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**Title: Fostering teacher language awareness in a primary English-language immersion school in France: supporting teachers on the road to engaging students' bilingual competencies**

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### **Abstract**

Educators in immersion contexts who view a policy of strict separation of languages in the classroom as the ideal model for second language acquisition are often reluctant to make connections between the dominant language, the target language and pupils' home languages resulting in missed opportunities for drawing on pupils' entire linguistic repertoire to foster their learning. The present study considers teachers' discourses surrounding the place and role of the dominant language (French), the target language (English) and home languages from the perspective of classroom teachers at one French primary school with a school-wide English immersion program participating in a participatory research project. Since the program's inception in 2011, the one teacher/one language model has been adopted and approximately half the day is spent in each language. The analysis of the data, which comprised semi-structured interviews, filmed observations, stimulated video recall and focus groups sessions revealed a shift in teachers' language awareness concerning the use of students' L1 as resources and their willingness to experiment with new pedagogies drawing on students' entire linguistic repertoire. The data also highlighted challenges which emerged during the implementation of more flexible multilingual pedagogies as well as teachers' need for learning for long-term continued professional development.

**Key Words: bilingual education - immersion – cross-linguistic transfer – teacher education – awareness raising – participatory research -second language learning**

**Word count: 7,326**

### **Introduction**

Educators in immersion contexts who view a policy of strict separation of languages in the classroom as the ideal model for second language acquisition are often reluctant to make connections between the dominant language, the target language and pupils' home languages resulting in missed opportunities for drawing on pupils' entire linguistic repertoire to foster their learning (Cummins, 2007; Fives and Gill 2015). Although monolingual approaches in bilingual education have been called into question by numerous researchers over the past two decades (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Cummins, 2007; Garcia, 2009; Herdina & Jessner, 2002; Paulsrud et al., Li Wei, 2018), many teachers in bilingual and/or immersion programs continue to promote a strict separation of languages policy. However, research in the area of third language acquisition has provided evidence of the benefits of

drawing on pupils' entire linguistic repertoires allowing them to make connections between existing knowledge of all the languages they bring to the classroom, thus increasing their metalinguistic awareness and facilitating their learning (Jessner, 2018; Woll, 2020).

Cummins was among the first to question the 'monolingual principle' in education, that is, the assumption that languages should be kept in separate spaces in bi-multilingual classrooms and in bilingual instruction. Cummins uses the term 'two solitudes' (Cummins, 2007) to refer to the practice of strict language separation in bi-multilingual contexts emphasizing how each language is learned and developed in isolation. These practices have also been referred to by other scholars in the field through terms such as 'parallel monolingualism' (Heller, 1999) or 'separate bilingualism' (Creese & Blackledge, 2010: 105). Drawing on his Common Underlying Proficiency Model (Cummins, 1979) Cummins emphasizes the interdependent nature of languages in bilingual language development, highlights the presence of cross-lingual transfer as a normal process of this development and argues for a more flexible use of languages in the classroom. He advocates for using learners' first languages as cognitive tools for learning and encourages the implementation of teaching practices which favour two-way cross-lingual transfer. Whilst acknowledging the importance of creating separate spaces for the languages of instruction in bilingual or immersion programs, Cummins also stresses the value of creating "shared spaces for the promotion of language awareness and cross-language processing" (2007: 229).

From a sociocultural perspective, language being the primary cognitive tool to organize and regulate learning (Vygotsky, 1978), learners' L1 serve as cognitive, affective and interactional mediators (Wu, 2018) and have the potential to be powerful cognitive tools for learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Given the role that language plays in mediating the understanding of complex ideas, the L1 is seen as an important means to scaffold students' learning in bi-multilingual classrooms and is thought to allow learners to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught (Swain & Lapkin, 2013). When knowledge is encoded in students' L1, drawing on these in the classroom is an important means to develop learning (Cummins, 2008, Wu, 2018). The L1 also acts as an affective mediator allowing teachers to create secure and trusting learning environments, thus allowing them to build a sense of community and enabling them to better focus students' attention on the content being taught (Lin & Lo, 2017; Wu, 2018).

