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Linguistic hybridity and learner identity: translingual practice among plurilinguals in the educational setting

Abstract

Capitalizing on the ecological approach to language learning (van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2008) and the conceptualization of language as a local practice (Pennycook, 2010) as well as *linguaging* (Jørgensen, 2008), accounting for the continuity of linguistic phenomena rather than a discriminatory perception of linguistic properties, we intend to delve into the problem of linguistic hybridity as a sign of L2 learner identity. A direct inspiration for the study, as exemplified in the title, is the concept of metrolingualism (Otsuji, Pennycook, 2010), which offers a potential to be very informative for the study of identity issues inscribed in language. Metrolingualism connotes linguistic hybridity, which refers to something unnatural, untypical, not conforming to the norm. Positing the continuity of language use and *symbolic competence* (Kramsch, Whiteside, 2008), we assume after van Lier (2004) that language is not a fixed code but socially constructed entity which mingles with personal experiences shaped by social context and activates power-related issues in language use. The aim of the paper is to delve into discursive practices of students learning/using more than one L2 in the educational setting. An examination of their narratives and their *linguaging about language* (Swain, 2006) discloses how they position themselves as L2 language users.

Keywords: language identity, translingualism, metrolingualism, linguistic hybridity, ecolinguistics, foreign language learning

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość językowa, translingwalizm, metrolingwalizm, hybrydowość językowa, ekolingwistyka, nauka języków obcych

1. Introduction

Reflection on language learning has moved away from conceptualizing it only as a mental activity subject to psycholinguistic processes, which certainly have its share in the effort of mastering a new linguistic system. With the contribution of sociocultural perspective to language acquisition research and the conceptualization of language as a social practice, there appeared issues of language and identity (cf. Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, Lantolf, 2001; Driagina, Pavlenko, 2007; Pavlenko, Blackledge, 2004). Briefly, the so-called “social turn” (Block, 2003) in SLA and the ecological metaphor to language learning (van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2002, 2008) accentuated, among others, the need to consider contexts in which language learning takes place and how the learners act as active shapers of these contexts and position themselves in the process of language learning and language use.

This paper capitalizes on the above reflection and considers identity issues via linguistic activities of plurilinguals, individuals who operate with more than one language. It needs to be stressed that the knowledge of several languages is taken to signify *plurilingual competence*. This entails linguistic abilities, not characteristic of monolinguals and even bilinguals, for example, the knowledge of words and grammars in a new guise, allowing plurilinguals to mediate and bring into play many linguistic systems, which, in turn, activates semiotic processes or grammaring beyond the scope of a monolingual. The resulting process of language hybridity is touched upon here in the contexts of how plurilinguals position themselves (express their identity) through their “hybrid linguistic repertoires” or, to be more precise, via translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013). Additionally, building on the notion of metroethnicity (Mahler, 2005), metrolingualism (Otsuji, Pennycook, 2010) and the local dimension of language use (Pennycook, 2010), we present a sample containing translingual practices and try to analyze it through a critical lens (language-power relations, Fairclough (1989; 1992; 1995) pertaining to student identity as an L2 learner. Since the context of the study is basically educational, the author concludes the paper with implications derived from the “translingual instinct” (Li, 2011) for language learning and teaching.

2. The ecology of the self and language

In the first place, the idea of the *self* or identity is well-established in modern philosophical and psychological reflection. Additionally, self-perception, manifested by the awareness of “me”, has broken free from Cartesian dualism. Modern reflection in this regard sees it as an integral part of a being. Psychologists, examining newborn babies, underscore the existence of their capacity

for the awareness of *self* in relation to physical and social reality. This basically ecological psychology stands ultimately for a close relationship between soma, psyche, and polis (physical, psychical and social elements) – three constituents balancing the development of a human being (cf. Brzezińska, 2000: 190).

