

Examples of teachers' management of multilingualism in Brussels Dutch-medium schools












< linguistic-ethnographic research (in collaboration with Sue Goossens, Kirsten Rosiers, Gemma Vilanova, Noémie Marchal)

Data-collection in 5 secondary schools between 2011-2018

Funding: FWO, FNRS, ULB (ARC)

Evolution of reported family language(s) of pupils in Brussels' Dutch-medium schools

	nursery school		primary school		secondary school	
	1979-1980	2020-2021	1979-1980	2020-2021	1991-1992	2020-2021
homogeneously Dutch-speaking	71,9 	6,7	85,9 	8,0	76,5 	16,2
Dutch + other language	17,8	18,1	10,1	18,7	17,2	25,2
homogeneously French-speaking	5,8 	37,0	2,3 	35,4	3,7 	26,9
French + other language or other language than Dutch/French	4,5 	38,2	1,7 	37,9	2,6 	31,7

How do teachers in Brussels Dutch-medium schools deal with multilingualism?

via official school rules

‘At school you always speak Standard Dutch, to teachers as well as to your friends, and this in class as well as during breaks. [...]. Parents encourage their children to speak Dutch. It is self-evident that you have to be competent in Dutch. Without it you have no chance of success.’ (RS, School diary; translated from Dutch)

How do teachers in Brussels Dutch-medium schools deal with multilingualism?

reminding pupils of the policy

‘speak Dutch’, ‘I would like to hear Dutch, ‘talk Dutch’, ‘Dutch if possible, and also when it’s not’, ‘guys, will you talk Dutch please’, ‘In Dutch, ladies’ [...]

feigning incomprehension or ignorance

‘what did you say?’, ‘hey what are the rules?’, ‘in what class are we now?’

straight orders

‘What time is it Jad? First: in Dutch. Second: carry on working’; ‘hey there guys, no French’

identifying what language pupils are using

‘you’re speaking French’; ‘try and speak a lot of Dutch. Perhaps you can speak other languages already well, like French and Turkish, but Dutch you still need to practice a lot’; ‘I hear French here, I hear Turkish here; that ... is not ... OK’; ‘Is it for the research that you’re speaking French?’.

How do teachers in Brussels Dutch-medium schools deal with multilingualism?

