

○ PLURILINGUAL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY: INSIGHTFUL, INVALUABLE, INVISIBLE

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In view of the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in school classrooms in many English-majority countries, the profile of the pre-service teachers being trained to teach in those classrooms has become of research interest. It was found in a cohort of Australian pre-service teachers that one third of the cohort was plurilingual. This article reports the findings of a project which interviewed fifteen plurilingual pre-service teachers about their linguistic identity, tertiary studies, experiences during practicum teaching, and their beliefs about their future teaching career. The findings reveal dynamic, hybrid, empowered plurilingual identities within their personal lives. In their university studies, however, their skills are invisible, as there are no links made between their identities and their developing professional skills as new teachers. Experiences during practicum included both some validating interactions in diverse schools, but also feelings of exclusion in monolingual schools. The pre-service teachers were insightful as to the valuable skills they possessed which could enhance student learning. The study indicates the need, within the discourse of Australian multiculturalism, for teacher standards, teacher education and schools to recognise plurilingual pre-service teachers' abilities as a teaching and learning resource, in order for them to achieve an integrated professional identity.

KEY WORDS: Pre-service teachers, plurilingual, transnational, identity, teacher education

BACKGROUND

In the international context, teaching has become a transnational globalised profession. Many schools which offer curriculum for the children of globally mobile parents, such as the International Baccalaureate, recruit staff internationally and value teachers with, amongst other content knowledge, intercultural and multilingual skills (Pritchard, personal communication, February 10, 2015). Yet, an opposing trend exists towards localisation in teacher training, in many English-majority countries with diaspora communities. There has been suggestion that the profile of pre-service teachers (PSTs), in Western countries such as Canada, the United States and Australia, is diversifying only slowly, and remains largely homogenous, white and monolingual (Allard & Santoro, 2006; Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000), while the diversity of the school classroom has rapidly accelerated, resulting in a mismatch between teacher and student cultures. Disputing this, a smaller number of studies

has pointed to increasing diversity in university pre-service teacher classrooms (Brown & Miller, 2006; Cho, 2010; Miller, 2010).

To investigate this issue of cultural homogeneity amongst PSTs within a particular university cohort, a survey was conducted in a cohort of undergraduate Education students in Sydney, Australia. Researchers were interested to find that while over 80% of the cohort was born in Australia, nearly a third spoke languages in addition to English, associated with their family background. In 2014, a follow-up investigation in the same university was conducted, in which multilingual PSTs, including both primary and secondary school trainees, were invited to take part in an individual face-to-face interview which explored the relationship between their multilingual abilities, their tertiary teacher education, and their future teaching career. This article reports the findings of that investigation.

The term ‘multilingual’, while still widely used, has been re-cast as a descriptive label indicating the static co-existence of different languages in a society, partner to ‘multicultural’ in the same sense. This special issue is framed by the notion of ‘plurilingual’ teacher identities, where an individual’s experience of language may expand through use and flexible transfer across different contexts, such as with children in a culturally diverse classroom (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009; Vollmer, 2006). Plurilingual teachers construct language and culture as a communicative competence in which languages interrelate and interact, rather than placing them in separate mental categories, and they can use this competence to critique and enhance communication. The project’s larger goal was to ascertain whether the participants of this study are enabled to employ their ‘plurilingual’ abilities in their Australian school context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review provides background to the three concepts which shape individual PST perceptions: the Australian social context, tertiary Education study, and the notion of a plurilingual identity in the teaching context.

AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM AND ATTITUDES TO LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE

Australian Multicultural Policy was designed by the Whitlam Government (1972-75) to support social cohesion, encourage the acceptance and celebration of cultural difference, and to redress the racist immigration policies and assimilationist attitudes of previous decades. While this brought about positive change and diversity in Australian society, critics believe the multicultural debate stagnated into a ‘tolerance’ discourse (Hage, 1998), and was not strong enough to support individuals to develop new relationships across difference on equal terms. Today, in New South Wales government schools, 30.9% of students are identified as coming from families where languages other than English are spoken, a status referred to in New South Wales curriculum as a Language Background Other than English (LBOTE). We

acknowledge that this term privileges English, and that it would be more positive to refer to such students, and their schools, as multilingual rather than LBOTE. In the South Western region of Sydney, 66.7% of all school students are classified as LBOTE (New South Wales Government, 2013). In some of these South Western Sydney schools, LBOTE students represent over 90% of the school population (Gerber, 2013). Hickling-Hudson (2003) has offered a powerful critique of multicultural education in Australia (within which the provision for English language learners has been situated). She asserts that Australian use of 'multicultural' in curriculum continues to place boundaries around human groups by the idea of 'culture', which then embeds notions of difference and othering into assumptions about race and nation, paradoxically resulting in exclusionary institutional practices and outcomes. In sum, it is questionable whether Australian multiculturalism supports the development of active intercultural enquiry to nurture more flexible cultural identities among Australian students and teachers (Crozet, 2008; Harbon & Moloney, 2015). Attitudes towards languages remain ambivalent, and Australia's recognised dominant monolingual mindset may continue to be an 'impediment to the development of plurilingual potential' (Clyne, 2008, p. 347).

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

Despite the increasing profile of teaching as a mobile, transnational profession (Lai, Shum & Zhang, 2014), localised accreditation practices prioritise the production of new teachers with local outlooks and skills. In many North American, Asian and European sites, teacher education has increasingly become "training" in how to teach a local educational jurisdiction's curriculum and how to comply with accountability systems (Mayer, Luke, & Luke, 2008, p.97).

In Australia, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) developed the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the National Program Standards. University teacher education programs must demonstrate that graduates will achieve the Graduate Teacher Standards. These teacher standards represent the desired hierarchy of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) in the teacher prototype (Cho, 2010) they construct. The characteristics of a transnational teacher (for example, multilingual competence) do not appear on current Australian standards. Cho (2010) has used Bourdieu's (1977) concept of cultural capital to examine cultural resources of immigrant teachers in the Canadian context. Those that differ from the prototype standard may be defined as deficient in some way. Linguistic capital (one of six forms of capital identified by Yosso, 2005) is not always perceived as an asset in the case of PSTs who have grown up as English language learners, if they speak accented English or are anxious about their linguistic accuracy in English.

Gannon (2012) has noted that 'it becomes difficult for those who are caught within the standards grid to see other dimensions of accomplishment in teaching beyond those that are prescribed by the standards' (p. 59). With the exception of modern language teachers, there is

little systemic or institutional validation or valuing of multilingual skills in teacher education in Australia.

Research literature has highlighted the lack of multilingual awareness built into teacher training programs (Faez, 2012; de Jong, 2014). Garcia (2008) argues that the pedagogy of multilingual awareness should be a central focus of all teacher education programs, involving a critique of assumptions about language and culture in monolingual PSTs. Moloney and Oguro (2014) found that for multilingual PSTs, narrative enquiry elicits, often for the first time, affirmation of their background and skills. If PSTs are encouraged by the wider institution to value their multilingual ability, they see themselves as ‘multi-dimensional educators’ (Watson, Solomon, Morote, & Tatum, 2011). This attitude can also be fostered by teacher education programs that provide the opportunity for PSTs to learn another language (Watson et al., 2011).

STUDIES OF PLURILINGUAL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

Studies of plurilingual PSTs have highlighted two main themes: evidence of linguistic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1990) as potential teacher knowledge, and the difficulties and barriers to realising this potential. In the first instance, plurilingual PSTs have been shown to be more empathetic towards issues faced by English language learners, such as culture shock, lack of local cultural knowledge, and educational challenges (Faez, 2012; Garvey & Murray, 2004). Multilingual teachers understand the links between ‘language, identity and thought’ (Ellis, 2004, p. 97), while Safford and Kelly’s study (2010) highlighted that multilingual PST’s understanding of normalcy and difference in home, school and social settings ‘mirrored’ those of their students, giving them an enhanced understanding of educational and socio-cultural contexts. In addition, multilingual teachers ‘can access multilingual knowledge networks to inform their teaching’ (Han & Singh, 2007 p. 296). Indeed, it is recognised that all students benefit from teachers who can apply experience of different cultural perspectives to the curriculum, viewpoints that are not always available to monolingual teachers (Santoro, 2013).