The discursive turn to language study, accentuating the position of language as a form of human activity, highlighted the issues of searching for identity via linguistic means. It has, among others, become the focus of ecolinguistics, which applies the metaphor of the ecosystem to the study of language, its learning and use. One of the key proponents of this approach, van Lier (2004: 107), assumes after Neisser (1988) that the idea of *ecological self* stands for a “close, inseparable connection between body and mind” with the “self” being constructed during human activity in the world. The interaction of the external world with the internal mind results in an “embodied mind”, as it is suggested by Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1991). This interaction between body and mind is represented by the cited authors in the notion of enactivism. It accentuates human agency through manipulating the environment (including the social one) via meaningful interactions, embracing both the physical (sensory motor possibilities) and cognitive capacities (mind). In this perspective, knowledge, including self-knowledge, is the result of sociolinguistic interactions. Van Lier (2004), drawing on the concept of enactivism, perceives language as a form of action by which humans relate themselves to the world. It is, however, worth accentuating here that for him language is “an emerging set of resources” (p. 208), reaching beyond code fixity, as maintained by Harris (1981; 1996), and marked by fluidity of linguistic features, as highlighted by Otsuji and Pennycook (2010). In a nutshell, via language use we provide information “[w]ho we are ourselves, and who we think our listeners or readers are. Or, phrasing it in another way, our language gives information about what we think of ourselves and what we think of the people who may be listening (or reading)” (van Lier, 2004: 108).

3. Considerations for linguistic identity derived from metroethnicity and linguistic hybridity

In most common terms the notion of linguistic identity pertains to the choice of a linguistic code by individuals who know more than one language since identity is constructed via linguistic means. Correspondingly, learning a new language entails acquiring new identity (Halliday, Hasan, 1989). The sociocultural perspective to language acquisition, as mentioned earlier, and the departure from the monolingual perception of bilinguals accentuates the need for considering language learning and its use in terms of identity issues.

Keeping in mind the objectives of this paper, we focus our attention on “plurilingualism”, which denotes the dynamic linguistic competence of an individual (the fact that a person knows more languages as “a *single*, inter-related, repertoire that they combine with their general competences and various strategies in order to accomplish tasks”) and reserve the term “multilingualism” to define the linguistic diversity of a geographical region (“the coexistence of different languages at the social or individual level”). These definitions are provided by a new Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2018: 28). In short, a person can be both pluri- and multilingual, however we construe the concept of multilingualism as still engrained in monolingual and possibly ethno-cultural perception of linguistic diversity (one language – one culture). Yet, professional literature is not unanimous in this regard.

In the field of language acquisition, a remarkable breakthrough in this respect has been made by Cook (1991) in the concept of multi-competence, standing for one underlying language system in place of compartmentalized knowledge of different languages. This led to the redefinition of the concept of interlanguage, perceived not as a temporary deficient language proficiency but a more constant feature of plurilinguals. This, in turn, led to the reconceptualization of the dichotomy of language learner vs. language user (Firth, Wagner, 1997) and the legitimacy of any L2 learner as an L2 user.

In the field of sociolinguistics, which traditionally assumes languaculture paradigm, Mahler (2005) breaks the vision of “heroic ethnicity” (p. 88) imbedded in language, i.e. ethnic linguistic allegiance (p. 88), and offers to perceive language as a part of “lifestyle accessory” (p. 83). In place of cultural essentialism, he posits metroethnicity, typical of multicultural urban areas and illustrates this new trend (new lifestyle) by the example of Japanese minority people who “*play* with ethnicity (not necessarily their own) for aesthetic effect” (p. 89), which is “being cool”. Such individuals “are oriented towards cultural hybridity, cultural/ethnic tolerance and a multicultural lifestyle in friendships, music, the arts, eating and dress” (p. 88-89). Being cool is perceived as an emergent code, or a new ability, typical of a new metroethnic generation and it accentuates the need for reconstructing “the immutable ciphers of ethnic identity” (p. 83).

