Arts-based research on plurilingualism

[a focus on initial foreign language teacher education]

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Aims of the presentation

• Aims:
  – To discuss the potential of adopting arts-based approaches to explore the constitution and dynamics of plurilingual repertoires in foreign language teacher education programs;
  – To present current studies using arts based research (drawings and poetry) to uncover foreign language teachers' professional development, focusing on student-teachers' representations of teaching, learning and multilingualism;
  – To reflect upon the added-value of using arts-based approaches in research.

Key-words: drawings (visual narratives), plurilingual poetry, plurilingualism, translanguaging and multimodal translanguaging.
Arts-based approaches to (teacher) language education

Linguistic biographies
Professional biographies

+ Digital storytelling, collage, poetry...

Teachers’ and students’ portraits by student teachers!
Some initial assumptions

- Language learning, language teaching, language education and research on these fields have been determined by an “empire of the written discourse” or a bias which has been called “lingualism” (Block, 2014).

- In Applied Language Studies, questions such as
  - “how are languages learnt across the life span?”,
  - “how different are the learning paths of monolingual and multilingual learners?”
  - “how do student-teachers learn to become teachers?”

have been approached mainly through methods that are anchored in discourse and discursive practices (interviews, questionnaires, written narratives, to name a few), rarely taking arts, embodiment and multimodality in consideration.
Some initial assumptions

• “Most qualitative researchers analyze data that are *words*. But *people do not make meaning or express it only through words*; they also do so by art, in visual art, in symbol, in theatre based art, and through photography, music, dance, story, or poetry. Since the advent of the new millennium, there has been much more of an emphasis on how creative expression can be a part of qualitative research efforts in what has come to be referred to as *arts based research* (ABR)” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 65);

• “Arts based research is an effort to *extend beyond the limiting constrains of discursive communication* in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable” (Barono & Eisner, 2012: 1) – an approach that challenges the standardisation of research methodologies (idem: 2) and promotes “methodological pluralism” (idem: 4);
Some initial assumptions

• The concept of an arts-based approach may be considered disruptive:
  
  – it calls for an expansion what counts as data and as evidence in Applied Language Studies;
  
  – it has the potential of producing innovative approaches in the research field, as new methods and new data may be decisive in the production of new knowledge (new hypotheses, new insights):
  
  – BUT: it does not completely overlook the role of language in the production of knowledge and science, but instead considers it more holistically, in combination with other modi.

“Methodological innovations typically develop as research paradigms shift, new insights into the social world and research practices emerge, and theories are developed” (Leavy, 2015: p. 79).
Some initial assumptions

- The arts-based approach is innovative in three ways:
  - it acknowledges the **connections between emotion and cognition**, favouring emotion as the element of most importance in teaching, learning and researching, due to the emotional inscription of lived experiences;
  - it favours **other means of expression**, benefitting audiences who may, for different reasons, experience difficulties in verbal expression (hearing or speech impaired and recent migrants and refugees, …), thus providing a “multimodal voice” to “voice-deprived audiences” and, by this means, promoting equality in such audiences’ participation in the production of scientific facts and discourses;
  - it recognizes the value of **involving subjects in complex and multivoiced processes** such as language learning and teaching.

“There are many synergies between artistic and qualitative practice. In both instances, the practitioner may aim to illuminate, build understanding, or challenge our assumption. For instance artists and qualitative researchers alike may aim to illuminate something about the social world, sensitively portray people and their circumstances, develop new insights about the relationships between our sociohistorical environments and our lives, or disrupt dominant narratives and challenge biases” (Leavy, 2015: p. 17).
Grasping teachers’ professional development with visual methods
Two studies in Hamburg

Multimodal linguistic biographies of prospective foreign language teachers

• “theoretical approach”, i.e., neologism implying a positive, affirming, empowering and celebratory attitude towards teachers’ linguistic and cultural repertoires and experiences, that could be reinvested in future teaching practices.