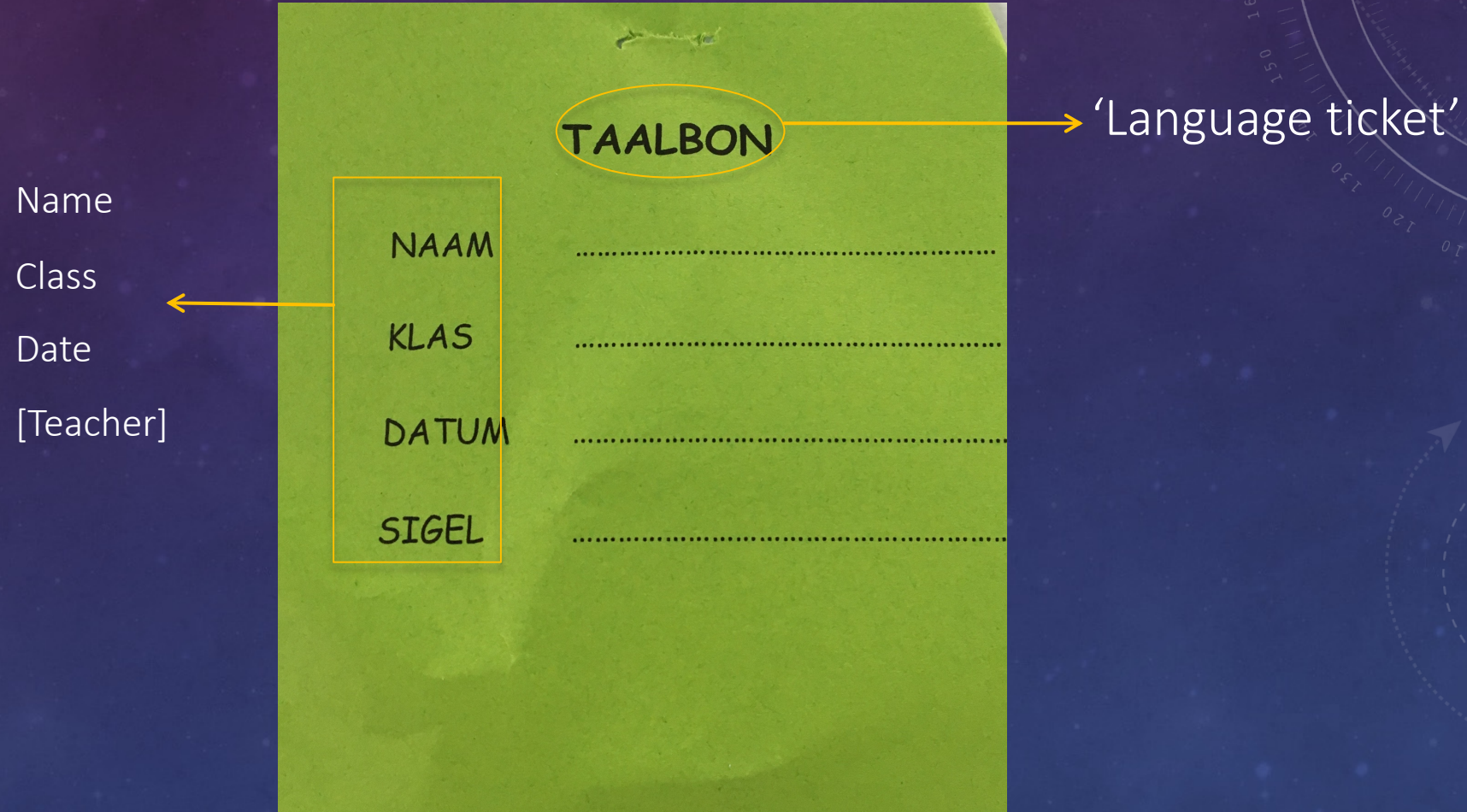
via posters



Dutch, a matter
of respect

How do teachers in Brussels Dutch-medium schools deal with multilingualism?

via punitive measures



How do teachers in Brussels Dutch-medium schools deal with multilingualism?

via punitive measures

‘They got marks on course attitude so in their report this is calculated on a hundred, and ten points are on course attitude. At the end of class I have my book with me and if I hear them speak French this is marked with a cross and they know they get a cross, and then each time I’m going to deduct a mark for course attitude.’ (interview with Ms Q, April 2015)

How do teachers in Brussels Dutch-medium schools deal with multilingualism?

via punitive measures

I can hear Ms P say: 'but you don't listen to me do you?; I'm telling you the whole time "speak Dutch, speak Dutch, speak Dutch", but you just won't do it. And now you're crying'. The reason appears to be an exam or a test on spoken language proficiency, where Ms P. allegedly warned that if they spoke one word in French, they'd fail the test. But still one boy (Samir?) apparently called Yassine a sale pute ('dirty whore'), and got a zero on his test, with tears following. Mr S intervenes a little later, and asks 'did Madam clearly announce that you would get zero on the test if you spoke French?'. 'Yes', the boy replies. 'Have you spoken French?', Mr S asks. 'Yes', the boy again replies. 'Well then you get zero don't you'. (SS, Fieldnotes June 2012)

?

‘beyond shameful [...] a form of psychological abuse’ [that will make pupils] feel less at home while being at school, believe less in their future opportunities, and, finally, perform less well cognitively in the areas of reading comprehension and science’ (Agirdag 2018, 52, my translation)

But: imposition of Dutch was far from uncomplicated
Teachers: favoured a ‘projectable’ authority



‘The child is expected to be able to understand and comply with such guidance, preferably without being told’ (Gulløv 2017, 60)

‘when pedagogical efforts . . . encounter resistance and are challenged . . . such reactions are mostly met with humour, playful interactions . . . and, in some cases, more explicit interventions. However, when the challenges become increasingly systematic or destructive, the interventions also become more pronounced, much to the chagrin of the pedagogues, who fear their acts may contravene their own standards of civilised behaviour for educators.’ (Gulløv 2017, 74)

The monolingual habitus:

‘refers to beliefs, basic concepts, commonsense patterns as elements of the practical professional knowledge or the practical professional behaviour of teachers’ (Gogolin 2002, 132).



