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### **Language education and institutional change in a Madrid multilingual school**

by

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# Language Education and Institutional Change in a Madrid Multilingual School

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## 1. Introduction

In the spring of 2010 we were invited to have a look at the data collected by a research team coordinated by Luisa Martín-Rojo<sup>1</sup> in Madrid (Spain). This team had been doing ethnographic fieldwork during the academic year 2008-2009, at *IES Villababel*, a secondary school that was considered “unusual” owing to the fact that it was one of the first schools in the Madrid region where the *Bilingual School Programme* (BSP, hereafter) was being applied. The BSP, officially instituted in the academic year 2004/2005, is a particular English-learning programme aimed at schools categorised as “educational centres with social problems”, in the framework of the collaboration established between the Spanish Ministry of Education and the British Council. At the same time, the school hosted the *Bridging Class* programme (BC, hereafter), a language reception programme implemented in 2003 aimed at teaching the language of instruction, Castilian Spanish, and the basic curricular content of Social Sciences and Mathematics to students of migrant backgrounds who have recently arrived. As we began to study the data, we quickly realised the challenge that the interpretation of such data, and therefore Luisa’s apparently casual invitation, actually represented.

Although we began with the aim of exploring the discursive and social organisation of the BC through the analysis of the voices and trajectories of its social actors, we soon faced the challenges of having to consider a broader picture of the school. As long pointed out by discourse-based researchers across the fields of linguistics, sociology and anthropology, social actors, in daily life, engage in very complex semiotic practices where the local negotiation of a shared understanding of context often brings wider institutional and social frames of interpretation, which go beyond the immediate action at hand (Blommaert 2001). In the particular case of the BC at *IES Villababel*, many of the conversations, during which teachers and the research team talked about the concerns and dilemmas experienced by the former in their everyday practices, ended up making explicit references to the BSP. Extract 1 below is a representative example of the content and shape of these conversations.

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Luisa Martín-Rojo for her invitation to study the data and her support both in the analysis and the process of writing this paper.

Extract 1. BC vs. BP

<p><b>Juan:</b> yo cre- / yo la per- / la percepción que tengo a nivel personal sobre la sección lingüística bilingüe es que / parece que es- / es / un programme- (...) / que tiene como ma- / eh / [mayor] (...) = prestigio // es decir / que realmente lo que nosotros estamos haciendo es un poco como integrar al alumno pero no tiene tanto prestigio / la labor] (...) labor que hacemos es / complicada muchas veces pero quizá no se vea con [tantooo] (...) = no sé // o una visión como quizá [el bilingüe]</p> <p><b>Luisa:</b> [¿pero por el] valor del inglés [o-&gt;?]</p> <p><b>Juan:</b> [sí] / quizá sobretodo por eso // porque el- / los alumnos que- / con los que trabajamos nosotros (...) no más que- / con un nivel sociocultural más bajo o tienen- / eh / unos problemas añadidos que no los tienen por ejemplo los alumnos del bilingüe // (...) / yo la visión personal que tengo de la sección bilingüe / (...) / es que genera en los centros una división entre [alumnos que son] (...) = eh / académicamente en principio / entre comillas / porque luego dentro de la sección bilingüe no todos son- / no es la panacea ni todo- / ni es oro lo que reluce // que también habrá alumnos que tengan problemas y que no tengan- / no alcancen el nivel de inglés o la competencia comunicativa y lingüística suficiente // pero / la percepción que yo tengo es que se crea como dos- / dos tipos de centro // por un lado los profesores que dan a [sección bilingüe / sí] (...) los que dan a la sección bilingüe / que además cobran un complemento adicional por dar la sección [bilingüe] (...) = y / no / no por lo del complemento por el dinero / Luisa / [pero que luego entre el profesorado / entre] = el profesorado- / eh / se genera / y yo es lo que veo en los claustros- / (...) / se genera como una ciertaaa / no sé si envidia o desconfianza porque claro / (...) // es la percepción que yo tengo // entonces eso genera tensiones // es la per- / eh / lo que yo estoy observando / que genera tensiones entre los [compañeros]</p>	<p><b>Juan:</b> I be- / my per- / my perception of the bilingual programme is that / it seems that- / it's a / a programme- (...) / that has a more- / eh / [most] (...) = prestige // that means / that what we are really doing is a bit like integrating \the students but this doesn't have the prestige / the work] (...) the work we do is / often complicated but perhaps it isn't seen with so [muchhh] (...) = I don't know // or a vision like [the bilingual]</p> <p><b>Luisa:</b> [¿but because] of the value of the English language [or-&gt;?]</p> <p><b>Juan:</b> [yes] / perhaps mainly because of that // because the- / the students who - / who we work with (...) / simply that- / with a lower socio-cultural level either they have- / eh / some added problems that for example the students of the bilingual programme don't have // (...) / me my personal point of view of the bilingual programme / (...) / is that it generates in the schools a division among [the students that are] (...) = eh / academically in principle / in quotes / because later in the bilingual section not all of them are- / it's not the panacea nor everything- / not all that glitters is gold// there will also be students with problems and who don't- / reach the level of English or achieve a suitable communicative and linguistic competence //but / my perception is that something like two kinds of school are created //on the one hand the teachers who teach at the [bilingual programme /yes] (...) those who teach at the bilingual section who additionally get paid extra for teaching [bilingual] (...) = and / it's not / not because of the extra pay / Luisa / [but then among the teaching staff / among] = the teachers- / eh / it generates / and that's what I see in the meetings- / (...) / a certain I don't know if it's envy or distrust / because of course / (...) // this is my perception so that causes tensions // this my per- / eh / what I'm seeing / that it creates tensions between [colleagues]</p>
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(Interview with Juan, a teacher in the BC)

In the course of a research interview in which one of the teachers in the BC, Juan, refers to the BSP, the researcher, Luisa, follows up by asking the teacher about his perception of the BSP. This question leads then to further explanation in which the concerns of the BC's teachers are framed primarily within a polarisation between the BC and BSP. Indeed, this polarisation is reinforced by their labelling as two kinds of school, where one is associated with high prestige, students with a better academic profile and better remunerated teachers, while the other, with lack of prestige, students with low socio-cultural background and distrustful teachers.

Juan’s voice summarises the way all teachers of the BC positioned themselves compared to their colleagues in the BSP, and the subsequent tensions that emerged from the co-existence of the two programmes at *Villababel* (see Mijares & Relaño-Pastor (2011) for an analysis of the emergence of the same set of values and tensions, from the perspective of the teachers in the BSP). This is presented in table 1, which illustrates the recursive comments made by the BC teachers during the course of conversations and interviews with members of the research team.

Table 1. BC teachers’ positions with respect to their colleagues in the BSP

<b>Bridging class</b>	<b>Bilingual Programme</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (aim) Integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contents</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No prestige</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prestige</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (target) Students with a lower socio-cultural level</li> <li>• Students with social problems</li> <li>• Low expectations regarding students’ academic life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “School boys/girls”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less academic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More academic</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers receive extra pay</li> </ul>

For us, as researchers who had participated in previous investigations in the multilingual classrooms of Madrid, Luisa’s invitation was an opportunity to go back to see whether significant changes had occurred in the situations we had studied previously over several years, where multilingualism was being dealt with (Pérez-Milans 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2011; Patiño-Santos 2007, 2010, 2011). An initial challenge was the fact that neither of us had initiated the fieldwork, even though we knew the context of the Community of Madrid and one of us had supported the team in some of their activities, mainly those regarding students of Chinese backgrounds. We thus began a continual communication between the three of us, by way of a number of phone calls and e-mails, in order to confirm or re-addressed our intuitions and observations arising from the data we had in front of us.