Studies have also underlined difficulties experienced by these teachers, however, and the failure of universities and schools to capitalise on their potential. Safford and Kelly (2010) found that the teachers had difficulty making links between their linguistic knowledge and their skills as young teachers. It was nowhere suggested to the PSTs that they could activate their linguistic cultural and community expertise as part of their professional knowledge. In particular, they lacked the confidence to articulate and use their language knowledge in monolingual school contexts, where they felt themselves to be positioned negatively, and in some cases felt insecure using their non-native English (Safford & Kelly, 2010). Coleman’s (2014) Australian study focusses on multilingual primary (elementary) school PSTs in their first 18 months’ study at university, before their engagement with practicum teaching. Coleman’s participants perceived their linguistic abilities and their personal identity had no

relevance or particular connection with their university studies. Participants accepted their marginalisation alongside the assumption that English was the only linguistic medium recognised for university study (Gorfinkel, 2014), for the school classroom, and for their own evolving teacher identities. Coleman suggests that the development of their identities as successful Australian teachers may to some degree rely on their suppression of their multilingual identities. Coleman calls for further studies to be done to build a case for change in Australian teacher education. This study responds to that call, but focuses on PSTs in their final two years of study in order to include their school practicum and beliefs about their rapidly approaching professional role.

The findings of the studies reviewed have informed the research questions of the current study, which sought to identify: (1) how the PSTs see their linguistic identity (2) what role this identity may play in university studies, including in school practicum (3) what role the PSTs believe it may play in their future teaching career.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study's analysis of interview data required a qualitative approach, to consider and interpret how participants make sense of their world and their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009). A detailed profile of the participants follows. The interview questions were designed to elicit descriptions of the lived world of the interviewees (Kvale, 1996). The fifteen volunteer participants were self-selected, in the last or second last year of their four-year Education degree. Most students completed a four-year undergraduate double degree, including a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Education. Some entered the Bachelor of Education at the graduate level, having completed discipline studies elsewhere. Participants responded to an electronic advertisement circulated among the undergraduate cohort in October 2014. Data were collected in individual, face-to-face, 30-minute semi-structured interviews, conducted in November 2014. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. All participants have been given pseudonyms. The researcher had taught five of the participants in a previous semester. All teaching and assessment for the semester were complete, so no coercion was involved or desirability effect evident. The study acknowledges the role and assumptions of the authors, both multilingual, as a possible factor impacting the interpretation of data (Russell & Kelly, 2002).

The interview transcripts were read and re-read. As the questions remained consistent across interviews, answers to the same question were compared using Constant Comparative method (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thematic coding (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) was used to identify themes emerging from the data.

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Of the 15 participants, three were male. This gender imbalance reflects the imbalance in the broader teaching profession. Eight of the participants were born in Australia. Eight participants were training to be primary teachers, and seven were training to be secondary teachers. Among the primary school trainees, two were studying for an additional classroom competence as teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs). Of those training to be secondary teachers, their intended teaching subjects included History, English, Society and Culture, Mathematics, Computing, Languages, and the teaching of ELLs. Four participants had entered the Bachelor of Education program as graduates, having been involved with some other career or discipline study previously. Amongst the undergraduate participants, the age range was 20-35. Amongst the post-graduate entry students, the age range was 28-40. The languages represented amongst the participants were Arabic, Malay, Mandarin, Indonesian, Spanish, Korean, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, French, German, Vietnamese, a Chinese dialect, Farsi, Armenian, Japanese, Urdu, Uzbeki, Dari (Afghan), Hindi, Pashtun (Afghan), Maltese, Italian and Turkish.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The answers to the interview questions were examined from the transcripts. Participants' responses in four areas – linguistic identity, tertiary study, school practicum and future career – will be addressed in turn, in the discussions below.

