Chapter 14: Siblings' Multilingual Discourse

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14.0 Introduction

Siblings' multilingual discourse is messy and vibrant and child-to-child language use has been proven hard to capture by researchers in the field and thus 'we know very little about the dynamics of bilingual children's speech and how they communicate away from the influence of parents' (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011: 1). This chapter will explore the integral role that siblings' multilingual discourse plays in children's multilingual childhood and examine these language practices across diverse family lives and sites of learning. In discussing key concepts in the field of family studies, young children are viewed as spending as much if not more time with siblings than their parents (McCarthy & Edwards, 2011). This chapter reflects on more recent research in the area of sibling language use and builds on the author's previous research into how siblings shape the language environment in bilingual families (Obied/Macleroy, 2002; 2009; 2010).

Barron-Hauwaert (2011) believed that sibling language use was an under-researched area and 'one of the most interesting factors of the bilingual family is the question of *which* language the siblings choose to communicate in' (ibid: 54). A distinctive feature of sibling relationships is their seriality and the place or 'niche' of each child in a family will be looked at in relation to a child's emerging multilingualism. Siblings' multilingual discourse is viewed as dynamic and siblings' language practices as in flux as the family grows, moves or separates. There is now growing evidence that some flexibility in language use or 'translanguaging' (García, 2009; García & Klein, 2016) can support development of the less developed language and 'artificial separation may feel like a denial of a natural way of being within family and community' (Anderson & Macleroy, 2017: 496). Siblings' decisions to speak in a given language is also about an investment in their identity (Norton, 2000).

Siblings can and should be viewed as agentive within family language policy and recent research into bilingual families shows how siblings can act as 'significant language socialization agents' (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2017: 16). There is still limited research on siblings' discourse in bilingual families (Baker, 1995; Gregory & Williams, 2000; Kenner, 2000; Yamamoto, 2001; Shin, 2005; Caldas, 2006; Obied/Macleroy, 2009; Barron-Hauwaert, 2011; Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2017; de Leon, 2018; Ćatibušić, 2019) and a gap in research that investigates siblings' multilingual discourse across sites of learning (home, community, school, offline and online). In recent research, Johnsen (2020) investigated sibling interactions through the lens of 'teasing and policing' noting that 'research on how children employ and use linguistic resources creatively and playfully in family contexts is rather scarce, especially within multilingual families' (Johnsen, 2020: 2). There is also limited research on how siblings collaborate together in bi- and multilingual educational settings to develop their language skills. This chapter will also show how digital technology is transforming the way that children use their languages and research that demonstrates how siblings work together in bi- and multilingual contexts through the process of filmmaking (Macleroy, 2019). Digital storytelling (3-5-minute films) is a powerful medium for affirming languages and identities for migrant children who 'traverse transnational spaces and ways of thinking' (Darvin & Norton, 2014: 61). This chapter will present two multilingual digital

stories that illustrate how multilingual siblings can work together across their languages to present their stories on culture and identity. *The lost boy and girl* is an Estonian-English bilingual animation created by a brother (8 years old) and sister (6 years old); and *The B.A.D. Robot* is a trilingual Hungarian-Portuguese-English animation created by 2 Hungarian brothers (10 and 14 years old) in collaboration with 3 Brazilian peers.

14.1 Siblings' language practices

Siblings' language practices within bi- and multilingual families is still an under-researched and neglected area. In addressing language development questions in relation to bilingual families, Baker viewed this as an area of research that was likely to develop in the next two decades as 'how siblings affect the language environment of the home, particularly in bilingual families, is almost unexplored territory' (Baker, 1995: 63). Barron-Hauwaert (2011) addressed this gap in the field with *Bilingual Siblings* but recognised that 'the influence of siblings on each other has hardly been studied at all and it is time to hear about the language development of all children and the sibling dynamics that are created within the family' (ibid: 6). Siblings' multilingual discourse is also seen as 'rather messier and complicated' (ibid: 51) than researching a one child scenario.

Siblings' multilingual discourse in its messiness and complexity fits in well with the concept of translanguaging (Baker, 2001; García, 2009; Li Wei, 2010). Siblings move across boundaries and borders in their experience of languages and are often in the liminal spaces and in-between-ness of speakers of their languages. Siblings' discourse is seen as a challenge to untangle for analysis due to the 'fast-paced chat, playground slang, jokes and expressions that only they understand' (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011: 16). Translanguaging spaces are viewed as creative and experimental, moving beyond the official standard uses of language and creating an expanded linguistic mode outside the boundaries of the conventional and appropriate. Translanguaging emphasises the multiple ways of transferring meanings through words and highlights the importance of experience, feelings and culture (Li Wei, 2018) and human beings' ability to 'deliberately break the boundaries of named languages to create novel ways of expression and communication' (Li Wei, 2019: 71).

Researchers have noted the agency that siblings exert over language usage and parents raising their children multilingually recognised it was 'harder to control the language the siblings choose to use together, especially when they played together, away from parents, and created their own mixes and interlanguage translations' (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011: 44). Inter-sibling language use highlights the creativity and vibrancy of their exchanges and sibling bonding, but also language friction when children use language to criticise, insult or make fun of other siblings. In reflecting on multilingual childhoods, Thomas (2012) draws together recollections on sisters and brothers' multilingual interactions and uses phrases such as 'bring them closer together; convey intimacy; emotional closeness; more informal or humorous conversations' (ibid: 181-184). Research into inter-sibling language use has also shown how siblings may incorporate a minority language into their games and role plays giving the minority language 'an important place in their imagination' (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011: p. 163).

