"It's good for us but not for him". Monolingual strata in plurilingual classroom practice.

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School context

- The city of Brussels (FR-NDL, heavily French-dominant, over 104 languages used)
- 4 upper primary classes in a French speaking primary school
- (92 pupils aged 10-12, 24 in 'focus-groups')
- Low socio-economic indicators
- Over 30 languages used (incl. Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Lingala)
- Most pupils have learned Dutch for 2 years
- 9 month linguistic ethnographic intervention study

School Rule:
« Our school is French-speaking and the language of teaching is French. We ask all of our pupils to immerse themselves in this language and to use it. »

Linguistic and repertoire diversity

Other language (Lx)

French: language of instruction (LOI)

Legend:
- Lx > FR
- Lx = FR
- FR > Lx
- FR
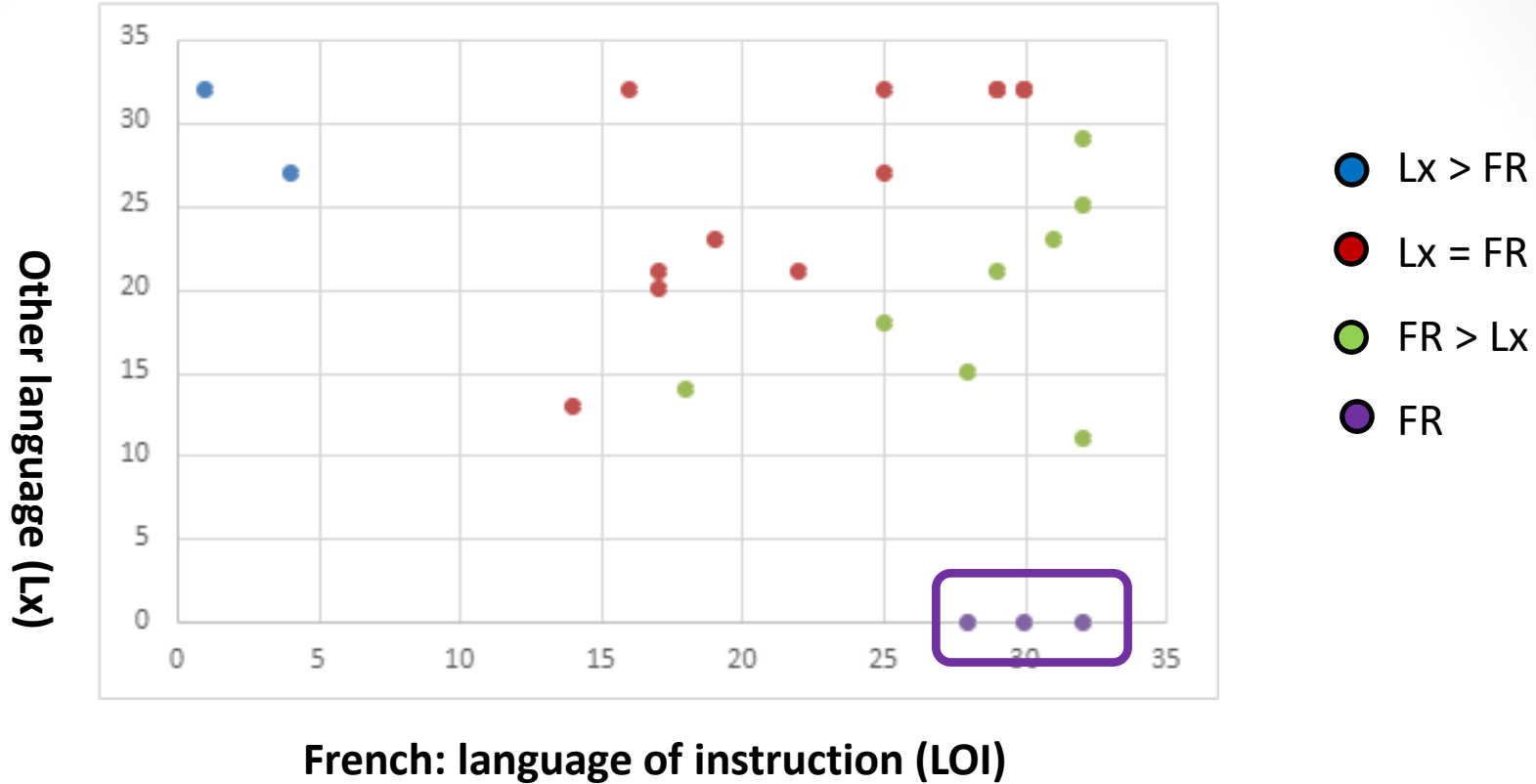
Based on pupil self-evaluation: reading, writing, spoken interaction, listening