Various things attracted our attention, but we decided to focus on those aspects that allowed us to link our previous knowledge with the current situation. Therefore, we decided then to focus on the BC; we were curious about its transformations over time, and what the consequences for its participants might be in the framework of its coexistence with a more prestigious language programme. We wanted to look at the ways teachers and students in the BC dealt with such a situation and if, contrary to previous research carried out ten years previously when this programme was first implemented (Perez-Milans 2006a), there were

now links with the rest of the school. We also wanted to understand the here and now of the observed daily practices as indexes of wider socioeconomic processes of change.

These are the issues addressed and analysed in this article. We shall begin by providing the socio-institutional context of the two above-mentioned language education programmes, BSP and BC, by reference to the specific conditions under which they emerged in the Madrid region (section 2). After that, we briefly present the theoretical-methodological stance that underpinned data collection, with special attention to the analytical perspectives driving our descriptions here (section 3). Later, we concentrate on two focal students in the BC at *Villababel*, Omar and Meiyi, by exploring a) the social categorisations assigned to them, and acted on by their teachers, b) their own forms of local positioning in the classroom interaction, and c) their resulting academic trajectories (section 4). Finally, we reflect on the implications of the analysis for our understanding of the links between institutions, language education and contemporary conditions of socio-economic change (section 5).

## **2. Bilingual education in contemporary Madrid: from national emancipation to participation in the new globalised economy**

The study of the implementation of new education policies in Madrid, which is the result of a ten-year multi-sited/collective/extensive research carried out by a single research team (see results in Martín-Rojo et al. 2003; Martín-Rojo & Mijares 2007, 2007b; Patiño 2011; Relaño-Pastor 2009; Alcalá 2010; Martín-Rojo 2010, 2013; Mijares & Relaño-Pastor 2011; Pérez-Milans 2006a, 2007, 2011), has shed light on some of the main institutional tensions and dilemmas being currently faced. Indeed, these tensions seem to point to a very particular genealogy of ideological shifts in the provision of second language education which are connected with larger processes of socio-economic change resulting from the political and economic reforms implemented in Spain from the late 1970s on (i.e. democratisation and increasing openness to the international economic market).

For the purpose of this article we will schematically articulate this genealogy of change around two main ideological shifts, language education for national emancipation and language education for participation in the new globalised economy, each of these being linked to the emergence of the two programmes coexisting at *Villababel* secondary school - the BC and BSP. With regard to the provision of second language education for national emancipation, the opening up and economic reforms mentioned above gave rise to a huge transformation in migration patterns within the country, moving away from large-scale

emigration by (southern) Spanish workers and towards increasing numbers of international migrants coming to Spain from a large variety of countries worldwide.

This new situation has resulted in the same consequences as are described elsewhere in other countries, for example in relation to the contradictions between the democratic commitment of modern states to citizens' rights and the restrictive views still in place regarding linguistic/cultural homogeneity and standardisation. Therefore, and even though recent EU regulations recognise the languages of migrant minorities within Member States, access to public spaces in Spain (i.e. participation in economic and political life) remains restricted to people fitting a linguistically and culturally homogeneous definition of the citizen that is based on an imagined Spanish heritage (see Moyer & Martín-Rojo 2007).

Language is crucial in all these tensions, as “[it] (together with religion, race and class) plays a key role in the processes whereby social actors are granted legitimate membership as nationals, i.e., are treated socially as ‘truly’ French, Spaniards, Catalans or Danes. Linguistic competence and performance is thus increasingly activated to construct or reinforce differences underpinned by other forms of social categorization” (Pujolar 2007: 79). This is particularly important for a region such as Madrid, where the traditional official language of the state is still the only official language of the region. Thus, linguistic ideologies contributing to the devaluation of all speech forms different from standard Spanish are much more explicit in such a context, where other speech forms associated with immigrants – accents, speech styles, varieties, code-switching and code-mixing – are particularly undervalued.

In the educational arena, this socio-economic transformation has led to an on-going process of reforms intended to help the institutional space of the school adapt to the new conditions. Among the different education programmes which have been implemented over the last decade in Madrid, the BC brought with it ideas and practices for managing bilingualism, which caused an important re-organisation of the material/symbolic space of the schools involved. This programme, which was initially implemented as an experimental programme in 2003 as a response to the increasing numbers of students of migrant background who did not speak Spanish, brought with it the re-allocation of material and human resources to allow the grouping of such students into one classroom, with a maximum of 12 students per class, under the guidance of two teachers in charge of teaching them Spanish for about one academic year.

In this regard, Pérez-Milans' study of the BC at *Violetas* secondary school, between 2004-2007 (Pérez-Milans 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2011), showed how a programme that started

life amid high expectations, little by little started to suffer a deteriorating reputation as a result of a variety of tensions and dilemmas. Thus, what initially seemed to be a golden opportunity for trained teachers to enrol in an unprecedented programme, boasting exciting communicative methodologies for teaching Spanish as a second language, turned into a stressful situation, due to the fact that the organisation of the BC became linked to a certain degree of improvisation and precariousness. In the end, these factors brought about, in the case of *Violetas*, the isolation of the BC from the rest of the school, leading to a failure to integrate newcomers into the mainstream classes.

The second ideological shift highlighted above, the provision of second language education for participation in the new globalised economy, needs to be framed within the context of the impact that contemporary changes in economic organisation, at both national and transnational levels, is having on labour migration and communication (Castells 2000). In particular, this new economy is inducing labour migration to adopt new, shifting, transnational patterns, with a more marked emphasis on communicative skills in general, and on multilingualism in particular. As a consequence of this new context, language evaluation dynamics seem to be moving away from former ideologies, in which languages were considered fundamental in defining membership of ethnic national communities, towards a new framework in which languages have come to be conceptualised as commodities or capital required for successful participation in the new transnational and post-industrial/services-based market (Blommaert 2010, Heller 2011).

Under these new conditions, the language policies implemented in the field of education by the European Union, and the European Economic Community before it, which has traditionally focused on the promotion of teaching/learning of the European languages within and across its member states, have shifted slightly in recent years (Fenoulhet & Ros i Solé 2011). Thus, the widespread disregard for languages from the wider world, which had resulted from the traditional Eurocentric/Western-based international order and was characterised by the promotion of monolingualism and by its insensitivity to any connection between language learning, mobility and global communication, is now evolving via a new policy framework that places more emphasis on the dissemination of languages with a global profile within Europe, even when such languages are non-European (Álvarez 2011: 151-153)<sup>2</sup>. Under this policy framework, the promotion of language learning and use is being

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, *Learning through languages. Promoting inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education*, as part of the European Centre for Modern Languages 2012-2015 programme (Council of Europe): [www.ecml.at/RESOURCES](http://www.ecml.at/RESOURCES)

undertaken by highlighting primarily their potential for strengthening *intercultural dialogue*, *social cohesion* and *democratic citizenship*, as well as their value as an important *economic asset* in a modern knowledge-based society<sup>3</sup> (see Pérez-Milans & Soto 2013, Pérez-Milans in press, for a detailed analysis of this shift in the London and Hong contexts, where Mandarin and English are now being provided to working-class students, in connection to discourses of social cohesion under institutional conditions of increasing neoliberalisation).

