

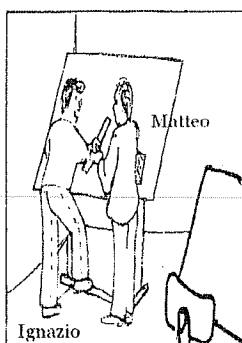


Marta ha arrivato se stessa a casa.

-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

Marta si e arrivata se stessa a casa.

-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3



Ignazio e Matteo si sono collaborati.

-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

Ignazio e Matteo hanno collaborato.

-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

When activity shapes the repertoire of second language learners

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Interactionists interested in second language acquisition postulate that learners' competences are sensitive to the context in which they are put into play. Here we explore the language practices displayed, in a bilingual socio-educational milieu, by three dyads of English learners while carrying out oral communicative pair-work. In particular, we examine the role language choice plays in each task.

A first analysis of our data indicates that the learners' language choices seem to reveal the linguistic norms operating in the community of practice they belong to. A second analysis reveals that they exploited their linguistic repertoires according to their interpretation of the task and to their willingness to complete it in English. Thus, in the first two tasks students relied on code-switching as a mechanism to solve communication failures, whereas the third task generated the use of a mixed repertoire as a means to complete the task in the target language.

Introduction

The role social interaction plays in the acquisition of a second or a foreign language has been the focus of numerous research studies. Mondada and Pekarek Doehler (2004) suggest that from a socio-interactionist perspective there are at least two distinctive views on this issue: a "weak version of the interactionist approach" which postulates that social interaction plays a secondary role as a contextualising tool which enables learners to be exposed to modified, negotiated or comprehensible input (e.g. Gass & Varonis 1985; Long 1983, 1996); and a "strong version" which supports the belief that learning mainly occurs through interaction since "social practice" allows learners to bring their (linguistic, cognitive and sociocultural) competences into play while they co-construct joint-activities with others (e.g. Firth & Wagner 1997; Lantolf 2000). This "strong version" is nurtured

by the notion of *situated learning*, first proposed by Lave & Wenger (1991) and defined as follows:

...learning is rooted in the learner's participation in social practice and continuous adaptation to the unfolding circumstances and activities that constitute talk-in-interaction. Situated learning invites us to look from a new perspective at what the learner is doing when he or she engages in a specific task or activity in a given socio-institutional context (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler 2004: 501).

As researchers, we position ourselves in this "strong" perspective. Our paper aims to describe how learners mobilise their repertoire and how they operate within the language norms used in their social context in order to carry out the three classroom oral tasks they were asked to fulfil. Examining tasks from the learners' perspective to see how language use varies from task to task seemed relevant to us, since, as Slimani-Rolls states, not many research studies have analysed learners' perception on tasks:

Although SLA researchers generally acknowledge the effects of social context on task performance (Pica 1987), and the importance of learner factors (Plough and Gass, 1993), it is evident that learner characteristics and learner perception of tasks have not been fully taken into account. In the process of attempting to predict the outcomes of task-as-work-plan rather than task-as-process (Breen 1987), SLA researchers have obviously overlooked the crucial relevance of the socio-psychological climate that animates learner behaviour during task implementation (Slimani-Rolls 2005:197).

Our interest in analysing tasks from the learners' perspective leads us to study the cognitive, linguistic and managerial activities learners engage in during the completion of such school tasks. At this point, it is important to notice that our description of how learners develop their communicative competences will be grounded on the principle that language competence and language use cannot be analysed as two separate constructs. Following Mondana and Pekarek Doehler (2004) we will defend the idea that language competence is situated (in each social context interaction creates), variable (dependent on each social practice) and collective (co-constructed amongst participants). Such a viewpoint allows us to describe the interactive activities carried out by our dyads from a perspective that accounts for how learners interpret each task and create a social context in which they need to activate different knowledge, skills and abilities. This also implies that it is possible to describe the nature of the competence each task triggers, but since it is dependent on the task itself, it cannot be transported from one task to another.

The study of language use in a multilingual environment requires us to look into language alternation phenomena, whose categorisation will depend on (a) the theoretical approach researchers adopt, (b) the kind of data they examine and (c)

the goal of their analysis. In our case, we aim at exploring how the use of various languages enhances the development of learners' communicative competence in the target one. Our corpus is composed of oral interactions produced by learners of English who are bilingual speakers in Catalan and Spanish and whose linguistic practices in the school setting reveal that they are accustomed to using those languages to take part in either monolingual or bilingual speech events. Our hypothesis states that learners in a multilingual milieu use different codes — either simultaneously or in juxtaposition — as a resource that, in time, will enable them to take part in monolingual practices in the target language. Our analysis coincides with the approach adopted by interactional sociolinguists (Gumperz 1982) and conversational analysts (Auer 1998), who in both cases do not analyse phenomena in isolation but examine their sequential occurrence, as well as how they are produced (which are the suprasegmental elements that accompany them) and how interlocutors interpret their own productions.

Research in the area of languages in contact covers various phenomena and makes use of several terms to describe them. From the existing literature we are interested in the concepts of code-switching and code-mixing, since they seem to be relevant notions to describe learners' production from an interactive and pragmatic viewpoint. We will consider a learner's reliance on code-switching as a *contextualization cue* (Gumperz 1982) since interlocutors change the orientation of their activity when they make use of such a resource, therefore, using the terminology suggested by Auer (1998), code-switching in the present paper will be analysed as a *discourse-related* activity. Code-mixing, on the other hand, embraces a wide range of hybrid linguistic forms learners make use of to maintain the *footing* and *frame* of their interaction despite having limited linguistic competence. From a formal viewpoint, code-mixing utterances can be categorised as calques, interferences or loans. Excerpt 1 (see the key to the transcription symbols in the Appendix 2) serves to illustrate how we will tackle these two concepts here. It is a fragment of a conversation between two learners (Pau & Bawna) who, with the help of a set of written guidelines, engaged in a role-play in which they had to script the dialogue between a shop assistant and a customer. Other dyads carried out the same task, which was administered and monitored by two researchers:

Excerpt 1

62. Pau: it's a ingredients-| *menys one*/ <2>
[translation: it's a ingredients-| *except one*/ <2>]
63. Bawna: {(PP) XXX\}
64. Pau: {(P) que tienes todos los ingredientes menos uno\}
[translation: {(P) that you have all ingredients except one\}]

65. Bawna: no\| I a I want_ um tot tot\| [to the researcher] todo\| {(F) todo *comes diu?*}\| to_ todo/| todo/
 [translation: no\| I a I want_ um all all\| [to the researcher] all\| {(F) all *how do you say?*}\| a_ all/| all/|
66. Teresa: all all all\|
67. Bawna: I want all ingredients\|

