Language(s) and the construction of knowledge in European HE
8-9 April 2022
Università per Stranieri di Siena (UNISTRASI)

Multilingual research practices of an international research team:
the tensions between the use of English and intercomprehension

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"Paradoxically, several studies have been showing that globalisation and internationalisation of higher education activities have not been accompanied by a reflection on the role of languages and cultures in education and scientific research (Bulajeva and Hogan-Brun 2014; Soler and Vihman 2017). This has contributed to the naturalisation of English-only policies, based on assumptions of 'excellence' and 'competitiveness' (Nóvoa 2015) and ignoring academic actors' plurilingual repertoires, contexts and academic and scientific cultures" (Araújo e Sá & Pinto, 2020: 224).

Ponto de partida ☺

My perspective: This contribution puts the subject – the researcher – and not the object – the research/the knowledge – at the center of the discussion, while, at the same time, it values the social production of science instead of its products only (Melo-Pfeifer, 2020).

- Aim: to adopt a holistic and ecological perspective on what it means to be a scholar: is not enough to see researchers as authors of published papers, but in terms of agentive managers of their plurilingual repertoires, depending on the specific tasks they are called upon to perform daily.

Aims of the presentation

- to throw light on the complex and multilayered linguistic choices made by plurilingual scholars to comply with multiple requirements of a multilingual academic life.

- to understand the linguistic dynamics and the language ideologies that guide plurilingual scholars' choices and practices in different domains of academic life.

Points de départ

Scientific communities and the making of science

- The choice of language(s) in research groups has a potential impact on workflow, management of interaction, researchers' participation and, in the case of building up international research teams, on choice of researchers and thus on which knowledge will be acknowledged.

  - multilingual science is as much about researchers' choices as it is about choice of researchers (and their chances to be heard).

- Multilingual science is about participation and exclusion, as not all players share the same linguistic assets, leading to unequal participation opportunities and uneven qualitative achievements;

- Researching multilingualy is about :

  - intentionality, language choices and decision making (Andrews, Holmes, Fay & Sawson, 2020) in different research spaces (varying stages of the research process).

  - asymetric linguistic competences and flexible multilingualism (idem: 81).

Scientific communities

- **Researchers as dynamic social actors**
  - **Agency (capacity to act on one owns will):**
    - capacity of researchers to act independently and to make their own free choices, despite structural constraints that could undermine or limit their intentions and practices:
      - Potential structural constraints: research evaluation policies, assessment of researchers' international profiles, ….
      - Agency can be connected to acts of resistance, perseverance, creativity, autonomy, criticality and positioning, in ways that challenge pre-established relations of power and structures;
      - Agency is affected by researchers' and academic community's beliefs about what can be understood under "proper practices".
  - **Investment (Norton, 2013):** researchers, while investing in publishing in a specific language, do it knowing that they will gain symbolic (acknowledgment from their pairs) and/or material resources (project financing), which will probably increase the value of their academic power.
        - researchers have "complex social history and multiple desires" (Norton, 2000).

Estudo empírico

Methodology

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of answers to a questionnaire filled in by group of researchers integrating the on-going Erasmus-Plus project (participants from 14 HE institutions, mostly from Romance Languages' countries):
    - A community of researchers working together on the theme of intercomprehension between Romance languagesfor more than 15 years.
    - Project coordinator: Christian Ollivier (Université de la Réunion);
- Answers collected during an project international intern meeting (Salamanca, June 2018).
- The questionnaire:
    - Profile
    - Linguistic management in academic context(s)
    - Linguistic practices in the scientific work (in the realm of the international project).

