

○ A FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION: PLURILINGUAL TEACHERS IN DAY AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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Linguistic and cultural diversity is becoming a feature of the teaching profession in OECD countries with the increase in global migration and mobility (Reid, Collins & Singh, 2014). Plurilingual teachers, however, tend to experience marginalisation in terms of gaining employment and in their workplace experiences. Although there is a body of research into the ex/inclusion of plurilingual teachers at the systemic/policy level and individual level, there is a gap in what is known about the school factors. The ways that plurilingual teachers are positioned and position themselves vary across sites. This paper draws on teacher interview data in community languages and day schools to explore the factors which determine the value attached to plurilingual teachers' work and the skills they bring to their teaching. The key features include the extent to which cultural/linguistic diversity is incorporated in school curriculum, the impact and role of community participation in the school and the focus on and support for appropriate pedagogies and teacher professional development.

KEY WORDS: plurilingual teachers, linguistic and cultural diversity, inclusion

INTRODUCTION

There is a body of research into the importance of employment equity for refugee and immigrant teachers and the benefits of this for increasing equity for culturally/linguistically diverse student populations (Adair, 2012; Bartlett, 2014; Carrington & Tomlin, 2000; Florence, 2010; Gagné, Kjørven & Ringen, 2009; Miller, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Ochs & Jackson, 2009; Schmidt & Block, 2010). Across OECD countries, however, there still exist large pools of teachers, particularly from non-English speaking and developing countries, unable to gain teaching accreditation and employment (Birrell, Dobson, Rapson, & Smith, 2006; Ingersoll & May, 2011; OECD, 2011; Penson & Yonemura, 2012). In Australia, the proportion of teachers from minority backgrounds and of overseas-born teachers is less than half the equivalent proportion of minority and overseas-born school students (Inglis & Philps, 1995; Reid, Collins & Singh, 2014). There is also strong evidence of marginalisation once teachers gain re-entry to the profession with recent studies finding plurilingual teachers tend to be employed in disadvantaged hard-to-staff schools (Bartlett, 2014; Dewar & Visser, 2000; Schmidt, 2010; Walsh, Brigham & Wang, 2011). Bartlett (2014), in a study of transnational teacher migration in American schools, characterised

plurilingual teachers as locked into being short-term workers concentrated in low-socioeconomic status (SES), high turnover schools.

Much of the research into this phenomenon addresses the systemic and policy barriers to employment and inclusion (OECD, 2011). Key factors have been identified as the lack of pathways into the profession and the demand for ‘local experience’. There are also studies which draw on case studies to explore teachers’ experience, identifying issues of English proficiency or adapting to local conditions, students and curriculum (Reid, Collins & Singh, 2014). Although the “school” factor has been a strong focus in research into educational outcomes, there is little research into the “school” factor in terms of the ex/inclusion of plurilingual teachers. This is despite the shift in many countries to school-based employment and management. One recent large-scale Australian study found:

a key factor in determining whether an immigrant teacher enjoys his or her teaching experience and living experience in a country like Australia is the extent to which difference is racialised, devalued and penalised in the school and community. (Reid, Collins & Singh, 2014, p. 133)

What are the school-level factors which promote the inclusion of plurilingual teachers?

METHODOLOGY

This article draws on interview data with nine plurilingual teachers with teaching experience in Australia and overseas and is supplemented by lesson observations, field notes and interview data from school principals, head teachers and students. The data come from a larger set of case studies of languages teaching and learning in 42 schools (Cruickshank, Wright, Tsung, & Black, 2014). For this article, plurilingual teachers were asked about their journeys as languages teachers. They were also questioned about attitudes to their languages, to teaching, and to the students they taught, and also about their role in the school. Ethics approval was gained from university and education systems. Where appropriate, one interviewer was fluent in teachers’ language/s so that there was a choice of language/s used. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed using nVivo. Codes were developed around the teachers’ perceptions of their role and status in the schools and the support they received. The second set of codes related to language teaching and learning: the attitudes to the language, the organisation of the program and classroom teaching and learning. Semantic maps were developed and checked with data.

