

Plurilingualism: A Review of Theory and Current Practice

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This article outlines a literature review of the current anglophone academic literature pertaining to plurilingualism. We summarize 24 of the most pertinent articles in terms of resistance to the adoption of plurilingual pedagogy; key factors in changing attitudes toward the approach; identified classroom options; and implications for teacher education. To us, it is clear that plurilingualism can make a difference in terms of facilitating gains in linguistic abilities, strengthening student self-confidence, and addressing issues related to social justice. Conceptually, language should be linked to multiple repertoires and identities that are living entities rather than things to be mastered. However, concrete institutional policy and material supports are key. We do note that much work within the previous literature also problematized decontextualized and standardized orientations toward language, especially in terms of the erroneous notion of the “native speaker.” Through this literature review, however, we argue that plurilingualism can potentially deepen this trend and add valuable conceptual insights and contribute to concrete pedagogical change as long as the concerns of classroom teachers are respected. Thus, it is not completely a case of plurilingualism amounting to being “old wine in new bottles.”

Cet article présente une revue de la littérature scientifique anglophone actuelle sur le plurilinguisme. Nous résumons 24 des articles les plus pertinents sur le plan de la résistance à l'adoption d'une pédagogie plurilingue, des facteurs clés du changement des attitudes à l'égard de l'approche plurilingue, des options identifiées d'implantation en salle de classe ainsi que des implications pour la formation enseignante. Il est clair pour nous que le plurilinguisme peut faire une différence en facilitant l'acquisition de compétences linguistiques, en renforçant la confiance en soi des apprenants et en s'attaquant aux enjeux de justice sociale. D'un point de vue conceptuel, la langue devrait être liée à de multiples répertoires et identités qui constituent des entités vivantes plutôt que des objets à maîtriser. Cependant, des politiques institutionnelles concrètes et du soutien matériel sont essentiels. Nous constatons que de nombreux travaux dans la littérature

existante ont également problématisé les orientations décontextualisées et standardisées envers la langue, notamment en ce qui concerne la notion erronée de « locuteur natif ». Dans le cadre de cette revue de littérature, nous soutenons toutefois que le plurilinguisme peut potentiellement accentuer cette tendance, apporter des éclairages conceptuels précieux et contribuer à des changements pédagogiques concrets, à condition que les préoccupations des enseignants soient respectées. Ainsi, l'enjeu du plurilinguisme ne se résume pas au fait de « mettre du vieux vin dans de nouvelles bouteilles ».

Keywords: classroom options, learner self-confidence, multiple identities, native speaker, notions of language, pedagogy, plurilingualism, respecting practitioners, social justice, teacher education

In the last 50 years, Canadian governments have invested significant resources in second language education (SLE) education for the express purpose of enhancing the acquisition of the two official languages among the growing numbers of allophones (Statistics Canada, 2022). Given this increased social, cultural, and linguistic heterogeneity, scholars such as Ballinger et al. (2017) have questioned the usefulness of simple cross linguistic pedagogy within minority and majority language learning situations.

Plurilingualism has been defined as the recognition of “the existence of a complex or even composite competence [in language usage] on which the social actor may draw” (Coste et al., 2009, p. 11). As such, plurilingualism “challenges the assumption of complete and balanced competence in [discrete] languages” and “highlights interculturality and the social nature of communicative competence” (Lau & Van Viegen, 2020, p. 12).

The implications to this shift in orientation toward language use are significant. As Piccardo et al. (2021) note, a plurilingual perspective validates the real language use of those not deemed to be “native speakers.” Instead of regarding those employing non-standard varieties of language as suffering from deficits, this new orientation takes the position that those who do not conform to imposed and abstract language norms do not suffer from deformity. To express this orientation more positively, those with a command over concrete varied and integrated usage demonstrate that they have a highly developed set of language skills that go well beyond a narrow competence with imposed (and often artificial) standards. As such, plurilingualism implies that varied language use is a form of resistance to these norms, which are often used to reinforce (and even contribute to the production of) unequal power relations (Piccardo, 2018).

In classrooms in which a plurilingual orientation has been adopted, “teachers and students pursue an educational strategy of embracing and exploiting the linguistic diversity present in order to maximize communication and hence both subject learning and plurilingual/pluricultural awareness.” (Piccardo, 2018, p. 214). This is based on “understanding the complex socio-historical context in which students’ language practices are formed and practiced” (Ollerhead et al., 2018, p. 8).