• *Theoretical* thus merges “theory” and “ethical” concerns related to teacher education principles:
  – i) models, theories and materials better suited to respond to the needs of linguistic education nowadays;
  – ii) preparation of teachers to responsively cope with linguistic and cultural diversity; and,
  – iii) linguistic and cultural diversity as inescapable issues across the curriculum, in diverse educational settings.
Multimodal linguistic biographies of prospective foreign language teachers

• Research question: Do our students have an additive or an integrative and qualitative vision about (their) individual multilingualism? How do they reflect about becoming multilingual through a lifespan?
• Prompt: “Draw your linguistic biography”.
• 33 participants.

(In Melo-Pfeifer & Chik, 2020)
Multimodal linguistic biographies of prospective foreign language teachers

- student teachers consider the acquisition and use of their various languages (3-6 languages per student) in **linear chronological order** and as separate national linguistic systems represented visually by national flags or geographic maps.
Multimodal linguistic biographies of prospective foreign language teachers

- Geographic representations tend to reconstruct **language learning as situated** in specific spaces, acknowledgement of the influential role of mobility in language learning/acquisition. The participants seem to suggest that there is only one language for one country (location).

- Three instances of language learning are given much attention: the **family** (in the case of students with migrant backgrounds), **institutional settings** (such as school or university) and **living abroad** (being part of academic mobility or not).
• Aims of the study: i) to identify student-teachers’ images about the language they are about to start teaching; ii) to understand their images about language and teaching methodologies; and iii) to analyse student-teachers’ professional development.
• Prompt: Draw yourself in the French classroom;
• 18 participants;
• Corpus: 36 drawings (before and after the internship).

Drawing professional development

(In Melo-Pfeifer & Chik, 2020)
Drawing professional development

- Drawings at the beginning of the « Praxis » (internship) are very student-centered, reflecting their doubts and fears; after the internship, drawings include much more students, making clear that the classroom is not an « one man show »;
- Visual representation of different foreign language classroom content and methodologies, before and after the internship.
Drawing professional development

- Before the internship, student-teachers represent themselves teaching in the foreign language, but reflecting linguistic and methodological anxiety;
- After the internship, student-teachers visually represent an easier relationship with the language, the profession and the classroom.
Drawing professional development

- Before the internship, the French classroom is represented as a monolingual space; after the internship, it is represented as a space where other languages can be included, as teaching and learning resources (both English and German are present in the second drawing).
- Evolution of teaching strategies (of new vocabulary): in the first drawing, just a picture with a caption; in the second, picture, caption and translation into another language.
The study of plurilingual multimodal voices

- Arts-based approaches foster teachers’ professional development to cope an engage with linguistic diversity, by:
  - using personal lived experience related to (foreign) language learning and using, related to being and becoming a plurilingual teacher, to foster reflexivity;
  - providing theories and materials best suited to meet the current needs of language education (“identity texts”);
  - preparing teachers to respond to linguistic and cultural diversity in schools, by helping them to develop situated pedagogical practices;
  - recognizing diversity as a starting point for the teaching itself, as an 'ingredient of the school educational context' and not as a problem/obstacle, an exceptional situation or an imbalance;
  - recognizing the language teacher as a plurilingual subject himself and as a professional with agency, which is influenced by contextual and social constraints and spaces of (linguistic) liberty.
Experimenting with the plurilingual repertoire: plurilingual poetry
Plurilingual poetry: an earlier experiment in 2015

• Vivre ensemble

Mi casa es su casa
Entra, passa passa
Bienvenue dans la famille
Tu es maintenant notre fille
Fühl dich wohl und leb’dich aus
Das ist jetzt auch dein Zuhaus.
Stay as long as you wish
And come back whenever you want

Até à vista y Arrivederci
XOX

“I never thought I could write poetry”

“It’s so beautifull”

“I have never combined languages this way”

“Freedom. Borderless.”

“Exigent!” “Authentic!”