My in-depth ethnographic research into how siblings shape the language environment in bilingual families (Obied/Macleroy, 2002; 2009; 2010) uncovered new ground on inter-

sibling language use and how siblings shift the language balance in the home and build bridges or barriers between their languages and cultures. There is still a scarcity of research into the way multilingual siblings negotiate cultural identity through interaction in the home and why particular cultural traits are reinforced or discarded in the process of achieving a multilingual identity. My investigation of the role of siblings in shaping discourses and literacy events was framed by the concept of 'in and out of sync with bilingual family practices' (Obied/Macleroy, 2002). Gee (1999) analyses the processes involved in establishing cultural competence: 'in fact, to be a particular *who* and to pull off a particular *what* requires that we act, value, and interact, and use language *in sync with* or *in coordination with* other people and with various objects ('props') in appropriate locations and at appropriate times' (Gee, 1999: 14). This notion supported my research into the complex and messy processes of negotiation and struggle in siblings' multilingual discourse.

Cultural bridges are being continuously crossed and broken and redefined by siblings and Dunn in her study of sibling relationships argues that children learn to understand the social rules and relationships of their cultural world in order to function effectively in family relationships (Dunn, 1988). Multilingual siblings interact and express emotions across their languages and in understanding multilingual discourse 'it is becoming increasingly important to understand ways in which different cultures conceptualize and verbalize emotions' (Dewaele, 2002: 3). In my ethnographic study of 6 bilingual families living in Portugal (Obied/Macleroy, 2002) a sibling aged 16 reflected on her language usage with her mother who is a single-parent: 'If I want to say something in Portuguese, something nasty for her not to understand, in Portuguese, really quick' and 'slang in Portuguese'. Sibling discourse in this bilingual family (Martin, 11; Janet, 16; Justin, 17) tends to be in the minority language when the single-mother is present, but the mother uses the majority language, Portuguese to interject, discipline or reprimand her 3 children. The mother also argues that language use gives them choices and opportunities in life and the siblings should be sensitive towards language register: 'if they are not able to be bidialectal not just bilingual, sensitive to situations, then is that the image they want to reflect of themselves?'. Conflicts occur in family discourse when siblings use Portuguese language practices which are 'out of sync' with the mother's language practice, and there is a cultural mismatch of speech forms between the two languages: 'I have conflicts with my oldest son (aged 17) about communication, because he works in the imperative a lot, which is a cultural thing'. These mismatches in forms of expression and communication are deeply rooted in culture and were apparent in sibling interaction with parents in the other multilingual families in my research (Obied/Macleroy, 2009).

In recent research on teasing and policing in multilingual families, Johnsen (2020) reveals how these mismatches can be used by older siblings to claim competence and authority over younger siblings, but that these 'local hierarchies are by no means stable or static structures' (ibid: 6). The research shows how authority positions and power in multilingual families are continuously 'negotiated, reconstructed and subverted in interactions' (ibid: 9).

14.2 Siblings as agentive in bi- and multilingual families

Research on siblings' influence on the language ecology of bi- and multilingual families is limited although there is a 'wide range of ways in which siblings influence family language practices, and these are related to siblings' interactions, activities, and social worlds' (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2017). Yamamoto's study (2001) of Japanese-English bilinguals in

Japan revealed how having sibling/s has an inhibiting influence on minority language use in the home from younger children to the oldest child. The analysis of language use to the English-speaking parent revealed that the most influential factors over the bilingual children's use of English were 'the medium of instruction in school and the presence of siblings' (Yamamoto 2001: 103). A further study on Korean children in America developing two languages (Shin 2005) showed that the language shift is initiated when bilingual children start to attend mainstream school and begin to use the school language at home. In researching siblings as language socialising agents, Kheirkhah and Cekaite (2017) found that the language of schooling dominates children's peer and sibling interactions and 'children become a major factor, contributing to language shift' (ibid: 3). These researchers argue that societal language is an 'inherent part of peer culture and siblings' intimate relationships' (ibid: 16). Siblings are seen as opening up ground and space for use of the societal language in the family domain.

In recent research into multilingual communication, Fashanu et al (2020) build on research that reveals how young children create their own cultures and use multiple strategies to assert agency through sociodramatic play, silence and negotiation (ibid: 97). These researchers also uncover children's use of space as 'a key theme that is frequently found within the literature on children's agency and resistance to discipline' (ibid: 97).

My research study showed the strategies siblings used to assert agency within bilingual family practices. In a Portuguese-Irish family with 2 siblings (Patrick, 11; Alison, 6), the Portuguese mother reflects on the younger sibling's use of the minority language.

> She understands everything, she just refuses to speak, but she speaks much more than she wants to show. Sometimes I find her speaking to her dolls in English when she's happy (Obied/Macleroy, 2009: 714).

