



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

## Legitimizing multilingual practices in the classroom

**Citation for published version:**

Bonacina-Pugh, F 2020, 'Legitimizing multilingual practices in the classroom: The role of the 'practiced language policy'', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 434-448. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2017.1372359>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1080/13670050.2017.1372359](https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2017.1372359)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism on 11 Oct 2017, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13670050.2017.1372359>.

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



# Legitimizing multilingual practices in the classroom: the role of the ‘practiced language policy’.

Florence Bonacina-Pugh

*The University of Edinburgh  
School of Education  
Charteris Land, Holyrood Road,  
EH8 8AQ, Edinburgh. UK.  
Email: f.bonacina-pugh@ed.ac.uk*

## **Abstract**

This paper revisits the notion of ‘legitimate language’ (e.g. Bourdieu 1977) as it relates to multilingualism in educational contexts. Since Heller (1996) developed the notion of ‘legitimate language’ to encompass issues of language choice, there has been a consensus that a legitimate language is a language that is *appropriate* in a given situation. However, a crucial issue remains to be addressed, namely that of knowing what benchmark do classroom participants use to know when a language is appropriate, that is, legitimate or not. To address this issue, this paper takes as an example the case of an induction classroom for newly-arrived immigrant children in France where multiple languages have been observed. A Conversation Analysis of a set of audio-recorded interactions reveals that whilst languages other than French are not legitimized by top-down language policies and ideologies held at the societal and institutional levels, they are nevertheless seen as legitimate according to the local “practiced language policy” (Bonacina-Pugh 2012). This paper thus argues for a multi-layered understanding of legitimacy and shows how in the classroom under study, and possibly in other multilingual classrooms, practiced language policies play a key role in the legitimization of multilingual language practices.

**Keywords:** legitimacy, classroom interaction, language policy, multilingualism, conversation analysis, France.

## Introduction: Conceptualising language ‘legitimacy’

A natural starting point when reflecting on the concept of ‘legitimate language’ is to return to the work of Bourdieu (e.g. 1977, 1991) for whom a legitimate language is:

Uttered by a legitimate speaker, i.e. by the appropriate person, as opposed to the impostor (religious language/priest, poetry/poet, etc.); it is uttered in a legitimate situation, i.e. on the appropriate market (as opposed to insane discourse, e.g. a surrealist poem read in the Stock Exchange) and addressed to legitimate receivers; it is formulated in the legitimate phonological and syntactic forms (what linguists call grammaticalness), except when transgressing these norms is part of the legitimate definition of the legitimate producer. (Bourdieu, 1977: 650).

This definition has been used to understand the legitimacy given to particular languages over others. It has also been used to understand the struggles of new speakers to gain legitimacy in speaking a particular language such as Occitan in Provence, France (Costa 2015). Even if, as Reagan (2016) among others argue, the legitimacy of a language has no linguistic foundations – that is, to put it simply, that no language can be said to be linguistically superior or inferior to another – some languages continue to be legitimized whilst others are not and that for political, economic and ideological reasons so that speakers of a legitimate language remain in power whilst speakers of non-legitimate languages remain marginalised. In this initial and fundamental understanding of the concept of ‘legitimate language’, emphasis is given, as can be seen in the quote above, on “legitimate *phonological and syntactic forms*” (Bourdieu 1977, 650, my emphasis). This means that, initially, the notion of ‘legitimate language’ was applied to account for *varieties* of languages that were given more legitimacy over others, as in the case for instance of Standard Modern Greek over Greek Cypriot Dialect in Ioannidou’s (2009) study of Greek Cypriot primary classrooms. However, the concept has since then been enlarged to encompass issues of not only language varieties but also of *language choice*. This is what Heller (1996) initiated in her study of a French-language minority high school in Ontario, Canada. Her focus was not simply on identifying when and how would pupils in that school use standard French or not but also on identifying when and how languages other than French such as English and Somali would be used and legitimized, or not as the case may be. Research conducted in complex linguistic markets has also pointed to the need to further extend the concept of ‘legitimate language’ in order to be able to account for situations where multiple languages may coexist as legitimate languages (Søvik 2010, 6). This is the case, for instance, of Søvik’s (2010) research in the Eastern

Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, where he observes that the standard varieties of *both* Ukrainian and Russian are given legitimacy.

Interestingly, whether the notion of ‘legitimate language’ is conceptualised as encompassing language varieties or language choice, a single or multiple languages, a consensus arises on the idea that a legitimate language is a language that is *appropriate* in a given situation. As Heller would put it, “form is not everything; form must be used appropriately” (1996, 155). This is echoed by many of the researchers mentioned above. Costa, for example, defines legitimacy as being “the ability to utter the *right* linguistic forms at the *right* linguistic moments in the *right* situations, and to comply with the type of discourse that society expects one to produce” (2015, 129, my emphasis). Similarly, in her reflection on legitimate talk, Copland argues that “legitimacy refers to the *acceptability* of practices within particular contexts” (2012, 4, emphasis added). Crucially, this raises an important question, namely: according to what benchmark is a language (or are multiple languages) seen as right/appropriate/acceptable or in other words, legitimate? And relatedly, how is a language legitimized? In their study of a Gujarati and Chinese complementary schools, Creese and Blackledge (2010) had been asking similar questions. Following their observations of pedagogic bilingual practices in English and a heritage language being seen as legitimate, they concluded their paper by inviting for further research to be conducted on classroom language ecologies to show “*how and why* pedagogic bilingual practices come to be legitimated and accepted by participants” (2010, 113, my emphasis).