This review supports a mixed-method study funded by the Canadian government through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) currently underway, which explores how digital technological practices are linked to the allophone home languages across both francophone and anglophone contexts in Canada. In addition to enhancing curriculum, teaching practices, and professional development, this study will document the ways in which teachers of English and French as official languages in publicly funded anglophone and francophone schools engage in professional development to mobilize allophone learners' linguistic repertoires. This review focuses on the Anglophone sector. A recent

conference paper included data from both the anglophone and francophone aspects of the current study (Bangou et al., 2023).

Purpose and Methodology

Purpose

As other scholars have argued, many teachers are reluctant or even resistant to the adoption of plurilingual approaches (Cruickshank, 2015; Dooly & Vallejo, 2020; Galante et al., 2020; Mady, 2019; Portolés & Martí, 2020). As we elaborate on below, it is important to recognize the reasons for this reluctance when delivering teacher education and professional development.

Teachers have a right to be suspicious of the latest fashions within second language education since, as Carroll (1971) once noted, “our field has been afflicted with many false dichotomies, weak conceptualizations, and neglect of critical issues and variables” (p. 102). Thus, we contend that it is not appropriate to dismiss teachers who show this reluctance as being ignorant of the implications associated with what has been advocated as an advance in theory. As has been consistently argued previously by notable curriculum specialists during the widespread adoption of the communicative approach (Breen, 1987; Johnson, 1989; Markee, 1995; Stern, 1983), real curriculum innovation depends on understanding how the nature of teaching practice and decision-making is influenced by belief systems. Changing belief systems, in turn, depends on teachers being shown what works concretely in the classroom (Kagan, 1992; Park & Ertmer, 2007) and respecting their responsibilities and expertise (Clark, 1987). To adopt the attitude that teachers should automatically adhere to the recommendations proposed by self-appointed experts dooms curricular change and perpetuates what Pennycook (1989) once argued is the maintenance of the traditional inequalities and hierarchies between ESL theorists and practitioners. Carroll’s cautions are still meaningful today, and, in short, we contend that we should learn from history.

There is a “maze of terminology” (Lewis et al., 2012) associated with multiple language use. In terms of plurilingualism in particular, there is “a plethora of comparable terminologies and concepts” (Lau & Van Viegen, 2020, p. 5). We do not propose here to go into the differences between all these conceptual variations, since these are, in our opinion, often minute theoretically and essentially inconsequential to teaching practice. We have discussed the theoretical background in the anglophone sector in greater depth elsewhere (see Fleming, 2023). However, it is worth noting at this juncture a set of critiques that several scholars have voiced about the usefulness of plurilingualism as a concept, since our review here is meant to cast a light on its overall saliency.

As Cenoz and Gorter (2017) have pointed out, minority communities often have heavy investments in having their home language codified, protected, and preserved. A number of scholars have questioned some of the basic tenets of plurilingualism and even its basic efficacy as a classroom resource. Kubota (2016), for example, has argued that plurilinguistic orientations often represent language skills as individualistic commodities that are commensurate with neoliberal globalization. Multiple language use has been a historical reality for most. However, for many within the global elite today, access to multiple languages has become a way to access capitalist opportunities on a global scale. At the policy level, McNamara (2011) has pointed out that even though the Council of Europe (2020) has endorsed plurilingualism, dominant standardized languages such as English and French are still given privileged status, while non-dominant or regional languages (or dialects, if you prefer), such as Basque or Roma, do not enjoy official status. Plurilingualism has also been described as problematic from the perspective of concrete classroom practice. Cummins (2021), using what he calls “consequential validity,” questions the usefulness for classroom teachers of some of the underlying theories because they often fail to account for

local teacher agency and experience as co-creators of actionable knowledge/theory in the face of institutional pressures to teach standardized forms of language.

Methodology

Given the various controversies and contentions noted above, we felt that it was important to adopt a carefully thought-out and comprehensive approach to our search methodology. It is clear that there is a great deal of relatively new material pertaining to plurilingualism in the academic literature. This article examines sources we have judged to be of interest to the readership of this journal. That is to say, we include here what we collected that reported empirical research written in English. The work we report here was part of a larger study that collected texts written in French and English. We are currently conducting a similar review, focusing on the francophone literature, which will be the subject of another article elsewhere. Our ultimate goal is to write a third article that will put the first two in dialogue. This article therefore discusses only the anglophone literature. We further decided that limiting the search to peer-reviewed sources would strengthen the authority of the claims we hoped to eventually make. Thus, the considerable number (over a thousand) of sources appearing in online repositories were excluded.

