

Communicative Competence and Institutional Affiliation: Interactional Processes of Identity Construction by Immigrant Students in Catalonia

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The growing presence of children of immigrant families in the public school system in the bilingual region of Catalonia provides us with an opportunity to study how young multilingual and multicultural speakers construct their social competencies and their identity within the specific context of a gate-keeping social institution such as the school. The study reported in this paper approaches language learning as a process of socialisation that involves not only learning how to make sense of linguistic signs but also learning how to enact different social roles in particular institutions.

The analysis focuses on the interactional profiles of two immigrant students in two types of communicative activities that are representative of the school context: responding to questions from an adult and cooperating with a peer in the resolution of a learning task. By shifting the focus of analysis from a decontextualised notion of communicative competence to the notion of 'institutionally affiliated communicative competence' and concentrating on issues such as the (1) the relationship between knowledge and participation, (2) language choice inside and outside school and (3) definitions of correctness in language use, the study reveals how the two students construct a highly 'affiliated' identity.

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Introduction

This paper is part of a research programme that starts from the consideration that the growing presence of children of immigrant families in the public school system in Catalonia provides us with an opportunity to study how young multilingual speakers construct their social competencies and their identities within the specific context of a social institution such as the school, one of the main social sites of contact between the domain of the home or local community and the domain of gate-keeping social institutions.

The study centres on two types of interactional activity that we consider as representative of the school as a community of practice. These types of interactional activity not only are very frequent in the ordinary life of the school, but also play a key role in determining 'academic success', depending on the students' participation and engagement in them. The first of these two types, structured peer-interaction following the guidelines of the teacher and a

particular task that they need to accomplish, is often employed by teachers as a classroom technique and, therefore, students are already familiarised its basic procedures. The second type of interactional activity is that of responding to questions from an adult interlocutor (usually the teacher). In this case, we find that this is again a familiar practice for the students, especially in their interactions with their teachers in dealing with matters such as conflict resolution, individual academic assessment or feedback on their personal work. Through the analysis of the data resulting from the participation of two immigrant students in these two different types of interactional activity, our aim is to describe how they position themselves in front of these activities by focusing on the particular interactional 'methods' they use to accomplish an 'institutionally affiliated identity'.

We have chosen to approach the analysis of the sociocommunicative competence of immigrant students by focusing on parameters that arise from the interactional activity in which participants are engaged. Our aim is not to describe a stage in the interlanguage of the speakers by reference to an ideal native speaker (Firth & Wagner, 1997). Rather, we want to explore the socially situated competence and awareness of the speakers while taking part in tasks that are typical of the school as a social institution.

The approach adopted in this study is in accordance with the socio-constructivist perspectives on the development of multilingual and multicultural competences (Miller, 2003; Norton, 2000; Rampton, 1995). Following Mondada and Pekarek (2004) and Zuengler and Miller (2006), this perspective can be seen as integrating different theories of language learning and socialisation: Vygotskian theory about the origins of cognitive development (Lantolf, 2000), language socialisation (Duff, 1995; Ochs, 1988), *el aprendizaje como práctica situada* [learning as situated practice] (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Bakhtin's dialogism (Hall, 2002; Johnson, 2004) and critical theory (Norton, 2000). Specifically, we follow the four main assumptions that, following Pavlenko (2002), characterise second language learning and use:

- (1) Language is seen as symbolic capital with different degrees of social value.
- (2) In language use speakers can construct and reconstruct their social competencies and identities.
- (3) Language learning is not only a cognitive process but mainly a socialisation process, with the result of gradually becoming a competent member of a 'community of practice' like the school.
- (4) Language learners are considered as active agents whose action is not limited to cognitive processing of input and output but also to manage their own learning, searching for opportunities to participate in the everyday life of social institutions and, ultimately, 'investing' (Norton, 2000) in a new language and culture.

In order to investigate the process of second language learning it is essential to focus on institutionally situated language use. Besides taking into account how learners make sense of linguistic signs, research should concentrate on particular social institutions and describe how they adopt different subject/interactional positions and how they appropriate particular discourses. By

focusing on the specific behaviour of language learners in institutionally situated interaction we can obtain clues about their learning process and, at the same time, learn more about the 'methods' (understood, from the point of view of ethnomethodology, as practical reasoning activities) that they share, or not, with their interlocutors to accomplish orderliness in particular social settings (Taylor & Cameron, 1987). In deploying a particular method participants are, at the same time, constructing their identities, which we understand not as essential facts but as available resources that social members activate for practical purposes in specific social contexts; that is we view identities as negotiable, variable and flexible. Blommaert (2005: 207) refers to identity resources as 'particular forms of semiotic potential, organised in a repertoire'. This non-essentialist view of identity allows him to say that 'all kinds of identities can be constructed in very flexible ways, and that every semiotic means can be used to construct such identities' (Blommaert, 2005: 208). Social institutions like the school can be characterised by their selection of 'acceptable' forms of semiotic potential and the ways in which they are transmitted to and acquired by the members of the institution.

After presenting the larger study from which our data originate, and introducing the conceptual tools that we have employed for the analysis of the subjects' participation in the school interactional activities we proposed to them, we will try to draw a profile of the two learners from the point of view of their participation in the interactional activities. We will attempt to show how the analysis of the data resulting from the participation of the immigrant students in the interactional activities proposed to them leads in a very consistent way to the notion of 'institutionally situated communicative competence'. This notion has revealed to us as essential in order to (1) discover consistency in students' 'interactional work' and (2) assess the students' communicative performance from an alternative point of view, taking into account its efficiency in helping them to enact an identity that allows them to 'affiliate' to the educational institution by adopting specific forms of participation and specific orientations in the interaction (Sacks, 1972).

The Data

The analysis presented in this paper forms part of a qualitatively oriented research programme, a component of which involves 15 adolescents of immigrant origin in primary and secondary schools from three different geographical areas in Catalonia. The goal of this specific project was to describe the multilingual competence of students of immigrant origin focusing on the trilingualism (Catalan, Spanish and English) that the schools want to promote in Catalonia.

The project is based on three different types of data that have been collected at different stages:

- (1) Ethnographic observations within the context of the school, including lessons, recreation time, lunch breaks at the canteen and lesson transitions in hallways.