SITES

This study focuses on teachers in three primary and secondary schools and two community languages schools in New South Wales (NSW). The plurilingual teachers in the primary schools were all employed in the government K-6 Community Languages Program which

began in 1980 and now operates in some 143 government schools teaching 31 languages. The two community languages schools are part of the complementary system of over 400 parent- and community-run out-of-hours languages schools in NSW. The secondary school participants were from one government selective school, the government-run Saturday School of Community Languages and the Open High School. The last two schools provide languages study on weekends and by distance for students who cannot access languages in their day schools. These schools were selected because of their numbers of plurilingual teachers; the Community Languages Schools and Saturday School of Community Languages are where teachers with overseas training often find employment and start their re-entry to the teaching profession. The focus on languages in this article is not meant to imply any limit to the skills and training of plurilingual teachers; it is because the data for this article comes from a broader study of languages teaching in NSW.

FRAMEWORK

The study draws on two frameworks: the first, by Cummins (1987, 2007, 2009) was designed as a framework for intervention for empowering minority students. His framework of school context identifies educator role definitions, linguistic/cultural incorporation, community participation, pedagogy and assessment as key features of inclusion. The second framework, developed in a study of school languages programs (Norris Report, 2000), works from the wider political/social context of languages programs. In terms of school programs, factors such as continuity of learning, resourcing, teacher availability, clear program goals, rationale and purpose, and support in terms of power and relationships are highlighted (Norris Report, 2000). The notion of the program being ‘embedded’ or ‘fully incorporated into the life of the school’ (Norris Report, 2000, p. 57), is then linked to the valuing and status of the teacher/s. As with Cummins (1987), the focus of the framework is on the classroom; that is, on the quality of teaching, and the development of student proficiency through opportunities to use the language and interact with speakers. Also included was a focus on the type of input, intake and output expected of students, all of which impact on the development of learner autonomy.

The key focus in this study is on the classroom, and classroom teaching and learning interactions. Next comes the wider school context: the extent to which the languages are embedded in the school curriculum and the status and roles of the languages teacher/s. Beyond this is the role of the language/language teaching in the community. This framework thus provides a way to explore the ways in which differences are constructed: SES differences, linguistic/cultural values, language teaching and learning and thus (in)exclusion of plurilingual teachers.

PLURILINGUAL TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC INCORPORATION

This section examines the extent to which the teachers with overseas experience and training in the K-6 community languages program are positioned and how much the languages they teach are incorporated in school curriculum. Plurilingual teachers bring linguistic and cultural understandings to their teaching: The centrality of language and cultural learning in the primary school curriculum thus affects the extent to which plurilingual teachers' skills and expertise are supported, valued and extended. This section reports on interviews with Maha,ⁱⁱ an Arabic teacher in Hillbrook Primary School, Slavica and Mei, Macedonian and Chinese teachers in Crestwood Public School, and Sangita, a Hindi teacher in Stockton Primary School.

MULTICULTURALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM?

Maha is a trained primary teacher from Lebanon who emigrated in the 1970s. She followed the common path for teachers with training from overseas, teaching Arabic to a class of 80 children in the out-of-hours community languages schools, working as a teacher's aide in a day school and, finally, undertaking additional teacher training course to gain an Arabic teaching position in her present government school. Hillbrook is a small school of 150 students in a low-SES area. The Macedonian and Arabic programs have been running for many years (the community is now third-generation Australian) and the new principal introduced Italian for the non-community languages students. Maha is funded for two days per week at the school. She teaches each group of Arabic-background students for one hour and also works in literacy classes for the other hour. Her focus is 'more on basic literacy in Arabic, learning some formal vocabulary and teaching cultural understanding'. On one of her days she runs cooking sessions, teaching Arabic through these activities. Maha is well-respected in the school and community and her sense of her role centres around her work as interpreter, community worker and teacher. Maha is strongly committed to teaching Arabic: She has undertaken professional development continuously; she has made and collected teaching resources in Arabic; and makes use of the Internet. She encourages the children to use Arabic with her in the classroom and around the school. Her comments, however, were tinged with regret. She felt that teaching Arabic was getting more and more difficult and that after she retired the program would stop.