This paper aims to address exactly these questions. It aims to understand what benchmarks do speakers use to know what language(s) is legitimate, i.e. appropriate, or not and when. In this paper, I argue that although legitimacy is often understood from a *critical* perspective, it can also be understood from a *practical* perspective. I further argue that legitimacy is therefore a multi-layered phenomenon and that, to fully understand how languages are legitimized, these multiple layers or perspectives need to be taken into account. To support this argument, I take the case of an induction classroom for newly-arrived immigrant children in France, where multilingual practices are seen as legitimate despite the fact that only French is legitimized by top-down language policies and ideologies. I show how understanding legitimacy from a ‘critical’ perspective only accounts for some, but not all, of these language choice and alternation practices and that for a full account, a ‘practical’ understanding of legitimacy is needed. Indeed, a ‘practical’ approach to legitimacy shows that to know whether a language(s) is legitimate or not in this classroom – and possibly in other education contexts – classroom participants refer to the “practiced language policy”

(Bonacina-Pugh 2012; see also Papageorgiou 2015), that is, a set of interactional norms of language choice.

### **Context: An induction classroom in France.**

The linguistic ideology in France and its educational system is strictly French monolingual. At the societal level, monolingualism in French is considered to be the key to successful social cohesion and the use of any other languages is thought of as a threat to that cohesion. At the level of the educational system, the language policy is also strictly monolingual as evidenced by the *Code de l'Education* where it is stated that French should be the only medium of instruction:

“The language of teaching, exams, entrance examinations, as well as theses and dissertations in public and private education institutions is French, except for the teaching of foreign and regional languages and cultures or, when teachers are visiting professors or foreign guests” (Code de l'Education, Article L-121-3: II, my translation).

Monolingualism in French is considered to be the key to successful learning and bilingualism in French and another language (especially in a migrant language) goes either unnoticed (e.g. Hélot 2003) or is thought to lead to potential educational failure (e.g. Young 2014) to the extent that, in practice, pupils' multilingual resources are rarely drawn upon.

This monolingual language-in-education policy sits at odds with the increasing multilingual student population in the French education system. This contrast is all the more salient in the context of induction classrooms for newly-arrived immigrant children, where all pupils are speakers of at least one language other than French. These classes are found at primary level and host newly-arrived immigrant children upon their arrival for a maximum of twelve months in order to teach them French before they join a mainstream classroom on a full-time basis (e.g. MEN 2002). In the classroom under study, the twelve pupils spoke a total of eight languages; namely French, English, Spanish, Peul, Japanese, Polish, Lithuanian, and Arabic. Only English, Spanish and Peul (a language from Senegal) were shared between two or more children. More specifically, five children spoke Spanish (these have been given the pseudonyms of Talia, Leila, Maia, Cristina, and Andrea), four spoke English (namely, Karen, Talia, Maia and Matilda) and two spoke Peul (Amkoulel and Samba). It should also be added that some children who had attended this classroom in the previous year came back to attend specific lessons during the week as a way of getting further language support. This was the case of Anika, a Romanian-speaking child. The induction teacher, Miss Lo (a pseudonym),

was a white French female in her mid-forties who spoke French as her first language. She also had some knowledge of Hindi and English but could not understand any other languages spoken by her pupils. Contrary to other classrooms I have observed in the past in France (Bonacina 2012), in the classroom under study pupils' multilingual repertoires were used in classroom talk as a resource.

### **Methods and data**

The interactional data analysed in this paper is drawn from an ethnographically informed study of an induction classroom in France at primary level. While a variety of data ranging from interviews to photographs of the school walls have been collected during a period of six months, this paper focuses on a corpus of 30 hours of verbal interaction audio-recorded in the induction classroom under study. The focus of the analysis will be on the multilingual practices observed in teacher-led talk in this corpus.

To analyse the legitimization processes of these multilingual classroom practices, I call for the need to adopt not only a 'critical' but also a 'practical' perspective. The latter involves a focus on practices and implies conceptualising talk as practical social action as devised in the traditions of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis whilst the former involves a focus on the social, economic and political constraints that impede on language practices as investigated in the traditions of postmodernism, poststructuralism and critical social theory. In this paper, I draw on Conversation Analysis (CA) as applied to the study of code-switching (as initially introduced by Auer 1984) and the study of Language Policy (Bonacina-Pugh 2012). CA calls for a sequential analysis of language acts and provides an emic approach to the analysis of multilingual interaction. I adopt the notion of "medium of classroom interaction" (Bonacina and Gafaranga 2011), which builds on the work of Gafaranga and Torras (2001; further developed in Gafaranga 2012 etc.). This notion implies that talk is conducted in a medium, that is a 'code', rather than a language, and that this medium can either be monolingual or bilingual. This means that rather than investigating what language(s) are used in interaction, I try to discover what 'medium' participants actually orient to in interaction, whether it being made of monolingual or multilingual linguistic resources.

In the classroom under study, classroom participants used five mediums; namely, a French monolingual medium, an English monolingual medium, a Spanish monolingual medium, a French and English bilingual medium or a French and Spanish bilingual medium. Classroom participants could also temporarily deviate from a chosen medium and switch to

another language for functional purposes. Of interest here is the fact that classroom participants saw all these language choice practices as *legitimate*, that is, as being appropriate/right/acceptable. This raises the question as to how did these multilingual practices come to be seen as legitimate in an educational environment where language policies and ideologies legitimize French monolingual practices exclusively? – which brings us back to the central aim of this paper, namely to understand what benchmark do classroom participants use to know what language(s) is legitimate or not. ‘Critical’ and ‘practical’ understandings to legitimization will be adopted in turn to understand how these classroom participants legitimize multilingual classroom practices in an otherwise strictly French monolingual environment.

