CODE-SWITCHING AS A NATURAL PHENOMENON AMONG LEARNERS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

Code-switching has long been regarded as a detrimental effect of being able to speak more than one foreign language. It is a widely accepted fact that the simultaneous acquisition of two or more foreign languages will make students code-switch more often compared to those learning only one foreign language at a time. Contrary to the common misconception that bi- or multilingualism through instruction would be any different in contrast to bi- or multilingualism acquired at home, bi- or multilinguals' languages "act" similarly regardless of how they have been acquired. Code-switching can impede and aid foreign language learning at the same time. If code-switching is considered a phenomenon that should be avoided, some EFL teachers tend to make conscious steps to help students discard their code-switches. However, if code-switching is treated as it is, merely a natural phenomenon occurring to multilinguals, then, instead of needing to fix it, it can simply be observed. On the one hand, this study summarises some general findings about code-switching, which can also be observed among students born into monolingual families. The second part of the study is a linguistic analysis of a German L2 – English L3 code-switching phenomenon among Hungarian learners of English. The third part of this paper is an educational outlook highlighting the challenges faced by learners, especially young multilinguals.

Keywords: code-switching, multilingualism, Hungarian L1, German L2, English L3

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is threefold. In the first part, I set out to synthesise the most relevant findings about the characteristics of code-switching, whose theoretical background could also be adapted to multilingual language acquisition through instruction. Most Hungarian citizens are born into monolingual families, thus, they usually become bi- or multilingual in educational settings. In terms of code-switching during multilingual development, what happens during the teaching-learning process at school is analogous to first, second or third language acquisition at home. For the sake of simplicity, the first part of the paper treats dialects as separate languages. Furthermore, no distinction has been made between the terms "code-switching" and "code-mixing", and as such, they are used synonymously.

In the second part of this paper, I present an experiment conducted in an English as a Third Language classroom at a Hungarian primary school. The experiment is an observation of five lessons with six students, where the second language German is evoked before the English lesson. The experiment has been designed to facilitate natural code-switching between German and English among the participants. The lessons have been observed with the help of audio recordings, then, the supposed code-switches between German L2 and English L3 have been described from a linguistic aspect.

The third part of this paper is an educational outlook highlighting the challenges faced by learners, especially young multilinguals, when transitioning to new educational environments.

Although teachers play a crucial role in creating an inclusive environment, many struggle due to a lack of language awareness and training, hence, students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds may struggle to adapt. The positive impact of multilingualism, as seen in elite schools, should be emphasised, in contrast with the often negative perception of plurilingual students in mainstream classrooms.

2. Multilingual development in case of children

Research has mostly focused on how infants can handle two or more languages during their acquisition. For the unitary system supporters, language mixing and code-switches were the proof of the child being unable to differentiate between their languages, while for the separated systems supporters it was visible that the unintentional switch between languages took place as an evidence of the interference across the languages and cross-linguistic influences would only occur if the child could differentiate between these languages. According to Göncz and Kodzopeljic, the multilingual child's awareness improves quicker than that of the monolingual ones. (Göncz & Kodzopeljic 1991). For the early phases of language developments in the case of bilingual children, Volterra and Taeschner (1978) established a three-stage model. The first stage includes the common lexical system with words from both languages, and the child is not able to differentiate between his/her languages. Thus, there are language mixings in the developing speech of the child. In the second stage, he/she develops two distinct lexical systems and applies the same syntactic rules to both languages, which causes incorrect structures in either or both of the languages. It is only in the third stage, which is at around 2-3 years of age that the child is able to differentiate between the two linguistic systems, lexically as well as syntactically. Genesee (1989) mentions that early mixed utterances are considered as evidence for the child being unable to differentiate between the languages, emphasising the role of parental input that could result in the child's code/language mixing in the early years of bilingual development. However, it is important to note that Genesee (1989: 174) refutes this argument and concludes that "contrary to most interpretations of bilingual development, bilingual children are able to differentiate their language systems from the beginning" and "they are able to use their developing language systems differentially in contextually sensitive ways", and also that "the case for undifferentiated language development in bilingual children is far from established".