In the past two decades, there has been a call for more dynamic models of bilingual education which recognize the value of pupils' home languages and allow them to draw on their entire linguistic repertoires as resources for learning (Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013, Cenoz & Gorter, 2014; Hélot & Garcia, 2019; Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014; Weber, 2014). These models have been called: 'Flexible Multilingual Education' (Weber, 2014), Dynamic bilingualism (Garcia, 2009); Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (Herdina & Jessner, 2002), 'Focus on Multilingualism' (Cenoz & Gorter, 2014) 'Integrated Plurilingual Education' (Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013) and Functional Multilingual Learning' (Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014), among others. Advocates for such flexible approaches argue for multilingual education models in which teachers and learners are given the space and encouraged to use their full semiotic and plurilingual repertoires to communicate, learn and make meaning in the classroom (Hélot & Garcia, 2019). The focus in this case is on placing learners, and not only languages, at the center of classroom practices (Cenoz & Gorter, 2014; Weber, 2014).

One of the key conceptual shifts proposed in the field of bi/multilingual education is the concept of translanguaging (Garcia, 2009). Referring to the context of the classroom, García & Kano

(2014: 261) state that translanguaging is “a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include *all* the language practices of students in order to develop new language practices and sustain old ones, communicate and appropriate knowledge, and give voice to new socio-political realities by interrogating linguistic inequality”. By drawing on the different languages in the classroom through translanguaging teachers can point out similarities and build bridges between languages and further develop pupils’ metalinguistic awareness. Research has shown that these practices are often already happening in some bi-multilingual classrooms, but that teachers often worry that they are either transgressing explicit or implicit language policies or demonstrating some weakness or lack of competence (Li Wei & Lin, 2019; Manan & Tul-Kubra, 2020; Probyn, 2019; Weber, 2014). However, there has been an increase in research this area in different contexts (Garcia & Kleyn, 2016; Duarte, 2019; Makalela, 2015; Mary & Young, 2017; Probyn, 2019) providing educators with a more complete understanding of the benefits and importance of translanguaging practices for learners.

### Language Aware teachers: raising the bar in bi-multilingual classrooms

Several authors have drawn attention to the lack of language awareness among teachers in mainstream multilingual classrooms (Young, 2018) as well as in bilingual classrooms (Camarata & Tedick, 2012; Peltoniemi & Bergroth, 2020). The Association for Language Awareness defines Language awareness as: “explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use” (ALA ‘About’ webpage, 2021<sup>1</sup>). When teachers lack sufficient research based language awareness with regards to bilingual language development, they run the risk of propagating beliefs acquired through dominant language ideologies and/or of basing their pedagogies on popular myths about second language acquisition. Many bilingual programs for example are steeped in the belief that a second language is acquired in the same way as the first language, that is, through a language bath with maximum and exclusive contact with the target language. It is therefore essential to address teacher beliefs about language and teacher language ideologies as these ultimately will have an impact on their classroom practices and whether they are willing to open up the classroom to languages other than the dominant language of instruction and/or to implement cross-linguistic pedagogies in the classroom (Fives & Gill, 2015; Mary & Young, 2020). Young (2018) & Menken (2008) also highlight the important role that teachers play as language arbiters in the classroom as they communicate consciously or unconsciously the value of languages. Becoming language aware implies developing a more critical perspective on the nature of languages (García, 2017; Hélot, 2018), on their relationship to identity formation and on their role in society and in uncovering existing power relations. Critical language aware teachers can thus render the complex relationships between languages more transparent. They therefore have the potential to disrupt harmful and oppressive relations of power (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). In this way, classroom teachers are seen as knowledge generators who can challenge the monolingual or two-solitudes assumption.