- (2) Audio (and in some cases video) recordings of a set of pair-work communicative learning tasks in each of the three languages contemplated in the school curriculum. These tasks were carried out with a non-immigrant partner belonging to the same group and in the presence of a researcher who was not a member of the educational institution. The idea of this pairing up was to be able to compare the competencies of immigrant students by reference to the actual competencies of non-immigrant students rather than an ideal speaker-listener.
- (3) Audio recordings of interviews between a researcher and the individuals involved in the research.

The communicative and cooperative nature of the learning tasks that were proposed to the students was aimed at placing them in what is closer to an ideal interactional situation (a conversation with a peer), in which communication is mainly symmetrical and there is a non-evaluative goal. The presence of the researchers (in person and through a video- or audio-recording device) during the development of the pair-work learning tasks has been taken into account in the analysis by including them in the analysis of the interaction, and considering them as active participants that contribute to the resolution of the task and the construction of the social situation.

The tasks we will analyse involve the following activities:

- (1) Pairing up objects appearing on a set of cards with pictures on them (according to their shape, function, material, colour, etc.) (Figure 1).
- (2) Finding out differences between two pictures (one for each partner). See Figure 2 for an example.
- (3) Preparing and performing a role play based on a given script (Figure 3).

The interviews with each of the 15 subjects participating in the study were carried out by the researcher who had carried out the ethnographic observation at the school and supervised the development of the learning tasks in the three different languages. The interviews were based on a semi-structured format, following a series of guiding questions on the following topics: biographical data, linguistic background, language choice in different contexts, representations of the reception community, the educational institution, academic and communicative competencies, expectations and preferences about learning and using different languages in the future, and relevance attributed to these languages.

This paper is based on the analysis of the interactional participation in the learning tasks and interview of two of the fifteen adolescents involved in the

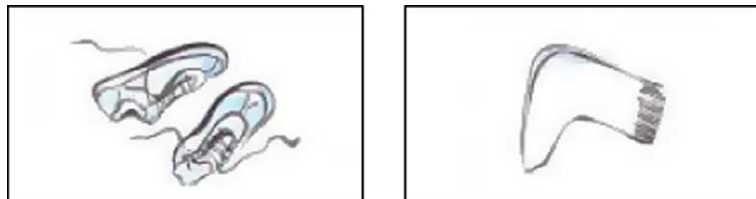


Figure 1 Examples of cards for Task 1



Figure 2 Examples of cards for Task 2

<p>CUSTOMER</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greet. 3. Say you need clothing to go on holidays. 5. Respond. 7. Respond. 9. Say what type of clothing you need 11. Respond. 13. Ask about the price. ... 	<p>SALES PERSON</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Greet. Offer help to customer. 4. Ask where s/he is going. 6. Ask what the weather is like in that place. 8. Suggest appropriate clothing. 10. Ask what colours s/he likes. 12. Offer clothing with the colours s/he likes. 14. Respond
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Figure 3 Examples of cards for Task 3

study: Kam (KAM) and Paula (PAU). Kam was born in Tanger (Morocco). At the time of data collection he was an 11-year-old primary school student and had had an educational experience of four academic years in Catalonia. He lived with his parents and two younger brothers. Although he does not refer to it explicitly, it can be implied from the interview that he was schooled in Morocco before he arrived in Catalonia. Kam's partner, Raquel (RAQ), was 10 years old and was born in Catalonia to a Spanish-speaking family. She lived with her mother and a 20-year-old brother. During the tasks there were two researchers present in the room: Dolors (DOL), a junior researcher, and Teresa (TER), a senior researcher. The interview with Kam was carried out by Teresa.

Paula, who is from Brazil, was 13 when the data were collected, and had been a secondary school student in Catalonia for almost two years. She said that her father was dead and that she lived with her mother, her stepfather and an old lady that they looked after. Like Kam, before she arrived in Catalonia she was schooled in Brazil, and she claims to be competent in reading and writing in Portuguese. Paula's partner, Enrique (ENR), was born to Spanish speaking parents in Catalonia. The tasks were carried out under the supervision of Antonio (ANT), a senior researcher. Antonio was also Paula's interviewer.

Our analysis will focus on the interactional behaviour of Kam and Paula in the course of the English tasks they carried out with a partner of a non-immigrant origin and an interview they held with the researcher. By studying their verbal behaviour in English (language in which they are clearly less proficient than in Catalan or Spanish) we think it is possible to (1) obtain more reliable clues about their stance as learners and (2) observe the extent to which

they make use of their different levels of competence in the other two 'school languages' in order to construct an interactional and institutional identity.

Analytical Framework: Reconsidering the Notion of Communicative Competence

Since Hymes proposed the notion of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), there have been several attempts to break it down into different components in order to investigate its potential as a tool for programming and assessing language learning (e.g. Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980) as well as for investigating language use in intercultural encounters (e.g. Bremer *et al.*, 1996; Gumperz *et al.*, 1979). In spite of works such as those by Cenoz and Genessee (1998) and Cook (2003), through which it is possible to see that multilingual competence and multilingual education cannot be accounted for as a sum of monolingualisms, we believe that a great deal of language teaching and assessment in schools is strongly guided by a monolingual idea of communicative competence, according to which the goal of the teaching/learning process is to take the learner to the levels of competence of an ideal monolingual user of the language (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2006). The result of this monolingual perspective is that in many schools the curricula of the three languages are developed and implemented taking little account of the other two languages, and students' communicative competence is assessed exclusively on the basis of their communicative resources in the corresponding linguistic code, without taking into account their whole linguistic repertoire.