De Houwer (1990) criticises Volterra and Taeschner's views. According to her, they use psycholinguistic terms to prove that during the mixing stage the child has one lexical system. It is considered that the child uses mixed terms only because of the different sociolinguistic categories. Researchers consistently agree on the interactions of the two languages or even more languages, triggering cross-linguistic phenomena at all linguistic levels. Cross-linguistic influences, including code-switching, show the complexity of multilingual improvements, and suggest that there is a constant interaction between the codes as multilingual people cannot deactivate any of their languages (Stavans & Porat 2019). Yet, it varies according to many aspects, for instance, when the dominant language affects the weaker one, but that is not always the case. In a multilingual situation, the systems are interrelated and are always active (Navracsics 2014). The multilingual setting, the individual variability, the proficiency levels of the languages, affect various interferences or cross-linguistic influences. The Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (Herdina & Jessner 2002) views multilingual development and multilingualism as a complex, nonlinear process.

It has been proved many times that multilingualism can be achieved with a certain amount of exposure to the languages. The only condition is that the child is exposed to the languages simultaneously and they will develop at the same time. The so-called Unitary Language Development Hypothesis was formed in order to collect the ideas of researchers in the different stages of language development. It was mainly based on the observations that children mix the two languages or lexicons, and that they use the different respective syntactic structures differently (Volterra and Taeschner 1978). However, Genesee (1989) argued that children mix the two lexicons for much the same reasons as adult bilinguals mix languages, such as a lack of vocabulary in one language

or adjusting language choice to that of the interlocutor. In addition, he claimed that there is far more evidence showing that children do not use the respective syntactic structures alternatively.

Recently, there is a global trend towards a heightened interest in enhancing the learning and utilisation of multiple languages within formal school systems. Recent global statistics reveal a rise in top-down language-in-education policies that advocate early language learning and bilingual education in formal settings across Europe, South America, Asia, and Africa. Numerous educational models worldwide strive to afford children opportunities to become multilingual or to cultivate and reinforce their competences in the languages they speak.

In addition to widespread foreign language teaching models, as emphasised in European policy documents (European Commission 2002), bilingual education models stand out as the most prevalent form of multilingual education. This is alongside other variations of multilingual education, where three or more languages serve as the medium of instruction (Cenoz 2013). Recent research on bi-multilingual education models has categorised them based on factors such as the overarching educational objectives of the programs (Baker & Wright 2017), the role of languages either as mediums of instruction or as subjects taught (Beetsma 2001), and the sociolinguistic contexts in which multilingual schools operate (Ytsma 2001). Ytsma suggests a typology of 'trilingual education,' where programs deliberately aim to 'establish additive trilingualism among its students.' This typology is based on the (socio)linguistic context in which educational models are implemented. Factors considered include whether the languages present in each trilingual model are also spoken in the school environment, whether these languages serve as the medium of instruction or are taught as subjects.

Additionally, linguistic distance between the languages involved and the program design employed are taken into account. It is crucial to acknowledge that the matter of school languages or languages used in education is closely intertwined with issues of identity formation, impacting not only individuals but also entire communities. The paths individuals, including children, adolescents and teachers, take in learning languages play a substantial role in shaping their individual identities. Simultaneously, the emphasis placed within the language curriculum significantly shapes the significance and prevalence of specific languages within a country. The languages employed in schools and other educational establishments are directly connected to the linguistic and cultural identity of a society (Hu 2014). A social-constructivist and sociocultural framework interprets identity as a reality that emerges "in an intersubjectively reached agreement that is historically and culturally negotiated" (Bamberg et al. 2011). According to this perspective, this agreement is in a constant state of renegotiation and is dynamic. Within this theoretical approach, it becomes evident that identity is intricately connected to language, "languaging", narratives, and broader societal discourses, power relations, and institutional practices. Research has demonstrated that both adults and children, even at an early age, engage in reflection upon and negotiation of their identities, using various literacy practices to express them. This perspective brings a fresh understanding to language learning and language education, suggesting that language learning/teaching and language practices, particularly in educational settings like schools, are closely intertwined with the construction and negotiation of pupils' identities.

Investigations of early trilingual first language development additionally favour separate improvements, showing that trilingual children's purposes of every language are equivalent to those of their monolingual companions (Montanari 2009), albeit the quantity of examinations is still restricted and future examinations are important. Mikes (1991) is quite possibly one of the earliest researchers zeroing in explicitly on the concurrent advancement of the morphosyntax of three languages at the beginning phases of language advancement, demonstrating that two small children presented to Hungarian, German, and Serbo-Croatian from birth have three separate syntaxes, a finding lined up with the results of numerous bilingual examinations. Quay (2011) followed this up by directing an exhaustive examination of the improvement of a Japanese, German, and English trilingual kid experiencing childhood in Japan, and afterward Montanari (2009) detailed an adjusted advancement of the morphosyntax and dictionary of English, Spanish, and Tagalog in California, USA. Both of these studies completely support the separate advancement of the three semantic

frameworks. Separate advancement does not mean that the various frameworks are totally autonomous. Scientists have reliably found restricted but still clear contrasts between the highlights of bilingual children's language and those of their monolingual companions, and many have recommended the chance of efficient association between the dialects being obtained, as a characteristic outcome of language contact.