PLURILINGUAL IDENTITIES

The linguistic profiles of the participants were rich and varied. While ten of the 15 participants spoke one language in addition to English, five participants spoke more than one additional language. Adele, for example, spoke Malay, Mandarin, Indonesian, Spanish and Korean, and was keen to learn more languages in future. Participants' profiles indicate the high level of personal investment made by participants: Victor, for example, in addition to knowledge of French and German, reported using Russian, Serbian and English on a daily basis. He spoke Serbian with his wife, and was trying to raise his children multilingually by using several languages with them. His children attended Russian community school on Saturdays and Serbian community school on Sundays.

Jacinta spoke with her family in Dari and her husband in Pashtun, Dari and English. Jacinta recognized her linguistic profile as somewhat 'unique' and was proud of her language knowledge when she realised that not everyone in Australia spoke multiple languages.

Nicole spoke Farsi and Armenian at home with her parents. Nicole was born in Australia, and attended Armenian Saturday school until Year 9. Nicole reported feeling as though she

lived in ‘two worlds’. When visiting Iran, she felt like an ‘outsider’ and when in Australia, she ‘definitely felt Australian’, and she felt ‘very proud’ of her background.

For all participants, their linguistic ability was aligned closely with family and community. For Misha, who spoke Japanese with her parents and grandparents by phone, the Japanese language represented ‘family, communication and emotion’. Participants reported that, while they possessed different levels of reading/writing literacy, they were highly competent in oracy in their language(s) used on a daily basis within the private sphere of their homes and communities for child-rearing, family communication, shopping, consumption of media, and social interaction.

A number of participants described the binary nature of their lives, and the complex contrast which existed between their ‘private sphere’ and the ‘outside’ world of their city. Anna explained that:

I walk between two cultures...at home I’m a completely different person, because I’m speaking my language all the time. I have cultural TV on all the time, very connected. But when I go outside, everything is in English.

In common with Anna, many participants expressed the importance of input from diverse literacies in their languages: television, films, social media, and poetry. They exemplify Gee’s (1988) claim that language and literacy are ‘the root of people’s identities and ultimately about the ways in which people situate themselves in the world’ (p. 40). Anna also expressed the common challenge of balancing the various facets of hybrid identity creation (Kanno, 2000): to fulfil membership in family community, to negotiate an intercultural space between cultures, and to study and later work in a public sphere perceived to be defined exclusively in English.

For all participants, the development of their languages has been important for their identity negotiation processes, just as it has been recognised in the need to support the home languages of learners (Cummins, 1996). Their plurilingual identity must be understood as dynamic, complex, and socially constructed through their interaction and negotiation with others (Cummins, 1996; Norton, 2000). Language is used to balance the roles and aspects of their identities which are of varied importance to them at different times.

In sum, to answer the first research question, the participants were proud of their plurilingual identities. Some experienced difficulty acquiring English as children, which endured as insecurity in their English communication. In their personal lives, however, they fulfilled the characteristics of ‘plurilingual’ through their deep investment in communicative engagement across a plurality of different peoples, cultural values, perceptions, media and activities.

PLURILINGUAL ABILITIES WITHIN TERTIARY EDUCATION STUDIES

In alignment with other findings (Coleman, 2014; Santoro, 2013) participants stated that their plurilingual ability had either received no recognition at all within their Education degree or that there had been some very minimal recognition in an isolated tutorial or lecture. Some reflected that they had not thought about it or expected their languages to be part of their university life, and that the interview was in fact the first time it had been raised. Nevertheless, two-thirds of the participants felt their language skills could or should be recognised in their university education. Their plurilingual skills could be exploited more in tutorials as a learning resource to diversify discussion, and offer richer perspectives, and to include their subjectivities. Jane reflected that:

in tutorial you could really feel that people are not asked often about their culture, but they are so happy to talk and reflect on it, if there is room for it. There was so much variety, Japanese, Korean, European, etc., it was so lovely to hear different perspectives.

