Multilingual pedagogies — towards more equitable education?

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Abstract

I scrutinise six multilingual pedagogical approaches (MPA), such as translanguaging pedagogy, language awareness and linguistically responsive teaching, which promise to make education more equitable by encouraging students to employ all their linguistic resources. Equitable education enables the same opportunities and access for everyone and it is reached through practices guided by the principles of social justice, but whether and how these aims are concretely achieved varies from MPA to another. In the analysis, I examine their strengths and weaknesses and ask whether multilingual pedagogy can make education more equitable. For the MPAs, representation of languages, acknowledging students' language skills and scaffolding access to the academic register are the main instruments in advocating for a socially just school. Some of them acknowledge aspects of cultural or racial inequity, but in general they focus mainly on language(s). Power, empowerment, and criticality are frequently mentioned, but comprehensive discussion on how to address them in school is not provided. Therefore, there is a danger that the multilingual pedagogies will be implemented as supporting celebratory multilingualism. Thus, I argue that the multilingual pedagogical approaches cannot effectively promote equitable practices unless the question of equity is centred and other categories for inequity are recognised.

Keywords: multilingualism, pedagogy, equity, education

1 Introduction

During the last decades, multilingualism has received a great deal of attention from applied linguists, educational scientists, and educational policymakers (Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021), and already a decade ago May (2014) reported so-called multilingual turn. However, using multiple languages in school is not new. Using other languages than the language of schooling has been a way for the pupils to contest and struggle against the institutional ideologies (e.g., Bui, 2018) and for teachers to adapt the teaching according to the needs of pupils (e.g., Kiramba, 2019). Both "bilingual" and "multilingual" have been used by esteemed scholars (e.g. Jim Cummins, Ofelia García) to describe education in which more than one language is used. *Bilingual education* is used especially in situations in which there are two majority languages, such as Spanish and English in the United States. In this article, I use the term *multilingual* to also include contexts where there are not clear majority languages.

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In this article, I ask:
1) What kind of tools and concepts do the pedagogical approaches offer for promoting equity and social justice in education?
2) What are the affordances and limitations of multilingual pedagogical approaches in making education more socially just and/or equitable?

I offer a critical reading of six different multilingual pedagogical approaches (MPA) focusing specifically on the ways they suggest promoting social justice and creating more equitable practices. According to Rodriguez and Morrison (2019), equitable education enables the same opportunities and access for everyone and it is reached through practices guided by the principles of social justice. Striving for social justice and equity means critically reflecting on why the school is the way it is and what discourses are possibly harmful for disadvantaged students as well as attempts to challenge the existing norms, practices and beliefs that dominate the school system (Rocha Pessoa & Urzêda Freitas, 2012).

First, I offer an overview of the way this study was conducted. Next, I examine the MPAs one by one. I shortly introduce their origin and the main aim, as well as the concepts and tools that the authors of each framework suggest for implementing. I focus especially on how equity and social justice are portraited in each approach. In the third section, I highlight three central themes that arise from the MPAs. These are (i) access to language of schooling, (ii) representation of languages, and (iii) criticality. Furthermore, I address the critique of those discourses not driven by equity which often accompany multilingualism. The article ends with a discussion on whether the MPAs can make education more equitable.

1.1 Method

The starting point for the analysis was to better define "critical language awareness": where it originated from and how it connected to other pedagogical or methodological approaches, such as translanguaging, plurilingual education and critical discourse studies. I began by browsing the "Language Awareness" journal and by conducting a keyword search in Google Scholar to identify key authors that were cited regarding multilingualism-oriented pedagogy. The four key authors, whose names frequently appeared, were Christine Helót, Ofelia García and Ana Maria Villegas & Tamara Lucas. Also, the materials produced by European Centre for Modern Languages (further, ECML) appeared in the search.

I began to trace language awareness, translanguaging and linguistically reposnive teaching individually. I searched for materials in Ebook Central, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ProQuest, Elsevier and Wiley Online Library. I used academic journals and books as the main data but also consulted pedagogical guidebooks and materials of the Council of Europe (CoE). The materials are dated between 2004 and 2021 and they are all in English.

During this process, I identified six pedagogical approaches that fit the following criteria: they promote the use of multiple languages, and they are widely recognised in the field of applied (educational) linguistics or part of an educational policy of the CoE. I did not include approaches that focused only on one feature, such as metalinguistic knowledge (Hofer & Jessner, 2019) or if the approach focused solely on two languages, such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (Nikula & Moore, 2019). The boundaries of the MPAs are not clear-cut: dynamic nature and ongoing development of the field has caused variance in the names of some MPAs in earlier literature. The authors also cross-reference each other.