Case study

Exploratory case-study
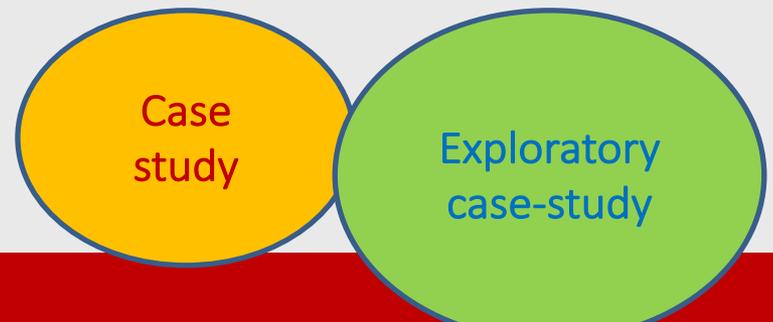
The researchers in our study: Profile

- 25 Researchers:
- Male: 8 / Female: 17
- Working experience: Between 1 and 43 years.
- Working:
    - in their working country : 16
    - In other countries: 8 (ie, 1/3 could be considered "minority teachers/researchers" in "nationally shaped educational systems" ; see Lengyel & Rosen, 2015: 157)
    - other: 1

Caracteristics:
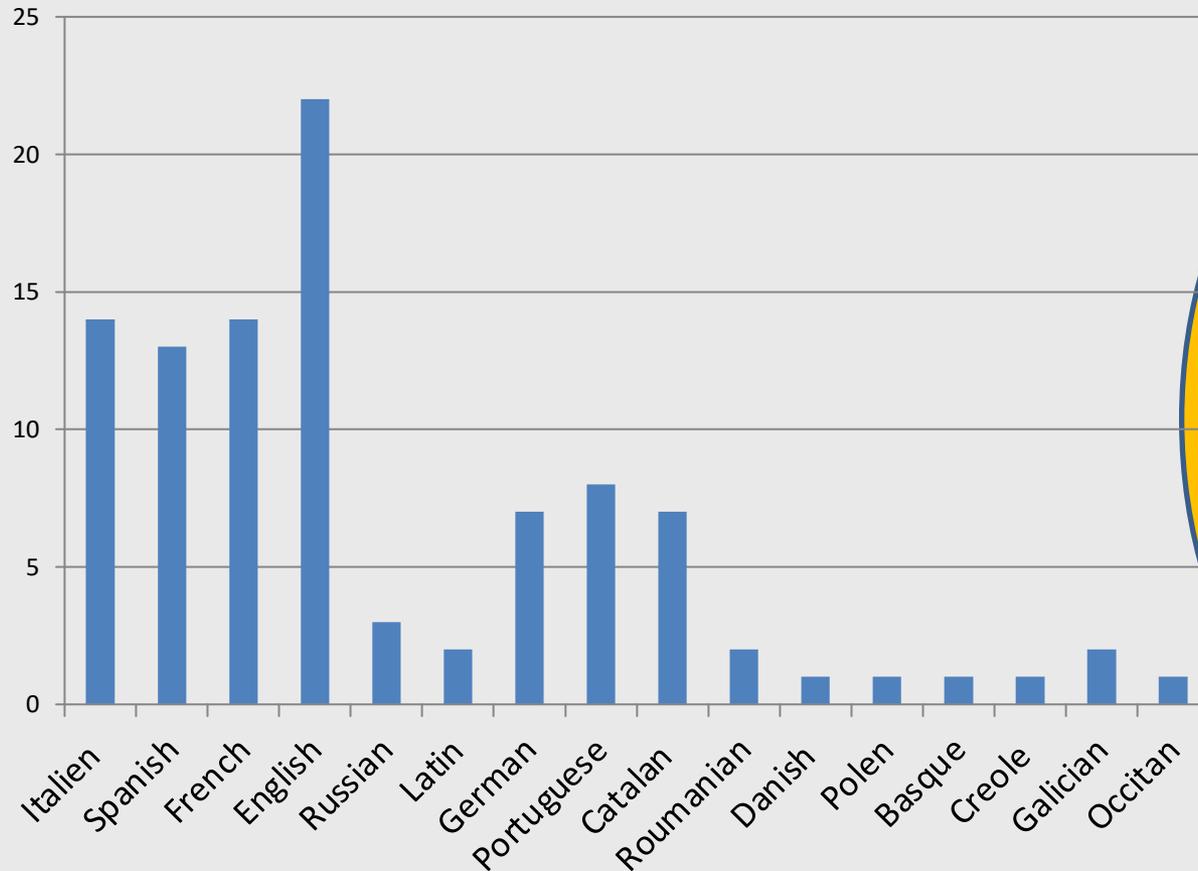- Mainly female
- Working in their countries
- Long experience.