## Methodology

### Context

The data presented in this paper was collected within the remit of an ongoing study (May 2018-present) in one French-English bilingual primary school located in the East of France. As

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.languageawareness.org/?page\\_id=48](https://www.languageawareness.org/?page_id=48)

bilingual schools are regulated by French law in the public sector in France, the school in this study had obtained special permission to set up a bilingual school under the status of an "experimental school" (Art. L 401-1, Code de l'éducation, Légifrance) and had made the transition to bilingual school in 2011. The school was authorized to provide 50% of curriculum instruction in French and 50% in English. In contrast to bilingual schools in the private sector in France in which families make a deliberate choice to enroll their child(ren), in this particular public school only children within that specific school district were allowed to attend. This meant that many parents of the children attending the school had not purposefully chosen to enroll their child(ren) in a bilingual program.

The impetus for creating this experimental bilingual school came after several teachers in the school had participated in a two-year exchange program in Utah ("*program Jules Verne*"), during which they had received training in bilingual education and had worked as bilingual teachers in French immersion schools in the area. Upon their return to France the local education officials, desirous of capitalizing on these newly acquired competences, obtained permission to open a bilingual school. Following this change, the bilingual teachers were expected to teach the French curriculum through English without any further preparation or additional resources. In addition, these teachers fell under a great deal of pressure from their hierarchy (e.g. school inspectors and teaching advisors) and their colleagues who were teaching through French to ensure that pupils' attained academic success across all disciplines. Since the school's opening in 2011, additional bilingual teachers were added to the teaching staff but no official research partnership involving specific training in bilingual education had been provided. In the spring of 2018 one research team which included the three authors was contacted by the inspectors of this catchment area with the initial aim of evaluating the school's bilingual program and providing supplementary training for the entire pedagogical staff (N=10).

#### The current study

The larger framework for this research draws on Lewin's (1946) work in social psychology in which educational research is conducted with the aim of transforming practice (Corey, 1953). The research used a participatory methodology which aimed on the one hand to empower and reassure teachers whilst fostering inquiry based on the practices observed. (Guibert, Dejemeppe, Desjardins & Maulini, 2019; Lapointe & Morissette, 2017). It aimed in particular to highlight certain classroom practices and teacher beliefs about bilingual teaching and bilingualism in a bid to encourage the teachers to critically reflect on and develop their practices. The research team firstly recognized and valued teachers' individual and collective expertise and then drew on those experiences when presenting current research in the field of bilingual education with the aim of articulating theory and practice. The first step in the process was the development of common objectives between the researchers and teaching staff through classroom observation and discussions between all members. Researchers and teachers identified together the difficulties encountered in the classroom and the items to be addressed during the project. Care was taken to foster collaboration based on trust and the creation of safe spaces in which teachers would be able to express themselves without the presence of their institutional hierarchy (Wilson, 2021). This was especially important given the nature and importance of the administrative hierarchical structure in the French education system.

During the initial stages of observation several areas for investigation emerged. It was evident from the start of the project that the English teachers had many questions about their practices and doubts about their legitimacy as bilingual English teachers, (being 'non-native'

English speakers). There was also an important need to foster collaboration between the English and French teachers. Finally, the entire teaching staff was desirous of better understanding the impact of their practices on children's learning and bilingual development and of learning how they might develop their knowledge and skills to best suit to the needs of their pupils.

#### Data Collection

The data collected between May 2018 and June 2020 comprised two sets of semi-structured interviews, a series of classroom observations, two stimulated video recall sessions and multiple focus groups sessions, all of which were audio and video recorded. In June 2018, prior to the school intervention, 11 initial semi-structured interviews with the teachers of the school, the local school inspectors and the teaching advisors (lasting approximately 30 minutes each) were conducted. The interviews focused on the participants' accounts of what had motivated the creation of the bilingual program and its development, the roles played by the various actors involved in the bilingual program and its creation and methods for assessing pupils in their final year (the last year of primary school).