Additionally, it is essential to note that the degree of proficiency children achieve in each language will vary to a large extent. This is mainly because bilingual or multilingual development or even loss depends strongly on the linguistic and social environment children are surrounded by and most importantly their individual motivation to use each language that they have learnt.

3. Code-switching behaviours

The ability to switch between two languages and combine them within a sentence, related to the growth of children's competence in each language, is a crucial subject for researchers in the field of bilingual and multilingual language development. While there is considerable evidence from researchers working on language development in multilingual children that code-switching is indicative of highly developed skills in both languages (Meisel 1994), multilingual families, teachers, and policy makers frequently worry that code-switching is a sign of poor language skills. Although relatively little is known about trilingual and multilingual youngsters compared to the literature on bilinguals, any unique qualities or similarities with regard to switching in both groups will be addressed. Many language systems are still in development and are likely to be extremely variable, hence analysing children's code-switching is particularly difficult. This is evident from Cantone's (2007) study of bilingual Italian-German children, who were recorded in either a monolingual Italian or a monolingual German mode. Despite the obvious distinctions between the language contexts in which the children were recorded, the children mixed languages in each of them. In all, between 1% and 20% of the children's utterances were mixed languages, although the percentages varied depending on the language environment. Children's code-switching behaviour may change as their productive capacities develop. Depending on whether code-switching is a common discourse mode in the speech community, this could signify an increase or decrease in code-switching. It is consequently quite challenging to understand how children combine languages at different ages and how this ability changes over time. Children mix their languages more frequently in the early stages than in the later ones, according to some data (Redlinger & Park 1980; Vihman 1982). If this is the case, it may provide evidence for the gradual separation of the two languages in bilingual youngsters as they grow older.

Trilingual children may code-switch more since they are unlikely to be equally proficient in all three of their languages. Hoffmann (2001) claims that trilinguals have at least one weaker language but may have two weaker languages and one stronger language. According to other research, these children could be predicted to code-switch more than bilingual children (Poeste et al. 2019), if it is true that children code-switch more while speaking their weaker languages than when using their stronger languages (Petersen 1988). Further research on the connection between dominance and code-switching is required to clarify the relationship between these two, even though analysing this relationship is complex due to the fact that dominance is task-specific - in the sense that a bilingual can be dominant in one language on some tasks but not on others. Dominance relations are a complex construct that can be operationalised and measured in a variety of ways (Treffers-Daller, 2016). Genesee (1989) notes that since it is frequently unknown how the child's speech was sampled, it is challenging to establish strong evidence for such comparisons. Children are likely to mix and code-switch less when they are only recorded in monolingual modes, as Cantone (2007) found, than when they are also recorded in bilingual modes.

Another issue is that multiple operationalisations of the term "mixing" are used by researchers, which makes it challenging to draw general conclusions about the mixing rates at various developmental stages across various studies. Comparisons between studies are made more difficult

because the frequency of code-switching also depends on sociolinguistic differences between speech communities and typological differences between languages.

The term "code-mixing" rather than "code-switching" is preferred by Muysken (2000) because according to him, it more accurately describes situations "where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear within one sentence", and he considers code-switching as a subcategory of code-mixing. Müller, Cantone and other researchers working in the field of Bilingual First Language Acquisition follow Meisel (1994). According to Meisel, the phrase "code-switching" refers to a particular pragmatic ability in selecting the appropriate language in conversations without flouting grammatical rules. However, other than the demands of the mixed grammars, nothing restrains code-switching, according to MacSwan (1999, 146). It is appealing that this presumption, known as the null theory of code-switching, does not presuppose the necessity of a separate code-mixing language. However, because the grammar rules of the two involved languages frequently diverge significantly, occurrences of mixing may be considered a violation of the rules, or at the very least a modification of the rules of one or both languages.

Children frequently incorporate nouns from language A into stretches of language B discourse, as Cantone (2007, 173) noted. Children's code-switching is comparable to adults' in this regard (Meisel 1994). Due to the fact that neither children nor adults have translations for all words in their respective languages, most authors consider the insertion of nouns and other lexical items as necessary. Only 30.8% of words in bilingual youngsters are doublets or translation equivalents, according to research (Pearson et al., 1995), the percentage is closer to 37%. Of course, the precise percentages will vary depending on the related languages and their typological distinctions. The employment of discourse markers from language A, such as "you know" or "well", in language B is another frequent form of language mixing. Since the discourse marker only appears on the edge of the utterance, this sort of mixing does not require embedding content from language A into language B. When a discourse marker from a language used in the larger community is used in conjunction with a phrase in the child's native tongue, it is preferable to interpret this as an instance of alternation. Some discourse markers, like "ok," have gained widespread usage, so one would no longer think of them as code-switches.