Languages used: Arabic, Spanish, Romanian, Italian (Sicilian dialect), Turkish, Georgian, Polish, Amharic, Tigrinya, Lingala

The multilingual turn

Overturning monolingual:
> ➢ ideologies
> ➢ policies
> ➢ pedagogies
> ➢ …. pupils?

"With increasing globalisation, all students must **be prepared for the linguistic diversity they will encounter in the future**. It is no longer enough to be proficient in only one language; indeed, the future will require **a multilingual competence of everyone** (García, 2009). Thus, **pedagogical translanguaging** benefits not only students from multilingual homes, but **also those from monolingual homes** (García, 2009)"
(Iverson, 2019)

Research questions

How were monolingual students, discourses and practices were positioned upon the introduction of a plurilingual classroom approach?

Acts of positioning

"Local social practices…….that position students as members or non-members of discourse communities."

(Martin-Beltrán, 2010)

"In order to behave in a way that others can recognize as a person of kind X who knows Y in context Z, one must first *gain access to resources* for speaking and acting in those ways and *then be effectively seen* to 'seem' like kind X by others."

(Anderson, 2009:293)

Functional Multilingual Learning

monolingual/
submersion education

bilingual/ multilingual
education
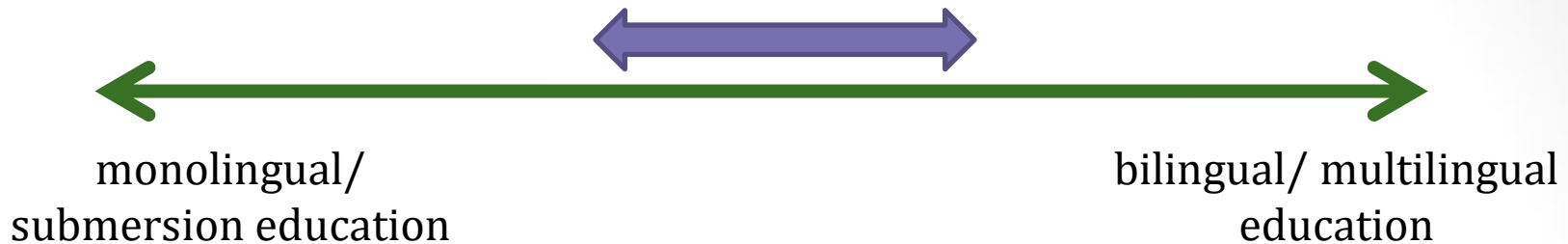
The functional use of home languages as **didactic tools for learning** and to affirm **plurilingual identity**.

Horizontal and vertical language practices (Heugh, 2015)

- A safe and positive classroom environment
- The possibility of interaction in L1
- Functional and meaningful activities with L1

(Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014)

Individual and spontaneous practices

M. Jean: plurilingual framework
- "switching tracks"
- emotional resonance of home language
- cognitive challenge/displacement leads to deeper learning
- active reframing of existing deficit position

Conocer a alguien...

