Dyslexia and Additional Academic Language Learning

Module 1

MULTILINGUALISM AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

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Lifelong Learning Programme

Dyslang Module 1
MULTILINGUALISM AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Claudia Cappa, Jill Fernando, Sara Giulivi, Gé Stoks, 2012.

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Learner outcomes

- Acquire a basic knowledge of aspects of multilingual acquisition of language
- Acquire a basic knowledge of issues related to multilingualism
- Acquire a basic knowledge of issues related to multilingualism in the school environment

Some useful terminology

Morphology: field of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the different forms that words can assume by adding affixes or by combining them with other words (in English, for example, the word “books” can be seen as made up of “book”, which conveys a lexical meaning, plus “-s”, which represents a syntactic function and means plural; similarly in a word like “call-ed”, “call” conveys the lexical meaning, whereas “-ed”, indicates that the action was carried out in the past).

Phonetics: the field of linguistics that describes the physical characteristics of sounds. In other words, phonetics studies what we do when we speak and when we are exposed to speech.

Phonology: the field of linguistics that studies the sound pattern of languages, i. e. the rules governing sound combinations in different languages.

Syntax: the field of linguistics that studies the principles that, in different languages, rule the combination of words in more complex structures.

Pragmatics: the field of linguistics that studies the rules of language use based on context, and the influence of situation in meaning.

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INTRODUCTION

Each language speaks the world in its own ways.
Each edifies worlds and counter-worlds in its own mode.
The polyglot is a freer man.
G. Steiner

Migration has always existed in European society, mostly due to economic reasons, internal conflicts or wars. Populations have become increasingly diverse, in terms of languages and cultures; however, many countries still find it difficult to perceive this as a positive factor. Differences, very often, are still a cause of distrust and conflict, instead of being seen as something enriching, something to benefit from under economic, social, cultural and educational points of view.
The school system is one context that could most benefit from contact between languages and cultures. Many European bodies and Institutions have highlighted this aspect and have tried to encourage national authorities to enact inclusive educational policies to afford all students an adequate education, without any distinction related to language or culture of origin, and to guarantee effective support actions for students with disabilities or with special educational needs (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009).
In 1994 UNESCO declared that:

> *"Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities, and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups"*[1].

1. Declaration of Salamanca, UNESCO, 1994, p. 6

In 2009, a report on inclusive education in various European countries states that:

> *"Instead of focusing on preparing children to fit into existing schools, the new emphasis focuses on preparing schools so that they can deliberately reach out to all children".*

2. UNESCO, World Education Forum Final Report: Part II. Improving the Quality and Equity of Education for All, Paris, UNESCO, 2000, p. 18

by Claudia Cappa, Jill Fernando, Sara Giulivi, Gè Stoks, November, 2012

It is extremely important for teachers to have the opportunity to enrich their knowledge and training in areas crucial to integration and inclusion, in order to be able to resolve any difficulties that may arise in the classroom.

IIn this module, we are going to concentrate on different factors related to the coexistence of more than one language and culture both within the single individual (the plurilingual student) and in the educational context. In particular, we will try to describe the different types of multilingualism and the characteristics of plurilingual acquisition of language. We will talk about the relation between multilingualism and school and we will highlight the value of acquiring a plurilingual, pluricultural and intercultural competence.

On reflection task1.1

- What is the history of immigration in your area?
- Have you had successive waves of immigration from different areas?
- Who are your most recent arrivals?
- Have the earlier groups integrated into general society?

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1.1 Plurilingual acquisition of language

You can't talk about multilingualism, without talking about languages, and you can't talk about languages without talking about the language faculty.

1.1.1 Languages and the language faculty

What is language?

Language is first of all an instrument for communication. Human language is unique amongst other forms of communication, such as bird songs or bees dance, in that it allows us to convey a potentially unlimited number of messages through a limited number of elements (sounds and words) that are discrete and combinable. It is a faculty that is part of our biological heritage developing when we are children without any effort or instruction, and without us being aware of its structure and way of functioning.

Language has sometimes been defined as an "instinct". According to S. Pinker (1994), human beings have brains that urge them to communicate through language and that enable them to do it, in the same way that a spider spins a web because it has the urge to spin it and the capacity to do it. The acquisition of language by a child takes place in a similar way regardless of the particular language environment (this is true both for verbal and sign languages). A child exposed to French will learn French in the same way and time as a child exposed to Chinese or American Sign Language will learn those languages.

So what are languages?

Languages are **the specific superficial 'shapes' that the language faculty takes in different countries and communities**. There are **characteristics** that are **universal**, common to all languages (for example all languages have consonant and vowel sounds; all languages make a distinction between names and verbs etc…), while other characteristics are specific to individual languages (for example the particular sounds used), and are selected by the child during infancy, based on the linguistic input he/she receives from the environment.

The linguistic system is made up of different components: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, semantics and pragmatics. Each language has a specific phonetic inventory, specific morphological and syntactic rule, a specific vocabulary etc…