Jacinta, who had had negative experiences learning ESL as a child, recalled a tutorial which promoted the use of bilingual books in primary classrooms: ‘that tutorial triggered something in me, made me sad and angry about my own experience’. The PSTs have been exposed to the constructivist notion that, for quality learning to occur, it is necessary for teachers to engage the subjectivities of the diverse classroom learners. They do not, however, see it modelled in their own tertiary classes. Jane recalled a tutorial devoted to recognising racism and privilege attached to whiteness and L1 English in schools. She could easily relate to the content, but her monolingual peers appeared limited in their responses: ‘I could see many people did not agree or could not understand...the Anglosaxon Australians said, “No, it doesn’t happen in Australia”’. Jane identified that her monolingual peers were operating from, as Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton (1999, p. 360) have described, a ‘limited base of knowledge about culture and identity’.

Jacinta, Victor and Enid mentioned struggling with the content, cultural context, and literacy load of their tertiary studies. Gorfinkel (2014) has noted that multilingual students move back and forth between their additional languages and English, in attempting to make sense of their tertiary study and ultimately bring more to their construction of knowledge. Gorfinkel (2014) has offered tertiary pedagogies to better support, and take advantage of multilingual students’ knowledge. Singh (2009) has similarly promoted tertiary teachers being open to the different intellectual heritages of students and seeking to learn, themselves, about these diverse perspectives.

In answering the second research question, it is evident that in the students’ perception, they have not been able to identify clear connections between their plurilingual abilities and their development as beginner teachers (Santoro, 2013). While, in the university Education department in which the study took place, there are a number of elective units which

explicitly examine diversity and encourage reflection on identity, in general, in core units the opportunity is implied rather than explicit. In a review of studies of student response to 'diversity courses' (Garmon, 2004), it has been noted that student response can be mixed. We recognise that there will be different levels of dispositional readiness amongst pre-service teachers, whether monolingual or plurilingual, to engage personally with concepts of diversity presented in university courses (Mills & Ballantyne, 2010). Mills and Ballantyne (2010) describe a 'developmental hierarchy' (p. 453) in student self-awareness. Moloney and Oguro (2014) similarly noted that within a group of multilingual PST participants, there was a range of abilities in engaging with the critical awareness needed for reflective narrative writing. If national accreditation standards do not indicate a need to explicitly value multilingual skills, however, there is no particular incentive (beyond best practice) for universities to critique learning in this area. In this study, albeit of limited scope, the PSTs' responses suggest that teacher education could do better, first in understanding the role that plurilingual abilities may play for the PSTs themselves, in the integration of their personal and professional teacher identities, and second in highlighting the pedagogic role of their linguistic skills in the diverse classroom. As part of their university study and accreditation, students must also complete school practicum teaching experience. Students were thus asked about their experiences in regard to their language abilities while on school practicum.

PLURILINGUAL ABILITIES DURING SCHOOL PRACTICUM

Impressions gained on school practicum are pivotal in PST's early perceptions of their role (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008) and sense of membership in their professional community. Participants' experiences were shaped by the school region in which they were placed. Plurilingual PSTs placed in the diverse southwest region reported different experiences to ones placed in the north of Sydney, alongside largely monolingual staff and students.

Seven participants reported that they had used language or language-related skills in some small way during their practicum. For four participants, using their language was a validating experience. Anna, for example, achieved a 'good outcome' for a Pakistani student after working with him for one day. Jacinta helped a recent arrival Iranian student in the playground, and was asked by the school to communicate with his parents. Trudy reported that she drew upon her understanding of language, cultural values and expectations that she had in common with her students when teaching. Outside his teaching area of History, Lawrence acted in the role of teacher's aide in a German class and was able to assist with the language lesson. These ad hoc opportunities helped to validate the cultural and linguistic knowledge of some participants.

Also of interest, during her practicum, Alexandra was frequently asked by students 'Miss, what's your nash [nationality]?' As Alexandra believed that withholding that information would create a 'barrier', she shared the information, with positive results and greater rapport.