Another aspect of many implementations of the construct of communicative competence with which we take issue in this paper is the understanding of language learning as an individual enterprise, essentially dependent on the cognitive abilities of the learner. This is the dominant perspective of influential works in the sociopsychological tradition (e.g. Gardner, 1985; Schumann, 1978; Spolsky, 1989) as well as interactionist approaches (Long, 1983; Skehan, 1998) to second language acquisition. However, the present research follows a socioconstructivist perspective to language learning (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Lantolf, 2000; Mondada & Pekarek, 2004, among others), which is based on the observation of the learners' behaviour in specific communicative practices and the processes of emergence of skills and knowledge rather than on the description of the learners' products or judgements on formal aspects. From this perspective, the competencies involved in communicating (1) are *situated* in specific communicative practices, (2) *vary* according to the practice and (3) are *collective*, i.e. distributed among the interlocutors. Therefore, the description of the learners' knowledge and their multicompetencies must be based on actual occasions of language use or speech events (see Hall *et al.*, 2006; as well as the studies mentioned immediately above), which is where learners develop their communicative competence through participation and engagement. These speech events constitute (1) a means for the learners to gain access not only to the forms of the language but mainly to social and communicative experiences and (2) opportunities to acquire the communicative expertise

(Hall *et al.*, 2006; Kasper, 2004) of the members of the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

For the analysis of the data produced by the students during the tasks, we chose to avoid departing from an *a priori* definition of communicative competence based on different components. We also decided that the learners' participation would not be assessed in connection with specific norms of usage corresponding to English, in the case of the tasks, or Catalan or Spanish in the case of the interview. Likewise, we decided not to take into account occurrences of language switching as we considered them as part of the students' global communicative repertoire and we wanted to see what use they made of them. In our attempt to describe how the students construct their self and face, we follow Goffman's (1967) interactional sociolinguistics approach, by paying attention to the display and social organisation of involvement in specific instances of interaction (Schiffrin, 1994: 103).

Our analysis of the tasks involved in the first place a careful observation of the development of the interaction in the case of those dyads of students who seemed to achieve most efficiently the communicative goals we had set for the task. In the second step of the analysis we compiled an inventory of the different interactional activities in which the participants became engaged in order to accomplish the task. Finally, based on the analysis of the interactional activities, we defined five main 'indicators of communicative competence' for the specific type of learning task they had to accomplish:

- (1) Introducing or recycling (from their partner or from the researcher) particular types of interactional moves appropriate to solve the communicative problem posed in the activity (pairing up cards with pictures on them, finding out differences or preparing and enacting a role play).
- (2) Taking part in the interactional management of the activity.
- (3) Contributing to the interactional development of the activity with a balanced amount of talk in relation to the other interlocutor.
- (4) Making adequate use of the participants' linguistic repertoire, involving, at least, the three different school languages (Catalan, Spanish and English), and in connection with the instructions that have been given by the researchers.
- (5) Repairing any communicative problems that may appear during the development of the task.

In sum, our analytical conception of communicative competence is based on the following premises:

- (1) It takes into account the nature of the communicative activity analysed as a particular type of institutional practice.
- (2) It is contingent and collectively deployed in the form of co-constructed interaction with the interlocutor.
- (3) It is connected with more general types of sociocultural competencies having to do, for instance, with the learners' capacity to categorise (a) the interview as a communicative formal activity that is part of the life of an educational institution or (b) the researchers as members of the educational institution (Unamuno & Nussbaum, 2005).

The analysis of the interviews focuses on the student's participation, looking at the 'discursive autonomy' (Molina & Maruny, 2005) of the student, understood as his ability not only to respond to the researcher's questions and comments but also to expand on a given topic and introduce information that has not been requested directly. In line with interactionist approaches, we also adopt the conceptual framework of Membership Categorisation Analysis (Hester & Eglin, 1997; Sacks, 1972; Titscher *et al.*, 2000) because it contributes to focusing the analysis on categorisation and description of the context (through lexical choice and semantic configurations) as one of the methods participants use to make a social activity recognisable to members as such and, therefore, sanctioned by the social institution in which it takes place (Sacks, 1992: 236). The components of this analytical framework are the following:

- (1) *Categories*, which interviewee and interviewer use to describe objects in the world and, in our case, in relation to their multilingual competence and their membership in the educational institution; e.g. school, Catalan, Spanish, family, friends, teachers, etc.
- (2) *Collection devices*, or sets of categories that are perceived as belonging together as a result of the links that the interlocutors have established among them in their interaction; e.g. school, teachers and Catalan are presented by Kam and Paula as a three categories belonging to the same collection device.
- (3) *Category bound activities*, or actions that the interlocutors link together with specific members of a category; e.g. both Kam and Paula link the category 'English' with the activity 'looking for opportunities to learn it'.

We consider categorisation as a resource that speakers manipulate in order to achieve their goal, to make sense of the activity in which they participate, and the objects in the world surrounding them. Categorisation procedures have a crucial role in the interactional construction of communicative competence (Mondada, 2004).

In the next two sections we will attempt to draw the interaction profiles of Kam and Paula by focusing on their participation in the tasks and in the interview.

Kam's Interactional Profile

The analysis of the interactional activity around the tasks will be based on the five 'indicators of communicative competence' mentioned above: (1) introducing or recycling (from their partner or from the researcher) particular types of interactional moves appropriate to solve the communicative problem posed in the activity; (2) taking part in the interactional management of the activity; (3) participating with a balanced amount of talk in relation to the other interlocutor; (4) making adequate use of the participants' linguistic repertoire according to the instructions given by the researchers and (5) repairing any communicative problems that may appear during the development of the task.

From the point of view of the interactional moves required for the resolution of the tasks, Kam is totally dependent on his partner, Raquel. However, we can see that he responds to Raquel and recycles her moves (line 90).

(1) Task 1¹

87. **RAQ:** the banana and grapes\

88. **KAM:** grapes\

89. **RAQ:** yellow\|

90. **KAM:** grapes and banana\| yellow\| < 5 >

When pressed by his partner, Kam is capable of building up a statement with lexical items which have appeared in the preceding activity (line 96).