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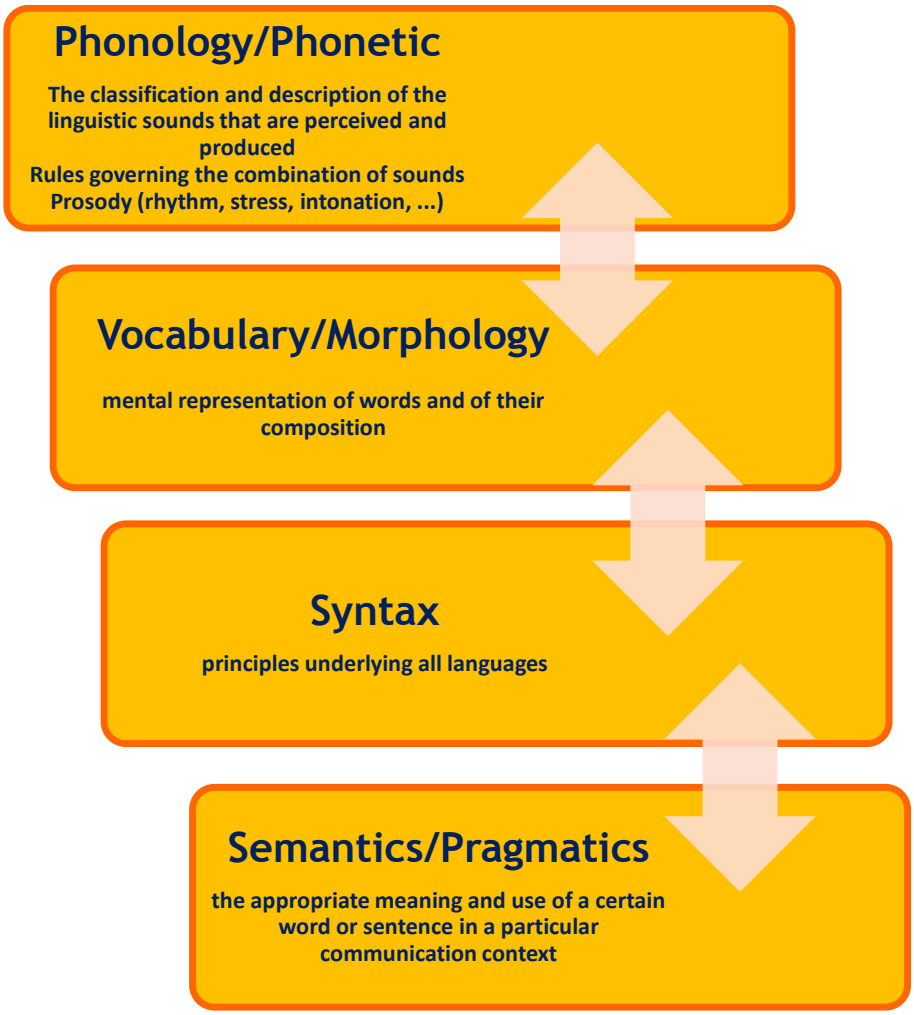
The components of a linguistic system (see BOX 1.1) are acquired with different modalities and at different times during development.



BOX.1.1 - Components of a linguistic system

On reflection task 1.2

- How many languages do you speak apart from your L1? What are some of the interesting differences between your languages?
- Are there some things you find easier in one language than the other? Why do you think that is?

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1.1.2 Language acquisition and language learning

The term language acquisition refers to the unconscious, spontaneous, gradual, non explicit, unguided process through which language develops in the child. This is the way we acquire our mother tongue (L1), which develops in a natural context through spontaneous interaction with native "expert" speakers. Interaction takes place in meaningful communication contexts where language rules are acquired in an essentially implicit way.
To learn more about the difference between implicit and explicit learning see BOX 1.2 below.

BOX. 1.1 - Implicit and explicit learning.

	LEARNING	
	IMPLICIT (OR PROCEDURAL)	**EXPLICIT**
	Skills	Knowledge
EXAMPLES	locomotion, reading (decoding)	Geography, History
SUSCEPTIBLE TO VOLUNTARY EXERCISE	LITTLE	YES
SUSCEPTIBLE TO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE	NO	YES
AWARENESS	NO	YES
ATTENTION TYPE	PREATTENTIONAL	ALWAYS VOLUNTARY ATTENTION
MEMORY TYPE	PROCEDURAL	LONG-TERM (EPISODIC OR SEMANTIC)
	IT'S NOT GREATLY INFLUENCED BY INTERRUPTION TO TRAINING.	For the concepts / notions to not be easily forgotten LEARNING MUST BE DEEP
METACOGNITION	Does not serve to enhance basic ability, but can be used in revision phase	Increased learning ability

1.1.3 Native language and second language

The first stages of L1 acquisition are closely related to the development of other cognitive functions, such as the formation of meaning concepts, the ability to generalise, and the ability to develop abstract thought and logical reasoning. Where a child is learning more than one language from birth, their languages will develop simultaneously with the other cognitive functions.
If, however, they start to acquire their L2 at a later stage, they need to have first developed the basic cognitive and linguistic abilities necessary for the acquisition of the first language. If the process of L1 learning is interrupted in favour of the acquisition of a second language, the development of higher-level functions, and consequently the general cognitive and linguistic development of the child, may be blocked. This could have a negative effect on the acquisition of both L1 and L2. The ideal situation is one where L1 and L2 develop together harmoniously.
This is where the concept of **additive bilingualism** (see par. 1.1.6) becomes particularly important: L2 develops together with L1, without the latter being perceived as inferior. In this way, the development of a bilingual personality is fostered; the two languages and cultures integrate harmoniously, both contributing to the moulding of the individual's personality and enriching it.

There is widespread agreement on the benefits of additive bilingualism. However, the relationship between first and second language remains complex and may lead to discrepancies and contradictions. This has led to the formulation of two hypotheses (Cummins, 2000):

Threshold level hypothesis: there is a minimum level of linguistic (and communicative) competence that must be achieved in order to allow a bilingual individual to gain the best advantage from the cognitive and linguistic input coming from the environment. This threshold level must be achieved both in L1 and in L2, in order to successfully operate in both languages.

Interdependence hypothesis: once the threshold level has been achieved both in L1 and L2, what is learned in one language is extended/tranferred to the other. It suggests a common storage of abilities, a 'common underlying proficiency' that can be used for learning both L1 and L2. The superficial aspects of L1 and L2 are manifestations of this underlying proficiency, and present specific differences.
This is well represented by Cummins' metaphor of dual iceberg.

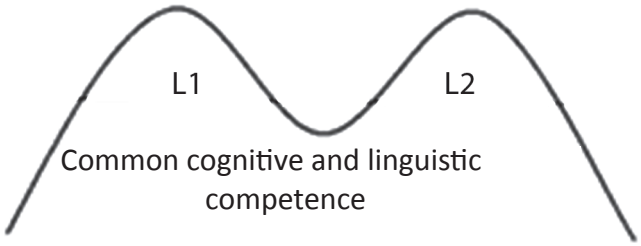

Fig. 1.2. The dual *iceberg*: the two iceberg tops represent the superficial aspects of L1 and L2, that may display differences. The underlying cognitive and linguistic competences, on the other hand, are part of a common base.

