

Towards multilingual pedagogies for social justice in the primary school: Insights from classrooms in England

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Multilingual pedagogies are a growing, yet often conceptually and politically contested area in mainstream educational settings. The article draws on data from a broader ethnographic study that focused on teacher agency in multilingual pedagogies in five superdiverse primary school classrooms in London and the East of England, where the children in each class spoke approximately ten languages besides English. The study used fieldnotes, teacher interviews, participatory activities with children and photographs of schoolscape to analyse dominant features of the classroom: a monolingual norm, educators' tendency to restrict children's multilingualism to EAL-learning aspects and an only symbolic acknowledgement of their linguistic repertoires. Here, I argue that three intertwined dimensions of social justice emerge from this status quo as requirements for and as elements of multilingual pedagogies in superdiverse mainstream schools: the participation and recognition of plurilingual speakers, a normalization of multilingualism in the institution school and a deconstruction of languages as national languages. It is suggested that these dimensions are relevant for critical reflections and developments at the classroom level. However, it is only possible to leverage their analytical as well as practical potential, if they are conceptualized within wider examinations of hierarchies, discourses and institutional practices within contemporary societies that are characterized by phenomena of transnational migration and racism. The article concludes by drawing on the frameworks of migration pedagogy and the raciolinguistic perspective for such contextualisation.

Keywords: multilingual pedagogies, superdiverse primary school, plurilingual speakers, social justice

1 Introduction

Where you know you have got seven, eight, nine different languages ... it is pretty inspiring
(Mike, class teacher Year 5)

I haven't really talked about [...] languages and things like that and, yeah, you never really get to talk [...] about languages [...] you don't really think about languages
(Brayden, pupil in Mike's class)

These passages are taken from ethnographic work in a London primary school whose website mentioned prominently that the children of its community speak approximately 40 languages apart from English. The linguistically superdiverse condition of the classroom and the apparent discrepancy between the two descriptions illustrate the ideological and pedagogical status quo, and they show how challenging it is for educational settings to react to the normalcy of multilingualism on the part of many pupils. In response to the increasing number of children and young people who grow up with more than one language in their daily life, *multilingual pedagogies* are used in this paper, in the context of English primary schools, as an umbrella term for approaches that *acknowledge, include and use* these students' languages (García & Flores, 2012, p. 242) or, in similar terms, *acknowledge, engage with and promote* their multilingual repertoires (Cummins, 2021, p. xxxvii). On the whole, multilingual pedagogies are simultaneously practices which are established in some settings of formal education, a rapidly developing pedagogical field and an area that is conceptually and politically contested, both internationally (e.g., Duarte & Gogolin, 2013a; Conteh & Meier, 2014; Probyn, 2019; Little & Kirwan, 2019; Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021; García et al., 2021; Cummins, 2021) and in the UK (e.g., Conteh et al., 2014; Cunningham, 2019; Gundarina & Simpson, 2021).

Within the paradigm of a pedagogy for societies significantly characterized by processes of transnational migration (*Migrationspädagogik*), İnci Dirim expands Fishman's (1965) famous question on multilingualism *Who speaks what language to whom and when?* She proposes as a conceptual compass to critically explore the (linguistic) power relations in society and educational settings, "Who can (not) speak and why in the migration society to whom, in which contexts, in which linguistic register or language, and which constructions of 'We'/'Not-We' result from those practices?" (Dirim, 2016, p. 321, transl. TQ). The article follows this overall line of inquiry and asks, who can (not) use their linguistic repertoire in school and which symbolic and factual exclusions as well as constructions of 'We'/'Not-We' result from such practices.

Drawing on an ethnographic study in three English primary schools, where multilingual pedagogies had not been introduced, this article addresses the questions: What aspects of social justice can be inferred from the classrooms' status quo and routines, and what implications can follow for the practices of multilingual pedagogies in such schools? The article focuses, firstly, on children attempting to negotiate the classroom's monolingual norm. Secondly, I explore three dimensions of social justice that emerge from the data of the status quo as conceptual requirements for multilingual pedagogies: the *participation* and *recognition* of students as plurilingual speakers, a *normalization* of multilingualism in schools and the *deconstruction* of national languages. Finally, these findings will be related to current perspectives on linguistic power relations in societies characterized by migration and racism.

2 Conceptual framework

The study is conceptually located in the 'new sociolinguistics of multilingualism' with its ethnographic approaches, its consideration of intensified developments of transnational migration and communication technologies, and with its attention to institutional and social processes that contribute to the construction

of social differences and inequalities (Martin-Jones & Martin, 2017, p. 1). In this context, institutions of formal education—and the primary school classroom as their base—are settings of social and cultural (re)production and discursive spaces where “groups with different interests struggle over access to symbolic and material resources and over ways of organizing this access that privilege some and marginalize others” (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001, pp. 5–6). For the question of who can or cannot use their linguistic repertoire in the primary school classrooms as encountered in this study, the concepts of language ideologies, linguistic repertoire and superdiversity are particularly relevant.

Three elements from the cluster concept of language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2010) are especially important for the context of schools. Firstly, language ideologies are defined as representing “the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group” (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 195). Secondly, they are multiple, because social divisions such as class, gender, generation and others within one sociocultural group can lead to diverse perspectives articulated as indices of group membership. “Language ideologies are thus grounded in social experience which is never uniformly distributed throughout polities of any scale” (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 197). Thirdly, the members of a society may show diverging degrees of awareness of such ideologies. They may vary between high levels with active contentions of ideologies and a “practical consciousness with relatively unchallenged, highly naturalized, and definitely dominant ideologies” (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 198), and the places, where the ideologies are generated as well as commented upon influence this variety further (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 198). This is relevant for explorations of classroom routines as it points to schools as sites where dominant language ideologies are constantly produced and students’ language use is commented upon, but where teachers and students might also be able to negotiate the meanings of certain language ideologies and linguistic repertoires.