Bourdieu's notion of habitus

education ‘confers on the privileged the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged’ and ‘convinces the disinherited that they owe their scholastic and social destiny to their lack of gifts or merit’ (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977: 210).

The monolingual habitus:

‘This system of dispositions is necessary for successful social activity, which also means that a person does not need to reflect and decide consciously upon his or her normal daily activities. That is to say, a habitus is the necessary precondition for an individual to act routinely, also in the face of unexpected, new situations’ (Gogolin 2002, 132).

Job typical attitudes, activities and products can be regarded as “professional habitus” if they can be identified as products of the activity of identical schemata which carry a systematic character and are therefore systematically differentiated from the constituent forms of activity of a different profession. . . . Based on historical analysis of the teaching profession, I formulated the hypothesis that a monolingual, monocultural orientation of teachers is an intrinsic element of their professional habitus as members of a nation state school system. (Gogolin 2002, 133)

The monolingual habitus:



raising awareness

Only consciousness helps to conquer habitual practices. From my point of view, this is one of the most important aims of our discipline: to contribute to future education systems, in which amateur teaching practice is the exception, and professional teaching is the rule. (2002, 136)



A multilingual habitus =

‘the self-concept that linguistic diversity is ‘normal’ in a society’ and this involves ‘explicitly fostering the active use of the whole linguistic repertoires of pupils in both language and subject-matter classes throughout schooling’ (Gogolin & Duarte 2017, 387).

problems:

- linguistic uniformity is equally common
- unawareness of multilingualism difficult to imagine
- monolingualism: depends on multilingualism to be meaningful
- explanatory limitations

Data: from three (out of five) Dutch-medium secondary schools in Brussels

- 21 interviews with teachers
- analysed as rhetorical accounts



Respondents' answers 'very often ... address what the respondent rightly or wrongly believes to be the intentions and preconceptions *behind* the question' (Cameron 2001, 148);

they are 'rhetorically organized to undermine alternatives' (Edwards & Potter 1993, 24).

Teachers' comments about French:

- 'unstoppable', 'uncontrollable', so, imposing Dutch is 'impossible', 'a hopeless task', certainly in the hallways and in the playground
- does not need to be controlled because:
 - its use is often innocent: punishing only necessary 'when someone really, time and again, after a hundred thousand remarks, still keeps talking French'
 - pupils' use of French is 'spontaneous', 'normal', 'unconscious', 'typical of adolescents', 'understandable', 'an automatism', 'similar to speaking vernacular Dutch in Flemish schools'
- 'French is not always French'

'French is not always French'

Extract 6.9

Participants and setting: Saint Martin's College, September 22, 2017. Interview with Céline (age forty or older, Dutch teacher and principal) and Kirsten Rosiers (age twenty-eight). French in italics. Simplified transcription.

	<i>Dutch original</i>	<i>English translation</i>
KR:	gebruik jij die, die taalbonnen?	do you use them, those language tickets?
C:	euhm ik heb het daar heel moeilijk mee euh [2.0] ik geef leerlingen wel opmerkingen, in de gang, of dan ga ik er zo, dan blijf ik er zo bijstaan zo, euhm, nu da-, da's ook iets wat da je op een bepaald moment leert, dat er heel veel gemixt wordt euhm, en het dus nie is omda je efkes zo passeert in de gang en je hoort <i>à l'aise</i> da je denkt [angstig:] "HUUUH, je bent in 't Frans bezig" nee, hoogstwaarschijnlijk zijn die in 't Nederlands bezig ma zijn die gewoon aan 't mixen	euhm I have real difficulty with that euhm [2.0] I do comment on pupils, in the hallway, or then I go like, then I go like stand with them like, uhm, now that, that's also something that you learn at a certain point, that there is a lot of mixing uhm, and so that it's not because you briefly walk past in the hallway and you hear <i>à l'aise</i> that you think [fearfully]: "HUUUH, you're going on in French" no, most probably they are going in Dutch but they are simply mixing