Congruent lexicalisation is rarely discussed in the literature on children's code-switching, despite the fact that insertion, alternation, and backflagging are frequently reported in children's mixing. In his study of code-mixing between English and French, Clyne (2003) found that since the code-mixing comprises a structure that is a compromise between French and English word ordering, it might be thought of as congruent lexicalisation. In other words, neither all of the sentence's structure is based on English nor all of it on French rules. A functional French word (the negation marker *pas*, meaning 'not'), an English verb (*wan*, meaning 'want'), and the homophonous noun *yogurt* are all included in this shared grammatical structure (Clyne 2003). As a result, the sentence exhibits a number of consistent lexicalisation traits. The research of a bilingual child by Lanza (1997), who contends that bilingual children may code-switch in the same way as adults from the age of two, provides supporting evidence for the parallels between children's and adults' code-switching behaviour. As a result, the majority of researchers appear to concur that, except for the early phase, children's code-switches are remarkably comparable to those of adults (De Houwer 1990; Vihman 1998). Code-switching can manifest itself in various ways, involving not only separation between grammars but also instances where clear language boundaries are not evident. Congruent lexicalisation entails using content and function words from both languages within a shared grammatical framework, lacking a distinct matrix language. This type of code-switching, as highlighted by Muysken (2000), tends to be more prevalent among closely related languages. In the early stages, advocating for strict separation is not particularly compelling since children's initial utterances typically consist of single words. While the use of single words from language A in contexts where language B is expected might be perceived as 'mixing' (Genesee 1989), determining the language affiliation of a specific word is not always straightforward. This challenge is especially pronounced in cases where the phonetic systems of the two languages significantly overlap, and there are

numerous cognates—words that bear striking resemblance or are identical in both languages (e.g., English/German: *daddy/Pappa*; *mummy/mamma*).

According to Bosma and Blom (2019), speakers of Frisian frequently integrate Dutch elements into their Frisian, often completely blending the lexicons and grammars of both languages. This practice suggests engagement in congruent lexicalisation, a phenomenon typical of closely related languages with a history of intense language contact. However, Poeste et al. (2019) argue that congruent lexicalisation is too complex for young children, proposing the opposite viewpoint that separation of the two language systems is too intricate at this stage.

In the early stages of child language development, congruent lexicalisation may not be confined to closely related languages like Frisian and Dutch; it may also be prevalent between languages that are typologically more distant, such as Estonian and English, as described by Vihman (1985). This does not imply a fusion of both grammars in the early stages but rather suggests that elements of the two languages are mixed in the process of language production.

4. The experiment

4.1. Method

During the investigation, five separate EFL lessons were audio-recorded. Students participating in the research were asked about their linguistic self-identity in Hungarian. German-English code-switching, albeit previously evoked, was treated as a natural phenomenon without the need to affect it. The recorded lessons had been organised alike in advance and consisted of four stages altogether:

Stage 0: Students were exposed to visual input in GFL (L2) lessons for five minutes. They were asked to look at a notice board with 19 vocabulary items in German. The vocabulary items with the same syllable-length were positioned similarly to the ones on the previous notice board.

Stage 1: In the introductory phase of the EFL (L3) lesson, students were asked to speak freely and express their thoughts in connection with the topic of the lesson for 10 minutes.

Stage 2: Stage 2 lasted for 10 minutes and it was a pair work activity. Students were given game figures and game boards with visual representations of the words on the German notice board. Students were allowed to step forward on the game board if they knew and could utter the word portrayed.

Stage 3: Students played Kahoot with the English equivalents of the words on the German notice board for 20 minutes.

The participants: six 11-12-year-old students with adequate speaking skills but different proficiency levels in both English and German.

Students were taught by the same teacher in L2 and L3 lessons.

The classroom: a friendly atmosphere where students were not afraid of making mistakes or errors in English L3 (and in German L2), a natural atmosphere where code-switching was allowed but L1 Hungarian was to be avoided.

Research question: How does German L2 – English L3 code-mixing manifest itself on a linguistic level in an English as a Third Language classroom?