In the case of Spain, language education has traditionally been oriented towards a “foreign language teaching” approach, focused either on English, French or German, although recent decades have seen a strong trend away from French and German towards teaching English as the almost exclusive foreign language in the curriculum. In fact, official statistics show that, out of the total population of students studying a second language in compulsory education in 2008, those learning English accounted for 97.7% (Ministerio de Educación de España 2009)<sup>4</sup>. Apart from this “foreign language teaching” approach, in recent years co-official State languages (such as Spanish, Catalan or Basque, among others) have been taught as a second language to newly arrived students of migrant background, in the context of policies implemented by the corresponding Regional Governments, to ensure newcomers’ success in mainstream education (see, for example, Nussbaum & Unamuno 2006; Trenchs-Parera & Patiño-Santos 2013). In consequence, languages other than English, to a lesser degree French, or the official languages of the Spanish state, now have little or no room in Spanish mainstream education, with the exception of some interpreters hired by non-governmental institutions to enable schools to communicate with the families of students with a migrant background who do not speak the languages of the educational institution.

In particular, the new European policy impetus to promote language learning and multilingualism in European mainstream education has led to Spain producing a new language education plan in which a budget of €120 million has been allocated to “improving foreign language learning” in Spanish mainstream schools (Ministerio de Educación de España 2010)<sup>5</sup>. This national plan seeks to promote the teaching/learning of a second foreign language in compulsory education, and has resulted in the strengthening of English and

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<sup>3</sup> See particularly: *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe* (Council of Europe/Language Policy Division 2007); *Recommendation on the use of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and on the promotion of plurilingualism* (Council of Europe 2008); *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment* (Policy document COM(2008)566).

<sup>4</sup> See the official statistics in the Spanish Ministry of Education’s Webpage: [http://www.educacion.es/mecd/estadisticas/educativas/dcce/Datos\\_Cifras\\_web.pdf](http://www.educacion.es/mecd/estadisticas/educativas/dcce/Datos_Cifras_web.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Programa Integral de Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras [*Comprehensive Plan for Foreign Language Learning*], Ministerio de Educación de España, 1 de Octubre de 2010.



French in mainstream schools. In fact, some Regional Governments, such as that of Madrid, through the implementation of the BSP, have been particularly diligent in the institutionalisation of Spanish-English bilingual schools, with an eye to internationalisation, academic excellence and the labour market.

In this regard, the BSP is officially intended firstly to “provide young people in the Madrid region with the means to benefit from their opportunities and to compete in the best conditions possible in a world that is increasingly globalized” and secondly, to increase “high quality education [in order to] enable them to obtain a better future, in both the personal and the professional spheres” (Orden 3245/2). Thus, this programme requires schools to implement a Spanish-English bilingual curriculum for those students proving to have a good command of the English language (English Language, Geography and History, Science, Arts and Crafts and Technology are taught in English within this curriculum), while keeping the traditional Spanish monolingual curriculum for those students without the necessary speaking and writing skills in English.

In the case of *IES Villababel*, for example, where the BSP had 18% of the students enrolled in years 1 to 4 of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO), the implementation of the BP, under these local conditions, was traversed by some difficulties and challenges (see Martín-Rojo & Alcalá 2010; Mijares & Relaño-Pastor 2011). In particular, the fieldwork carried out in this context showed the extent to which the social prestige of English as a dominant, global European language, on the one hand, and the traditional association between the Spanish-English language education programmes and elite schools, on the other hand, opened the space for the (re)production of a set of values, beliefs and expectations about the students and teachers involved in the BSP, which resulted in their discursive representation as ‘the good/best ones’ in *IES Villababel*. In other words, the BSP “allowed for a diversification of funds and resources at school for ‘good’ students, counteracting the dynamics of aiding and benefiting ‘disruptive’ and ‘bad’ students” (Mijares & Relaño-Pastor 2011: 433).

### **3. Site, data and approaches**

The study of the language programmes in the *IES Villababel* followed a critical sociolinguistic ethnographic approach, as understood by Martín-Rojo (2010, 2013). Educational practices, involving representations of actors in discourses as well as classroom interaction, are linked with the wider social transformation of the Madrid area, as mentioned in the previous section. Martín-Rojo’s concern has focussed on “the social distribution of

capital in the class”, which she describes as “decapitalisation” processes, with their consequences being materialised in school failure or lack of social access: “speakers try to gain capital, to position themselves, to improve their situation and to learn. However, these capitalisation moves may be constrained or even impeded by other participants. In fact, in social selection processes, the impact appears to be particularly strong when the capital required in an educational programme (for example, the academic variety of the language of instruction) is not presented, or when social agents are prevented from gaining capital (..). It is precisely this phenomenon, that of not providing and of preventing the capitalisation of social agents, which I term ‘decapitalisation’. (127-128). Her work has documented extensively, amongst other aspects, how students’ linguistic uses, as well as previous knowledge in certain subject matters, are not taken into account (Martín-Rojo 2010, 2013).

In this paper we wish to address how the ideological shifts, described in section 2. shape, and are challenged by, the institutional and daily practices of the BC, by following a slightly different stance. In particular, our analysis in this article follows the sociolinguistic work done by those who have paid greater attention to the complex, non-unified local practices by which youngsters in school settings build up cultural meanings and social relationships in interaction (Rampton 2006; Harris & Rampton 2009; Chun 2009; Jaspers 2005). That is, we want to focus on how youngsters navigate the social space of a BC in Madrid, in an institutional context traversed by ideologies and processes of both internationalisation and mobility.

By doing so, we want however to avoid the so often taken-for-granted dichotomy between supposedly micro- and macro-societal processes. We do not think of social structure and local agency as separate/different entities or layers, as this would imply that different methodologies and analytical tools need to be used for approaching micro- or macro-processes (Giddens 1984). Rather, as sociolinguists we believe that we can only study local practices, which can be traced through space / time in order to identify their consequences for participants’ access to material / symbolic resources (Heller 2001): “if we want to understand how social processes work, or how social reality is constructed, we have to work with what is observable in the here and now (that is, social interaction), and with the traces laid down in time and space by those interaction. The problem of linkage between macro- and micro-levels becomes a problem of linkage among social interactions over time and (social) space” (p. 212).

In the case of *IES Villababel*, this view implies an ethnographic account of the everyday situated practices through the lens of interactional and sociolinguistic analysis, with

the aim of shedding light on: a) how teachers and students in the BC mutually assign and negotiate identities/social categories (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004) by positioning themselves and others in the course of their daily actions, b) how newcomers navigate the socio-institutional constraints they face in the school and c) what the resulting academic trajectories of these students are and what they tell us about the transformations of the BC. We will address these issues by portraying the cases of Omar and Meiyi, students attending the BC programme, who illustrate recurring variant categories about who is a *bad* or a *good* student according to teachers' discourses in this particular context.

Specifically, we will connect these two students' forms of social positioning in classroom interaction, the teachers' categorisations of them, and the ethnographic data provided by the ethnographers who participated in the field work, including one of the authors of this paper who supported certain activities in the classroom. Such information, complemented with Omar and Meiyi's specific trajectories throughout the academic year, will allow us to give account of their identificational trajectories (Wortham 2006), which in turn will provide a complete picture of how these students made use of the available resources in the course of their everyday lives at the BC in *IES Villababel* when navigating their new school networks. These identificational trajectories also offer an insight into the longer term institutional consequences that resulted from the local/individual choices of these two students. In sum, the stories of these two focal students will enlighten us about the transformations apparent in the BC programme ten years after being implemented.