### **Understanding legitimacy from a critical perspective**

Legitimacy has traditionally been understood from a critical perspective, that is, it has been informed by critical social theory, postmodernism and poststructuralism. According to Fairclough (1992, 7), critical language study “highlights how language conventions and language practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes which people are often unaware of”. From this perspective, a language is said to be ‘legitimate’ if it is invested with power by dominant discourses and ideologies in the wider society. For instance, a legitimate language can be one that is institutionalised as the official language of a particular domain (e.g. education, government etc.). From this perspective, speakers are said to use these ideologies and top-down policies as reference points to know whether a language is legitimate or not in a given situation. In this section, I show how the language policies and ideologies held in the school and the French educational system at large can account for the legitimacy of some but not all of the language practices observed in the classroom under study and how a multi-layered understanding of legitimacy is needed.

As a first example, let us turn to extract 1 below where a French monolingual medium of classroom interaction is used between Miss Lo and the pupils. Miss Lo is showing a cartoon to the whole class and asks pupils where the main character (i.e. the detective) is sitting (i.e. in his office).

Extract 1: original transcript

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in Spanish.

19. Miss Lo: voilà (.) le détective il est où†  
20. (.)  
21. Leila: il est tout dans la (.) dans la:: (.) **oficina!**  
22. Miss Lo: dans son bureau

23.       (.)  
 24.       Miss Lo:        heint  
 25.       (.)  
 26.       Miss Lo:        il est dans son bureau

-----  
Extract 1: Translation

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in Spanish.

19.       Miss Lo:        that's right (.) the investigator where is he↑  
 20.       (.)  
 21.       Leila:            he is all in the (.) in the:: (.) **oficina!**  
 22.       Miss Lo:        in his office  
 23.       (.)  
 24.       Miss Lo:        hu↑  
 25.       (.)  
 26.       Miss Lo:        he is in his office

In this extract, both French and Spanish are used. However, they do not have the same legitimate status. While the choice of French is oriented to by speakers as being appropriate, the use of Spanish is oriented to as being inappropriate. This is evidenced by the fact that, although Leila is obviously having troubles finding the word elicited by Miss Lo, she does not immediately switch to Spanish (line 21). The ‘deviant markers’ such as the pauses, the delaying device (the elongation of a vowel) and the recycle (line 21) signal that Leila sees the use of Spanish as being deviant from the current medium of classroom interaction. This orientation is confirmed by Miss Lo, who repairs the Spanish label (‘oficina’) by providing the French equivalent (‘bureau’) (line 22). Clearly, Speakers orient to French as being the current medium of their interactional episode, while they orient to Spanish as being an instance of deviance that needs repair. In other words, French is seen as the legitimate language choice act while Spanish is seen as illegitimate. These orientations are easily accountable from a ‘critical’ approach to legitimization. Participants see French as legitimate because it is a language that is conferred legitimacy beyond the classroom, in the educational system and the French society at large. It is the one and only official language, the language of power and prestige. In this regard, it can be argued that, in this extract, the classroom participants see French as the only legitimate language because they are referring to the top-down language policy and to surrounding ideologies – in other words, to benchmarks outside interaction itself.

Interaction between Miss Lo and the pupils is systematically conducted in a French monolingual medium (while pupil-pupil talk can be conducted in any of the five mediums of classroom interaction). Nevertheless, language alternation occurs often and can even be seen as legitimate. While a ‘critical’ approach to understanding language legitimization can

explain how the classroom participants see French as legitimate (as in extract 1 above), it fails to explain how some instances of alternation to a language other than French gets to be legitimized since languages other than French are not conferred legitimacy by top-down language policies and wider ideologies. How can these language alternation practices be seen as legitimate? Consider the legitimization processes taking place in the word searches found in the following extract. Matilda (an English speaking child) is talking with the teacher (Miss Lo) searching for the French title of the movie she watched over the weekend.

Extract 2: original transcript

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in English.

77. Matilda: samedi on (.2) samedi on voit (.1) euh (.3) on voit un  
 78. film à la maison je- je sais pas comment on dit en  
 79. français (.) j'ai oublié comment on dit (.) moi je sais  
 80. comment on dit en anglais  
 81. Miss Lo: mais quoi↑ (.) on dit quoi↑ le titre↑  
 82. Matilda: oui  
 83. Miss Lo: c'est quoi alors↑  
 84. Matilda: euh (.) je- je sais pas comment on dit en français  
 85. Miss Lo: ben dis-le en anglais moi ça ne me pose pas de problème  
 86. Ma- Matilda  
 87. Matilda: hahaha ((laughing)) (.) **lord of the ring**  
 88. (.2)  
 89. Matilda: c'est comme euh (.) comme euh (.) comment on dit::  
 90. Miss Lo: c'est quoi (.) ah ben tiens Karen tu vas nous traduire  
 91. le titre là

-----  
Extract 2: translation

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in English.