To accommodate the current conditions of linguistic diversity, it has been suggested to expand Gumperz’s (1964) concept of the linguistic repertoire, which encompasses all the accepted ways of articulating messages. Including poststructuralist perspectives, Busch (2012, pp. 520–521) argues in the context of work on language biographies that a speaker’s linguistic choices are not only determined by their interaction in a certain situation and social and grammatical rules, but by historical and biographical dimensions too. The meanings which the speaker associates with languages and linguistic practices relate to their experiences and life trajectories, especially to how discursive constructions around national, ethnic, and social affiliation or non-affiliation influence their perception of their linguistic resources. Thus,

“[l]anguage ideologies or discourses on language and language use, on linguistic normativity, appropriateness, hierarchies, taboos, etc., translate into attitudes, into the ways in which we perceive ourselves and others as speakers, and into the ways in which these perceptions are enacted in language practices that confirm, subvert or transform categorisations, norms and rules” (Busch, 2017, p. 52).

For research on multilingualism in primary school classrooms, these theoretical frameworks prove productive because they allow us to see the school as a place of language experience, where the students’ linguistic repertoires come in contact with language ideologies and where educators and children negotiate the

meanings of those repertoires and ideologies. Thus, multilingual pedagogies can be seen as intervening in this field and as mediating between these aspects.

Superdiversity is a common feature in many schools in urban areas in Western Europe (Duarte & Gogolin, 2013b). The term as used in this study follows Vertovec's (2007) trifold concern to describe increasing demographic changes due to global migration movements, to overcome methodologically a narrow focus on 'ethnicity' and to provide an orientation for praxis and policy to adapt public services to changing social formations (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015). For many schools all three aspects are relevant, and features like the duration of residence, class, legal status, the education of parents, and others may impact on a child's learning. The lens of superdiversity can also draw attention to the existing complexity of linguistic repertoires due to migration trajectories of families or shifting language experiences of children from longer settled communities that include different generations (Martin-Jones et al., 2012, p. 7). Indeed, the notion of the 'superdiverse classroom' is used to emphasize the fact that in each of the five classrooms, pupils had between nine and ten languages apart from English in their repertoires. At the same time, it indicates that children may associate different meanings with speaking their respective languages. Thus, the constellation met in this research can be described as 'hyper-central English' (de Swaan, 2001) meeting superdiversity, and regarding the specific position of the ('superdiverse') English primary school, this is important for two reasons. It differs considerably from schools where all or the majority of students share, apart from the language of instruction, one other language, such as in bilingual settings. It also differs from schools where English is taught as Foreign Language or where, as in officially bilingual regions and countries, the learning of those official languages can serve as a catalyst, which helps to legitimize the children's use of their entire linguistic repertoire in school (e.g., Duarte & Günther-van der Meij, 2018; Little & Kirwan, 2019).

3 Context and methodology of the study

The data belong to an ethnographic study that was conducted in five classrooms of three inner-city primary schools in London and the East of England. The classroom vignettes presented here are from a Year 4 classroom of the same school that was mentioned in the introduction, and the school statistics had the following languages recorded as 'first languages': Akan/Twi-Fante, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese/Cantonese, English, Igbo, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian and Telegu – as named in those records. Approximately a third the pupils of the school was eligible for pupil premium, a supplementary funding scheme in the English education system to raise the attainment of disadvantaged children, which can roughly serve as a proxy for the socio-economic situation of the children's families. The overall study focused on teacher agency in multilingual pedagogies and was located within ethnographic research in educational settings (Gordon et al., 2001). This ethnographic work included participant observations (the researcher taking fieldnotes and sometimes supporting children's learning), semi-structured interviews with teachers, two participatory activities with small groups of children (a language portrait activity and another centred on children's ideas for multilingual activities). In addition, photographs were taken of the linguistic schoolscapes where multilingualism was thematized. The fieldnotes, interview

transcripts and the data sets from the activities with the children were analysed using the thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The multilingual signs and displays in the schoolsapes were categorized along three aspects: their purpose, their use of languages other than English, and their source (made by pupils or online publishers). Furthermore, I used the lens of stancetaking as developed within an interactional sociolinguistic perspective (Jaffe, 2007). Stancetaking is understood as the speaker's possibility – built into the act of communication – to take up a position with regards to the form or the content of their utterance by “simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others) and aligning with other subjects” (Du Bois, 2007, p. 163). Stancetaking plays a crucial role in the naturalization of social and linguistic ideologies and the structures, which they legitimate. By activating ideologies indirectly, stancetaking acts can have naturalizing, yet may also have denaturalizing effects as some acts can include a performative element (Jaffe, 2007, p. 22). Importantly, it is intertwined with processes of positioning, which relate to society's discourses that make certain positions available for the subject to take up (Davies & Harré, 1990). The stancetaking lens was applied for a closer analysis of a relatively small number of teaching/learning instances in which multilingualism featured or was thematized within or in relation to the official classroom. The vignettes presented below served as critical incidents within the otherwise large pattern of data showing the prevalence of monolingualism. Thus, they can shed light on how children position themselves and others and which positions are obtainable within the language ideologies of the classroom.