1.1.4 Second language and foreign language (L2 and FS)

In linguistics the term second language (L2) is used to refer to a new language that is acquired in the country/context where that language is used by most of the population.

> An Albanian child immigrating to Italy or to the Italian speaking part of Switzerland will learn Italian as a second language.

Second language learning takes place not only at school, but first and foremost during daily life. It is important for language teachers to be aware that children in this situation will develop most of their linguistic competence outside the school, during daily spontaneous interaction with native speakers, for example during play with peers. In this case it seems more appropriate to talk about L2 acquisition rather than learning as it more closely resembles their acquisition of their L1 (Krashen, 1981).

The term **foreign language** (**FL**), in contrast, refers to a new language that is acquired in a country/context where the language is not normally used on an everyday basis.

> An Italian child learning English in Italy, either at school or in special language classes, will learn this language as a foreign language.

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In our society it is easy to imagine that any classroom may include plurilingual children who are simultaneously acquiring an L2 and learning an FL.

Our Albanian child, who has come to live in Italy will learn Italian as a second language and may also learn English as a foreign language.

There are, however, substantial differences concerning the teaching and learning of a second language and a foreign language. These differences are summarised in BOX 1.2.

BOX 1.2: Second language VS foreign language

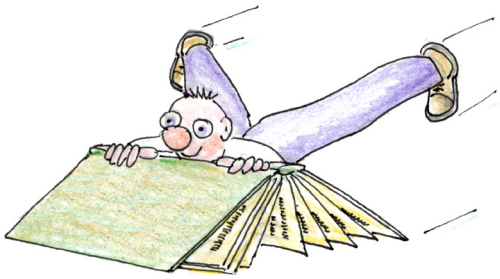
	INSEGNAMENTO/ APPRENDIMENTO LINGUA SECONDA	INSEGNAMENTO/ APPRENDIMENTO LINGUA STRANIERA
CONTEXT	Country/environment where the language learned is the language of usage (Italian course in Italy)-	Country/environment where the language learned is NOT the language of usage (English course in Italy).
TYPE OF LEARNING	Teaching/learning is EXPLICIT, but reinforced by IMPLICIT learning that happens in daily life interaction	Mostly EXPLICIT
AIMS	The new language is an instrument for communication in daily contexts, but also a means for cognitive development and thinking	The new language is learned mostly to be used occasionally to communicate with foreign people
LEARNER'S MOTIVATION	Reinforced by the necessity to use the language to satisfy daily life needs. Related to the desire for intellectual and cultural growth.	Must constantly be induced and reinforced by the teacher.
STARTING COMPETENCE LEVEL OF PUPILS/ STUDENTS	Nonhomogeneous (children arrive at different times and will be at different levels)	Homogeneous (the whole class starts learning at the same time and from the same starting point)
LINGUISTIC INPUT	Native teacher, authentic teaching material, environment	Native or (often) non native teacher, less authentic teaching
CONTACT WITH THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE NEW LANGUAGE	Direct	Mediated by the teacher

1.1.5 Bilingualism and multilingualism

Researchers often define those people those people who are able to communicate in two languages as 'bilingual', and those who are able to communicate in three or more languages as 'plurilingual'.

"At least half of the world population is bilingual".
Barbara Abdelilah-Bauer

In this project the terms "**bilingual**" and "**plurilingual**" will be used **interchangeably** to refer to all those who can communicate with a good level of competence in more than one language.



In the **Common European Framework of Reference**, a distinction is made between plurilingualism and multilingualism. Multilingualism refers to the society in which several languages are present, whereas plurilingualism refers to an individual who has competence in more than one language.

According to this definition, Switzerland, for example, is a multilingual country in which most individuals are plurilingual (Note that the term multilingual used to be applied to both societies and individuals, but increasingly the distinction is being made between the two).
Switzerland is one of the countries where **multilingualism is institutional**. Some other examples are Wales, Belgium, Canada... In these countries two or more languages are considered official. This means that official documents must generally be written in all the official languages and that children will need to develop a linguistic competence in at least one of the official languages regardless of the language they use on a daily basis.
The term **individual multilingualism** is used on the other hand to refer to the condition of people who talk more than one language but independently of any official regulations.

Languages and dialects

In some regions of Italy, for example, almost the total population speaks Italian as well as the local dialect. (Nowadays linguists agree that dialects are in effect languages in all respects).
The areas where dialects are most widely spoken are the south of Italy, the islands and the North-East; Veneto, in particular, is the region with the greatest use of dialects.
www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/speciali/italiano_dialetti/Cerruti.html (visited on 19/04/2012).

In Italy, Trentino and Valle d'Aosta regions are bilingual. In these regions people speak Italian/German and Italian/French respectively.
The Swiss canton of Ticino is another example, where most people speak a minimum of two languages, namely Italian and the regional dialect. Ticino is actually a context where you can find a great variety of language 'combinations' and 'coexistence' in the same person. It is very common to find cases such as the following: the mother speaks Swedish and the father German; the children learn Swedish and German more or less simultaneously, and then learn Italian when they play with other children and go to school, where they probably also learn French and English.

Studies such as the Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity commissioned by the European Commission (2009), and others undertaken internationally (Krizman et al., 2012), have shown that having competence in more than one language can lead to cognitive benefits. Multilingual individuals are not only able to learn another language more easily, but their cognitive flexibility appears to give them an advantage over monolingual students in other areas such as problem solving, and the executive functions of paying attention and inhibiting unwanted responses (see par 1.2.1).

When immersion programmes were introduced in Canada in the 1980s, some people worried that bilingualism might have a detrimental effect on their children's intelligence, and this fear is occasionally still expressed in the popular press.