(2) Task 2²

91. **RAQ:** no\| míralo\ < 1 > two differences\|

92. **KAM:** two\ < 5 >

93. **RAQ:** habla tú\| alguna vez\| venga\|

94. **KAM:** tú\| tú\|

95. **RAQ:** pero_\ < 1 >

96. **KAM:** vale\| banana is in the basket\|

97. **RAQ:** yes\ < 2 > leder is in_ detra_ detrás del del vendedor\| ladder\|

91. **RAQ:** no\| look at it\ < 1 > two differences\|

92. **KAM:** two\| < 5 >

93. **RAQ:** you talk\| some time\| come on\|

94. **KAM:** you\| you\|

95. **RAQ:** but_\ < 1 >

96. **KAM:** ok\| banana is in the basket\|

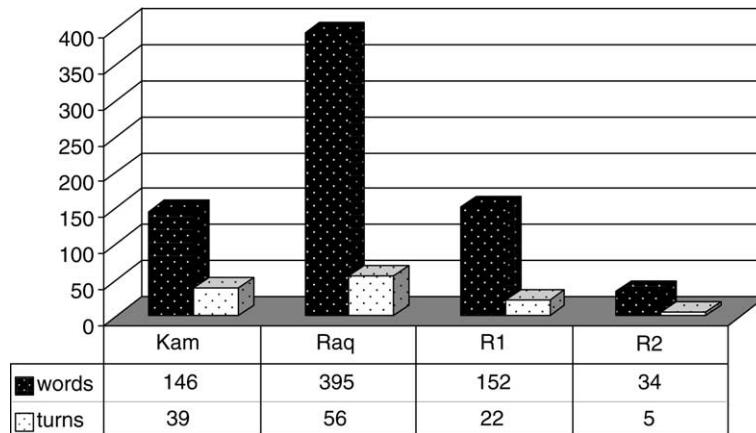
97. **RAQ:** yes\ < 2 > leder is in_ behi behind the the clerk\| ladder\|

Kam takes very little part in the management of the learning tasks. He seems to devote all his attentiveness to follow Raquel's lead to decide on the adequacy of his participation. This is what we see in Example (2), in which Raquel forces Kam to open a new exchange (Line 93).

Kam's subsidiary role in the task is connected with a lower degree of participation in terms of amount of talk, as reflected in Graphic 1, including the total number of turns and words produced by each of the participants in the task: Kam, her partner Raquel, and the two researchers who supervised the task, R1 (Teresa, TER) and R2 (Dolors, DOL).

Whereas R1's role involves mainly giving specific directions to Kam and Raquel on how to carry out the activities, R2's participation consists of assisting them and responding to their requests. Raquel's higher number of turns compared to Kam is due to the fact that she asks the researchers more questions on how the activities should be done.

As for Kam's use of his linguistic repertoire involving the three school languages, we observe that, like Raquel, he uses Spanish in order to manage the tasks. Example (3) shows how Catalan is placed by Kam and Raquel on a



Graphic 1 Amount of talk produced by participants in Kam's group

level with English in that it seems to be categorised as 'performing' or 'school' language, as opposed to Spanish, which appears to be categorised as 'informal communication' or 'outside school':

(3) Task 3

87. **TER:** vosaltres que heu acabat els primers\| va\|

88. **KAM:** no\| no\| no\| no\| < 1 >

89. **RAQ:** va\| aunque hables en catalán\|

90. **TER:** vinga\|

91. **KAM:** vale\| pero hablo en catalán\|

92. **TER:** no.\|

93. **RAQ:** mézclalo un poquito\|

94. **DOL:** vinga va\| no passa res\| tu intenta = \|

87. **TER:** you | who have finished first\| come on\|

88. **KAM:** no\| no\| no\| no\|

89. **RAQ:** come on\| even if you speak in Catalan\|

90. **TER:** come on\|

91. **KAM:** ok\| but I speak in Catalan\|

92. **TER:** no.\|

93. **RAQ:** mix it a bit\|

94. **DOL:** ok come on\| don't worry \| just try it\|

It seems that Kam's main problem with the English tasks is his low proficiency and lack of familiarity with peer-interaction activities in that language. He responds to this problem by adopting a 'wait and see' attitude, which is only modified when Raquel forces him to participate in the interactional activity.

In the interview, which the researcher carries out entirely in Catalan, Kam not only responds adequately to all the questions posed by the researcher but also expands on certain answers without being asked directly (Lines 245–247):

(4)

237. **TER:** aha\| bé esta_ i aquelles festes que f_ que es fan\| el Ramadà it
 238. tot això_bueno aquestes celebracions_
 239. **KAM:** sí\<|
 240. **TER:** les feu/|
 241. **KAM:** aquí/| = sí\<| =
 242. **TER:** = sí\<| =
 243. **KAM:** però allà com fem XXX\<|
 244. **TER:** clar \<|
 245. **KAM:** perquè aquí no es com al Marroc\<| perquè. allà. -| e. doncs a la
 246. festa del corder \<|quan maten el corder\<| er llavors er han
 247. d'invitar tota la família\<|

237. **TER:** aha\<| ok it's_and those parties they d_ that are organised\<| the
 238. Ramadan and all that _ well these celebrations_
 239. **KAM:** yes\<|
 240. **TER:** you have them/|
 241. **KAM:** here/| = yes\<| =
 242. **TER:** = yes\<| =
 243. **KAM:** but there because we do XXX\<|
 244. **TER:** right \<|
 245. **KAM:** because here it's not like in Morocco\<| because. there e. well on
 246. the Feast of the Sacrifice \<| when they slaughter the sheep\<| er
 247. then er they have to invite the whole family \<|

Throughout the interview, Kam consistently participates in fluent Catalan. This is not a new situation to Kam in terms of language choice as he links the categories of 'school', 'teacher' and 'Catalan language' as forming part of the same collection. Indeed, Kam declares that it is in the school context where he has learnt and uses Catalan. The potential inclusion of the category 'friends' in this collection (as co-participants in the educational institution) is immediately clarified by Kam when the researcher replaces the category 'school' by that of 'teacher'. We see then that the categories 'Spanish' and 'friends' form part of a different collection device.

(5)

93. **TER:** castellà\<| eh./| bé.\| escolta-| i m. i a l'escola-| què parles?
 94. **KAM:** jo\<| català\<|
 95. **TER:** sí/|
 96. **KAM:** sí\<|
 97. **TER:** amb la mestra/|
 98. **KAM:** sí\<| amb la mestra parlo en català\<|
 99. **TER:** i amb els teus amics i amigues/|
 100. **KAM:** més castellà \<|
93. **TER:** Spanish\<| eh./| ok.\| listen-| and m. and at school| what do
 94. you speak\<|
 95. **KAM:** me\<| Catalan\<|

96. **ER:** yes/|
 97. **KAM:** yes\|
 98. **TER:** with the teacher/|
 99. **KAM:** yes \| with the teacher I speak in Catalan\|
 100. **TER:** and with your friends/|
 101. **KAM:** more Spanish \|