The analysis of a hybrid identity of a young Ainu man, who does not speak his ethnic language and is strongly attracted to the Italian language and aspires to be an expert on Italian cuisine, as presented by Mahler (2005), evokes our personal experiences pertaining to ethnic roots. To be specific, quite recently, on the occasion of the Polish Independence Day, we had some relatives, with whom we visited the old city of Gdańsk. Dropping to a confectioner’s to buy traditional crescent rolls, we were surprised by a different

name given to this type of pastry, which we expressed by a statement that “in Poznań, we have another name for them” (due to the fact that we lived there for a remarkable period of time). To our surprise, one family member repeated our “in Poznan, we” with irony, indicating this was a false aspiration. Only in the afterthought and a moment of reflection, it became problematic to the relative whether the childhood place should be a determinant of our *self* (identity). Successive discussion additionally disclosed ideological tension included in the concept of identity. Ultimately, we agreed that our allegiance “is subjected to ...[our] critical judgment” (Mahler, 2005: 88).

Continuing the issue of cultural hybridity, as posited in the term of “metroethnicity”, Otsjui and Pennycook (2010) extend it to the notion of metrolingualism, a form of linguistic hybridity, or language fluidity typical of urban multilingual and multicultural milieus. Doing so, they “question not only a one-to-one association among language, ethnicity, nation and territory, but also the authenticity and ownership of language which is based on conventional language ideology.” (p. 241). Similarly to metroethnicity, metrolingualism is perceived as emancipatory politics challenging “the orthodoxy of the orthodoxy of *language loyalty*” (Mahler 2005: 84) and kind of social empowerment of minorities (Mahler, 2005: 97). More importantly, however, they demonstrate how plurilinguists manipulate their linguistic resources available to them. This is in line with research on multilingualism (Makoni, Pennycook, 2007), regarding the use of linguistic resources by plurilinguists in the local contexts. Such thinking, in turn, forces linguists to abandon researching plurilinguism through the monolingual lens, as a collection of separate languages, subject to code-switching, depending on communicational circumstances. In contrast, metrolingualism assumes code-mixing or code-meshing, as signaled by Canagarajah (2007; 2010) in the context of ideologically transformed term of *Lingua Franca English* (as opposed to English as a *Lingua Franca*) and translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013) characteristic of the era of globalization. Translingualism accounts for the fact that linguistic resources are reconstructed to local and personal needs. Eventually, it is in line with the ecological metaphor in language acquisition (van Lier, 2004; Kramsch, 2002; 2008), postulating agency of the language learner in the use of semiotic resources. Resultant hybrid forms are evocative not only of personal competences but also of how users position themselves in relation to language polices and their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, basically, their life narratives. The concept of metrolingualism provides solutions to conceptualize culture, ethnicity and language relations in the cosmopolitan era (transnational worldliness), in which individuals are given freedom to construct their own version of group identity.

4. Translingual practice as a sign of linguistic identity of plurilinguals

The authors of the notion of metrolingualism do not intent to limit it only to urban areas but propose it as an analytic category to account for mixed language use (Otsjui, Pennycook, 2010: 245-246) or “the productive space provided by, though not limited to, the contemporary city to produce new language identities” (p. 247).

In his perspective, the concept of language should be abandoned in favor of an ongoing process termed *linguaging*, both shaping and being shaped by people “as they interact in specific, cultural and political contexts” (García, Leiva, 2004: 204). Ecolinguistically, the concept encompasses a variety of meanings (cf. Lankiewicz, 2014) which overlap very much with a more popular notion of translanguaging, a linguistic equivalent of the poststructural turn of doing linguistics. García and Li (2014), derive “translanguaging” from the conviction that the existence of discrete languages served colonial policies (Makoni, Pennycook, 2007). Capitalizing on the concept of multi-competence (Cook, 1991) and translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013), García and Li (2014) postulate a paradigmatic shift dubbed as “trans turn” in applied linguistics and in researching multi-and plurilingualism in particular. Briefly, this boils down to seeing languages as living entities, subject to dynamic hybridity imparted by users.