Disinformation

In a recent article about bilingualism in a popular magazine in Ticino (Roveda, 2012) fears were expressed that learning more than one language would be too demanding for the child and have negative effects on the learning of the language of schooling).

Roveda, R. (2012), Bilinguismo, quella marcia in più…, Ticinosette, n. 18: http://issuu.com/infocdt/docs/n_1218_ti7 p. 4-5

Indeed, a bilingual child may initially have a smaller vocabulary than a monolingual child in the same language, because they are building word knowledge in two languages, but they do catch up and the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages (see par 1.2.1).

On reflection task 1.3

- How would you describe the society you live in? Is it the norm for people to be plurilingual?
- What level of competence do you think someone needs in their languages to be considered plurilingual?

1.1.6 Types of bilingualism

There are different types of bilingualism. These are classified according to three main aspects:

a) Age of acquisition of the languages:

Simultaneous bilingualism

When parents speak **two different languages**, they may decide to use the respective mother tongues with their child. The child will therefore be simultaneously exposed to two languages from birth.

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It is very important for parents to be aware of the fact that this condition is considered a great **resource** that will bring benefits at a cognitive level and also in relation to the development of cultural identity.
However **it is important for parents to know that**:

- **All children are capable of learning two languages at the same time**.
- An individual's competence in more than one language can contribute to their overall linguistic ability.
- When talking to their child, parents **should use the language that they feel most comfortable speaking**, in order to give the child a rich, stimulating and well-developed language environment.
  Some teachers mistakenly advise parents not to speak their home language with their child, but to use the language of the environment. There are numerous indications (Cummings, 2011) that being exposed to a rich and comprehensible input in the home language is much more beneficial to a child's language acquisition than being exposed to poor and restricted input in the language of schooling.

Parents should not be worried if a young child acquiring language in a bilingual environment:

- does not seems to understand immediately what they say. With time they will be able to distinguish and understand the two languages, associating them with different contexts
- answers in one language to questions that have been asked in another: what is important is that the answer provided is appropriate.

Sequential bilingualism

When a family migrates to another country, the child will be immersed in the language of that country. Consequently, they will develop a competence in one or more languages besides the mother tongue. In some cases, if exposure is very strong (school, play with friends, other…) the new language may become dominant in comparison to L1 (which may only be used with family members). According to some researchers (Pallier et al., 2003), if a child is put in a position where they are no longer exposed to their L1 (as may happen in the case of adoption) between 3 and 8 years of age, they may acquire the second language in the same way as their mother tongue with the L2 eventually replacing it.

When a child learns a second language before puberty, the term early bilingualism is used (Guasti, 2007), whereas the term late bilingualism is used when the second language is learnt after puberty.

b) Social value of the two languages:
According to the social status of the two languages learnt, within the socio-cultural environment in which the child lives, a distinction can be made between:

Additive bilingualism: the new language and culture develop together with the mother tongue. Both the new language/culture and the native one are perceived as positive, and evolve in a complementary way.

Subtractive bilingualism: the new language and culture are perceived as more 'prestigious' and are acquired "at the expense" of the mother tongue, that is destined to a gradual, even if partial, loss.

It unfortunately happens too often that children are no longer able to communicate with their grandparents in their country of origin, because they have stopped using that language. This is particularly the case when parents are keen to integrate into the new society of which they are now a part. Children, especially teenagers, may refuse to speak a language for several reasons: because the language and its speakers have a lower social status in society, because they wish to identify with the language of the environment in which they live and don't wish to be seen as different to their peers, or as a form of personal protest against a new family situation.

c) Level of fluency and competence in the two languages:
Two languages, even in simultaneous bilinguals, may not develop in perfect synchrony. Researchers, therefore, make a distinction between:

Balanced bilingualism: where two languages are spoken with the same level of fluency and competence, for example if a bilingual person maintains relations and contacts with their original community while using the language of the new community on a regular basis.

Dominant bilingualism: one of the languages is spoken with greater fluency and competence than the other. According to the Dynamic Systems Theory,

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(De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor, 2005) language acquisition is a complex process of which "forgetting" is as much part as "acquiring" and in which the phrase "use it (the language) or lose it" applies. Research into language loss, for a variety of methodological reasons, is quite complex, but we can observe that for instance children with a migrant background may actually lose their first language when they grow up in a second language environment, if their first language is not used.
If the mother tongue or native language is not meant to be the first language an individual learns, it may happen that he or she may become more proficient in a language other than the mother tongue in later life.

The child in our previous example learnt Swedish from his mother (his "mother tongue"), but since Italian is the language used and learnt at school, he gradually becomes more proficient in Italian. This includes his proficiency in writing in Italian, which is mainly developed at school. (However, if he continues speaking Swedish with his mother and German with his father he will not "forget" these languages).

On reflection task 1.4

- How can you encourage additive bilingualism in your classroom?
- Do you feel some languages have a higher status in your school?
- Do the pupils appear to value some languages more than others?
- Are you aware of any situations in your community that could be contributing to subtractive bilingualism?
- What characteristics do you think a balanced bilingual needs to display?

Bilingualism in the home

'Better education without teaching in the home language...'These educators are quite simply wrong and their advice to parents to use English in the home can lower the quality of communication between parents and children. This in turn can have very detrimental effects on children's development since there is strong evidence that quality and quantity of communication in the home provides children with the basis for performing well in school.
In summary, bilingualism is associated with educational difficulties only when children come to school without a good foundation in their heritage [home] language, and when the heritage language is not promoted in school.
When parents actively promote the heritage language in the home, children come to school with the necessary foundations for acquiring high levels of reading and writing skills in the school language. Research shows that these children consistently perform better than monolingual children in both linguistic and educational tasks. The better the children's home language is developed, the more successfully they acquire high levels of English educational skills.