#### *Data*

For the purposes of this paper, we will draw on one classroom interaction in triangulation with interviews with the two teachers of the BC and field-notes taken by the research team, all of it analysed through continual exchanges with Luisa (for more details on fieldwork in the *IES Villabel*, see Mijares & Relaño-Pastor 2011, and Martín-Rojo 2013). The focal classroom interaction was taken from an activity co-designed by one of the researchers (Luisa) and the teacher. Students of the two Bridging Classes in the school were brought together to talk about themselves, to compare their experiences in the education systems of their countries of origin with those under the Spanish one, as well as their expectations. The main aims were to encourage students to work co-operatively and using a task-based approach, as well as to practise their oral skills, since classes normally focused on reading, writing and grammar. They had the support of an invited researcher who was supposed to enhance the participation of the students with Chinese background (Miguel).

The activity was based on a non-curricular topic, namely the students' previous experiences in the schools in which they studied before coming to Madrid, and was carried out on the basis of a non-traditional physical arrangement of the class setting, in which the participants were seated in a circle. Students participating in the activity were 13 newcomers: from China (3), Morocco (8), Brazil (1), and Cape Verde (1), aged between 14 and 16 years. Although the proposed activity was conceived to encourage oral participation based on a cooperative learning methodology, the interaction carried out in the BC of *IES Villababel* turned out to be institutionally constrained by the same legitimated conventions and interactional rules described when analysing everyday life in the Bridging Classroom at other schools in Madrid, such as the above-mentioned *IES Violetas* (see Pérez-Milans 2011, for an overview of the organisation of classroom activities in this school).

The activity ended up being constructed upon a participation framework very much controlled by the teacher, in which participants' social actions had to adhere to a particular management of turn taking by following the pattern "one participant at a time" and emerging contents were initiated by the teacher and the researchers involved in the activity. It is also noticeable that the presence of the researcher invited to the activity, in order to enhance the Chinese students' participation by engaging with them in Mandarin Chinese, introduced a change in the usual linguistic order characterised by the prohibition of languages other than Spanish. The use of other languages was usually categorised as a lack of respect for the rest of the participants as well as an obstacle to language learning in everyday activities, and this was clearly expressed in different signs and posters hanging in the BC, which asked students to speak only in Spanish. However, code-switching came to be permitted by the teacher during the suggested activity as long as languages other than Spanish were kept in the back-stage of the activity.

The following section presents Omar and Meiyi's identificational trajectories based on an in-depth account of their social positioning in the classroom activity, in connection with teachers' discourses about them and their academic achievements in the course of the year.

#### **4. Omar and Meiyi: different forms of positioning, similar results.**

Our portraits of Omar and Meiyi start in the classroom interaction and move on to interview situations and fieldwork notes about them. We shall begin with Omar and his positioning as "chulo" in the discursive space of the BC (section 4.1). Later, attention will be paid to Meiyi and her performance of silence (section 4.2).

#### 4.1. Being a “chulo”, acting out “the troublemaker”

Omar told the team he was 14, was born in Morocco and came to Spain on his own, leaving his family in Tangier, Morocco. According to his narration, he took the decision to migrate to Spain even though he was “better there / with my parents and everything.” He hid himself under a large truck to cross the Straits of Gibraltar. Given the fact that he was a minor, the Madrid local government accommodated him in a state youth residence. He was later sent to *Villababel* secondary school in order to complete his compulsory education or, at least, to stay at school until the age of 16 - the age limit below which basic education in Spain is compulsory. At the point of carrying out the research, he had come to the school a few months previously. Once at this school, he was placed in the BC, despite speaking the language of instruction, Spanish, a language he claims he learned “here” with his mates at the residence (“I hang out with Spanish people to learn faster”).

One of the explanations given by the teachers for enrolling Omar in the BC was that he did not know the suitable curricular content to be in the mainstream, or even in Compensatory education. However, such an allocation had consequences for the ways Omar participated in all school activities and his positioning in school life, as noted by one of his teachers in Extract 2.

Extract 2. The teacher talking about Omar.

<b>Juan:</b> Omar ha vuelto / y parece que más calmado / se estaba comportando muy mal / [...] la percepción que tengo es que no era un chico de aula de enlace / era un chico de compensatoria / [...] solo viene al aula de enlace siete horas ahora mismo / [...] está incorporado a todas excepto a lengua / estudio / [...] y religión	<b>Juan:</b> Omar has come back / and he seems calmer / he was behaving really badly / [...] from my point of view he wasn't a Bridging class boy / he was a Compensatory boy / [...] right now he only comes to the Bridging class for seven hours / [...] he's integrated into everything except Language / Studies / [...] and Religion
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(Interview with Juan, a Bridging Class teacher)

After being excluded from the school for various reasons involving his behaviour towards teachers and classmates, his teachers decided to relocate Omar to spend 7 hours in the BC and the rest of his time in the mainstream classes where this student affirmed that he was more comfortable. According to field notes, all the complaints from the school had serious repercussions in the residence where he lived, causing him to be punished for months on end.

Ethnographic data, triangulated, allow us to observe that Omar's bad behaviour at school related to a displayed identity of being “chulo” (“cocky”), that is to say, somebody who presents as excessively proud of himself and self-confident in everyday life, and who

denigrates school life. This form of positioning was indeed linked to a pattern of confrontational participation in the classroom, and being in trouble most of the time with both teachers and peers: on the one hand, Omar adopted a tough guy identity (“un chico de cuidado”) with his teachers; on the other, he acted as an arrogant expert in front of his peers, mainly female Moroccans.

### *Showing off*

Omar participated in class in a confrontational way which caused him be interactionally sanctioned, interrupting the ongoing activity continually. Acting was performed through a series of resources such as playful games where Omar simulated collaborating with the questions asked by the moderator and ratified by the teacher, in the case of the observed activity. Interaction with his peers was carried out along the same lines; indeed, in the research interviews he acknowledged having the support of only two other classmates who were from Morocco and had also been excluded from the school like himself, apart from two other “Spanish friends from the residence”. With the rest of his peers, mainly three Moroccan girls in the classroom (Nadia, Suad and Fátima), he deployed direct confrontation. These interactional patterns are enacted in Extract 3.