77. Matilda: saturday we (.) we see (.1) ehm (.3) we see a movie at  
 78. home I- I don't know how to say it in French (.) I  
 79. forgot how to say it (.) me I know how to say it in  
 80. English  
 81. Miss Lo: but what↑ (.) to say what↑ the title↑  
 82. Matilda: yes  
 83. Miss Lo: what is it then↑  
 84. Matilda: ehm (.) I- I don't know how to say it in French  
 85. Miss Lo: well say it in English it's not a problem with me Ma-  
 86. Matilda  
 87. Matilda: hahaha ((laughing)) (.) **lord of the ring**  
 88. (.2)  
 89. Matilda: it is like ehm (.) like ehm (.) how to say::  
 90. Miss Lo: what is it (.) ah see Karen you're going to translate the  
 91. title there

In keeping with previous talk, Matilda starts her turn in French (line 77). However, she soon runs into difficulty finding the *mot juste*, as evidenced by various the pauses and self-interruptions. She then says that she is lacking the word in French (line 79) but that she knows it in English (line 80), asking in this sense permission to switch to English. These first few lines of the extract show that Matilda is orienting to a French monolingual medium.

Matilda’s interlocutors understand that she is missing a word but they cannot guess what that word may be (this is typical of “self-initiated other-repair” sequences like this one; c.f. Gafaranga 2012, 19). Miss Lo thus licenses a switch to English (line 85) and in line 87, Matilda provides the title of the movie in English. The two-second pause (line 88) following the switch shows that the teacher allows Matilda to self-repair (a preference for self-repair in conversation was noted by Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977); which she attempts in the next turn (line 89). However, the numerous trouble markers (euh, pauses, elongation of vowels and reformulations) signal that Matilda is still lacking the French word and is thus unable to self-repair. In the next few turns and beyond the extract, Miss Lo and Matilda will try and repair the English word and find its French equivalent by relying on the expertise of a more fluent English and French bilingual pupil. Of interest here is that the switch to English is an instance of “other-language repair initiation” (Gafaranga 2012, 39); that is, it contributes to repair initiation in clarifying exactly what the problem is. This is made possible only because it was licensed by the teacher first. Furthermore, when licensing English, the teacher says that the use of English is ‘not a problem for her’ (line 85), thus distancing herself from the institutional language policy. This signals the possibility of a new “linguistic market” (Bourdieu 1977, 38), that is, a space at the local level of the classroom where language legitimacy may obey different rules.

One might wonder if in extract 3 above, English is legitimized in teacher-led talk simply because it is a high-prestige language and a language that the teacher understands (even if only partially). However, other extracts in the corpus show that languages other than English can also be legitimized in teacher-led talk. A further example can be found in extract 3 below where Romanian is used. Anika, a Romanian-speaking child, is looking for the French word for ‘garlic’ (i.e. ‘ail’) as she is explaining what her mum cooked for her the previous evening. A French monolingual medium is used throughout.

Extract 3: original transcript

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in Romanian.

35. Anika: quelque chose comme euh::  
 36. (.3)  
 37. Miss Lo: ben dis et les autres ils vont pouvoir t’aider peut-être  
 38. (. ) dis qu’est-ce que tu cherches↑  
 39. Anika: je sais pas comment ça-  
 40. (. )  
 41. Miss Lo: mais c’est quoi↑  
 42. (.3)  
 43. Matilda: c’est un raclette euh↑  
 44. (.6)

45. Anika: euh:: (.) en français je sais pas-  
46. Miss Lo: mais c'est de la nourriture↑  
47. Anika: oui  
48. [...]  
49. Miss Lo: en roumain c'est comment alors (.) dis-  
50. moi en roumain  
51. Anika: euh: (.) **usturoi** et c'est ( )  
52. Miss Lo: comment c'est en roumain↑  
53. Anika: **usturoi**  
54. Miss Lo: **usturoi** (.) et **usturoi** ça se mange↑  
55. Anika: euh (.) ouais  
56. Miss Lo: ah  
57. Anika: et c'est (.) c'est comme ça ((gets up from her chair to  
58. draw on the blackboard))  
59. Miss Lo: ah ben voilà! (.) tu nous fais un dessin (.) **usturoi** ça  
60. vous dit quelque chose les autres non↑ (.)**usturoi** non↑  
61. (.8)  
62. ((Anika draws on the blackboard))  
63. Miss Lo: ah! (.2) c'est des oignons↑  
64. (.2)  
65. Anika: non::

-----  
Extract 3: translation

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in Romanian.

35. Anika: something like ehm::  
36. (.3)  
37. Miss Lo: well say and the others will be able to help you maybe  
38. (.) say what you're looking for↑  
39. Anika: I don't know how it-  
40. (.)  
41. Miss Lo: but what is it↑  
42. (.3)  
43. Matilda: is it a raclette ehm↑  
44. (.6)  
45. Anika: ehm:: (.) in French I don't know-  
46. Miss Lo: but is it food↑  
47. Anika: yes  
48. [...]  
49. Miss Lo: in Romanian how is it then (.) tell me in  
50. Romanian  
51. Anika: ehm: (.) **usturoi** and it's ( )  
52. Miss Lo: how is it in Romanian↑  
53. Anika: **usturoi**  
54. Miss Lo: **usturoi** (.) and can you eat **usturoi**↑  
55. Anika: ehm (.) yeah  
56. Miss Lo: ah  
57. Anika: and it's (,) it's like this ((gets up to draw on the  
58. blackboard))  
59. Miss Lo: ah there you go! (.) you're drawing for us (.) **usturoi**  
60. does it ring a bell to anybody no↑ (.) **usturoi** no↑  
61. (.8)  
62. ((Anika draws on the blackboard))  
63. Miss Lo: ah! (.) are they onions↑  
64. (.2)  
65. Anika: no::