4 Findings

4.1 Negotiating the monolingual norm – Who can(not) use their linguistic repertoire?

“Miss said she needs to write in English”

Except in the Modern Foreign Language lessons, the fieldnotes from the five classrooms showed consistently monolingual practices in the official teaching/learning activities, that is, those activities initiated by the teacher. The absence of approaches of multilingual pedagogies as encountered in the classrooms needs to be seen against the background of an English primary school curriculum (Department of Education, 2013) that does not include any mention of students' multilingualism. In fact, the curriculum itself is embedded in an education policy in England, where surveillance and a culture of performativity (Ball, 2003) operate in a rigorous framework that moves both curricula and pedagogies (e.g., Cushing, 2021, p. 327). This wider context is important in order not to misconstrue monolingual practices in linguistically superdiverse classrooms as shortcomings of individual class teachers or schools. The dominance of monolingualism in the English primary school has been documented throughout the last two decades (Bourne, 2001a; Cunningham, 2019; Gundarina & Simpson, 2021). Kenner and Ruby (2012) as well as Welply (2017) portray the monolingual norm as working invisibly and as implicitly expected rather than explicitly formulated. Pearce (2012), however, reports about a school policy that explicitly prohibited the use of children's home languages, and Gundarina and Simpson

(2021), too, observed situations, where the researcher was explicitly asked by the school not to use a non-English language with the pupil in lessons, and where the same child was threatened with sanctions if she used her Romanian again. The monolingual norm in the classrooms of this study was not based on the claim that English is the only legitimate language but rather on the assumption that *English is the only official language for learning*. In the following two episodes this norm is implicitly thematized, and negotiations occur about the use of Romanian and Italian respectively for learning purposes. Vignette 1 is from a cross-curricular Topic lesson on 'The Romans'. The children were asked, in small groups, to choose from three different locations a place for building a Roman village and to write down their reasoning, for example, whether the place was near a river.

Vignette 1

139 [The three children Adriana, Bianca and Norman] work together on the task.

140 Adriana talks with Bianca in Romanian. After a while,

142 TQ: What are you talking about?

143 Bianca: She wants to know what to write.

144 I get a small white board, "Maybe you could write in Romanian?"

145 Bianca: She is not allowed.

146 TQ: What is she not allowed?

147 Bianca: Miss said, she needs to write in English.

148 Children continue to work together on the task. Bianca writes.

(fieldnotes Y 4, 24.1.2017)

As in other situations, Adriana uses Romanian with one of the other two children in her class who speak the language, in order to clarify the task (140). The monolingual norm that *English is the only official language for learning* appears to prevent Adriana from participating more actively, and it is this observation that triggers the researcher's question about the possible use of Romanian for writing, which was originally directed at Adriana (144). Yet the other pupil, Bianca, answers, and her response *She is not allowed* (145) and the assertion, *Miss said, she needs to write in English* (147) can be seen as declarations of the norm. The norm (or writing Romanian) can be seen as stance-object, and Bianca positions herself in relation to *English is the only official language for learning* as someone who cares for the fact that Adriana follows the rule or, at least, as someone who states the rule. Simultaneously, by reiterating the norm in this way – and as a child who also has Romanian in her linguistic repertoire – Bianca is inevitably positioning herself as someone who is *a bilingual child but a monolingual student*. Thus, the monolingual norm is reproduced with consequences that restrict both pupils. Adriana does not have the chance to participate more actively and independently in the learning task by, for example, drawing on translanguaging strategies (Celic & Seltzer, 2012), which would offer the opportunity to write first in Romanian and then in English. In fact, the classroom's dominant language ideology prevents her from taking advantage of the fortunate coincidence that one of her new classmates is a successful pupil and a bilingual speaker of English and Romanian. Bianca, on the other hand, is taught that Romanian cannot be a useful component of the official learning just at a time when – having been the only Romanian speaking pupil in her class before – she could have the opportunity to extend her knowledge of Romanian, for example, into the register of some academic language through interactions with two girls who have been schooled in Romanian before coming to England.

"I searched for it, so it came in Italian"

The second vignette is from the participatory activities with the children. When asked whether they had ever translated a text in school or at home, Khadija referred to a recent homework activity, on which she had worked over the half-term holidays. The children had been given the task, among various other options, to create a poster about 'the country you are from', and Khadija designed a map of Italy with some facts and personal information written around it.

Vignette 2

- 215 Khadija: Actually we had to write some facts. I wanted to write in Italian
but my mum said not--
- 216 I found-- I searched for it and something that I already know
about it, I searched some things
- 217 and I searched for it, so it came in Italian. But my mum said not
to write that. But I really
- 218 wanted to-- so I had to-- I know how to translate that into English
So I wrote that in English.

(activities Y 4, 15.3.2017)

The child describes her bilingual practices during the homework. Having researched some facts in Italian on the internet (216–217), the negotiation around her linguistic repertoire became necessary when she intended to write them on her poster (215, *I wanted to write in Italian but my mum said not--*; 217, *But my mum said not to write that*). Although Khadija negotiated with her mother at home, their interaction focuses the question, whether Italian can have the prestige and the official status of a language for learning in Khadija's classroom, with Khadija's mother articulating and imposing the monolingual norm of the classroom. However, the division between non-English languages and the 'official' English in the homework can only be reproduced, because the teacher had missed the opportunity, in the introduction of the task, to mention the possibility of including all the children's languages. Khadija's recount illustrates how the child uses the language that had been her language of schooling until approximately six months before. Although such use might have been further encouraged by the particular type of homework, she described other situations too, where she drew on her Italian for learning. In the episode, Khadija negotiates and claims her position as plurilingual learner, *I wanted to write in Italian* (215) and *But I really wanted to* (217–218). The *recognition* as plurilingual speaker and learner is foregrounded, while she suggests that the completion of the homework, that is, her *participation* in the overall learning task was not at stake, *I know how to translate that into English. So I wrote that in English* (218). In other words, what had been at stake and is conceded, is the subject position of *a plurilingual child who is a plurilingual student*. Unlike Adriana and Bianca, Khadija did not have the opportunity to speak Italian or Bengali with someone in her class, and therefore her presence as a plurilingual speaker depended more on some other forms of visibility. The nature of the homework could have provided affordances for this, but the paradoxical fact that the task allowed explicitly for pupils' personal motivation and some multimodality while excluding their multilingualism, might be best seen as an indication of how the monolingual norm has been naturalized. It should also be emphasized that Khadija does not mention Bengali in this episode, although she