### Extract 3. Confrontation with teacher and peers.

<p><b>1. Profesora:</b> aquí en España / o / en Marruecos / y dónde sería más fácil / en España o en Marruecos / y por qué (...)</p> <p><b>2. Omar:</b> en Marruecos</p> <p><b>3. Suad:</b> creo que en España más fácil</p> <p><b>4. Profesora:</b> en España más fácil por qué?</p> <p><b>5. Omar:</b> en Marruecos [eres]</p> <p><b>6. Suad:</b> [porque] / en Marruecos no hay mucho trabajo</p> <p><b>7. Profesora:</b> ¿en Marruecos hay poco trabajo?</p> <p><b>8. Omar:</b> hay mucho trabajo</p> <p><b>9. Profesora:</b> a lo mejo- pero a lo mejor no de profesora (...)</p> <p><b>12. Omar:</b> العايدة (eh niña) hay mucho trabajo</p> <p><b>13. Alumna:</b> NO / no ha- no hay dónde trabajas</p> <p><b>14. Profesora:</b> ¿no hay dónde trabajar?</p> <p><b>15. Omar:</b> ¿cómo que no?</p> <p><b>16. Alumna:</b> no hay dónde trabajas</p> <p><b>17. Alumna:</b> المغرب ال خدم ماك ينانش سي، {Traducción: si, en Marruecos no hay trabajo}</p> <p><b>18. Alumna:</b> أوي لي أوي لي {Traducción: por Dios ¡qué dices!}</p> <p><b>19. Omar:</b> العايدة المغرب في الخدمة أكاي نة {Traducción: eh niña, en Marruecos sí que hay trabajo}</p>	<p><b>1. Teacher:</b> here in Spain / or / in Morocco / and where would it be easier? / in Spain or in Morocco / and why? (...)</p> <p><b>2. Omar:</b> in Morocco</p> <p><b>3. Suad:</b> I think that it is easier in Spain</p> <p><b>4. Teacher:</b> why is it easier in Spain?</p> <p><b>5. Omar:</b> in Morocco [you are]</p> <p><b>6. Suad:</b> [because] / in Morocco there is not much work</p> <p><b>7. Teacher:</b> is there not much work in Morocco?</p> <p><b>8. Omar:</b> there's a lot of work</p> <p><b>9. Teacher:</b> may- but maybe not as a teacher (...)</p> <p><b>12. Omar:</b> العايدة (hey girlie) there's a lot of work</p> <p><b>13. Girl:</b> NO / there is no- there is none where you work</p> <p><b>14. Teacher:</b> is there nowhere to work?</p> <p><b>15. Omar:</b> what d'you mean none?</p> <p><b>16. Girl:</b> there is none where you work</p> <p><b>17. Girl:</b> المغرب في الخدمة ماك ينانش سي، {Translation: right, in Morocco there's no work}</p> <p><b>18. Girl:</b> أوي لي أوي لي {Translation: God, what are you saying?}</p> <p><b>19. Omar:</b> العايدة المغرب في الخدمة أكاي نة {Translation: hey girlie, in Morocco there is work}</p>
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<p><b>20. Suad:</b> ال سد باط ن ج بد و إلى ف مك جمع ع ل يك و ن ش دير {Traducción: cierra la boca, sino quito mis zapatos y te las tiro encima}</p> <p><b>21. Omar:</b> ك ل شي كاي ن راه {Traducción: hay de todo (se refiere a Marruecos)}</p> <p><b>22. Nadia:</b> en Marruecos es muy fácil / el idioma árabe / pero estudiamos muuchísima para ser un abogada / médico / así // pero aquí [no se-/ mm] (..)</p> <p><b>23. Profesora:</b> o sea / crees que es el- / es por el idioma / ¿no?</p> <p><b>24. Nadia:</b> eso / es- / mi idioma es mm fácil / pero idioma otra (creo que es muy difícil)<sup>o</sup></p>	<p><b>20. Suad:</b> ال سد باط ن ج بد و إلى ف مك جمع ع ل يك و ن ش دير {Translation: shut your mouth, or I'll take my shoes off and chuck them at you}</p> <p><b>21. Omar:</b> ك ل شي كاي ن راه {Translation: there are all kinds of jobs (he is talking about Morocco)}</p> <p><b>22. Nadia:</b> in Morocco it is very easy / the Arab language / but we study really hard to be a lawyer / doctor / whatever // but here [I don't know- mm] (...)</p> <p><b>23. Teacher:</b> in other words / you think that it is the- / it's because of the language / right?</p> <p><b>24. Nadia:</b> right / it is- / my language is mm easy / but language other (I think it is very difficult)<sup>o</sup></p>
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(Interaction, extra-curricular activity, Bridging Class)

Extract 3 shows an instance of how Omar positions himself as an opponent of Suad and of the other Moroccan girl, by using a set of different strategies. On the one hand, he self-selects in an attempt to take the front stage by taking his colleagues' turns when replying to the teacher's questions. In turns 3 and 6, Suad is heteroselected by the teacher, becoming the ratified participant, but Omar takes the floor to contradict the information she has given in turn 6. In some cases, such a reply is interpreted by the teacher as *acting* in the form of a false collaboration, as in turn 8 where Omar states that "there's a lot of work [in Morocco]". The teacher takes the floor, then, to question Omar's statement while aligning with Suad's previous answer "in Morocco there's not much work". In general, during the classroom interaction, turn taking management shows how Omar struggles constantly to take the floor, overlapping or taking other people's turns.

On the other hand, Omar carries out various actions that might be expected to be done by the teacher rather than by a student, according to studies on classroom interaction (e.g. Cazden 1988, Mehan 1979, Tsui 1995). In this sense, he requests clarifications, as in turn 15 where he addresses one of his peers in order to demand clarification from her, regarding what she has stated in turn 13. He also corrects information given by his classmates, as in turn 8 where he contradicts Suad's answer of turn 6. By so doing, he seems to ratify himself as the person "who knows" in the interaction.

Finally, we might note how he addresses his female Moroccan classmates by the appellative "hey girlie!", which may contribute to infantilise them within the frame of on-going confrontations as in turns 12 and 19 ("eh niña, en Marruecos sí que hay trabajo"). In other words, such a strategy can be seen as a way of undermining the girls' credibility where he tries to position himself as an adult who knows the right answers. Contrary to what is

reported (by Dietrich 1998) regarding certain “Mexican girls” who stay silent while their male “latino” peers provoke them, the three Moroccan girls in this interaction align themselves together to respond to Omar. The use of Moroccan Arabic by the peer group during the confrontation scene (turns 17 to 20) allows, on the one hand, the creation of a back stage that excludes the rest of the participants of the confrontational scene, including the teacher, as seen above; it also indexes Omar’s relationship with the girls outside the class. In fact, Suad’s warning in turn 20 (“shut up, or I’ll take my shoes off and chuck them at you”) foreshadowed a physical confrontation with Omar that took place in the playground a few days after the activity.

Omar showed himself to be conscious of his confrontational behaviour in the classroom, acknowledging this in some of the research interviews. Extract 4 is taken from one of these interviews in which he and the researcher had been talking about these conflicts, after which he introduced the topic of boredom as a frame for understanding his preference for the mainstream classes.

Extract 4. Boredom.

<p><b>Luisa:</b> ¿estás en primero? / sí / ¿y qué tal? / bien / ¿prefieres estar en tu clase normal o en el aula de enlace? /</p>	<p><b>Luisa:</b> ¿are you in the first year? / yes / ¿so / how is it? / fine / ¿do you prefer to be in your normal class or in the Bridging Class? /</p>
<p><b>Omar:</b> en mi clase normal / aprendo más / pero también ahí estoy más mejor / no me aburro / me aburro en esta clase [en el aula de enlace] / no sé por qué / me quedo ahí dos horas / con los mismos profesores /</p>	<p><b>Omar:</b> in my normal class / I learn more / but also there I’m more better / I don’t get bored / I get bored in this class [<i>in the Bridging class</i>] / I don’t know why / I’m stuck there two hours / with the same old teachers</p>

(In-depth interview with Omar)

Numerous studies on school counter culture across different contexts have reported boredom as a key factor (e.g. Willis 1977, D’Amato 1993, Hurd 2004, Jaspers 2005, Patino-Santos 2009, Martín Rojo 2010). Such studies show that boredom has various causes and provides an apparent reason for “larking about”, but that it might be a response to students’ expectations of, or beliefs about school life. Expectations might cause them to invest in school studies or to prioritise friendships and reinforcing social relations. Thus for example, Willis shows how curricular contents were meaningless for a group of British working class students who were conscious of wanting to enter the labour market as soon as they could. In these cases, students invested in strengthening social links.