Jim Cummins, 1985. Bilingualism in the Home.
Heritage Language Bulletin

1.1.7 *Code mixing* and *code switching*

Code mixing and *code switching* are defined in different ways according to the specific field (language acquisition, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic).
Often, ***code mixing*** refers to the change of one language to another within the same sentence. It is considered a developmental stage in the bilingual acquisition of language in the child. Starting from the beginning of language acquisition the

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child may produce utterances that include elements from the two codes.

It has been observed (Genesee, Nicoladis & Paradis, 1995; Petitto et al., 2001) that the extent of code mixing in the child generally depends on his/her (adult) interlocutor. The child tends to adapt easily to the situation, so the more the interlocutor changes from one code to another, the more the child will also mix the two codes.
In some cases code mixing is also defined as the morphological adaptation of a word taken from one language and used within an utterance in the other language.

*Taschengeldo, *Schublado are Italian variations of German words Taschengeld (pocket money) or Schublade (drawer), where the original German word has been given the 'o' ending of an Italian noun.

Code switching is generally defined as the change from one language to another, or from one language to a dialect. The change doesn't usually happen within the same sentence but from one sentence to another. Usually speakers are aware of this mixing of languages and do it for convenience's sake. The phenomenon may also be part of a 'secret code' used between speakers that share more than one language, for example, between members of a family. So among adults the code switching phenomenon is mostly of a sociolinguistic origin. The code is changed according to the communication circumstances and to the interlocutor.

On reflection task 1.5

- Are you aware of any words commonly used in your language that have been informally adopted from another language like the German-Italian example above?
- Are there any words that you know in another language that you would find really useful to use in your L1?

1.1.8 Consequences of the influences between languages in plurilingual speakers

In multilingual speakers, the different codes can influence each other in more than one way:

- delays in the acquisition of some aspects of the language in comparison to what would happen in monolingual acquisition. An example of this sort is the acquisition of gender distinction.

Language dependent errors 1

The accordance of article-noun gender is one of those language aspects that are subject to be acquired with some delay in bilingual children. It has been observed that Italian-German and Italian-Swedish bilingual children make some more errors in the accordance between article and noun than the monolingual Italians. French-German bilingual children tend to make even more errors than the Italian-Germans children, which may be due to the fact that noun gender can generally be retrieved from word ending in Italian but not in French.

- Transfer of some aspects of language X into language Y. It normally takes place in structures that are similar in the two languages and that imply a link lbetween syntactic and pragmatic information.

Language dependents errors 2

In Italian, (but also in Spanish and Greek) the subject of a sentence can be omitted when someone or something has already been introduced (es. (loro) hanno detto che arriveranno alle 8.00 = (they) said they will arrive at 8.00). A pronoun or noun is used when the speaker wants to introduce something new, or express a contrast (es.: Lui parla inglese, lei parla turco = He speaks English, she speaks Turkish). So, when allowed by the pragmatic context, an Italian speaker can omit the subject. In English, instead, the subject can never be omitted (apart from a few exceptions), as the omission would cause a syntactic error.

It has been observed that, in the case of Italian-English bilinguals, English influences Italian (Serratrice et. Al, 2004): the number of omitted subjects in Italian is smaller in bilinguals than in monolinguals. The same has been observed in English-Spanish bilingual speakers.

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1.2 Multilingualism and school

Almost all schools in Europe now have a significant number of children who may not speak well, or may not speak at all, the majority language when they start going to school. Although knowing more languages is often seen as an advantage, it is in real life a problem for the teacher who has to communicate with new children in a language they may not know. Cummins (2011) has underlined the importance of making the school a place where every child can feel welcome and is free to use his/her own language. This can be done by strategies such as making books available in those languages and making use of the children's knowledge of their languages, thus demonstrating that their languages are also important.

Interesting initiatives can be found in the MARILLE (http://marille.ecml.at/) project of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz (www.ecml.at).

Maintenance of the home language is important for several reasons: it is a fundamental human right to use one's language, it is important for a child's identity and allows him/her to keep in touch with the country of origin and relatives in that country.

Although all languages are equal in principle, in reality, some are 'more equal than others'. The status of the language is related to the social and economic status of its speakers. Thus, migrant languages tend to have a lower status than majority languages such as English, French or Spanish. There may be other factors, such as historical reasons, why a language has a lower status than another, but it is the school's task to ensure that no child feels ashamed of speaking a particular language.

1.2.1 Multilingualism as a positive factor

There are different kinds of advantages of being bilingual/plurilingual, provided the bilingualism is balanced and the speaker can reach an adequate competence level both in L1 and L2. With regards to this, Cummins (1981) talks about "threshold level" (see par. 1.1.3).

Cognitive

The bilingual/plurilingual student has more than one word for each object or concept, and he/she will associate each word with slightly different connotations. For this reason, the plurilingual individual generally thinks in a "more complicated" way than monolinguals normally do. This leads to greater cognitive flexibility (Hakuta, 1987) and to a more complex understanding of words. Knowing more than one language also enhances episodic and semantic memory, and this has positive effects on long-term memory as well (Kormi-Nouri et al., 2003). Positive effects of multilingualism have also been observed in updating working memory information.

Furthermore, bilingual/plurilingual individuals exhibit not only greater inhibitory control (Martin-Rhee & Bialystok, 2008) and selective attention(Bialystock e Codd, 1997; Bialystok & Majumber, 1998), but also greater control on a wide range of other executive processes (Bialystok, 2010; Barac & Bialistok, 2012). This is due to the necessity continually selecting the right word in the appropriate language from the different alternatives they could potentially use. In order to select the appropriate word, they need to somehow inhibit the irrelevant language. The result is that bilingual/plurilingual individuals generally do better at selecting the relevant information needed to answer a question, and this has positive effects on problem solving abilities.

Linguistic

Knowing two or more languages means knowing something greater than their sum (Hakuta & Bialystok, 1994). The condition of bilingualism/multilingualism leads to greater sensitivity to languages and to greater metalinguistic awareness and abilities: several studies have shown that plurilingual individuals demonstrate a greater ability to intuitively understand language structures and functioning, and do better than monolinguals in the manipulation of sounds, morphological units and words (Bialystok & Barac, 2012).

