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Research articles

Supporting language rights: plurilingual pedagogies as an impetus for linguistic and cultural inclusion

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Abstract

This paper explores how the concept of plurilingualism is positioned to act as an impetus for linguistic and cultural inclusion in human-rights-based language education. Drawing on frameworks foregrounding descriptors for plurilingualism and democratic citizenship, the paper employs discourse analysis and sorting techniques to identify and align strategies of linguistic and cultural inclusion found in multimodal plurilingual task artefacts collected from a multi-year, multi-site research partnership between a Canadian university and the Italian Ministry of Education. The findings reveal that the implementation of plurilingual tasks aligns with key elements of democratic, rights-based language education, including critical understanding of communication, openness to cultural otherness, cooperation skills, and the valuing of cultural diversity. The findings of this paper contribute to further understanding of the concept of plurilingualism and to empirically informed perspectives on pedagogies that support language rights as human rights in education.

Keywords

Plurilingualism, pedagogy, language rights, culture, inclusion, democratic citizenship

Introduction

Present societies are faced with deep social transformations as a consequence of increasing human mobility. This reality has profound implications for human rights, with rights to food, adequate living standards, and education being violated across the globe. As individuals and communities move in a quest to improve their living conditions or provide better chances for their children and descendants - often also escaping from war, persecution, discrimination, poverty, and terror - language becomes another right that is violated. With traditions of monolingualism and cultural imperialism, many Western education systems fail to preserve and advance linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom, even insisting that newly arrived families refrain from using their mother tongue at home. These perspectives and practices foreground the epistemological limits of viewing notions such as country, nation state, language, and culture as clearly defined static entities that call for identity-shaping allegiances. In multicultural settings, these tendencies are increasingly visible and problematic: 'It is the limit of the linear vision, the paradigm of simplicity, that shows the impossibility of neatly fitting human phenomena and human beings into pre-determined categories' (Piccardo, in press). It is the problem of reasoning in additive ways, in which individuals accumulate experiences and knowledge as if they were filling up point cards. The narrowness of such a vision is being increasingly discussed in philosophy, sociology, and other social sciences, with concepts and metaphors that help us to come to terms with it, from post-modernity (Kramsch, 2009) to Bauman's liquid modernity (2000), to post-structuralism and the idea of rhizomatic development (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Canagarajah, 2018). In applied linguistics, discussions around migration and increasing diversity call for broader and more complex analyses, going beyond the classic study of bilingualism and its implications. The term 'multilingual turn', proposed simultaneously in two books published on different continents (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014), marks a significant theoretical shift in the field.

Alongside the increase of diversity in the social world, related to augmented mobility, studies on pre-colonial social configurations (e.g., Appadurai, 1996; Graeber & Wengrow, 2021) have also contributed to surfacing the real nature of all human communities and cultures; that of being naturally and intrinsically plural and diverse. In non-Western contexts, linguistic diversity has been the norm (Rabbi & Canagarajah, 2022) and entire periods of Western history were characterised by a flow of languages and cultures within the geo-political realities of Europe (Piccardo, 2018). As Graeber & Wengrow remind us, 'the very idea that the world is divided into … homogeneous units, each with its own history, is largely a product of the modern nation state, and the desire of each to claim for itself a deep territorial lineage' (2021, pp. 168-70). The monolingual disposition (Gogolin, 1994), which implies that monolingualism is the norm and that there are neat distributions of very identifiable 'languages and cultures', has strong roots. This representation has proved so strong that people are at odds with

different viewpoints, even though 'multilingualism [has been] the natural way of life for hundreds of millions all over the world' (Crystal, 1987, p. 360). All this diversity has long been forgotten since the new monolingual mindset took root in the Old Continent and its colonial extension and became normalised over the centuries, in both academia and society.

Due to the more recent increase in human mobility, societies find themselves confronted – once again – with the devastating consequences of this monolingual normalisation, and new crucial questions arise that require novel visions and responses. In recent decades, it has increasingly come to the fore the extent to which language rights are fundamental human rights (De Varennes, 2017; Gramling, 2016; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2022), and how the protection of these human rights requires attention both at the macro level of language policies and at the micro level of the language class and pedagogical choices. Regarding the latter point, debate around plurilingual language education has been sparked at different levels (e.g., Auger, 2004; Grommes & Hu, 2014; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; Marshall, 2020; Piccardo & Capron Puozzo, 2015; Preece, 2019). In plurilingual language education, the development of multiple and diverse linguistic and cultural competences supports quality education and the right to learn (Gellman, 2019), constituting foundational human rights. However, many language education systems restrict this right by continuing to implement monolingual, nationalist, and hegemonic beliefs and practices. In order to tackle this disconnect and to facilitate the work of both policy makers and language educators, new frameworks have been developed which offer both conceptual and practical support to facilitate a shift towards human-rights-oriented education - which includes linguistic rights - and to foster new inclusive pedagogies.

This paper draws on two such frameworks - the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture - to theorise the application of the concepts of plurilingualism and democratic culture in linguistically and culturally inclusive, human-rights-based language education. To do so, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do plurilingual pedagogies inform linguistically and culturally inclusive teaching and learning strategies?
2. To what extent do plurilingual pedagogical strategies align with descriptors of democratic culture?

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

In addition to the two conceptual frameworks mentioned above and detailed below, complexity theories (De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007; Morin, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2017; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) provide this study with a metatheoretical framework to investigate embedded systems and emergent phenomena, thus helping to reconceptualize plurality, change, and flow in research and pedagogy. Language learners/users who draw on their entire linguistic and cultural repertoires and semiotic resources while developing their proficiency are complex adaptive systems (CAS), and are embedded in broader CAS such as the classes and the communities they are operating in. In turn, the different languages, or varieties that they use, are themselves CAS which are developing and changing over time as a result of the way they are used by the different individuals. With this view, complexity theories allow us to overcome the linear, clockwork conception of nature and make space for freedom, creativity, and the emergence of the new and the unpredictable (Larsen-Freeman, 2017). Emergence is indeed 'the spontaneous occurrence of something new' (van Geert, 2008, p. 182) and, as Larsen-Freeman highlights, 'it arises from the interactions of the components of the system while interacting with its environment' (Larsen-Freeman, 2017, p. 15). In line with this theoretical framework, 'language learning can be considered as an emergent process that involves individuals engaged in social interactions that are complex and unpredictable' (Piccardo, 2022, p. 69), as will be demonstrated throughout the paper.