Linguistic profile: MT
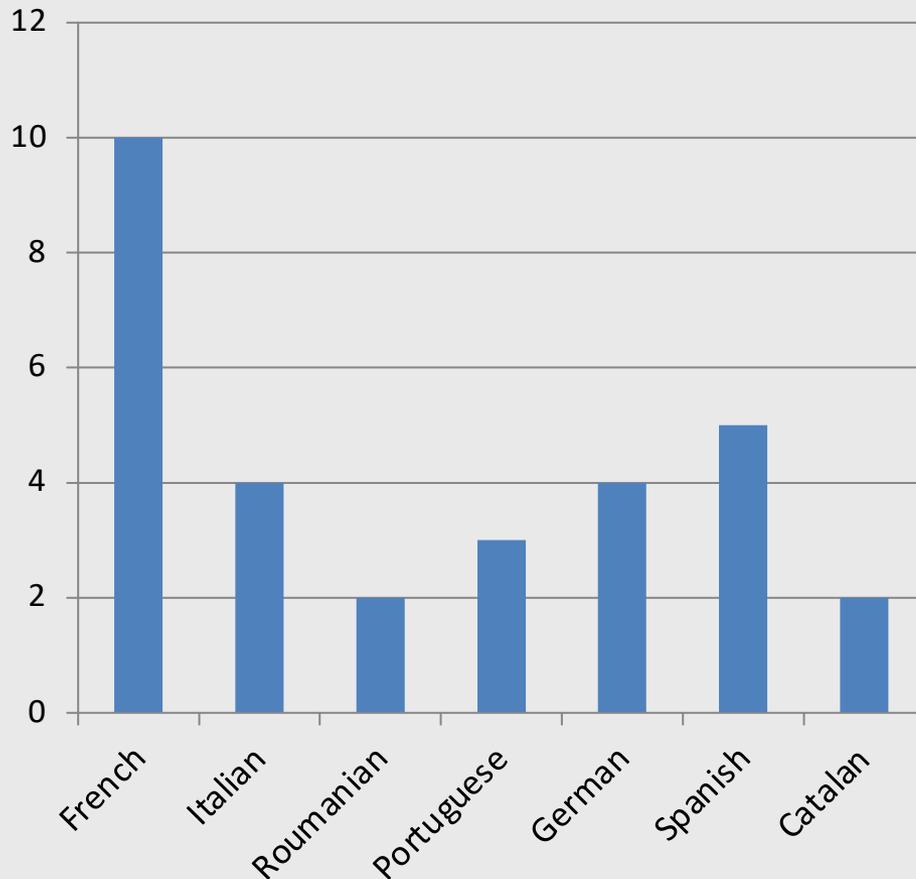
Caracteristics:
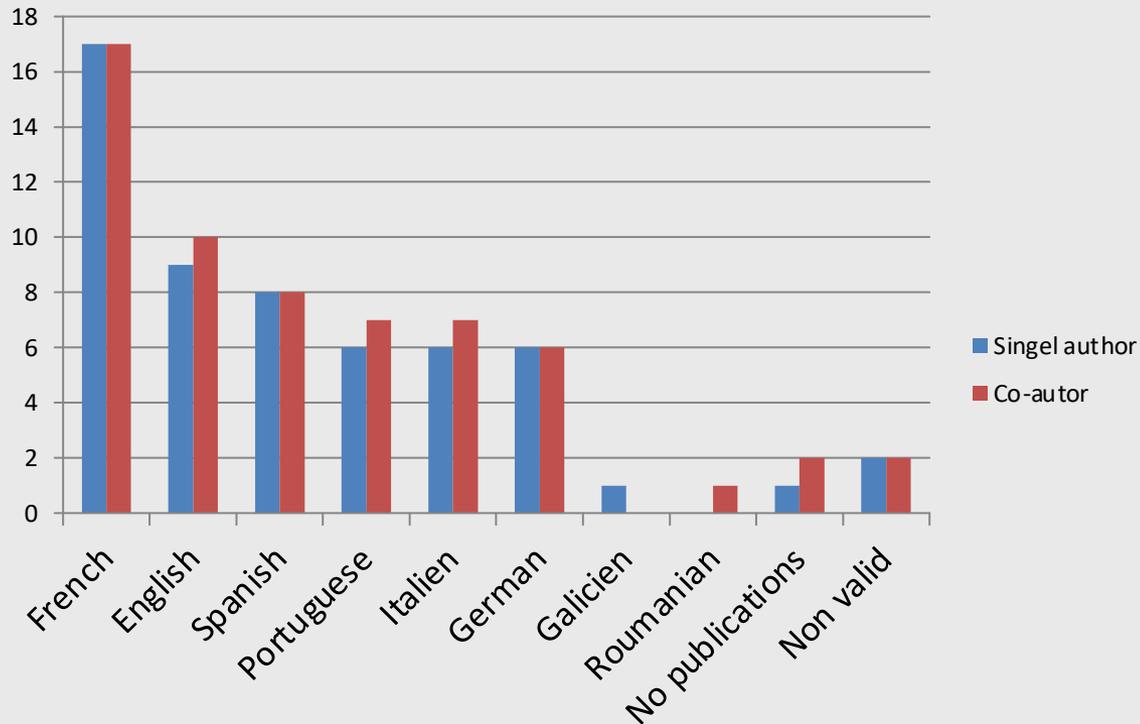- MT usually one or two romance languages;
- English not declared as a MT.

