

# A Plurilingual Approach to Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Primary Students: An Exploratory Study in a Catalan School

## PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Maintaining linguistic diversity within the European Union has become an influential ideology for the foreign language classroom within Europe. At the same time, the demand for learning English as an additional language is sought out more than other European languages. With the intention of satisfying, both the demand for the European Union and it's' members this study aims to explore the possibilities of introducing plurilingual approaches into the English as a foreign language classroom.

## CONTEXT

We carried out this study in the Jesuit School St. Ignasi located in Sarrià, a neighborhood within Barcelona, Spain. These students were instructed in Catalan the official language of the autonomous region of Catalonia and studied Spanish, the official language of Spain. In addition to these two languages, the students are also required to learn a foreign language; in this case English. As a result, these students had three separate language classes.



## PARTICIPANTS



## QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

### Questions:

- How do the participants perceive English?
- Are 3rd grade (ages 8-9) students able to imagine a situation in which multiple languages are used in a conversation?
- How can plurilingual approaches, such as Intercomprehension and the Integrated Didactic Approach, be introduced to promote plurilingualism and assist in learning English?

### Objectives to help answer questions:

- 1** - Triangulate data from participants.  
- Learn how teachers are approaching English instruction.
- 2** - Create language census from teacher and student participants.  
- Discover how English is used between teachers and students.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the possibilities for implementing a plurilingual approach into the EFL classroom we chose a mixed method for collecting data that was then triangulated.

Questionnaires were created for the students and teachers that allowed us to obtain information in regards to their linguistic background and language use. These questionnaires were given through Google Forms, which provided some advantages for data collection such as data organization.

The students in addition to their questionnaire completed a comic strip activity that incorporated text and images. Students needed to create a dialogue consisting of multiple languages and put it into a setting. (*Directions: 6 panel minimum, at least three languages, specific setting, and add color at the end*). This was then analyzed with a rubric that allowed for consistent analysis in the interpretation of their capacity for identifying a plurilingual context.

Individual semi-structured interviews were held with the educational experts, providing firsthand access to their knowledge and experiences in applying plurilingual approaches to the language classroom. Both interviews were audio recorded and the interviewee could respond in their language of choice.