Our first step for this review was a search for such sources using the keyword “plurilingu” in three databases: Cairn, Google Scholar, and Omni. This resulted in well over 1,000 results. In addition, the ERIC database was consulted using the key word “plurilingu*”. This second search resulted in 230 sources. From these results, only peer-reviewed articles and book chapters published from 2010 to 2021 in English were selected for further consideration, since we believe that a timespan of the last 10 years is adequate for showcasing current research. In total, 97 anglophone articles and book chapters were considered. These sources were then divided into those that focused on policy, student repertoire, classroom practice and teacher perspectives, and within higher education.

For the purposes of this article, we have reviewed the 24 sources that would be of most interest to ESL practitioners. That is to say, we have chosen those that are focused on classroom practice and teacher perspectives. The section below has been organized in terms of how this literature has been coded: resistance to the adoption of plurilingual pedagogy ($n = 5$); key factors in changing attitudes toward the approach ($n = 6$); identified classroom options ($n = 10$); and implications for teacher education ($n = 3$). We summarize the implications arising from our examination of these articles with an italicized paragraph at the end of each thematic sub-section. Of course, these themes overlap to a great extent, a point that we will cover in the conclusion.

The Empirical Research on Classroom Practice and Teacher Perspectives

Resistance to the Adoption of Plurilingual Pedagogy

We found that the literature we examined made reference to teacher resistance to the adoption of plurilingual methods. This is an important factor to consider, especially in light of the resistance to the adoption of earlier methods that we referred to above. As we note in our discussion below, this resistance on the part of teachers is not a simple process.

On the basis of an extensive set of interviews with teachers in day and community schools, Cruickshank (2015) argues that those who use plurilingual pedagogy experience challenges associated with gaining and retaining rewarding employment. Even though it has been adopted as a preferred approach in many policy contexts, plurilingualism is commonly viewed skeptically at the school level. Cruickshank notes that the adoption of plurilingualism at this level depends on the extent to which cultural and

linguistic diversity is found within school curricula, community involvement, explicit administrative support, and ongoing professional development.

Through an examination of the discussions held during a series of professional development workshops, Dooly and Vallejo (2020) focus on what they call the “transformative” aspects of plurilingualism and the conceptual tools that should be provided to teachers who are making the transition to plurilingual practice. It is important for teacher trainers in this context to acknowledge the positive and negative perceptions about plurilingualism within the profession and be clear and forthright about the challenges these teachers face.

Galante et al. (2020) reported on an auto-ethnography that examined the implementation of plurilingual practices at the university level. The authors contended that even though the literature is full of calls for a shift toward plurilingualism, most teachers are unsure about how to apply this approach. The seven co-researchers of the study, who had not had the benefit of previous education in plurilingual approaches, interviewed each other and observed each other’s classroom practices. As they described it, the classrooms were divided into those that adhered to plurilingual approaches and those in which English-only instruction was enforced. The authors found that the students in the classes that emphasized plurilingual instruction exhibited greater engagement with material and showed stronger self-confidence. The study also found that it is important to develop safe spaces for students and to acknowledge how difficult it can be for teachers to break old habits related to English-only instruction.

Mady (2019) reported on surveys of three years of teacher education participants and graduates that focused on how the use of languages was perceived in French as a second language classes that included English language learners. The study found that novice teachers emphasized the need to maximize French use and minimize English use. At the same time, these novice teachers regarded additional languages to be useful resources for supporting the acquisition of French, as long as they were limited to teacher use.

Using an extensive set of surveys designed as pre- and post-tests, Portolés and Martí’s (2020) study looked at the effect of teacher education on the beliefs about multilingualism and plurilingualism held by preschool and primary teacher candidates in Valencia, Spain. The study found that, despite extensive professional development and training, these teacher candidates still held beliefs about second language pedagogy that included the need for English-only instruction and the effect of age on second language acquisition.

The five articles outlined above in this theme highlight how difficult it can be for teachers to adopt plurilingualism, especially in terms of challenging English-only instruction. These difficulties are not simply related to the retention of old habits and continued erroneous beliefs about second language pedagogy research and practices; many teachers have well-founded fears of how the adoption of a new approach can threaten their chances of gaining and retaining rewarding employment. Collectively, these articles recommend honestly acknowledging the positive and negative perceptions about plurilingualism that teachers hold and argue that it is important to develop safe spaces for teachers and students to reflect on and engage with the principles associated with plurilingualism that they themselves deem important to explore.