Linguistic profile: FL

Caracteristics:
- Very diverse and rich plurilingual repertoires;
- English as a common FL;
- Knowledge of one or more RL;
- "other languages" less expressive.

Languages of publication

Legend:
- Singel author
- Co-autor

Chart categories (x-axis): French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italien, German, Galicien, Roumanian, No publications, Non valid

Caracteristics:
- Preference for publishing in French.

- Correlation between presence of "Native Speakers" and number of publications
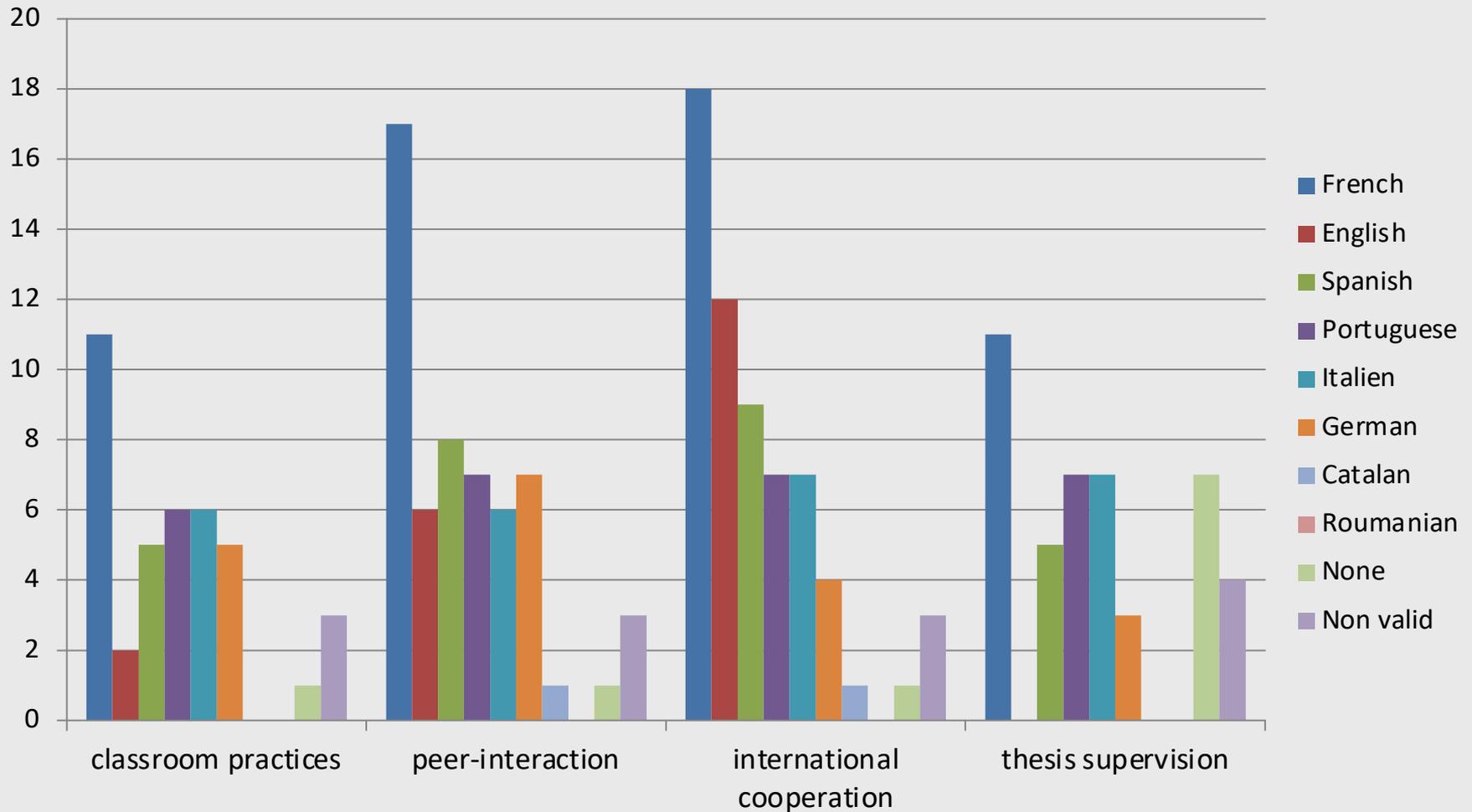- It would be interessant to have numbers on how many articles in each language.