4.2. Discussion

Code-switches from L3 English to L2 German on different linguistic levels of analysis

Observation 1 (with notes)

Notice board 1

Category 1 – presumedly due to the German notice board

Phonetics (IPA transcription):

ˈhaʊzɪz → ˈhaʊsɪz – The voiced alveolar fricative has become voiceless, which may have happened because of the pronunciation of "s" in the singular form of L2 "Haus" (L3 houses – L2 Haus)

However, **z** and **s** should be observed in a similar environment under similar circumstances to rule out other explanations. It is also possible that **z** has become voiceless because in the vast majority of cases, the base of the plural form is phonetically identical to the singular form. Moreover, students could have heard it from others and started to pronounce the word with an **s**.

ˈwɔːtəfɔːl → *ˈvɔːtəfal* – The long open-mid back rounded vowel has become an open front un-rounded vowel, and as such pronounced in a German way. (L3 waterfall – L2 Wasserfall)

Vocabulary (items in which standard pronunciation features are mostly preserved)**:**

wild swines → *Wildschweine* – Students seeing *wild swines* in the lesson could bring the influence of German L2 to the surface. Nevertheless, it is important to note that *wild boars* is used more frequently when speaking English.

Category 2 – presumedly not due to the German notice board

Vocabulary (items in which standard pronunciation features are mostly preserved):

december → *Dezember* – At first, this might seem like an influence of L1 Hungarian. Still, as "r" is pronounced in a German way as a near-open central vowel in place of the Hungarian voiced dental trill, this switch must have been due to L2 German.

happy children → *happy Kinder* – The English *children* has been substituted by its German equivalent.

Syntax:

I really love sports. → *I love really sports.* – The correct English word order has been altered. Although the German calque of the student's sentence would not be correct grammatically, code-mixing can be observed here as well. In simple German sentences, students expect the German verb in the second place, which might explain the inversion of the word order.

Observation 2 (with notes)

Notice board 2

Category 1 – presumedly due to the German notice board

Phonetics (IPA transcription):

ˈkɒstjuːm → ˈkɔstyːm – The voiced palatal approximant has been omitted and the close back rounded vowel has been replaced by a close front rounded vowel. As the close front rounded vowel is not pronounced short as in Hungarian *kosztüm*, the influence must have been due to L2 German.

Category 2 – presumedly not due to the German notice board

Phonetics (IPA transcription):

ˈʧɒk(ə)lɪt → ˈʧoko ˈlaːd – The near-close front unrounded vowel has been replaced by a long open front unrounded vowel, moreover, the voiceless alveolar plosive has been replaced by its voiced counterpart. However, the switch here could have happened just as likely due to the influence of L1 Hungarian as L2 German since these two German and Hungarian speech sounds do not differ from each other.

ˈvæləntaɪnz deɪ → ˈvaləntiːns deɪ - The voiced alveolar fricative has been replaced by its voiceless counterpart exactly how it is pronounced in L2 German *Valentinstag*.

ɡəʊst (BrE) / ɡoʊst (AmE) → ɡaːst – The English diphthong has become a long open back un-rounded vowel. It is difficult to decide whether this should be regarded only as a phonetic switch because in standard German, supposing the L2 influence can be derived from the word *Gast*, the speech sound would be categorised as an open front unrounded vowel. It is important to note that the student has made a mistake here and probably mixed up the meanings of *ghost/Geist* and *guest/Gast*.

Vocabulary (items in which standard pronunciation features are mostly preserved):

two → zwei
and → und

The latter two switches tend to happen among learners because of the similarities and close related-ness of English and German.

Pragmatics:

Leise, bitte! – This phrase was used in lesson 2, and students consciously inserted it into their speech several times later on in the other four English lessons as well. Code-switching on the prag-matic level might serve as conscious empowering of a sense of belonging in a group.

Observation 3 (with notes)

Notice board 3

Category 1 – presumedly due to the German notice board

Vocabulary (items in which standard pronunciation features are mostly preserved):

wind → Wind, mouse → Maus, narcissi → Narzisse, fox → Fuchs, golden rain → Goldregen
    These switches to German L2 can be realised on the lexical level and they might have occurred due to tiredness and lack of attention.

Category 2 – presumedly not due to the German notice board

Phonetics (IPA transcription):

ˈʧɒk(ə)lɪt → ˈʧoko ˈlaːd (see above in Observation 2)

Pragmatics:

Danke!, Bitte!, Auf Wiedersehen!
        – conscious, occurring several times later on (see above in Observation 2)

Observation 4 (with notes)

Notice board 4

Category 1 – presumedly due to the German notice board

Vocabulary (items in which standard pronunciation features are mostly preserved):

field → Feld, angler → Angler, feather → Feder, land → Land, stork → Storch, app → App, rucksacks → Rucksäcke – Students seeing *rucksacks* in the lesson could bring the influence of German L2 to the surface, although its synonyms are used more frequently when speaking English.