In parallel to linguaging, translanguaging thereby accentuates the fact that (1) “communication transcends individual languages” and (2) “communication transcends words and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances (Canagarajah, 2013: 6; cited in Mazak 2017: 3). In the context of “trans turn” Mazak (2017: 3-6) ascribes five distinct meanings to translanguaging: (1) “Translanguaging is a *language ideology* that takes bilingualism as a norm; (2) “Translanguaging is a *theory of bilingualism* based on lived bilingual experiences [...]”, (3) “Translanguaging is a *pedagogical stance* that teachers and students take on that allows them to draw on all of their linguistic and semiotic resources [...]”; (4) “Translanguaging is a *set of practices* [...]” typical of bilinguals; (5) “Translanguaging is *transformational* [...]”. All of the dimensions of translanguaging overlap in this paper.

5. Educational setting and the language *self* of plurilinguals: Research

The following research analysis is an offshoot of a bigger project pertaining to critical language awareness in L2 acquisition in the framework of the ecological approach to language learning, which we have been recently working on. Linguistic data was collected from students studying at the department of applied linguistics at the University of Gdansk. For the reader information, it

needs to be mentioned that this institution offers a bilingual BA and MA education programs in linguistics and translation studies. Students major both in English and German. Obligatorily, they need to select a third language, which is Spanish, French or Italian. It is also worth mentioning here that translingual practices mentioned in literature and during conference presentations pertain mostly to multilingual environments in which the use of all linguistic resources, including a native language, is to facilitate educational endeavors, recognize linguistic diversity for political reasons or counteract the hegemony of English as a global language (cf. Mazak, Carroll, 2017). Translingual practices entail mostly teacher navigation between various levels of language competence and necessitate intercomprehension (speaking one language and understanding the other). We, however, intend to see how the plurilingual repertoire surfaces in translingual practices during a language class in which communication is done in the target language (in our case English as an L2). In our considerations of translingual practices we go markedly beyond the achievements of Contrastive Analysis or Error Analysis since ultimately the examples of translingualism are not perceived as deficiencies but rather the sign of linguistic mobility, personal dynamics and linguistic creativity.

5.1. Data collection and methodology

Research was carried out in three stages. Firstly, we observed students during different classes to collect examples of translingual practices, define their types and the extent of this phenomenon. Data was collected in a random way at the moments convenient to the researcher, while teaching, having seminars or observing classes of other teachers. The methodology for this part of research consisted in ethnographic field notes.

At stage two, keeping in mind the goal of the study, we selected four students from whom we expected a significant number of translingual practices (guided by earlier observations) and whose plurilingualism is rich (their language competence is diversified due family roots, sojourns abroad longer than a year, or foreign ancestry). To maintain the respondents' anonymity, we refrain from presenting their profiles and we will refer to them as Marek, Veronica, Adrian and Lucas. They knew they would be the subject of the study yet initially its objective remained occluded. They kindly agreed to prepare a ten-minute presentation titled "Memorable experiences from my apprenticeship" with the use of the PowerPoint program to be delivered during a Practical English Class. To encourage language play, they were informed that the expected format did not have to be very formal. For the reader information, the curriculum for applied linguistics at the University of Gdansk includes 40 hours

of practical training to be realized by students during vacation or in time convenient to students. The PowerPoint presentations and presentation protocols during an observation session were subject to further analysis to identify translingual practices. The overall objective was identical to that of stage one exemplified with research questions: (1) Do students use their multilingual resources in an English class? (2) What types of translingual practices can we identify in students' presentations and their visual aids (PowerPoint slides)? Both sources of data were coded for translingual practices.

At stage three, we applied the focus group interview (cf. Morgan, 1988), a method that enables researchers to generate data through group discussions and, most importantly, to co-construct the meaning in action to gather a range of personal experiences referring to the same phenomenon. The questions presented by the moderator (the author of this article) had a form of languaging-about-language session (Swain, 2006), a meeting dedicated to eliciting students' beliefs regarding translingual practices. A general question for this part of research was (3) "How do students position themselves as non-native language users in the context of plurilingual competence?" The answer to this question could be obtained by delving into how respondents understand language use (language ideology), how they conceive of culture, ethnicity and language, or how they perceive the ownership of language as L2 language users.