But they (the children) don't enjoy it. When they go overseas they don't speak the language, especially the younger ones. So they don't even enjoy their life, going to the grandparents.

Mona, the principal, had cut down on the time allocated to the language-specific classes because of pressure from other curriculum areas.

If we allocated those times to...specifically to the languages, I guess the teachers were worried about missing other...our other curriculum areas.

The school was low-SES and 75% language backgrounds other than English. Mona saw the needs of her students in terms of improving their confidence, their socialisation and communication and thus the English language and literacy learning.

The children have learning needs that perhaps are a little different...the children here, I think they take a while to move. We're really happy with the work that we do with the children in class and all of that kind of thing, and giving them opportunities...but oftentimes external testing that the children do, they don't do as well with that as we feel that they're performing in class.

Cultural diversity was thus characterised as both a positive and a problem. It was a construct of cultural diversity as a central feature of the school but one that excluded language. This left Maha as circumscribed in her role as a teacher of language but valued in her role as community worker and 'teacher's aide'.

LANGUAGES FOR ALL?

Crestwood is a mid- to low-SES school in the southern suburbs of Sydney. Community languages have been a key feature of the school and enrolments have increased to 900 students because of the languages program. The school teaches six community languages for two hours each per week with all non-background students learning Indonesian. Slavica has been teaching Macedonian at the school for 22 years. Her students, like Maha's, are now third- and fourth-generation Australian. Her focus, unlike Maha's, is much more on language learning. Slavica frames her language teaching not just in terms of the local community but in a broader bilingualism:

I believe that if you learn one language...really early...children are open to learn more languages...- it's like I usually explain to the parents like driving a car. While the person is learning how to drive a car they will think oh, I have to stop because it's a red light, oh, I have to stop, it's a stop sign. But when they are confident in what they are doing they just don't think... they just stop at the red light automatically.

Of all the teachers interviewed, Slavica was the clearest about the learning outcomes expected adjusting her outcomes according to student backgrounds and abilities. She also saw a clear pathway of student learning from primary to Year 12. With her network of teachers in her community she organised Macedonian and other recital competitions. Macedonian classes were lively with lessons based around big books in Macedonian and much use of information technology such as iPads, Skype, Internet and Powerpoint.

In kindergarten and year one it's a very strong program of drama, nearly every book we do it's with drama activities and songs, poems. So by year one when they start to do really a bit harder work, they will then see the difference and they will see the difference between the letters in the English and Macedonian alphabets...by year two lots of children pick up the reading by themselves, like visually...my year six children can read fluently, can understand fluently what they're reading. They can write a poem, now we do with stage three write a simple poem when they get normally the vocabulary. The same thing for writing the creative writing letter or little story...I have now children in year four doing long stories because they are encouraged in my class to do that. So it's all diverse. They all do – they all start from the same point but then I've got diverse program.

In the classes observed, Slavica managed mixed-ability classes with different level groups and established an environment where all children were attempting to use Macedonian. She was realistic about her students' strengths and needs but she also had a clear idea of the linguistic and cultural incorporation of her teaching: first in the cultural/linguistic life of the Macedonian community in Australia and overseas and then of this bilingualism/biculturalism in the wider society.