In turn 62, Pau, incorporates a Catalan word, *menys*, in his English utterance. Here, code-mixing is a resource he uses to overcome his lexical problem and to proceed with the task. Yet, his question remains unanswered because Bawna has not understood him or does not know how to reply (turn 63). At this point, (turn 64) Pau relies on code-switching to trigger Bawna's answer. In doing so, he is changing his footing (he stops being a shop-assistant to become Bawna's peer) and the frame of the interaction (he is not representing the role play but engaging himself in a task management activity). Bawna, in the first part of turn 65 (no), replies using the same frame (task management) that Pau had just provided, but then she proceeds with the role play and answers the question Pau had asked her in turn 62. To do so, she also needs to rely on code-mixing (using a word in Catalan *tot*), which leads her to change again the frame and the footing of her utterance to open a side-sequence in Catalan, to ask the researcher for the word she needs and that she will incorporate in her discourse in her next turn (turn 67). From an etic viewpoint, code-mixing in turns 62 and 65 affects the syntactic structure of the utterance the learners produce because it has a hybrid nature. Yet, in the first stages of learning a language, learners tend to focus their attention on lexical aspects, since this carries the semantic load that allows learners to interpret the pragmatic meaning of each task. This kind of "*bricolage lexical*" (Lüdi 1991, 1999) is the resource they make use of as a means to proceed with the task they are engaged in.

In this paper, we will argue that each dyad will not simply use these two procedures to exploit their linguistic repertoires in a multilingual milieu; instead, they will become powerful resources learners have at hand to reconfigure their repertoires on the basis of the demands of each activity that they need to accomplish to meet the tasks' goals. Thus, code-switching and code-mixing exhibit important aspects of multilingual competences, but, at the same time, they also indexicalise the processes through which learners acquire, select and use new knowledge. This means that we are claiming that multilingual practices can turn into resources which activate processes to conduct monolingual-like activities.

We also need to make clear that our analysis will not assign pre-set social or functional meaning to the code-switching and code-mixing phenomena we encounter. On the contrary, we will study the processes in which learners make use of different codes and we will interpret them in the context in which they occur.

We opt to examine them from an interactive perspective because language is not a static entity, as it mainly exists through talk-in-interaction. Consequently, in the first section of this paper, we will go deeper into the construct of situated learning and will argue in favour of regarding learners as multi-contextual experts who acquire language by taking part in speech events. In the second section, we will present our data, which will be analysed in the third and fourth sections. In the third one, we will examine the relationship between language choice and language use within a given community of practice and in the fourth one, language choice will be studied as a resource learners use to complete the set tasks in the target language. Finally, in the discussion section we will interweave these two analyses with the idea that learners make use of a mixed repertoire as a means to move away from multilingual practices into monolingual ones.

Learners as multi-contextual communicative experts

One of the traditional approaches to the study of the processes involved in the learning of second (or foreign) languages is based upon the opinion that in order to be able to communicate learners should first acquire the linguistic forms of the target language. Such an idea leads to the taking of the linguistic practices of native speakers of that language as a reference point, but this view of an idealised monolingual speaker has recently been criticised. Cook (1991, 2003, see also this volume) postulated that the kind of competence multilingual people possess is different from the one monolingual speakers exhibit and he has coined the notion of *multilingual competencies* as "a neutral term for the knowledge of more than one language, free from evaluation against an outside standard... (The) term multi-competence implies that at some level the sum of the language knowledge in the mind is relevant, not just the portions dedicated to the L1 and the L2" (Cook 1991:190–191). Cook's construct is interesting because it regards L2 users as "successful multi-competent speakers" instead of mere "deficient communicators" or "failed native speakers".

Parallel to this, the so-called "strong" socio-constructivist view of language learning is grounded on the idea that communicative competences can only be acquired by taking part in speech events. Such practice, though, is not only seen as a means for learners to access language forms but as a source to gain experience as language users, since it facilitates the discovering of the linguistic variation inherent in language use, which, in turn, will enable the users to acquire the *communicative expertise* (Kasper 2004; Hall et al. 2006) displayed by the members of the *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger 1991; Chaiklin and Lave 1993; Wenger 1998) in which learning takes place. In our study, the school is regarded

as a community of practice because it is the milieu in which learners -who mostly live in Spanish-speaking milieus- have become Catalan speakers by taking part in situated linguistic activities which often rely on code-mixing (Catalan-Spanish) procedures. Such practices – which involve learners in taking part in joint class activities as well as in sharing repertoires and resources – might differ from one community of practice (school) to another, but also from one space to another within the same community. In this case, the English classroom would be considered as a different space within the school, since the presence of a third language reshapes the *interactional regimes* (see below) of the members of the community.

To consider language learners as expert users who acquire knowledge of language use and usage through talk-in-interaction within a community of practice is extremely valuable when describing how languages are employed when students conduct communicative school tasks. This is because it allows us to confront different social organisations with diverse *interactional regimes* or “set(s) of behavioural expectations regarding physical conduct, including language ... (which) often originate exclusively in practice” (Bloomaert, Collins & Stembrouck 2005:12). In the present study, both the constructs of community of practice and interactional regime are relevant for describing in greater depth how closely bound learners’ linguistic competences and their use of code-switching or code-mixing are. This view is particularly relevant in a milieu such as the one in our study, in which communicative practices in and out of the school context are very often multilingual. Spanish is the language most of our informants use in the social activities they engage in (with classmates in class or in the playground, on the street, at the shops, at home — in many cases, even when families are of immigrant origin, etc.). When Catalan is hardly used at home, children are still in contact with it through their interactions with teachers or by watching the Catalan TV channel (Nussbaum 2003). Thus, learning a language in a multilingual setting has, then, at least two consequences (Nussbaum & Unamuno 2006):

- a. Learners learn the forms of the target language while they learn to interpret the social and interactive meaning of the linguistic resources people use. This means they acquire a type of sociolinguistic competence which is shared by all individuals living in multilingual communities and differs from the sort of sociolinguistic competence monolingual speakers develop.
- b. Individuals are able to take part in communicative practices by making use of mixed or switched linguistic forms and it is precisely the possibility of using their multilingual resources what scaffolds the construction of their linguistic competence in the new target language.