The focus group discussion session lasted for an hour and an half, it was audio-recorded, transcribed and subject to content analysis for "interpretative insights" that the researcher is seeking (Morgan, 1998: 12). At this stage, the students were informed about the main objective of the research.

5.2. Results and analysis

The data obtained from the study will be considered in reference to research questions. As to question one "Do students use their multilingual resources in an English class?" (1), it needs to be stressed that both at stage one and two of the study we were able to identify 237 examples of clear-cut translingual practices. By translinguaging we understand any new lexico-grammar combinations or untypical pragmatic functions which "include the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users for purposes that transcend the combination of structures, the alternation between systems, the transmission of information and the representation of values, identities and relationships" (Li, 2011: 1222). Translinguaging is also effectuated by different language and cognitive skills (speaking, writing, listening reading, remembering, etc.); "across all modalities of language, from code-switching and mixing to translation and transliteration" (Androutsopoulos, 2013: 186). With

such a broad definition of translanguaging, there is always a danger of classification bias or overlooking. Examples derived from stage two were coded and consulted, thereby the problem of subjectivity is surely minimized but still their classification might be lacking a clear-cut division (some examples fit many macro categories) or be affected by metalinguistic and plurilingual competence of the researcher. Taking into account the fact that our research pertained to a monolingual class context (English classes) and had a restricted focus (selected classes), the sheer number of hybrid language forms is significant and allows the claim that translanguaging is a natural practice of plurilinguals, or, as some claim, an instinct (Li, 2011).

With reference to question two “What types of translingual practices can we identify in students’ presentations and their visual aids (PowerPoint slides)? (2), due to space limitations we can only exemplify the typology of translingualism identified in the study. The inclusion of the PowerPoint presentations in the search for multimodalities and hybridities extended our analyses to trans-semiotizing of visual and graphic elements. The following are major categories of translanguaging examples.

- Trans-semiotizing

In self-presentations, original names or surnames of some students obtained hybrid versions, e.g. Dolgovich in the place of a Polish spelling Dołgowicz, or transliteration of a foreign surname in the email address turned it into *luca2koty*. In the second case an original Italian name and surname (Luca Vaccotti) is presented jokingly by homophonic similarity to a Polish ear as “lukadwakoty”/“lukatwocats”. Both student’s identity as well as identity related transformation mentioned here is made up to hide personal data and is only indicative of a type. Other examples of trans-semiotizing pertained to the use of original titles or labels without rendition, regardless of the language of the presentation, which was English, e.g. *Mine vaganti*, accompanied by a Polish translation *O miłości i makaronach*, not “Loose Cannos”, *Tacones lejanos* instead of “High Heels”. Some seemingly universal signs were used in the way that would be misleading to a native speaker of English, e.g. a circle and a triangle (typically used in Polish context to mean Ladies in Gents) was used by some student to indicate the number of males and females employed in a company.

- Language play

This category includes intentional (indicated by the context) wordplay for a comical effect which would be understood only by a Polish audience, e.g. a *man with*

a *black beard* (pronounced "bird", correlating with a Polish colloquial word for a penis). Another example might be the use of the German compound *Reisefieber* or the use of German pronunciation of the toothpaste brand *Colgate* to communicate humor, as construed from the context and the accompanying outburst of laughter. Sometimes, language play consists in the intentional and ironic imitation of words and expressions ubiquitous in media, including common pronunciation mistakes, typical of foreign language users (e.g. *delete*, *ultimate*, *certificate*, etc.). Interesting, in this regard, may be a morphological hybrid *carusek** (*car*+Polish suffix *-usek*, to indicate something small).

- Intercomprehension and code-switching

This category includes occasional reactions of the audience to the basically English presentations in Polish or rarely in German to stress understanding and involvement. This type of translanguaging also encompasses the use of original titles, geographical locations, etc., or language switch for clarification or more precise communication of meaning, or as a compensation strategy.