In a Portuguese-English divorced family (Susana, 10; Ruben, 17, step-brother), Susana interacted with Ruben in Portuguese, but engaged in imaginative play in both languages.

> I was playing on the balcony of my mother's house alone and I was talking to my toys in Portuguese and English. A young Portuguese boy walked past and asked me who I was talking to. I said I was talking to myself in both languages, as I had no friends to play with. The boy said that he would talk to me and be my friend. We became friends. He thought that I was mad talking to myself in Portuguese and English (Obied/Macleroy, 2010: 236).

In recent research in Mexico focusing on talk-in-interaction between bilingual siblings in their everyday family life (de Leon, 2018), the researcher was surprised to discover that 'the children created parallel bilingual structures using *both* languages in the *same* imaginary play spaces' (ibid: 5). These bilingual siblings contested the bounded nature of distinct language domains and showed how the 'two worlds can overlap in pretend play, in spite of their linguistic and cultural distance' (ibid: 8).

14.3 Siblings' language choices, humour and intimacy in bi- and multilingual families

Siblings give languages vibrancy and immediacy and Barron-Hauwaert (2011) notes that one of the most interesting factors of the bilingual family is the question of which language the siblings choose to communicate in: 'the preferred sibling language' (p. 55). She found that multilingual siblings make this language choice 'independent of their parents' language

strategy' (p. 160) and parents are often 'unaware of how this language preference could possibly undermine their carefully planned language strategies' (p. 160). In researching his 3 bilingual children, Caldas (2006) became acutely aware of how 'our influence was rapidly waning into insignificance' (p. 126) and how 'we (the parents) were still speaking more French than English around the table during the fall of 1999, but it was apparently not increasing our children's preference for French – not even a miniscule amount' (Caldas, 2006: 138).

This points to the importance of thinking of creative and engaging ways to support siblings' minority language use in the home as 'with no or little inter-sibling language use, a minority language will become passive or underused over time, and the whole family could even slip into using the majority language together' (Barren-Hauwaert, 2011: 68). It is seen as vital that siblings use the minority language in some form and 'ideally when the parents are not around or listening in' (ibid: 68). Multilingual siblings' discourse may be enriched by what researchers have called the four 'great untranslatables': 'jokes, poetry, menus and swearing, where the interplay between culture and language is often unique' (Harding and Riley, 1986: 141). The bilingual siblings in my research study (Obied/Macleroy, 2002) tended to use the majority language, Portuguese, in everyday exchanges, but in imaginative role play, oral storytelling, jokes and computer games they moved into the minority language, English, or used both.

Research into monolingual family relationships found that humour is a fundamental part of language acquisition in the home and of developing social understanding: 'Discovering how to share a sense of absurdity and pleasure in the comic incidents of life is an important step towards intimacy' (Dunn, 1988: 168). Research conducted by Heath into ways families use language uncovered the imaginative versatility and linguistic value of oral narratives in the Trackton community: 'Trackton's "stories", … are intended to intensify social interactions and to give all the parties an opportunity to share not only the unity of the common experience on which the story may be based, but also in the humor of the wide-ranging language play and imagination which embellish the narrative' (Heath, 1983: 166).

My research study showed the powerful role of jokes, absurdity and humour in siblings' discourse in bilingual families. Siblings engaged in humorous interactions across their languages and had a 'large repertoire of jokes and anecdotes which play on words' and heightens their 'awareness of cultural traditions' and 'sense of shared pleasure' (Obied/Macleroy, 2010: 233-234). This shared pleasure creates intimacy between siblings and research shows how 'understanding each other in both languages can bond siblings' (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011: 163). In siblings' discourse they move between their languages for meaning making and this ties in with the notion of translanguaging where multilingual children draw on the full range of their available linguistic repertoire to enhance their communication (García et al., 2012).

In recent research in multilingual families, Johnsen (2020) uncovered how siblings can use teasing and humour to question, disrupt and subvert social hierarchies, but at the same time how these 'fleeting, conversational "power struggles" also work as a way to produce and affirm family bonds' (ibid: 9).

Siblings' discourse is seen as playing an active role in revitalising languages. De Leon (2018) in her research on bilingual siblings' talk-in-interaction in everyday family life found it

remarkable that siblings creatively manipulated the available codes and 'carved out a space in which two languages coexist as a result of the creative bilingual performance of new genres' (ibid: 14). Sibling interactions can prove to be a rich site of experimentation, humour and language learning as they recognise the value of inhabiting these in-between spaces and dwelling in the borders of their multilingualism: 'whether we can let ourselves be open to just being in the borderlands, inclusive borderlands, without being forced to cross borders. Only then will we be able as human beings to experience liberation and creativity, as we bring down the walls that separate us' (García, 2017: 19).

14.4 Seriality in siblings' multilingual discourse

In reflecting upon the shifts and changing dynamics in multilingual siblings' discourse it is important to look at the distinctive feature of seriality in the relationship between siblings. Barron-Hauwaert (2011) notes that there has been 'very little research done on the connection between birth order and language skills, and even less on birth order and bilingualism' (ibid: 109).