Kam's multilingual attitude is clearly constructed throughout the interaction. In the first place, Kam unlinks two categories that the researcher assumes as forming part of the same collection, 'family' and 'Arabic', by saying that he sometimes speaks in 'the language of here' with his brothers and sisters. We should notice here the ambiguity of the expression 'language of here' in a bilingual community like Catalonia and the subsequent interactional work to clarify that Kam is referring to Spanish. This link between the categories 'multilingualism' and 'family/brothers and sisters' is later reinforced when Kam includes his 'father' in this collection device by saying that he 'speaks many many languages'. A second component in the construction of Kam's multilingualism is the fact that, in response to a question from the researcher as to what language he speaks regularly, he does not link the category 'habitual language' with just one but with two languages, 'Catalan and Spanish', and he does so on more than one occasion. Thirdly, after the researcher shows her appreciation of Kam's academic achievements by commenting on his 'good marks', he presents 'Catalan and Spanish' (in the same order as before), together with maths, as the school subjects in which he excels most. Fourthly, although he cannot link the category 'English language' with 'good marks', Kam compensates this absence of connection by showing a positive attitude, through the category bound activity 'like', towards not only English but also French. In the case of 'Catalan', Kam can reinforce his multilingual profile by linking it with the category bound activity 'look for opportunities for learning' when he comments that he watches TV and reads only in Catalan and he looks for opportunities to use it with his neighbours. One final point that can be made about the interactional construction of Kam's multilingual attitude is that he seems to have a theory of how languages are learnt, linking 'language learning' with 'language use':

- (6)
 278. **TER:** però en saps molt tu de català-| no/|
 279. **KAM:** sí\|
 280. **TER:** i saps llegir bé i escriure bé\| no/|
 281. **KAM:** sí\| a_ algunes vegades er algunes coses no les entenc\|
 282. **TER:** bueno\|
 283. **KAM:** perquè se m'olviden\|
 284. **TER:** clar però- < 0 >
 285. **KAM:** perquè parlo· castellà només amb els meus amics llavors les
 286. coses se m'olviden\|
 287. **TER:** ja\| clar\| només parles català amb la mestra\| no/
 288. **KAM:** sí
 289. **TER:** i amb mi ara\|

290. **KAM:** sí\|
 291. **TER:** [riu] molt bé doncs escolta'm_
 292. **KAM:** i al carrer també\|| hablo català\<|
 293. **TER:** ah. al carrer ta_ clar\<| català\<|
 294. **KAM:** i amb els veïns\<|
278. **TER:** but you know a lot of Catalan\<| don't you/|
 279. **KAM:** yes\<|
 280. **TER:** and you can read and speak correctly\<| can't you/|
 281. **KAM:** yes\<| s sometimes er I don't understand some things\<|
 282. **TER:** right\<|
 283. **KAM:** because I forget them\<|
 284. **TER:** of course but -
 285. **KAM:** because I spea·k in Castilian only with my friends and then |
 286. forget things\<|
 287. **TER:** yeah\<| right\<| you only speak Catalan with the teacher\<| right/
 288. **KAM:** yes\<|
 289. **TER:** and with me now\<|
 290. **KAM:** yes\<|
 291. **TER:** [laughs] very good\<| now listen_
 292. **KAM:** and on the street I also\|| speak Catalan\<|
 293. **TER:** a·h | on the street al_ of course\<| Catalan\<|
 294. **KAM:** and with my neighbours\<|

To sum up, Kam and his interviewer construct a multilingual profile by establishing two basic collection devices. The first one is related to Kam's multilingualism in his everyday life (family, habitual language). The second collection has to do with Kam's academic life and his aptitudes and attitudes towards languages and language learning.

Paula's Interactional Profile

Paula's interactional profile in the tasks and in the interview is very similar to Kam's. From the point of view of her interactional moves, she contributes very little to the task and her participation, as in Example (7), is mostly limited to repeating what the researcher, Antonio (ANT), or her partner, Enrique (ENR), have just said:

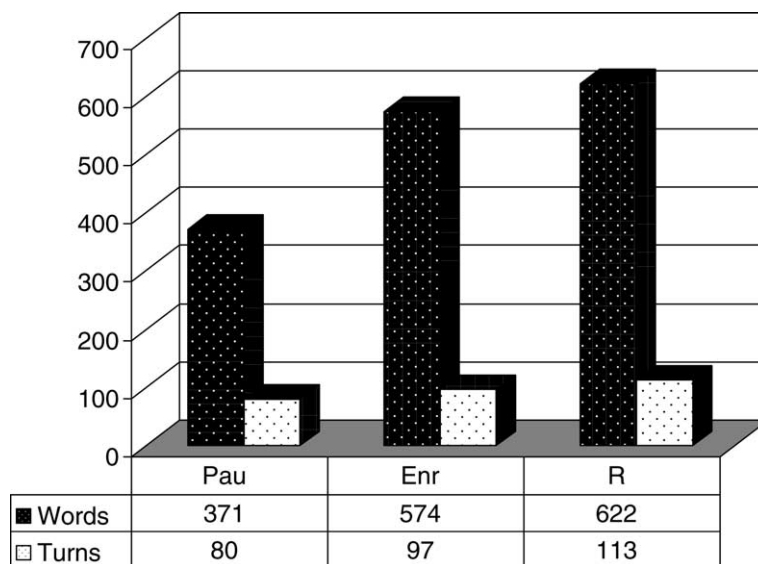
- (7)
24. **ANT:** a veure\|| fem més coses\<| Enr_ Enrique. i Paula\<| em.. esquerra\<|
 25. com és esquerra\<| left\|| eh/ left\<| esquerra és left\<| no/|
 26. **ENR:** = em =
 27. **ANT:** = i dreta/ = | right\<|
 28. **ENR:** {(DC) = 1 there = are trousers\<|}
 29. **PAU:** =1 right\<| =|
 30. **ANT:** i a dalt/| top/|
 31. **PAU:** top/|

32. **ANT:** abaix-| bottom\|
 33. **PAU:** bottom\|
24. **ANT:** let's see\|| let's do more things\| Enr Enrique. and Paula\| er..
 25. {(Cat) esquerra}\| how do we say {(Cat) esquerra}\| left\ | eh/
 26. left\| {(Cat) esquerra} is left\| ok/|
 27. **ENR:** = 1 er =
 28. **ANT:** = 1 and {(Cat) dreta/} = | right\|
 29. **ENR:** {(DC) = 2 there = are trousers\|}
 30. **PAU:** = 2 right\ =
 31. **ANT:** and {(Cat) a dalt}/| top/|
 32. **PAU:** top/|
 33. **ANT:** {(Cat) abaix} | bottom\|
 34. **PAU:** bottom\|

Paula, like Kam, takes very little part in the management of the activity. In this case, this is not only due to the leading role of her partner but also to the greater presence of the researcher.