In addition to this metatheoretical framework, this study is conceptualised within two conceptual frameworks developed by the Council of Europe (CoE), founded in 1949 by the treaty of London in the wake of the disasters of World War II. It is the oldest European institution whose core mission is, alongside the rule of law and democracy, the protection of human rights. The Council of Europe, which comprises 46 member states, should not be confused with the European Union (EU), which has 27 member states and has been rooted in the idea of an economic and potentially increasingly political shared space since the foundation of its forerunner, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), in 1951. One of the CoE's major achievements is the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), which itself was inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its main institution is the European Court of Human Rights, based in Strasbourg. The entire work of the CoE in the field of education aims to foster inclusive education, with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001) (henceforth CEFR) and, particularly, its updated and extended edition, the *CEFR Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020) (henceforth CEFRCV), along with the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (Council of Europe, 2016) (henceforth RFCDC). All these documents are deeply rooted in a vision of equity, inclusion, social justice, and the protection of minorities and linguistic rights.

In accordance with this vision, the CoE has made the political terminological choice to distinguish plurilingualism from multilingualism; a choice that has not been adopted by the EU, which has historically followed an additive educational model of L1 + 2 (other languages) and for whom the adoption of plurilingualism would require radical changes to language policy, as explained in detail by Piccardo (in press). For the CoE, the different use of two prefixes of Latin origin, *multi-* and *pluri-*, with the former stressing a linear additive paradigm of languages and communities and the latter foregrounding a complex, dynamic paradigm which values and builds on plurality, is crucial:

> First of all, it has 'a leverage effect in helping to conceptualize the fundamental difference between the two opposite visions of linguistic and cultural diversity: pureness or richness, rejection of otherness or empathy, living side by side or living together, tolerance or active interest' (Piccardo, 2019a, p. 1007). Secondly, it tackles upfront the idea of a linguistic repertoire made up of the different linguistic and semiotic resources that an individual can draw upon as interconnected and as synergistically developing during the course of their life trajectory. (Piccardo, Germain-Rutherford & Lawrence, 2022, p. 5)

Indeed, 'Plurilingualism is a unique, overarching notion, implying a subtle but profound shift in perspective, both horizontally, toward the use of multiple languages, and vertically, toward valuing even the most partial knowledge of a language (and other para- and extralinguistic resources) as tools for facilitating communication' (Piccardo & Capron Puozzo 2015, p. 319). The development of the concept of plurilingualism, alongside the idea of fostering intercultural education (Byram, 2003; Beacco et al., 2016), contributed to the trailblazing work of the CoE in supporting linguistic rights in (language) education. With the recent publication of the CEFRCV and the RFCDC, this trailblazing vision comes to full bloom, as it provides policy makers and practitioners with practical tools and resources to make plurilingual, intercultural, and democratic human-rights-based paradigms a pedagogical reality.

Plurilingual pedagogies, rooted in human rights and democratic education (Lüdi, 2022), help to overcome restrictive approaches and processes that keep languages and cultures separate by supporting the inclusion of diverse linguistic and cultural repertoires and resources in learning and teaching (Piccardo et al., 2022; Piccardo & Langé, 2023; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020). Plurilingual pedagogical practices may include a number of activities: mother-tongue mediation (researching information in one language and explaining it in another) (Burton & Rajendram, 2019; Dendrinos, 2006); crosslinguistic comparison (e.g., identifying lexical cognates across two or more named languages) (De Carlo & Garbarino, 2022; Cole, 2019); translanguaging (e.g., drawing on words or phrases in a home language while discussing a task in class) (Alvarez, 2014; Galante, 2020); or affirmation of diverse linguistic and cultural identities (e.g., explicitly discussing, normalising, and valuing class members' plurilingual

repertoires) (Garbarino, 2022; Schmor et al., 2023). By leveraging the diverse linguistic and cultural resources within and beyond the classroom, plurilingual pedagogies constitute a response to existing calls in human rights education to protect and preserve all languages in an educational community, especially indigenous and minoritised languages (De Varennes, 2021; May, 2011). In this way, plurilingual pedagogies provide an avenue to help pursue inclusive, quality education for all. They also contribute to the culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue which informs the second framework of the CoE mentioned above - the RFCDC, a 'document of reference founded on the values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law' (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 11).

The RFCDC highlights how:

> intercultural dialogue requires respect for the dignity, the equality and the human rights of other people. It also requires critical reflection on the relationship between the cultural groups to which those involved in the intercultural dialogue belong, and respect for the cultural affiliations of others. In order to participate in intercultural dialogue, citizens require intercultural competence, and respect is a vital component of that competence. (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 24)

Based on these notions, the RFCDC provides a conceptual model of democratic and intercultural competence (Table 1) and a series of descriptors to assist educational planners and practitioners in their work (Barrett, 2020).

Table 1

Conceptual model adapted from Council of Europe (2016) 'The RFCDC conceptual model of democratic and intercultural competence'.

Values	**Attitudes**
Valuing human dignity and human rights	Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
Valuing cultural diversity	Respect
Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law	Civic-mindedness
	Responsibility
	Self-efficacy
	Tolerance of ambiguity

Skills	**Knowledge and critical understanding**
Autonomous learning skills Analytical and critical thinking skills Skills of listening and observing Empathy Flexibility and adaptability Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills Cooperation skills Conflict-resolution skills	Knowledge and critical understanding of the self Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

By positioning the right to language - in all its tongues, dialects, and registers - as a crucial value, attitude, skill, and understanding, plurilingual pedagogies resonate with several of the descriptors included in the RFCDC, which promote human rights through an unequivocal respect for and valuing of humanity's diverse linguistic and cultural forms. It is through this common vision of language-as-right (Hornberger, 1998) that the present study theorises the relationship between plurilingual, action-oriented pedagogical tasks and human-rights-based language education.