... en 5 pasos:

LOS HUESOS

Classroom practices
- pupil-led, open language policy
- individualised
- scaffolding for newcomers
- sharing between non-language peers
- presenting to the class

Meaningful multilingual activities (class level)

1. Cross-lingual comparison
Language groups

Monolinguals:
invented language
(chelou)

2. Greeting phrases
Mixed language group

Monolinguals:
collected and
collated words

3. Geography concepts
Mixed language groups

Monolinguals:
discussed, debated,
exchanged

Meaningful multilingual activities

4. Metaphors and idiomatic expressions
Mixed language groups

PL: "Czuc do kogos miete"
Lit: To smell the mint for someone
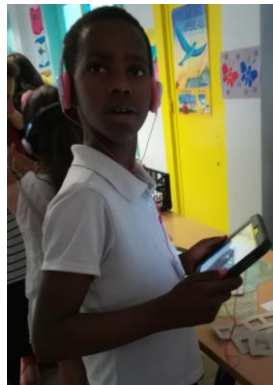**Fig:** To be attracted to someone

Monolinguals:
Preparation at home
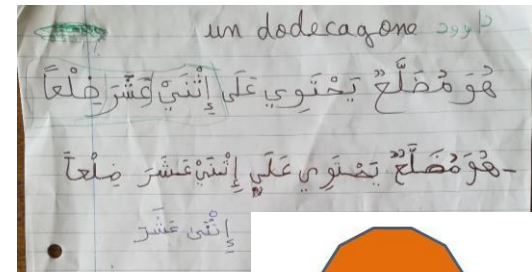Completed in French

5. Science experiments: oral recordings
Free choice

Monolinguals:
Use of Googletranslate, including Dutch, German and English

6. Multilingual geometry phrases
Mixed language groups

un dodecagone

هُوَ مُضَلَّعٌ يَحْتَوِي عَلَى إِثْنَي عَشَرَ ضِلْعًا

ـهُوَ مُضَلَّعٌ يَحْتَوِي عَلَى إِثْنَى عَشَرَ ضِلْعًا

إِثْنَى عَشَرَ

Dodecagon

Monolinguals:
Learner, morse code

A lack of linguistic capital : Self-positioning of monolingual pupils

Unstable engagement
Participation – innovation - withdrawal
Solidarity/rejecting monolingual francophones
Appreciating the significance for newcomers and others

Sensitive to linguistic exclusion
"….all the Moroccans will get on well together, all the Spanish will get on well together but it will create barriers between the Moroccans and the Spanish" (Benjamin)

"I don't really want to continue these lessons….I don't feel like carrying on when there are people who speak several languages but I only speak two…and these two languages, well, they're the most spoken in Belgium. And, well honestly, its painful for me because there are other people who speak 6 languages you know" (Benjamin)

Positioning of monolingual pupils by others

"... they ONLY speak French..."

"angry"   "fed-up"   "it's difficult"   "he'll cry"   "she'd be sad"

"...but deep down they were sad because everyone else has got a home country but not them..."

"..it's good for us but not for him"

"I wouldn't want to be in his shoes"

- Seen as less able to make connections across the class

- Might be easier because they can understand everything easily

Wider language ecology: the place of Dutch

Used in 2 out of 23 lessons - introduced in response to exclusion of monolingual pupils.

Absent from pupils' initial designations of plurilingual repertoire.

Teachers' negative associations.

Low status. Reflects societal negative attitudes towards Dutch in francophone Belgium:

➤ Of limited use; difficult to learn; ugly language (Mettewie, 2018)
➤ Cultural and education separation
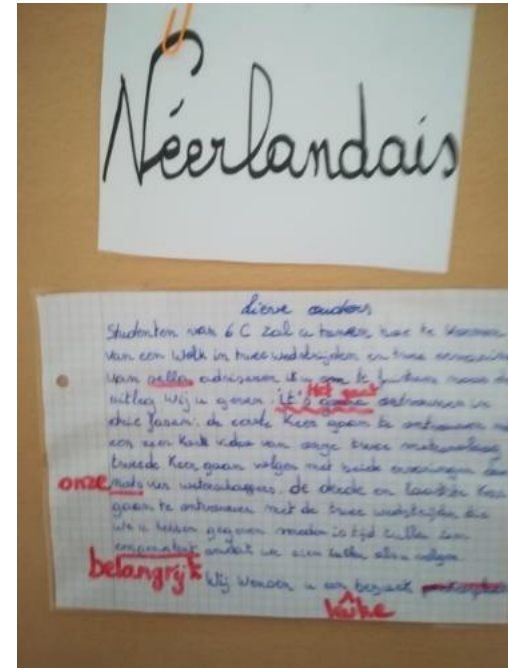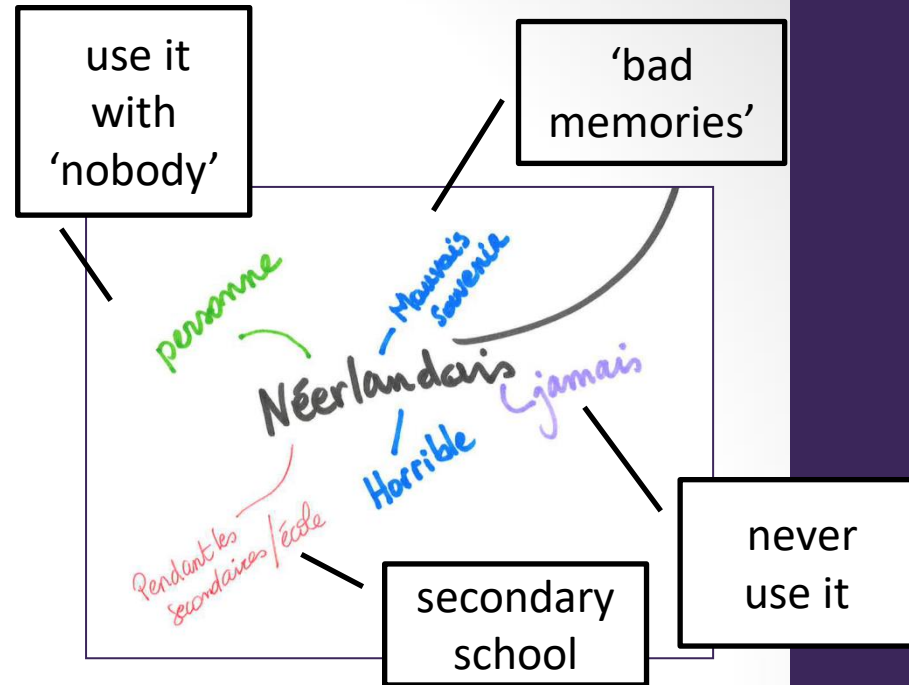
Participation structures constructed by the teachers

Language groupings
Lesson 1: "That leaves the ones who speak French" (M. Jean)
Lessons 2-6: mixed

Evolution over time

M. Jean: "It forced some children to decentre away from their monolingualism (which was maybe quite tough for some of them) or to decentre away from their mother tongue and all of the emotion involved, in order to focus on the learning objectives"

M. Jean: "I think that his kind of organisation [mixed language groups, preparation at home] also allowed the francophones to find their place…between an 'aspirational' language (English), by using the internet, artistic expression, exchanging expressions with the newcomer pupils"

Witness to the plurilingualism of others

Expertise vs discovery
Existing repertoire vs aspirational repertoire

"well, its useful because at least like that you learn…. I learned to write some Arabic for example" (Benjamin)

"…. well at least he can learn some languages and he can say them because he only speaks French" (x on Benjamin)

"… well he didn't do anything because he hasn't got a language… he had to do it in English and he didn't understand a thing" (Ari on Hugo)