The language balance is seen to change in the family with the arrival of the second-born, as the older sibling provides a language model for younger siblings and the language histories of bilingual families seldom 'show a parallel bilingual development in first-borns and later-borns' (Baker, 1995: 64). Typically, perhaps to avoid the messiness and idiosyncratic nature of multilingual siblings' interaction, biographical or case studies of bilingual families have tended to focus on a 'first-born or only child, usually under the age of five' (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011: 16) or block siblings together in their interactions in the home (Harding and Riley, 1986).

Researchers have noted the strong school-effect on sibling language use and peer-defined boundaries outside the home. Barron-Hauwaert (2011) describes the older sibling as 'inadvertently' tipping the language balance towards the school language, whereas Caldas (2006) views this as a deliberate act of sabotage by the first-born on sibling interaction in their home and uses terms such as 'negative influence' and 'infect': 'Moreover, not only was he not speaking French, he was quite possibly infecting his sisters with his negative sentiment towards French speaking in the monolingual Louisiana context' (Caldas, 2006: 119). Caldas recorded large disparities between the language preferences of the twins in comparison with their older brother.

In looking more closely at siblings' niche in the family, research shows that multilingual siblings' discourse is also affected by the age gap between siblings. A close-in-age sibling relationship is viewed as easier for parents to support the minority language as siblings 'share similar lives, activities, cultural backgrounds and early language patterns' (Barren-Hauwaert, 2011: 76). In contrast, a wider gap between siblings can lead to the older sibling controlling or influencing the language patterns of younger siblings and show an 'alternative to parental language models' (Barren-Hauwaert, 2011: 79). However, the role of older siblings as 'excellent brokers' or mediators of a new language and culture can be valued in the home as the older bilingual sibling may help the younger sibling to successfully blend together different language strategies and develop a syncretic literacy (Gregory and Williams, 2000; Kenner, 2000).

My ethnographic research study (Obied/Macleroy, 2002) investigated the question of whether younger siblings reject or conform to the language environment of the older siblings. First-borns or only children have to negotiate language use and cultural practices with the parents, whereas younger siblings may identify closely with older siblings in their language choices, or conflicts may arise between siblings. Recent research in bilingual families reveals how siblings actively 'contribute to families' language shift' (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2017: 16). This research also showed how parents in these bilingual families were adopting a more child-centred approach and interest in allowing the 'children to use the societal language (Swedish) because it was the language the children felt more "comfortable" with' (ibid: 15).

14.5 Sibling rivalry in bi- and multilingual families

Sibling rivalry is an under-researched area in multilingualism and power imbalances in the family can lead to language friction in siblings' discourse. Language friction is seen when 'children use language to upset, annoy or insult each other. It can potentially lead to one language being under-used or dropped' (Barren-Hauwaert, 2011: 138). Research indicates that first-borns' speech is generally more correct and they appear to have a broader vocabulary in both languages than younger siblings (Barren-Hauwaert, 2011).

The close-in-age siblings (Alexandre, 9; Marco, 13) in a Portuguese-English bilingual family in my research study (Obied/Macleroy, 2009) exhibited signs of sibling rivalry and language friction in their discourse. The siblings usually interacted at home in Portuguese and Marco, the older sibling, reflected on the language use of his younger sibling.

> He understands more Portuguese than English. Mum says – speak in English – I speak in English, but he speaks in Portuguese (Obied/Macleroy, 2009: 710).

The younger sibling, Alexandre, experienced problems of feeling halfway between two cultures and resented being singled out by Portuguese peers on the basis of the home languages he speaks. When the siblings were with Portuguese peers they preferred to be addressed in Portuguese by their mother in the home, community and school. This ties in with previous research findings that show: 'Some parents report their offspring do not address them in the usual language when they pick them up from school, for example or when a monolingual peer is present' (Hoffmann, 1991: 92).

Sibling discourse shifted the language balance in this Portuguese-English bilingual family to the majority language, Portuguese (Obied/Macleroy, 2009). The older sibling used both languages in the home, but switched into Portuguese with his younger brother. The discourse interaction between the siblings was often aggressive and competitive and the younger sibling swore and showed his emotions in Portuguese. The younger sibling tended to borrow Portuguese words when he was speaking in English and his mother reflected: 'He'll try, but if he knows he can't, he'll just say – no, I don't know it in English – and continue in Portuguese'. The younger sibling reported feelings of frustration and annoyance with his bilingual identity and identified more strongly with Portuguese culture. This is reflected in other research on bilingual siblings which found that 'even siblings living in the same home, with the parents speaking the same languages, may have very different *language orders,* depending on their personal experiences of languages in their lives' (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011: 88).

Research with siblings and bilingual peers (Obied/Macleroy, 2009), shows how the older sibling was often in a more powerful position due to his broader vocabulary and greater fluency across languages. He fuelled sibling rivalry by laughing at the mistakes of his younger brother in the minority language (ibid: 711). This frustration and miscommunication can be exasperated through sibling rivalry and is apparent in other research into language shifts in pre- and early adolescent bilingualism where 'on a deeper level, the children were socially constructing identities for themselves, at times quite aggressively' (Caldas, 2006: 127). The close-in-age siblings use 'language tricks' (Barren-Hauwaert, 2011: 135), diversion and annoyance to not allow the minority parent to talk in one language. Siblings' discourse can be highly volatile and subject to powerful peer influences and Caldas (2006) argues that if the minority language is not valued by the adolescent's peer group 'he or she will likely not speak the language – even in the home' (Caldas, 2006: 163).