Mei is one of the three Chinese teachers at Crestwood and has been there 11 years. Like many Chinese teachers she trained as a secondary English teacher and then did further training in Australia as a high school Chinese teacher. Her students are generally orally fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese or Shanghainese and so she tends to have a more traditional focus on teaching literacy with stroke order of characters in kindergarten leading to writing sentences in Year 1. Similar to findings from studies of Chinese complementary schools in the UK (e.g. Archer, Francis, & Mau, 2010), Mei saw her role as more focused on teaching proficiency in Chinese reading and writing. "Chineseness" was perhaps assumed and cultural issues did not emerge in interview. Mei's concerns were more at the lack of pathways for her students to continue their study of Chinese at local high schools. She complained that when children began secondary school they went back to learning basics in Chinese, writing their name and the numbers. She also commented on the difficulty of children continuing to Year 12. She complained about the broader lack of incorporation of languages in the education system.

Although there was a strong group of languages teachers at Crestwood and although all students took languages for two hours a week there was still some marginalisation in terms of the curriculum. Language teaching followed the Social Studies curriculum called Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE)ⁱⁱⁱ and the language teachers met regularly by themselves to plan units around topics such as Natural Disasters. Mei explains:

...natural disasters, would they talk about that at home? We have to follow the school policy, but we tried to pull some words – not too technical words. The Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE) program, it does not really suit our language.

Mei complained that she had to focus too much on teaching vocabulary from Social Studies rather than to develop the languages they were teaching. She felt that they did not have much voice in curriculum planning but simply had to follow and repeat the HSIE classes.

The status and role of languages teachers were stronger than in Hillbrook. There was a stronger sense of participation in teacher professional networks and of being part of the school professional development. There was, however, a sense of being ‘second-class’ citizens because of the way that languages were not seen as curriculum areas in themselves but as serving the Social Studies syllabus.

ALL FOR LANGUAGES?

Stockton is a multicultural primary school in a mid- to low-SES area with large Arabic, Korean, Indian and Chinese communities. The school had long-standing community languages programs in Arabic and Chinese and the principal participated in a government plan several years ago to establish bilingual programs. The school now teaches Korean, Chinese, Hindi and Arabic through a mix of school and systemic funding. All children in the school learn at least one language and they are learning curriculum areas through languages other than English for about half of the week. The principal, Paul, has a policy of employing plurilingual teachers on staff so that there is continuity and support in the languages teaching. Paul explained,

If you want to run a comprehensive program like ours, I can’t just have three Chinese teachers. So I’ve actually got five. Three of them are mainstream teachers who’ve had language and I’ve recruited them. I’ve recruited three of them.

The school enrolment has risen from 500 to 740 students. Sangita is the teacher of Hindi and her story of gaining re-entry to teaching was typical.

I was a primary and secondary teacher in India but they would not recognise my qualifications here so they said ‘no, it’s not recognised’. So I had to do the degree all over again. I was pregnant at that time and I said, ‘no I’m not, I’ll forget teaching’. Then I joined the bank but I was soon really bored. I wasn’t going to count money all my life. So I did the course, four years, then the last year the uni said that my Indian qualifications are accepted now!

Sangita started as a grade teacher at Stockton, but as the Indian community grew, the principal, Paul, asked if she would teach Hindi across the grades. At the same time, she also started postgraduate studies in literacy education. Informed by her experiences in India she

was not happy with the lack of outcomes in the languages teaching: ‘They were just doing singing, eating, dancing’. She worked with the languages teachers to teach literacy and language through different content areas. Sangita explained, ‘We teach kindergarten, we teach a lot more and they’re learning and they’re doing a great job. They are just so good at it; even better than I thought before.’ Sangita frequently referred to her being respected and valued in the school. Shifting from grade teacher to languages teacher meant that she knew all curriculum areas well. Paul described the negotiation through regular meetings between languages and grade teachers: ‘Teachers sometimes lack confidence in giving an area to another person but we had to overcome it and are overcoming those things’. Languages are taught through Mathematics, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, Creative Arts and HSIE depending on the skills of the teachers. Eleven of his staff had completed Graduate Certificates in Asian Studies. The school also reached an agreement with local secondary schools for students to continue their languages studies in Korean and the other languages.