Punitive responses to French:

- 'overly repressive', 'inflexible', 'outdated': 'we're not the police are we'
- 'does not help', 'pedagogically self-defeating', 'pupils will clam up'
- 'a sign of an old reflex'


Extract 6.10

Participants and setting: Saint Martin's College, September 22, 2017. Interview with Céline (age forty or older, Dutch teacher and principal) and Kirsten Rosiers (age twenty-eight). Simplified transcription.


	<i>Dutch original</i>	<i>English translation</i>		
1	C: allez wa ik altijd héél heel erg vind is	you know what I always very much		seeing monolingual preferences as: fear
2	da, ook hier, euhm [...] meertaligheid	regret is tha		for French invasion, an old reflex
3	vaak gezien wordt als euh [...] 'k ga 't	multilinguali	55	
4	nu met hele grote woorden zeggen,	I'm going to	56	
5	een misdaad [1.0] da mensen, de	now, a crim	57	
6	leraar, leraar, leerkrachten de	teacher, tea	58	
7	leraarskamer binnenkomen en vól	the staff roc	59	
8	verontwaardiging zeggen "én moet je	indignation	60	KR: en vind je da, begrijp je da of?
9	nu 's wa horen, én die zitten in 't	and they are	61	
10	vierde jaar, én die kennen het woord	they don't k	62	C: ik begrijp da, ik begrijp da, maar ik
11	<i>glooiend</i> niet, <i>een glooiend landschap</i> ,	<i>rolling lands</i>	63	denk da da een ouwe reflex is, ik denk
12	dat zegt hen niets" [...] OK, ma breng	anything to	64	da mensen zich daar moeten
			65	overzetten, euhm, vooral ook, omda
			66	het Frans heeft het ook moeilijk
			67	vandaag de dag hé, het gaat nu meer
			68	en meer om meertaligheid in Brussel,
			69	de eentaligen zijn gewoon in de
			70	minderheid, ook de eentalig
			71	Franstaligen
				into a corner [...]
				and that is a situation that has
				certainly got to do with it, a kind of
				fear for the French invasion that stays
				in place
				and do you think, do you understand
				that or?
				I understand that, I understand that,
				but I think that's an old reflex, I think
				that people should get over that, uhm,
				especially also, 'cause also French is
				having a difficult time today isn't it,
				it's now more and more about
				multilingualism in Brussels, the
				monolinguals are simply
				outnumbered, also the monolingual
				francophones

contesting that teachers see
multilingualism as a crime


Signs of a multilingual habitus?

- Linguistic justifications for tolerating pupils' French
 - Repressing French >< valorising multilingualism
- 
- 'I assume that if they speak good French, **if they have a good mother tongue**, they will be **better in other languages** too' (Rachida, CS)
 - 'if they, but I've actually read that before too, if you, **the, better your mother tongue, the stronger the basis on which you can build the next language**' (Sandra, CS)
 - 'I do realise that the **one language can help you with the other**, and in that sense I always try to be flexible so I try not to stigmatise them, you know for the language that they do speak and that they can't do that yet in a different language and you have to be a bit flexible in that if they sometimes, use French words in Dutch' (Ms Dirckx, PS)


Signs of a multilingual habitus?

- Linguistic justifications for tolerating pupils' French
 - Repressing French >< valorising multilingualism
- 
- 'a lot of English words have a French equivalent or something that resembles it, and if they draw links between them, I think that's actually quite positive, because they are making connections between different languages and then I don't have any problem with that at all' (Audrey, SMC)
 - 'uh, I think it, it would be very good if uh pupils had to, pay attention as well to the home language [...] if they would sometimes be able to feel that there are also norms for their home language [...] that they might be able to, transplant them onto Dutch'' (Patrick, CS)

Signs of a multilingual habitus?