- Unintentional target language code meshing

We dare claim that students of English as an L2 are exposed to more World Englishes than native speakers and since their English is at the formative stage, shaped by different influences (teachers, materials, travels). Hence, translanguaging practices consist in an indiscriminate use of all possible pronunciations, local expressions or idioms. This category includes spelling, pronunciation and lexical denotational differences. It leads to an incompatible use of codes, belonging to American, British, Scottish and other varieties of English, in the same utterance or sentence, e.g. American pronunciation of the word *mayor* and an inherently American noun *intern* (trainee) is accompanied by the British spelling of words such as *labour*, *travelled*, *offence*.

- Lexical and pragmatic calques or borrowings

Plurilinguists operating many languages have a rich semiotic and lexicogrammar repertoire to draw upon. Talking to a homogenous audience, with which they share more than one language code, plurilinguists very often rely on plurilingual resources, seeking assistance and comprehension, e.g. *So we went to Kino* (German not Polish pronunciation of the last word!). However, an interesting phenomenon is that some of the hybrid forms are influenced by lexicogrammar and pragmatic calques other than derived by the native language and culture. Therefore, a native Italian living in Poland happens to be influenced

by the same spelling problem as a Polish learner of English, e.g. *cementary**/*cimitero* (Italian)/ *cmentarz* (Polish) or the pragmatic mistake *Miss Barbara** in place of *Miss Kowalska*.

- Lexis and grammar hybridity

This category encompasses morphological mutations typical of Lingua Franca English, however influenced by all languages remaining at the disposal of plurilinguals, e.g. *I still have it on the shelf standing** (a construction influenced by colloquial German), typical native interlanguage errors as *make business**. Interestingly, in this category we also place examples of semantic ambiguity such as *twisted man** (crazy man), *milk centrifuge** (milk separator), *operation room** (operations center), or *what do you intend by this word?**. The latter most obviously influenced by Italian (*intendere/ to mean*) as an L2.

An the last stage of research, with the use of focal group discussion methodology, we attempted to find the answer to the general question of (3) how students position themselves as non-native language users of English and other languages in the context of plurilingual competence. Certainly, as the group moderator, we did not pose the question in the same way. It was disintegrated into step-by-step procedure to discuss some of the examples of translanguaging described above, with the intention of getting to know the reason, motivation or justification of a particular use in the context. Additionally, we tried to elicit general reflection upon language *per se* and students' perception of themselves as non-native users of various languages. To enhance cooperation, the session was conducted in Polish. Hence, students opinion and beliefs presented below were translated in to the language of the article.

Interestingly, students participating in the session did not perceive the examples of translanguaging as deficiency in the English language competence (the question of a kind was asked to them) but rather as a manifestation of plurilingual competence. Significant in this regard is the opinion of Veronica: "Well, we all speak English and German. Sometimes, it is better to use a German word because the English equivalent does not sound the same. Being language students we simply know it. That is why I used the word *Reisefieber*, while speaking in English". Some lines later in the script, she admits not to know the exact English or Polish equivalent of this word. In the follow-up to this statement all students engaged themselves in a long debate of what it meant to be a native speaker in the modern era. In this context, striking are the words of Marek: "I am Polish born in Germany, OK, I am bilingual, in a sense, but then we moved to Italy for 2 years, and now, for some time I have been living in Poland with my mum. It is difficult to say, which language

is my mother tongue. Polish, OK, in a sense, but I prefer, for example, to write in English. I think I am better this way than in Polish". This claim, in turn, opened up pathways to discuss the differences between language genres used at the university and outside academia. This part of discussion was concluded by Lucas who argued "Outside school, when I am on a *Facebook* or *Tweeter* I do not pay much attention to how I say something but to what I am saying or writing. It depends, of course, on who I write with and then I may mix languages. It is important that people understand me".

We may conclude that students are basically aware of their plurilingual linguistic repertoire and it is somehow natural to them to make use of it at large, outside school. This may be corroborated by extensive research, disclosing bilingual discursive practices in which plurilinguals try to "make sense of their bilingual worlds" (García, 2009: 45) and their linguistic repertoire is perceived as a "language continuum" (García, 2009).