Key Factors in Changing Attitudes Toward the Approach

What accounts for the lessening of resistance on the part of some teachers to the adoption of plurilingual methods? In this section we examine the articles that outline some of the factors that have led to its successful adoption.

Rocafort (2019) conducted a study of teacher candidates that examined their beliefs regarding language education through a process of multimodal narrative reflection. The findings showed that many beliefs were based on purist and monolingual attitudes and were deep-seated and resistant to change. On

the basis of this study, Rocafort argued that reflective practice is key to changing teacher candidate attitudes from seeing language as a thing to be mastered to having an appreciation for plurilingualism repertoires.

Sabatier and Bullock (2018) collaborated on an auto-ethnography concerning their personal histories as teacher educators. They examined how their identities and conceptions evolved in the contexts of colleagues, teacher candidates, and the process of self-reflection. They emphasized how living in plurilingual spaces helped them reframe their identities as teacher educators.

Slaughter and Cross (2021) contended that the lack of concrete guidance in how to conduct plurilingual pedagogies has resulted in the disengagement of many teachers in English as an Additional Language programming in Australia, even though many of these teachers are sympathetic to its principles. On the basis of the study's findings, the authors argued that teacher motivation can be restored when the linguistic repertoires of students are "mapped." This involves asking teachers to reflect more deeply on how they perceive language and making them more aware of how their students communicate in everyday life.

In a mixed-method case study examining a virtual exchange project involving German and Colombian upper-intermediate English learners, Bailey and Gruber (2020) found that it was important to explicitly provide significant space for online conversations and written collaboration if students were to develop communicative, plurilingual, and pluricultural competencies. This action research study focused on student self-assessment of their own performance in multi-varied tasks. The researchers also found that it was important to encourage self-reflection, to explicitly make students aware of concepts related to plurilingualism, and to pair students with speakers of other languages rather than with those who shared the same L1.

Gagné et al.'s (2015) article consists of a dialogue between three researchers who conducted a study of a set of plurilingual teacher candidates and graduate students who used a support and tutoring service centre within their university. The study revealed the need to make significant changes within the centre that would better address the need for a greater focus on equity and inclusion.

Prasad (2012) reported a case study in a French-language school that focused on how teacher practices with allophone learners opened up third-space supports for linguistically diverse children. The study showed the importance of policies enacted by policy-makers, educators, and researchers that create concrete measures for their integration into Canada.

Schmidt and McDaid (2015) collected interview and focus-group data from two studies of Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs) in Ireland and Canada. Even though the sites varied greatly, the participants faced similar challenges in terms of how their linguistic repertoires were regarded as barriers to employment and increased status. These authors argued that institutions should provide IETs with better linguistic supports and should abandon monolingual frameworks. Instead, support should be given to these teachers, who offer rich linguistic resources to these institutions.

The six articles outlined above in this theme collectively argue that changing teacher attitudes toward plurilingualism is neither straightforward nor easy. Concrete guidance that makes use of reflective practice is key. Institutional support is also important, especially when it comes to valuing and rewarding teachers who bring their own plurilingual resources to the institution in question. This support should not simply take the form of symbolic acknowledgments at the level of policy; it should also be substantially material. These articles also note the importance of viewing language as an appreciated living entity rather than as a thing to be mastered. Plurilingual repertoires and identities can thus be valued, resulting in classroom treatment that leads to the development of "third-space" supports for linguistically diverse students and communities.

Classroom Options

This section reports the articles that indicated what the adoption of plurilingual methods actually looked like in the classroom.

In an experimental study with English-foreign-language primary-school students from diverse linguistic backgrounds in Germany, Busse et al. (2020) found that significant vocabulary learning gains can occur when one's first language is viewed as a resource. This research used an interventionalist strategy in which an experimental group was led through activities where their first language was explicitly used. On the basis of pre- and post-testing, in contrast to the control group, the experimental group showed significant gains in less time and displayed higher levels of self-confidence and motivation.

Corcoll López (2021) described a sequential approach that encouraged the enhancement of learner identity, flexibility on the part of the teacher, and making pedagogy explicit and visible. Corcoll López recommended organizing classroom treatment options in three stages that refer to the diverse languages found in the classroom, emphasize the everyday utility of these languages, and explicitly make connections between them.

In an earlier article, Corcoll López and González-Davies (2016) recommended two pedagogical strategies that counter the common unfounded contention that plurilingual practices result in language interference, a drop-off in student motivation, and a reduction in target-language exposure. These strategies are based on the usefulness of code-switching and translation. Classroom tasks should be designed that encourage the purposeful use of multiple languages while noticing and understanding the similarities and differences between them. At the same time, students should be encouraged to carefully monitor their own production. The authors argued that these strategies can be highly effective.