All the above words have been pronounced in a German way, which must have been due to lack of attention similarly to lesson 3.

Observation 5

Notice board 5

- In lesson 5, except for the pragmatic ones mentioned earlier, no further L2-L3 code-switching occurred.

5. Summary of the experiment

The students observed were born into a monolingual Hungarian family. (In this section, dialects are not treated as separate languages.) In the English as a Third Language classroom, they show similarities with all other types of bi- or multilinguals in terms of code-switching. As such, theoretical considerations advocated by the literature about bi- and multilingual code-switching can be transferred naturally into the foreign language classroom.

The findings indicate that the majority of L2-L3 code-switches have happened on the phonetic or lexical level. Even if influencing factors such as tiredness or lack of attention are excluded from the investigation, the underlying reasons for the particular switches are not unambiguous yet and need further investigation, for instance, by repeating the experiment under different circumstances. All six students reported switching accidentally between German and English. It seems that they can successfully separate Hungarian from their two foreign languages. All of them reported that sometimes when they have to talk in English, they accidentally use German. Not surprisingly, the amount of L2-L3 code-mixing began to decrease gradually and students' unconscious code-mixing ceased to exist entirely. The students may have realised some connection between the German notice board and its English equivalents integrated into the lessons recorded. Thus, as for the teaching-learning process, the lessons seem to have fulfilled their covert purpose meaning that students' awareness of their linguistic repertoire developed.

This study has its limitations since the participants' L2 and L3 proficiency levels and also their receptive and productive skills are very different. I have experienced that language learners are more likely to start English after having learned German for some time. In this way, they presumably have more advantages that include better learning strategies, metalinguistic awareness and communicative ability. Within a primary school setting, it is difficult to put students into the same group in a unified manner because of several, mostly pedagogical reasons. Furthermore, in a foreign language classroom, when the teacher is the researcher at the same time, the subjective viewpoint cannot be ruled out entirely. On a more positive note, notwithstanding the differences in knowledge of L2 and L3 grammar or vocabulary, at least all six participants could hold a conversation in English, which is one significant commonality among them.

6. An outlook – Multilingualism and plurilingualism at school

For any learner, switching from one learning environment to another may be both stimulating and difficult. The absence of shared linguistic and cultural knowledge frequently makes it more difficult for a learner whose home language and/or culture differ from that of the classroom, as well as for the teacher and perhaps the majority of the other students.

Young multilinguals may find the move from home to school particularly challenging. Children must adjust to a new environment, comprehend its structure and rules (both explicit and implicit), interact with and build connections with strangers, and try to live up to their expectations, frequently with very little or no verbal support. Children who receive assistance from their families, instructors, or both, may benefit greatly from the extra or different types of stimulation they receive at school. Children who attend bilingual or international schools, where staff members are knowledgeable, trained, and frequently bilingual themselves, frequently experience this. Children gain from their families' support even more when their parents are highly educated and/or aware of school standards and ideals. However, this can be a very stressful scenario for the large majority of children whose families have immigrated to a new country, who belong to a marginalised minority, and who depend on the state sector for their education. In conversations with students who have experience as new entrants and/or as emergent plurilinguals, recurring leitmotifs include not knowing what to do and being unfamiliar with both the language spoken at school and the cultural codes and expectations.

As a result, they develop a keen awareness of non-verbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, and so on, which they interpret in an effort to make sense of their environment—often misreading

the intentions of their interlocutor. The discrepancy between expectations and behaviours may occasionally be brought on by variations in cultural norms. For instance, social norms governing what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, courteous or disrespectful interactions between men and women, and between the older and younger generations differ with countries and cultures. All of these students want to prioritise social connection, acceptance, and inclusion. Although the development of this crucial social support network is hampered by the lack of a shared language for fundamental interpersonal communication, other types of communication should not be stopped. To make the classroom a more welcoming, inclusive, and supportive learning environment, teachers and other adults in the school (classroom assistants, secretaries, caretakers, etc.) must model and normalise these alternative forms of communication, such as gesture, facial expression, learning a few words in the language of the others.