Linguistic capital: predicated on expertise, fluency, confidence, 'difficulty', ability to write (in a non-Roman script)
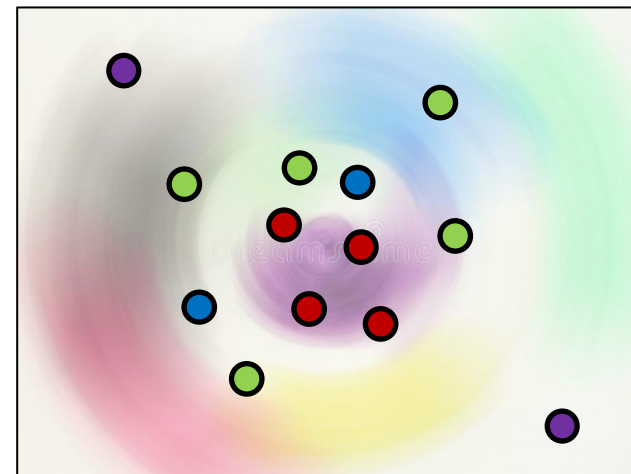
Legitimate peripheral participation
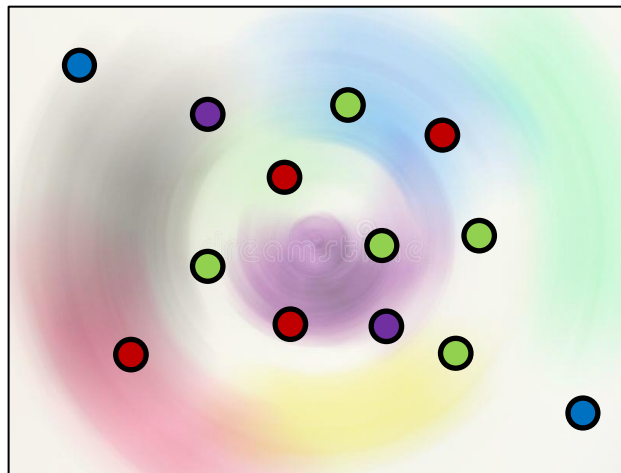
Monolingual functioning

Lx > FR
Lx = FR
FR > Lx
FR

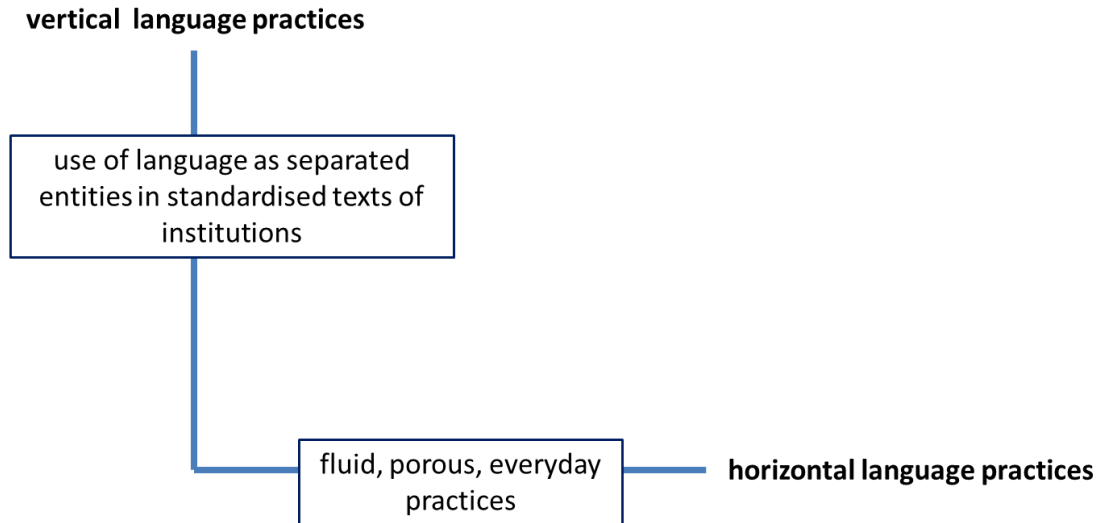*Introduction of plurilingual approach*

Social justice in the classroom based on :
"a non-threatening equality between bi-/multilingual speakers' languages and associated identities" (Prada & Turnbull, 2018)

"…fashioning identities of full participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

Representations of monolingualism in a framework of linguistic fixity

vertical language practices

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ use of language as separated │
│ entities in standardised texts of │
│         institutions         │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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┌──────────────────────┐
│ fluid, porous, everyday │ ──── **horizontal language practices**
│       practices        │
└──────────────────────┘
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Drawing on Heugh (2015)

Dissonance : discourse of standard language & holistic conceptualisation of language repertoire

Plurilingual practice reposes on existing norms of participation

Patterns of valorisation of school achievement: closed tests, numbered grades

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