Llompart et al. (2020) focused their study on data collected at multilingual schools in Catalonia. Using conversation analysis based on classroom observations, they argued that plurilingual practices influence how student participation changes over time in ways that progressively utilize linguistic diversity as resources for their cognitive and language learning. The students that they studied initially exhibited reluctance to engage in practice in the target language. However, through an explicit "didactic" explanation of plurilingual principles that encouraged the utilization of their first-language resources, these students learned to engage in meaningful target-language practice.

Based on a study that investigated how Japanese learners understand the construction of passive structures in English and Japanese, Nagai (2020) proposed a number of classroom tasks that would help students develop better awareness of plurilingualism and crosslinguistic similarities and differences. These tasks would focus on metalinguistic awareness and how passives are actually manifested, thereby encouraging their everyday use.

Ortega (2019) outlined the concept of "trans[*cultura*]linguación," in which classroom tasks are designed to explicitly compare linguistic and cultural variation. The study specifically looked at how one teacher used plurilingual and translanguaging principles to address issues related to social justice, to support the value of varied student backgrounds, and to tackle issues within specific communities.

Using data collected through in-depth interviews, Payant (2015) looked at how four plurilingual students at the university level regarded linguistic repertoires while completing a set of collaborative pedagogical tasks. The study found that both native and non-native languages were used as significant resources, both cognitively and socially. However, variances between the participants were related to factors such as previous educational experiences, language proficiency, and the context of their language learning.

Prasad's (2015) article drew on the experiences of plurilingual students in four English and French schools in Toronto and one school in Montpellier, France. The article reported on an exploratory comparative and collaborative ethnographic action research study that engaged children as co-researchers.

Specifically, each of the five children in the study were interviewed about the process of creating plurilingual multimodal “identity texts” in the contexts of discussions with their teachers and parents.

Based on 24 in-depth interviews with both migrant and non-migrant adults living in Western Europe, Rivière’s (2017) study examined how plurilingual readers accessed books produced in various media along with their different language repertoires. Rivière found that media in dominant languages are much more accessible than those in dominated languages, principally because these media were cheaper and more varied. However, access to media in dominated languages can be greatly facilitated through the interaction and active participation of plurilingual readers themselves. The author recommended carefully thought-out pedagogical practices that could, for example, involve becoming more aware of local non-commercial or informal multimedia organizations. Overall, teachers could not only “involve the learners in the discovery of the different ways to access cultural content, [but] also learn with them to use creative and personal means of accessing cultural goods and of compensating for language inequalities” (p. 15).

Stunell (2021) examined how the linguistic diversity in a plurilingual school community could be used to build positive attitudes in the surrounding community. Focusing on primary teacher candidates in France, the findings suggest that major changes in how language is represented in pre-service education is necessary if the attitudes of student teachers can be changed to emphasize the values of inclusion and interculturality.

The ten articles outlined above describe lessons learned from the adoption of specific classroom practices that made use of plurilingual principles. Initial student reluctance to engage in these practices was overcome through explicit explanations of the pedagogical goals involved and a focus on a metalinguistic awareness of everyday language use. Successful adoption of plurilingual methods can result in significant linguistic gains in shorter amounts of time, address issues related to social justice, and help strengthen student self-confidence and motivation. Classroom treatment options should be organized in ways that refer to the diverse languages found in the classroom, the practical utility of these languages, and the connections among them. Students should be shown how to monitor their own language use and to notice the similarities and differences among the languages used in the classroom. Teachers should encourage code-switching and translation while paying close attention to their students’ current and previous educational contexts and linguistic experiences. Specific activities such as the use of “identity texts” or the production of media in dominated languages can be greatly facilitated by actively engaging students as “co-researchers.”

Implications for Teacher Education

Successful curricular change, we contend, necessitates respectful teacher education and professional development. This section reports on articles in which these processes were engaged.

Maddamsetti (2020) reported on a study that focused on a candidate in a US teacher preparation program who had Korean heritage and previous lived experiences in China. Coupled with her previous high socio-economic background and her practicum work in poor urban schools that featured English-only pedagogy, these factors resulted in complex negotiations of socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and professional identities. The findings indicate the need to support novice teachers as they negotiate the complexities associated with the implementation of plurilingual strategies in English-only contexts and how teacher identity is affected as a result.