There were three aspects to the linguistic and cultural embeddedness of languages and thus language teaching in the school. First, the employment of classroom/grade bilingual teachers meant that the role of teaching languages was seen as a whole school commitment and responsibility. Second, the curriculum planning involved negotiation between class/grade and languages teachers in which there was equal responsibility for decision making. Grade teachers were supported in achieving their curriculum outcomes and languages teachers felt that they had a role in “mainstream” teaching. Third, there seemed to be little division between “community” and other languages. Language learning was curriculum learning with languages framed in wider community and global contexts. The impact of the programs being embedded in the school curriculum with strong leadership was noticeable, as was the impact on how plurilingual teachers saw their roles.

COMMUNITY LANGUAGES SCHOOLS

Community languages schools are parent/community run out-of-hours schools where students aged from four upwards learn their home language for around two hours per week. At present some 2,000 teachers in 400 schools are teaching over 32,000 students in NSW. Many plurilingual begin their teaching in Australia as volunteers in these schools. Our survey data indicate just over 40% of teachers in the community languages schools have tertiary qualifications from overseas. The main issues emerging from the growing field of research in the community languages schools are the high turnover of teachers, lack of materials or inappropriate resources, class management, the difficulties of teaching mixed proficiency level and mixed age classes. Many studies report teachers having feelings of isolation and not having pathways to gain re-entry to the teaching profession in day schools (Blackledge & Creese, 2012; Cardona, Noble, & di Biase, 2008; Garcia, Zakharia, & Otcu, 2013).

A COMMUNITY WITHOUT BORDERS?

Every Sunday morning the primary day school is transformed into a Thai language school. Parents and children come from all over Sydney and beyond, many travelling for several hours. The playground is covered in mats and cushions on which parents sit and chat, preparing food and caring for younger children while a makeshift shop sells food and Thai language materials. In the school hall, teachers run an assembly for children with news and songs in Thai. There are then classes ranging from a kindergarten group to a Thai adult beginner class. At the staff meeting in the corridor teachers chat and drink tea.

Katy, the kindergarten teacher, is in Australia with her husband and is studying hospitality. She is a five-year trained primary teacher in Thailand. Her class of four and five year olds are gathered in a circle, sitting on mats (which are in fact Thai letters). Parents bring children in and settle them down. After news time, Katy tells a story in Thai and teaches a song using the Smartboard. Children then go back to their desks and write on the worksheets with help from two teachers.

Suchin, the principal, began the school 25 years ago in the local temple at the request of parents and then moved sites as numbers grew until the local primary school gave them rooms. She was originally a university lecturer in Thailand. The support of the community, the consulate and longstanding support from a Thai University are central to the longevity of the school which has grown to 100 students. Each year graduate teachers come from Thailand to run a summer school and the school follows the syllabus for second language learners set by the university. Suchin and the teachers are now working towards Thai being accepted as a Year 12 subject for students to continue their learning in secondary school.

The sense of a supportive community of teachers and commitment to the school emerged strongly in the interview data. The school is the centre for a very diverse and dispersed community. Families are often mixed marriages and there are few contexts in which children have access to Thai in the wider community. The school runs classes for adult beginners in Thai. The school staff has developed a committed community of teachers and parents. Katy and other teachers see their role as teaching Thai language and culture to Australian-born children, parents and others who are second-language learners. The school resembles a Brigadoon which comes to life every weekend; it is a community which operates in constant interaction with Thailand and Thai institutions but which also has a very mixed Australian/Thai student and parent population.

A TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Greek community schools are well established in Sydney. Every weekday after school and on Saturdays, classes run for two to three hours for students from kindergarten to senior high school in Carlton Park Public School. There are 90 students in this school which is one of 20

run by the same organisation. Fotini, the school curriculum co-ordinator, trained as a primary teacher in Greece and is responsible for employing and supporting teachers, liaising with parents and developing the school curriculum. She and the teachers follow an Australian-based curriculum using materials they developed. Fotini explains:

Our children are third- and fourth- generation now and the needs are different in every school. Our teachers?...Some old, some new. We have parents and grandparents but we also have teachers, new migrants from Greece. They have to use different ways here. We have seminars and workshops. They are used to teaching Greek as a first language. It takes them about a term to settle into our system.