Materials and methods

In investigating the research questions outlined in the introduction, this paper identifies, analyses, and theorises instances of linguistic and cultural inclusion found in multimodal, plurilingual task artefacts collected during the second iteration of a multi-year, multi-site research project entitled 'Supporting Language Learning: Fostering Pedagogical Innovation in a Time of Crisis', a partnership between the University of Toronto (Principal Investigator Enrica Piccardo) and the regional office for Lombardy of the Italian Ministry of Education. In turn, this partnership built on resources (plurilingual action-oriented scenarios) developed during a previous SSHRC-funded research grant (Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Reinvented (LINCDIRE) https://www.lincdireproject.org/). The iteration referenced in this article expanded on the Lombardy-Toronto collaboration with the implementation of plurilingual, action-oriented scenarios in language classrooms in the Italian regions of Campania, Lazio, and Lombardy in 2021 and 2022.

To address the first research question - to what extent do plurilingual pedagogies inform linguistically and culturally inclusive teaching and learning strategies? - the present study

draws on a discourse analysis (Johnstone, 2017) of data from the above project. This analysis draws on a set of multimodal task artefacts produced during the implementation of plurilingual, action-based scenarios (Piccardo & North, 2019) by the project's 110 English, French, Spanish, and German language teacher participants recruited from primary and middle schools across Italy. An example of a plurilingual, action-based scenario is provided in Table 2, depicting steps from the adaptable scenario template 'Lost in a New Town', offered in English, Spanish, and Bulgarian on the LINCDIRE project's LITE (Language Integration through E-Portfolio) website (https://lite.lincdireproject.org/all-scenarios-2/).

Table 2

'Lost in a New Town' scenario description and steps.

Scenario Description	**Scenario Steps**
Lost in a New Town/In einer neuen Stadt verlaufen/Изгубен в нов град You are participating in an exchange program to Germany, and you have lost your group after the city tour. Now you are trying to find your way back to the youth hostel, but unfortunately, your cellphone is out of battery. You cannot check online or call a friend. However, you do have a paper map and can ask someone on the street for help.	Step 1: Have you ever lost your way? Step 2: Comparing cities Step 3: Can you help me find my way? Step 4: Let's get lost together Step 5: Culminating task: Lost in a New Town Step 6: (Homework) Our Plurilingual City

In this scenario, the instructions for step 2 require students to draw on their plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires:

> In your groups, compare the German city maps with other cities from around the world. Try to note how the cities are laid out and what the layout might tell you about the culture … Then, using your knowledge of all the other languages you know, can you guess the meanings of some of the unfamiliar words on the map? As a class, create a plurilingual vocabulary chart that lists all the vocabulary for directions, names of streets, and landmarks that you can come up with. Which of the languages that you already know are similar to the German words? Which are the most different?

Each scenario used in this study features at least one step with an explicit focus on activating plurilingualism or pluriculturalism. Once the task artefacts (e.g., a video role play, a digital

storybook, a photo of a handwritten card, etc.) from these scenarios were collected, a spreadsheet was used to code, for each artefact, the associated scenario title, target language, task modality, and presence of languages other than the target language. Example spreadsheet items for three task artefacts are reproduced in Table 3.

Table 3

Example spreadsheet items.

Scenario title	Target language	Task modality	Other languages present
Our community cookbook	English/French	Digital cookbook	Family recipes in Spanish, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Italian dialects
How are you feeling?	English	Paper posters	Vocab in Italian, French, German, Serbian, Russian, Malayalam, Spanish
Town hall environment meeting	English	Digital poster	Text in Spanish, Italian, French, Ukrainian, Arabic, Yoruba

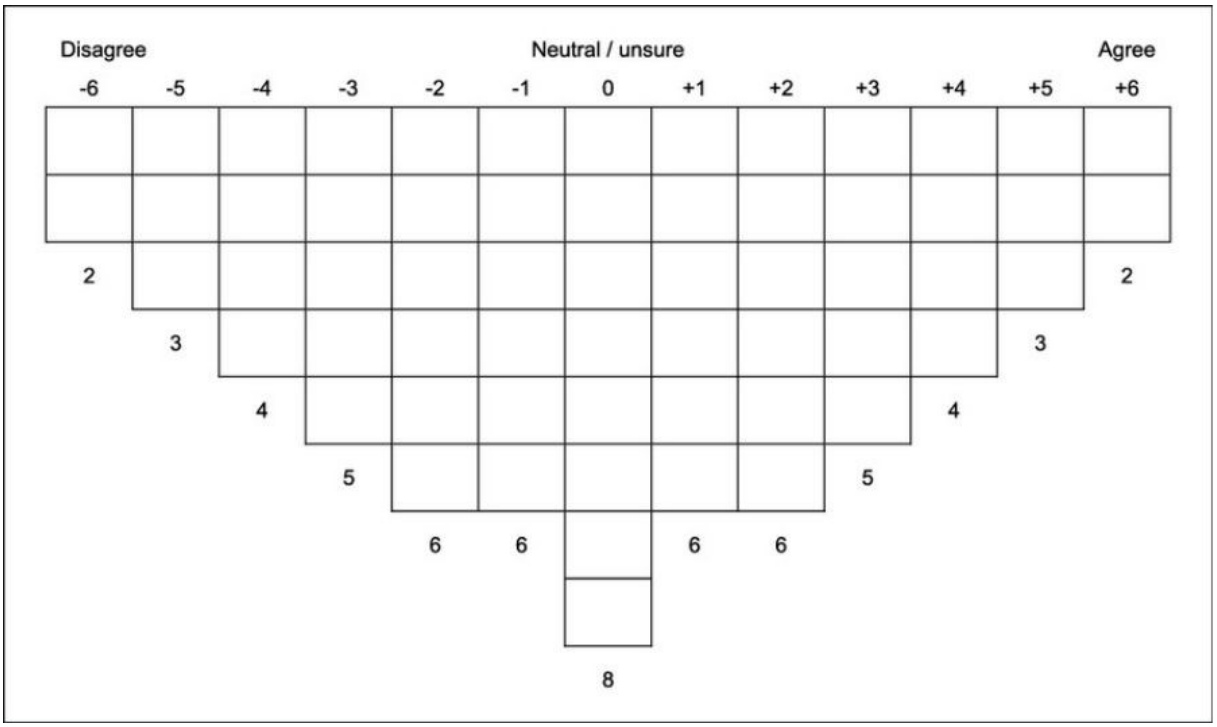
After the initial spreadsheet coding of the artefacts, NVIVO software was used to code the 'other languages present' column into nodes representing a series of 8 linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies (Table 5 in the findings section), conceptualised as ways in which languages and cultures other than the target language/culture were included during the implementation of the plurilingual scenario tasks. The instances and distribution of these strategies across scenarios were subsequently tallied for further analysis.