Master students (2014-2015)
Plurilingual poetry: an earlier experiment in 2015

- Vivre ensemble

Tout ce qu’on veut
It’s not to be alone
Wir halten zusammen
Was immer auch geht
Quiero una vida y un mundo
Für alle
Pour tous
For all

Master students (2014-2015)

- Vivre ensemble

Mit dir life is not only negro y blanco
But also anaranjado e azzuro
Mes rêves come true
When I am with you.

Master students (2014-2015)
The study of plurilingual poetic voices

• “As an effective reflexive or self-study technique, poetic form articulates the tensions and complexities of lived experience. It challenges our engrained modes of thinking and expression as it breaks from the confines of linear ways of knowing” (Mandrona, 2015: 107).

• Poetry as an alternative to the traditional narrative ways of doing and inquiring?

• “Emotional evocation as a part of meaning making” (Leavy, 2015: 79);

• “Poetry expands our understanding of social life, makes an impact on readers [and creators!], expresses a reality, promotes reflexivity, and is attentive to aesthetics” (Richardson, 2000, p. 254, in Leavy, 2012, p. 83).
A current study

• Participants: German students in the teacher education program:
  – 15 French student teachers, seminar “L’approche par compétences en cours de FLE”;
  – 22 Spanish student teachers, seminar “Enfoques plurales en clase de ELE”;
• Winter semester 2021/2022 (yet another pandemic semester!): asynchronous interactions, in discussion forums.
• Prompt:

  1. Think about the theme "Living together" and write a poem using languages from your plurilingual repertoires.
  2. Think about your plurilingual writing strategies: how did you choose words and languages? How did you combine your languages? What effects did you want to achieve? Did you really use all the languages in your repertoires? If not, why not? What feeling(s) did you have while writing?
  3. Comment on a poem by your colleagues from a multilingual point of view.
  4. What is the potential of this task for the EFL classroom? Use the literature from the previous sessions to reflect on this!

Students’ could write their reflection in German, French and Spanish.
A current study

Sme rozdielni, sme jedno

Quand tu te promènes dans la street,
Tu entends beaucoup de façons de greet.
Il y a des gens qui disent « Ahoj ! »,
That is something to enjoy.
Il y a des autres qui se serrent la main,
On dirait pas vraiment des copains.
Toi et tes copains, vous vous faites la bise,
C’est comme ça qu tu te sens at ease.
Tu y vas pour leur demander la façon bizarre de dire
« Bonjour ».
« Ah, c’est comme ça qu’on fait chez nous à
Hambourg ! »
La prochaine fois que tu vois tes amis,
Vous utilisez la façon d’Hambourg : Vous êtes vraiment ravis !
La chose qui au début semblait si étrange,
Fait jetzt aussi partie de ta Begrüßungsmélange.
Unterschiedliche façons font un nouveau façon,
Sme rozdielni, sme jedno.

- It actually **took me much longer** to write the poem than I thought at the beginning. I started **sorting out** which languages I could include. Then I thought I'd just start writing, which was quite difficult because I hadn't yet sorted the languages properly in my head and **always thought of several languages directly when I wanted to think of a rhyme**.

- For me - and certainly for the pupils - this task gave me the opportunity to reflect on my knowledge of foreign languages. In addition, writing a multilingual poem **makes the differences and similarities in the syntax, vocabulary and sound of different languages clear once again**.

(original in German)
A current study

Vivre ensemble

Ak cil si diam au pays de la Téranga!
Tout le monde veut être ton gars.
The ladys invite you si sèni repas.
Die Männer t’attirent dans leur débat.
Les filles veulent danser avec toi pas à pas.
Boys yi, dans la street, restent sympa.
Bébés yi crient et t’appellent papa.
Take dem alors in your bras!

It is a poem about the hospitality of the Senegalese people. I have used four languages as you can see. These three languages, namely French, English and German, are easily recognisable, while the fourth, "Wolof", which is part of the Niger-Congo language, could pose a problem for understanding. I must admit that the writing did not require much preparation time. It was quite easy to compose a poem like that, because the languages could compensate each other. I wanted to combine the languages in such a way that it would sound good. I could also have used Arabic, but because of the complexity of its writing, I didn't bother to put it in the poem.