The dynamic character of this repertoire is confirmed by the examples delivered in this research but also by the respondents' beliefs who at a different moment of the group discussion argued: "I cannot help it to keep my English under control, words from other language sleep into it" (Adrian), "I honestly do not know the English title of *Mine Vaganti*, when I use the Polish title it should be enough, we all know which movie we are talking about" (Lucas), "It is funny that I made such a mistake with *cementary**, it means Polish is winning here [he meant: over his Italian]" (Lucas), "I said delete [dilejt] because this is what you say in Poland, I wanted to be ironic, why shouldn't I" (Marek).

As to the identity issue, respondents do not worship the native speaker (at least the English one). They are fully aware of the international status of English. Some of them clearly state "Was I not taught during linguistic classes that native speaker is dead so my English, is as important as ... [here the name of the native teacher appears]. I sometimes do not understand him so if he has a problem, it is his problem [laughter echoed by others] (Veronica), "Well, can't we play a bit with English [...] it is ultimately my utterance and my opinion and I do not care whether natives like it or not" (Adrian).

All in all, we must say that the plurilingual students taking part in the discussion do not self-marginalize (Lankiewicz, Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2016) themselves as non-native users of English, or, we may construe it by extension, any other language. Their translanguaging practices manifest their high level of critical awareness that language is not a fixed code and the hybrid forms they produce legitimize them as active creators of contextual meaning outside the established code. Significant in this regard is the opinion of one of the respondents: "There are so many poems about love but they present it in so many different ways, even a rap way" (Lucas). We venture

a claim that by translanguage plurilinguals appropriate English (by extension any other language) and identify as legitimate users, not merely learners of this language (Firth, Wager, 1997), since they actively tailor it to their own needs in the same way they play and adjust their native languages. An ecological metaphor comparing a rich ecosystem to linguistic diversity, evoked by van Lier (2004: 50), applies here well. Sterility means muteness, agency means “voice” (van Lier, 2004: 130).

6. Conclusions and implications

The reflections and research examples included in this paper were presented on several occasions and judging by the comments or questions addressed at the author, one might suspect that for the great majority of researchers of whom many are active language teachers, translingual practices are perceived as unnecessary evil (“it turns language teaching into chaos”, opinion of an anonymous Polish teacher-researcher) in a language classroom and they are basically classified as a variant of a well-known phenomenon of code-switching. Such a stance is evocative of monolingual perception of plurilingualism and the vision of language as well-defined, culturally solidified and normatively driven entity, despite the fact that research in sociolinguistics and broadly understood applied linguistics shows otherwise, suffice to look at the list of references in this article. Language teachers seem to believe that “there are no atheists in the foxholes”. Understandably, it is easier to teach with the norm – a tangible frame of reference at hand, leaving aside the fact that very few of the teachers themselves conform to the norm.

Yet, plurilingual and pluricultural competence is not a figment of the imagination of crazed linguists. It is, as a matter of fact, corroborated by the new version of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume with New Descriptors (CEFR/CV, 2018). This document updates the former version from 2001, broadens it with new concepts and refines the pedagogical vision of language learning and teaching. Although there are no references to hybridity or translingual practices in the document, the description of plurilingual competence makes provision for these phenomena. Among other things, the document mentions that “[p]lurilingual competence as explained in the CEFR [...] involves the ability to call flexibly upon an inter-related, uneven, plurilinguistic repertoire to: [...] express oneself in one language (or dialect, or variety) and understand a person speaking another [...] recognise words from a common international store in a new guise; [...] bring the whole of one’s linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression”

(CEFR/CV, 2018: 28). In short, the citation allows for translanguaging in a language classroom, or the emergence of *symbolic competence* (Swain, Whiteside, 2008), yet it is a better said than done statement. Nonetheless, there is some fluttering among applied linguistics regarding translanguaging. Some practical proposals in regard to higher education are contained within the pages of the volume edited by Mazak and Carroll (2017). We personally intend to present some concrete suggestions in the subsequent article.

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