Chapter 13.

Ideology vs. practice: Is there a space for pedagogical translanguaging in mother tongue instruction?
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Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the concepts translanguaging and pedagogical translanguaging (e.g. Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009) from the perspective of mother tongue instruction (henceforth MTI) in a Swedish context. In Sweden, MTI refers to non-mandatory state-funded instruction of minority languages as a subject within the curriculum. For example, a child whose parent speaks Somali as a mother tongue may be entitled to Somali MTI according to Swedish language policy. For reasons of clarity, we will use the terms MTI and mother tongue throughout this chapter in alignment with how they are used in Swedish language policy and practice. For example, in Swedish legislation MTI does not encompass the teaching of Swedish as a mother tongue and MTI is only offered in one language, even when students may have multiple mother tongues. Accordingly, in this chapter a distinction is sometimes made between the use of the mother tongue on the one hand and the use of Swedish on the other.

In the chapter, we draw on interview and observational data from MTI to emphasize the need to take into consideration the ideologies that are articulated by the MTI teachers and embodied (Kroskrity, 2006; cf. Salö, 2015) in their pedagogical practices in order to be able to interpret multilingual practices that occur in interaction in the MTI classrooms. In light of this, we discuss whether neologisms such as translanguaging and pedagogical translanguaging are suitable terms to describe linguistic and pedagogical practices within MTI, considering that these concepts come associated with a particular set of theoretical assumptions about language and pedagogy that in many respects differ from the ideologies articulated and embodied by the MTI teachers. Our data is used to exemplify mismatches between surface level observations of multilingual practices and the ideological underpinnings of the same practices. As will be demonstrated and argued, even multilingual practices can be modelled on monoglossic views of language if they are restricted and predefined in time and space, and viewed as necessary rather than desirable.

Ideologies of language and pedagogy

In our subsequent discussion of MTI, we adopt a broad understanding of ideologies as
“commonsensical and often normative” (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998: 25) beliefs and feelings about language that tend to reflect, maintain and (re)produce hegemonic power relations (Kroskrity, 2006; Woolard, 1998; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; see also Jonsson, this volume). Accordingly, we acknowledge the sociohistorical and political embeddedness of language use and language beliefs. Ideologies are, in this sense, seen as “power-linked discourses” (Woolard, 1998: 7), which people eventually come to perceive and embody as neutral and universal truths by being socialized as members of different institutions, by engaging with state-enforced policies, and by interacting with other people. In particular, we are interested in how the MTI teachers come to maintain and reproduce dominant idealized conceptions of language and pedagogy. Considering that teachers often "become the main agents through whom ideology is spread" (Shohamy, 2006: 79), it is important to investigate their beliefs and practices, as these are shaped by the underlying "dominant language ideology" (Kroskrity, 1998) that is embodied in curricula, school manuals, teaching materials, and teacher education. They are also constantly being reinforced and justified in the communicative practices in which teachers engage (cf. Busch, 2014). Nevertheless, notions of ideological embodiment and reproduction should not be viewed as static or non-contradictory, nor do they exclude possibilities for contestation and renegotiation (cf. Canagarajah, 2013).

In this chapter, we focus on how ideologies of language and pedagogy were explicitly articulated by the teachers in our study during interviews and in informal conversations with the authors, as well as how these ideologies were being "embodied in communicative practice" (Kroskrity, 2006: 496), that is, how the ideologies could be observed and "read from actual usage" (Kroskrity 2006: 505) during the MTI lessons (cf. Martínez, Hikida & Durán, 2015; Salö, 2015). The analyses of the teachers’ articulated and embodied beliefs are also situated in a sociohistorical and political context, by taking into consideration the historical foundation of MTI in Sweden, and the subject’s possibilities and limitations in terms of policy and practice.