D’Amato, on the other hand, shows how Hawaiian students test their teachers’ skills, including that of controlling discipline at the beginning of the school year, through a set of



interactional playful games. In the case of Extract 4, Omar positions himself as someone who is not a BC student. In comparing the activities of the BC with those of the mainstream class he sheds important on perceptions of the BC offered by a number of students.

Unfortunately for him, and despite the efforts of the BC teachers to help him join the mainstream classes, Omar failed to maintain the standards of behaviour required by his teachers on entering the mainstream classes, which caused him to be returned to the BC until the end of that school year. Omar’s case shows how the BC was used as a holding place, not just for those learning the language of instruction and basic curricular content of the school, but also for those whose behaviour was not considered appropriate.

Let us now turn to the case of Meiyi, who offers a rather different story from that of Omar.

#### 4.2. Meiyi, “a good student who dropped out”

Meiyi, a 15 year old student, had arrived directly from China together with her father and her brother, in order to join her mother who had settled in Madrid two years previously. During the period of data collection, Meiyi was socially categorised by her teachers as a very bright and self-demanding student, with a great future ahead of her, who did not participate much in class because of the frustration of not yet having a good command of Spanish. Extract 5 is from an interview conducted with one of the two teachers in the BC who talks about Meiyi.

#### Extract 5. Silence, excellence and frustration

<p><b>JUA:</b> yo creo que esta chica va a funcionar muy bien / es una alumna muy trabajadora / es una alumna muy perfeccionista / tendría opciones entre ahora y el verano / no sé si es mejor que repita cuarto / o si dejarla ya libre y decirle / incorpórate a cuarto normal;</p> <p>.....</p>	<p><b>JUA:</b> I think this girl is going to work out very well / she’s a very hard working pupil / she’s a highly perfectionistic student / she could have choices between now and the summer / I don’t know whether it’s better that she repeats the fourth year / or if it’s better just to let her go and tell her / put yourself in the normal fourth form</p> <p>.....</p>
<p><b>ALI:</b> Meiyi está escolarizada en cuarto / Meiyi quiere / aprender español aquí / y luego ir a clase / porque es como muy exigente consigo misma / a ella esas dificultades que tiene de no hablar el idioma / pues le cuesta mucho / hay que estar empujándola / yo hablé para que hubiera ido a informática / y no ha querido ir / incluso es que se nos ha puesto a llorar un par de veces / como muy agobiada // y ahora estamos pensando que en matemáticas / como se le da tan bien / pues que empiece a ir / pero eso / que a ella no le apetece / Meiyi como ha venido ahora en septiembre / tiene todo el curso fijo [<i>en el aula de enlace</i>]</p>	<p><b>ALI:</b> Meiyi is taught in the fourth year / Meiyi wants to / learn Spanish here / and then go to class / because she’s very demanding of herself / for her these difficulties she suffers for not speaking the language / well she really struggles / you have to keep pushing her / I tried to persuade her to go to IT / and she didn’t want to go / she even started crying a couple of times / like really at the end of her tether // and now we’re thinking that in Maths / since she does so well / well that she starts to go / but that’s the thing / she herself doesn’t fancy it / Meiyi since she has just arrived this September / has the whole course fixed [<i>in the Bridging class</i>]</p>

(Interview with Bridging Class teachers)

However, despite being assigned the identity of a successful student by her teachers, Meiyi dropped out without having finished the Spanish compulsory education. Several questions arise at this point: what happened to her? Could part of the answer lie in a misunderstanding over the cultural meaning of silence in everyday classroom activities? Did Meiyi's silence really index a lack of understanding or frustration? Previous work has been done on the emergence of intercultural misunderstandings in the course of interactions that involve Chinese speakers and other participants from so-called "western" cultural background (see, for instance, Wierzbicka 1991, Günthner 1993, Young 1994, Jia 2003, Love & Arkoudis 2006). These previous studies have pointed to existing communicative differences regarding the management of politeness, between speakers of Asian and European cultural backgrounds, which often result in different ways of managing verbal and non-verbal communication and, therefore, in misleading interpretations in the course of cross-cultural encounters.

In fact, comparative work on socialisation practices in educational institutions in Europe and China shows the extent to which these differences are institutionally (re)produced and legitimated according to different understandings of what is considered to be a "good student" and appropriate learning (Su & Su 1994; Jin & Cortazzi 1998, 2006; Goldstein 2003; Leng 2005). However, we believe that cultural differences do not only arise autonomously, they are also socially constructed in the course of situated interactions under specific local conditions. In this regard, the lack of verbal participation during classroom activities on the part of students of Chinese background needs to be ethnographically and situationally explored for its indexical meanings to be properly grasped within the framework of the specific relationships locally constructed by the participants involved (see Pérez-Milans 2013: 158-169, for a critique of these cultural explanations).

### *Understanding silence*

After she dropped out, Meiyi's teachers in the BC became curious about her emotions and reasons for doing so, and so they asked Miguel to translate a blog that the student had posted on the internet shortly after quitting the school. We have not been able to show an excerpt of such a blog here as the student removed it when this manuscript was in preparation, but some of Miguel's notes sent to Meiyi's teachers reveal that the student missed her friends in China and felt alone at *IES Villababel*: "she says next term she will be moving to another school and she wonders if her new classmates will be as nice as the ones in her current school (I get the impression that there is a hint of irony here). In fact, she goes on to reflect on how she misses

her classmates in China (Qingtian) and about all her learning experiences and good fun she used to have there. The text ends up emphasising this feeling of nostalgia and a certain feeling of personal isolation” [Miguel’s notes, 2011].

A close look at the interaction during the course of the extra-curricular activity carried out in the BC, which took place before Meiyi left the school, helps shed a little light on some of the social and inter-personal processes that Meiyi refers to. Indeed, the social positioning of this student in the course of the interaction indexes meanings in which ambivalent participation and educational disappointment seem to have greater salience than lack of command of the language. Regarding ambivalent participation, two aspects seem relevant: reluctance on the part of Meiyi to get involved in the front stage of the interaction, which was notably throughout the entire activity, and her active participation in the back-stage of the class, by speaking in Mandarin with her peers of Chinese origin.