For each MPA, I have used the name given by the original authors, except for multilingual language awareness, to which I have added "multilingual" to separate it from other language awareness approaches. The MPAs are (i) awakening to languages (AtL), (ii) multilingual language awareness (MLA) and (iii) critical multilingual language

awareness (CMLA), (iv) translanguaging pedagogy (TLP), (v) linguistically responsive teaching (LRT), (vi) linguistically sensitive teaching (LST). Throughout reviewing the literature, I built Figure 1, which displays the authors, origins, and related frameworks of the MPAs and their internal relationships. As Figure 1 indicates, the origins of the MPAs (names in bold) are in either anglophone or European contexts, excluding most parts of the world.
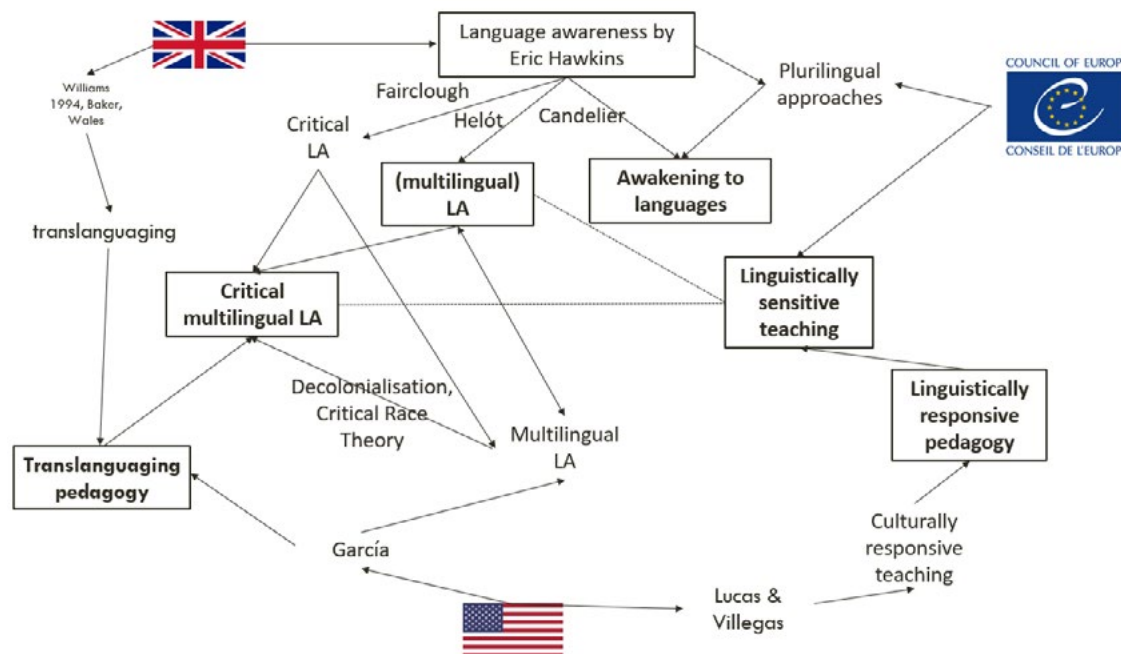
Figure 1: The Family Tree of the Multilingual Pedagogical Approaches

Furthermore, I read broadly about related pedagogical approaches and their critiques, such as intercultural education and critical pedagogy. I noticed the MPAs I had chosen argued they aimed for social justice. Simultaneously this was under regular critique in related literature. I chose to analyse this in detail. I identified two to four key texts on each MPA. Next, I used methods drawn from (critical) discourse studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2013) to analyse the chosen texts. Language practices both reflect and construct social reality, and thus I focused on how the (social) aim of each MPA was framed in the texts. The questions that guided my analysis were: 1) What is the aim of each MPA? Is it social justice? 2) If it is social justice, how is it worded in the texts? 3) What other tools besides use of multiple languages are suggested? 4) How is intersectionality present in the texts? 5) Has the MPA been empirically tested/used? If yes, what were the results? I followed (Rocha Pessoa & Urzêda Freitas (2012) definition of social justice. The three current wider themes emerged by grouping the text-level findings of each MPA and comparing them with the earlier critique and/or endorsement of diversity-related pedagogies.

2   Multilingual pedagogy: six approaches

2.1 Language awareness movement

I start the analysis with a wide branch of MPAs, the language awareness movement. Language awareness (or awareness of language) (LA) is a concept originally made known by Eric Hawkins (Svalberg, 2016). Hawkins was concerned about the decreasing levels of language learning and weak literacy skills among the British youth. Hawkins

was not happy with the way languages (including mother tongue teaching) were taught separately without any links to each other. He suggested a bridging subject, language awareness, to be taught alongside language subjects. The focus of language awareness was on comparing different languages and drawing on already existing skills in other languages when learning a new one. The aim was to help especially students coming from homes with low socioeconomic status and students with home language other than English (E. Hawkins, 1984). LA has been interpreted in many ways and this has resulted in diverse research topics ranging from phonetic awareness to critical multilingual language awareness (Svalberg, 2016). LA is also visible in the European Union (Council recommendation on a comprehensive…, 2019) and the Council of Europe's language policies (*Council of Europe Language Policy Portal*, n.d.) and it is also closely linked to translanguaging pedagogy.

2.1.1 Awakening to languages

Awakening to languages (AtL) is one of the three pedagogical[1] approaches of the plurilingual educational policy of ECML developed as part of the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA) (Candelier et al., 2010; ECML, 2021). Thus, awakening to languages is closely connected to the agenda and policies of the European community.

AtL has three focus points: contributing to students' ability to adopt an attitude and beliefs favourable to linguistic (and cultural) diversity, encouraging students to choose more languages to learn and (sociolinguistic) knowledge of languages (Andrade et al., 2004; Candelier, 2017). While other pedagogical approaches of plurilingual education focus on developing intercomprehension of languages taught in school and integrating language and subject learning (ECML, 2021), AtL explicitly focuses on languages other than those taught in school (Andrade et al., 2004) and therefore does not take a stand on learning the language of schooling.