From this standpoint, language learners are regarded to as “multi-contextual communicative experts”, that is, “skilled participants in a variety of communicative

domains or practices as instantiated within particular communities of practice” (Hall et al. 2006: 233). Therefore, their language choices should not be expected to operate within the logic of diglossic practices, instead, they are likely to (a) reveal the norms of their *community of practice*; (b) serve a communicative purpose and (c) contextualise the activities learners co-construct turn by turn. This, somehow, also implies that the rules under which code-switching has been said to operate should be re-examined in order to account for “(the provisional nature of language knowledge) grounded in and emergent from language use in concrete social activity for specific purposes that are tied to specific communities of practice” (Hall et al. 2006: 235). At this point, it should be made explicit that in the Catalan educational system, Catalan is the language of instruction in kindergarten, primary and secondary education; Spanish is a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools and English (and in a very few cases French) is introduced as a compulsory subject in primary schools, though, some schools also teach this language to their kindergarten pupils. By the end of primary school and in secondary school, students can also choose a fourth language (usually French or German).

Our study

The present study aims at challenging the univocal connection between linguistic competence and code-switching and code-mixing mechanisms. We will analyse language practices in a multilingual socio-educational milieu and will question viewpoints that regard the use of a language other than the target one as a sign of lack of linguistic competence. We will do so by considering learners as “multi-contextual communicative experts” and will examine language choice, first, as a sign of belonging to a given community and then, as an activity-dependant mechanism for the task completion and as a resource to accomplish, in the target language, the goals of each task.

Pedagogical tasks are used as tools for data collection, as they appear to be an ideal construct to link the fields of SLA and language pedagogy (Pica 1997; Ellis 2003; Slimani-Rolls 2005). Our English learners were asked to carry out three “classical” communicative tasks in pairs around the topic of purchasing food at a grocer’s: sharing information to spot seven differences between two pictures in which a woman is buying goods at a grocer’s (*two-way information gap task*), grouping flashcards of some of the objects present in the previous pictures to form pairs which were later going to be used to play a memory game (*problem-solving task*) and scripting a dialogue between a shop assistant and a customer (*role-play*) following a set of written instructions which served as a sketch for the fictional dialogue learners had to produce (see Appendix 1). Their conversations were

tape-recorded, transcribed and analysed using CA procedures. That is to say, we carried out an accurate transcription of our data and examined, from the participants' perspective, the sequential dynamics of their interaction, the methods they use to contextualise the micro-activities they engage in, the interlocutors' mutual orientation, etc.

The data we present here were collected at various primary and secondary Catalan schools within the framework of a broader research project.¹ Our corpus is composed of 15 primary and secondary dyads that carry out the three communicative tasks in Catalan, Spanish and English. This allowed us to have comparative sampling of three stages of language learning, which was necessary so as to examine the development of learners' ability to take part in speech events in the target language only.

Although the impact of the adult's behaviour on the learners' discourse is beyond the scope of this paper, at this point, it is also important to clarify that in two of the selected schools, the regular English teachers administered the three tasks to all the students in the observed group, whereas in the third school, the researchers were in charge of doing so with a few students picked up by their teacher from those in the regular class.

Language choice as a sign of belonging to a community of practice

Foreign language users in general and foreign language learners in particular often need to solve two simultaneous communicative challenges when they take part in conversations. On the one hand, they have to understand information and convey meaning and, on the other, they have to do so in a language that they have not completely mastered. One of the processes we wanted to analyse was how learners solved communicative problems related to their willingness to maintain the conversational flow in the target language when they felt the need to comprehend or use words they did not know. We were particularly interested in examining the role language choice played in those circumstances. As we will see, our data reveals that requests for help (addressed either to the other member of the dyad or to the adult administering the tasks) and comprehension checks are quite extensively used by the three pairs as methods to solve their problems. However, the form that such requests or checks adopt and the language in which they are produced differ from one group to another.

Our two secondary students, who do not seem to need their teacher to overcome their communication breakdowns, never switch into one of the languages they share or ask a direct question when they open a side-sequence to request help or to check comprehension; instead, they tend to use paraphrasing in English, as in excerpt 2:

Excerpt 2: Spot the differences (two-way information-gap task)

13. Jana: uh — || I don't know\<6> is there a paper with\<2> uh-| the words
open in {(?)other} languages/| in the door\
14. Núria: no\
15. Jana: {(PP)(?) don't have}\
16. Núria: {(PP) no\}

In excerpt 2, we can see that Jana wants to know whether there is a notice on the door in her partner's picture, but does not know this word. What she does, then, is to try to describe (paraphrase), in English, the object she wants to mention (turn 13). Núria does not provide the word but answers Jana's question (turn 14). Since Núria's answer was not positive, Jana needs to check (turn 15) whether they have spotted one difference (as it is the case) or whether Núria did not understand her. The fact that she speaks in a low voice indicates a shift in the activity, yet, it is not accompanied by a language alternation move.

Our primary students, on the contrary, rely on code-switching to overcome the same sort of problems. Yet, the language they use to do so varies according to the interactional regimes operating in their community of practice. In excerpt 3, we can see that Pau needs to know the word "fall" in English and switches into Spanish to address a request for help to his partner (turns 237 and 239). Since she does not provide such help, he addresses the same request to the researcher (turn 239), but this time he does so in Catalan. Turn 239 is particularly interesting because it illustrates that Pau knows the sociolinguistic norm that operates in his community of practice, in which children tend to address their teachers in Catalan but are not likely to use this language to talk to all their peers if this is not the one they preferably use at home:

Excerpt 3: Matching cards (problem-solving task)

236. Bawna: banana and_ the ladder | it's colour yellow |
237. Pau: cómo se llama caer en inglés?
[Translation: how do you say\ fall/ in English?]
238. Bawna: eh_
239. Pau: cómo se dice caer en inglés? [to the researcher] caure\
que com es diu caure en inglés?
[Translation: how do you say fall in English? [to the researcher]
fall\ how do you say fall in English?]
240. Researcher: fall |
241. Pau: =fall |=
242. Bawna: =fall |=
243. Pau: on the port <1> of the_ [to the researcher] *com es deia?*

- [Translation: on the *door* <1> of the_ [to the researcher] *how was it said?*]
244. Researcher: fall\|
245. Pau: of the fall of the window | <1>
246. Researcher: *no he entès res*\|
[Translation: *I didn't understand anything*\]
247. Pau: *que_ <0>*
[Translation: *that_ >0>*]
248. Bawna: *què vols dir?*
[Translation: *what do you mean?*]
249. Pau: *a: que això s'ha caigut per la finestra* |
[Translation: *uhm: that this has fallen out of the window*]
250. Bawna: ah | the purse_ is fall for the w w white [+wite+] window\|

Excerpt 3 also shows that the researcher does not use English but Catalan to address the two pupils (turn 246), which would explain why the two learners feel it is "legitimate" to use Catalan (and not English) to address each other when the researcher is present (turns 248 and 249). This excerpt also serves to illustrate the interactive regime of this community of practice, in which Catalan is the language children tend to use to address adults, and, as the English teacher does, the language researchers occasionally use to conduct the English tasks. Once the problem has been solved, though, the conversation proceeds in English (turn 250).