In this extract, Anika is having difficulties searching for a French word and her interlocutors are experiencing difficulties guessing what she is referring to, which means they cannot help

and provide other-repair. Miss Lo conducts a “teacher-initiated peer-repair” (Seedhouse 2004, 147) and asks the other pupils in the class to try and help Anika (lines 37-8). As a result, in line 43, Matilda offers a candidate to repair Anika’s problem. However, the two long pauses and lack of ratification (lines 42 and 44) indicate that the problem is not solved. As Miss Lo realises that Anika will not be able to give more precise information regarding the nature of the trouble source, she licenses language alternation in Romanian, Anika’s first language (line 49). This switch to Romanian (e.g. line 51) is followed by a switch to a non-verbal medium (i.e. drawing; line 57), which will eventually lead participants to understand the word Anika is missing. Interestingly, language alternation to Romanian is licensed to help Anika clarify what word she is missing and to enable her peers to help; licensing language alternation thus contributes to self-initiation of repair. Romanian is not legitimized by the surrounding top-down language policies and ideologies, it is not a language of particular high prestige in France nor is it understood by the teacher. Nevertheless, at the micro level of this classroom it is licensed by the teacher and thus given a legitimate status. We now see the need to adopt a multi-layered approach to understanding legitimacy since clearly, classroom participants do not solely draw on top-down policies and wider ideologies to know whether a language is legitimate or not; they also draw on a sense of legitimacy developed at the local level of interactional practices.

### **Understanding legitimacy from a ‘practical’ perspective: the role of the ‘practiced language policy’.**

A ‘practical’ understanding to language legitimacy is grounded in the Ethnomethodological approach to sociology (e.g. Goffman 1959) and the Conversation Analytic (CA) approach to the study of language (e.g. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). From this perspective, talk is seen as social action, and choosing a language or switching from and to a language is a social act. Recurrent language choice and alternation acts form patterns of interaction, or what is referred to in the CA tradition as ‘practices’. In turn, speakers draw on these practices to deduce interactional ‘norms’, which will inform their interactional choices. A ‘practical’ understanding to language legitimacy is grounded in the argument that, when speakers see a language as legitimate, they refer not only to the wider language policies and ideologies but also to *a set of norms* of language choice; that is, to an implicit understanding of what the ‘rules’ are, or in other words of what is appropriate or not in a given “community of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991).

The idea that a set of norms is what confers legitimacy to a particular language(s) is not new and is touched upon, sometimes more explicitly than others, in other classroom-based studies already reviewed in this paper. For example, Costa (2015) writes that in the Occitan bilingual primary school he studied in Provence, France, language choice between French and Occitan was strictly regimented at the local level of the school itself, which functioned as a “closed linguistic market with its own rules” (2015, 135). Here, languages are not legitimized exclusively with reference to top-down language policies and wider ideologies but also with reference to a local set of “rules” or norms of what is acceptable or not in particular situations. Similarly, Creese and Blackledge (2010) suggest that in the Gujarati complementary school they investigated, the teacher and the students are “finely tuned to the *normative pattern* of this classroom ecology – that is, they sense the limits of what is acceptable in terms of the use of one language in relation to the other” (2010, 110, my emphasis). We see clearly here how the notion of language legitimacy is articulated in terms of a set of norms of language choice from which speakers draw upon to know when a language is “acceptable”. A last example, and probably the most explicit example of all, is Søvik’s paper where a legitimate language is said to represent “the perceived norm”, that is “the language one is most often expected to communicate in” (2010, 22). He further argues that:

“the term legitimate language may thus not only refer to a language that is endorsed by state institutions, but also to a variety which one is expected to use in certain settings, i.e. the language variety that is seen as *constituting the norm*” (2010, 9, my emphasis).

Building on this idea that a language is seen as legitimate with reference to a set of norms, I argue that these norms are constructed at the very local level of interaction. They are “interactional norms” (Hymes 1972), which speakers use as a point of reference, a “grid of interpretation” (Heritage 1984) to know when a language is appropriate or not. From an Ethnomethodological perspective, norms are there to make sense of and engage in practical social action and, from a Conversation Analytic perspective, *interactional* norms are there to make sense of and engage in *talk* as practical social action. In *multilingual* talk, interactional norms are there to be used by speakers to organise and make sense of their language choice and alternation acts, to know what language(s) is appropriate and when. The assumption that norms are used for the interpretation and production of acts is grounded in the Ethnomethodological principles of the ‘reciprocity of perspectives’ and the ‘documentary method of interpretation’. The former implies that social actors hold each other to have the same perspective and the latter means that any social act is a ‘document’ or an example of a

previously known pattern. Thus, for a speaker to know whether a given language is appropriate and therefore legitimate in a particular situation, they would have to recall what language(s) was used and seen as legitimate in a similar situation they encountered in the past and assume that the current interactional episode is another instance of that interactional practice or pattern and that therefore a similar norm applies (this is the Ethnomethodological principle of ‘documentary method of interpretation’). Furthermore, they would have to assume that all participants will identify this interactional episode in the same way as them so that everyone follows the same norm of interaction (this is the Ethnomethodological principle of ‘reciprocity of perspectives’). In this sense, a practical understanding to legitimacy suggests that speakers draw on interactional norms to know whether a particular language is legitimate or not.