However, some studies have shown that plurilingual students generally have smaller vocabularies and that their access to lexical items is usually weaker (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2008).

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Also, several authors have found that bilinguals have a greater pragmatic competence. (Genesee, Tucker & Lambert, 1975; Genesee et al., 1995) Advantages in reading have also been observed in bilinguals in comparison to monolinguals. Bilingual speakers of alphabetical languages have been shown to outperform monolinguals in reading and in understanding the principles of reading. A further advantage could be that they can potentially transfer the reading principles from one language to another (Bialystok, Luk & Kwan, 2005).

Interpersonal, social and cultural

knowing different languages facilitates communication, mobility and exchange among individuals.

The coexistence of more than one language implies the coexistence of more than one culture, and this leads the bilingual/plurilingual individual to a richer cultural background and a richer identity.

Furthermore, plurilingual individuals tend to develop an earlier and greater ability to see things from a different perspective and to understand different points of view, which is the basis for greater tolerance towards different cultures and for developing a positive attitude to different views, ideas, traditions, behaviours…

Economical

Proficiency in different languages facilitates the mobility of the individual across different countries, and increases the possibility of creating contacts and networking. This results in greater job opportunities and in potential economical growth.

In a multilingual country like Switzerland, knowing the national languages is an enormous advantage from an economic point of view, as demonstrated by several research studies (Zhang & Grenier, 2012). People who speak more languages tend to have higher salaries.

On reflection task 1.6

- How can you encourage children to use their L1 to help their learning in your classroom? Do they feel comfortable to do so?
- Could you put more strategies in place to support the development of each child's L1 alongside the language you are teaching?

1.2.2 Multilingualism and identity related issues

Language and identity are closely related. In the past, people lived in a rather homogeneous community, in which everybody spoke the same language or the same dialect, which became one of the principal determinants of their identity. Nowadays, more and more people develop plural identities because they are part of various linguistic and cultural communities. If the new country is not positive towards newcomers, as is still quite often the case in Europe today, they may end up feeling estranged: strangers in their new country, but also strangers in the old country.

Dealing with this problem of belonging, which is not restricted to youngsters, but also present in older people, is a challenging task and it is only recently that interest has grown around issue of belonging, identification and the risks of estrangement.

Maintenance of the home language is a very important factor in an individual's identity. Trying to keep in touch with the country of origin is very important but an important role can also be played by the educational context. Teachers of plurilingual students should try and find ways to recognise the value of their languages and cultures of origin, especially in those cases when those languages and cultures are considered to have a "lower" status for social or historical reasons.

1.2.3 Multicultural societies and intercultural education

Due to historical circumstances and/or immigration phenomena, different groups of people from different countries have come to coexist together, bringing elements of their cultural heritage and resulting in new multicultural societies.

Multicultural societies are made up of plurilingual and pluricultural individuals. As stated in the Common European Framework of Reference, the different cultures that are part of an individual's background "...do not simply co-exist side by side; they are compared, contrasted and actively interact to produce an enriched, integrated pluricultural competence, of which plurilingual competence is one component" (CEFR: 6, 2001).

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The school system should take responsibility for helping the individual to develop a plurilingual and pluricultural competence, that is "...the competences of knowledge, disposition and linguistic and behavioural skills required to function as a social actor within two or more cultures" (Council of Europe, Language Policy Division, 2009).

However, in order to reach real social cohesion, a further step in needed. As stated in the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe, 2008), social cohesion depends on what has been defined as "interculturality". This entails "...the capacity to experience and analyse cultural otherness, and to use this experience to reflect on matters that are usually taken for granted within one's own culture and environment".

The education system should take responsibility for this and help students (the future citizens of our societies) develop an "intercultural competence". This involves different cognitive and behavioural skills: not only knowledge about the diverse aspects of different cultures, but also an attitude of openness, curiosity, respect towards those cultures, the capacity to adapt to different ways of thinking, the willingness to negotiate meanings in the different languages and to try and find a sort of "common ground" for an effective interaction, without allowing one cultural system to prevail over the other(s).

Schools should develop intercultural competence both in immigrant and authocthonous students and, due to the inseparable relationship between language and culture, the language classroom could certainly be one the best contexts where this may happen.
The role of the teacher is of fundamental importance in achieving this goal.
In the multilingual and multicultural classroom the teacher should:

- present diversity as a resource for everybody.
- be aware of the different communication rules, behaviours, verbal and non verbal codes that may belong to the various cultures represented in the classroom; he/she should explicit them in order to avoid misunderstandings and communication problems.
- explain the cultural differences present in the classroom to all pupils in order to avoid conflicts.
- be able to mediate and manage conflicts if they arise.
- use strategies of cooperative learning that foster collaboration and exchange among students.
- highlight the value of the contribution of every single student in the classroom.

- help students relate what they know about themselves and their own culture to the new knowledge they will acquire in the multicultural classroom.
- make extensive use of non verbal language, particularly useful in cases where verbal communication is difficult.
- promote activities based on music, drawing, movement
- work with the class on elements of cultural backgrounds that may present differences: concept of time and space, the relationship between body and space, meaning of gestures
- foster activities aimed to deconstruct the ethnocentric attitude of pupils and students
- promote contact and 'contamination' between languages and cultures.

1.2.4 Activities to develop an intercultural competence

In order to develop an intercultural competence, a number of activities can be done in the classroom. The following activities can be done to:

- increase students' knowledge about different cultures
- foster contact and contamination between cultures
- develop the ability to look at things from different perspectives and points of view
- favour cooperation and exchange among students.

All these activities can work particularly well with students with dyslexia, since they mostly require oral interaction (while reading and writing is very limited), are often multisensory, involve interaction with peers (rather than too much interaction with the teacher), and can be fun and motivating.

They may require some preparation time, but should not be considered as excessively time consuming activities that add a lot of extra work with respect to the sillabi teachers need to follow. They can be very useful tools to teach languages but also many other school subjects, while developing a pluricultural competence.