The participants interpreted that students hoped that the teachers would be ‘non-Anglo’, like themselves, in order to be members of their diverse learning community. Alexandra believed that this questioning was evidence that there was ‘some potential for teacher and kids to construct ideas about language and culture together’. Misha felt a part of the community in her diverse practicum school that was ‘so vibrant, so multicultural, I loved it, both staff and kids’. When Trudy told students she was Lebanese, the students asked her if she knew certain areas of Lebanon or had tasted certain Lebanese dishes. Trudy further utilised her good rapport by relating curriculum content to the real-life experiences of students. Participants exemplify the cultural bridges which can be built between student and teacher through linguistic diversity (Watson et al., 2011). Practicum appears to serve as a trigger for participants to think about ways to use their capital to provide a richer educational environment for all students, to reflect on their own identity and to begin to see themselves as ‘multi-dimensional educators’ (Watson et al., 2011).

However, there were also barriers encountered on practicum. Three participants reported that they had had occasion to hide their multilingual ability while in a monolingual school. While on practicum in a monolingual school, Misha reported that she felt ‘out of place’, and that ‘not being like everyone else’ made her feel as if there was an ‘invisible wall’ between her and the school community. Jenny and Jacinta stated that they did not think their language was important or ‘relatable’ to the students, and focused on English only. Victor felt that in order to ‘stay professional’ he should not say too much about his cultural background, and in fact was subject to an incident of verbal abuse from a small group of students regarding aspects of his cultural and linguistic background shared previously. Several participants felt concerned and insecure regarding the accuracy of their English speaking and writing abilities, what Garvey and Murray (2004, p.18) refer to as the ‘imposter syndrome’, and as such had a disinclination to use or promote their plurilingual abilities. Adele stated: ‘I feel people judge me because I know other languages. I feel I would be more sought after if I only spoke English’. The monolingual mindset of such schools is clearly acting as an impediment to these PSTs’ plurilingual potential (Clyne, 2008).

In sum, the data indicate disparate experiences during practicum. For nearly half the group, incidental positive opportunities enabled a sense of belonging to the community of a culturally and linguistically diverse school, while others felt marginalised by monolingual school communities. Positive experiences in relation to their languages were spontaneous, unexpected and unstructured. Their experiences show the uneven development of inclusive practice in Australian schools, ambivalent attitudes towards linguistic difference (Crozet, 2008) and lack of public awareness about languages generally (Lo Bianco, 1987).

PLURILINGUAL ABILITIES IN A FUTURE TEACHING CAREER

How a person understands possibilities for their future is part of their identity (Norton, 2000). Participants were asked how they saw their language ability as part of their future career. Many found this question the most difficult to answer, with a number answering ‘don’t know’, or ‘never thought about it’. For many participants, at that point in their development, their principal concern was, rightly, their acquisition of classroom content knowledge, survival skills, and high standards of English literacy competence. Nevertheless, ten of the participants offered reflections on abilities which they felt would be useful to them in their teaching careers. Four themes were represented in the responses, confirming similar processes identified in Santoro’s (2013) study.

First, participants believed that they brought a capacity for empathy to their career. Several participants spoke of an enhanced cultural awareness gained through language knowledge, and an appreciation of different values held by students (Faez, 2012; Garvey & Murray, 2004; Safford & Kelly, 2010). The respect for diverse values was not confined to students from the same cultural background, but was a generic intercultural skill. Many highlighted empathy with English language learners, understanding students’ need for pragmatic cultural knowledge. Trudy was keen to teach within her community, where she could empathise with cultural restrictions and expectations. While limited to particular school contexts, participants also hoped for future practical opportunities to speak to students and parents in their languages, to be useful in building good communication across effective school communities.

A third perceived asset for their teaching future was their metalinguistic ability (Cummins, 1978). Four participants spoke of their ability to break down complex communication. Viktor reported that his linguistic knowledge made him more aware of grammar structures, and Lawrence had developed the habit of simplifying communication for students, even in an L1 English monolingual context. Viktor and Jane were self-aware of the possibility of miscommunication due to difference in both linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Victor noted that ‘what I am trying to teach may not be what students perceive...what I say is not what other person hears’, showing awareness of language as a socio-cultural meaning system (Ellis, 2004).