Crucially, and as I have argued elsewhere (e.g. Bonacina-Pugh 2012), these interactional norms of language choice constitute a language policy – namely, a “practiced language policy” – in the sense that they inform speakers of what language(s) is appropriate or not. The idea that there is a language policy at the level of practices originates from Spolsky (2004, 2007 etc.) according to whom language policy is made of three elements, namely language management, language beliefs and language practices (Spolsky 2004, 14). Although language practices often feature in language policy studies to see whether a particular language policy has been implemented or resisted to (e.g. Canagarajah 2005), the argument that there is a policy at the level of practices is a different matter insofar as it implies seeing language policy as practice (Bonacina-Pugh 2012). I have proposed to call language policy as practice ‘practiced language policy’ (Bonacina-Pugh 2012) to refer to exactly that -- a set of implicit and deducible norms of interaction that speakers use in talk to know what language(s) is appropriate and when. Or to put it differently, practiced language policies are what Spolsky and Shohamy (2000, 29) call “a set of descriptive and explanatory rules that would somehow capture the idea that members of the community have of appropriate behaviour”. This does not mean, however, that practiced language policies are a fixed set of norms. On the contrary, these interactional norms of language choice can be renegotiated, transformed or created every step of the way, at each language choice and alternation act. Nevertheless, knowing what practiced language policy speakers orient to in a given context will shed light on what language(s) is legitimate and when in that context. In this regard, I argue that practiced language policies play a key role in legitimizing languages. They are what speakers refer to,

the benchmark speakers use, to know whether a particular language is appropriate and therefore legitimate in a given situation.

The issue remains now to know how to uncover practiced language policies. I have made the case elsewhere that Conversation Analysis (CA) can be an efficient tool to discover practiced language policies (Bonacina-Pugh 2012). To put it briefly, a practiced language policy can be unravelled using CA in its broad sense, that is, including both sequential and categorisation analysis when relevant. A particular useful CA tool is “deviant cases analysis” (Heritage 1984), which consists in studying cases that are deviant from a previously observed pattern. Deviant cases are identified by looking at participants’ reactions to a particular act. If a speaker or a hearer reacts to a particular language choice or alternation act as being a problem or as needing repair, this indicates to the analyst that this instance of language choice or alternation is considered to be deviant by the interactional participants. It is by looking at interactional participants’ orientation (i.e. reaction) to deviant cases that the analyst is able to deduce what a ‘normative’ case would be. In this sense, the study of deviant cases reveals what norms speakers orient to in interaction, that is, they indicate what the practiced language policy is. Once we know what the practiced language policy is, the analyst is then able to understand what interactional norm speakers are referring to in order to know whether a language(s) is legitimate or not and when.

To return to the specific case of the induction classroom under study, from their experience of teaching, learning and simply talking in that classroom, the participants have constructed a practiced language policy, which they use as one possible benchmark to know what language choice or alternation act is legitimate or not in a given situation. By revisiting extracts 1 to 3 above, we can infer that Miss Lo and the pupils are orienting to a practiced language policy at the local level of the classroom that enables them to legitimize multiple languages in teacher-pupil talk. Extract 1 consisted of Miss Lo and a pupil interacting in French and switching temporarily to Spanish. There, French was seen as the legitimate language whilst Spanish was seen as inappropriate. Whilst the legitimacy of French could indeed be accounted for from a critical perspective with reference to the fact that French is the language of power and prestige in the French educational system and the French society at large, it can equally be accounted for from a practical perspective with reference to a norm of language choice that could be initially formulated as follows: in teacher-led talk, French should be used as the medium of classroom interaction. This norm can then be further elaborated by looking at the commonalities between extracts 2 and 3. To recall, in both

extracts, languages other than French (namely, English in extract 2 and Romanian in extract 3) were licensed by Miss Lo in order to help clarifying what word pupils were missing in French. Clearly, English and Romanian are not legitimized because Miss Lo and the pupils orient to the top-down language policies and surrounding ideologies but rather because they orient to a norm of language alternation acts according to which languages other than French become legitimate when they are licensed by the teacher. This norm is part and parcel of the multilingual ‘practiced language policy’ of the classroom under study and is consistently and repeatedly followed by the classroom participants. This can be confirmed by further instances of language alternation acts observed in the corpus. Consider for instance extract 4 below. Here, Miss Lo is introducing the negation system in French and wants to bring pupils’ attention to the fact that, in French (and especially in written French), the negation is expressed by the two markers ‘ne’ and ‘pas’.

To introduce the syntax of negation in French, Miss Lo asks pupils to provide a positive sentence and to transform it to its negative. Therefore, Karen suggests the French sentences ‘je veux manger’ (i.e. I want to eat) and ‘je ne veux pas manger’ (i.e. I do not want to eat). Once that French example is set, Miss Lo wants to check pupils’ understanding and asks if the same negative structure is found in their other languages. This launches a series of “translation quests” (Bonacina-Pugh 2013), where each pupil attending this lesson get asked to translate these two sentences in their respective other language(s). First, in extract 4a, Miss Lo turns to the Spanish-speaking pupils and asks them to provide the Spanish translation for these two French sentences (line 127).