In contrast to other peers in the classroom, she did not participate as much as expected by the teacher and the researchers, taking into account that, on the one hand, such an activity was intended to provide the students with an opportunity to talk more freely in an informal setting where everyday rules were not supposed to apply so strictly, and, on the other hand, that one of the researchers who speaks Mandarin was invited to enhance the Chinese students’ participation as illustrated in extract 6:

Extract 6. When Chinese does not help

<p>1. <b>Miguel:</b> = ¿cuántos más o menos? / para que se hagan una- ¿cuántos estudiantes hay en &amp;</p> <p>2. <b>Caicai:</b> eeh / (差不多)° {Traducción: ¿más o menos?}</p> <p>3. <b>Miguel:</b> 差不多 {Traducción: más o menos}</p> <p>4. <b>Caicai:</b> 多少 (())? {Traducción: ¿cuántos (())?}</p> <p>5. <b>Profesora:</b> {a Meiyi} ayúdales tú / a ver si así (...)</p> <p>6. <b>Caicai:</b> 她的有四千多的 {Traducción: el suyo tiene más de cuatro mil}</p> <p>7. <b>Meiyi:</b> (())°</p> <p>8. <b>Profesora:</b> {a Meiyi} en una cla- en una clase ¿cuántos? (2”)</p> <p>9. <b>Caicai:</b> {a Miguel} 一个 / 差不多 (())? {Traducción: ¿cuántos (()) en una?}</p>	<p>1. <b>Miguel:</b> =how many more or less? / just so they get an- how many students are there in &amp;</p> <p>2. <b>Caicai:</b> &amp; uuh / (差不多)° {Translation: more or less?}</p> <p>3. <b>Miguel:</b> 差不多 {Translation: more or less}</p> <p>4. <b>Caicai:</b> 多少 (())? {Translation: how many (())?}</p> <p>5. <b>Teacher:</b> {to Meiyi} you help them / let’s see if that way ↑ (3”)</p> <p>6. <b>Caicai:</b> 她的有四千多的 {Translation: hers has more than 4,000}</p> <p>7. <b>Meiyi:</b> (())°</p> <p>8. <b>Teacher:</b> {to Meiyi} in a cla- in a class how many are there? (2”)</p> <p>9. <b>Caicai:</b> {to Miguel} 一个 / 差不多 (())? {Translation: in one / how many (())?}</p>
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(Interaction extra-curricular activity, Bridging Class)

After more than 30 minutes of conversation focused on the students from Morocco, the teacher and Miguel try to invite Meiyi and Caicai to participate in the ongoing activity. In this example, Miguel takes the floor in order to question Meiyi and Caicai. He initiates a sequence by asking them about the number of students in their previous schools (turn 1), which is followed by a doubtful answer from Caicai who mutters to herself in Chinese while thinking about the number (turn 2). Miguel then repeats in Chinese what Caicai has just said (turn 3), which in turn is repeated again by Caicai before providing an inaudible answer (turn 4). At this moment, the teacher re-orientes the turn-taking so as to involve Meiyi, which is done by asking her to help Caicai by providing an answer herself (turn 6). This is nonetheless again followed by a reply from Caicai, who auto-selects herself and provides the answer to the question posed to Meiyi (turn 6), although Meiyi finally closes the sequence by saying something in a very low voice right after Caicai (turn 7). The teacher then opens a new sequence by asking Meiyi again about the number of students per class (turn 8), which is followed by the Meiyi's silence and then by a Caicai's clarification question addressed to Miguel in Chinese about the teacher's original question (turn 9).

However, in contrast to this reluctance to engage in the public floor of the activity, she managed to participate more actively when talking to some of her peers, particularly to Caicai. That is, far from being a silent student making a great effort to follow and to understand the conversation on the front-stage of the activity, she seemed to be enjoying other parallel peer-related conversations taking place in the back stage of the activity. The extract below corresponds to a particular moment of the interaction in which the teacher makes this explicit:

Extract 7. Selective talk

1. <b>Profesora:</b> ¿tenáis muchas amigas entre las (( ))? {conversación paralela ininteligible entre Caicai y Meiyi}	1. <b>Teacher:</b> did you have many friends among (( ))? {intelligible parallel conversation between Caicai and Meiyi}
2. <b>Alumna:</b> les vecines y las amigas en mi casa de Marruecos {risas}	2. <b>Girl:</b> the neighbours and the friends in my house in Morocco {laughs}
3. <b>Profesora:</b> Caicai yy Meiyi / a ver / sabemos que os encanta estar juntas aquí porque es la- el único rato del día que podéis hablar entre vosotras / pero ahora / ¿eh? / hay que escuchar a las demás / porque cuando habléis vosotros también- vosotras dos también os vamos a estar escuchando / ¿eh? / luego escuchar / (Meiyi / venga) <sup>o</sup>	3. <b>Teacher:</b> Caicai aand Meiyi / I mean / we know that you love to be together here because it's the- the only time you can talk to each other during the day / but now / uh? / you have to listen to the others / because when you come to talk yourselves- you two we'll be listening to you / ok? / so listen / (Meiyi / come on) <sup>o</sup>
4. <b>Alumna:</b> ¿qué?	4. <b>Girl:</b> what?
5. <b>Profesora:</b> que echabais de menos a las amigas / a las compañeras del cole	5. <b>Teacher:</b> so you missed your friends / your classmates in the school

6. <b>Alumna:</b> les vecines	6. <b>Girl:</b> the neighbours
7. <b>Profesora:</b> ¿sí?	7. <b>Teacher:</b> really?
8. <b>Alumna:</b> no tenemos aquí	8. <b>Girl:</b> we don't have any here

(Interaction, extra-curricular activity, Bridging Class)

In this extract, Caicai and Meiyi seem to be having a conversation in the back stage of the activity, in the course of a question-answer sequence taking place between one of the Moroccan students and the teacher (see turns 1-2). Thus, the teacher decides to hold back the students' explanation about friends in Morocco in order to ask Caicai and Meiyi to stop their parallel conversation and to stick to the required framework of participation (turn 3). This causes the two students to keep quiet, which is followed by a re-initiation of the previous sequence between the teacher and the Moroccan student (turns 5-8). Paradoxically, such silence, ordered by the teacher, cannot be interpreted as a lack of desire to interact within the activity.

Regarding educational disappointment, the study of the interaction also shows how Meiyi (and other students) make use of the proposed extra-curricular activity, which involved a main polarization between 'there/before' and 'here/now' where the former refers to their country of origin and the latter to Spain, to position herself as a student who comes from a school system which is more demanding and where students work harder. Extract 8 corresponds to one of these instances where she positions herself in such way.

Extract 8. Spanish education is not serious

<p><b>1. Miguel:</b> ¿oye qué- / qué os gu- / qué- pensáis de la educaci- de aquí del- del colegio este en comparación con el vuestro en China?</p> <p><b>2. Luisa:</b> ¿se trabaja menos?</p> <p><b>3. Miguel:</b> ¿más fácil / más difícil?</p> <p><b>4. Caicai:</b> más difícil</p> <p><b>5. Miguel:</b> más difícil ¿cuál? / ¿éste o- o el vue- o allí?</p> <p><b>6. Caicai:</b> en China</p> <p><b>7. Miguel:</b> ¿más difícil?</p> <p><b>8. Caicai:</b> sí / más</p> <p><b>9. Miguel:</b> ¿por qué?</p> <p><b>10. Meiyi:</b> porque // todos estudiante estudian mucho</p> <p><b>11. Suad:</b> mira / como nosotros</p> <p><b>12. Pau:</b> sí</p> <p><b>13. Meiyi:</b> hacemos muchos deberes</p>	<p><b>1. Miguel:</b> so what- / do you li- / what do you think of the educati- here of the- of this school compared to yours in China?</p> <p><b>2. Luisa:</b> Do you work less?</p> <p><b>3. Miguel:</b> {to Caicai} easier? / harder?</p> <p><b>4. Caicai:</b> harder</p> <p><b>5. Miguel:</b> harder which one? / this one or- or yo- or there?</p> <p><b>6. Caicai:</b> in China</p> <p><b>7. Miguel:</b> harder?</p> <p><b>8. Caicai:</b> yes / harder</p> <p><b>9. Miguel:</b> why?</p> <p><b>10. Meiyi:</b> because // all the students study hard</p> <p><b>11. Suad:</b> look / like us</p> <p><b>12. Pau:</b> yes</p> <p><b>13. Meiyi:</b> we do a lot of homework</p>
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(Interaction extra-curricular activity, Bridging Class)