Translanguaging and pedagogical translinguaging

Recently, translanguaging has become a popular concept to describe and analyze language practices that occur in diverse settings (Canagarajah, 2011; García, 2009). Importantly, translanguaging and other similar concepts such as translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013), heteroglossia (Bailey, 2007; Blackledge & Creese, 2014), metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010) and polylingual languaging (Jørgensen, 2008) represent a shift in the ideology of language, where languages are seen as social constructs, and no longer believed to be static, discrete and separate systems (although the extent to which these concepts are able to do away with structuralist ideas of language as system can be disputed, e.g. Orman & Pablé, 2016).
Accordingly, the main focus is on the language user and on how languages are negotiated in interaction rather than the language systems per se (e.g. Canagarajah, 2011; García, 2009). In this respect, translanguaging differs radically from the earlier concept of code-switching, which reflects a monoglossic ideology through which the languages of a bilingual speaker are conceptualized as two discrete systems that can be separated and regulated in time and space (e.g. García, 2009).

Following Creese and Blackledge’s (2010) seminal research in complementary schools in the UK, it has also become increasingly popular to speak of translanguaging as pedagogy, or pedagogical translanguaging, in contexts illustrating pedagogical practices that endorse multilingualism and students’ flexible language use. In fact, García and Li (2014) define translanguaging both as an act of performance and as a pedagogy for teaching and learning. However, in our view, pedagogical translanguaging, goes beyond translanguaging as it includes how teachers deliberately try to draw on their students’ multiple linguistic resources in pedagogy in order to promote and mediate learning. In this chapter, we argue that the concept pedagogical translanguaging should be reserved for contexts where teachers have made a deliberate decision to include students’ flexible language uses, and where the multilingual practices employed in pedagogy harmonize with the teachers’ ideologies of language. Like many other researchers, we think it is important to link the interactions observed within a practice to the ideologies that influence these same interactions (cf. Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Heller, 2007; Hornberger & Link, 2012).

Mother tongue instruction in Sweden

At the policy level, there is relatively strong support for MTI in Sweden. For example, the Swedish Education Act (SFS 2010:800) states that any student with a legal guardian who has a mother tongue other than Swedish is entitled to instruction in this language, if s/he has basic knowledge of the language in question, and the language is used for daily communication in the student’s home. Recent statistics shows that approximately 24 % of the students in compulsory school are entitled to MTI, and that MTI is currently offered in more than a hundred different languages (Skolverket, 2015). However, the access to instruction varies in different parts of Sweden, as does the attendance level for the different languages encompassed by MTI. What is more, despite the comparatively strong legal support, MTI has been associated with constant struggles of implementation and marginalization (e.g. Ganuza & Hedman, 2015; Hyltenstam & Milani, 2012). For instance, the subject is non-mandatory and the instruction is often restricted to less than a one-hour lesson per week. MTI also tends to be poorly integrated with other subjects in the curriculum. Furthermore, the MTI teachers often work under strenuous conditions as many
of them have to ambulate between different schools and be able to cater to very heterogeneous student groups.

The MTI subject syllabus (Skolverket, 2011: 83) states that the aim of mother tongue instruction should be to provide opportunities for students to develop knowledge in and about the mother tongue, with a main focus on the development of mother tongue language skills. Among other things, it is described how MTI should help students develop their abilities to read and write in the mother tongue and to be able to adapt their language use in relation to different purposes, interlocutors and contexts, and to comply with language norms. The students are also expected to reflect on cultural phenomena and traditions in the countries where the mother tongue is spoken. Furthermore, there is a comparative approach regarding language and culture, where language and cultural phenomena should be compared with Swedish and Swedish conditions.

The study

In this chapter, we draw on the same ethnographic data used in an earlier article that focused on MTI teachers’ ideologies concerning language, teaching, and literacy (Ganuza & Hedman, 2015). The data was collected within the larger research project “The role of mother tongue instruction for the development of biliteracy among Somali-Swedish speaking children in the early school years” (funded by the Swedish Research Council 2013–2016). The ethnographic part of the project included audio-recorded and transcribed in-depth interviews with 15 MTI teachers of Somali and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (henceforth BCS), and field notes taken during classroom observations conducted over a one-year period with the same teachers. In total, 67 MTI lessons were observed. Field notes, photos and copies of teaching materials are the sources of data from these observations. The authors also spent additional time at several of the schools where the MTI teachers worked, as part of collecting quantitative data for the larger project (e.g. Ganuza & Hedman, in press). On these occasions, field notes were taken of interactions in the corridors, the lunch hall, and the staff room. All ethnographic data was analyzed thematically using QSR Nvivo Software.