Fotini uses the terms 'we' and 'our' frequently in her interview, speaking as an Australian of Greek background. She reports no conflict for her students being bilingual and bicultural Australians, not like in the parents' generation. Although children come from homes where Greek is not now commonly used, there are emerging domains of usage. The families go on annual holidays to Europe and Greece; the role of grandparents (in Australia and overseas) has become central to the language maintenance outside school. The school now uses the *pistopoiitiko*, a proficiency exam developed in Greece for second language learners. Fotini also commented on the pathways available for the students to study Greek in high school and university.

Anastasia, a trained English teacher in Greece, migrated to Australia and did a further postgraduate degree to gain local accreditation. She identifies her vocation as a languages teacher as the reason she took up teaching in the Greek school but her sense of her own and the students' identities was stated more in global terms:

So I would like for them to have...to feel good with both languages and both cultures, because everywhere now it's multicultural, in every country. They are lucky to have both. I believe that they're lucky because, if you learn the language since you are one or two years old, then it's easy for you to talk that language as your mother tongue.

Community languages schools are often characterised as bastions of conservatism, but the themes in interviews from both schools were very much one of connection to recent global changes. The teachers we interviewed were up-to-date with educational developments in day schools and many worked across day and community schools. The sense of community in the Greek school was one which was transnational: where children could live, work and study in Australia and overseas. Language maintenance and development played a key role in this.

This is not to minimise the feelings of marginalisation also expressed by teachers and co-ordinator. The school runs in borrowed premises; teachers have no access to day school technology or resources in their classrooms, not even a cupboard in which to store materials; day school teachers often prepare in the rooms during classes and both Anastasia and Fotini

reported feeling like unwanted visitors; everything had to be packed up and taken away at the end of classes. Motivating and engaging students was a constant problem, as in all community schools. Students, teachers and parents all commented that there would be little attendance without parental pressure. Peter, a student we interviewed, when asked if he would keep attending if his mother did not force him to, replied:

Student: No way.

Interviewer: What about when you grow up and have a family. Will you send your kids?

Student: Yes, of course.

A strong sense of community solidarity was thus evident: a community of parents but also one of students and teachers. Students, in interview, in fact nominated meeting friends from the same background from other schools as what they liked best about Greek school!

Anastasia and Katy are experienced classroom teachers who engage and challenge their students. Their student diversity and the difference in teaching the community languages to second, third- and fourth-generation students were themes they had in common. Both Katy and Anastasia see language teaching as their vocation. Their schools have curriculum co-ordinators and established syllabuses. Several factors give added structure to their language teaching: the introduction of external proficiency testing in Greek schools and the support for teaching from links with Thailand and Greece and the pathways of study to Year 12 and beyond.

Despite the voluntary nature of the teachers' work, the marginal status of the school and the difficulty of teaching often unwilling learners, the teachers' sense of purpose was supported by their place in globalised diasporic communities; where the Thai and Greek communities were very much part of a local "mainstream" but where there were also dynamic and continuing links with and support from overseas; and where parents saw their children's futures in global terms.

PLURILINGUAL TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This section reports interview findings from Hui, a language teacher at a government selective school where students are accepted based upon their academic merit; Anna, a Russian-trained teacher at the Open High School; and Ela, a Polish-trained teacher at the Saturday School of Community Languages. The section focuses on teaching and learning and links with plurilingual teacher identities. There is a strong theme in the research literature on the 'problem' of teachers with overseas training and how they adhere to 'outdated' teacher training and pedagogy. The findings in this article are that plurilingual teachers, in fact, are in a privileged position. They have knowledge, expertise and professional development in at least two systems. This means that they can choose from a broader range of beliefs and skills

sets: Their teacher identities are not limited to one context and they are in what has been called a ‘third’ space as bilingual/bicultural professionals (Kramsch, 1993).