After Miguel's question on the comparison between the Chinese students' previous school and the one in Madrid (turn 1), which is immediately followed up by a more specific question

co-constructed by Luisa and Miguel on the degree of easiness or difficulty of both educational systems (turn 2), Caicai auto-selects herself and points out the fact that the Chinese education is more difficult. This is stated along a process of negotiation of meaning involving successive turn-takings between Miguel and Caicai (turns 3-8). Once Caicai's statement is clear, Miguel continues by asking the reason why it is so (turn 9), which provokes two unusual interactional movements. Firstly, and as the only occasion in the interaction, Meiyi answers Miguel's open question through auto-selection to explain that all students in China study hard (turn 10). Secondly, and even though they did not tend to engage voluntarily in processes of topic construction when the interaction was focused on the Chinese students, two of the Moroccan students participate to support Meiyi's statement about the lack of a dedicated environment (turns 11-12) – although this instance can be interpreted either as an affirmation that this is the same when comparing Moroccan and Spanish education, or as an instance of irony to emphasize the lack of a dedicated environment (“look how hard we Moroccans study here in Spain”). Finally, the sequence is closed by a new turn of participation on the part of Meiyi who completes her previous statement by including herself in the in-group of Chinese students who do a lot of homework (turn 13).

In short, all these extracts show a form of social positioning that, although not focused on confrontation, as in the case of Omar, also involve a high degree of personal de-alignment with the BC's programme. In fact, Meiyi registered in a private language academy together with a good friend of hers, right after dropping out of *IES Villababel*, as she thought she could learn faster and better Spanish language there. In this sense, her silence and her preference for Mandarin in the back-stage of the class might be better understood as indexes of many complex processes happening at the same time: on the one hand, lack of confidence in using Spanish, as stated by her teachers, but on the other hand, frustration and lack of challenge as reasons that emerge in interaction with the researchers and the teacher, in the course of the extra-curricular activity analysed here.

Field-work notes show, however, that the experience in the BC, though sometimes academically disappointing, might occasion positive emotional relationships of trust and fondness towards the teachers. In Meiyi's case, for example, she asked them for support in searching for a language academy where she could learn Spanish more efficiently in order to fulfil her dreams of learning of languages and travelling the world. These dreams, as she told us one year later, have not yet been fulfilled since she went immediately into the job market and had no time to enrol in an academy. Nevertheless, at the moment of preparing this

manuscript she is still willing to enrol in one since, in her view, it is a better option than the BC.

## 5. Discussion

Data in this paper point to emerging continuities and discontinuities regarding the management of language education policies and social mobility in the Madrid region, if examined against the backdrop of what was previously observed by the researchers ten years ago. In contrast to the early 2000s, and in the context of the gradual adjustment to the wider dynamics of mobility and economic globalization highlighted in section 2 – with the specific guidelines of the EU regarding language education policies, the Madrid regional government is now creating the institutional conditions for the co-existence of language education programmes that target at different groups of students and are underpinned by different goals, under the same roof. This seems to be the case for *IES Villababel*, where data collected in the BC programme make the co-existence of BC and BSP an issue from the perspective of some of the involved participants.

Far from being equalitarian, these participants' discursive practices enact a form of co-existence that has social consequences for the institutionalization of who gets to be considered the legitimate recipient of what language programme. In particular, our data show that the local implementation of the above mentioned programmes result in the hierarchisation of the school's teachers and students, according to the section to which they have been assigned, namely BSP, mainstream classrooms or BC – being this order connected to the hierarchical value attached to such programmes from the view/experiences of the teachers and students in the BC.

Although the EU's new policy guidelines aim to provide European youngsters with global languages, with emphasis on achieving social cohesion in each of the state members through targeting at working-class students, the experience of *IES Villababel* indexes a localisation of a new order among working-class students who are compartmentalized in different educational streams according to their linguistic repertoire. That is to say, the implementation of the BC and BSP in the *IES Villababel* suggests an institutional logic in which the national language (Spanish) is constructed as a first priority for students with economic migrant background, while access to other global languages is first provided to the rest. In consequence, diversity (of all kinds, including nationalities, language repertoires and/or educational backgrounds) is constructed as something which only concerns the BC, in contrast to the supposedly more socio-culturally homogeneous (mainstream) space of the

BSP – although the BSP may also have students with diverse trajectories and linguistic repertoires.

The consequences for the social actors of the BC, the less valued programme, are revealed through their communicative practices. BC teachers' discourses (re)constitute a polarisation between the BC and the BSP in which they are positioned as those with less social prestige, on the basis of the programme's lack of academic orientation, worse salary conditions, and more socio-culturally diversified profile of students. On the other hand, Omar and Meiyi's academic trajectories show an institutional disconnection between the BC, the mainstream classrooms, and the BSP. Regarding the lack of links between BC and the BSP, the students in the former cannot be assigned to the latter officially, since as newcomers they are expected to be focused on the intensive learning of the official language of instruction in Madrid at the expense of other language programmes which might also be beneficial for them.

As for the BC and the mainstream classes, Omar's and Meiyi's stories portray a very similar picture to that which we had previously observed and described in the same region in 2006. As in the case of *IES Violetas*, where the BC students ended up feeling isolated from the rest of the school as a consequence of the lack of institutional bridges with the mainstream classrooms, Omar's and Meiyi's trajectories show a lack of access to the mainstream education. Indeed, their accounts point to only minimal incursions which are followed by undesired return to BC or drop out. In this sense, their experiences as BC students travelling sporadically to the BSP seem to be sensed as a form of exotic tourism which leads to a desire of being "mainstream" and, therefore, to a subsequent feeling of dissatisfaction with what they get from the BC; in both cases, they position themselves as subjects with higher aspirations who feel that the local form of education offered to them does not fulfil their academic expectations.

While these forms of positioning are in line with what we had previously observed in other BC in Madrid, data in this article also brings about a complementary layer that connects this study with issues of cultural change described in other institutional spaces across different contexts. In particular, the stories of Omar and Meiyi at *Villababel* make salient a very intensive emotional link between them and their BC teachers that we had not noticed before, which may index the progressive institutional disempowering that all of them were undergoing. The BC teachers supported Omar and Meiyi in their attempts to join the mainstream classes or, at least, to stay at school – being these efforts frustrated when Omar was returned by the mainstream teachers because of "his bad behaviour" or when Meiyi dropped out; these teachers even helped Meiyi to find a language academy as requested by



her, in what may be seen as an explicit act of recognition of the institution's inability to cope with the students' demands/desires/needs.

As described elsewhere as in relation to increasing professional instability under the socioeconomic conditions of "late modernity" or "hypermodernity" (Giddens 1991), these forms of intensive collaboration and trust between teachers and students illustrate the emergence of local "collusion" (McDermott & Tylbor 1986) across the boundaries of different institutional identities, beyond traditional (modernist) accounts in which asymmetrical relationships are foregrounded (see also Rampton 2006). We understand this form of solidarity as a central resource in contemporary life; in response to institutions' incapacity to adjust to new changing realities and (linguistic/cultural) practices, local forms of collusion may offer a platform for mobile social actors to overcome institutional constraints and navigate their new social networks.

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