During the two-year intervention cycle the researchers and teachers of the school participated in three-hour meetings held approximately once a month. Each meeting was organised into plenary sessions for discussion and updates on current work, a theoretical input session, group work on a specific area and focus group feedback sessions (see table below for specific details). The sessions were filmed, audio recorded and transcribed and in addition, each researcher took detailed field notes of each session. These meetings facilitated the interactions between the teaching team researchers and between the members of the teaching staff and provided the researchers with important insights into the interplay of different perspectives which provided a better understanding of the challenges facing the bilingual teachers and the school in general.

The stimulated video recall (SVR) sessions were conducted at the start of the project (October, 2018). During these sessions 3 to 4 teachers viewed video extracts of their teaching together and were invited to reflect and comment on their actions, reactions and decision-making processes. The extracts were selected by the researchers as a means of assisting the teachers' recall and generating and facilitating their thinking (Lyle, 2003). SVR engages the practitioners in the act of reflection about a linguistic or teaching problem encountered but with the aim of generating answers to questions or problems previously identified together. For the researchers SVR was an effective way to gain the perspectives of the practitioners and their interpretation of their acts (Fox-Turbull, 2009) and provided insight into the next steps to be taken in the flexible research protocol.

In June 2019 one of the focus group sessions with the teachers (N=8) was filmed, audio recorded and transcribed. The purpose of the focus group session was to allow the researchers to identify any change in teaching practices and the motivation behind or resistance to these (Lemoine-Bresson, 2020). This highlighted the different positionings of the teachers with regard to their awareness of their own critical engagement in teaching and thinking within a bilingual program. A second set of semi-structured interviews was then conducted in June 2020 with the teaching staff (N=7) at the end of a two-year intervention cycle. The interviews focused on teachers' experience of working together over the two years, the strategies they employed with regard to student errors and whether and how they made links between the languages of schooling, (French and English) and between these and additional languages, in particular children's home languages.

## Results

### Unpacking teachers' initial beliefs about immersion education and bilingualism

The data from the initial semi-structured interviews on the role and place of languages in the school revealed a certain homogeneity. Initial interviews revealed that the English teachers had experienced a great deal of pressure from their hierarchy which contributed to reinforcing the following aspects: 1) implementation of a strict separation of languages policy (for example: one teacher-one language policy, monolingual linguistic landscapes, pretending the teacher only speaks English), 2) restricted use of any written form of the target language (English) and 3) a ban on any formal teaching of the target language (any explicit teaching of grammar, for example).

With respect to the school language policy, the school languages, French and English, were to be kept separate and only the language designated for each subject/space (For example, math lessons implemented during English classroom instruction) was to be used during that lesson. In addition, pupils' additional home languages were not included as potential resources at any point during lessons and were not mentioned during the initial interviews. This strict language policy was also visible through the linguistic landscape of the school (presence of signs indicating "Only English spoken here", books and wall hangings exclusively in English/French). Initial classroom observations also mirrored this policy. For example during one observation session of a classroom of six-year old children who had recently started the bilingual program, we observed the teacher repeatedly telling the children to "only speak English" or to "count **in English**" exclusively. The following extract from an initial interview with the native French speaking English teacher of one group of first year (six-year-old) pupils illuminates the ideologies behind some of these practices.

TL: I never speak in French, unless if some parents 'let the cat out of the bag', but otherwise I only speak in English and certain children think I'm English or American and so the image of a foreigner is constructed in the children's minds [...], so that's my role in the school, compared to the others, then the children say to themselves 'well, in fact I have no other choice, in order to communicate I have to learn to speak [in English].

(TL, Semi-structured interview, May, 2018)

Another extract from the initial teacher interviews illustrates the notion that the teachers' aim was not to teach any formal aspects of the target language.

TD: We have to work on the basis that we're speaking a language that is not the [pupils'] mother tongue and that we're not **teaching** them this language but teaching the class **through** this language, this language is the means to learn.