used it, in all likelihood, when negotiating with her mother, since she had explained elsewhere, “I speak English in school (. . .) I speak Bengali always with my parents” (participatory activities, 15.3.2017, 34–35). The fact that Bengali is unmarked here points to the normalcy, with which the child experiences her plurilingualism, and of how enumerations like ‘first’, ‘second’ or ‘third language’ have ceased to be meaningful.

In the superdiverse classrooms of the study, the monolingual norm is established not simply by drawing a line between the use/non-use of other languages than English, but likewise by distinguishing between spoken language and written texts. This distinction is a central feature routinely thematized in lessons of literacy and language education, especially within curriculum and teaching approaches that are based on text genres and their modelling by teachers (e.g., Schleppegrell, 2004; Martin & Rose, 2008). Such approaches are the dominant method in Literacy lessons in the English primary school. The distinction between spoken and written language, however, runs the risk of serving as gateway for ideologies and policies that construct standardised and non-standardised English as dichotomy. It is argued in the US context that discourses around ‘appropriateness’ or ‘standard language’ are interwoven in society’s wider power relations and, thus, embedded in processes of racialization that perpetuate the image of a deficient, raciolinguistic Other (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Similarly, in England, the dominant and almost exclusive focus on ‘standard English’ after the education reforms implemented under the Conservative-led governments from 2010 onwards, results in schools “where these linguistic boundaries get drawn up, enacted and entrenched, often through the ‘correction’ of students’ non-standardised spoken grammar which can lead to language-based prejudice, often at intersection points with race and class” (Cushing, 2021, p. 324).

As the two vignettes show, the distinction between spoken and written language is also important for realising and policing the monolingual norm. It was generally accepted that children speak their non-English languages informally in the niches of the classroom – the two Romanian speaking girls, who had arrived six months before, used Romanian at the periphery of lessons or with Bianca in ‘safe houses’ (Canagarajah, 2004) like talking off-task or in the playground. Given, however, the lack of pedagogical concepts and resources to encourage such use for learning, there were no possibilities to expand those practices into the official classroom, neither for emergent bi- or plurilinguals like Adriana and Khadija nor for those children who did not depend on their plurilingual repertoire for learning like Bianca. Since the curriculum focuses often on literacy and on writing, the pupils’ possibilities to respond to the monolingual norm and to negotiate what meaning the elements of their linguistic repertoires have in school, is considerably limited. That is, if the primary school does not provide appropriate resources, such initiatives would require deliberate steps on the part of the pupils, for example, to use digital devices or to bring books to school. In classrooms under superdiverse conditions, the leeway for such negotiations can be further restricted by the fact that oral language practices depend on the presence of other speakers who share the same language, unless teachers design pedagogical settings that encourage other ways for such use. Whereas Khadija was, as mentioned before, the only Italian speaking child in her class, three other children with similar migration trajectories and Bengali-Italian repertoires in another classroom of the study described how they had used those languages, for example, while learning English.

These and other findings are further discussed now by drawing on three dimensions of social justice that emerge as intertwined requirements for multilingual pedagogies in these superdiverse classrooms.

4.2 *Three dimensions of social justice*

4.2.1 Dimension 1: Participation and recognition of plurilingual speakers

In the two vignettes, aspects of *participation* and of *recognition* feature and are intertwined in relation to the speaking subject, on the one hand, and to social justice, on the other. In vignette 1, Adriana's participation, in terms of content and of language learning, could be enhanced, if she had the opportunity to use Romanian for writing and not merely for talking with her peer. The situation is different for Bianca, whose successful participation in the learning task is not at stake. Yet, the position that the classroom's linguistic power relations offer her is the subject position of *a bilingual child who is a monolingual pupil*. To overcome this limitation and to increase opportunities for learning would require the recognition that Bianca, too, is a bilingual speaker. In vignette 2, Khadija explicitly thematized her desired recognition as a plurilingual speaker *and* student, although this recognition was not granted by the mother and, by extension, the teacher. To acknowledge the child's plurilingualism and to offer her the subject position of *a plurilingual child who is a plurilingual learner* would require an explicit response, reaching out to the child's experiences of plurilingualism and initiating classroom activities.