Languages of participation in conferences
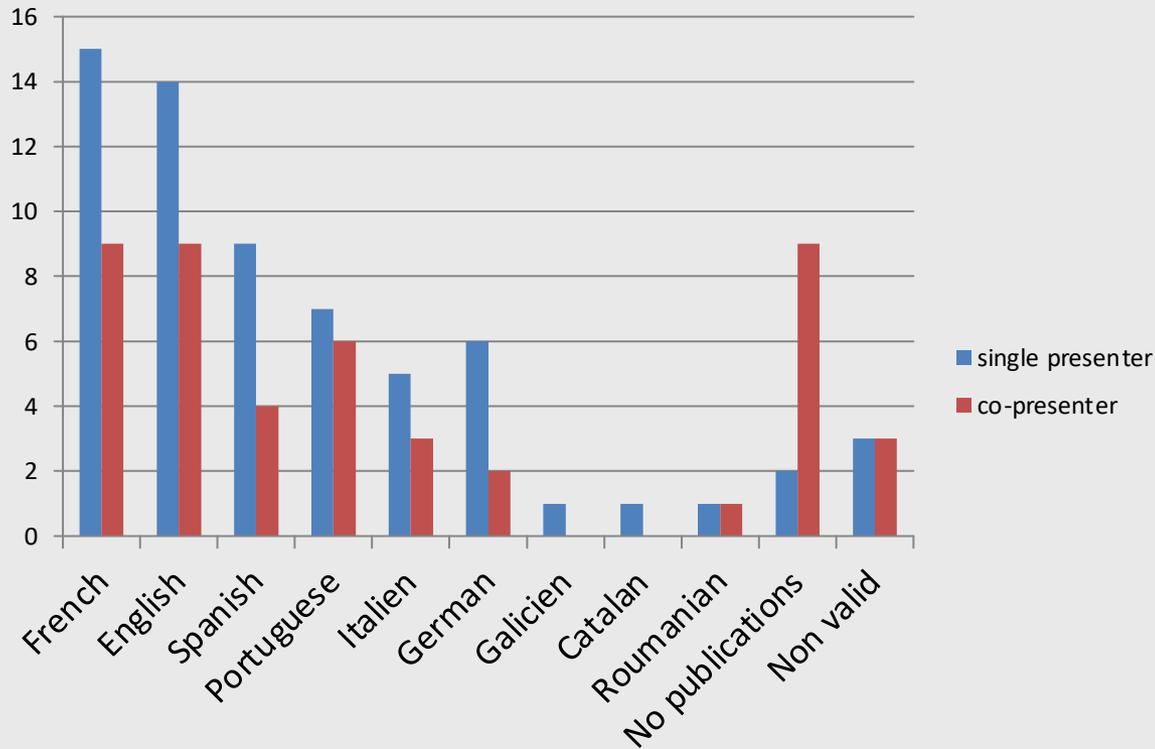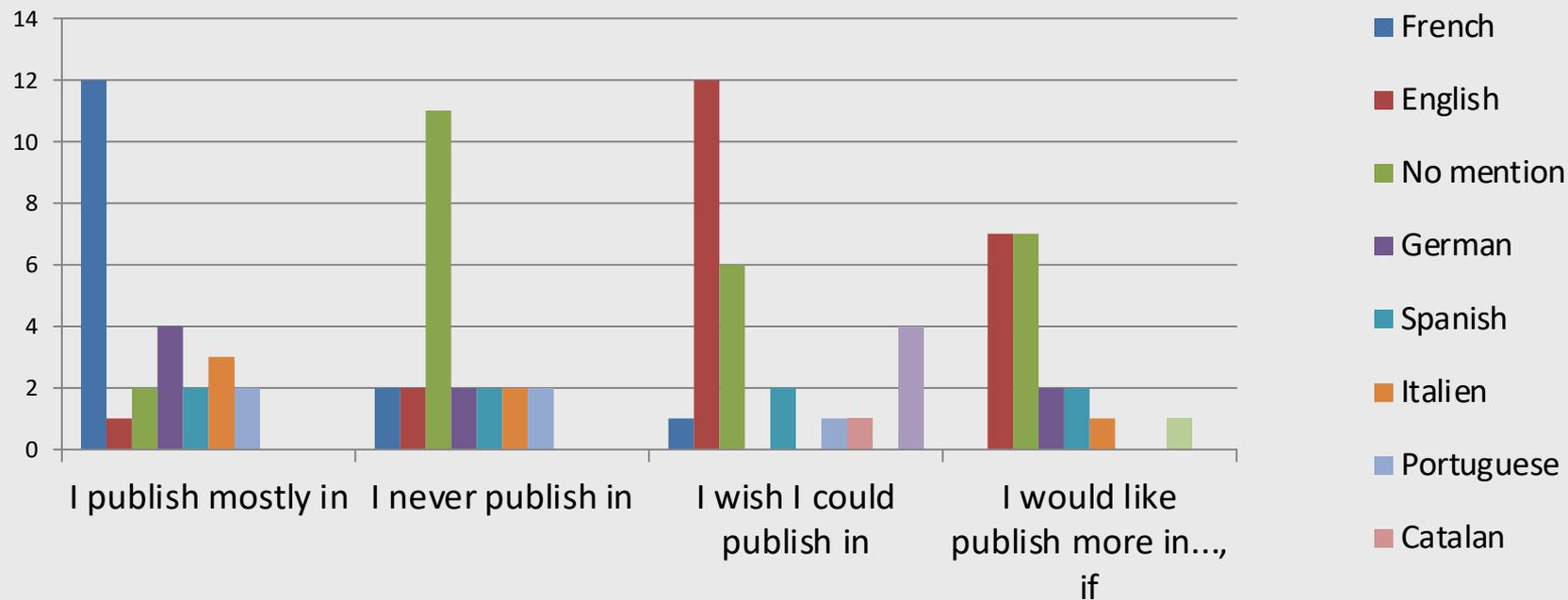