From the point of view of the amount of talk, Paula's participation in the English tasks (including all of her contributions in English, Spanish and Catalan) is lower than in the Catalan and English tasks, but stays within the same ratio if we compare it with the participation of her partner (1:2) (Graphic 2).

In this case the higher number of words and turns by the researcher (R) is due to the fact that he is very active in his supervision of the task and addresses the students very frequently. Likewise, Enrique's contribution in words and turns is greater not only because he adopts a more uninhibited role in the activity but also because he sometimes addresses the researcher.



Graphic 2 Amount of talk produced by participants in Paula's group

In Paula's repertoire of 'school languages', Spanish has the most important role. This is the language she uses for 'non-academic or outside classroom communication' with both of her interlocutors during the tasks and during the interview, independently of the fact that the researcher always addresses to her in Catalan. Although she suggests in the interview that she uses Catalan with Catalan speakers (with the exception of her friends at school), Paula's use of Spanish is clearly dominant both in the tasks and in the interview. In Example (8), we can see how Paula's attempt to use Catalan (lines 148, 150) is interrupted when her partner participates in Spanish. She seems to be under the same sort of pressure as Kam in connection with the possibility of using Catalan with her friends.

(8)

146. **ANT:** que heu començat aquest any a fer anglés/| no ja n'havieu fet\|
 147. no/| abans/|
 148. **PAU:** jo/|
 149. **ENR:** yo si pero. en un = verano = se me olvidó todo\|
 150. **PAU:** = l'any passat = |
 151. **ANT:** ah si/|
 152. **PAU:** el año pasado\| = XXXX\ =
 153. **ENR:** = a mi me pasa eso\ = |
 154. **ANT:** ah l'any passat vas començar\|| però tu més\| no/| tu fa dos o
 155. tres anys\| no/| a primària/|
 156. **ENR:** sí\| pero| se me olvida muy facilmente\|
 157. **ANT:** ah si/|
 158. **ENR:** las tablas = de multiplicar me las estoy estudiando este año\ = |
 159. **PAU:** = yo tengo un diccionario en inglés y.. en = brasileño/| y no lo
 160. traigo\|
146. **ANT:** have you begun to take English this year/| no\| you had
 147. already done English\| right/| before/|
 148. **PAU:** me/|
 149. **ENR:** I have, but in one = summer = I forgot everything\|
 150. **PAU:** = last year =
 151. **ANT:** oh really/|
 152. **PAU:** last year\ | = XXX\ =
 153. **ENR:** = I have this problem\ = |
 154. **ANT:** ah you began last year\ | but you [have taken] more [English]\|
 right/|
 155. you have [taken English] for two or three years\| right/| in
 primary [education]/|
 156. **ENR:** yes\| but\| I forget very easily\|
 157. **ANT:** ah really/|
 158. **ENR:** I'm learning = the multiplying tables this year\ =
 159. **PAU:** = I have a Brazilian-English = dictionary/| and I don't bring it
 160. [to school]\|

When it comes to facing a communicative obstacle, Paula opts to explicitly display her lack of ability by refusing to make a contribution to the task ('no', 'hm hm'), or express her inability in English: 'no te he entendido' (I haven't understood you) '¿que qué?' (you said what?) 'no tengo ni idea' (I have no idea) '¿me estás hablando en chino?' (it sounds like double Dutch to me); in the case of a problem related to producing language, apart from participating as little as possible in English, she requests the help of the researcher:

(9)

203. **ANT:** = vale\ = ara tu\| Paula\ < 5 >204. **PAU:** cómo se llama caja/|205. **ANT:** caja/| box\|206. **PAU:** box\| y tapada y abierta/|207. **ANT:** open-| closed\|203. **ANT:** = ok\ = now you\| Paula\| < 5 >204. **PAU:** how do we say {(Cas) caja/|}205. **ANT:** {(Cas) caja/} box\|206. **PAU:** box\| and {(Cas) tapada y abierta/|}207. **ANT:** open- | closed\|

In the interview, Paula's participation differs from Kam in that she speaks in Spanish. Her initial efforts to participate in Catalan indicate that, despite her lack of proficiency, she sees this language as the appropriate one in the school context, and makes an effort to use it. However, she soon becomes aware of her difficulties and requests the consent of the researcher to use Spanish. By doing this, Paula, like Kam, is linking the categories 'school', 'teacher' (in this case represented by the researcher) and 'Catalan language'. Through her switching into Spanish, Paula can also be seen as orienting the interaction towards a type of bilingual conversation that is common in secondary schools (see, for instance, Example (7), in which Antonio, the researcher, speaks in Catalan and Enrique responds in Spanish). This type of bilingual conversation, in which one speaker uses Catalan and the other Spanish, is almost non-existent in primary schools, Kam's institutional context, where Catalan is clearly the dominant language and, therefore, Spanish is not available to Kam as a communicative resource.

In Example (10) we can see that Paula is very cooperative in the interview, responding to the researcher's questions by supplying detailed information and expanding on certain topics. Her participation often takes the form of long contributions either in a single turn or in different turns which are only separated by the researcher's provision of backchannel:

(10)

149. **ANT:** mm mm\| y te. et va bé et van bé les classes/|150. **PAU:** si\| al. al primer año. me ha ido bien\|151. **ANT:** l'any passat vols dir\|