The observed MTI lessons varied widely in terms of the number of students attending the classes. Sometimes there were only two students, and at other times twenty-five. Moreover, the student groups were often heterogeneous, both in terms of age and proficiency in the mother tongue. This was especially the case for the BCS languages. The student enrollment and the attendance rate are often higher for Somali MTI than the BCS languages (Statistics Sweden, 2014), which is why the teachers of Somali were generally able to teach larger and more age-homogeneous student groups.
Ideological context of MTI

As described in the previous article (Ganuza & Hedman, 2015), we found that the MTI settings observed were ideologically dominated by a monolingual norm, reflective of the teachers’ beliefs in languages as separate entities, and their beliefs in the ability and desirability to separate languages in time and space (cf. García, 2009), which is exemplified by teacher Naima in excerpt 1. Please note that all teacher names used in the chapter are pseudonyms, and the interviews and field note excerpts have been translated from Swedish into English by the authors, with the intent of keeping the translations close to the original.

**Excerpt 1. Teacher Naima**

> When they sit in the classroom I say, now we leave all other languages outside. In here, only Somali counts.

In class, students were often reprimanded for using Swedish, and the teachers regularly urged them to repeat themselves in the mother tongue (e.g. Teacher Amina: “Say that in our language!”). At other times, the teachers’ strategies were less direct, for example by repeating in the mother tongue what students had stated in Swedish or by consistently answering back in the mother tongue despite the language directed at them.

We do not argue that the MTI teachers’ negative evaluations of their students’ uses of Swedish reflect negative attitudes towards Swedish *per se*. Instead, the data shows that these represent the teachers’ fear of the diminishing value and space that they think Swedish imposes on the mother tongue in a Swedish context (cf. Kroskrity, 1998), especially as they consider most of their students to be much more proficient in Swedish than in the mother tongue (exemplified in excerpt 2). They also see Swedish as the language of more prestige in the wider society.

**Excerpt 2. Teacher Ilyas**

> None of them know Somali more than Swedish. There is no one. They all know better Swedish [...] they have their friends, the environment, the teachers that help them many hours per week, homework, and everything. That’s why they learn Swedish so fast.

As a result, the MTI teachers tended to regard the MTI lessons as a time and place reserved for protecting the mother tongue. They viewed MTI as a unique opportunity to help students increase their proficiency in and knowledge of the language and culture of heritage, which is exemplified in excerpt 3 (cf. Martínez et al., 2015).
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**Excerpt 3.** Teacher Naima

I know I work only once a week. I can’t give all the um important but the only thing I want to show them is that we have this language that is well functioning […] I think it is really important that I come as a real language teacher who can show the students that they should feel WOW, we do have this language.

The teachers’ strong advocacy for mother tongue use can also be seen as counter-hegemonic as they try to inculcate in their students the idea that not only Swedish is important in Sweden (cf. Martínez et al., 2015).

Although all the teachers articulated the value of bilingualism in the interviews, and stressed the advantages of knowing several languages in order to be successful in school (e.g. Teacher Naima: “When the students know their mother tongue it facilitates the other subjects”), they also claimed that languages would be best developed separately, that is, they advocated “a one language at a time ideology” (García & Li, 2014: 67). They wished that their students would be able to attain an equally high command of both of their languages, and feared the undesirable alternative where their students would only manage to reach this goal halfway. This belief is exemplified in excerpt 4, where teacher Sanela explains how she perceives that her students’ unequal opportunities for and use of Swedish and BCS may turn them into semilinguals.