Through their language socialisation – of being socialized through and into language (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011) – and before entering formal education, a child develops and continuously extends their linguistic resources by participating in a growing number of social contexts, for example, family, neighbourhood, and nursery. In these contexts, children are recognized and respected as speakers and, by using their linguistic repertoire, they experience their agency, that is, their capacity to act upon those environments. These fundamental processes are vital for pedagogical considerations with regard to the nexus of monolingual classroom practices, multilingualism and linguistic power relations. García and Li (2014, p. 15) argue in the context of translanguaging theory that schools enforce an interpellation, by which pupils can recognize themselves only as subjects who speak two separate languages. Thus, bilingual pupils “become complicit in their own domination as they often conform to monolingual monoglossic practices that constrain their own bilingualism to two separate autonomous languages, although at times they may resist by engaging in fluid language practices” (García & Li, 2014, p. 15). However, for children in superdiverse primary schools, such separation of their linguistic repertoires into ‘autonomous’ languages might not be the main and foremost ideological work accomplished by the linguistic power relations of school. Contrary to bilingual programmes or complementary schools, where the non-English and the English language respectively are recognized as integral part of the children's formal education, the monolingual norm has more immediate and more comprehensive effects in superdiverse mainstream settings like Adriana's and Khadija's classroom. Moreover, the children's exclusion as plurilingual speakers has simultaneously factual and symbolic consequences – albeit in different ways for different pupils. On a factual level, it interrupts the hitherto unchallenged link between a child's language use and their capacity to act in and upon their (learning) environment, as sketched above. On the symbolical level, the exclusion

connects to and reproduces particular discourses of monolingualism, nation and immigration. Approving monolingualism as the ‘normal’, “implies that multilingual forms of practice, particularly those that are migration-induced, acquire the status of deviant or ‘illegitimate’ practices” (Duarte & Gogolin, 2013b, p. 6). That is, the distinction between speakers whose language practices are seen as legitimate in school and others whose practices are illegitimized, does not occur in isolation. In the study presented here, the children were not asked about experiences of direct language discrimination. Yet, Cushing and Carter (2022), working within the raciolinguistic paradigm, document how 11- to 13-year-old pupils describe their experiences of such discrimination in the primary school, and they show how it operates along the lines, where processes of racialization can ensue.

4.2.2 Dimension 2: Normalization of multilingualism in schools

The theme of social justice was an important component of how the teachers talked about their pupils and multilingualism. Although most educators described the precarious character of their own teacher education concerning multilingualism and the inadequacy of support for newly arrived pupils with no or little previous knowledge of English, none ascribed a deficit to these children or their families. In fact, all five teachers considered teaching plurilingual children as a regular and normal feature of their profession, and it could be argued that in this sense multilingualism has been normalized in the classrooms of this study. When asked how bilingual children would, in her opinion, experience school, a Year 3 teacher explained,

Vignette 3

845 I think here [in this school] it is more usual to be multilingual, everyone is
different, everyone
846 speaks another language [...]
847 [...] it's just part of who they are. And I don't think, there is--
848 it doesn't make you a second-class citizen in any way [...]
860 it's really cool and it's just being part of this school [...]
861 [...] But you know the whole
862 thing is, our academic language is English

(teacher interview Y 3, 7.12.2017)

The teacher describes the normalcy of multilingualism in her school, resulting from the fact that *everyone speaks another language* (845–846). She links this perspective explicitly to the themes of social justice and political participation (848, *it doesn't make you a second-class citizen in any way*). However, in relation to pupils' successful participation in education, the social justice perspective is articulated through an exclusively monolingual lens (861–862, *But you know the whole thing is, our academic language is English*), and the teacher appears to explain the restriction to a monolingual approach by the sole focus on the English academic language. Thus, the extract mirrors both the monolingual framework of the English National Curriculum and recently renewed concerns that some teachers' comprehension of the concept 'academic language' risks a simplification that interprets the differential between students' linguistic repertoires and the linguistic register 'academic language' in a purely dualistic way (Flores 2020; see for a discussion Cummins, 2021, ch. 8). Like the teacher's and the pupil's discrepant

descriptions quoted in the introduction, other interview passages also showed, how the acknowledgement of children's multilingualism does not develop into multilingual pedagogies. For example, the same teacher as in vignette 3 replied when asked whether she knew which languages apart from English her pupils speak,

Vignette 4

671 Yeah, yes, I mean we know when they came to school, and we treat-- then
 672 we teach them all as a EAL child. So the idea is that they need to learn a good
 673 model of English and still keep their heritage language going. Not saying, 'You
 674 mustn't speak that'. So I wouldn't say that it doesn't matter that-- what
 675 language they speak. But the approach will always be the same [...]
 676 [...] So like, I wouldn't do anything different for a child whose
 677 home language is French than for a child whose home language is Polish.
 (teacher interview Y 3, 7.12.2017)

The educator refers in (671) to the school's statistics that record the 'first languages' of pupils at their enrolment in school. The extract illustrates an omission found throughout the interview data: Within an 'EAL-discourse' – discourse understood as constructing its object in a particular way, thus limiting other ways in which it might be constructed (Hall, 1992, p. 291) – the children's multilingualism is restricted to English-as-additional-language learning aspects. In such a way, the EAL-discourse allows the teacher to position her pedagogical approach within a social justice perspective. Indeed, she emphasizes her rejection of an overtly discriminatory practice (673–674, *Not saying, 'You mustn't speak that'*), and is able to handle a certain tension emerging from the fact that the normalcy of children's multilingualism is acknowledged, while the monolingual norm of the classroom is simultaneously being confirmed. In vignettes 3 and 4, the normalcy of children's multilingualism and of their participation in monolingual learning are – at a first glance somewhat paradoxically – both advocated. In a sense, the normalization of multilingualism is divided or halved by allocating the 'normal' to the children, who are nevertheless asked to adapt themselves to the monolingual norm of an institutional setting, whose pedagogy and routines remain largely unchanged. However, within a social justice perspective which examines how schools reproduce language ideologies a normalization of multilingualism can occur only when the normalcy of multilingualism on the part of the children results in developments of pedagogical and institutional practices and is not accomplished by educators' simple acknowledgement that the pupils in their superdiverse classrooms speak more than one language. Therefore, the data from this study suggests that such developments need to include, how the 'EAL-discourse' itself – the fact that the children's plurilingualism is thematized merely in relation to aspects relevant to learning/teaching English-as-an-additional language – contributes to the monolingual status quo as it shields school and educators from institutional and pedagogical efforts to respond to students' plurilingual repertoires.