To address the second research question - to what extent do plurilingual pedagogical strategies align with descriptors of democratic culture - the linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies were then paired with RFCDC descriptors and analysed for converging features, following an approach rooted in Q-methodology. Q-methodology, or Q-sort, originally developed by William Stephenson in the 1930s, enables a systematic study of perspectives on an issue through the sorting or ranking of a set of statements (Clausen et al., 2021; Cooke, 2020). In Q-sort data collection, statements about a topic (the phenomenon discourse) are first defined. In this study, statements about democratic culture were collected from the full bank of 447 validated RFCDC descriptors. Q-sort data collection methods then require a selection of representative statements. For this study, 82 representative statements

were selected from the bank of 447 descriptors, using a terminology search which included the key words 'language', 'linguistic', 'culture', 'inter/cultural', 'country', 'an/other', 'different', 'new', 'alternative', 'diverse', 'perspective', and 'belief'. These 82 representative descriptors were then paired down to 28 upon cross referencing and confirming their presence in the task artefact data. A final step of the Q-sort methodology involves performing a card-ranking activity (Figure 1) using the selected statements. In the Q-sort process, statements are assigned a hierarchical position in a forced-choice, quasi-normal, and symmetrical distribution according to the extent to which the statement was perceived to describe the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, the 28 descriptors were ranked for their perceived alignment with each of the 8 linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies (i.e., agreeing or disagreeing with their alignment), allowing for the determination of relevant pairings of descriptors with strategies in this first sort (i.e., those descriptors that were sorted into the 'agree' ranking for each strategy). In the final sort, 4 descriptors were eliminated in a forced choice to enable equal distribution of descriptors across strategies. Through this process, the alignment of RFCDC descriptors with linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies resulting from plurilingual scenario tasks was determined.

Figure 1

Example Q-sorting grid used in Q-Methodology



Findings

The data set of 110 task artefacts represented a total of 19 plurilingual, action-based scenarios and 4 CEFR levels (Table 4).

Table 4

Scenarios with CEFR levels in descending order of frequency.

Scenario	CEFR Level	Frequency
How are you feeling	A1	25
Our community cookbook	A2/B1	18
A weekend away	A1	16
Wanna be my buddy	A1/A2	12
The winter weather report	A1	7
Lost in a new town	A2	5
Mascot poster	A1/A2	5
Fall feast	A1	4
Food tour through Italy	B2	3
Holiday wish list	A1	2
It's great to finally meet you	A2	2
Our museum, our stories	A1	2
Town hall environment meeting	A2	2
Traditional storytelling for the 21st century	A2/B1	2
Let's go to the movies	A2	1
Our family history	A2	1
Plurilingual songs	A2	1
The perfect year-end activity for our multicultural class	A2	1
The time machine	B2	1

Resulting from the implementation or adaptation of the steps in these 19 scenarios, the 110 collected task artefacts displayed 8 different strategies of linguistic and cultural inclusion (Table 5).

Table 5

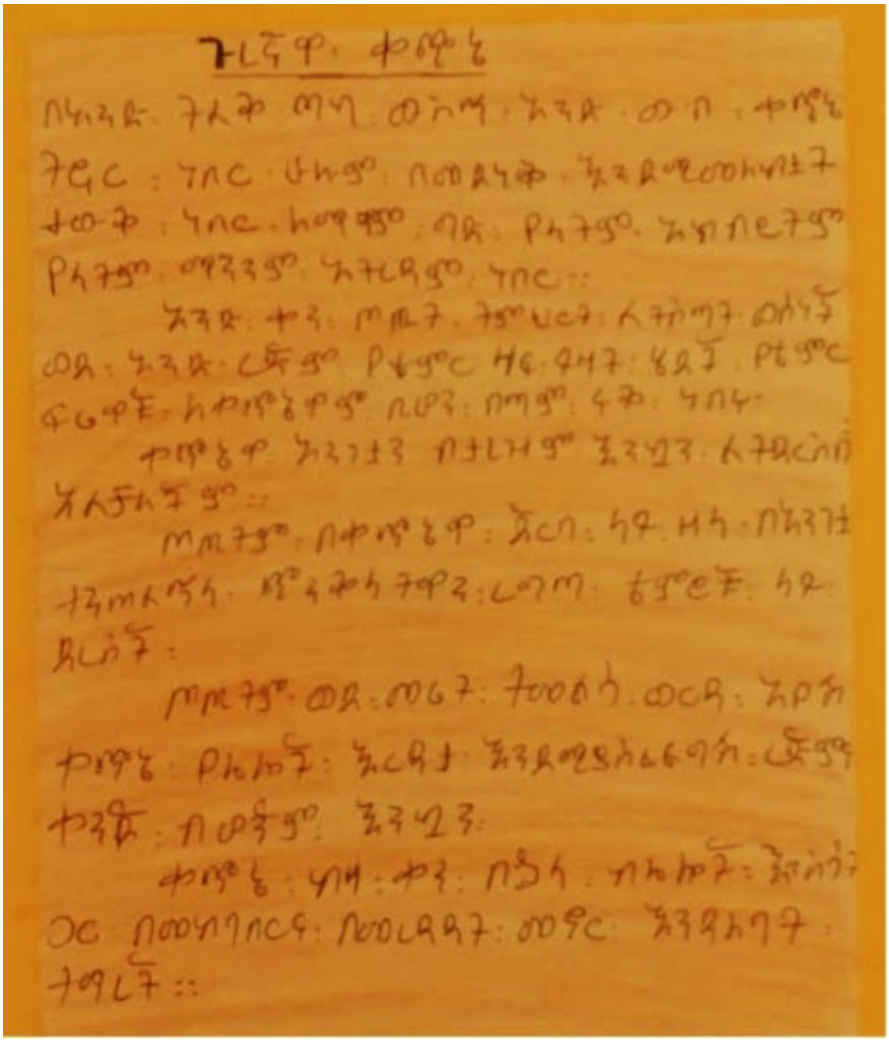
Descriptions and frequency of linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies found in plurilingual scenario task artefacts.