(original in French)
I have tried to be careful not to violate the grammatical rules of the individual languages and to create some verses in only one language, others in all languages. I have only used the languages that I can speak fluently. Of course, I could have included some phrases and words in other languages, such as mile grazie, bonjour, ni hao, smörebröd, ene dok dok, etc., but it felt more right for me to use only the languages I know well. (…)

For Spanish lessons, this task can take into account several positive aspects. Firstly, the eveil aux langues is applied. The pupils can write very colourful and varied poems in Spanish, German, English and possibly other languages. (…) Furthermore, the pupils think about the constellation in which they write their sentences or verses. This gives them a better feeling for the languages they have mastered and they learn the first rules of syntax themselves. (original in German)

Vivir juntos

Zusammensein is very bien egal ob mujer, oder man.
Estar en casa everytime,
Mit einem schönen Gläsen Wein.
The main thing is the red red wine,
Denn er lässt Liebe spürbar sein.
Invitaciones para los que bailen,
Trinkt schnell, ihr sollt euch sehr beeilen.
Zusammensein para siempre,
Share love con mucha gente.
But don´t forget about manana,
Zusammensein wird einfach hammer.
A current study

I had a lot of fun writing this poem. I used English, German, Spanish and my mother tongue Hungarian, because I can only speak these languages fluently. It was not so easy for me to make the languages rhyme, especially Hungarian, which is not even an Indo-European language, was very difficult for me to put into the poem, so there is comparatively the least content in Hungarian. (…)

Of course, there will be students who don't find it so easy or who don't enjoy writing poetry. That's why I would try it out in groups, so the students can exchange ideas and get motivation from each other. Reading out the final results creates a very good atmosphere in the classroom and promotes the pupils' language awareness and motivation, in line with the "eveil-aux-langues" approach.

(original in German)
“At first, I thought the idea of writing a multilingual poem was pretty terrible. But the experience is actually really cool, especially because sometimes you really feel that a word in Spanish can express something much better than the German or English equivalent or vice versa.” (original in German);

“With regard to the Éveil aux langues, it is certainly a very good medium to make students aware of different languages and to give everyone the opportunity to present their individual language skills. (...) However, I would definitely provide the students with some support, e.g. dictionaries and create a mind map with them beforehand to collect ideas, possibly a separate one for each language on the topic of the poem.” (original in German)

“This task could be used in Spanish lessons and can help to compare languages, similar to the intercomprehension method. In the rhyming context, words that are phonologically similar are searched for. It can be quickly established that the same sounds have different orthographies in different languages. From this, regularities can be deduced and internalised. Some sounds and word endings are more frequent in some languages or do not occur at all.” (original in German).

“This kind of tasks can be very valuable for foreign language teaching. On the one hand, the pupils are made aware of other languages and their language repertoire. On the other hand, by linking the different languages, possible blockades of code switching can be interrupted.” (original in German).
Pre-service teachers reflected about...

- Me and my plurilingualism
- My students and their plurilingualism
- Me and my pedagogies with plurilingual students
Synthesis
attention
empathy
research

plurilingual lens
Arts-based approaches sustain teachers’ (and students’) plurilingualism, by...

- Allowing the emergence of subjectivity, emotion and the self expression;
- Through maximal emotional investment in task completion, enhancing reflexivity and empathy towards being and becoming plurilingual;
  - Identification with plurilingual ways of living?
- Challenging tropes such as “monolingual professional identity” and “monolingual teaching and learning modus”: translinguaging as potentially transformative of language teachers’ identities (see Moore, Bradley & Simpson, 2020).
- Constructing border-crossing practices that give teachers agency to transgress socially (also academically and educationally) constructed language boundaries, in order to challenge monolingual language ideologies in language learning and teaching and in teacher education.
References


Muito obrigada!

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