AtL aims at more harmonious co-living of different linguistic and cultural groups (Andrade et al., 2004). Its main tool to achieve this aim is enabling positive representation and encouraging positive attitudes towards different languages and those who speak them by making the usually discredited languages into legitimate teaching objects (Andrade et al., 2004). In other words, unlike most of the approaches presented in this article, AtL sees languages as objects of teaching, not as tools for teaching. Limiting the approach to study of languages instead of actively using them for different purposes in school poses a risk of their role and thus the attitudes towards them staying superficial rather than making their existence and use the norm.

In terms of criticality, AtL remains moderate. Its goal is "to allow diversity" (Andrade et al., 2004) and create an environment in which diversity of languages is something normal. It is appropriate to ask who has a position to allow diversity, whom it affects and what exactly is meant by this. Using the word "allow" implies that there is hierarchy of people in school – those who "cause" diversity and those who can, if they wish, allow it. However, diversity is present in the classroom whether it is allowed or not; the question is more whether the gatekeepers (teacher, the school board/administration) decide to embrace or suppress it. The hierarchy of languages in society and the injustice caused by it are not addressed either in this approach.

2.1.2 Multilingual Language Awareness

Plenty of academic work has been devoted to multilingualism-focused language awareness (MLA) in schooling in different contexts (e.g., Alisaari et al., 2019; Gorp &

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1. In ECML materials, "didactic" is used instead of "pedagogical". In this article, I have used "pedagogical" for coherence of the text.

Verheyen, 2018; Honko & Mustonen, 2020; Muñoz, 2014; Suuriniemi, 2019). The MLA work emphasises bringing awareness and activities as part of all classes and subjects. Here, I focus on the work done by Christine Helót and her colleague Andrea Young who have worked mainly in a European context.

There are two main aspects in MLA: helping the students to build academic knowledge on their existing knowledges and raising critical awareness of the power imbalances and discrimination between different groups (Helót, 2018). According to Hélot et al. (2018), the focus of the MLA activities should not be on competence in languages, but on the attitudes. The key message of MLA is to acknowledge pupils' lived experience and possessed skills. This is done by first validating the students' resources, such as language skills and other knowledge, and then scaffolding the classroom practices in a way that the knowledge becomes meaningful in school (Young & Helót, 2003; Helót, 2018). Pupils' resources acquired outside of school are appreciated as such, but they are also considered assets for acquiring the language of schooling and other academic skills.

According to (Hélot, 2018)), MLA can help the teachers to use activities to address the unequal roles of languages in the classroom and how the roles affect the students' opportunities to be heard. This seems to refer to the hierarchy of languages while also addressing it, but how this is done in practice is not described in detail.

2.1.3 Critical Multilingual Language Awareness

Critical multilingual language awareness (CMLA) is an approach introduced by Ofelia García (2017). I have included it to represent the critical direction of the language awareness movement, even though there are few case studies that have used it (Deroo & Ponzio, 2021; Manan et al., 2019; Manan & David, 2021). Usually "critical" is understood as (research-based) interest to study and affect the existing power structures in a way that would benefit those who are discriminated against or otherwise in an underprivileged position (Fairclough, 1992; Pennycook, 2021; Piller, 2016). In Table 1, I have illustrated the development of the critical features in three LA frameworks.

Table 1   *Development of "Critical" in Language Awareness*
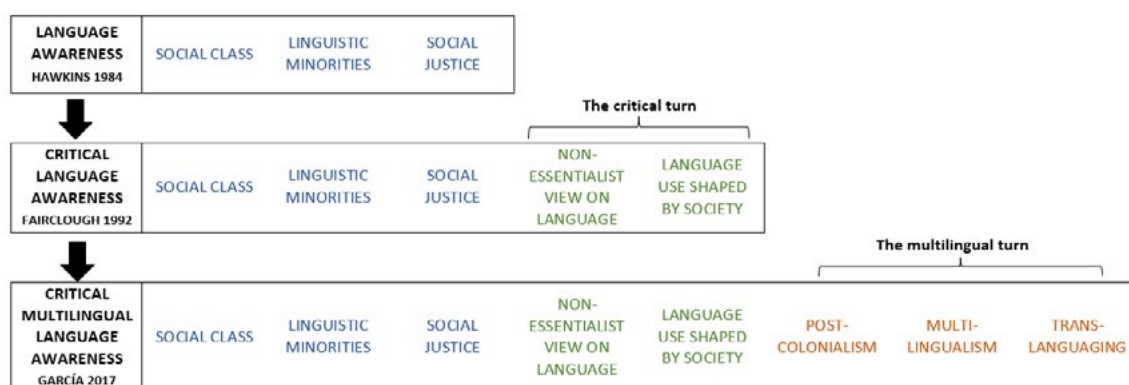
Hawkins' LA was already critical in a sense that it was sparked with the need to equip students from lower social classes or immigrant background homes with better literacy skills as well as support language learning and social cohesion in general (E. Hawkins, 1984). Already in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a group of scholars started to call for a more critical LA approach (Clark et al., 1990). Critical LA, conceptualised especially by Norman Fairclough (Fairclough, 1992), explicitly addressed how the power structures of society were reflected in our language use. The scholars took a non-essentialist approach to language, bringing more of a social constructionist view to LA research. However,

later research in critical LA has focused more on critical literacy studies (e.g., Britton & Lorimer Leonard, 2020) without much attention to multilingualism (however, see e.g., Quan, 2020).