4.2.3 Dimension 3: Deconstruction of languages as national languages

Another dimension of social justice emerging from the ethnographic work in these classrooms is the requirement for multilingual pedagogies to deconstruct

languages as national languages. The next episode involves also Bianca and is taken from the fieldnotes of the first day of the participant observations in her class. Listening for the first time to the child speaking Romanian, I asked,

Vignette 5

- 180 TQ: Do you speak Romanian?
 181 Bianca: I speak Romanian. I speak it but I am born in England. I am from Oxfordshire,
 182 from a nice little village.

(fieldnotes Y 4, 10.1.2017)

As seen in the first vignette, the use of Romanian is largely unmarked for Bianca, when she uses it in informal talk in the classroom or on the playground. Yet, she is at the same time a nine-year-old who positions herself as a *bilingual speaker with ownership over what being bilingual means*. That is, the child switches languages within a bilingual normalcy while, for example, also expressing her experience of missing words in her Romanian vocabulary (fieldnotes, 10.1.2017, 173–177) or replying when asked (in the language portrait activity) whether she could answer the question about having/not having a favourite language, “I can answer it . . . my answer is English, I was born here, I lived here all my life, I just lived in a different country only for one or two years” (8.3.2017, 280–281). It is the importance of such ownership that Bianca appears to foreground in vignette 5, too. Instead of a possible answer ‘yes’ to the question about Romanian, her response is more complex. By adding *I speak it but I am born in England* (181), she communicates her familiarity with the supposition that a speaker of Romanian is not ‘born in England’ or ‘from Oxfordshire’. In doing so, the child appears to show an awareness that being such speaker in the UK is a highly contested subject position and that someone who takes the position up risks to be perceived and constructed as not or ‘not really’ belonging ‘here’. This is a versatile as well as integral trope of political and media discourses on ‘the nation’, echoing the role language has historically played in the building of European nation states in the 18th and 19th century (Hobsbawm, 1992). As such, it continues as one of “the most persistent myths to date”, suggesting “that a nation state is monolingual not by its creation, but ‘by mere nature’, and that individual monolingualism in the national language is the ‘natural’ result of being born and growing up” (Gogolin, 2021, p. 298). The anti-immigration discourse in England draws on such myths as exemplified by the far-right politician Farage, who lamented in the build-up to the Brexit referendum that “in many parts of England you don't hear English spoken any more”, combining the imagination of a monolingual community with the ‘We’/‘Not-We’ dichotomy that is a main feature of racist discourses: “This is not the kind of community *we* want to leave to *our* children and grandchildren. [. . .] [On a local train] it was not until we got past Grove Park that I could hear English being audibly spoken in the carriage. Does that make me feel slightly awkward? Yes it does” (Sparrow, 2014, emphasis added). Such discourses are part of the wider political context and anti-immigrant media narratives (Wright & Brookes, 2019), in which monolingual ideologies are embedded and flexibly updated.

While it is not possible to pinpoint exactly the motivation behind Bianca’s choice of words, the child’s reaction is instructive. It indicates how the theme ‘speaking a language’ and plurilinguals’ experiences of the ambiguous ways in

which ‘language’ can become part of nationality and ethnicity talk (Zhu & Li, 2016) constitute a challenge for educators. The thematization of languages and plurilingual experiences needs to be designed within pedagogical approaches that avoid any resemblance to the processes of othering that are typical of the dominant discourse on language and nation. ‘Othering’ is understood here as “[d]iscursive *Othering* [that] produces different subjects—Others—onto which ‘difference’ is ascribed as an attribute” (Thomas-Olalde & Vehlo, 2011, p. 37, emphasis in orig.), and provides an analytical lens “which takes into account the ambivalences of actions (also of actions intended to be counter-hegemonic) within dominant discourses” (Thomas-Olalde & Vehlo, 2011, p. 47). The necessity to avoid pre-established categories, such as ‘first’ or ‘second’ languages, and the factor that the same language might have various meanings for different children in the same (superdiverse) classroom—as in the examples of Adriana and Bianca presented here—require pedagogical approaches and settings that allow children and teachers to explore those meanings. Without such explorations as a constitutive component of multilingual pedagogies, there would be a substantial risk to reproduce the hegemonic ideology of ‘one nation–one language’ and of an othering of bilingual or plurilingual pupils.

In superdiverse classrooms, where the majority of students is plurilingual and where their language repertoires are ‘superdiverse’ (in terms of languages *and* the variety of meanings ‘speaking a language’ has for the children), it seems easier to thematize multilingualism or to develop multilingual activities without creating instances of othering, because children and teachers deem multilingualism a normality. However, the educators involved in the research considered the superdiverse condition—combined with strict curricular guidelines and a rigid time management—as a significant hindrance to include multilingual activities. Studies have regularly drawn attention to the superficial approach to pupils’ ‘home languages’ in the English primary school (Bourne, 2001b) and a divide between positive rhetoric and tokenistic practice (Welply, 2017; Cunningham, 2019). In this study too, a merely symbolic take on the children’s multilingualism has been identified. The schools displayed multilingual ‘Welcome’ signs and used ‘Language of the Month’ resources. Although the original project in a London school included an active engagement of children and parents in developing downloadable videoclips together with word cards, ideas for games and information texts about more than sixty languages (Debono, n.d.), the teachers in the study restricted, on the whole, the use of these resources to displays.

