive diversity. Thus, strategies promoting linguistic diversity and the choice of English as corporate language coexist in the same companies … What are the implications of all these developments for European educational language policies? It seems plausible that, at least in some cases, monolingual individuals and companies operating on a monolingual basis face disadvantages in a global marketplace. If we accept the premise that the educational systems' mission is to prepare young people for the working world, one of the major challenges is to equip them with multilingual repertoires as a prerequisite for succeeding in a world characterised by growing mobility and a massive increase in multilingualism. On the one hand, this means learning and/or teaching other languages in addition to English. On the other, the stakeholders will have to revise their conception of multilingual competences and move away from 'additionist' views (a multilingual competence is not equal to several monolingual competences) towards the kind of repertoires which are partially shared and perceived by the participants as resources to be used according to the situation, i.e. in a 'situated way'. Thus, the main challenge for foreign language teachers is to coach learners in learning ONE particular language and allow them, at the same time, to conceive of all of their languages combined as a tool kit to be used in pluriglossic environments" (p. 495).

At a time in which mergers within in-house teams are becoming increasingly frequent and multilingual scenarios are no longer restricted to overseas encounters, the seven critical factors for success in international working environments (tolerance for ambiguity, behavioural flexibility, goal orientation, sociability and interest in other people, empathy, non-judgmentalness and meta-communication skills) are becoming more and more pervasive in everyday experience (Prechtl & Davidson Lund, 2008). Multilingual settings thus emerge, both home and abroad, as optimal pathfinders for understanding the multifaceted nature of translingualism, mostly when considering that in such scenarios, interpersonal communication "not only occurs between individuals but also via mass media and computer-mediated technologies and through international organisations" (Barnett & Lee, 2002). Although societal multilingualism and individual plurilingualism have been neatly distinguished in recent literature (Coste et al., 2009; Cavalli et al., 2009; Oliveira & Anç ã, 2009; Zarate et al., 2008; Beacco & Byram, 2007; Byram, 2007), and multilingualism remains an umbrella term (Mackiewicz, 2002), translingualism seems a more suitable term to describe the competences involved in multilingual settings, multifaceted scenarios of which mergers are an intrinsic feature.

The understanding of welcoming leaflets at a hotel provides an interesting token at this stage: everyone has experienced the frustration of having to read the information in various languages so as to be able to know how to operate the air conditioner. Likewise, everyone has at some point laughed when reading notices such as "Cooles and Heates: If you want just condition of warm in your room, please control yourself" or "The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable." Mistranslations need not come from amusing websites on the internet: they are part and parcel of everyone's experience. The interesting point is not the obvious lack of language proficiency in display, but rather what makes speakers understand those texts, for the mechanisms that grant understanding of mistranslations seems in tune with those that grant effective communication in translingual and transcultural settings. Mistranslations can surely be amended, but translation remains inadequate as an answer to communicative success in multilingual settings, even if sworn translations were readily available at any point, which is of course not the case, as depicted by Lambarena (2009): "the European Union has the largest translation and interpretation services in the world to serve the now 23 official languages (Welsh to become the 24th this year). This means 506 possible language combinations. In 2007, the 2,500 translators produced two million pages of text, and the 500 interpreters are supplemented by 300-400 freelance interpreters per day. The annual expenditure on translation and interpretation in the EU is a calculated at 1,1 billion euros every year until 2013".

As Bellos (2009) puts it, nothing as simple as a 'translation process' can be pinned down, for there are many other language-related tasks (summarising, rewriting, recontextualising, adapting and so forth) that cannot be formally distinguished from translation (p. 401). Likewise, nothing as simple as a translingual communicative process can be pinned down, since near-native proficiency in any given language does not warrant a successful exchange unless a strategic integration of competences, albeit partial, is brought about. In order to prevent cultural and linguistic misinterpretations that may prevent communicative success in a multilingual scenario, overt training in strategies such as managing anxiety when facing difficulties to express in an unfamiliar language or dealing with uncertainty and asymmetry in the communicative exchange, as well as much awareness training, becomes paramount within a translingual curricular programme. Before such a goal is fulfilled, however, much research is still to be done on the creation of meaning in multilingual settings. Singh's (2010) insights are inspiring: "natural laboratories called multilingual contexts furnish abundant evidence for the construction of the sort of theory those who claim that multilingualism is really the unmarked linguistic condition must work towards (p. 636). Such a theory will not only