Extract 4a: original transcript

Bold font us used to transcribe talk uttered in Spanish

127. Miss Lo: alors par exemple (.) comment vous dites en espagnol alors↑  
 128. Talia: euh:: (.) je veux manger (.) **quiero comer** (.) je ne veux  
 129. pas manger (.) **no quiero comer**  
 130. Miss Lo: alors attends (.) on va le- donc tu vas venir l’écriture

-----  
Extract 4a: translation

Bold font us used to transcribe talk uttered in Spanish

127. Miss Lo: so for instance (.) how do you say in Spanish then↑  
 128. Talia: em:: (.) I want to eat (.) **quiero comer** (.) I do not want  
 129. to eat (.) **no quiero comer**  
 130. Miss Lo: so wait (.) we’re going to- do you’re going to write it

Here, Spanish becomes legitimate because it is licensed by Miss Lo in the form of a ‘translation quest’ (line 127). Next, in extract 4b, Miss Lo turns to the Polish-speaking child named Piotr and asks him to translate the two French sentences in Polish.

Extract 4b: original transcript

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in Polish

235. Miss Lo: d'accord ok (.) très bien! (.) alors en polonais maintenant  
236. (.) vas-y Piotr  
237. (.2)  
238. Piotr: euh:: (.) je veux manger ((writes the Polish on the board))  
239. ((children trying to read Polish))  
240. Miss Lo: ok d'accord (.) et je ne veux pas manger  
241. Piotr: **ja nie chcę jeść** ((writes on the board))  
242. ((children repeating the Polish sentence))

---

Extract 4b: translation

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in Polish

235. Miss Lo: do alright (.) very good ! (.) so in Polish now (.) off you  
236. go Piotr  
237. (.2)  
238. Piotr: em:: (.) I want to eat ((writes the Polish on the board))  
239. ((children trying to read Polish))  
240. Miss Lo: ok alright (.) and I do not want to eat  
241. Piotr: **ja nie chcę jeść** ((writes on the board))  
242. ((children repeating the Polish sentence))

Here also, because Miss Lo licenses the use of Polish, it becomes legitimate. Miss Lo then turns to English-speaking children, the Japanese-speaking child (extracts not reported here due to space constraints) and the Peul-speaking children (see extract 4c) to elicit respectively English, Japanese and Peul.

Extract 4c: original transcript

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in Peul (a language from Senegal)

358. Miss Lo: en peul (.) comment est-ce qu'on dit 'je veux manger' ↑  
359. (.3)  
360. Cissé: **mi**  
361. Miss Lo: **mi** ↑  
362. Cissé: **mi i di niamdé**  
363. Miss Lo: c'est séparé 'i' ou c'est ensemble ↑  
364. Amkoulel: séparé  
[...]  
395. Miss Lo: quelque chose comme ça ↑ (.) après on va lire et on va voir  
396. si c'est ça (.) et 'je ne veux pas manger' ↑  
397. Amkoulel: [( )]  
398. Samba: [( )]  
399. Miss Lo: alors (.) vous allez voir si vous êtes d'accord après (.)  
400. **mi** (.) **i**  
401. Samba: **da**  
402. Miss Lo: **da** ((Miss Lo writes on the board))  
403. Amkoulel: [**niamdé**]  
404. Samba: [**nadé**]  
405. Miss Lo: **niamdé** ((Miss Lo writes on the board))

---

Extract 4c: translation

Bold font is used to transcribe talk uttered in Peul (a language from Senegal)

358. Miss Lo: in Peul (.) how do you say 'I want to eat' ↑  
359. (.3)  
360. Cissé: **mi**

361. Miss Lo: **mi**↑  
362. Cissé: **mi i di niamdé**  
363. Miss Lo: is it seperate 'i' or is it together↑  
364. Amkoulel: separated  
[...]  
395. Miss Lo: something like this↑ (.) after we're going to read it and  
396. we'll see if that's right (.) and 'I do not want to eat'↑  
397. Amkoulel: [( )]  
398. Samba: [( )]  
399. Miss Lo: so you'll see after if you agree (.) **mi**  
400. (.) **i**  
401. Samba: **da**  
402. Miss Lo: **da** ((Miss Lo writes on the board))  
403. Amkoulel: [**niamdé**]  
404. Samba: [**nadé**]  
405. Miss Lo: **niamdé** ((Miss Lo writes on the board))

Here again, Peul becomes legitimate because it is elicited and therefore licensed by Miss Lo. To summarise, this interactional episode further demonstrates that the classroom participants consistently refer to a language policy devised in practice – a “practiced language policy” – whereby languages other than French are appropriate when they are licensed by the teacher. It also illustrates the key role that practiced language policies play in legitimization processes since it is because the classroom participants draw on this practiced language policy that languages other than French are given a legitimate status.

### Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have revisited the concept of ‘language legitimacy’ and showed how languages can be legitimized at different levels, including that of interactional practices. I have taken the example of multilingual language practices observed in an induction classroom in France at primary level and tried to understand *how* the classroom participants in that context came to see multilingual language practices as being legitimate while the surrounding top-down language policies and ideologies held in the school as well as in the wider French educational system are strictly French monolingual. Two complementary perspectives to language legitimacy have been discussed, namely a ‘critical’ and a ‘practical’ understanding to legitimization processes. A ‘critical’ understanding to legitimization implies that top-down language policies and ideologies are what legitimize classroom language practices. From this perspective, only French is seen as a legitimate language. While this could account for extract 1 where only French is seen as appropriate (whilst Spanish is not), it did not account for the fact that, in extracts 2 and 3, alternations to English and Romanian respectively were seen as acceptable. Consequently, a ‘practical’ account to legitimization was discussed in the second half of this paper. According to this alternative approach, legitimization does not come from speakers’ orientation towards top-down language policies

and wider ideologies but rather from their orientation towards a “practiced language policy” (e.g. Bonacina-Pugh 2012) constructed at the local level of classroom language practices. The practiced language policy oriented to in this classroom is definitely multilingual and consists of a set of norms of language choice and alternation acts that legitimize the use of languages other than French. I focused specifically on one norm of language alternation acts that legitimized the use of languages other than French in teacher-led interaction where a French monolingual medium is used. That norm can be summarised as follows: languages other than French become legitimate when they are licensed by the teacher. Ultimately, it is hoped that, in this classroom, languages other than French will eventually gain legitimacy without having to be licensed by the teacher first, so that pupils can draw on their linguistic repertoire freely in interaction.