- Linguistic justifications for tolerating pupils' French
 - Repressing French >< valorising multilingualism
- 
- 'there is now not so much stress anymore uh [on speaking Dutch], which I actually, understand because, yes, **you also give a message to pupils, that their own language, is not welcome at school** and, yes [...]' (Peter, CS)
 - 'I certainly want to **avoid like, like for example to start stigmatising French, or stigmatising another language, because I'm in favour of language** [...] we're a multilingual school, and so there you absolutely want to pass the message, all languages are equal [...] there is no single language that is inferior, far from, each language is a richness, so the more languages you can speak, hallelujah, so much the better' (Ms Dirckx, PS)

Signs of a multilingual habitus?

- Linguistic justifications for tolerating pupils' French
 - Repressing French >< valorising multilingualism
- 
- '[in theory pupils should speak Dutch everywhere] but the practice is of course very lively and very flexible so that it's very difficult to, and, and it's in itself not bad because, we do **try to pursue diversity in the language**, so it's not super bad but [...] it only becomes bad or annoying when pupils are excluded because they, do not master the other language that is being spoken then' (Machteld, CS)
 - 'I think they should [speak Dutch], I think they should, but always, always, valorising the fact that language skills, the more languages the better, the more languages the better, but here it's Dutch now for a while' (Patrick, CS)

But value of linguistic diversity balanced against:

- value of inclusion
- necessity of sufficient Dutch practice / pupils' low skills in Dutch
- 'can you call it Dutch with some? I don't think so is it? Yes I don't think that's okay' (Els, SMC)
- 'at first you think wow they're exaggerating, all this hammering on Dutch, but then you start correcting tests, teaching those pupils, and then you notice that they really can't write basic [...] sentences in Dutch' (Audrey, SMC)
- 'I was a bit shocked to learn that it- that it is uh, so incomplete [...] because for English I expect that actually because it's a new language [...] but uhm for Dutch I hadn't expected that it was so incomplete, and I don't w- I don't want to call it bad I want to call it incomplete, because you notice that they really miss parts in that language' (Ms Dirckx, PS)

But value of linguistic diversity balanced against:

- value of inclusion
 - necessity of sufficient Dutch practice / pupils' low skills in Dutch
 - pupils' monolingual habitus
-
- 'I regret it sometimes that you have pupils, certainly with English [classes], who simply **refuse** to watch something in English, or to watch a series in English with French subtitles for example, that's too much effort, so sometimes **I have difficulty with their attitude towards other languages** [...] that **they just hold on to speaking French** and that they have something like 'that's it and this is what I will get by with' (Audrey, SMC)
 - 'I notice with my pupils who speak other languages that they **do not seize the opportunities** offered at school so, actually they can create a lot of learning occasions outside class by listening, to each other, by speaking, Dutch' (Patrick, CS)

But value of linguistic diversity balanced against:

- value of inclusion
- necessity of sufficient Dutch practice / pupils' low skills in Dutch
- pupils' monolingual habitus

'At a certain moment, how old or young you may be, if you've received the message so often, but **you have to, to make the switch, you have to be aware of that, you have to now really want, to speak that other language here**, because I explain the principle to them, how you indeed associate a person with a language and that you actually start speaking that language every time again with that person, but that **they have to go beyond that, that they have to really want it**, because they really do have to work more on their Dutch, if they wish to be able to express themselves better, want to continue getting good results [...] I want to give that rule all the time, again because I'm a language teacher and, and notice how [laughs] how bad the state of that language is, and so, and because I also see to what extent this can be an obstacle in their studies. **I realise this much more than they do**' (Ms Dirckx, PS)

Mystification? Dilemmas

Participants and setting: Saint Martin's College, September 22, 2017. Interview with Céline (age forty or older, Dutch teacher and principal) and Kirsten Rosiers (age twenty-eight).