Strategy	Description	Frequency
Incorporating home/heritage languages	Bringing knowledge of languages that students or their family members speak at home into the classroom	44
Displaying linguistic diversity	Visually or aurally presenting parallel translations of words or phrases in multiple languages	42
Incorporating other (non-heritage) languages	Referring to other languages studied at school or languages unknown to students	39
Mother tongue mediation	Using the mother tongue to brainstorm, follow instructions, engage in self-evaluation, etc.	28
Expressing cultural identity	Using the target language to share aspects of students' cultures (e.g., traditions, food, symbols, beliefs)	17
Plurilanguaging	Drawing on a flexible and situational use of multiple languages for communicative purposes	11
Intercultural mediation	Using the target language to act as a cultural ambassador (i.e., facilitate a newcomer or visitor's navigation of the local cultural context)	10
Recognizing national/regional diversity	Discussing and / or showcasing linguistic and / or cultural diversity within a nation, such as dialectal varieties or regional cultural traditions	8

The most frequent of these strategies was that of 'incorporating home/heritage languages' during the implementation of the scenario tasks. This strategy was seen, for example, in the scenario 'Traditional storytelling for the 21st century', which instructs students to 'share [their] favourite childhood fairytale with [their] classmates' in its original language. One task artefact included the African fairytale 'The vain giraffe', presented by a student in Amharic (Figure 2).

Figure 2

'Traditional storytelling for the 21st century' task artefact.



The next most frequent strategy was 'displaying linguistic diversity'. This strategy was found in an artefact from the 'Town hall environment meeting' scenario, which requires students to 'create a multilingual digital poster that lists [environmentally friendly] actions that private citizens have taken or could take.' In one of these poster artefacts (Figure 3), parallel text was displayed in Italian, French, Arabic, Yoruba, Ukrainian, and Spanish.

Figure 3

'Town hall environment meeting' task artefact.

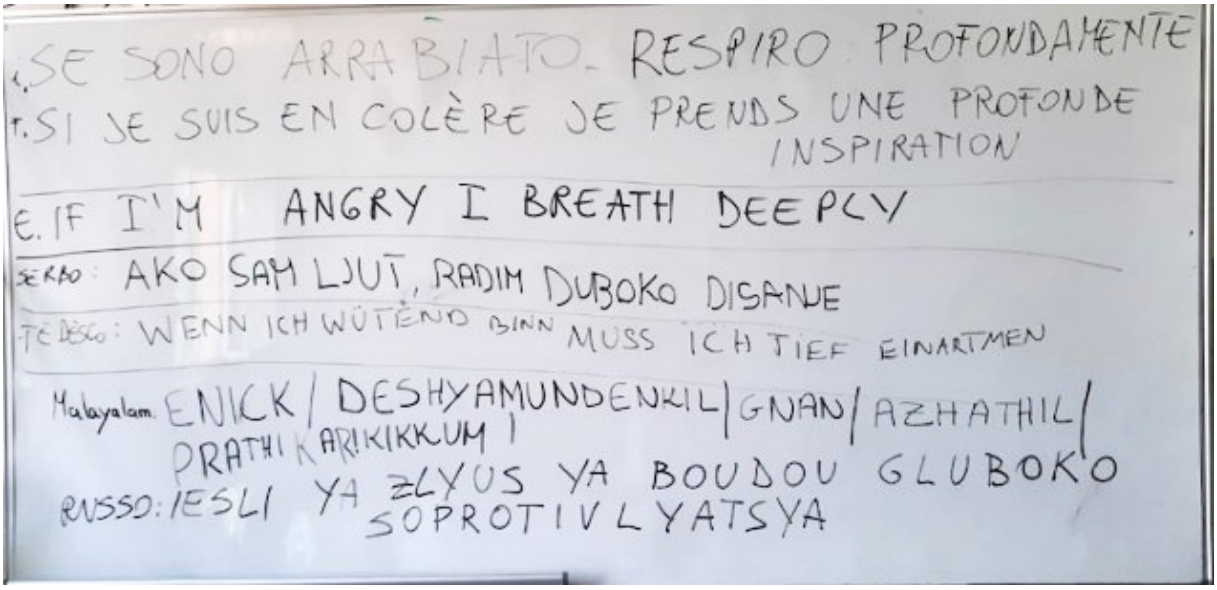
The strategy of 'incorporating other (non-heritage) languages' was also frequently present in the artefacts analysed. One task artefact from an English-language version of the scenario 'A weekend away' showed the use of Greek, as the class decided that the family member they were visiting lived in Corfu. In other scenarios, artefacts revealed the inclusion of other languages studied at school (e.g., French, Spanish, German).

A further frequent strategy was the use of 'mother tongue mediation'. In most cases, this meant brainstorming, giving/following instructions, or completing (self-) evaluation rubrics in Italian. However, for students with a mother tongue other than Italian, this also meant using their mother tongues to mediate new vocabulary (presented either in Italian or a target language). For example, in the scenario 'How are you feeling', which invites students to create

posters sharing what they do when they feel different emotions, one task artefact featured phrases in Italian, Serbian, German, Malayalam, and Russian, along with the target language of English (Figure 4).

Figure 4

'How are you feeling?' task artefact.



Following this, the strategy of 'expressing cultural identity' was most frequently present. An example was observed in another iteration of the scenario 'A weekend away', which requires students to select a gift to bring on a trip to visit a family member in another city and 'create a special message that explains why this gift is so important in your hometown.' One class artefact included gifts of a Moldovan shirt, a Senegalese luck bracelet, a Bosnian necklace, a map of Germany, an Italian mandolin, and an Italian dictionary.