The term ‘multilingualism light’ has been suggested to emphasize that the monolingual norm and the merely symbolic acknowledgement of pupils’ multilingualism must be considered as a phenomenon, in which both practices are closely intertwined (Quehl, 2022). Ultimately, ‘monolingualism light’ results in a strengthening of the norm, as the practice of an only symbolic acknowledgement of multilingualism appears to shield the norm against potential perceptions on the part of the educators of pedagogical tensions caused by such norm. That is, it allows teachers to be under the impression that ‘something is done with the languages’. Yet, the ways in which this symbolic acknowledgement operates, its heavy reliance upon displays and the type of representation of multilingualism chosen for them (re)produce meanings that are far from neutral. The representation of languages through national flags reiterates the ideological link between language and monolingual nation state. Contrary to other displays, showcasing pupils’ work from lessons, displays which refer to multilingualism are—in

absence of multilingual activities in the official classroom – usually downloadable printouts from online publishers. For example, a mini poster next to Adriana’s and Bianca’s classroom showed avatar-like children marching with flags, and words for ‘Welcome’ were printed in many languages around them. In another school, the teachers were asked to put up printouts of speech bubbles that combined ‘Hello’ in various languages with national flags. Ideologically the message is simple in that it conveys that a language can be equated with a nation state. Pedagogically, it is highly contradictory as it claims to include plurilingual children without considering how they are symbolically excluded by the very same representation. Such representational practice associates plurilingualism with immigration, and in doing so, perpetuates the construct of a monolingual nation and the distinction between a monolingual ‘We’ and a plurilingual ‘Not-We’, on which discriminatory and racist discourses are based. Thus, the approach risks, on the one hand, to freeze pupils like Adriana and Khadija in the act of immigration and, on the other, to subject children like Bianca to an othering that disrupts their plurilingual normalcy by evoking concerns of (not) belonging – the constellation, for which Bianca appeared to brace herself with the statement *I speak it but I am born in England...* (181–182).

5 Beyond classroom and language – the three dimensions in context

The three dimensions of social justice within multilingual pedagogies – participation and recognition of plurilingual speakers, normalization of multilingualism in schools and the deconstruction of languages as national languages – emerged from the ethnographic work in five classrooms in English primary schools under ‘superdiverse’ conditions. Implicitly or explicitly, these dimensions underpin many of the initiatives, approaches and projects of multilingual pedagogies that have been developed in educational settings, for example, identity texts (Cummins & Early, 2011), pedagogy of multiliteracy (Hélot et al., 2014), translanguaging (García & Kleyn, 2016; Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021) or multilingual digital storytelling (Anderson & Macleroy, 2016). However, approaches of multilingual pedagogies had not been introduced in the classrooms encountered in this research. In the last section, I want to address how the three dimensions can provide some conceptual orientations for developments in primary school classrooms that are ‘superdiverse’ yet still officially monolingual. Overall, the monolingual status quo in schools is linked to wider contexts of linguistic power relations in societies which are characterized by phenomena of migration and racism. Therefore, I want to contextualize the three dimensions as they emerged from the classrooms by relating them to two lenses that theorize, among numerous others aspects, the links between language(s), migration and racism: the perspective *migration pedagogy*, which has been developed in the context of the German and Austrian educational systems (Mecheril, 2004; 2016a; 2018), and the *raciolinguistic perspective* that has been developed mainly in the US (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017), but evolves in countries such as Finland and England, too (Enns-Kananen et al., 2017; García et al., 2021; Cushing & Carter, 2022).

Migration pedagogy is an approach that acknowledges migration as a universal form of human activity (Mecheril, 2018, p. 121), but also uses the term ‘migration’ as a wide-ranging perspective, which includes phenomena relevant to societies characterized by migration, “e.g., the emergence of transnational spaces of in-

between and new and multiple affiliations, phenomena of attributing ‘foreignness’, structures and processes of everyday racism, the creation of new practices and new self-understandings” (Mecheril, 2016b, p. 13, transl. TQ). Thus, migration pedagogy responds with the term ‘migration society’ to the fact that *all* members of the respective society – that is in the educational context, all educators and students – are affected by such phenomena. One of the central interests of this pedagogical perspective is to ask, how educational institutions are involved in the reproduction of ‘natio-racial-culturally coded orders of belonging’. The variables ‘nation’, ‘race’ and ‘culture’ are in themselves vague, and hegemonic ideologies and discourses around those orders of belonging owe much of their political and social efficiency to such vagueness and the ways, in which they are used to reference each other (Mecheril, 2010; 2018). This constellation is particularly relevant for the exploration of linguistic power relations because ‘language’ and discourses about language use can operate in this nexus as an additional variable that is arbitrarily employed to reference the others. That is, the dispute about languages, which are considered as legitimate in the migration society, often thematizes issues related to the politics of belonging. “Who belongs to ‘us’? Yet even more so: Who are ‘we’? Are ‘we’ also those who speak primarily Russian? Are ‘we’ also those, who speak German-Turkish?” (Dirim & Mecheril, 2010, p. 105, transl. TQ). The three related concerns of migration pedagogy – with power relations that generate dominant and dichotomous distinctions, with orders of belonging that are generated through discourses and reproduced in institutional practices, and with the ways in which schools offer or impede certain subject positions – can help to contextualize the dimensions of social justice within multilingual pedagogies outlined before.