Alex and Eli, like Pau and Bawna, also switch into Spanish when they address each other to check comprehension or to request help. What is interesting to observe, as excerpt 4 illustrates, is that if this pair rely on their teacher to overcome their communication breakdowns, they formulate a direct question in English (turn 69) and only use Spanish (code-mixing) to provide the word they do not know:

Excerpt 4: Matching cards (problem-solving task)

68. Eli: yes\|
69. Alex: [to their teacher] how do you say *muebles* in English?|
70. Teacher: furniture\|
71. Alex: furniture/|
72. Teacher: furniture\|
73. Alex: the door and_ and the windows because is furniture\|

The analysis of the last three excerpts reveals the interactional regimes which operate in each context. In our secondary classroom, the teacher's instructions and the task materials (the script for the third task) were delivered only in English; in one of our primary classrooms (that of Pau and Bawna) the teacher's instructions and the task materials were given only in Catalan and in the other primary

classroom, the materials were provided in Catalan but the instructions in English. This means that the fact that Jana and Núria do not rely on code-switching as a resource to solve their communication breakdowns cannot only be interpreted as a sign of language proficiency in the target language. It should also be seen as an indication that they view their classroom as an English speaking environment and do their best to maintain their conversation in English to stick to the social norms in their class. Parallel to this, code-switching in the primary classrooms should not simply be regarded to as a signal of students' lack of mastery in the target language as the four primary students are displaying the linguistic practices operating in their groups. In Paw and Bawna's classroom, the use of Catalan is legitimatised by the researchers, who address these children in this language (as we saw in Excerpt 2). In this class, even though the tasks are meant to be carried out in English, Catalan is the language of communication between the students and the researchers and Spanish and Catalan are the languages learners use to address each other. It is, then, not surprising that code-switching seems to be the most recurrent procedure available for them when they need to produce requests for help, clarification requests or comprehension checks. Finally, in Alex and Eli's classroom, the teacher tries to use English most of the time to address her students. If necessary, she provides translations in Catalan, but allows pupils to use Spanish, the language they normally use to talk to their peers, as in turn 69 in excerpt 4 above. In Alex and Eli's English class, unlike what occurs in Pau and Baw's, the use of Spanish seems to be allowed even when the teacher is present, as excerpt 5 below illustrates:

Excerpt 5: Spot the differences (two-way information-gap task)

148. Eli: in my picture there are eh_ | *cómo se dice?* | {(PP) XX} <2>
{| (PP) *la camisa* \}|
[Translation: in my picture there are eh_ | how do you say?|
{| (PP) XX} <2> |{(PP) *the shirt* \}|]
149. Alex: the short\| short\|
150. Teacher: shirt\|
151. Alex: shirt\|

Eli's whisper when she uses Spanish to open a side-sequence to ask for a translation (turn 148) suggests she knows she might be transgressing the rules of the English class as she is not using the target language to address her partner when the teacher is present. As we suggested earlier (see the analysis of excerpt 1), code-switching here occurs when Eli is changing the frame of the interaction and ceases to carry out an activity related to the task accomplishment (i.e. doing the task) to conduct one related to the task management (i.e. organizing the task). Yet, in excerpt 4, this same pair, Alex in that case, does the same without relying on code-switching.

The fact that neither Alex nor the teacher corrects nor makes Eli's practice salient might indicate that the use of Spanish in this community is legitimate but the comparison of the last two excerpts also seems to suggest that the learners' ability to take part in monolingual (English only) speech events still fluctuates.

Our data seem to suggest that code-switching in our two primary classrooms is not only used as a means to solve lexical problems but also serves as a procedure to undertake activities related to the management of the task, such as distributing turns, agreeing, showing approval, making judgements about the task, etc. The languages both pairs use in those circumstances vary from task to task (see table one in the discussion section), which moves us to examine in greater depth the students' linguistic practices in each task.

Language selection as an activity-dependent resource for the task completion

As we pointed out earlier, in communicative activities such as the ones we are describing, learners need to attain a dual goal: to solve the task and to accomplish it in the target language. This forces learners to activate *bifocalisation* (Bange, 1992) procedures to focus both on the task resolution and on the linguistic forms they need to use to complete it. In our data, this has, at least two consequences: on the one hand, learners encounter problems they need to overcome and on the other hand, they seem to behave differently depending on how they classify the activities they engage in during the resolution of the task. Our secondary students do not give the impression of having problems in meeting the double-sided demands of the communicative tasks and are able to use English in all circumstances. Our primary students, on the other hand, rely on code-switching into Spanish (and/or Catalan) to carry out activities related to the management of the task in all three tasks in the case of Pau and Bawna and in the first and third tasks in the case of Alex and Eli:

Excerpt 6: Matching cards (problem-solving task)

232. Pau: {{PP} no ésta_ ésta no esa no} que no va XXX |
[Translation: {{PP} not this_ this not that not} they don't match XXX]
233. Bawna: the a_ apron and and open it the colour white |
234. Pau: open of the door | {{P} venga |}
[Translation: open of the door | {{P} come on |}]
235. Bawna: banana and_ the ladder | it's colour yellow |

In excerpt 6, Pau uses Spanish in two occasions: to let his partner know he thinks two cards do not match (turn 232) and to ask her to talk (turn 234). The fact that in both occasions he speaks in a low voice indicates that he is aware of the fact that he is transgressing the rules of the task (to conduct it in the target language).

Apart from being communicative oral pair-work tasks which are meant to be completed in English, the three tasks are distinct in nature and therefore they require students to undertake different activities for their management and resolution and to display different activities to solve the various communication breakdowns they come across, which are, obviously, not the same for all the pairs. Our secondary students, for example, encountered most lexical problems in the first task, a few in the second one and none in the third. Some of the problems they had to overcome in the first two tasks were the same, since learners did not know a word they wanted to use in them both, but they did not employ the same procedures to overcome such lexical problems. In the first task, the two girls were inclined to use paraphrasing but not in the second. The difference being that in the second task both learners saw the cards and, therefore, they could use gestures (pointing) and deictic pronouns and adverbs to replace the words they did not know (see excerpt 7). They also provided descriptions, but this time, they were part of the task (as they were asked to justify the choices they made when they paired two cards) and not methods to solve a lexical problem.