WORKING FROM THE STUDENTS

The need for in-depth understanding of the students in planning for teaching emerged as an unprompted theme in interview. All three teachers gave detailed breakdowns of the diverse backgrounds of their students. Anna explained:

Our students are Australian but their roots are Russian...one group is second-generation, another third generation and the last group often has one parent of Russian descent. I have one student whose great grandfather came in the 1920s.

Hui’s response below was typical of the differentiated teaching they described.

I have three different groups at least. One with smaller numbers is capable of reading and writing. The other one is starting from scratch. I also have some with Shanghaiese or Cantonese dialect. They need to work on pronunciation. I have some non-background in Year 7 and 8 and I can give them more help. My normal way of teaching is to work in groups after the first 10 minutes.

Ela outlined language, cultural and political differences in her groups of students and the consequent need for building class cohesion to enable learning. Motivating students also figured as an unprompted topic in all interviews. Ela described the use of external motivation, from parents and exam results, and her building of ‘internal’ motivation through reflective writing and other tools. The goal for all teachers was the Year 12 Higher School Certificate which determines the high levels of expectations in terms of oral and written proficiency. Having community languages count for tertiary entry provided a pathway and had a washback effect on student engagement in Ela’s school.

Last year, a student said she wouldn’t do Polish because she has enough units in her English – day school. Her parents were absolutely devastated. She said I am not going to do it. I am not, and they begged me to help her. I talked to her. She said, “I’m sorry, Miss. I am not going to do it.” We wrote a letter to her in class. “xxxx, come back. We love you.” We sent the letter. A week later, she was here. She came second in HSC in Polish. She was good.

This sense of the teacher as educator and guide beyond the classroom emerged as a key theme in all interviews. Ela linked this perception of teacher identity and role to her experiences as a teacher in Poland but also to her experiences in Australian schools with immigrant students.

TEACHER ROLE

Ela and Anna were teachers of English in their countries of origin and Hui had majored in business in China. Their migration, in fact, forced them all to become community languages teachers, as they were initially unable to continue their original career path. This new role meant a journey through additional professional development, casual and voluntary teaching. The role as and satisfaction in being language teachers and overcoming difficulties emerged as a thread in each interview. School factors played a role in this: Each teacher was part of a “critical mass” of plurilingual languages teachers in their school: Hui was in an established languages department which was highly respected by all teachers in his school; Ela, Anna and Hui reported all being supported by a strong parent group; they felt their students had a wide exposure to languages and high motivation. Ela teaches in both day and Saturday school. Both she and Anna belonged to the professional networks of teachers of their language and they also appreciated the collegiality with other languages teachers in their present schools. They framed their view of their own bilingualism and of their role as languages teachers in cognitive and social terms. Anna said:

Some people ask me, how do you know this? I know it, because I am an educated person. Here...by studying languages, people will take ideas from other cultures. They will be much more open, much more educated. It should be compulsory.

Each interviewee had anecdotes that encapsulated their confidence in their identity as languages teachers. Ela was at a conference where the speaker asked participants to select a shell from a basket to show their identity as a teacher. By the time she got to the basket there were only broken fragments left. Ela took them and explained:

So I took the little bits and pieces. I put them on my palm and I said this is my student. Me as a teacher, I have to see in every bit of that shell a person. Even if he stops believing in himself, I have to show him that he's an important person. They were broken, not because of their own fault. Maybe there were too many of them in a basket, maybe they were too soft. Maybe someone did not handle them in a correct way. But they are the bits of pieces of a beautiful, beautiful shell.

This account encapsulated the approach of the three teachers. There is the focus on the students and their needs, the perception of the responsibility and role of the teacher as a guide in and beyond the classroom. There is a confidence and strength in teacher identity.