In the 2000s, Christine Helót and others, including García (Garcia, 2008), had started to advocate for LA that would explicitly focus on the multilingualism in the classroom and enabling using other languages than the language of schooling in education, connected also to multilingual turn in applied linguistics (May, 2014). Critical multilingual language awareness combines the two strands, critical LA and MLA, and adds the post-colonial and translanguaging perspectives.

CMLA is directed towards teachers of all classrooms and its aim is to empower teachers to become social activists which, according to García, will lead to equitable education for all learners (García, 2017). As the focus of CMLA is teacher training, it does not describe practices to be implemented in classrooms. The classroom practices are drawn from translanguaging pedagogy, but CMLA adds a layer of critical awareness. In addition, it focuses on teachers' skills to recognise students' different backgrounds, acknowledge their existing knowledges, and adapt teaching to their needs.

The approach introduces a set of core skills that teachers need. Those include proficiency of the language of schooling (both languages in bilingual education), subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical practice, awareness of plurilingualism and merits for democratic citizenship, awareness of histories of colonial and imperialistic oppression, and awareness that language is socially created and thus socially changeable (García, 2017)

Based on methods and/or principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), García (2017) suggests that all pre-service teacher training should have activities that involve observing (multilingual) environments – including language use, linguistic landscapes and teaching methods –and critically scrutinise them. Then, the pre-service teachers should get involved in curriculum building and making multilingual and cultural texts in which they apply the knowledge gathered from the observations. Finally, the teachers should have the opportunity to practice applying the knowledge they gain by, for instance, conducting a project that has an effect outside the classroom (García, 2017).

The social justice agenda of CMLA focuses on preparing teachers to actively include aspects of critical and student-centred pedagogy in their work. CMLA emphasises the (historical) knowledge needed to critically inspect society but also highlights the concrete actions that are needed from the teachers to promote social justice in education. Like translanguaging pedagogy, CMLA is based on a social constructionist understanding of language and it recognises the named languages as social constructions rather than "real" linguistic entities.

2.2 Translanguaging pedagogy

The term translanguaging has become popular after Ofelia García (2009) and Li Wei (2011) and later on Garcia and Wei together (2014; see also Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2011) started to develop it into a wider theory of multilingualism and multilingual education. To understand translanguaging pedagogy (TLP) it is necessary to understand translanguaging theory. Earlier, the theories of language (Cummins, 1981 as one of the most influential ones) had suggested that bi- or multilinguals processed their two (or more) languages in the same location in the brain, and therefore the knowledge and skills that were developed in one language could be transferred to the other language as well. However, the translanguaging theory suggests that in the mind there are no separate languages: there are linguistic resources that a person draws on differently according to the context (García et al., 2017; García & Wei, 2014; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Thus, separate, named languages are social constructs, that is, they are not real in a cognitive sense, only in a social one (Otheguy et al., 2015).

The aim of TLP is to provide tools to teachers that can enable meaningful participation of multilingual students, enhance their learning as well as support them to live peacefully and to cooperate with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (García, 2009; García et al., 2017; García & Kleyn, 2016). According to García, the key to reaching these goals is to actively include the students' other languages in all schoolwork. That way the language ecology of the classroom will better reflect the language ecology of the students' home environment and society. The connection between translanguaging pedagogy and socioemotional wellbeing lies in the sociocultural understanding of identity: by actively inviting the students to use their languages in schools, opportunities for being valued members of the community are given to the students, who can then also develop academic identities while having a secure identity and performances which will lead to socioemotional wellbeing (García et al., 2017).

The teachers need to know about the language learning process, bilingualism and social functioning of language, as well as have adequate tools to pedagogically encourage the students to use all of their linguistic resources. The language of schooling is accessed through the other linguistic resources the pupils may have, but the skills in other languages are valued as well. However, many of the TLP examples of practice are from bilingual education in which learning the academic genres of two languages is the official goal, and the difficulties related to, for instance, assessment have been recognised (García et al., 2017).

The social justice aspect of translanguaging pedagogy borrows from critical pedagogy using "critical consciousness" (Freire, 1970) as one of its core components. According to García et al. (García et al., 2017), giving space for more flexible language use can provide room for a critical discussion of the power relations in society, which can lead to empowerment. The lesson descriptions emphasise building content learning on the students' experiences and asking them to critically question why, for example, course books have certain kinds of content (but lack others) while providing enough linguistic support. The pedagogical tools provided by García et al. (2017) resemble, for example, culturally sustainable pedagogy (Alim et al., 2020).

2.3 Linguistically responsive teaching

Focusing on teacher education and writing from the US context, Tamara Lucas and Ana María Villegas have been advocates of Linguistically Responsive Teaching (LRT) (Lucas & Katz, 1994; Lucas & Schecter, 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The need for developing the framework is grounded in the increasing number of English Language Learners (ELL) in US schools and on the unpreparedness of most mainstream teachers (Lucas et al., 2008).

LRT is a practice-oriented framework aimed at enhancing students' learning and enabling them to start learning the subject content despite not yet being fully proficient in English. The framework has two focuses: "orientations" and "knowledge and skills" (Lucas & Villegas, 2011, 2013). These are divided into seven parts. The orientations of linguistically responsive teachers describe three perspectives that are seen as crucial to successfully teaching multilingual students: these perspectives focus on the attitudes towards and perceptions of multilinguals and multilingualism. *Sociolinguistic consciousness* emphasises understanding the complex relationship of language, culture, and identity as well as the idea that languages are not a neutral aspect of schooling but tied to the socio-political environment. The other two aspects, *value for linguistic diversity* and *inclination to advocate for ELL students*, require teachers to recognise all language skills of students. In addition, they call for active work towards linguistically more equitable education (Lucas & Villegas, 2011, 2013).