The elite's multilingualism, as supported by foreign schools, for instance, is uncontested. Through multilingual education, frequently in addition to the language spoken at home, these children will pick up a second, third, or fourth language. They will learn multiple languages and be able to negotiate challenging cross-cultural interactions with relative ease. Their multilingualism will be viewed as a strength, a unique complement to the other abilities and information they have gained via education. It will offer up opportunities for them, enabling them to study or work abroad. It will consequently broaden their horizons and aid them in the development of new language, metalinguistic, and literacy abilities. The 'image of the child', as described by Malaguzzi (1994), is positively impacted by such positive attitudes and beliefs regarding languages and their use.

The idea that teachers should perceive children as bright, strong, and beautiful rather than as lacking in skills and knowledge is at the core of Malaguzzi's perspective. The hundred different languages spoken by youngsters, in his view, represent a wealth of resources and assets that should be used to foster and stimulate development. Consequently, the ability of the teacher to shape the learner's own self-image, with potential effects on learner self-esteem, identity construction, and wellbeing, lies at the core of the teacher's perception of the child. Children from lower socioeconomic classes who speak a language at home other than the one used in the classroom see their (emergent) plurilingualism less frequently valued in the classroom. Whether they acquired their plurilingualism naturally or as a result of recent migration, the message young children all too frequently hear is very far from the world of potential and empowerment. They are frequently perceived as being deficient or lacking in language (the language of education), possessing only a small vocabulary, handicapped by their poor communication skills in this language, and also, by implication, their poor cognitive skills, rather than being encouraged to develop social and academic identities of competence (Manyak 2004).

Children are also not immune to the feelings and attitudes of the important people in their lives. They can discern whether their languages and cultures are respected or disregarded, deemed acceptable or unsuitable, in the setting of the school, remarkably quickly. Numerous studies have shown that children begin to internalise the significance that their teachers place on their languages at a very young age, which can occasionally result in what has been referred to as the "silencing" of persons (Thomauske 2015). In other studies, it has been noted that children who disobey this norm are punished, both in the past (Broudic 2013) and in the present. When a youngster refuses to speak in class, this condition has been referred to as selective mutism (et al. 2015). Children who lack their most vital social and cognitive tool—their language—find it difficult to make sense of the events they encounter at school. They could feel alone and like they do not belong in the classroom, with their friends, or at school. Such extreme measures as those described above may leave lasting scars on their self-esteem, confidence, and general well-being (Rezzoug De Plan 2007). School can turn into a struggle, a confusing, misunderstood place where you risk being rejected and left alone.

Teachers have difficulties in these challenging and frequently unpleasant circumstances, and for many teachers of plurilingual students, the teaching and learning process is likewise seen as difficult. The presence of students who do not speak the same language as them can be unsettling for teachers, and they can feel overburdened by the seemingly insurmountable task of bringing

these students up to speed and on par with the other students in the classroom. As it is via inter-action that the youngster will learn the new language, they may, frequently subconsciously, completely shun interaction with them, unintentionally worsening the situation. Some teachers explicitly forbid the use of students' native tongues in the classroom, others adopt a more passive approach and choose to ignore their students' (emergent) bilingualism. According to Cummins (2019), this disre-gard for learners' languages and cultures as learning resources is referred to as "benign neglect". Such regulations go counter to a wealth of evidence-based research that emphasises the value of incorporating learners' languages and cultures into the educational process. However, despite the fact that these policies are documented by researchers (Beiler 2020; Cummins 2019), they are still uncommon in mainstream classrooms where the school's language is still frequently seen as the only acceptable language for instruction.

Why teachers prohibit, ignore, or neglect the use of students' native languages in the class-room, is a complicated issue. Professionals' inadequate language awareness, or more specifically, critical multilingual awareness, is frequently cited as a major underlying cause of such misguided practiced language policies. This is because professionals frequently lack in training and knowledge about the language development of the plurilingual child. Educators across a range of settings, including preschools in Europe and higher education institutions in Australia, still admit to feeling uneasy, unprepared, or unaware of language development-related issues (Cajkler & Hall 2012). How can a learner feel a sense of belonging at school without negating a crucial aspect of herself/himself if the learner's home language is not at the very least acknowledged by the school, by the teachers, by the learner's peers, and preferably named? According to research done in Bel-gium (Van Der Wildt et al. 2017), many plurilingual students do not feel like they belong in the class-room. Allowing all children to live their many, consistent identities in a secure and accepting envi-ronment is essential for their development and well-being in our increasingly complicated, multilin-gual, and multicultural surroundings.