Caracteristics:
- Preference for presenting in French and English.

- No correlation between presence of "Native Speakers" and language of presentation.
- It would be interessant to have numbers on how many presentations in each language.

Practices and wishes in publication

- 77% of the researchers publish the most in their mother tongue;
- From 12 researcher wishing to publish more in English, 67 % declared French as their MT; 8 in 10 French MT speakers wish to publish more in English (80%);
- Researchers publishing in other languages are frequently those classified as "minority researchers" (reported changes: Pt → Fr/Eng; Spa/Cat → P; Spa → It; It → Fr and Rom → Fr)

Practices and wishes in publication

1. **I publish the most in…, because…**
    - Je m'adresse à un public lusophone/brésilien (about PT);
    - Ce sont les langues plus internationales dans mon domaine (about EN and FR);
    - Vivo y trabajo en Italia (about It);
    - La langue mieux maitrisée (about FR);
    - C'est ma langue maternelle et de formation intellectuelle/culturelle (about FR):
2. **I never publish in…, because…**
    - C'est la langue de l'Empire [et je n'ai pas les compétences nécessaires] (about EN);
    - Je ne connais pas suffisament la langue (about IT);
3. **I wish I could publish more in…, because**
    - Une façon aussi de diffuser nos travaux et de travailler avec d'autres publics (about EN);
    - J'aurais plus de lecteurs (about EN);
    - C'est ma langue maternelle (about RO);
4. **I would publish more frequently in…, if**
    - "tivesse mais facilidade/segurança na língua" (about EN);
    - Si j'avais pus de compétences et des appuis financiers à la traduction (about DE);

Criteria for choosing the languages of publication

Diffusion and dialogue with other colleages/researchers	20	Translation costs	2
International impact	4	Type of publication	4
National impact	4	Benefits for my CV	3
My insufficient linguistic competences	2	Evaluation made by my institution	3
My good linguistic competences	15	Target audience	12
Co-autor competences	3	Research objet	12

Other answers added:
- Política linguística da revista
- Prescriptions des éditeurs
- Dans la plupart des cas, on n'a pas le choix

Practices of communication in EVAL-IC
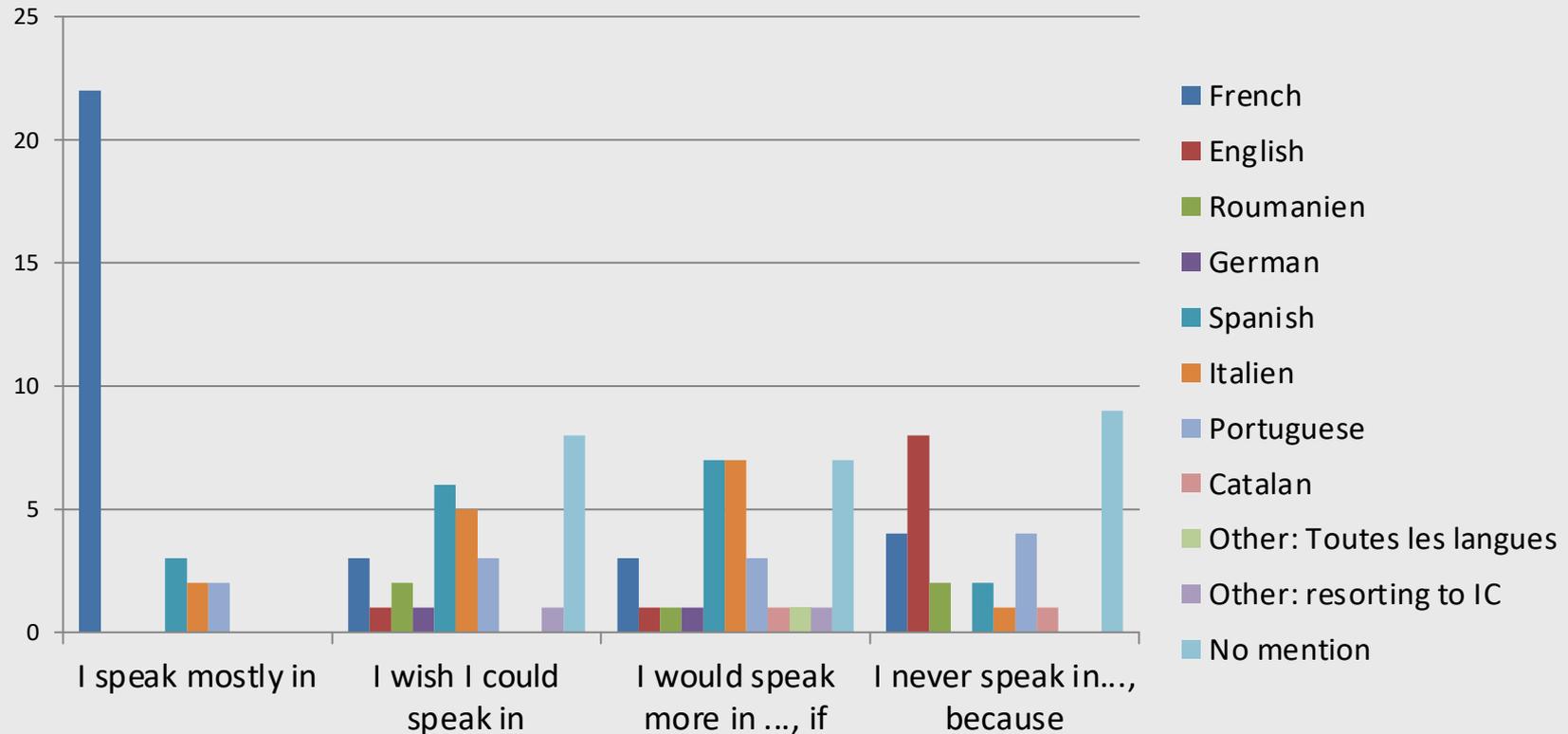
- French as *lingua franca* in the communication; English as the "langue tabou" within the group and in a project leading with Intercompreension between RL:
  - English: "je déteste cette langue", "je ne veux pas le faire dans ce contexte", "ce n'est pas la langue de qui que ce soit dans ce projet"