Dutch original

- 1 KR: zou je die taalbonnen afschaffen?
2
3 C: [2.0] in een ideale wereld wel ja [.]
4 absoluut [.] omdat die euh die
5 wellevend [.] of allez [.] euh [.] het
6 zich goed voelen euhm wel aantast
7 [.] alleen weet ik dan nie hoe ik het
8 wel zou oplossen [.] want ik zou het
9 ook nie fijn [.] ook absoluut geen
10 ideale situatie vinden als iedereen
11 Frans zou spreken
12 KR: hm mm

English translation

- would you abolish those language
tickets?
[2.0] in an ideal world I would yes [.]
absolutely [.] because it uh it harms
the well- [.] or you know [.] uhm [.] the
uhm well-being [.] but I am not sure
how I would solve it then [.] because I
also would not like [.] also would
absolutely not think it an ideal
situation if everyone would speak
French
uhuh

Dilemmas

13 C: allez dan spreekt mijn mijn eigen
14 achtergrond als Nederlandstalige
15 moeder van Nederlandstalige
16 kinderen [.] 'k heb ooit mijn mijn
17 zoon in de lagere school van school
18 veranderd omdat die [.] da we na
19 twee jaar doorkregen van "die vindt
20 geen aansluiting [.] die heeft geen
21 vriendjes want op school [.] op de
22 speelplaats spreekt iedereen Frans"
23 [1.0] en da jongetje is zeven euh [.]
24 die spreekt geen Frans [1.0] en en ja
25 die had geen vriendjes [.]
26 tegelijkertijd ook [.] die euh [.] moest
27 [.] euh gaan lezen bij 't vijfde leerjaar
28 [0.5] en die was nie hoogbegaafd hé
29 KR: en naar een andere Nederlandstalige
30 school gegaan [.] en daar was 't
31 beter?

you know that is when my my own
background as a Dutch-speaking mum
of Dutch-speaking children [.] I've once
made my my son in primary school
change to a different school because
he [.] after two years we realized like
"he does not connect [.] he does not
make any friends because at school [.]
in the playground everyone speaks
French" [1.0] and the little boy is seven
uh [.] he does not speak French [1.0]
and and he had no friends [.] and at
the same time also [.] he uh [.] had to
[.] uh go read with the fifth year [of
primary school] [0.5] and he was not
highly gifted you know
and went to a different Dutch-medium
school [.] and it was better there?

Dilemmas

32	C:	ja [2.0] dus sociaal gezien blijf ik [.]	yes [2.0] so socially speaking I still [.]
33		hoewel ik mij heel erg verzet tegen	although I am very opposed against
34		die politieke toestanden allemaal [.]	the whole political situation and all [.]
35		blijf ik toch ook wel vinden [.] da het	I still keep thinking that [.] That
36		Nederlandstalige onderwijs ook wel	Dutch-medium education also still has
37		nog steeds [.] de school of de plek	to be the [.] the school or the place for
38		moet zijn voor de Nederlandstalige	the Dutch-speaking children in
39		kinderen in Brussel	Brussels

Dilemmas

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	<i>Dutch original</i>	<i>English translation</i>
1	C: zou dat een oplossing zijn [.] ik denk	would that be a solution [.] I think that
2	dat dat een ongelooflijk moeilijke	that would be an incredibly difficult
3	evenwichtsoefening, oefening is [.]	balancing exercise, exercise [.] uh yes
4	euh ja omda we als	because we as Dutch speakers are just
5	Nederlandstaligen gewoon 't	absolutely the mini mini minor party
6	absoluut het mini mini kleine	and uhm
7	broertje zijn en euhm	
8	KR: een gevaarlijke stap?	a dangerous step?
9	C: [5.0] dan wordt het weer heel	[5.0] than it gets really political again
10	politiek hé [.] ik denk voor de	doesn't it [.] I think for the
11	beheersing van het Nederlands	proficiency of Dutch it perhaps is the
12	misschien wel de vraag is een	question is
13	KR: gevaarlijke stap voor de	do you mean then a dangerous step
14	beheersing van het Nederlands	for [pupils'] proficiency in Dutch?
15	bedoel je dan?	