Excerpt 7: Matching cards (problem-solving task)

9. Jana: ok\| I think this one goes with th=e: {(?) door=}
10. Núria: =the {(?)door} = {{PP} xxx}
11. Jana: we have to explain why\| or not\| because it was_ | it was_ | put on the door\| in the:
12. Núria: yeah\| it has to show if it's open or closed\|
13. Jana: uhu_ | ok\| then\| the money <3> goes\|
14. Núria: {(?) money} can go\| here\|

In excerpt 2, we observed that in task one, Jana did not know the word "notice" and on that occasion she paraphrased what she wanted to say (turn 13: is there a paper with\<2> uh-| the words open in {(?)other} languages\| in the door). In excerpt 7 we can see that in task two she has a problem with the same word (turn 9). This time, she points at the card with the picture of a notice on it and uses a deictic pronoun to replace the word she does not know (this one; turn 9); this contrasts with the fact that she names the object in the second card (door; turn 9). When she has to justify her pair, she also uses a personal pronoun for the word she does not know and names the object in the second card (turn 11). Her argument for pairing the two cards is complemented by Núria, who also uses personal pronouns to refer

to both cards (turn 12). Núria's use of deictic pronouns in turn 12 is a discursive device: she uses them because the objects have already been identified. Yet, turn 14 illustrates that she also employs words with a deictic function (here) when she does not know a term, in this case, "cash register" (turn 14).

Tasks one and two are also different from task three in the sense that in the first two, students do not have time to plan their discourse: they are trying to spot differences and to make pairs while they are engaged in talk-in-interaction. The third task is accompanied by an outline (in Catalan for the primary students, in English for the secondary students) of what the conversation should be like (see Appendix 1). Our older students use it to plan the content of the conversation they would act out in front of the class (turns 8–11) by, somehow, paraphrasing those instructions. Later on, they create their simulated dialogue by improvising its content and the linguistic forms they would use (turns 34–47). As excerpt 8 illustrates, the dual objective of the third task (getting students to focus on form and on meaning) is accomplished at two different stages:

Excerpt 8: Role-play (simulating a conversation between a shop assistant and a customer)

[Planning stage]

10. Núria: so I'm going\ I'm going to tell you that I'm going to make a cake\
 11. Jana: I'm going to tell you what-| ask you what-| what is you're celebrating\
 \

[Rehearsing stage]

34. Núria: uh-| I I want to: make a cake\
 35. Jana: cake\
 36. Núria: and I've realised I I run out of some things and I'm coming to buy them\
 \
37. Jana: uhu-| and why why are what are you cel celebrating\

In turns 10 and 11 Núria and Jana are simultaneously reading the guidelines for the task (see Appendix 1) and verbalising what it is that they will do. In turns 34 and 36, Núria actually produces the sentence she announced in turn 10; and the same applies for Jana, whose turn 37 corresponds to what she said in turn 11. The fact that turn 36 is an expanded comment to what was said in turn 34 and that Jana is hesitating as to how to start her intervention in turn 37 indicates that the planning stage only served as a resource to understand the task and to plan the content of the simulated dialogue but not its form, which is being improvised in the rehearsing stage. We can now argue that the sketch has a prominent role in the planning stage but becomes less relevant when students attempt to create a first proposal of text (Masats & Unamuno 2001). This discursive practice of attending to form and meaning at two different stages is only present in our data in the third task, which

is multi-modal, as learners are asked not only to interact but also to interpret written instructions. Learners will attempt to meet these two task requirements either consecutively, as in excerpt 8 above, or simultaneously, as in excerpt 9 below:

Excerpt 9: Role-play (simulating a conversation between a shop assistant and a customer)

37. Alex: hello\
 38. Eli: hello hello<1>
 39. Alex: tu di que hem de fer un pastís\ [calls another student] Joel_| fer a cake\
 \ [Translation: you say that we have to make a cake\] [calls another student] Joel_| make a cake\
 \
40. Eli: i com es diu hacer?
 \ [Translation: and how do you say make?]
 \
41. Alex: [calls the teacher] {(F) Maria_|} hacer/| eh_| how do you say hacer in English?
 \
42. Teacher: [laughter] to make_| to make a cake\
 \
43. Alex: make/<2> do you celebrate/

In turn 39 Alex opens a side-sequence to read the guidelines of the task and to ask Eli to elaborate her part. The fact that he constructs his first utterance using two languages (code-mixing), neither of which is English, indicates that he is operating in two overlapping frames: the one of the written task (reading instructions in Catalan) and the one related to the management of the oral task (telling Eli in Spanish that it is her turn to speak). In the second utterance he produces in turn 39, he is trying to help Eli construct her turn by asking another student to provide the words she would need. To do so, he opens another side-sequence to request for help. This excerpt illustrates that Alex uses English when it is possible (when he knows the word) and Catalan when it is not. The presence of English in this second utterance reveals that he wants to signal which word is the one he needs to know and which is the one he already knows.

Eli in turn 40 also produces a request for help mixing Catalan and Spanish. We cannot know whether he addresses Joel or Alex, but, somehow, the turn indicates that Eli is using the two languages to contrast two activities: she uses Catalan to ask for help (*i com es diu*) and Spanish to name the word which causes the problem (*hacer*). The whole exchange also reveals that language choice is a useful device to contextualize different practical activities in the group: children use English to address their teacher in the English class (turn 41) and use Spanish when they ask for translations (turn 40) or when they carry out activities related to the management of the task. Catalan is the language the teacher uses when she needs to clarify the instructions she gives in English and it is also used by students

when they operate with the written instructions which, as we said earlier, were given in Catalan.

The written outline also serves another purpose to our primary students. The fact of having a sketch (in Catalan) of their conversation helps them to concentrate on the task end (representing a transactional dialogue between a shop assistant and a customer) and, apart from still relying on code-switching to solve the linguistic problems they encounter, they also employ other resources, such as making use of semantically (and phonetically) related words (see excerpt 10) or using a mixed code (see excerpts 10 and 11):

Excerpt 10: Role-play (simulating a conversation between a shop assistant and a customer)

53. Eli: bizcocho\
[Translation: sponge cake]
54. Alex: pero no sabemos como se dice bizcocho\
two kilos of
/+stronberris+/ \<0>
[Translation: but we do not know how to say sponge cake\
two kilos of /+stronberris+/ \<0>]
55. Eli: {(F) no:: _} | yo he puesto uno\
[Translation: {(F) no:: _} | I have written one]
56. Alex: ah_ | un kilo of bizcochos\
[Translation: ah_ | one kilo of sponge cake]
57. Eli: biscuits\
58. Alex: eh_ | one box_ una una\
one box _ no\
[Translation: eh_ | one box_ one one\
one box _ no\
59. Eli: no\ sigue\
[Translation: no\ go on\
60. Alex: one box of biscuits [/biscuits/]
[Translation: one box of biscuits]