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1. "A trip to…"

This activity can be done by using Webquests (for a definition see: http://www.indire.it/content/index.php?action=read&id=1505; http://webquest.org/index.php) which can be very useful activities, especially with high school students who have computers available in the classroom.
The teacher can ask students to organise a trip in one of the countries of origin represented in the classroom. The itinerary can be decided collectively with the help of those students coming from the country that has been chosen. Then, the teacher may divide students in small groups and ask each of them to do some research on the web and find out information that is relevant for the organization of the trip. Each group can be assigned a specific topic: art attractions, food, accommodation, transportation, shopping, other…. After the research, students will collectively put together the itinerary.
This activity can be done in a collaborative way (as described above) or individually, either at school or at home.
Webquests can be a very useful type of activity to encourage intercultural collaboration among students, especially with students in upper secondary education. They can be done on a number of different topics and can be used very effectively in curricular language lessons. They are usually very entertaining, since they involve the use of the Internet, and are generally rewarding and are generally entail the realisation of some sort of "product".

2. "A day in..."

The teacher can ask students to tell the classroom about the following topics in their culture of origin (also make drawings, bring pictures, etc..):
festivities
food
fashion
music
family
religion
traditions (wedding, birthdays, ...)
free time
environment / climate
other ...
Students can then be involved in role-plays on each of the topics touched upon. The role-plays may involve either students belonging to the culture that is being considered or to a different one.

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3. "The mysterious object..."

The teacher can search and find a particular/strange object belonging to one of the cultures represented in the classroom. He/she can bring the object (or a picture of it), to school show it to pupils, ask if anyone knows what the object is and tell those who know not to tell the others. A brainstorming activity can then be started in which the class will try to guess what the object is used for and /or, in which students try to imagine what they would use the object for…

4. "From the eyes of…"

The teacher asks students to try and tell a famous story/tale from the point of view of a minor character, or of what is considered the "bad character", for example Little Red Riding Hood, told from the Hunter's point of view, or the Wolf's point of view; Snow White told from the point of view of the evil Queen/ Witch; Cinderella, told from the point of view of the Step sisters… etc…
The same activity can be done, especially with older students, on historical events like the conquest of Native Americans told from the point of view of a Native American.

5. "The world of tales….or tales from the world"

Different countries have different versions of the same story/fairytale or the same stories may present a different moral/message. For example, in Cina, the Wolf of "Little Red Riding Hood", becomes a tiger, and in Iran, the little girls does not walk alone in the woods, but is accompanied by a boy. It is very interesting to ask children from different countries to tell the version they know of the same story and explore the differences together. Children may be asked to tell their story in their L1, and then the class, together with the teacher, can put it into the FL.

6. "Into the shoes of..""

The teacher asks students to "step into the shoes" of one of their classmates (preferably one from a different country) and tell the classroom about an event like "the first day at school", or "the last time I went on a trip", or "the first time I had pasta/fish&chips/pizza/other"...

7. "Today I feel like a..."

The teacher asks students to identify with things like a flower, a tree, an animal, an invented character, describe it, and try to imitate it, and imagine what it would say, think, see, feel under a certain circumstance.

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8. "I say yes, you understand no (Talking bodies)"

The teacher works with students on non verbal language, namely on gestures that can have different meanings in different countries and cultures (see Module 4, Extension material 4.6 - Gestures in different cultures).

9. "An extraordinary invention"

The teacher selects different objects that are typical of the different cultures represented in the classroom. The students will choose one of the objects that does not belong to his/her culture of origin and will engage in a sort of role-play activity where he/she will try to convince the rest of the classroom that the object is an "extraordinary invention".

10. Music and numbers

Activities on topics like jazz music, which has developed from a mix of African rhythms and European musical instruments. Another interesting topic could be the number system, as it resulted from the contribution of mathematicians from different countries and cultures before reaching the Arab states and then Europe.

11. Foreign words

Activities on linguistic borrowings: exploring how foreign words have entered the vocabulary of many languages. But also consider "false friends". See Appendix 2 at the end of this module.

12. Greetings from...?

The following is an activityon different writing systems: alphabetical, ideographic, ... The teacher brings pupils different postcards representing places around the world. They will be written with the different writing system of the different Countries. Children will have to to guess where postcards are from.

13. Intercultural and cooperative learning activity

The teacher proposes the following activity:
Let's consider a class made up 20 students, with 4 different languages-cultures (for example, in Italy, a class made up of Italian, Chinese, Romanian and Moroccan students). The class is divided into 4 groups of 5 students each. The teacher asks each group to collect information about the following 5 topics: food, fashion, religion, music, art.
Each person in each group will be responsible for one of the five topics. This is a cooperative learning activity and will proceed in Jigsaw modality (for details, see Module 4, par. 4.9.5, activity 8).

14. Numbers around the world

The teacher explains that around the world the four basic operations can be done in different ways.
In Arab countries multiplication is done with the help of a grid. See the link: www.lanostra-matematica.org/2008/08/la-divisione-canadese-una-divisione-per.html while in Canada divisions are done through a series of consecutive subtractions. See the link: www.lanostra-matematica.org/2008/01/la-moltiplicazione-araba-o-graticola-o.html .

Both of these procedures can be helpful for students with dyslexia, since they will be able to work with smaller numbers.
If in the classroom there are children belonging to the above cultures, the teacher can ask them to explain these ways of doing the operations to the their peers.

1.3 Groudless beliefs concerning multilingualism

Multilingualism seems to be the norm in the world. As already mentioned, there are more people in the world who are bi- or plurilingual than monolingual. However, prejudices and misconceptions about multilingualism are still widespread. In this paragraph we are going to try and show that these beliefs are groundless.