**Excerpt 4.** Teacher Sanela

[…] then I knew from the start that they had difficulties speaking [BCS]. But I know that their mom speaks [BCS] to them because she’s not that good in Swedish and she would never speak Swedish to her children. But she’s all day at work and maybe she sees her children only for a short time, so they, their stronger language is Swedish. But the problem with those children is that they become semilingual.

The teachers’ call for language separation, their beliefs in the possibility and desirability to develop an equal command of several languages, and their fear of semilingualism follow the logic of *parallel monolingualism* (e.g. García, 2009; García & Leiva, 2014), and “the container metaphor of competence” (Martin-Jones, 2007: 167), through which language competence is conceptualized as a finite space (see also Stroud, 2004).

Within the observed dominant monolingual ideological frame of MTI, the teachers also seemed to agree with the idea that language choice and use is primarily a matter of individual choice, and that multilingual practices can easily be replaced with monolingual practices (as illustrated in excerpt 5).

**Excerpt 5.** Teacher Sanela

I usually say, when you talk to me choose one language. If you speak Swedish, speak Swedish, yes, but do not mix.
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Considering the restricted teaching time for MTI, the teachers stressed the importance of using the mother tongue at home, and they tended to criticize parents who would allow their children to speak Swedish abundantly. The teachers said that they felt unable to make a change during their one hour of MTI per week, unless the parents also made the effort to speak the mother tongue with their children at home. Consequently, some of them insisted that parents should impose language use regulations in the home to foster their children’s use of the mother tongue (as illustrated in excerpt 6).

**Excerpt 6. Teacher Marija**

> When they’re home, they should say no, now we have to speak the mother tongue when we’re at home. That should be a rule.

Hence, the home, in addition to MTI, was by many teachers regarded as a place reserved for the mother tongue, and the parents were positioned as co-agents in the struggle for minority language maintenance.

The advocacy of language separation was not only upheld by the MTI teachers in the schools that we visited, but oftentimes also by other staff. For example, in two of the schools we observed how several teachers explicitly asked the bilingual students not to speak their mother tongue in the corridors, or in the lunch hall. The teachers explained to us that the school’s language policy was to use Swedish when in school (with the exception of the MTI lessons, the English lessons, and the Modern Language lessons), and this language rule was also found to be practiced by teachers and teacher assistants in the schools who shared other languages in addition to Swedish with the students. On several occasions, we also observed when students articulated reprimands and regulation of other students’ language use, both within and outside of MTI. Altogether, these observed actions regarding multilingual practices reflect how the Swedish school as an institution is strongly "rooted in a monolingual habitus” (Gogolin, 1994, in Busch, 2014: 22), and how students and teachers have come to both articulate and embody this dominant ideology (Kroskrity, 2006) in their communicative practices, both within and outside of MTI (cf. Haglund, 2005).

The MTI teachers’ ideas about language separation are clearly informed by monolingual and language purist ideologies. In their attempts to safeguard the survival of the mother tongue, they tended to construct MTI as a site and an opportunity to introduce, reproduce and promote not only a certain set of linguistic norms but also a certain set of cultural norms, based on an idea of a common heritage (cf. Kroskrity, 2006). The teachers also tended to assign themselves the important function of acting as role models for these desired and highly valued norms (Ganuza & Hedman, 2015, see also excerpt 3 above), and by doing that, they were able to renegotiate power and dominant ideologies in their favor (Canagarajah, 2013: 29). However, this left almost no
space for negotiation of how diasporic languages and identities as practiced in communication in Sweden may differ from how identities and languages have been practiced in the “traditional homelands” (Canagarajah, 2013; see also Eliaso Magnusson, 2015). It is also important to stress that the MTI teachers’ views of language and culture are a reflection of the MTI subject syllabus, in which an essentialist view of language and culture prevails over acknowledgements of hybridized cultural and linguistic expressions (cf. Ganuza & Hedman, 2015; Rosén, this volume, Spetz, 2014). Outakoski (2015) found a similar promotion of a “determined body of predefined knowledge” (see Busch, 2011: 14) among teachers of Sami, who tended to support the transmission through education of only certain sets of Sami language, literacy and culture, namely those which were in alignment with their own beliefs about what constitutes valid representations of Sami traditions and culture.