The third element of the framework, classroom pedagogy and interaction, emerged strongly in interviews with these teachers. They worked from knowledge of the diversity of learners, their ability to plan and teach for mixed-levels, abilities and backgrounds; the use of engaging teaching and the building of cohesive communities of learners. They did not see their teaching overseas and in Australia as discrete but as one journey of continuous learning. What made this possible? Hui, Ela and Anna were all part of a “critical mass” of plurilingual teachers in their

workplaces and there was strong professional support for them as languages teachers in and beyond their schools. They felt successful in their classroom teaching and reported strong support from students, parents and colleagues. All three worked across mainstream secondary and complementary schools and so their teacher identities which they enacted were not limited to single contexts but drew on the range of present and past experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study are not meant to be taken as representative of the experiences of all plurilingual teachers. The research evidence is that there are large numbers of teachers who cannot gain re-entry to the profession and who are limited to voluntary work in the community languages schools. There is also evidence of segmentation of plurilingual teachers in low-SES, hard-to-staff schools with high numbers for students from diverse backgrounds (Bartlett, 2014). This study focused on a small group of teachers and schools in order to identify the positive factors which contribute to the inclusion of plurilingual teachers in a largely monocultural teaching profession.

What, then, are the school factors which lead to the inclusion of plurilingual teachers? The findings indicate the centrality of cultural and linguistic inclusion in the structure, organisation and life of the school and community. At Stockton Primary School, where languages were a core part of the school curriculum, the skills and expertise of the plurilingual teachers were valued and developed. The school had employed plurilingual teachers as grade teachers and had supported the professional development of all teachers in areas of the learning of languages and intercultural understanding. The value given to teacher knowledge meant that plurilingual teachers on staff interacted as equals from positions of equal power. The professional development and support of plurilingual teachers were not framed as deficit. They were seen first and foremost as teachers, teachers with experiences and skills that were of value to the school.

The findings from the community languages schools challenge constructs of community teachers as traditional and conservative, force-feeding language and culture to children. The students in the community school classes were second-, third- and fourth-generation Australians; despite lack of resources, teachers were making use of information technology in their classes. These schools were playing an increasing role as language providers in the wider community with their classes for non-background learners. The construct of ethnic community schools as embattled fortresses for isolated ‘time-warp’ communities is also inaccurate. The growth of global technology and travel has meant that the Thai- and Greek-background families see their lives and futures in dynamic and flexible ways. Locally, the communities themselves are geographically dispersed. This means that senses of community and identity are also porous. The teachers in the community schools realised the importance of the school in developing and supporting a sense of community, but this ‘community’ was

also something that was both transnational and local. In all research sites, the plurilingual teachers showed an awareness of their role in the community which gave them purpose in their teaching.

The third element of the framework was classroom teaching and learning. Plurilingual teachers bring experiences of at least two systems, languages and cultures. This supported their understanding of the diverse strengths and needs of their students. The success in classroom teaching then fed into their sense of professional development pathways. In each of these schools there was a “critical mass” of colleagues who valued languages teaching and learning. This critical mass plus having supervisors who supported their professional development, having pathways of learning for their students and having clear and appropriate curriculum, outcomes and assessment all enabled the interaction between teaching, identity and inclusion to develop.

The comment of Sangita – ‘I know two systems, I know where the loopholes and the cracks are’ – encapsulated the strengths of plurilingual teachers reflecting Kramsch’s (1993) notion of ‘third space’. Being able to be in this position of power and choice is not simply a feature of the individual; it is something which schools promote through the inclusion of cultural and linguistic diversity, through collaborative relationships with their communities but most importantly through the classroom pedagogy and the interactive relationship with teacher professional identities. These are the conditions needed for plurilingual teachers to be able to develop, extend and share skills.

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ENDNOTES

- i The term 'plurilingual teachers' in this article is used in preference to terms such as 'overseas-trained teachers' or 'internationally-educated teachers' as it focuses on the strengths of teachers rather than on difference.
- ii Teachers and schools are all given pseudonyms.
- iii In the 1990s the NSW primary 'Language' curriculum was changed to 'English' and Languages were shifted into Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE). Although there are K10 languages syllabi, there is no separate primary school languages curriculum in NSW.