LRT emphasises how to amplify learning English, the language of (most) schooling in the US. Firstly, the teachers need to learn about their students: about their language use

and educational background. Second, they need to be aware of the linguistic demands of classroom tasks and, third, of the principles of second language learning. That way they can apply the fourth aspect, scaffolding instruction to enhance learning (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). The section for knowledge and skills is mainly based on the second language acquisition theory by Stephen Krashen (Krashen, 1981) and Jim Cummins (Jim Cummins, 2000) and sociocultural understanding of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Lucas and Villegas (2011) provide a few examples of instructional methods, such as supplementing and modifying both text and speech. LRT emphasises that supporting multilingual students is a task for all teachers, not just language teachers (Lucas et al., 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2011, 2013).

Where LRT gets most critical is in the description of sociolinguistic consciousness. First, it calls for critical reflection in the relationship between language hierarchy and hierarchy of social groups in the society. Second, the teachers need to be aware of the emotional attachment that people have for their (first) languages and how ignoring or devaluing them can affect the student's self-esteem and thus motivation and commitment to schoolwork (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Therefore, Lucas and Villegas recommend paying more attention to students' linguistic backgrounds in instruction to support ELLs become confidently bilingual.

2.4 Linguistically sensitive teaching

Linguistically sensitive teaching (LST) is the newest of the approaches presented in this article. LST follows the same principles as LRT and CMLA, connecting it explicitly to the other approaches in the field of multilingual pedagogies (Aguirre, Worp, et al., 2021; Bergroth, Llompart-Esbert, et al., 2021). The authors do not make a clear distinction how it is different from its predecessors, rather it combines their features. LST has been developed in the EU-funded project LISTIAC (Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms, 2019–2022). The project was led by Siv Björklund from Åbo Akademi University in Finland. Bergroth et al. (Bergroth, Llompart, et al., 2021) describe LST as an umbrella term for initiatives supported by European policies and guidelines, which include, for example, awakening to languages and language awareness. Because LST as a framework has been established only in recent years, there is only a limited number of publications available, all of them written by the LISTIAC project.

The goal of linguistically sensitive teaching is to find "adequate, sensitive and inclusive" answers to the challenges of multilingual schools (Aguirre, van der Worp, et al., 2021) and to create socially just learning environments for all pupils (Bergroth, Llompart-Esbert, et al., 2021). The framework itself is directed at equipping teachers with adequate skills and knowledge to support multilingual students. According to Aguirre et al. (2021), the framework addresses four different aspects: (i) multilingual environment of the school, (ii) the wellbeing of students with regard to the possibilities to use their full linguistic repertoire, (iii) the adequate use of languages in instruction, and (iv) flexible use of all languages. In other words, LST aims at school success, well-being, and social cohesion.

The advocates of linguistically sensitive pedagogy have developed a model that can be used in teacher training to familiarise (pre-service) teachers with the principles of LST. Even though there were many existing models that have been used in teacher training for similar purposes, they were found to be too complex and/or context-specific for the purpose, as the model needed to be easily translated to different languages and contexts. The development work was conducted collaboratively with teacher trainers and pre-service teachers. In Spain, the pre-service teachers tested a SWOT analysis approach for reflecting on LST in their own teacher experiences (Bergroth, Llompart-Esbert, et al., 2021).

"Sensitive" in linguistically sensitive teaching is described as acknowledging and understanding the role of all languages of the local and national community for learning and identity (Bergroth, Llompart, et al., 2021). It emphasises recognising the language ecology of the school context and calls for mobilising the students' various resources. It is not clear if LST calls for using the pupils' languages in everyday schoolwork or simply presenting them in some way in the school. Furthermore, it does not explicitly address the different power positions of different language varieties, the social positioning caused by using the varieties nor the (historical or political) reasons for the language hierarchy.

3   Multilingual pedagogies for equity?

In the previous section I introduced the multilingual pedagogical approaches. In the table below, I have summarised the key aspects of each framework. Even though the approaches come from different contexts and emphasise slightly different aspects of the multilingual school environment, there are three themes that many of the approaches share and that are central for their equity and social justice agenda. Furthermore, the use of the names of the approaches is not completely established and thus there is imprecision in the scholarly literature.

Table 2   *A Summary of the Features of the Pedagogical Approaches*

	TLP	LRT	LST	AtL	MLA	CMLA
Context	USA	USA	Europe (the EU)	Europe	Europe	USA
Theory behind the model	Translanguaging theory	ESL, sociocultural theory	Draws from LRT and CMLA	Draws from Awareness of language by Eric Hawkins	Draws from Awareness of language by Eric Hawkins	Language awareness, translanguaging theory, postcolonialism
Aim	Tools for: enabling meaningful participation, enhancing learning, supporting peaceful living + cooperation	Enhancing learning: give teachers tools to help ELLs to learn content before their English is perfect	Socially just learning environments for all pupils, tools for teachers	Change attitudes towards languages, get students to study more languages, harmonious co-living	Building academic knowledge on their existing knowledge	Empower teachers to become social activists
Tools	Active use of students' other languages and knowledge	Inclusive classroom environment, scaffolding, knowledge of bilingualism	Use of pupils' and staff's languages + the society, reflection tasks	Workshops on languages other than those taught in school	Validating students' existing knowledge, scaffolding	Reflection, scaffolding, knowledge of bilingualism
Social justice/equity	Representation of languages, language of schooling, critical discussion + empowerment	Critical reflection language hierarchy, linguistic identity (representation), language of schooling	Representation, understanding linguistically diverse society	Representation, but not necessarily in everyday school life	Critical reflection, representation, scaffolding for language of schooling	Critical discussion, empowerment, activism

These themes are access to the language of schooling, representation of the students' languages in school, and the criticality and empowerment of the students. First, I discuss each theme one by one. Lastly, I look at the effect of other categories that intersect multilingualism in education.