(TD, Semi-structured interview, May, 2018)

Focus group interviews conducted later in the year revealed that these practices had in fact been part of a top down school language policy imposed on them by their hierarchy at the start of the program.

Despite the presence of practices reflecting a "Two Solitudes" approach (Cummins, 2007), the initial interviews with the teachers also revealed some basic understanding of the

nature of bilingualism and some knowledge of the process of cross-linguistic transfer among certain teachers. During the initial interviews one of these teachers made reference to the overall outcomes of the bilingual program and demonstrated some awareness of cross-linguistic transfer which could take place in the classroom.

TD : Take for example reading skills, which we can develop in both languages. When we develop reading comprehension and oral and written expression in a second language, I think that we are also making progress at the same time in our mother tongue and that's what I have tried to focus on, at least during the first two years [of teaching], by telling myself that spending time in English here does not mean that we are losing out on time spent in French because these skills cross over in fact.  
(TD, Semi-structured interviews, May 2018)

Despite such knowledge of cross-linguistic transfer this teacher also had expressed the view that these competences developed in distinct separate language spaces highlighting a lack of a more precise knowledge concerning the specific nature of cross-linguistic transfer in bilinguals, thus depriving him of opportunities to capitalize on pupils' linguistic repertoires in order to draw attention to similarities and differences and to make connections across languages.

#### Opening doors to alternative practices and cross linguistic transfer

Based on the initial observations, the research team devised a protocol to foster critical reflection on teaching practices among the members of the teaching staff through SVR and group discussions on all teachers' practices coupled with exposure to current research and theory in the area of bilingualism and bilingual education. During the SVR sessions teachers were able to openly discuss their classroom pedagogies and explain the underlying beliefs which led them to implement these. For example, during one session, two of the English teachers compared their lessons and pointed to the strategies they had used to explain more difficult lexical or grammatical notions in English through the target language (English), without making use at all in the dominant language (French). They clearly expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with these strategies but both teachers admitted that they had resigned themselves to the fact that some children would simply not have a clear understanding of certain words or concepts straight away as one of the goals of the program was to encourage the children to speak and use the target language, sometimes at the expense of inaccuracy.

The fact that our research was longitudinal, collaborative and based on regular visits provided a context in which teachers could freely express their views whilst at the same time remaining open to theoretical input and alternative approaches. Following a theoretical input session during which we presented research theory and findings on cross-linguistic transfer and actual examples of classroom practice fostering such transfer, the teachers expressed a deep interest in the concept. Some admitted to having already questioned their teaching approaches which were based on a monolingual language separation policy. These sessions allowed them to move from a position of not allowing themselves to engage in 'bilingual' practices to that of giving themselves permission to 'transgress' the policies in place and to rejecting a certain determinism in which they had settled. For example, with regard to the use of written forms in teaching the curriculum through English or to providing corrective feedback in order to make explicit connections between French and English one teacher stated "it was something that I completely prohibited myself from doing" (TSY, Focus Group interviews, June 2019). Other colleagues also echoed this statement admitting that they too had felt this same pressure. The

fact that they had been able to discuss their fears and reflect on their practices in the light of current research allowed them to defy the top-down language policy in place at that time:

TA (English teacher): So I completely allow myself to speak French again when necessary

TH (English teacher): Me too I do that

TS (French teacher): same here

[...]

TS: We quickly realized that it was not possible to function correctly without using writing and written forms. I think, for example, what has been very, very, very useful, well, I speak a little bit for the English teachers, uh, is the fact of already acknowledging that corrective feedback is absolutely useful for language acquisition, and that, uh, that it had to be put in place. Just by saying that [openly], it helped break down barriers, in fact.