To summarise, in this paper, language legitimization is apprehended as a multi-layered process according to which legitimacy is conferred at the societal and institutional level as well as at the practical level of interaction. The suggested ‘practical’ understanding of language legitimacy grounded in the Ethnomethodological and Conversation Analytic traditions offers an additional layer to our understanding of legitimacy, namely that of practices. This paper thus argues that what legitimizes multilingual practices in the classroom under study – and possibly in other multilingual classrooms – is not only wider ideologies and top-down language policies but also (and sometimes, primarily) the “practiced language policy” (Bonacina-Pugh 2012), that is, the norms of language choice and alternation acts constructed and negotiated in interaction by classroom participants themselves.

## **Acknowledgements**

## **References**

- Auer, P. 1984. *Bilingual Conversation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bonacina, F. 2012. “Ideology and the issue of access in multilingual school ethnography: A French example”. In *Multilingualism, Discourse and Ethnography*, edited by M. Martin-Jones and S. Gardner, 269-284. New York: Routledge.
- Bonacina, F. and J. Gafaranga. 2011. “‘Medium of instruction’ versus ‘medium of classroom interaction’: Language choice in a French complementary school classroom in Scotland”. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 14 (3): 319-334.

- Bonacina-Pugh, F. 2013. "Multilingual label quests: A practiced for the 'asymmetrical' multilingual classroom". *Linguistics and Education* 24 (2): 142-164.
- Bonacina-Pugh, F. 2012. "Researching 'practiced language policies': Insights from Conversation Analysis". *Language Policy* 11 (3): 213-234.
- Bourdieu, P. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Malden: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. "The economics of linguistic exchange". *Social Science Information* 16 (6): 645-668.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (Ed.) (2005). *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Code de l'Éducation. Found on <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071191&dateTexte=20100305>, last accessed on 05/05/2010.
- Copland, F. 2012. "Legitimate talk in feedback conferences". *Applied Linguistics* 33 (1): 1-20.
- Costa, J. 2015. "New speakers, new language: On being a legitimate speaker of a minority language in Provence". *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 231: 127-145.
- Creese, A. and A. Blackledge. 2010. "Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching?". *The Modern Language Journal* 94: 103-115.
- Fairclough, N. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gafaranga, J. 2012. "Language alternation and conversational repair in bilingual conversation". *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 16 (4): 501-527.
- Gafaranga, J. and M. C. Torras. 2001. "Language versus medium in the study of bilingual conversation". *International Journal of Bilingualism* 6: 1-22.
- Goffman, E. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Heller, M. 1996. "Legitimate language in a multilingual school". *Linguistics and Education* 8: 139-157.
- Hélot, C. 2003. "Language policy and the ideology of bilingual education in France". *Language Policy* 2: 255-277.
- Heritage, J. 1984. *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hymes, D. H. 1972. "Models of the interaction of language and social life". In *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*, edited by J. J. Gumperz and D. Hymes, 35-71. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

- Ioannidou, E. 2009. "Using the 'improper' language in the classroom: The conflict between language use and legitimate varieties in education. Evidence from a Greek Cypriot classroom". *Language and Education* 23 (3): 263-278.
- Lave, J. and E. Wenger. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MEN (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale). 2002. Organisation de la scolarité des élèves nouvellement arrivés en France sans maîtrise suffisante de la langue française ou des apprentissages: Circulaire 2002-100 du 25-4-2002. *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale* Numéro Spécial, 25 avril 2002: 8-14.
- Papageorgiou, I. 2015. *When Language Policy and Pedagogy Conflict*. Saarbrücken: Scholars' Press.
- Reagan, T. 2016. "The conceptualization of language legitimacy". *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 13 (1): 1-19.
- Sacks, H., E. A. Schegloff and G. Jefferson. 1974. "A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation". *Language*: 696-735.
- Schegloff, E., G. Jefferson and H. Sacks. 1977. "The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation". *Language* 53: 361-382.
- Seedhouse, P. 2004. *The Interactional Architecture of the Language Classroom: A Conversation Analysis Perspective*. Malden, USA: Blackwell.
- Søvik, M. B. 2010. "Language practices and the language situation in Kharkiv: Examining the concept of legitimate language in relation to identification and utility". *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 201: 5-28.
- Spolsky, B. 2007. "Towards a theory of language policy". *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 22 (1): 1-14.
- Spolsky, B. 2004. *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spolsky, B. and E. Shohamy. 2000. "Language practice, language ideology, and language policy". In *Language Policy and Pedagogy: Essays in Honour of A. Ronald Walton*, edited by R. D. Lambert and E. Shohamy, 1-41. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Young, A. 2014. "Unpacking teachers' language ideologies: attitudes, beliefs and practiced language policies in schools in Alsace, France". *Journal of Language Awareness* 23 (1/2): 157-171.