In excerpt 10, learners are trying to co-construct one of the turns of the customer (Alex); the one in which he has to ask for the ingredients he needs to make a cake. In turn 53 Eli uses Spanish to name one of the ingredients he would need (*bizcocho* = sponge cake). Alex, in the first part of his turn, opens a metalinguistic sequence, in Spanish, to object to Eli's proposal by stating that neither of them knows this word in English. He then changes the frame of his interaction and proceeds the task in English by naming another ingredient (turn 54). Yet, Eli, who is writing down their fictional dialogue, opens a new sequence to negotiate in Spanish one aspect of the content of the dialogue they are scripting (the number of kilos, in turn 55). Alex then formulates a hybrid utterance (*un kilo of bizcochos*, turn 56) which indicates, at the same time, that he accepts Eli's proposal and that he has changed again the frame of his intervention as he has turned on to the task

again. In turn 57, Eli proposes an English word (*biscuits*) to turn Alex's hybrid utterance (*un kilo of bizcochos*) into an English phrase. Her proposal will be integrated in their simulated dialogue by Alex in turn 60 (*one box of biscuits*), after they begin work on an embedded activity related to the management of the task (turns 58–59).

Excerpt 10 is particularly interesting because it illustrates that code-switching and code-mixing are resources used by learners to conduct different activities necessary for the task completion: they need to operate within the frame of planning a simulated dialogue (code-mixing) and to negotiate how they can produce such a dialogue (code-switching). At this point, we would like to claim that paraphrasing and lexical substitution are also two procedures learners can make use of when they wish to overcome linguistic problems in order to be able to conduct the set tasks in the target language. Yet, students need to possess some competence in the target language. When they do not, there seems to be a preference for using code-mixing mechanisms as we saw in turn 56 in excerpt 10 or in excerpt 11 below:

Excerpt 11: Role-play (simulating a conversation between a shop assistant and a customer)

72. Pau: pero eso lo tienes tú\
[Translation: but you have that\
73. Bawna: eh\
74. Pau: eres tú que eres el cliente\
[Translation: it is you because you are the customer\
75. Bawna: it's a_ a_ | a *deu mil* money\
[Translation: it's a_ a_ | a *ten thousand* money\
76. Pau: *deu mil* no\
<2> *deu mil* moneys\
[Translation: *ten thousand* no\
<2> *ten thousand* moneys\
77. Bawna: a *ten* <0>
78. Pau: er_
79. Bawna> *ten thousand*
80. Pau: *ten thousand* moneys\
81. Bawna: XXXXX\
82. Pau: yes yes es que_ sube\
it's up\
| it's up navideit\
[Translation: yes yes it is because_ it goes up\
it's up\
| it's up
Christmas]
83. Bawna: =thank you\
84. Pau: =thank you\
= bye bye\
85. Bawna: =bye bye\
=

In turns 72–73 Bawna and Pau switch into Spanish to carry out an activity related to the management of the task: they discuss who is responsible for producing one

of the turns of the simulated dialogue they are creating. Both children had already used this language for similar purposes throughout the course of the two previous tasks, yet, it is only in the third task when they need to rely on code-mixing to be able to produce the simulated dialogue in English. On some occasions, the use of a mixed-code will trigger the linguistic English forms they need (turns 75: *deu mil* versus turn 79: ten thousand) and in other cases, they will accept a hybrid form to proceed with the simulated dialogue, as is the case in turn 82 when Pau wants to justify the high price of the products he sells by stating that prices increase at Christmas, the season during which the data were collected, and produces the word *navideit*, from Spanish *navidad*, for Christmas.

Excerpt 10 also illustrates that when students are trying to build the turns of their simulated dialogue in English, the use of Catalan or Spanish to replace unfamiliar words can be interpreted as an individual option (Bawna produces mixed turns in English and Catalan, whereas Pau mixes English and Spanish). In this case, we cannot argue that the two languages serve a different purpose because producing a mixed utterance (*déu mil money*) and coining a new word using two codes (*navideit*) is not exactly the same activity. The student who invents the word also seems to have preference for the use of Spanish, as he also uses it in other circumstances, for example, when he needs time to recall the words he needs to use (turn 82: *es que sube* versus *it's up*).

Discussion

One of the goals of our study was to challenge the idea that learners' reliance on code-switching and code-mixing in foreign language classrooms reveals their lack of mastery in the target language. We have argued that our data suggest that learners' language choices are mostly determined by the interactional regimes which operate within their community of practice, Catalan schools. As we said earlier, in Catalonia, tuition in primary and secondary schools is given through Catalan, the historical language of the community, but unlike what happens in other linguistic communities worldwide, students are allowed to use their mother tongue to address their peers. It should also be noted that instruction in English lessons in many schools is not done entirely in English. These two factors can explain why the English classroom is very often a multilingual setting in Catalonia. Our dyads, which belong to three different schools, share the knowledge regarding language use and preferences which prevail in the community of practice they belong to. Yet, as members of different classrooms, their discourse also reveals traces of the interactional regimes that operate in their (sociolinguistic) space, where the rules regarding which languages can be used in the English class originate mainly

through practice, when teachers address their students and when the latter interact with them or with their peers. Thus, we now need to describe which interactional regimes are operating in the three classes we have examined in this paper.

Our secondary class: The English classroom is seen as a social context in which only English is allowed, therefore, learners conduct and manage the set tasks in this language. They also do their best to maintain conversation in English. Additionally, the practices they adopt in order to fulfil this goal vary from one task to another. In the first task, in which this dyad encountered most of their problems with unknown words, the two girls use paraphrasing or substitute the words they need by English words close in meaning. On one occasion they also coin a mixed word and in another one they switch into Spanish. In the second task, they have to solve very few problems and, because the task design allowed this, they use deictic pronouns and adverbs to replace the words they do not know. In the third task they do not encounter any lexical problems and this task is also carried out entirely in English.

Alex and Eli's primary class: The teacher conducts the class in English; she occasionally provides materials or translations in Catalan (the language of the school) and does not reprimand students if they use Spanish (the mother tongue of most students in the group). This means that in this social context, the three languages play a clear role and students use them accordingly. They do their best to carry out the tasks and the activities related to their management in English, as they see this as the language of the lesson. As we argued, Eli's whisper when she uses Spanish to request for help (see excerpt 5) indicates she knows she is transgressing this principle. Again, the practices adopted and the language(s) used by this pair are also task-dependant. In the first task, both children occasionally switch into Spanish to request help or to engage in activities related to the management of the task, but they are also capable of doing so in English. Task two just presents a lexical problem which is solved in English and in task three, they seem to rely on Catalan and Spanish more than on English to resolve problems and for task management activities. In this case, we would argue that the fact that they have the guidelines in Catalan legitimates and triggers the use of this language by the learners.