3.1 Access to language of schooling or academic register

A common argument for promoting multilingual practices in school comes from the so-called additive model of language education. The additive model is based on the (research-based) argument that using one's L1 can foster learning the language of schooling or the so-called academic register, that is, academic language (e.g. Bhooth et al., 2014). Academic language has been seen as a more complex and abstract variety in comparison with everyday registers of language (Cummins, 2021). However, this standpoint has been questioned, and the role of, for example, the colonial discourse in establishing its status has been recognised (Jensen & Thompson, 2020; Ramanathan, 2013).

Contrastingly, the multilingual theories have been criticised for preventing access to academic language and thus preventing access to academic success (Blommaert, 2010). Mastering the language of schooling is still considered a key element to academic success, as being able to produce it in (especially) written form is considered essential for further education and middle-class jobs. Nevertheless, the question of whether learning the academic register really supports equity or social justice has been recently asked by several scholars (Jensen & Thompson, 2020). Using the other languages of pupils to learn the language of schooling maintains the hierarchy between languages if the language of schooling becomes the sole used variant once it is mastered. The other resources of students are seen as having merely an assisting role.

Furthermore, prioritising the language of schooling maintains the privilege of students, who come from homes where the language of schooling is spoken. The power structures or structural inequity caused by the hegemony of the language of schooling are not challenged, and thus, this approach may not promote equity or social justice in school (Jensen & Thompson, 2020).

Alternative approaches to emphasising the language of schooling have been suggested. For instance, language architecture in Flores (2020) does not suggest that we should deny access to the academic register, but that the students' attention can be guided to analyse and utilise the complex and abstract language practices and skills they already have. That way it is shown that the students' skills gained outside of school also have value in the educational context without excluding them from the middle-class labour market.

3.2 Representation of languages

Increased representation of students' languages is at the heart of each multilingual pedagogical approach. The use of multiple languages in the classroom is argued by the fact that the classroom environment should reflect the language ecology of the society. It is seen as important not only to the minority students but also to the representatives of the majority. Research shows that activities in which other languages are represented can impact positively the students' understanding and attitudes towards diversity and improve the community atmosphere (Makalela, 2015); (Sierens et al., 2018).

In the MPAs, there are two core principles derived from the representation of different languages in a classroom. First, by encouraging the use of multiple languages in classrooms the teacher signals that the students' knowledge attained outside of the school is considered a valuable resource at school, too (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Often in the case of students who do not speak the language of schooling as their mother tongue, the focus of the school discourse is on their lack of skills. Encouraging the use of other resources the student may have helps both the student and the school staff to focus on the skills the student already possesses. This helps them to both feel more confident and committed to schoolwork (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Norton, 2013).

Second, representation of languages helps the students to create an academic identity which will lead to commitment and higher success in school (Steele, 1997). Usually prestigious public speaking is done monolingually and using a majority language of the region. Thus, many students with a multilingual (or monolingual) repertoire develop an underlying understanding that only a certain type of language use is fit for prestigious situations and that their home or community language practices are deficient in some way. By using different languages and encouraging translingual practices in the classroom these beliefs can be challenged (Creese & Blackledge, 2015).

Even though representation of languages as a method for creating more equitable school is widely recognised, it is not without its challenges. Unfortunately, research shows that the efforts to create representation of languages on the level of both policy and practice have not been too successful (Pennycook, 2021). The attempts to bring other languages to the classroom often remain superficial and do not challenge the hegemonic

role of the standard language of the majority (Jaspers, 2018; Pennycook, 2021). Many scholars have referred to so-called celebratory multilingualism (McNamara, 2011), which means using the languages of students in the class but for tokenistic purposes, such as greetings, or paying attention to diversity only on theme days, such as the European Day of Languages. The use of different languages for greetings is great, but it does not help enough to demonstrate the languages' value in a prestigious environment, school. Rather it can strengthen the discourse of other languages being good enough only for informal, non-academic use. Another issue with celebratory multilingualism is that it tends to reduce complex language practices to essentialising imagery and thus reinforces stereotypes instead of challenging students' previous beliefs about "the other" (Jaspers, 2019).

To make education more equitable, we need more than representation of languages and language practices. Using different languages in school must be accompanied with critical reflection on why we tend to use certain languages and not others in different contexts. When teaching greetings in different languages we need to address the language hierarchy and how it reflects the hierarchy of people. We should not fall into using stereotypes of speakers of different languages, but we need to encourage the students (and ourselves) to embrace complexity. If we do not engage in critical reflection when adding representation of languages in school, we merely accept the inequality of people, which does not equal promoting equity or social justice (Francis et al., 2017).