A less frequent but notable strategy was the use of plurilanguaging (Piccardo, 2017; 2021) in the task artefacts. For instance, one video (available here) from an adapted scenario 'Food tour through El Salvador' featured students in a role play ordering pupusas, with the '*pupusero*' speaking Spanish and two 'travellers' speaking English while using a combination of gestures and Spanish-English cognates to successfully complete their order (Figure 5).

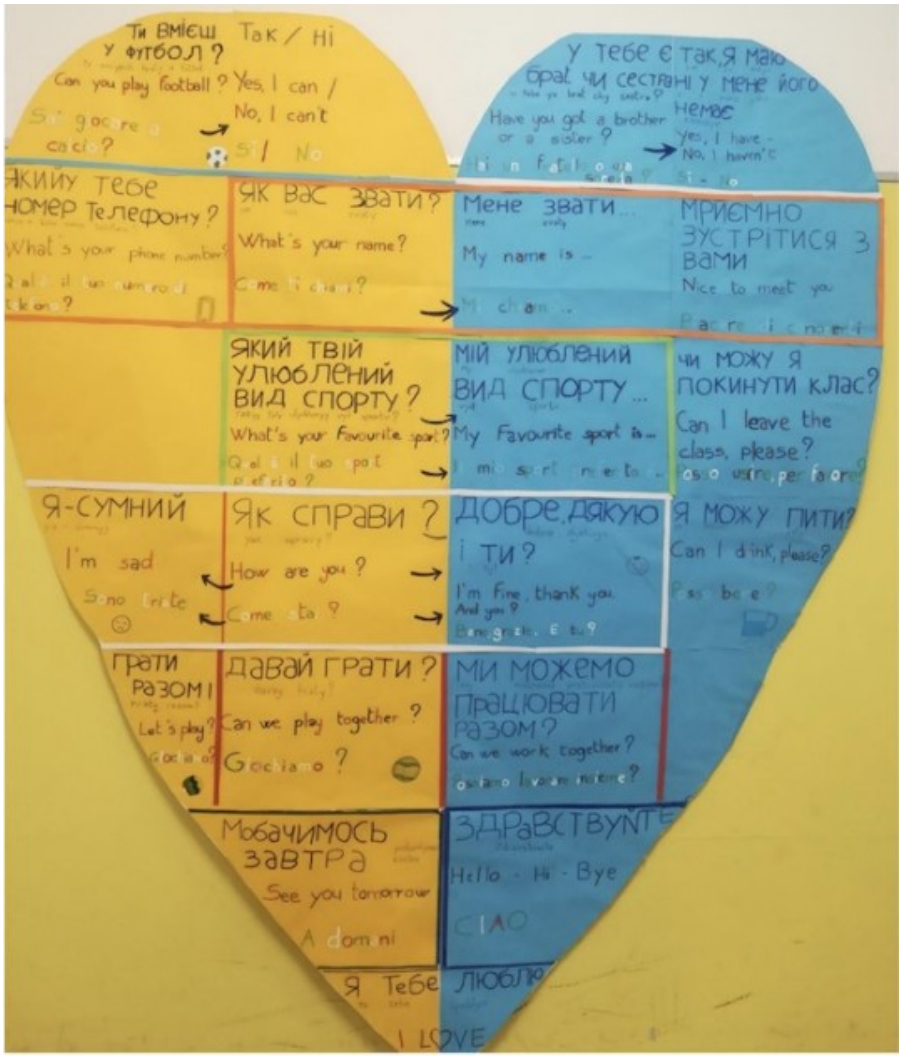
Figure 5

'Food tour around the world' task artefact.

Another strategy present in a smaller subset of task artefacts was 'intercultural mediation', with students acting as cultural ambassadors. For example, in the scenario 'Wanna be my buddy', which asks students to create a plurilingual welcome poster for a new classmate and 'spend some time researching how to say some words and phrases in the new student's home language', one artefact showed a poster with greetings, questions, and useful phrases written by the students in Ukrainian, Italian, and English (Figure 6).

Figure 6

'Wanna be my buddy' task artefact.



Finally, the strategy of 'recognizing national/regional diversity' was also present in a subset of task artefacts. One of these (Figure 7) included family recipes from different regions of Italy, alongside Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Argentinian, Peruvian, and Cape Verdean recipes. This was from the scenario 'Our community cookbook', which asks students to bring in 'a recipe that has special meaning to [their] family, and to [their] culture.'

Figure 7

'Our community cookbook' task artefact

Evidently, the majority of the task artefacts included more than one strategy. For example, the task artefact in Figure 3 shows evidence not only of 'displaying linguistic diversity' but also of the strategies of 'incorporating home/heritage languages' (Ukrainian, Arabic and Yoruba; languages not studied at school) and 'incorporating other (non-heritage) languages' (Spanish and French; languages studied at school) as well as 'mother tongue mediation' (Italian, for some students). Likewise, the task artefact in Figure 6 demonstrates the use of not only 'intercultural mediation' (acting as cultural ambassadors to welcome a student from Ukraine) but also 'displaying linguistic diversity' (showcasing three languages on the classroom walls).

Of the 110 task artefacts collected, 80% showed evidence of the use of linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies. There were 22 that showed no evidence of the inclusion of languages or cultures other than the target language/culture. Of these 22, 13 were concentrated in the most frequently used scenario, 'How are you feeling'. However, for the second most frequently used scenario, 'Our community cookbook', there was evidence of the use of linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies in every task artefact collected, and of 7 of the 8 strategies, as represented in Table 6. The third most frequently used scenario, 'A weekend away', contained evidence of all 8 strategies, while the fourth most frequently used scenario, 'Wanna be my buddy', showed the inclusion of 6 of the 8 strategies.

Table 6

Frequency and distribution of strategy use for the 4 most frequently used scenarios.