Pau and Bawna's primary class: As was the case with our previous primary group, Spanish seems to be the language children use to talk to each other. In this case, though, Pau and Bawna only use Spanish when the researchers are not present and switch into Catalan to address the researchers or each other in the presence of the adults. Both languages are used to resolve the linguistic problems they encounter and to accomplish activities related to the management of the task. This suggests that the two children associate the researchers with the institution and, therefore, use the language of the institution when they are present. This practice does not change from one task to another, except for the fact that in

the first task they occasionally use English to perform a task management activity, such as to verbalise the fact that they have spotted one difference between the two pictures.

The linguistic practices this pair displays in the third task are somehow different from those exhibited by the other two dyads. In this case, the sketch relieves the learners from the pressure of not knowing what to say, which allows them to embark on a process of trying to convert the two sets of instructions into a coherent dialogue (Masats & Unamuno 2001). In this case, they rely on code-mixing procedures, and it is precisely the possibility of anchoring their discourse on their multilingual repertoires that allows them to tackle the task in English (Nussbaum & Unamuno 2006).

Table 1 summarises our discussion and illustrates how our students used their repertoires in each task to overcome the lexical problems they encountered. In brackets we indicate the number of times each problem-solving mechanism was used. We also thought it would be interesting to show which language(s) they used when they embarked on the activities related to the management of the task. It is important to notice that the table only shows the number of times a method was used and not how many times it was used in each language. The numbers in brackets under the name of each task indicates the order in which the task was presented to each of the dyads.

Earlier in this paper we claimed that the members of a community of practice share a common interpretation about which languages are to be used when they engage in speech events. Throughout our analysis we have seen that our learners are familiar both with the sociolinguistic norms related to language choice operating in Catalan schools and with the interactional regimes adopted by their social space in that community, in our case each class. We also pointed out that both constructs were going to be useful to account for the links existing between learners' linguistic competences and their use of code-switching or code-mixing mechanisms. At this point, then, it is necessary to examine how these two recourses, which are employed to solve lexical problems and to undertake activities related to the management of the task, relate to the students' competences.

Ideally, in a foreign language class, interactions should be carried out entirely in the target language as the classroom is very often the only social context in which students can be exposed to that language and we defend that language learning mainly occurs through talk-in-interaction. In this sense, the milieu created in our secondary class is an ideal one, since students are only exposed to English and almost exclusively use this language to accomplish the requirements of all three tasks. We have seen that in this case, our students rely on paraphrasing or employ lexical substitutions as methods to solve the lexical problems they encounter during the resolution of the set tasks. However, we must admit that students who are

Table 1. Recourses employed to solve lexical problems and languages used to manage each task.

Students Task and order of delivery	Jana and Núria (secondary students)	Alex and Eli (primary students)	Bawna and Pau (primary students)
Spot the Differences (1-1-2)	- Paraphrasing (8) - Lexical substitution (3) - Code-switching (1) - Code-mixing (1)	- Request for help in Spanish or English (4) - Clarification requests in English (6)	- Request for help in Spanish or Catalan (6) - Clarification requests in Catalan (2) - Comprehension checks in Spanish or Catalan (4)
Language for task management	English	English and Spanish	English and Spanish
Matching cards (2-2-1)	- Use of deictic adverbs and pro- nouns (2) - Request for help in English (1)	Request for help in English (1)	- Request for help in Spanish or Catalan (5) - Clarification requests in Catalan and Spanish (2)
Language for task management	English	English	Spanish and Catalan
Role-play (3-3-3)	No evident problems	- Request for help in Spanish or Catalan (7) - Lexical Substitu- tion (1)	- Request for help in Spanish or Catalan (6) - Code-switching into Spanish or Catalan (2) - Code-mixing (8)
Language for task management	English	English, Catalan and Spanish	Spanish and Catalan

still developing their abilities in taking part in monolingual discourses in the target language might have trouble using such procedures. One of our primary dyads, comprising Alex and Eli, only makes use of lexical substitution on one occasion in the third task, but they solve all the other problems through the use of direct clarification requests in English or through requests for help in one of the three languages of the school. The fact that although they need to rely on code-switching, they are also able to use English to undertake some of the activities related to the management of the task and to the resolution of lexical problems leads us to believe that their ability to carry out oral tasks only in English is at a lower stage of development compared to our secondary students and at higher stage compared to our second primary dyad. This last pair has to overcome more problems and hardly ever use English to do so. Yet, in the third task, Bawna and Pau, as we have seen, use their multilingual repertoires to create a mixed code which enables them to complete the task.

We could, then, claim that the development of learners' competences and abilities to take part in monolingual speech events in a foreign language goes through a series of stages which starts with the use of a mixed-code and of code-switching to solve problems (as in the case of Pau and Bawna) and continues to subsequent stages in which code-mixing is less likely to occur and the use of code-switching as one of the resources used for the resolution of linguistic problems fluctuates (as in the case of Alex and Eli). Finally, at a later stage, code-mixing and code-switching are not employed because learners are capable of using the target language to undertake any of the activities related to the completion of oral tasks, including the resolution of lexical problems (as in the case of Jana and Núria).

Conclusions

In our study we have described the linguistic practices of three pairs of language learners who represent three different stages of development in the ability to take part in interactions in a foreign language. Our dyads, who were asked to resolve three communicative oral tasks in English, made use of resources such as code-switching, code-mixing, lexical substitution and paraphrasing to solve the lexical problems they encountered. We have argued that learners' preferences for one procedure or another might be influenced by their degree of expertise in the target language. Our secondary students, for example, who were able to conduct the three tasks in English and did not encounter many problems during their resolution, opted to rely on paraphrasing and lexical substitution to maintain their conversational flow in English, whereas Pau and Bawna, our primary students who had to overcome more problems during the completion of the oral tasks, were able successfully to accomplish the third one in English because they made use of their multilingual repertoires to generate a mixed code which enabled them to engage in activities related to the task accomplishment (i.e. doing the task). Code-switching, in the case of the two dyads of primary students, was the resource used to carry out activities related to the management of the task and to formulate clarification requests or requests for help. In both cases, their language choices (Catalan or Spanish) reveal the interactional regimes inherent in their sociolinguistic space (e.g. the norms regarding which language is to be used to address the adults or their peers, how they categorise the activities they embark on to meet the task demands, etc.). It is also important to notice that one of our primary dyads, Alex and Eli, can also conduct these activities in English, which might indicate a remaining fluctuation in their preference for using only the target language.