152. **PAU:** si\| el primero de la ESO me ha ido bien\| y. bueno al principio.
 153. no conocía a nadie\| el primer día de clase ha sido super
 154. divertido\|
 155. **ANT:** si/
 156. **PAU:** porque yo he llegao XXXX\| me he sentao en la en la = {(Cat
 157. cadera\|} y nadie me miraba\| de allà la señorita de catalán| la
 158. Maria\| no/|
 159. **ANT:** si si\|
 160. **PAU:** llegó\| y el Carles me ha dicho\| pero tu que haces aquí/| y
 161. todo esto no/| y yo mejor que te calles\| que yo no quiero
 162. hablar. coger problemas\|
 163. **ANT:** però que ja et coneixia el Carles/|
149. **ANT:** mm mm \| and you. you're doing well in your classes/|
 150. **PAU:** yes\| I. I've done well in the first year\|
 151. **ANT:** you mean last year\|
 152. **PAU:** yes\| I did well in 1st ESO\| and. well at the beginning I didn't
 153. know
 154. anybody\| the first day of class was super funny\|
 155. **ANT:** really/|
 156. **PAU:** because I arrived XXXX\| I sat on the on the chair \| and
 157. nobody was looking at me\| the teacher of Catalan| Maria\|
 158. right/|
 159. **ANT:** yes yes\|
 160. **PAU:** arrived \| and Carles said to me \| but what are you doing
 161. here /| and all that
 162. you know /| and I go you'd better be quiet \| because I don't
 163. want to talk. get into trouble \|
 164. **ANT:** but did Carles already know you/|

Kam's linking of the categories 'friends' and 'Spanish language' as part of the same collection device is even clearer in the case of Paula. In Example (11), she admits that she does not use Catalan with her friends, and she even becomes irritated when one of them uses it outside the class. She presents the use of Spanish outside the classroom as a sort of 'situational contract' which her friend does not honour on certain occasions. However, in the Catalan language class, the situational contract involves using Catalan, and Paula makes sure to tell the researcher that she always does. This behaviour is made even more relevant by the researcher when he points out that Paula's partner, Enrique, does not honour the contract by using Spanish in the Catalan language class. We see therefore, that Paula presents her multilingualism as clearly distributed in what she considers as different situational contracts, by which she consistently abides.

(11)

121. **ANT:** a ha\| i amb quina llengua parleu\|
 122. **PAU:** castellano\|
 123. **ANT:** però el Ramon és català\| no/|

124. **PAU:** si pero. cuando el habla catalán/| vamos que yo me pongo
 125. furiosísima con él\|
 126. **ANT:** = ah si/| =
 127. **PAU:** = a veces = XXXX XX\|
 128. **ANT:** que ho dius en serio/|
 129. **PAU:** sí\|
 130. **ANT:** perquè.. /| perquè no l'entens/|
 131. **PAU:** no.. \| porque. el no lo sabe hablar mucho el castellano \| no/|
 132. **ANT:** sí \|
 133. **PAU:** y yo también_ mira\| tu me ayudas a hablar catalán/| y yo te
 134. ayudo a hablar castellano\| pero tenemos una cosa\| en la hora del
 135. patio castellano\| y en la hora de la clase catalán\| o sea que tu_/
121. **ANT:** aha | and what language do you speak\
 122. **PAU:** Castilian\
 123. **ANT:** but Ramon is Catalan\| isn't he/|
 124. **PAU:** yes bu.t when he speaks in Catalan/| well I get really upset with
 125. him\
 126. **ANT:** = oh really/| =
 127. **PAU:** = sometimes = XXXXXX\
 128. **ANT:** are you serious/|
 129. **PAU:** yes\
 130. **ANT:** why../| because you don't understand him/|
 131. **PAU:** no.. \| because. he cannot speak Castilian very well\| right/|
 132. **ANT:** right\
 133. **PAU:** and I also_ look\| you help me to speak Catalan/| and I help
 134. you to speak Castilian\| but we have one thing\| during the
 135. break Castilian and during the class/ Catalan\ so that you_/

When it cannot be supported on her actual proficiency (as with Spanish), Paula's multilingual attitude is projected through the expression of her desire to learn, as a goal to be reached through her constant effort to learn and practise the languages. Thus, as Kam did with her weakest language, English, Paula links her two weakest languages, Catalan and English, with the category-bound activity 'looking for opportunities to learn'. In connection with the Catalan language, apart from her strict observance of the situational contract to use Catalan in the Catalan language class, Paula modalises her behaviour declaring a positive attitude toward the language in that, even though outside the school she does not use Catalan, she has a multivolume encyclopaedia on the history of Catalonia of which she has already read the first two volumes and she has also bought a Spanish-Catalan bilingual dictionary to look up some of the words she does not understand. Furthermore, Paula says that she watches cartoons in a Catalan language channel 'to learn a bit more'. As for English, Paula manifests the same positive attitude to compensate for her self-defined low aptitude in the language ('English with me doesn't... I don't do very well in English') when she declares that 'she tries with all her strength to understand it' and that she knows she will need English to be a lawyer.

Paula's orientation towards the institutional context of the school is similar for Catalan and English: she acknowledges her low proficiency and compensates it with a self-categorisation as a student who wants and strives to learn. The connection between the category 'weak language' and the category bound activity 'look for opportunities to learn' is reinforced when, in response to the researcher's request to express her preferences among Catalan, Spanish, English and Portuguese in terms of how important she considers them for her future, Paula mentions her weakest language, English, in the first instance, and Catalan in the second.

Whereas for Catalan and English Paula explicitly admits to having problems, in the case of Spanish she defines herself as fully competent, to the point that she feels entitled to evaluate and help with the Spanish of a classmate of a non-immigrant origin with Catalan as his mother tongue (see Example (11)).

Paula's comfort with her Spanish, reflected in her talkativeness during the interview and her evaluation of the competence of a classmate, contrasts with her admission of lack of competence in Catalan and in English, which is reflected in the little use she makes of Catalan during the interview, the simplicity of her interactional moves in the English tasks, the frequent requests for help and the acknowledgements of lack of resources whenever she is forced to contribute to the task. However, with both languages she projects an image of a wilful learner who is aware of her lack of competence and looks for opportunities for learning, thereby orienting herself towards an institutionally affiliated identity.

Communicative Competence and Institutional Affiliation: Institutionally Situated Communicative Competence

An analysis of the participation of Kam and Paula in the English learning tasks strictly based on the communicative competence they display in that language could easily lead us to the conclusion that they are incompetent in English. The following aspects of their participation can be mentioned as possible indexes of their lack of competence:

- (1) They hardly ever take the initiative and allow their partner to set the pace.
- (2) They do not introduce interactional moves, instead they reuse elements from previous contributions by their partner or by the researcher.
- (3) Their participation in terms of amount of talk is clearly lower than that of their partner.
- (4) They acknowledge at some point during the tasks that they are not competent enough.
- (5) They use Catalan or Spanish in tasks for which they were told they should use English.