**Multilingual practices in MTI**

Despite the teachers’ strong advocacy for *double monolingualism*, and their many efforts to try to keep languages separate, and preferably leave Swedish outside of MTI, Swedish still formed part of the classroom interactions in all the places visited, as both students and teachers used Swedish during MTI. This is in line with previous research that has shown that multilinguals have always resisted monolingual language policies enforced in educational settings (e.g. Hornberger & Link, 2012; Makalela, 2015; Shohamy, 2006).

For example, all MTI teachers used and allowed Swedish for specific aims, such as in written translation tasks, to translate or explain words during reading of texts, and in order to continuously check students’ understanding of their lines of argumentation. During teacher-led text reading in the mother tongue, they often asked students to repeat words and sentences in Swedish, in order to make sure that they had understood them correctly. One teacher also pointed out that the MTI syllabus prescribes that students should develop their ability to compare linguistic structures in the mother tongue with Swedish. However, students’ unsolicited use of Swedish during MTI was regularly met by explicit reprimands asking them not to use Swedish and/or by asking them to repeat themselves in the mother tongue. Altogether, our impression was that the use of Swedish was accepted by the teachers if it was used to facilitate students’ understanding of the mother tongue, and when it clearly geared students towards enhancing their proficiency in the mother tongue, but not for other purposes, as also confirmed by the following statement by teacher Omar.

**Excerpt 7. Teacher Omar**

I use Swedish for them to understand, but not for them to use and speak in the class.
When asked in the interviews about their feelings concerning the use of Swedish during MTI, most teachers expressed a firm conviction of the inadequacy of using Swedish, while concurrently emphasizing the necessity of bringing in Swedish in order to help students who lack proficiency in the mother tongue. The teachers regarded the use of Swedish as “natural” outside of MTI (e.g. Teacher Ilyas: “They speak Swedish with each other sure, it’s only natural, but I always say, ‘During my lessons, you are not allowed to speak Swedish to each other.’”), but they rather consistently framed it as a “deficit practice,” “a necessary evil” and as “a last resort” within MTI, and never as a valid strategy for learning (cf. Probyn, 2015). However, the teachers said that they made exceptions to the language separation rule with students whom they considered unable to use the mother tongue, and clarified that they would never force a child to speak the mother tongue if they thought s/he would be unable to do it (e.g. Teacher Omar: “There are some who don’t know Somali, there are one or two in each class. These children, I let them speak Swedish”).

On the whole, students tended to be positioned as the scapegoats for the abundant use of Swedish during lessons, and the teachers explained their use of Swedish either as a consequence of sloppiness or due to students’ lack of proficiency in the mother tongue. In this way, the use of Swedish was found to be a constant dilemma by the teachers. However, we also have to ask ourselves to what extent our presence in the observed settings, as representatives of higher education who may be perceived as symbols of the Swedish hegemony, may have contributed to the reinforcement of monoglossic ideologies in our data, and whether our presence made the teachers stress the negative aspects of using Swedish in MTI more emphatically than they otherwise would have.