Finally, three participants expressed a positive projection of their plurilingual identity into their future roles, believing in their responsibility to model how language learning represents an exciting engagement with the world and intercultural learning. Jocelyn believed that ‘new languages teach new values and understandings’ and that it was her responsibility to teach about humanity and difference. Claudia similarly believed she must ‘teach that having another language is okay’, and that children need to embrace and share it.

Positive projections of the plurilingual teachers’ futures appear to have been shaped largely by two sources of input: by their own plurilingual identity, and by experiences on practicum.

There is no explicit representation of input from their experience as learners at university. Figure 1 demonstrates that while their plurilingual identity is connected to and invested in the practicum and reflected in their anticipated future roles, the beginner teachers felt there was little explicit support for plurilingualism within their tertiary studies. The background context in which the limitations of these dynamics operate is the discourse of Australian multiculturalism. In light of the research regarding the need for teacher knowledge to integrate both the personal and professional, the study suggests that it may be a struggle for these plurilingual PSTs to move forward to an integrated professional identity in their Australian context. It will depend on a range of factors in their professional pathways, their future school context, their professional mentors, and, just as in their undergraduate development, their individual ability to critically reflect and grow as teachers (Harbon & Moloney, 2013).

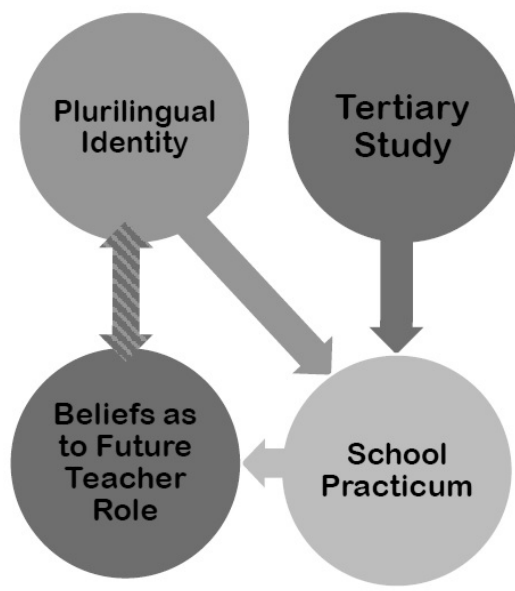


Figure 1. Relationships between plurilingual identity, university study, practicum and beliefs about their roles as future teachers.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the perceptions of a small sample of pre-service teacher participants. The study reported commonalities in the participants’ plurilingual identities, the participants’ perceptions of the limited engagement of plurilingual identities in tertiary studies, and

opportunities encountered in participants' practicum teaching. Finally, it reported participants' beliefs as to the possible role of their abilities in their future careers.

Findings illustrate that plurilingual PSTs move with flexibility across languages and cultures, crossing boundaries between their homes, communities and networks. They are comfortable with difference, and use metalinguistic skills to communicate across difference. They are willing, indeed delighted, to extend their linguistic competencies in new contexts and to have the chance to speak to students or parents in their language if opportunity arises. They know they can contribute to student wellbeing and success through empathy and consideration of communication issues, and by playing a positive role in supporting student learning. And yet, within the educational context of multicultural Australia, opportunities to employ their plurilingual capacity may be limited.

This study contributes to research-based evidence of the need to recognise and activate the learning resource represented by plurilingual PSTs. The study may serve as a catalyst towards larger scale investigations; a follow-up study of plurilingual teachers in their first five years of teaching could deliver interesting findings about development of professional identities. These plurilingual PSTs require professional opportunities, both at university and in schools, to demonstrate their intercultural capital, in order to bring their personal identities forward into their professional futures, to the benefit of both their peers and their classroom students. It should be mandatory that all PSTs engage with two areas of study: even a minimal amount of foreign language learning, and intercultural anti-racist experiential learning. Both of these would serve to unseat assumptions about language and culture, and develop a proactive intercultural pedagogy. Plurilingual teachers entering the profession possess 'diversity capital' (Cho, 2010), that is, linguistic and intercultural skills, that must be visible and valued, and can be active agents in embracing plurilingualism in multicultural Australia.

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