show that the routine abridgement of our linguistic capacity presented as competence is unwarranted but also has . . . important implications for the construction of monolingual grammars . . . Only an attempt to construct a new theory of language form and architecture can do justice to the contribution multilingualism can potentially make to our understanding of language".

IV. Still on the Agenda

Rethinking the notion of translingualism and acknowledging the significance of diversification in language-related tasks in order to develop strategies for success in multilingual settings gave rise to another concern which exceeds the scope of the MULTICOM project and indeed of this paper: envisaging a translingual CEF to measure translingual communicative competence, which should integrate the linguistic ability to interact in contexts in which at least three languages are at play and intercultural communicative competence. Translingual communicative competence cannot be adequately learned and assessed as a distinct competence without such a framework, but there is still a lot to do on the translingual agenda so as to know what makes translingual communication different before it can be actually drawn.

The seven constitutive principles of textuality without which communication breaks down (cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality) and the three regulative principles that control textual communication (efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness) have been known for long (de Beaugrande & Dressler, 2002/1981). However, in multilingual settings a number of such principles are often missing and communication still occurs, which once again makes one wonder what makes translingual communication different, and how to measure the magnitudes so as to know how to enhance strategies that secure successful communication, minimising the difficulties faced in multilingual settings. According to Kramsch & Whiteside (2008), "social actors in multilingual settings seem to activate more than a communicative competence that would enable them to communicate accurately, effectively, and appropriately with one another. They seem to display a particularly acute ability to play with various linguistic codes and with the various spatial and temporal resonances of these codes. We call this competence "symbolic competence." Symbolic competence is the ability not only to approximate and appropriate for oneself someone else's language, but to shape the very context in which the language in learned and used … For language learners and educators, symbolic competence is not yet another skill that language users need to master, nor it is a mere component of communicative competence. Rather, it is a mindset that can create 'relationships of possibility', but only if the individual learns to see him/herself through his/her own embodied history and subjectivity and through the history and subjectivity of others" (p. 664f).

"Symbolic competence" goes beyond plurilingual and pluricultural competence, which the Council of Europe (2001) describes as a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw by making use of proficiency of varying degrees in several languages and experience of several cultures (p. 168). The notion of symbolic competence comes from the ecology-of-language paradigm, nowadays gaining ground as a platform for the study of multilingualism almost half a century after it was first proposed by Einar Haugen for the study of multilingual societies. The paradigm "involves building on linguistic diversity worldwide, promoting multiculturalism and foreign language learning and granting linguistic human rights to speakers of all languages" (Phillipson & Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996, quoted in Gill, 2003, p. 70) and provides new insights into multilingual settings and plurilingualism together with methodological proposals. Within the ecological framework (Kramsch, 2008), language teaching is not conceived of as the teaching of linguistic codes, but as the teaching of meaning, which from an ecological point of view is thought to be relational and multidimensional, mediated, multiscalar and recursive, emergent, unpredictable and double-voiced, fractal, subjective, historically contingent and reflexive. Thus, as Gill (2003) puts it, "an ecological curriculum for teaching language does not restrict itself to the teaching of the language per se but is expanded to include the context and meta-context of language as a process. In a recursive framework, the very process becomes a meta-context for study. The introduction of frameworks for language awareness alongside the study of language is central to a movement in ESL teaching known as the ecology-of-language paradigm. Supporters of this movement believe that it is the responsibility of language teachers to increase language awareness and counter the overwhelming presence of dominant world languages, particularly where English, for example, is having the effect of eliminating or suppressing minority languages and cultures in the world" (p. 70).