In larger student groups, and with older students, we observed some group work, which allowed for more peer interaction. During these occasions we observed how the students sometimes interacted with one another mainly in Swedish, as well as how they drew on various linguistic resources, for example while checking their answers with each other or when speaking about things unrelated to the exercises at hand. However, if noticed by the teacher, the students were often reprimanded for speaking Swedish, and as a result many of these conversations were hidden from the “front stage” classroom activities (Goffman, 1959) and instead became part of illegitimate “back stage” language practices. One observed exception to the language separation policy took place during a Somali MTI lesson in a secondary school class, where students had been assigned to work with drama. During the preparatory work, a large part of the teacher instructions and student interactions took place in Swedish, without comments on language choice by the teacher (although the written instruction for the assignment contained a request not to mix languages). We noted that this differed radically from the same teacher’s observed conduct when teaching younger students, where he constantly reminded them to use Somali, not Swedish. The teacher explained his more liberal stance towards the older students’ use of
languages with the fact that these students were proficient in Somali, and that he knew that they would be able to perform the play in Somali, regardless of the languages used during preparation. It thus appears as if the assumed negative impact of the “wrong” language use in MTI may be perceived as less of a threat for more proficient bilingual speakers. This is reminiscent of teacher Ms. Birch’s remarks in Martínez et al.’s study (2015), where she considers the right to mixing languages in writing as reserved for older and more competent bilingual students.

Practical consequences for students

We argue that the teachers’ attempts to always regulate the languages used during MTI had the effect of silencing the students. As discussed in Ganuza and Hedman (2015), we found the MTI lessons at large to be dominated by teacher monologues and teacher-dominated interactions following a pattern of initiation-response-evaluation (IRE, e.g. Mehan, 1979). Thus, the teacher’s role within MTI was mainly framed as an “interactional-structural authority”, in control of the interactional floor (Karrebaek, 2012: 33), which left relatively limited space for student interactions and student input. Activities during MTI were often organized so that every student, despite their varying levels of proficiency, would be able to provide an answer in the mother tongue. This was achieved by asking questions to which the answers could be found directly in the pedagogical context (e.g. in a text, on a worksheet, or on the whiteboard). If students provided more extensive answers, which included the use of Swedish, they were often asked to repeat themselves in the mother tongue. Also, when working in pairs or groups, students were reproached if the teacher noticed that they were speaking Swedish amongst themselves. Although the teachers’ intent with these strategies was to promote the use of the mother tongue instead of Swedish, these strategies were found to be counter-productive (cf. Shohamy, 2006), as this resulted in relatively little verbal input from students during MTI. This is in line with earlier arguments that “controlling devices over language use are ineffective, futile and often counter-productive to language and content mastery” (Makalela, 2015: 1).

Another consequence of the observed deficit discourse surrounding students’ use of Swedish in MTI, as well as their use of languages other than Swedish outside of MTI, is that they were consistently being stigmatized for not conforming to the monolingual norm. This implies that many bilingual students face a reality at school where they just cannot get it right. They are under linguistic surveillance and control wherever they go. BCS teacher Marija’s comment in excerpt 6 above indicates that the effort to regulate the students’ language use may also follow them home. A consequence of this type of language surveillance could be an experience of
exclusion where students feel that their linguistic repertoires never fit with the surrounding demands, thus resulting in a negative “lived experience of language” (Busch, 2015).

Is there a space for pedagogical translanguaging in MTI?

Without an in-depth analysis of the MTI teachers’ explicitly articulated language ideologies, and the ideologies embodied in their pedagogical practices, we might have concluded, based on the descriptive surface level observations of multilingual practices that occurred in MTI, that translanguaging formed a natural part of MTI. Yet, our findings in MTI do not harmonize well with the theoretical-ideological assumptions about language and communication that come associated with the label and concept of translanguaging. If we used translanguaging to describe the observed multilingual practices, we would be imposing a view of language and pedagogy from the outside, an etic perspective, rather than to analyze them on the basis of the conditions revealed in our data. In the observed settings, the terms multilingual practices or even code-switching are perhaps more suitable as these two notions, similarly to the MTI teachers’ articulated views of language, conceptualize languages as separate entities, even if they are used in co-existence (cf. Canagarajah, 2013; García, 2009). In line with other scholars (e.g. Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Heller, 2007; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Martin-Jones, 2007), we maintain that a merely descriptive analysis of classroom interactions can disguise the ideologies and the pedagogical challenges at stake. The observed regulation of language use in MTI, and the teachers’ articulated beliefs regarding the possibility and desirability to separate languages differ quite radically from settings where students are encouraged to draw freely on their linguistic resources, and translanguaging is defined as a valid pedagogical practice (e.g. Busch, 2014; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). By using the term pedagogical translanguaging in contexts where multilingual practices are used by teachers and students without reflection and/or without a deliberate aim to mediate learning, we argue that the concept runs the risk of losing its inherent power, and researchers may thereby also lose access to a powerful tool for describing, possibly rare multilingual educational practices.