3.3 Criticality

In the social sciences, the critical approach or criticality manifests in questioning the mechanisms that are used to gain or maintain powerful positions in society, and scrutinising the ways of oppression (Pennycook, 2021). The critical approach and critical thinking is also said to lead to empowerment and thus to better opportunities for the oppressed minorities (e.g., Freire, 1970). All the multilingual pedagogical approaches mention critical thinking or the critical approach in one way or another. However, how criticality should be implemented in practice is scarcely addressed.

Doing critical education is not simple. Even if the pedagogical framework includes critical elements, there are still many steps to implementing it. I have presented the steps in a simplified form in Figure 2. The arrows illustrate the de- and recontextualization of an MPA.

SCIENCE   INSTITUTIONS   TEACHER   STUDENTS
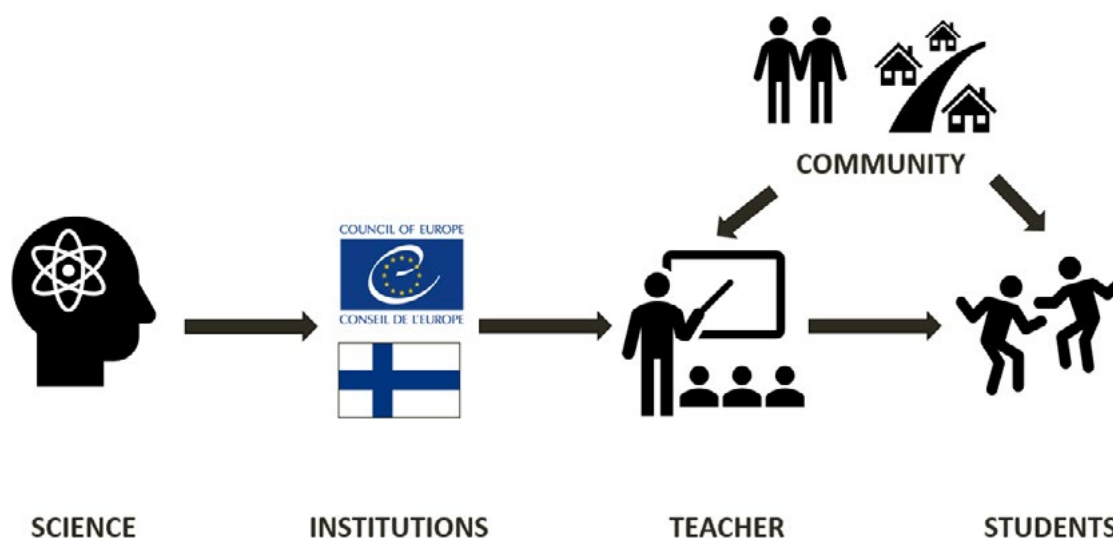
Figure 2   *The Process and Factors for Implementing a Critical Framework in School*

First, in order for a pedagogical framework to be adopted as part of teaching and teacher training curricula on a wider scale, it needs to be distributed by either a national or supranational institution (Liddicoat & Curnow, 2014). This can happen by including it in the national curriculum or in the guidelines of a supranational institution, such as the Plurilingual education policy by the Council of Europe. However, the (supra)national institutions have their own agendas which do not necessarily align with the developers of the original framework. The pedagogical framework gets decontextualised when it is taken from the scientific world to the use of the institutions and recontextualised, for example, in a curriculum text. The entextualisation process can lead to significant changes in the original concept and thus also to its interpretation (Blommaert, 2005), as the recontextualised framework may not include the original critical features. Sometimes the different versions are accompanied by other discourses, such as a nationalistic agenda (for a European example, see McNamara, 2011).

The possibilities for a teacher to affect the content and the ways of teaching varies from country to country, but nevertheless the teacher plays a big role in implementing the curriculum and criticality (Croll et al., 1994). However, not all teachers are willing or likely to engage with a critical or social justice agenda in their schoolwork (Fornaciari, 2020). In addition to teachers' resistance to acting as social changemakers in a way that questions the hegemonies in society, the epistemologies of some MPAs can be a challenge. For instance TLP, CMLA and MLA take an openly social constructionist epistemological stance. Even though it makes a crucial difference in comparison with the other approaches, being a social constructionist can be an issue in the implementational phase. Our everyday reality is based strongly on positivist and essentialist worldviews, and it can be challenging to adopt a different perspective to apply critical methods in teaching.

Next, teachers do not teach in a vacuum but are also affected by the surrounding community. Diverting from regular, perhaps non-critical pedagogy can cause resistance in both students and parents (Bui, 2018). Already at early age, students are socialised into beliefs about what schoolwork is and what is expected in school, and thus it is important to include the critical aspects in teaching from the beginning. Different methods and critical discussions can also cause parents to react either directly to the teacher or through the children if their thoughts and beliefs do not align with the equity agenda.

For these reasons, implementing a critical multilingual pedagogy is a multifaceted challenge, and it should be kept in mind already when designing research-based pedagogical approaches. Implementation is not a one-way street, as the pedagogical approaches designed by researchers are often based on empirical and/or participatory work with teachers and students: there are many examples of implementing critical pedagogy successfully. However, pedagogical approaches that challenge the dominant discourses are yet to become mainstream, and thus it is relevant to focus on the process of systematically implementing successful methods used in case studies in multiple classrooms and schools in the same area.

3.4 But is it really about language?

Next, I shortly analyse the effect of neoliberalist and colonial discourses on the interpretation of MPAs and how this can impair their effect on equity. This also demonstrates the role of categories of inequity, social class, race, and gender that often accompany multilingualism.