Dilemmas

16	C:	Ja allez de vraag is bijvoorbeeld [.] ik	yes you know the question is for
17		woon twintig jaar in Brussel [1.0] ik	example [.] I have been living in
18		kan nie zeggen dat ik het altijd even	Brussels for twenty years [1.0] I can't
19		gemakkelijk vind euhm [2.0] ik kan	say that I always find it very easy [2.0]
20		gerust op de markt mijn	I can easily do my shopping at the
21		boodschappen doen in 't Frans [.]	market in French [.]
22		maar voor veel andere dingen werkt	but for a lot of other things it does
23		da regelmatig toch wel op mijn	regularly get quite up my nerves [.]
24		systeem [.] bij de apotheek	at the pharmacist's for example [.] that
25		bijvoorbeeld [.] da je [.] [zucht]	you [.] [sighs]
26	KR:	ja ja	yes yes
27	C:	euh op voorhand moet dingen gaan	uh have to look up things in advance
28		opzoeken voor da je iets kan gaan	before you can go explain something
29		uitleggen in 't ziekenhuis	in the hospital for example [.]
30		bijvoorbeeld [.] op spoedgevallen [.]	at the emergency department [.] I have
31		heb ik ooit eens vreselijk van mijn	once gotten terribly angry [.]
32		oren gemaakt [.] euhm [.] dus de	uhm [.] so the question is then only if
33		vraag is dan nog maar of da Vlaamse	Flemish teachers
34		leerkrachten [3 seconden geschraapt	[3 seconds cut here] if they will then
35		hier] of die nog in Brussel gaan	still come and teach in Brussels isn't it
36		komen lesgeven dan hé [.] of die zich	[.] if they would still feel at home here
37		hier nog thuis zouden voelen	

Two descriptions:

- the exclusion of her own son at school,
- communication difficulties encountered as a Dutch minority speaker in Brussels

Made compelling by:

- 'eye witness' account
- 'extreme/maximum case formulations' (Pomerantz 1986): not make *any* friends, *everyone* spoke French, *terribly* angry, living in Brussels *for twenty years*

→ her actions so 'shif[t] from the personal to the situational, from agent to circumstance' (Edwards & Potter 1993: 37)

So, monolingual habitus:

- denaturalizes linguistic routines
- highlights one aspect of common sense
- favours a researcher-knows-best attitude?

Knowledge:

- insufficient basis for decision-making in class (Biesta 2009, Hammersley 2002)
- > teachers' professional autonomy

So, monolingual habitus:

- denaturalizes linguistic routines
- highlights one aspect of common sense
- favours a researcher-knows-best attitude?

cf. Freire (1993):

- a banking type of education. treating others as depositories for knowledge

vs.

- teachers who become fellow inquirers, creating a process where 'no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught' (1993, 61)

So, monolingual habitus:

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- favours a researcher-knows-best attitude?

Biesta 2017:

emancipatory education: requires teachers to take up a distinctive role *as teachers*.

This emancipation '*doesn't 'run' on knowledge*' but entails '*using one's intelligence under the assumption of equality*' (Biesta 2017, 66; his emphasis; Rancière 1991).

Coming out in June 2024 !

OXFORD STUDIES IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Monolingual Policies in Multilingual Schools

TENSIONS, AMBIVALENCE,
AND THINKING TEACHERS



Jürgen Jaspers

'Expert ignorance' (cf. Biesta 2017, Rancière 1991)

→ 'not a relationship of intelligence to intelligence but of 'will to will'' (Biesta 2017, 62)

- sharing expertise with practitioners
- verifying intelligence of their decision-making

but also:

- refusing them the comfort of thinking they cannot learn
- verifying if decisions/actions are based on practitioners *own* intelligence

and:

- verifying the process of thinking, not the desirability of its outcome

Thank you