(Focus Group interview, June 2019)

Another impact of the collaborative research was that this particular protocol allowed the teachers time to reflect on and take on board the theoretical input they were able to explore during the collaborative sessions. This had the effect of increasing their language awareness and stimulating their desire to collaborate together on possible ways of integrating their new understanding in their classroom practices. Some teachers specifically made reference to the impact the theoretical input had had on their thinking and teaching practices. One teacher in particular mentioned reaching a turning point after reading a specific research article (Roussel, Tricot & Sweller, 2016). The article had highlighted the positive results of group of law students who had had access to bilingual versions of a text and were better able to mobilize their skills through making connections between the two languages. He specifically emphasized the role of the theoretical input saying that “the research (on the law students with the bilingual texts) really had an impact on me” (TS). Several teachers echoed this statement stressing that they had appreciated the theoretical input provided during the training sessions. The result was that the English teachers began to experiment with using the students’ L1 (French) to make connections with the content being taught. However, this new freedom to draw on children’s entire linguistic repertoires created new questions for the teachers on the role and place of the dominant language in the classroom and how to judiciously draw on this without falling prey to an overuse of it.

TS: We allow ourselves much more to use both languages to switch from one language to the other to explain things in French... as a result, I do it and I think I do it too much.  
(TS, Semi-structured interviews, June 2020)

Other teachers drew attention to certain changes in their practices which mirrored those supported by research and presented during the training sessions. One teacher in particular focused on the use of ‘noticing’ as a tool for scaffolding instruction as well as the role of language awareness in second language learning. This involved a process of helping students gain an awareness of their errors in their language production and providing corrective feedback in order to overcome these (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Schmidt, 1990). For the teacher cited below, the research input in this area enabled him to try his hand at implementing noticing practices with his students:

TD: it's an exercise I've done [noticing] since we met. I had the pupils produce a fairly short piece of writing. I put a correct version of their text next to their original text and

we compared the two texts, as we had seen during our work together [in a collaborative session].  
(TDA, Focus Group Interview, June 2019)

With the exception of one teacher (TA, English teacher) who expressed feeling "stuck", the other teachers expressed feeling relieved and managed to recognize their freedom and their ability to do things differently from the routine ways in which they had settled into, despite experiencing challenges finding the right balance.

### Building bridges across languages

In addition to implementing the specific cross-linguistic practices they had encountered during the training sessions, some teachers began to experiment on their own with building bridges between languages and developed their own bilingual practices. The following quote is from a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher (children 9-10 years-old) who, for practical and administrative reasons, had been asked to teach pupils both the French and English curriculum, something previously considered as contrary to the school language policy. She used this context as an opportunity to compare languages, using 'translation' at certain appropriate times, without 'formally teaching' the language. She did this by using bilingual texts getting the pupils to reflect on various grammatical aspects of French and English in a bid to help them better understand the way each language was structured and how each differed from the other. She therefore engaged them cognitively by using information encoded in their first/dominant language in order to build new knowledge of the target language through purposive use of the latter.

The moment I got the class in English and in French... it really allowed me to make bridges between languages. [...] We do a bit of translation, which we didn't do at all before, and I think it's really interesting because it allows us to address grammar points without stating that we're actually doing that, without formalizing it. We can structure things.  
(TH, Semi-structured interviews, June 2020)

Likewise the 1<sup>st</sup> grade English teacher explained her struggles to 'reach the children' who were just entering the bilingual program and the difficulties she had encountered in trying to help them to understand content when teaching through English only. Below, she speaks of how using the pupils' first language as a tool enabled her to promote their understanding and to reassure them. She specifically mentions asking pupils to 'remember items from their first language' and encouraging them to 'dissect the other language' thus engaging them in a conscious reflective process. She employed a pedagogical approach that drew on the L1 which she would not have attempted prior to the research due to the language policies in place at that time.