Practices of communication in EVAL-IC

- "Theoretically, this would be an ideal context for practicing IC. In fact, it is sometimes, if not often, more important to access the precise content of the discourse" (original in French).

- "French predominates, it is the "lingua franca" best mastered by the majority. But an effort is noticeable to bring our practices into line with our principles" (original in French).

- "In general it works because the language of communication is French and most of the members are specialists or have a high proficiency in that language" (original in Spanish).

- "Monolingual / does not practice what it preaches but given the diversity of the repertoires this is understandable" (original in French).

Practices of communication in EVAL-IC: a look into the beliefs

- Plurilingual values (declarative level; normative discourse) vs. Monolingual practices (praxeological level; *habitus*);

- Maximalist view of linguistic skills, the myth of the transparence and "precision of discourse" in monolingualised international research contexts;

- Asymetric linguistic competences lead to naturalisation/normalisation of monolingual practices;

Fazit

Conclusions

- A high number of multilingual reported practices in most of the domains of the academic life. Exceptions:
    - Classroom interaction;
    - Thesis supervision.
- Positive correlation between MT of the researcher and the most used language in publication;
    - French MT speakers are those who more frequently express the wish to publish in English;
- Gap between reported and aspirational practices in publishing:
    - Reported practices (mostly in French) are connected to linguistic proficiency (authors publish in the languages they feel more confident in) and national impact of the research;
    - Aspirational practices (mostly in English) are connected to internationalization and acknowledgement by peers.

Conclusions

- Choice of languages of publication related to:
  - Linguistic biography of the researcher;
  - Academic biography of the researcher;

- Not a single language common to all, but a modelisation of linguistic practices (Borg at al., 2016), depending on the context of use, competences, goals and intentions of researchers;

- Not really challenging monolingual *habitus* in research and interaction with peer scholars: rather a preference for another *lingua franca ("tendance à retomber dans un monolinguisme français")*.

Conclusions

- Multilingual scholars move between a multilingual ethos and an monolingual pathos, either in French or English (Melo-Pfeifer, forthcoming):
  - tension between perceived academically valuable languages and personally valuable languages;
  - tension between plurilingual ideologies (and practices), and those perceived as imposed by the academia;

- The need to see researchers as empowered agents, who navigate contradictory linguistic calls and practices: "Researchers invest in different linguistic practices according to their plurilingual identity, the positive value they attach to their linguistic repertoires, (…) and to the ideology underpinning research on intercomprehension" (Melo-Pfeifer, 2020: 14).

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MUITO OBRIGADA! VIELEN DANK! THANK YOU!