- ***Learning two or more languages entails an excessive cognitive load. This may have negative effects on the general cognitive development:***
  NO, since birth, our brain is perfectly able to "handle" two or more languages. It has been demonstrated by several research studies that the benefits of bilingualism on a cognitive level are much greater than the disadvantages (see par. 1.2.1).
- ***It may be better to wait for one of the languages to become "stable" before introducing the other.***
  NO, parents may discover that introducing the second language late may be too difficult.
- ***Bilingual children mix up the two languages and are confused.***
  NO: bilingual children do switch from one language to the other but the changes always follow precise rules. Children are not confused by the use of two languages. On the contrary they develop the ability to select the appropriate words from the appropriate language, based on the context of the interaction.

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- ***If the parents of a child speak two different languages, the child will naturally become bilingual.***
  NO, if there is not enough exposure to the minority language (the one that is not the language of the environment), the child might not develop enough competence in this language.

- ***Multilingualism is a problem because it does not allow the child to focus focus completely on the language of schooling.***
  As has been pointed out above, there may be some problems when a bilingual child goes to school. S/he may have a more restricted lexicon, because their words come from two or more languages. However, they tend to catch up quickly.

- ***Having to learn more languages is too difficult for students with dyslexia***
  NO, multilingualism being the norm in the world, it is known that practically all children are able to learn more languages in a naturalistic context. It is true that having to learn several languages in a school context with 3 to 4 lessons a week and homework on top may be too much for some children. However, interference should not be a reason for exempting students from learning more languages, since this is generally a temporary phenomenon.

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APPENDIX 1 - Language skills

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

LEVEL		BASIC USER
A1	breakthrough or beginner	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
A2	waystage or elementary	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
		INDEPENDENT USER
B1	threshold or intermediate	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
B2	vantage or upper intermediate	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
		PROFICIENT USER
C1	effective operational proficiency or advanced	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
C2	mastery or proficiency	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.

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APPENDIX 2 - False friends

In linguistics false friends are words or of a language presenting a significant morphological and/or phonetic similarity with words or expressions of another language but different meaning.

False friends in English:
http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiuto:Traduzioni/Glossario_dei_falsi_amici_della_lingua_inglese
http://pagina1.altervista.org/falsi_amici_pag.htm

False friends in Spanish
http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiuto:Traduzioni/Glossario_dei_falsi_amici_della_lingua_spagnola

False friends in French
http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiuto:Traduzioni/Glossario_dei_falsi_amici_della_lingua_francese

False friends in German
http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiuto:Traduzioni/Glossario_dei_falsi_amici_della_lingua_tedesca

False friends in Portuguese
http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aiuto:Traduzioni/Glossario_dei_falsi_amici_della_lingua_portoghese

False friends in Romanian
Italian -Romanian: Conosci il tuo vicino. Torino- Romania, il dizionario per favorire l'integrazione.
link:
http://www.laboratoriocreativo.com/progetti/Conosci%20il%20tuo%20vicino_Dizionario.pdf
here it is possible to download the interesting intercultural materials

Extension material:

Jean-Pierre Mouchon: I falsi amici della lingua italiana, 2 volumi, vol. I: A-L & vol. II: M-Z (13006—Marsiglia, Francia, Terra Beata, 2001, 500 pp.).

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http://www.mediazioni.sitlec.unibo.it/images/stories/PDF_folder/document-pdf/terminologia2009/09_foris.pdf

Some Polish vs English examples

Below are some examples of words that may cause confusion for a Polish individual who has English as an additional language.

ENGLISH FALSE FRIEND	POLISH EQUIVALENT	SIMILAR TO POLISH FALSE FRIEND	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT
caravan	karawana	karawan	hearse
confection	ciastko, cukierek, deser	konfekcja	ready-to-wear clothing
direction (north, south, left, right)	kierunek	dyrekcja	management
divan	sofa	dywan	carpet, rug
dress	sukienka	dres	tracksuit, swe-atsuit
expedient	celowy; korzystny	ekspedient	shop assistant, sales clerk
eventual	ostateczny; końcowy	ewentualny	possible, poten-tial
fabric	materiał, tkanina	fabryka	factory
gymnasium	sala gimna-styczna; siłownia	gimnazjum	secondary school
lecture	prelekcja, wykład	lektura	reading; reading matter
ordinary	zwykły, zwyczajny	ordynarny	vulgar, gaudy
parapet	balustrada	parapet	window sill, ledge
pension	emerytura; renta	pensja	salary, wage
preservative	konserwant	prezerwatywa	condom
pupil	uczeń	pupil	favorite, darling
receipt	paragon	recepta	prescription
sympathetic	pełen współczucia	sympatyczny	nice

Examples from the website:
http://en.blackfreighter.com/wiki/Polish_False_Friends

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Links and further readings

- **http://bilinguepergioco.com/**
  blog created by a multilingual mother talking about her experience of parent of a bilingual child (in Italian)

- **http://www.yorku.ca/coglab/?page_id=8**
  website containing several downloadable articles about research on bilingualism and cognitive development, conducted by the Cognitive Development Laboratory coordinated by E. Bialystok, York University.

- **http://www.pearsonlongman.com/ae/cef/cefguide.pdf**
  Guide for teachers of the CEFR.

- **http://iteachilearn.org/cummins/**
  Cummin's website collecting articles on second language learning, bilingualism, literacy development.

- **http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/forum/archives/docs/forum-11-49-01/49_1_4_milambiling.pdf**
  paper on multilingualism and education.
  http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/forum/archives/docs/forum-11-49-01/49_1_4_milambiling.pdf

- **http://www.erp.org.za/pdf/language%20booklet_WEB.pdf**
  Explains why it is important for migrant population to keep their mother tongue

- **http://paduaresearch.cab.unipd.it/290/1/tesi.pdf**
  PhD Thesis by Monique Charbonniee (University of Padua, Italy) on non-verbal communication among bilingual children (in italian)

- **Dixon L.Q., Zhao J., Shin J.Y,Wu S., Su J.-H., Burgess-Brigham, R., Gezer, M. U., Snow, C.**(2012). What We Know About Second Language Acquisition: A Synthesis From Four Perspectives, Review of educational research 82: 5
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Dyslang

Module 1

MULTILINGUALISM AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

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Lifelong Learning Programme

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