	How are you feeling	**Our community cookbook**	**A weekend away**	**Wanna be my buddy**
No strategy	13	-	3	1
Incorporating home / heritage languages	10	11	5	4
Displaying linguistic diversity	9	7	4	-
Expressing cultural identity	1	5	5	7
Incorporating other (non-heritage) languages	2	9	7	4
Mother tongue mediation	4	4	2	3
Plurilanguaging	1	2	1	2
Intercultural mediation	-	-	1	4
Recognizing national/regional diversity	1	4	1	-

The use of these linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies was found to align with 24 descriptors of democratic culture, determined through the Q-sort methodological approach described in the methods section. Reproduced and adapted in Table 7 below, the 24 descriptors represented all four categories of the RFCDC conceptual model of democratic and intercultural competence: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. Across these 4 areas, 11 subcategories were represented: 6 descriptors were of linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills, while 3 were of knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication. 2 descriptors came from each of the following subcategories: valuing cultural diversity, openness to cultural otherness, analytical and critical thinking skills, skills of listening and observing, cooperation skills, and knowledge and critical understanding of culture, cultures, and religions. A single descriptor came from 3 other subcategories: respect, tolerance of ambiguity, and flexibility and adaptability.

Table 7

Alignment of linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies with RFCDC descriptors.

Strategy	**RFCDC Descriptors**		
1. Incorporating home/heritage languages	1a) The task invites students to 'share [their] own ideas and resources with others'	1b) The task requires students to 'mediate linguistically in intercultural exchanges by translating, interpreting or explaining'	1c) The task 'gives space to others to express themselves'
2. Displaying linguistic diversity	2a) The task 'requires dealing with unknown or unusual circumstances'	2b) Students are invited to 'compare different ideas when thinking about a topic'	2c) Students must 'work effectively and respectfully with other people'
3. Expressing cultural identity	3a) The task 'argues that one should try to learn from one another in order to deepen understanding of both one's own and other people's backgrounds'	3b) The task invites the student to recognize that 'although a member of his/her own culture, he/she is … comfortable in one or more other cultures'	3c) The task provokes 'interest in working with people from different cultural backgrounds'
4. Incorporating other (non-heritage) languages	4a) The task requires students to 'recognise the different ways of speaking that are employed in at least one other social group or culture'	4b) The task encourages the student to be 'linguistically and culturally competent in at least one language and culture other than his/her own'	4c) The task encourages students to 'describe basic cultural practices (e.g. eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in one other culture'
5. Mother tongue mediation	5a) The task invites students to 'meet the communicative	5b) The task invites students to 'describe different	5c) The task encourages students to 'reflect critically on

Strategy	RFCDC Descriptors		
	demands of intercultural situations by using a shared language to understand another language'	communicative conventions that are employed in at least one other social group or culture'	the different communicative conventions that are employed in at least one other social group or culture'
6. Plurilanguaging	6a) The task encourages students to '[watch] speakers' gestures and general body language to help himself/herself figure out the meaning of what they are saying'	6b) The task requires students to 'identify when two people are trying to say the same thing but in different ways'	6c) The task invites students to 'explain how different forms of language are used in different situations and contexts'
7. Intercultural mediation	7a) The task '[promotes] communication and dialogue between people from different cultural backgrounds'	7b) The task requires students to 'communicate efficiently and effectively in an intercultural setting'	7c) The task encourages 'curiosity about other beliefs and interpretations and other cultural orientations and affiliations'
8. Recognizing national/regional diversity	8a) The task requires students to 'analyse the variability which occurs in behavioural patterns within cultures'	8b) The task 'expresses the view that the cultural diversity within a society should be positively valued and appreciated'	8c) The task encourages students to 'analyse different points of view, products or practices found in other cultures'

For example, the task artefact for 'Fall feast' (Figure 8) showed students sharing their linguistic resources with the class (descriptor 1a): a collaborative vocabulary chart revealed the inclusion of Italian, English, Albanian, Portuguese, Polish, and Romanian in brainstorming food items. Further, as not all members of the class had knowledge of all these languages, students had to translate or explain words to their classmates or teacher (descriptor 1b) in this task. As such, the class had to deal with unknown circumstances (descriptor 2a) while comparing different ideas about a topic in different languages (descriptor 2b). They also had to use a shared language, perhaps Italian or English, to understand words in another language

(descriptor 5a). The presence of these descriptors is consistent with the strategies (1, 2, and 5) initially identified in the coding of this specific task artefact. Similar convergences were found for other descriptor items across the task artefact data.

Figure 8

'Fall feast' task artefact.

Discussion

The strategies identified in the multimodal task artefacts speak to the linguistic and cultural diversity present in the Italian context, with heritage language inclusion representing the most commonly emerging strategy. By contrast, the least commonly used strategy of including regional diversity may indicate a need to continue to promote dialectal language varieties, which are frequently stigmatised in Italy and other European nations (e.g., Alfonzetti, 2017) and represent a key priority for human rights in language education. On the other hand, the frequently used strategy of including non-heritage languages, such as other languages studied at school, destabilises concerns that a 'multicultural' class is needed in order to practise plurilingual pedagogies, and thereby advances further avenues for promoting language rights in class.

Of course, the identification of linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies in this study does not represent a holistic theorisation of all possible plurilingual strategies represented in the scenario tasks. In the artefact data, it also was unclear whether other strategies were used at different points of the implementation of the scenario and were simply not present in the task artefacts. For example, it is possible that mother tongue mediation was used while giving oral instructions in a task, but that this was not observable in the final task artefact. It is also possible that teachers were more likely to include other languages during the various steps of the scenario but preferred to have the final task produced in the target language. To better understand this, it is necessary to consider the scenario in its entirety and not only the final task, which was not always possible in analysing the task artefacts collected.

Despite these limitations, this study confirms the high likelihood (80%, as reported above) of plurilingual tasks to result in the use of linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies, which can support language rights and human rights in education. Importantly, the high concentration of the absence of observable inclusive strategies in the scenario most frequently chosen by teachers during this research project suggests the need for more professional development regarding the concept of plurilingualism and how it can foster linguistic and cultural inclusion and human rights in language education. Further, a more equal distribution of the different types of inclusive strategies could be incorporated into plurilingual tasks by modifying some suggested steps. For example, in a scenario like 'Our community cookbook', which featured a notable inclusion of regional diversity, a step could be added to also encourage intercultural mediation (not identified as a strategy used with this scenario), such as preparing a local meal for a visitor. Likewise, the scenario 'Wanna be my buddy', which promoted intercultural mediation, could be adapted to incite a greater focus on regional diversity, perhaps by asking students to welcome a classmate from another region of the country. Promoting a variety of linguistically and culturally inclusive strategies would help to enact a more holistic rights-based model of language education.