Johnsen (2020) in his research into multilingual families in Norway found the older siblings corrected and teased the younger ones and Spanish was not the preferred language choice between siblings as the older brother discredited 'his younger brother's attempt at speaking Spanish' (ibid: 5). Johnsen uncovered a 'social (age-scaled) hierarchy' in multilingual families (Spanish, English, Norwegian) in how older siblings used language-directed teasing, but he also found that younger siblings could question and discredit these hierarchies (ibid: 9). These power struggles, teasing and rivalry were often seen as short-lived and both older and younger siblings learn to 'exert their agencies in negotiating authority and competence' (Johnsen, 2020: 6).

14.6 Siblings as literacy mediators in diverse bi- and multilingual families

In a bi- and multilingual homes, children are in contact with two or more literate traditions and in interpreting a text they have to achieve a new synthesis of literacies. Kenner (2000) investigated literacy links for bilingual children and demonstrated how for children to become confident writers, educators needed to learn more about children's home literacy experiences in different languages. Her research focused on young children becoming biliterate across different writing systems (Kenner, 2004).

Research into developing literacy in bi- and multilingual families identified siblings as excellent brokers of a new language (Gregory, 1996) and recognised the value of older siblings as mediators of language and culture (Gregory & Williams, 2000). According to Gregory and Williams, in supportive sibling relationships the older bilingual sibling helps the younger bilingual sibling to successfully blend together different cultural reading strategies and develop a 'syncretic literacy' (2000: 176). A study into sibling interactions found that sisters were, on average, more effective teachers than brothers, especially if they were older (Azmita and Hesser, 1993). Rashid and Gregory (1997), in their research into bilingual siblings, cite a case study that explores literacy support in an 'older-sister; younger-brother' combination (a nine-year gap between siblings). The older sister effectively uses the family's home language, Sylheti, to help her younger brother access texts in English and make sense of his reading as 'part of her responsibility is to sit with Maruf and read with him books he brings from school' (Rashid and Gregory 1997: 112). This research shows how support for school literacy is viewed as a responsibility for the older sister as she is bilingual.

Similarly, in my research (Obied/Macleroy, 2009) in the single-parent bilingual family (Justin, 17; Janet, 16; Martin, 11), the older sister supported the literacy development of her younger brother whilst her mother was at work. The older sister was given the responsibility

of scaffolding her younger brother's academic literacy in the home. The mother negotiated with her daughter and provided monetary motivation to ensure the older sister supported her younger brother whilst she was working. The older sister complained that her younger brother was easily distracted and had problems developing writing in both languages: 'It's difficult because he doesn't know what he needs to study, what he needs help with, but it's been okay'. However, it is hard for children to achieve literacy across their languages and in her model of the Continua of Biliteracy, Hornberger (1989) sets out the complexity and multi-layered nature of these interactions. The youngest sibling in the single-parent bilingual family in my research was confident and versatile in non-formal home literacy and read for pleasure about 8 hours a week in both languages (Obied/Macleroy, 2009).

> I've read this story. It's the scariest one. They didn't let it come to Portugal at first. In the book it's *O Fantasma Decapitado* (The Beheaded Ghost). I used to take about a day to read a Goosebumps book, but now it's a few hours.
> (Obied/Macleroy, 2009: 233)

Recent research clearly demonstrates the value of reading for pleasure (Cremin et al., 2014) and Claxton, researching children's cognition, claims that 'children's success in life depends not on whether they *can* read, but on whether they *do* – and derive enjoyment from doing so' (Claxton, 2008: 19).

A recent comparative study of two siblings (the eldest and youngest of three sisters) acquiring Bosnian and English in Ireland (Ćatibušić, 2019) built on the work of Kenner and Ruby (2012) in recognising the important role that complementary schools can play in maintaining home languages and connections to home language communities. This research found that using Bosnian as the family language had a positive impact on the bilingual development of the siblings. The parents encouraged sibling interaction in Bosnian and supported the children's biliteracy development by encouraging them to read Bosnian books together and write in Bosnian. The study found attending the complementary school in Dublin had a positive impact on all three siblings' literacy development in Bosnian as 'interacting with other Bosnian-speaking children enabled them to further value their multilingual identities' (Ćatibušić, 2019: 155).

14.7 Siblings' bi- and multilingualism in educational settings

An under-researched area in childhood multilingualism is how siblings could be encouraged to support each other's multilingualism in the mainstream school setting. Multilingual siblings' discourse can be vibrant and creative in the playful and intimate spaces of everyday family life, but what happens when this playfulness and creativity seeps into the borders and spaces of school life? How can siblings' multilingualism be valued in schools? Hornberger (2009) talks about her deep conviction that 'multilingual education constitutes a wide and welcoming educational doorway' (ibid: 198). The recent 'multilingual turn in languages education' (Conteh and Meier, 2014) is concerned with how multilingual identities can be valued in schools and Young (2014) views teachers as key actors in this process who 'can and should play a key role in bridging the gap between home and school, be these linguistic and/or cultural bridges' (ibid: 106).

