Redefining language boundaries in the multilingual classroom. Translingual practices and Plurilingual competence in context

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Plurilingualism does not describe separate competences in fixed and labelled languages, but views languages as “mobile resources” (Blommaert, 2010, p.43) within an integrated repertoire (Lüdi & Py, 2009) that can include translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013). Plurilingualism has been identified in numerous recommendations as a guiding directive for language education policies in Europe (Beacco & Byram, 2007), and more recently in Canada (Vandergrift & Churchill, 2009). While the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001), and the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to languages and cultures (FREPA-CARAP, 2013) propose explicit referential levels and descriptors to identify and develop competences and resources across the curriculum, based on the recognition that strategic skills combine knowledge in several and across languages, teachers are not necessary aware of these tools, nor of the multilingual knowledges and literacy practices learners bring into the classroom, and/or how these can be transformed into new learning resources. What happens then in the multilingual classroom, as plurilingual and pluricultural learners create new spaces and identities for themselves, marked by creative language use and multiple identifications that move beyond static linguistic boundaries, ideologies and expectations (Pennycook, 2013; Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010)?

Within this pluri-/translingual approach, and drawing from data that illustrate the variety and complexity of ways in which participants represent and enact their plurilingual competence (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 1997/2009) in various contexts and spaces of action, the aim of the presentation is two-fold: to understand teachers and learners’ own perspectives and experiences of language revitalization, mobility, and migration, and to explore the pedagogical implications and contextualizations of pluri- and translingual practices for the second-language classroom.

Data collection methods included participant observation, field notes, photographs, and audio-recorded interviews with multilingual and multicultural learners in various groups and classroom settings in Vancouver, Canada.

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