Moloney and Giles (2015) examined the linguistic profiles of a cohort of teacher candidates in Australia and found that one-third had dynamic plurilingual identities. However, there were few connections between these identities and their experiences in teacher education. This was especially true for those candidates in monolingual school practicums. The authors argued that pre-service education should better validate plurilingual identities and use them to enhance programming and professional integration.

Otwinowska's (2014) paper reported on a study of plurilinguistic awareness carried out with Polish teachers of English that consisted of a survey of over 230 teacher candidates and a set of interviews and focus groups with five in-service teachers. Plurilinguistic awareness was positively corroborated with the extent of participants' teaching experience and with their linguistic repertoires. The author recommended that plurilinguistic principles be enhanced and strengthened in teacher education.

The three articles outlined above emphasize how plurilinguistic awareness is connected to how long one has been teaching and one's own linguistic repertoire. These articles emphasize the importance of helping novice teachers negotiate the complexities associated with the adoption of plurilingual strategies, especially within English-only institutions. To do this, the often-overlooked connections between the linguistic and social identities of these novice teachers must be taken into account. Overall, plurilingualism must be a major focus within teacher education.

Discussion

This literature review has summarized what we consider to be the dominant trends in empirical work in the anglophone academic literature that are closely related to plurilingualism as they pertain to teacher beliefs and classroom treatment options. Space here does not allow for an in-depth discussion of some of the pertinent theoretical background. As we discuss elsewhere (Bangou et al., 2023), however, it is worth noting that much of the older trends within the anglophone second language education literature has problematized decontextualized and standardized orientations toward language. This is especially true in terms of the erroneous notion of the "native speaker," a concept first problematized in the anglophone second language education literature by Leung et al. (1997). This is what we consider to be the common legacy that this literature shares with plurilingualism. We argue that plurilingualism deepens this trend and adds valuable conceptual insights and (more importantly, as we outline here) concrete pedagogical recommendations.

What are the commonalities between the 24 articles across the four themes we have identified through this literature review?

Clearly, plurilingualism has the potential of making a significant difference in terms of classroom practice. The adoption of plurilingual methods can result in significant and efficient gains in linguistic abilities, strengthen student self-confidence, and help address issues related to social justice. As these articles make plain, institutional policy *and* material supports are key. It is crucial to view language as linked to multiple repertoires and identities. These are living entities rather than things to be mastered.

To be successful, plurilingual classroom treatment options should be organized in specific ways. Students should explicitly be made aware of plurilingual principles and helped to appreciate the linguistic diversity of both themselves and others while engaged in the practical utility of language use. This can be done through an encouragement of self-monitoring, code-switching, and translation. Teachers should encourage code-switching and translation while paying close attention to their students' current and previous educational contexts and linguistic experiences.

Adopting plurilingual methods on the part of teachers is not a simple process. Resistance to change has a rational basis related to employment and English-only constructs common within institutions. Those seeking a paradigm shift must acknowledge that these contexts do indeed exist; it is not a matter of lazy teachers who cannot break old habits.

The field of second language teaching and learning has experienced constant paradigm shifts. These have included grammar translation, the audio-lingual technique, a plethora of pop-psychology-based "designer" methods, the communicative approach, focus on form, and task-based instruction, to name just the more dominant trends. Those seeking a paradigm shift must also acknowledge that many teachers are frustrated with pressures from "experts" extolling the miraculous nature of yet another set of new precepts in the field. It is important to develop safe spaces for teachers and students to

reflect on and engage with the principles associated with plurilingualism that they themselves deem important to explore.

Teacher education has a major role to play. It is important to help teachers negotiate the adoption of plurilingual strategies in all their complexity through an engagement with linguistic and social identities. We argue that it is not appropriate to be dismissive of the beliefs that these teachers hold, since curricular innovation depends on showing teachers that notions such as plurilingualism are concretely useful in the classroom. To do otherwise is to fall prey to the elitism that is common within the academic/practitioner divide and to what (at least theoretically) plurilingualism is designed to address.

Conclusion

To a certain extent, it is true that the notion of plurilingualism does amount to being “old wine in new bottles.” However, we argue that there is some new wine in there too. As Flores (2013) has noted, “there is a need for a more critical treatment of the concept of plurilingualism to avoid complicity with the promotion of a covert neoliberal agenda” (p. 1). It might not be the panacea many might consider it to be, but it is clear to us that plurilingualism is concretely useful. The notion breaks with the common focus on long-antiquated grammar-based and structural orientations within anglophone second language pedagogy. We should have more of it.

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