In relating the creation of meaning with diversity, the ecology-of-language paradigm approaches translingual communicative competence by focusing on both multilingualism and intercultural competence as defined by the Council of Europe (2001), i.e., as the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other; as cultural sensitivity; as the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures; as the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations; and as the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships (p. 104f). Kramsch (2008) reminds us of the breach between theory and practice: "most institutions are still teaching standard national languages according a 19th-century modern view of language as a structural system with rules of grammatical and lexical usage, and rules of pragmatics reified to fit the image of a stereotyped Other. The 21st century is all about meaning, relations, creativity, subjectivity, historicity and the trans– as in translingual and transcultural competence. We should conceive of what we do in ways that are more appropriate to the demands of a global, decentred, multilingual and multicultural world, more suited to our uncertain and unpredictable

times" (p. 406).

Translingual communicative competence, the one deployed in successful multilingual settings, stands out as a "personal competence" (Moran, 2001, p. 119) that ranks highest within the hierarchy of language and culture learning outcomes. Before we can actually teach, and test (Lenz & Berthele, 2010), translingual communicative competence, however, a number of questions need to be addressed: what makes speakers choose the language for the exchange in multilingual settings? How do we provide students with explicit modelling of strategies to succeed in multilingual settings? What are those strategies, how are they used, and what for? In a word, what, specifically, is encapsulated in multilingual settings? The answers, according to CEF (2001) are still not at hand: "from this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place . . . The full implications of such a paradigm shift have yet to be worked out and translated into action" (p. 5).

"The number of studies on the effect of individual and contextual factors in multilingual acquisition is very limited" (Cenoz 2000, p. 49); as a result, most questions remain largely unanswered. The cognitive effects of being multilingual, which include "an enhanced metalinguistic awareness and an enhanced multilingual capacity to monitor, and [which] positively affect divergent and creative thinking, pragmatic competence, communicative sensitivity and translation skills" (Jessner, 2006, quoted in Svalberg, 2007, p. 300), still need research, just as the constraints of multilingual settings do. At the same time, awareness training stands out as an educational challenge so as to prevent that emotional and identitary factors make for a resistance to multilingualism and pluriculturalism. Defensiveness, different world views, different values and beliefs, prejudices, different languages, different ways of using and interpreting the non-verbal code, different ways of constructing messages, unequal power, and the failure to allow for individual cultural differences within a group have been mentioned as recurring barriers to effective intercultural communication of which students need to become aware to realise how their culture may be shaping their own reactions (Singh & Rampersad, 2010, p. 3) and how such reactions affect the communicative success. Hornberger (2009) pictures a prospect for progress: "now, as throughout history, multilingual education offers the best possibilities for preparing coming generations to participate in constructing more just and democratic societies in our globalised and intercultural world; however, it is not unproblematically achieved. Multilingual education is, at its best, (1) multilingual in that it uses and values more than one language in teaching and learning, (2) intercultural in that it recognises and values understanding and dialogue across different lived experiences and cultural worldviews, and (3) education that draws out, taking as its starting point the knowledge students bring to the classroom and moving toward their participation as full and indispensable actors in society – locally, nationally, and globally. Beyond these fundamental characteristics, there are many unanswered questions and doubts surrounding multilingual education as to policy and implementation, program and curricular design, classroom instruction practices, pedagogy, and teacher professional development, but there is also much that we understand and know very well, based on empirical research in many corners of the world" (p. 198).

Far too often, languages are still viewed as problems rather than as resources. By means of applying recent findings in the literature on multi and plurilingualism to language instruction, such as the introduction of the notion of "partial competence" as an evolving tool to handle imbalance (Coste at el., 2009, p. 18), overcoming such a prejudice does not seem out of reach. When tested in class, the MULTICOM tasks elicited enthusiastic responses from students, who sometimes for the first time became aware of the interpretative process involved in communication and of the relevance of factors other than foreign language proficiency in successful translingual interaction. The prospects for change seem promising as long as applied linguistics is actually applied.

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