The three pupils Adriana, Khadija and Bianca all attended the same class, and approaches of multilingual pedagogies would need to respond conceptually to this ‘superdiverse’ classroom *in its entirety*. Thus, educators would need to design pedagogical tasks and affordances that facilitate the children’s participation in processes of learning *and* their recognition as plurilingual speakers differently for different children or groups of children. This does not, and realistically cannot, mean to completely personalize activities, but would imply to ask, as a reflective guiding question, which subject positions particular activities or projects offer to various children, and importantly, whether these are desirable from the point of view of the child. In other words, to be a *plurilingual child, who is a plurilingual student* does not necessarily mean the same for different children – not only because they have different languages in their linguistic repertoire but also due to the different meanings and experiences these pupils associate with the respective languages (meanings that might or might not be interwoven with natio-racial-culturally coded orders of belonging). For Khadija, it was meaningful to work on a homework task of creating a poster about ‘the country you are from’ and to use her Italian literacy skills within this activity. Yet, it would have been a practice of othering, if a teacher had suggested a link between Bianca’s Romanian language skills and a specific country. Bianca’s teacher did not suggest such a link, and the homework task had been set in such a way that the pupils had a choice between various tasks.

While the constellation in this class highlights the importance of taking the individual children’s linguistic repertoires as a point of departure for understanding how their repertoire comes in contact with the school’s language ideologies, the dominance of the monolingual norm and the comparatively limited leeway

children had to negotiate the norm point to the overall power relations that frame the English primary school in this regard. It can be argued, therefore, that the constellation observed in the classroom also illustrates that the three dimensions participation and recognition of plurilingual speakers, normalization of multilingualism in schools and the deconstruction of languages as national languages must be thematized and pedagogically addressed as an interrelated whole.

The raciolinguistic perspective theorizes the various ways, in which ‘language’ and ‘race’ became historically co-naturalized, focusing “the interplay of language and race within the historical production of nation-state/colonial governmentality, and the ways that colonial distinctions within and between nation-state borders continue to shape contemporary linguistic and racial formations” (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 623). Thus, one of the interests within the raciolinguistic perspective is to trace, how the legacy of colonialism continues to operate in the ways, in which the language of students, who become the raciolinguistic Other, is thematized as deficient. Building on the critique of the white gaze, the scholars introduce the ideological position of the ‘white speaking and listening subject’ to emphasize how racial hierarchies are at the core of the marginalization of these students. “[A]nti-racist social transformation cannot be based solely on supporting language-minoritized students in engaging in the linguistic practices of the white speaking subject but must also work actively to dismantle the hierarchies that produce the white listening subject” (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 167). This critique of the ways, in which racism, intersecting with class-based inequalities, is inscribed in linguistic power relations is highly relevant for debates about the multilingual classroom for two reasons. Firstly, it draws attention to how issues of ‘normality’ and the resulting hierarchisation of linguistic practices are constructed by, as quoted before, “language ideologies [that] represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group” (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 195). Secondly, such hierarchies do not only shape the micro level of classroom practices but are built into the organisational forms and routines of the institution school. One of the corresponding concerns of migration pedagogy and the raciolinguistic perspective can be seen in the school’s powerful labelling processes and resulting processes of subjection on the part of racialized and minoritized students. Examples for this are, in the US context, the category of ‘long term English learners’ (Flores & Rosa, 2015) and pull-out classes in the elementary school or separate academic tracks in the middle and high school (Flores, 2020). In the German and Austrian contexts, such processes have been problematized regarding the label ‘German-as-second-language-students’ and separate classes for students who have newly arrived as refugees. In the context of schools in England, such processes are implanted in the way ‘standard English’ dominates the curriculum (Cushing, 2021).

Another correspondence between the raciolinguistic perspective and migration pedagogy can be seen in the notion of neo-linguicism. While research on the heritage of colonial governmentality is key to the raciolinguistic inquiry, the notion of neo-linguicism has been suggested within migration pedagogy as a lens for analysing, for example, instances in political and media discourses or in educational settings where linguistic practices of minoritized and othered speakers are discriminated against or devalued (Dirim, 2010; Quehl, 2018). “Neo-linguicism is directed then against people, who do not speak the national language of a state in a monolingual form or as ‘native speaker’” (Dirim, 2010, p. 97, transl. TQ).

It is against this wider background that it is crucial for further developments that set out to intervene in the status quo of classrooms as encountered in this study to consider the three dimensions of social justice within multilingual pedagogies as intertwined. I would suggest that it is helpful for educators, who wish to reflect on their current practices or to plan further developments of multilingual pedagogies in their classrooms to consider each dimension separately *and* as part of a coherent conceptual perspective for such pedagogies. However, a sustainable normalization of multilingualism in the institution school is not realized in one classroom or one school alone – as important as they are. To consider the three dimensions as intertwined points unequivocally then to the institutional level, where teacher education, curriculum development, resources for research and others, and, crucially, the education policy are developed that shape the institutional parts. The exploration of the close link between the three dimensions on the primary school level underscores that the mainstream primary school, attended by (almost) all children, can have an important impact on processes of societal normalization. It can either reproduce or disrupt dominant monolingualising ideologies along with their various references to discourses of anti-immigration, racism, and nationalism that are evoked or potentially made around thematizations of monolingualism, ‘speaking a language in a particular way’ or ‘other languages’. Last not least, on the pedagogical level of the classroom, the study’s findings emphasize that the primary school classroom is the place, where children find out which of their experiences count or do not count as knowledge. For the children it is, therefore, important to have opportunities for exploring their plurilingual repertoires, for leveraging them for learning, and thus for negotiating what their linguistic repertoires can mean in school. For their teachers it is vital to have the institutional support to provide such opportunities. From the educators’ perspective the institutional normalization of multilingualism would need to include time to listen to their students, to reflect on the status quo and to leverage all their professional experiences and pedagogical creativity for further developments.

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