The foundational knowledge a child acquires at home serves as the solid base upon which new skills and knowledge (Vygotsky 1997) can be safely built. These knowledge resources are key to the child's identity and are also crucial to the educational process. It is crucial that the profes-sionals working in the school environment take this crucial factor into consideration when a child arrives speaking a language at home that differs from the school's language because it is through this language that the child's skills and knowledge have been developed, nurtured, and deeply in-grained. Unfortunately, professors and teaching assistants do not always take into account stu-dents' prior learning.

For examples of the translanguaging utilised as an educational technique (Beiler 2020; Mary & Young 2017) learners are empowered rather than silenced when they are encouraged to use their complete linguistic repertoire to enhance their learning. Simple language awareness exercises, such as writing or drawing personal language biographies, surveying the school's language usage, or mapping the area's linguistic landscape can help students and teachers learn about, share, and appreciate the diversity of linguistic experiences and abilities among a school's student body. Such activities can alter how a school views the languages of its students (Simon & Maire Sandoz 2015), allowing children who are multilingual to be proud of their linguistic abilities rather than feeling ashamed of them. Spaces, where translanguaging usually takes place, are perceived as inventive and exploratory, going beyond the established and formalised language norms. They establish an expanded linguistic mode that operates beyond the limits of conventional and prescribed language usage. Translanguaging underscores the diverse methods of conveying meanings through words, placing significance on personal experiences, emotions, and culture (Li 2018). It recognises human beings' capacity to intentionally transcend the constraints of named languages, enabling the crea-tion of innovative forms of expression and communication (Li 2019).

The discourse between siblings is recognised for actively contributing to the revitalisation of languages. De Leon (2018) conducted multifaceted research on bilingual siblings' conversations within everyday family life and observed the remarkable creative manipulation of available codes. Siblings were found to "carve out a space in which two languages coexist as a result of the creative

bilingual performance of new genres" (De Leon 2018). Sibling interactions offer a fertile ground for experimentation, humour, and language learning, as they acknowledge the significance of inhabiting these intermediate spaces and residing in the borders of their multilingualism.

Languages are no longer seen as a problem but as valuable learning resources for the entire learning community when the learner assumes the roles of teacher and expert. In order to actively co-create overlapping spaces that connect home and school with the help of families, teachers who recognise the value of fostering these connections between languages, cultures, and home and school work hard to do so (Audras & Leclaire 2016). These spaces should make both the children and the members of their families feel valued, accepted, and empowered. Professionals can have a significant impact on the learning and wellbeing of all the students in their classrooms by doing nothing more than showing an interest in the languages and cultures of the families they work with and inviting the linguistic and cultural diversity of the local community into the classroom. Due to linguistic and/or cultural insecurity, families that were previously excluded from the educational process may now feel included and empowered to participate to the education of all students and teachers.

Admittedly, both teachers and students are unique. Any particular learning circumstance is influenced by a wide range of elements. The learner's adjustment to formal learning in the new environment will depend on a variety of factors, including the family's socioeconomic status, its educational history, its decision to remain in its current country of residence or move to another country, and the language skills of its members. The learner's unique character, prior formal educational experience, personal language skills, and degree of literacy or preliteracy will also be taken into consideration. However, whether the learner's plurilingualism will be encouraged or suppressed depends on the attitude, vision, and strategy of the teacher within the limitations of any national or regional language education policies. How can a teacher act as a language arbiter if he or she has insufficient expertise of language learning, plurilingualism, and multiliteracy? Plurilingual students will continue to struggle to make sense if teacher education providers disregard the crucial function of teacher language awareness in classrooms. The full linguistic, academic, and personal potential of learners will regrettably go unrealised without classroom-based activities that attempt to integrate home and school languages, cultures, and people.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has attempted to delve into the multifaceted realm of multilingual language development, focusing on the intricate processes of code-switching and language acquisition among young learners. The synthesis of existing literature has illuminated the challenges and dynamics inherent in the transition from monolingual to multilingual settings, particularly within the context of formal education. The experiment conducted in an English as a Third Language classroom may shed some light on the nuanced nature of code-switching between German and English, underscoring the importance of creating conducive environments for natural language alternation.

The experiment explored code-switching among students from monolingual Hungarian backgrounds in an English as a Third Language classroom. Reflecting patterns seen in multilingual settings, participants exhibited code-switching primarily at the phonetic or lexical level between their second language (German) and third language (English). Accidental code-switching diminished over time, suggesting a developing awareness of linguistic repertoire.

In light of these findings, the study advocates for a nuanced understanding of multilingual language development, acknowledging the diversity of experiences among learners. It calls for educators to be equipped with language awareness and training to create inclusive environments that foster positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity. Ultimately, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on language acquisition, multilingual education, and the intricate dance of code-switching in the dynamic landscape of language development.

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