Research into supporting migrant children in mainstream schools reveals the importance of bilingual peers acting as buddies and interpreters for children who are learning the school

language. These bilingual peers share the same minority language as the new arrivals and act as 'young interpreters' for them across the school. Teachers also tend to pair up students who speak the 'same language so that they could help each other in lessons' (Arnot et al, 2014: 49). Viewing bilingual peers as young interpreters and translators in schools allows these young people to use their minority language in more formal settings and for others to recognise the value of their multilingualism.

Recent research into doing research on multilingualism as lived and visualising multilingual lives (Kalaja & Melo-Pfeifer, 2019) has recognised a new methodological turn, the 'visual turn' (Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huta, 2018). These researchers argue that when 'addressing aspects of multilingualism as subjectively experienced, which as a rule involves emotionally charged events, visual methodologies can be beneficial' (Kalaja & Melo-Pfeifer, 2019: 4) particularly with children.

14.7.1 Digital technology and siblings' bi- and multilingual literacies

Research studies on childhood now recognise the key role that digital technology plays in children's literacy, language and culture and how digital literacy blurs the boundaries between sites of learning and leisure: 'these new literacies give students a great deal of pleasure – the kind of pleasure that fosters literacy (Gennrich and Janks, 2013: 463). Craft (2011) investigates creativity in digital learning and believes the digital revolution is having a deep effect on childhood and youth in terms of: 'the plurality of identities (people, places, activities, literacies); possibility awareness (of what might be invented, of access options, of learning by doing and active engagement); playfulness of engagement (the exploratory drive); and participation (all welcome through democratic, dialogic voice)' (ibid: 33). Gee and Hayes (2011) also note the transformative effect that digital media can have on the way young people learn new languages and their deep engagement with more flexible, dialogic and interactive forms of language learning.

Siblings' multilingual discourse will be examined in these new digital spaces and research findings presented from an international project, 'Critical Connections: Multilingual Digital Storytelling' (2012 – present) which included siblings working together on the filmmaking process. We defined multilingual digital storytelling in our project as a short multilingual story (3-5 minutes) made using photographs, moving images, artwork, sculpture, objects, shadow puppetry, stop motion animation, green screen, poetry, dance and drama. (Anderson and Macleroy, 2016). The project has involved over 1,500 young people, across primary and secondary age ranges (6-18 years old), in creating and sharing digital stories in over 15 languages (Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Croatian, English Estonian, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, Tamil and Turkish) and usually with English subtitles.

This chapter presents two digital stories that illustrate how siblings can work together in a school setting and be given space to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning in complex and creative ways. The research draws on interviews with the siblings; video footage of their discourse whilst creating the digital stories; siblings presenting their digital stories to an international audience at the BFI; siblings' reflections on the stories; teachers' reflections on the process; and the digital stories. *The lost boy and girl* is an Estonian-English bilingual animation created by a brother (8 years old) and sister (6 years old); and *The B.A.D.*

Robot is a trilingual Hungarian-Portuguese-English animation created by 2 Hungarian brothers (10 and 14 years old) in collaboration with 3 Brazilian peers.

14.7.2 Siblings' creative multilingualism

14.7.2. i: *The lost boy and girl*

Teachers are key to fostering children's multilingualism in schools and Dominika, the English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher in a London primary school, had completed her MA in Education at Goldsmiths including a module on 'Teaching Languages in Multilingual Contexts' where she had learnt about the multilingual digital storytelling project. Dominika was keen to implement the project in her primary school and selected her EAL classes with these young Estonian siblings, Säde and Uku. Working with these siblings in the EAL classes was an opportunity to work across age groups in the school and Säde (6 years old) was in Year 2 and Uku (8 years old) was in Year 4. Säde was the youngest child that we had worked with on the project and we were worried about the media and language skills required, but the bonding between these siblings was strong and mutually supportive.

These close-in-age siblings collaborated together to create a bilingual digital story about belonging with the voice-over in Estonian and the subtitles in English. The EAL teacher fostered collaboration between the siblings and created a workshop environment where the siblings were encouraged to imagine, experiment and come up with their own ideas. Dominika set up the circle of digital storytelling with a hypothetical idea – what if things could talk? The siblings explored where objects could be from; the languages they could speak; what they could say and then moved to their own lives and discussed journeys, family, memories, country, languages, school environment, how to fit in, and belonging. The Estonian word for belonging, *Kuulumine*, was written on a post-it note and stuck on the classroom wall and the siblings added their own post-it notes to the wall. The siblings discussed the rewards and difficulties of belonging to particular groups and thought about the message they wanted to communicate in their own digital story. It has already been argued that reading for pleasure is vital in developing literacy across languages and the EAL teacher used picture books with the siblings (*Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers; *The Colour of Home* by Mary Hoffman; and *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak) to explore sadness, anger, loss and friendship and how together the words and images convey a state of mind and powerful feelings (Reynolds, 2007).

After watching a selection of digital stories the siblings discussed the production process including storyboarding, scriptwriting, translation and setting. The bilingual siblings had their own workshop at the BFI to develop their knowledge about camera shots and angles and how to make a film using Stop Motion Animation (Figure 14.1).