However, if we take into account the socioconstructivist and interactionist perspectives to the notion of communicative competence we will have to shift the focus of the analysis to describing the extent to which the participants, by activating all of their communicative resources, are capable of orienting their

participation towards the social/institutional context and the particular demands of the interactional activity. From this point of view, our evaluation of Kam's and Paula's communicative competence should focus on how they take a stand in front of two particular sociocommunicative activities characteristic of the educational institution and how they invest in a specific identity (Norton, 2000), the figure of the good learner, who claims to be willing to learn and be taught by others who know more.

In this way some of the aspects of Kam's and Paula's participation may be reinterpreted as indexes of an acceptable level of institutionally situated communicative competence. Their participation in the tasks and in the interview, as well as their stance in front of the languages and, in general, the demands of the educational institution show them as perfectly 'affiliated' with it (Coulon, 1993), in the sense that they have probably come to accept that his academic success depends on their acceptance of the institutional norms involving issues having to do with (1) the relationship between knowledge and participation, (2) language choice inside and outside school or (3) definitions of correctness in language use. Therefore, the analytical questions that need to be posed are the following: how do Kam and Paula construct their affiliation to the institution? How successful are they in doing so? In other words, to what extent do Kam and Paula succeed in interactionally constructing an acceptable learner identity in response to and, at the same time, in cooperation with their interlocutors?

By reinterpreting certain aspects of Kam's and Paula's participation it is possible to have a different impression of their achievements since they arrived in Catalonia and to conclude that they have already achieved an acceptable level of institutionally situated communicative competence in the context of an educational institution. The following are some of these aspects:

- (1) They recognise the 'authority' of the more proficient interlocutor in the tasks and allow him/her to manage the activity (i.e. to act as the teacher).
- (2) They follow the pattern set by the proficient interlocutor and recycle what he/she says.
- (3) They participate in the activity when they are asked to do so.
- (4) They pay attention and show understanding.
- (5) They do/say what they can and do not try to do what is beyond their capacities; they do not take risks.
- (6) They acknowledge their inability (i.e. they do not try to trick their interlocutors) and request, when necessary, the help of the more proficient interlocutor.

In the interview Kam and Paula continue their interactional work constructing a profile which is institutionally affiliated with the education institution:

- (7) They have a clear multilingual attitude, showing their willingness to learn and/or use the minority language, Catalan, as well as other languages.
- (8) They have clear academic-related goals and work hard towards achieving them.

- (9) They are generous with information requested from them by the interviewer.
- (10) They clearly discriminate between 'school' and 'outside school' when it comes to language choice between Catalan and Spanish.

Final Remarks

In this study we have taken verbal interaction as the focus of our analysis, and we have concentrated on Rampton's (1995: 15) four analytical dimensions: language use, interaction structures and processes, institutional organisation, and the subjects' ideas and feelings, in our case, about language learning and use and about the educational institution. The analysis has allowed us to gain a deeper understanding in two main directions. On the one hand, we are now in a better position to deal with the notion of 'multilingual communicative competence' as a set of practices within a specific type of institutional discourse. On the other hand, the analysis has revealed the 'interactional methods' employed by two non-immigrant adolescents in order to (1) take advantage of the opportunities the school offers them to acquire useful knowledge and, at the same time, (2) display their affiliation to the educational institution.

The analysis we have presented brings to question the applicability in multilingual and multicultural situations of a what, in practice, sometimes may become a rather strict 'linguistic' notion of communicative competence, as an abstract construct which often associates accurate verbal behaviour with successful social behaviour. The analysis we have carried out shows us that Kam and Paula, in spite of their relatively inaccurate verbal behaviour in English, succeed at enacting an identity that is clearly affiliated with the educational institution in which they find themselves, thereby opening up their possibilities for social promotion. From the ways in which Kam and Paula orient their interactional participation we can obtain an idea of what is most relevant to them as members of the educational institution. Despite the linguistic focus of both the learning tasks and the interview, we believe that what is most relevant to them is the enactment of a 'good learner' identity rather than an 'accurate speaker' identity.

We have seen that Kam and Paula employ very similar interactional methods to take part in the institutional activities we proposed to them. Their participation in the learning tasks and the interview shows them as being very much aware of the roles, values and norms of the educational institution. They seem to have understood perfectly well the symbolic values of the three languages that they encounter in the school, and they are capable of displaying 'situational propriety' (Rampton, 1995: 347). They try to avoid participating in the learning tasks because of their low proficiency in English and they allow their partner to take the role of leader. However, they remain attentive and contribute to the task when they are asked to do so. In the interview, on the other hand, Kam and Paula are more generous with their participation because they have the necessary resources to do so (i.e. Catalan or Spanish). They also show the appropriate deference and collaborate with the interviewer to

construct an image of themselves that is likely to make them acceptable members of the institution.

This analysis connects with Lave and Wenger's notion of *legitimate peripheral participation* (1991) and the relevance for second language learning of 'learners' access to participatory roles in expert performances of all knowledge skills, including language' (Watson-Gegeo, 2004: 341). Kam and Paula have been shown as having learnt to take the expected non-expert position in the community of practice represented by the school, a position which they may interpret as granting them more possibilities for learning and social promotion. It is the responsibility of the institution not only to value them for these specific capacities and skills, which go beyond the strict definition of linguistic competence, but also to offer them a variety of activities through which they can gradually adopt expert roles, thereby becoming full participants.

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Notes

1. Transcription conventions:

<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Symbol</i>
Three initial capitals at the beginning of the turn	Speaker's identification (names have been changed in order to preserve anonymity)
Tone-unit boundary:	falling \ rising / level with preceding syllable –
Pauses:	short
	medium
	long < number of seconds >
Syllabic lengthening (according to length):
Overlapping segments	= text speaker A =
	= text speaker B =

Interruption of tone sequence	text_
Speed	accelerando {(AC) text} rallentando {(DC) text}
Transcriber's comments:	[comentari]
Inaudible utterance (according to length)	XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX XXX
Use of a language that is different from that which is dominant the activity.	{(name of the language) text}

2. From this extract on we enclose English translations.

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