The question remains whether there is room for change in MTI, to possibly allow for the introduction of pedagogical translanguaging. What we found striking during our observations of MTI was the limited space for peer interaction, despite the teachers’ firm belief in the importance of collaborative work and oral language development, as expressed in the interviews (Ganuza & Hedman, 2015). We find that the restricted space for interaction is problematic, as it silences the students, narrows their opportunities for using the mother tongue orally, and infringes on their possibilities to voice their own “concerns or topics of interest” (Busch, 2014: 37). It keeps them from being able to actively participate in the (re)formulation, (re)construction and resistance of
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concepts such as identity, language and culture within MTI. In short, the observed MTI settings do not create the conditions needed for stimulating multidiscursivity or multivoicedness (see Busch’s, 2014, use of these Bakhtinian concepts). The challenge for MTI is, in our view, to create pedagogical milieus that can motivate students to use the mother tongue as much as possible, without having to set up the firm interactional constraints that we have observed, that is, the key should be motivation rather than regulation.

One way of addressing the existing monolingual ideologies in MTI would be to, in discussions with MTI teachers, highlight the important role of interaction and oral language development and stress how language regulations in educational settings can become counter-productive for students’ oral participation. It may also be fruitful to present examples of good practice, as an embryo for possible change, for example from complementary schools in the UK (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Creese et al. 2011) in order to show that the acceptance of more flexible language use does not automatically lead to a diminished use of the mother tongue. The quality of interaction would also need to be addressed, for example through critical reflections on what the students do with language, what language does to them, and what language means to them (Blommaert, 2010: 188). This could be a means to raise the teachers’ awareness of how languages are always in contact and how languages tend to complement each other in communicative practices rather than compete with each other in the way that follows from the logic of the container metaphor of language competence (Canagarajah, 2013; Martin-Jones, 2007). Such discussions could also bring attention to the pedagogical potential of inviting the students’ back stage interactions to take front stage.

Potential pitfalls

One important question that still needs to be addressed is whether it is at all desirable with pedagogical translanguaging in MTI, considering the hegemony of Swedish in Sweden, the marginalization of MTI within the Swedish school system, and MTI’s long history of implementation problems. The role of language as a medium of instruction—or not—is also relevant to this discussion. It is, for example, easy to see the potential for pedagogical translanguaging in the teaching of content subjects in the Swedish school in general. Historically, most subjects in Sweden are taught through Swedish only, and various studies have shown how the Swedish school participates in sustaining the dominant social order where Swedish and “Swedish experiences” are constructed as “natural” and “superior” to other languages and experiences, despite the fact that it caters to increasingly diverse student groups (e.g. Eliaso Magnusson, 2015; Gruber, 2007; Haglund, 2005; Runfors, 2003). The introduction of purposeful pedagogical translanguaging in mainstream content subjects might have the ability to better
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endorse the validation and valorization of students’ varying funds of knowledge, and at the same time act as resistance towards—or even have the potential to overcome—the hegemony of Swedish and the dominance of monoglossic pedagogies (cf. Martínez-Roldán, 2015). Study guidance (i.e., content learning support in the mother tongue for newly arrived students) is another area where pedagogical translanguaging could have the potential to mediate students’ learning (see e.g. Reath Warren, 2016, and Dewilde, 2013, in a Norwegian context). The introduction of various languages as resources in regular content subjects, as well as in study guidance, would present no “threat” to Swedish. The stakes for introducing the same practices in MTI could, on the other hand, be much higher considering the generally low status of MTI in school and the low status of many of the languages taught through MTI in the Swedish society (e.g. Hult, 2012).