Figure 14.1: Bilingual siblings engaging in a media workshop at the BFI.

Storyboarding was a vital part of the process for these young bilingual siblings as they were learning to interact in and across their languages and across different modes of communication (transmediation) and choose from 'multimodal semiotic resources that do not have direct equivalence, thus inviting creativity and transformation (Mills, 2016: 68).

Storyboarding is seen as providing a creative multi-voiced space which is dialogic and interdiscursive (Mills, 2011). Säde and Uku worked collaboratively on their storyboard for *The lost boy and girl* discussing the script in both languages; sound effects and mood; camera shots and different emotions; and images and sequencing. The siblings created a sequence of 22 frames in their storyboard and shared the scripting and design of different frames. Uku captures the feelings of frustration as the siblings are told they are moving from Estonia to London in the emotive question: *Miks ema?* /Why Mum? (Figure 14.2).

Figure 14.2: Storyboard frame (no. 4) The lost boy and girl

Säde draws an image to depict the power of the other children in the London school and the high-angle shot to denote the siblings' vulnerability to their harsh words: *Mine siit ära*! /Get out of my way! (Figure 14.3).

Figure 14.3: Storyboard frame (no. 8) The lost boy and girl

As well as storyboarding the siblings wrote a script and included stage directions, dialogue and emotions. These bilingual siblings then made the decision to use Stop Motion Animation for their digital story and work with Lego bricks to bring their story about belonging to life. Facial expressions are vital in comic art to communicate emotions (McCloud, 1993) and the siblings show a complex and creative understanding of visual communication. Stop Motion Animation required patience, negotiation and discussion between the siblings as each shot was framed and the Lego characters, props and buildings constructed.

The Estonian-English digital story *The lost boy and girl* opens with upbeat music in the family home in Estonia. The siblings are in the corner of the family home together with smiles on their faces and the mother moves across towards them. The music stops and the voice-over is in Estonian with English subtitles. The mother announces: 'We are moving to a new country. You need to pack your bags …' (the siblings have covered over the smiles on their Lego faces with plasticine to show their sadness). The older sibling's response is framed in anger as the subtitles are in capitals: 'I DON'T WANT TO PACK MY STUFF!' (and sadness as each sibling has a blue plasticine tear on their faces). The sadness intensifies (the siblings' faces now have 2 tears) and the father reiterates in Estonian: 'You have to pack your clothes and toys'. Slow music plays to show the passing of time as a Lego aeroplane flies from Estonia to London.

The next scene opens in their London school and the siblings have smiles on their faces as other children approach and the younger sibling whispers quietly in Estonian to the older sibling: 'Don't worry, Tom!' The mood abruptly changes as the music creates tension and the voice-over and subtitles switch into English (Estonian is silenced as the siblings have plasticine over their mouths and they appear afraid to speak). The other children are intimidating and the siblings depict this through large monobrows, angry facial expressions, increasing height, and shouting and laughing at them in English: 'Go back to your country! Yeah, you don't belong here! Ha ha ha ha!' (sinister laughing as the other children increase in size and the tension builds). The siblings are left alone together.

In the next scene the siblings are alone and smiling when two new friends enter with smiles on their faces. The mood changes as these new friends reassure the siblings: 'Don't worry guys! Yeah! Let's be friends'. The older sibling now has the courage to talk: 'Let's tell the teacher'. The following scene is upbeat with the 4 children on a slide in the playground. The scene switches to the Estonian family home in London and the voice-over reverts to Estonian with English subtitles as the mother tells the siblings: 'We're going back to Estonia! The siblings respond happily in Estonian: Hooraaaaay!!!' The next school scene is now framed with the 2 siblings and their 2 new friends in a semicircle with smiles on their faces and the younger sibling talks: 'Goodbye guys!' Then the older sibling ends with this message of friendship: 'Thank you guys. We know where we belong now. It's not only our country, but you became our family'. Slow music plays again as the Lego aeroplane is depicted on route back to Estonia and a scene in the family home in Estonia. These young siblings use comic graphics at the end of their animation to depict the power and confidence they now feel: Yeah! Pow! Smash.

These young bilingual siblings surprised their parents, teachers and peers with their complex and imaginative understanding of multilingualism and the emotions and experiences of living in different languages. Säde and Uku presented *The lost boy and girl* at the BFI and described their Estonian-English animation in this way: 'Two Estonian children are moving to London with their parents. After a difficult beginning, they realise what belonging means to them'. The siblings stood together to present their film to a public audience and the younger sibling opened with these words: 'I would like to talk about our film that I made with my brother'.

The lost boy and girl: https://vimeo.com/220341659

14.7.2. ii. *The B.A.D. Robot*

In this digital story, the interdisciplinary collaboration between the Language and Art teacher was key to fostering an experimental and creative space for multilingualism in the secondary school in London. The Language teacher, Mirela, had been part of an active self-help group of parents raising children bilingually and part of their interview team for research on multilingual childhoods (Thomas, 2012). She completed a postgraduate certificate in Education on 'Teaching Multilingual Learners' and became interested in the multilingual digital storytelling project as she was keen to engage with innovative pedagogies to support multilingual children learning English as an additional language. The Art teacher, Marc, was interested in opening up creative and digital spaces in the school for language learning. He has been studying and engaged in improvisation workshops for the past few years and he is fascinated by the creative power of improvisation. He is also intrigued in the process of animation and how it allows children to 'play with stuff, problem solve, talk to each other, focus and that is what I want from a classroom'.