In terms of the framework of democratic culture, there was a natural convergence among the plurilingual strategies and those democratic culture descriptors already aligned with language or culture, such as in the subcategories of linguistic skills, valuing cultural diversity, or critical understanding of language and culture. However, the alignment of strategies and descriptors also showed synergies in categories that do not explicitly focus on the role of language or culture - such as analytical and critical thinking skills, flexibility and adaptability, or cooperation skills - implying the relevance of linguistic and cultural factors across broader areas of the RFCDC and other human-rights-based frameworks. For instance, it is possible that the plurilingual scenario tasks being also based in an action-oriented framework (Piccardo & North, 2019) may have informed the emergence of alignments that bridged language and other categories of the RFCDC descriptors. This affirms the productive possibilities of pairing

plurilingual pedagogies with other frameworks to support rights-based language education, as this study has done.

In this study, while aligning the plurilingual strategies with RFCDC descriptors, the use of Q-sort ranking techniques helped to eliminate descriptors that were heavily influenced by one task artefact. For example, the following three descriptors were initially identified as relevant to the strategy of intercultural mediation: 'can help someone new become part of a group'; 'expresses readiness to contribute to improving the situation of other people in the community'; and 'can recognise when a companion needs his/her help'. However, upon redistributing the descriptors in the final sorting process, it was found that these descriptors related only to task artefacts from the scenario 'Wanna be my buddy' and did not reflect the broader strategy as observed across the artefact data. This beneficial outcome of a forced choice process is consistent with observations from other researchers working with Q-methodology. These researchers recognize the potential of the methodology to generate more concrete outcomes from subjectivity (Irie et al., 2018; Lundberg et al., 2020) and develop theory through exploratory work (Stenner et al., 2008) by sorting items in relation to each other, rather than in isolation as in Likert style scales (Stenner et al., 2008). This process, in turn, helps define and describe phenomena rooted in complexity (Lo Bianco, 2015). The development of rigorous, qualitative methodologies that centre the complexity of humanity in research is also a priority for human-rights-informed (education) frameworks. Indeed, the pedagogical and methodological complexity that emerged in this study is consistent with the dynamic and emerging nature of its own complex adaptive system: the diverse classrooms, communities, individuals, ideas, and approaches that interacted to inform it.

Conclusions

As evidenced above, the concept of plurilingualism is positioned to act as an impetus for linguistic and cultural inclusion in human-rights-based language education. The present study reveals that the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies aligns with key elements of a democratic, rights-based language education (Ifeanyichukwu & Chyke, 2019; Starkey, 2011) that includes critical understanding of communication, openness to cultural otherness, cooperation skills, and the valuing of cultural diversity. As such, the findings of this paper contribute to further understanding of the concept of plurilingualism and to empirically-informed perspectives on pedagogies that critically support language rights as human rights in education.

The findings also imply the importance of cross-fertilisation between the fields of human rights and language education. With many existing interdisciplinary parallels, the cross-infusion of democratic culture and plurilingual frameworks can mutually enrich knowledge

and practice in and across these fields. A focus on human rights and democratic citizenship can strengthen the inclusive nature of plurilingual paradigms. Likewise, a greater focus on language as a key aspect in valuing cultural identity and promoting pluricultural cooperation can reinforce human rights-based frameworks.

For instance, descriptors such as 'valuing linguistic diversity' or 'maintaining heritage languages and dialects' could be added to the RFCDC framework. Other RFCDC descriptors could be modified, such as 'tolerating ambiguity', which could be extended to include 'tolerating linguistic ambiguity' or 'tolerating cultural ambiguity'. Further, the reference to 'native speaker' competence in descriptor 1211 could be removed, in order to align with the CEFRCV descriptors, which have intentionally avoided any instance of the term 'native speaker' in consideration of its problematic and ill-defined nature (Cheng et al., 2021; Mahboob & Golden, 2013). In doing so, the RFCDC could further encourage language rights through an acknowledgement and inclusion of diverse and dynamic linguistic competences in its descriptors.

One fundamental added value of the provision of descriptors is that of offering a tool that allows practitioners to engage with aspects and dimensions that might remain hidden if not explicitly stated. This visibility is particularly important for both teachers and learners as it encourages a reflective attitude, which in turn may increase awareness and facilitate or boost agency. Descriptors are of great value when it comes to supporting teachers in their planning: by selecting and, if necessary, adapting descriptors, teachers are facilitated in the necessary reflective process that adopting a backward design (Richards, 2013) requires. The use of descriptors also enables greater alignment between teaching, learning and assessment as descriptors are also a way of 'signposting' the learning journey. By sharing descriptors with learners, a teacher can help them to develop in different ways: to reflect on their own plurilingual and pluricultural trajectories, as well as on the different interconnected facets of human rights; to take ownership of their learning process; and to feel empowered vis-a-vis languages and cultures.

By bringing together two frameworks like the CEFRCV and the RFCDC, it becomes clear how languages cannot be separated from the rest of education. Education happens through languages; it is a process of languaging - a 'form of social agency able to negotiate between interactive and self-directed meta-regulation **linguistic sense-making**' (Cuffari et al., 2015, p. 1110, original highlighting) and a process that takes place 'in the interindividual relational domain' (Raimondi, 2014, p. 6). A plurilingual perspective further amplifies this process as it fosters learners' awareness of the dynamic, evolving nature of their repertoire. In turn, this broadens the scope of learners' social agency, supports the construction and manipulation of meaning, and enhances reflection on linguistic and cultural diversity and the constant

mediation process that this diversity requires. Applying the notion of plurilingualism to the four RFCDC categories means that language should not be seen as a subcategory, but instead infused throughout all categories.

This study demonstrates that further interdisciplinary collaboration and collective understanding of languages as a human right is necessary and timely. The use of the CEFRCV and RFCDC frameworks can serve as a valuable initial step to raise awareness of the place and role of languages across the curriculum, of the complex, dynamic, and constantly evolving relationship that all learners have with their languages and cultures.

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