We have also argued, though, that language choices cannot be interpreted only in terms of how competent students are in the target language, as learner's

competences are not independent of the activities learners engage in; rather they are permanently shifting and contextually dependent (Nussbaum & Unamuno 2006). The diverse nature of the three tasks (spotting differences between two pictures, matching cards and scripting a role-play) served to illustrate that the learner's interpretation of classroom tasks is a circumstance worth investigating, since students need to embark on different activities to accomplish the task goals and such activities trigger different interactive practices. Our data also suggest that although language learning is a situated social practice, language learners do not transfer their competences from one situation to another rather they "re-anchor" them according to the demands of the activities they engage in (Py 1996; Pekarek Doehler 2000). We have seen, for example, that our secondary learners, Jana and Núria, only needed to rely on code-switching on one occasion; during the resolution of the first task, whereas this was not the case for our primary school pupils. Alex and Eli were able to conduct the second task entirely in English but they occasionally switched into Spanish in the first one and into Spanish and Catalan in the third one. The presence of Catalan in the third task may be explained by the fact that learners were operating with a set of instructions written in this language. Pau and Bawna switched into Spanish and Catalan in all three tasks; in their case, they used one language or another depending on who their interlocutor was, that is, they used Spanish to talk to each other but Catalan if the adults (the researchers) were present or if they addressed them directly.

To conclude, we suggest that the presence of code-switching and code-mixing in our data is not a mere indicator of lack of competence but is evidence that learners categorise differently both their interlocutors and the activities they engage in with them. Their practices, therefore, make relevant their ability to adjust their repertoires to the context which is being built through the interaction. This demonstrates that through talk-in-interaction learners behave as *multi-contextual communicative experts* (Hall et al. 2006) who operate within the norms of the *community of practice* they belong to, Catalan schools, and who adapt their behaviour to the interactional regimes being built through talk-in-interaction in their sociolinguistic space, the English class, when they attempt to meet the demands of each task.

Notes

1. The present study is grounded on the research work undertaken by GREIP, a research team from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain) interested in the study of plurilingual interaction and language teaching in a multilingual milieu. The data analyzed in this paper come from research projects financially supported by the Spanish Ministry of Education (Dirección

General de Enseñanza Superior — PB96-1219; Dirección General de Investigación — Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología — BSO 2001-2030 and SEJ2004-06723-C02-01).

For more information, visit <http://dewey.uab.es/greip/angles/introduction.htm>.

2. See Appendix 1 to read the whole set of instructions. The fragment relevant for the analysis of this excerpt is the following:

Customer:

2. — Say you want to make a cake.

Shop assistant:

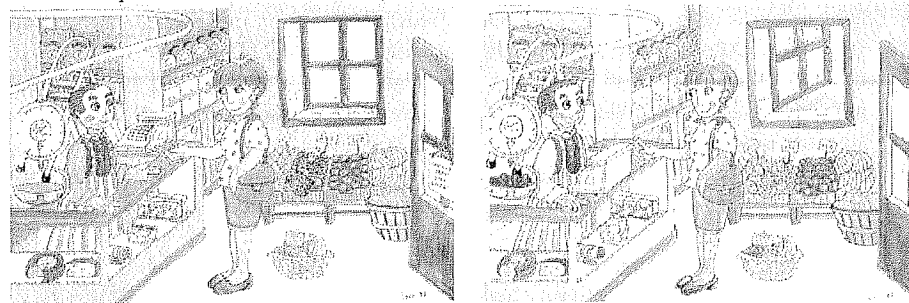
2. — Ask your customer what he/she is celebrating.

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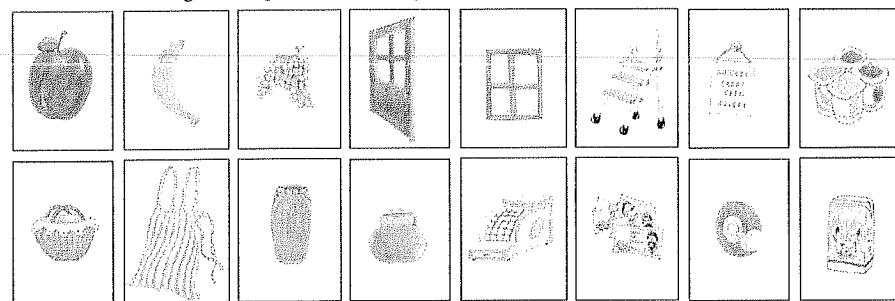
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Appendix 1. Task materials

Task one: Spot the differences (two-way information-gap task)



Task two: Matching cards (problem-solving task)



Task three: Role-play instructions

These were the role-cards given to our secondary students. Our primary students had the same instructions in Catalan.

CUSTOMER

You wish to make a cake and go to a shop to buy the ingredients you need. Use the following guidelines to prepare a dialogue with the shop assistant:

- 1.- Greet the shop assistant.
- 2.- Say you want to make a cake.
- 3.- Answer his/her questions.
- 4.- Ask for the products you need and say how much you need of each of them.
- 5.- Ask for the price of what you bought.
- 6.- Pay.
- 7.- Say good-bye.

SHOP ASSISTANT

You work as a shop assistant at the grocer's. Use the following guidelines to prepare a dialogue with a customer:

- 1.- Greet back.
- 2.- Ask your customer what he/she is celebrating.
- 3.- Ask him/her what he/she wants to buy.
- 4.- Give him/her all ingredients except one, which you ran out of.
- 5.- Tell him/her what he/she bought costs.
- 6.- Charge him/her for what he/she bought.
- 7.- Say good-bye.

Appendix 2. Key to the Transcription Symbols

1. Questions:	
Yes/No	/
Wh+	?
2. Other intonation types	
Affirmative	\
Suspension	-
3. Pauses	
short	
quite long	
longer than a second	<n°>
4. Overlapping	
=text of speaker A=	
=text of speaker B=	
5. Interruptions (unfinished sentence)	text_
6. Lengthening of a sound:	text :
7. Intensity	
Great	{{(F) text}
Piano	{{(P) text}
8. Language shift	
Catalan	text
Spanish	text
9. Incomprehensible data	XXX
10. Uncertain fragment	{{(?) text}
11. Laughter	{@ text}
12. Approximate phonetic transcription	/+text+/ text
13. Salient data for the analysis	text
14. Comments from the person who transcribes	[text]
15. Translation	[Translation: text]