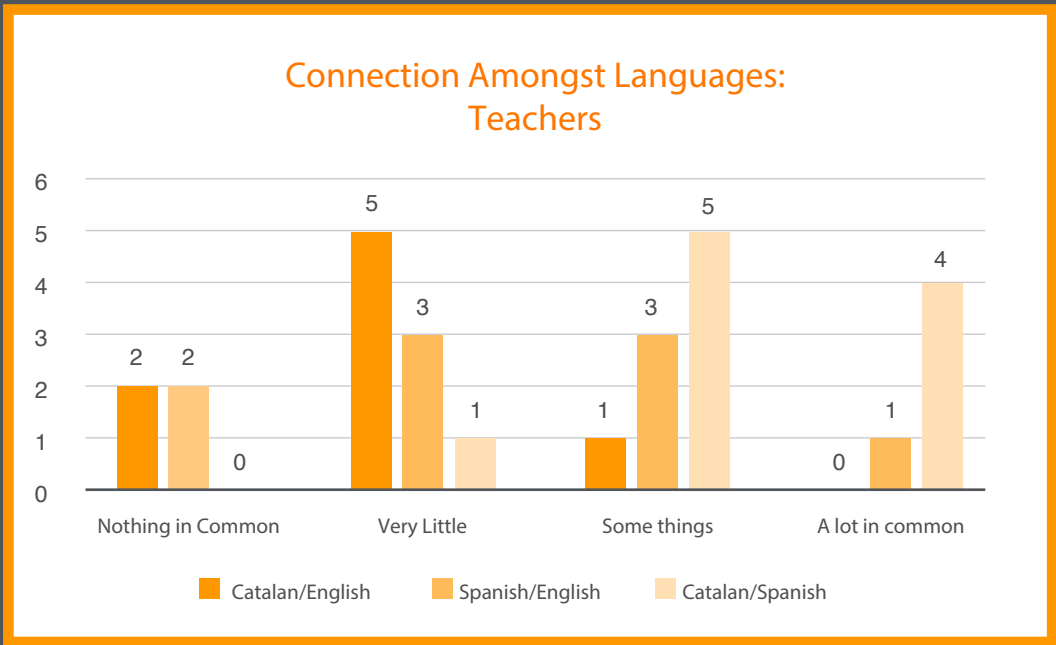
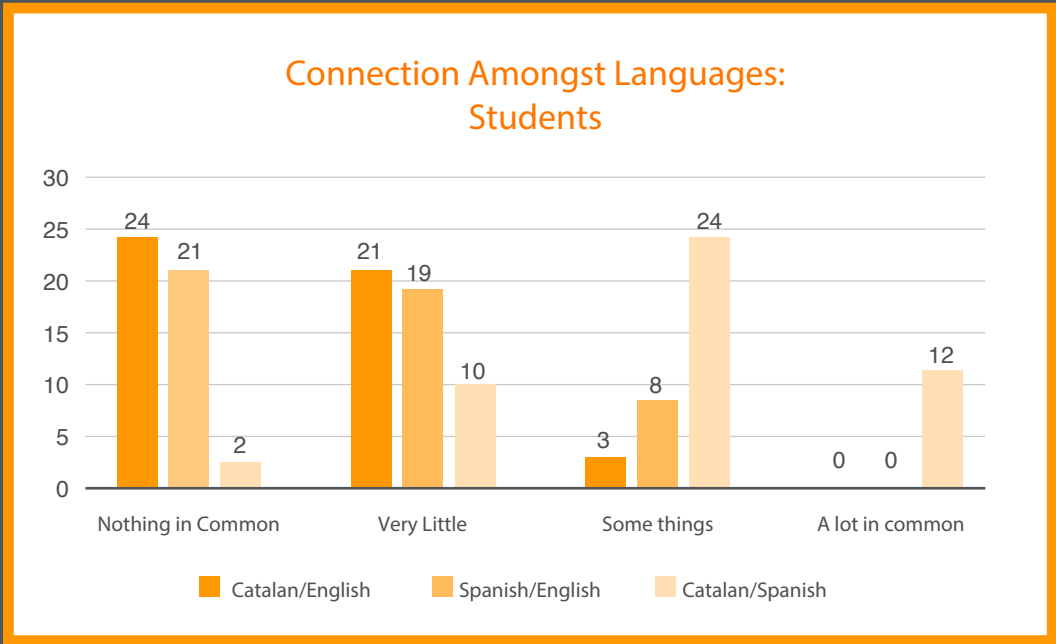
## RESULTS & CONCLUSION

**STUDENTS:**  
The students recognized an important use of English as part of travel and in their personal lives as far as playing video games or watching film. We see that in their comic responses languages such as Spanish, Catalan, English, and French. They identified that English is more closely related to Spanish than to Catalan, but on a very low scale. They also identified Spanish and Catalan as being more similar to each other.

**TEACHERS:**  
The teachers limit their use of English to the classroom and to travel. Very few identified as using English outside of the classroom. They also identified that it is more important to introduce culture for language learning in comparison to that of learning the etymology of a language. Much like the students they identified little connection with English to the co official languages of Catalonia.

**EXPERTS:**  
For the experts to introduce a Plurilingual Approach authentic and relative material must be provided to the student along with periodic moments of a metalinguistic reflection, looking at all languages as a whole. As well as providing space for all languages inside and outside the classroom.

## PRESENTATION OF DATA



“Es muy importante el enfoque, que el alumno haga cosas reales, útiles, que le sirvan en el futuro en su vida.”  
*Expert from Department of Education of Catalonia*



3rd grade illustration example

“...if we didn’t have our subjects divided, if it was like project based learning and in that project time each student can use a different language provided that there is comprehension and understanding...”  
*Expert from Consortium of Barcelona*