It's interesting to reflect on the language together to better understand, interesting to mix languages. At the beginning of the year I was uncomfortable speaking only in English because I was putting some children on the sidelines and I couldn't reach them ... but you mustn't be afraid to build bridges ... You can explain some words, prefixes, suffixes and ask them to think of these words in their first language and also to dissect the other language.  
(TA, Semi-structured interviews, June 2020)

## Remaining challenges

Despite these examples demonstrating a certain shift in the participants' ideologies and teaching practices and showing evidence of new links being made between the majority language of schooling (French) and the target language (English), interview data also suggested that some teachers continued to hold limiting ideologies about the value of certain languages over others. This possibly stemmed from insufficient knowledge about the linguistic diversity of the pupils in their classrooms and a lack of awareness of the importance of supporting home languages other than French. The teacher below, for example, affirmed that there were in fact few pupils in his classroom who spoke languages other than French (or English) at home. However, another teacher stated the opposite during one of our group sessions saying that cultural and linguistic diversity was so visibly present in the school that it would be, 'impossible to ignore it' (TH, focus group interview, 2019). Conversations during the focus group sessions indicated that some teachers believed there were no additional home languages based on their observations of exchanges between parents and their children. If pupils and parents were seen speaking French together, then it was assumed that this was the only language present at home. Another assumption, as seen in the statement by the teacher below, was that languages other than French or English spoken at home would not be sufficiently developed to be able to make links between these and the languages of schooling (French and English) in the classroom.

I don't have many students in the class who speak other languages or, at any rate, who master them well enough to make bridges between English or French so, on top of that, it's also due to the fact that certain languages are too linguistically different in fact I think that if I had students whose mother tongue was German or Dutch we could make bridges naturally.

(TDA, semi-structured interview, June 2020)

The above statement highlights a belief that some languages, namely European languages, and in this case thought to be linguistically similar to English, would be more appropriate or easier to draw on in the classroom. This showed us that there was indeed a need to address the issue of language hierarchies and to explore with them the large body of research on the benefits of raising children's language awareness through engaging them in tasks in which they reflect on multiple languages, especially those already present in the classroom. Whilst some teachers seemed to be unaware of the linguistic diversity present in the school as shown above, others seemed to have gained an awareness of this diversity and the benefits of recognizing pupils' home languages during the project but expressed feeling at a loss of how to value and capitalize on this diversity without falling prey to stereotypes.

So that's what I realized (during the project), that it (taking into account children's languages) was important to do. But now, I'm a bit at a loss as to how to draw on the language and the cultural richness of the children in the classroom beyond that of speaking anecdotally about differences in civilizations or practices or customs and so on, how to really learn about their languages and help the student who already knows things in other languages, because there are already unconscious mechanisms that I do not see.

(TDE, Semi-structured interviews, June 2020)

## Discussion

The data presented above provide evidence that the longitudinal and collaborative nature of the research and the fact that it involved regular visits and the establishing of an authentic partnership had an impact on teacher language awareness. We made it clear from the beginning that our presence in the school was not only to collect data but also to engage teachers in a process of critical reflection on their practices away from the weight of judgement or evaluation. During the SVR sessions the research team focused firstly on the solid experience and knowledge of the teachers and, in so doing, created a context in which the teachers felt reassured, recognized and competent which then allowed them the freedom to distance themselves from their practices and gain new insights from the theoretical input and the discovery of more flexible bi-multilingual pedagogies. The data revealed a clear shift in teachers' awareness of bilingual language development and the benefits of using students' L1 as cognitive tools for learning. We also observed many ways in which the teachers were already implementing teaching practices which allowed for two-way cross-lingual transfer. In addition, at the close of the first phase of the project, we were also able to identify several challenges that had emerged during the research which need to be addressed.