Recently, states and institutions that promote multilingualism as part of educational or work life policy have connected it to neoliberalist or capitalist discourse (e.g. Del Percio & Martín Rojo, 2019; Kubota, 2016; Flores, 2013). Languages are not to be supported for the sake of well-being, but because multilingualism is seen as an economic asset for the individual. When we look more closely, a problem emerges regarding what type of

multilingualism (i.e. which languages) is valued by employers and how that benefits only certain multilinguals, while other peoples' language skills go unrecognised — not all multilingualism can be made profitable. Moreover, the financial benefit of being multilingual has been questioned too. Some research shows that multilingualism is financially beneficial only in certain professions or for middle or upper class people (Alonso & Villa, 2020). Scholars have been raising a point also on classism with regard to multilingualism (Block, 2018; Duchêne, 2020). Praising multilingualism and multilinguals does not favour the traditionally monolingual (European) working class but strengthens the position of the already more powerful middle class who can afford to study more languages if they are not born into a multilingual family.

The institutions and individuals implementing the MPAs are also affected by nationalist, colonial and racist discourses which play a role in the realisation of the MPAs in practice. Languages are not neutral but they are strongly linked to the their speakers and attitudes towards them (Flores & Rosa, 2015), which is also acknowledged in the MPAs by referring to the hierarchy of languages. Why certain language skills are valued in society, and some are not is largely a result of the colonial history (Migge & Léglise, 2007; Ramanathan, 2013). In many contexts, at the top of the hierarchy of languages are the big European languages with their long, written history, such as French, English and Spanish, followed by, for instance, Mandarin Chinese. The prestige of these languages is a result of the global dominance of France, Great Britain and Spain during the golden era of imperialism, and it has gone unchallenged in (socio)linguistics until recent times (Migge & Léglise, 2007; Ramanathan, 2013). The interpretation of an MPA is coloured by the colonial discourse. This can manifest, for instance, in favouring certain languages while executing multilingual pedagogy.

In other words, in the implementation of an MPA, languages are often perceived as a neutral concept and the political load of language choice (or, in this case the choice for multilingualism) is ignored. In the MPAs discussed in this article, multilingualism and multilingual pedagogy are offered as responses to concerns about multilingual student population and society. Societies being multilingual is a fact and one benefit from the multilingual pedagogical approaches is that they recognise this and attempt to address it. However, in many contexts the questions of language and multilingualism should be seen as tools that are used by powerful groups to control access to privileges, and to maintain the social hierarchies (Duchêne, 2020). If we "solve the language issue", the people in power will highlight another "issue" to control the access to privilege (Flores & Rosa, 2015). It is appropriate to ask whether an MPA that solely focuses on language can promote social justice in education if the questions of language are often attached to socially unjust discourses such as neoliberalism or racism.

4   Why focus on equity and social justice?

In this article, I have asked what tools and concepts the pedagogical approaches offer for promoting equity and social justice in education and can addressing languages and multilingualism in school through multilingual pedagogy make education more socially just. I used texts of different genres to get a holistic view of each MPA. However, diversity of the texts means they are not quite comparable and thus, a more systematic review of for example empirical studies or pedagogical guidebooks would be useful. Interdisciplinarity and widening the search for good practices outside of anglophone or European linguistics and in English seem necessary for development (Flores, 2013). This could mean for example finding inspiration from equity literacy (Gorski, 2016), ubuntu translanguaging (Makalela, 2019) or culturally sustaining pedagogy (Alim et al., 2020; Sobré, 2017).

The multilingual pedagogical approaches claim to promote equity and social justice by enhancing learning the language of schooling, by creating spaces with a more

diverse representation of languages and by critical discussion. We should not take it for granted that multilingual teaching approaches lead to more than the valorisation of different codes in schools but rather the field should be scrutinized, and the suggested practices thoroughly argued. If we focus on teaching the languages of schooling without critically examining why they have such a prestigious position in our society and how they have reached that position, we can easily end up rather strengthening the divide of "good" and "bad" language users and maintaining the colonial discourse behind the hierarchy of languages. Secondly, if representation of different languages of the students is performed in classrooms without a critical perspective, we can easily fall into using essentialising stereotypes in a superficial way. That does not have the same empowering effect as does the more explicit questioning of the roles that are given to people with different language and ethnic backgrounds in society.

Thirdly, criticality is hard to execute because there are many actors with their own social agendas included in the process. For more efficient implementation, we should also avoid constantly developing new closely related concepts. Short-term research funding can pressure researchers to promote their own "theoretical contribution" but with diverse use of concepts we rather risk confusing both practitioners and researchers. Furthermore, we need to consider that by addressing multilingualism alone we ignore the fact that it often intersects with other types of inequity, such as class or race-based inequity.

I argue that multilingual pedagogy cannot effectively promote equity and social justice unless the question of equity is set in the centre instead of the question of multilingualism. Focusing primarily on equity instead of language(s) allows us to look at an individual or groups holistically and recognise the overlapping inequities. Furthermore, equity and social justice are already politically loaded terms and thus more likely to trigger critical reflection and practice than language which is treated in our everyday society as a neutral concept. Many useful practices that help to recognise and utilise multilingual children's linguistic resources in school have been tested and developed within MPAs presented above. However, in striving for social justice, we need more than that. It is crucial to explicitly reflect what is meant by social justice and how it can be reached: what the harmful discourses are and how hegemonic norms beyond language can be challenged (Rocha Pessoa & Urzêda Freitas, 2012). That way we can make education truly more equitable.

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