Furthermore, the teachers’ observation that most of their students are more proficient and more willing to speak Swedish than the mother tongue cannot be disregarded. García (2009: 297) claims there is reason for concern if the introduction of flexible linguistic practices only “are put to the service of the majority language” and if they “progressively take time and space away from the minority language” (García 2009: 297; see also Martínez-Roldán, 2015).

In addition, one has to take into consideration the subject syllabus for MTI. The syllabi for most other subjects prescribes language and content integration, whereas the MTI syllabus focuses predominantly on the development of language skills in the mother tongue, without linkage to subject content (cf. Ganuza & Hedman, 2015). The lack of language and content integration in the syllabus may therefore decrease both the incentives for and the possibilities to introduce pedagogical translanguaging in MTI. Nevertheless, some of the MTI teachers interviewed expressed a yearning for collaboration with other teachers and emphasized the advantages if content and language integration could be accomplished within MTI (e.g. Teacher Vesna: “I think the teaching somehow needs to be more synchronized, with more joint planning, integrated in other subjects”, see Ganuza & Hedman, 2015: 133). However, the few experiences that they had of collaboration were often on unequal terms, where the initiative and effort was left mainly to the MTI teacher.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have argued why it may not be suitable to adopt theoretical neologisms such as translanguaging and pedagogical translanguaging to describe multilingual practices occurring in pedagogical settings that are still informed by monoglossic ideologies. By drawing on data from MTI in Sweden, we have highlighted some mismatches between surface level observations of multilingual practices among teachers and students and the monoglossic ideological underpinnings of these practices. In line with a number of other scholars, we have
used our data to emphasize the importance of linking interactional practices to the local ideologies that influence the practices, as well as to the wider social and ideological order in which the Swedish school system is embedded (Martin-Jones, 2007).

We found that the MTI teachers’ articulated and embodied beliefs about languages as pure and bounded entities that can be regulated in time and space, negatively affected the students’ possibilities for verbal interaction. Consequently, the students had few opportunities to voice their own interests and opinions, thereby limiting their chances to contribute to the (re)formulation of notions such as language, identity and culture within MTI. The teachers’ control and domination of the interactional floor was found to function as a language controlling device, through which they tried to enforce the use of the mother tongue and restrict the use of Swedish to particular tasks and purposes. However, even this restricted use of Swedish tended to be regarded as a “necessary evil” rather than a valid pedagogical practice (cf. Probyn, 2015). These observed patterns of communicative practices contrast quite sharply with the notion of pedagogical translanguaging, which refers to a deliberate flexible use of students’ various linguistic resources to mediate learning, and which is made explicit through pedagogy.

Although we have shown that the teachers’ regulation of the use of Swedish in MTI did not necessarily lead to an increased use of the mother tongue, we have problematized whether attempts to incorporate pedagogical translanguaging in MTI is desirable, given the subject’s marginalized position within the Swedish school system, and its long socio-political history of implementation problems. We have considered the teachers’ articulated concerns regarding the possibilities for minority language maintenance in Sweden, and their counter-hegemonic attempts to inculcate in their students the idea that not only Swedish is important in Sweden. We have also argued that the lack of language and content integration in the MTI subject syllabus does not provide the incentives needed to introduce more flexible linguistic pedagogical practices. Nevertheless, we think it would be fruitful for agents within MTI to reflect on how to create pedagogical milieus that can motivate students’ use of the mother tongue without having to impose the counter-productive, and possibly guilt-generating, language regulation rules that were observed.

Finally, we conclude that we think the term pedagogical translanguaging should be reserved for settings where multilingual practices are embraced and made explicit in pedagogy, and where the multilingual practices observed harmonize with the ideologies that are articulated and embodied in communicative practice, by both teachers and students. We also argue that misapplications of the term pedagogical translanguaging may disguise relevant ideological discourses, and that researchers need a concept that can be used exclusively for educational contexts that are based on multilingual norms—particularly as these contexts may be rare within the school as an institution.
Chapter 13.

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References


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