The first issue to emerge and one that remains an important concern for the teachers in this study, is the question of being able to draw on students' L1, (this refers specifically to French, the dominant national language) during times dedicated to the teaching of the curriculum through English. This topic has been an important object of debate in recent research in the field of immersion education, especially with regards to the use of translanguaging pedagogies (Fortune & Tedick, 2019; Lyster, 2019). Concerns from some researchers stem from the need to provide sufficient exposure to the L2 target (minority) language whilst creating classroom contexts which will motivate learners to use the L2 despite the possible increased cognitive effort they might incur when doing so (Swain & Lapkin, 2013). Lyster & Tedick (2014) highlight the necessity of addressing this question in bilingual/immersion educational contexts stating that:

Immersion teachers need answers to this question [of using the L1 in the classroom] because, in school settings where competition for time and status between target languages often leads to the habitual use of one language over the other, the notion of each language having its own space becomes crucial. Systematic collaboration between partner teachers would seem to be a promising avenue to pursue in this regard.  
(Lyster & Tedick, 2014: 220)

Various answers to this question have been identified in the literature on bilingual/immersion education. As a team, we have identified three avenues to explore with the teachers during the subsequent stages of research:

- 1) Using bilingual resources collaboratively in the classroom as part of both the English & French curricula (Ballinger, 2013; Lyster et al., 2013, Velasco & Fialais, 2016);
- 2) Developing pedagogical translanguaging to scaffold learning (Juvonen & Källkvist, 2021 ; Paulsrud, Tian & Toth, 2021 ; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020 ; García & Wei, 2014);
- 3) Implementing language awareness pedagogies with students (Dagenais et al., 2008, Hélot et al., 2018; Schleppegrell and Moore, 2018).

These elements have already been integrated into the second phase of the research protocol (PRIMERA<sup>2</sup>) in order to address the many complexities involved in building more linguistically inclusive classrooms within bilingual (50/50) programs. The first phase of the project, described in this article, set a solid foundation for this new exploration and collaboration by enabling the teachers to critically reflect on their practices and collaboratively develop new pedagogies and strategies adapted to their particular context. The fact that the teachers posed a wealth of new questions and expressed a new set of needs during the work undertaken in the first stage of the research highlights the importance for researchers and teacher educators of providing continued support to teachers over longer periods of time. It is through long-term research based partnerships based on current research and theory and conducted within safe spaces in which teachers are allowed to express their doubts, questions and needs that their language awareness can develop and their beliefs and practices can evolve.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://ife.ens-lyon.fr/lea/le-reseau/les-differents-lea/ecole-jean-jaures-et-college-guynemer-nancy-grand-est>

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## Appendix/Tables

Dates	Collaborative Research Sessions	Objectives
June 2018	Semi-structured interviews	Investigating beliefs/ideologies of supervisors and teachers regarding immersion in connection with their practices.
November 2018	Filmed observations of classroom practices	Documenting current practices.
December 2018	Stimulated Video Recall & focus group sessions	Documenting discourses on practices, concerns and difficulties.
January 2019	Whole school staff training session <i>Focus group</i>	Fostering teacher exchanges with regard to classroom practices. Presenting current theory in bilingual education Topic: bilingualism
February 2019	<i>Focus groups</i>	Understanding ideologies, resistances and language policies.

		Topic: errors /adjustment, corrective feedback, noticing
June 2019	<i>Focus groups</i>	Collecting feedback on current/new practices.
July 2019	Whole school staff training session	Evaluating practices and reflecting on the forthcoming year.
September 2019	Focus group	Developing awareness of the multiple facets of skills to be developed in bilingual teaching-learning. Topic: Framework of references on pluralistic approaches to languages and culture (Council of Europe)
November 2019	Theoretical training session	Topic: Working with bilingual texts / Translanguaging
January 2020	Whole school staff training session	Supporting staff in their new flexible bilingual practices. Topic: (Research conference) Bilingual education programs in New York and Frankfurt, translanguaging for simultaneous biliterate development.
June 2020	Semi-structured interviews	Understanding the role of the collaborative research on teaching practices.
July 2020	Meeting with the full team	Collecting individual feedback on the research project. Collecting teachers' emerging questions, needs and new perspectives.