The multilingual digital storytelling project was set up in an Art classroom in the secondary school as an after-school film club for multilingual children learning English as an additional language. The focus for the series of workshops was on older children and the three Brazilian students involved in the project were in Year 9 and Year 10 (aged 14 – 15 years old). However, the two Hungarian siblings had arrived in England at the start of the school year and the parents were keen for the younger sibling to participate. The younger sibling had only a few words of English and this project allowed him to work alongside his older brother in a school setting and be supported by teachers. Lázlo (14 years old) was in Year 9 and Bálint

(10 years old) was in Year 5 and this wider age gap between the siblings created a strong bond (rather than rivalry) where the siblings could use Hungarian together to develop ideas and interpret and translate the dialogue.

These Hungarian siblings collaborated with their bilingual peers to create a trilingual digital story on belonging. The teachers created the digital storytelling circle through initial experimentation with animation and exploring the effects of bringing objects to life in imaginative ways. The siblings made a short animation of their pen and showed sophistication in representing upward movement, sound effects, and comic graphics (crash, boom, pow). The older sibling was technically savvy and quickly developed media skills in editing Stop Motion Animation and the younger sibling was skilled in music and became adept at adding sound effects. The siblings became immersed in experiential learning with their bilingual peers and explored how objects could tell stories engaging with objects as 'vibrant matter' (Bennett, 2010). This experimentation phase of the project was not bounded by the children's different languages and the siblings were learning to make meaning in and beyond language.

The siblings with their bilingual peers explored the concept of belonging and came up with the idea of robots and artificial intelligence and the disturbing and difficult question – what would happen if robots could feel emotions? The young people created a mind map with their ideas including the following: a robot family, not belonging to a time period, a build-up or crescendo with a change. A Hungarian mother tongue teacher in the school supported the siblings at different stages of the project, interpreting for the younger sibling at the start and listening and checking the siblings' Hungarian in the voice-over for the final film animation. The younger sibling found it hard to contribute to the initial exploration of ideas for the digital story, but he listened attentively and slowly constructed a robot as the others were talking. The Art teacher reflected on this as a 'big breakthrough' in the process when the youngest sibling created this 'fantastic robot out of some wooden stuff I'd left lying around'. This wooden robot became the main focus for the project and Bálint, the youngest sibling, was credited as the chief robot designer (Figure 14.4).

Figure.14.4: Bilingual siblings engaging in a pre-production workshop

Lázlo, the older sibling, researched online for pictures and photographs to create a mood board and support their ideas for a storyline: 'The making is just a process, but the ideas are much harder'. The Art teacher created an environment where the students learnt through engaging with materials and he filled the classroom space with robotic materials, electronic junk and computer parts. However, the siblings and bilingual peers were finding it hard to develop a collaborative storyline around the robots until a drama teacher suggested writing a back story for their robot character (name, voice, experience, age, story). This was a key decision and the youngest sibling moved from speaking only a few words in English at the start of the project to being able to write a detailed back story in English for his robot (Figure 14.5). It was also the moment when the children began experimenting with the voices of the robots in Hungarian, Portuguese and English and the Art teacher commented that there was a 'wind of energy and fun'.

Figure 14.5: Bilingual siblings' back story, mood board and stage set for their digital story

The young people were working across 3 languages and had the challenge of creating a trilingual script. Instead of traditional storyboarding they created a digital storyboard with digital sketches of each scene and the narrative script came out of this improvisation. The young people experimented with different voices and accents in their languages and made the decision that the central robot character, B.A.D, would speak in Hungarian. The Hungarian siblings collaborated closely on the Hungarian script for the oldest robot, whilst the Brazilian students developed the Portuguese script for the newer robots, and they then worked together across languages and the narration in English. Their linguistic sophistication was striking and the teacher noted: 'These skills would not have happened in any other part of the curriculum'.

The Hungarian siblings played a key role in framing the digital story and understanding how languages include and exclude others. The opening narration of *The B.A.D Robot* is in English (without subtitles) as the young people wanted to convey a sophisticated and complex backstory and focus the visual communication on the robot. Bálint, the younger sibling, created the electronic sound effects as the B.A.D. robot is slowly reactivated by the sun's rays and its systems come to life. The older sibling, Lázlo, experimented with the younger sibling with voices and accents in Hungarian for the B.A.D. robot and they decided on a monotone metallic sounding voice. The first words spoken in Hungarian with English subtitles, 'I have to find a life … I must find the city', capture the dilemma for the old robot as he walks slowly towards a completely changed world.

The B.A.D Robot was scripted, animated and narrated by all 5 students and the next part, where the old robot encounters the new robot models, shows their deep understanding of the notion of belonging and also the inventiveness and versatility of their multilingual discourse. The old B.A.D robot sees 3 androids that are 'uncatalogued in his data base' and 'speaking a language he identifies as Portuguese'. A circle of friendship is created between these 3 androids interacting in a shared language, Portuguese, about robotic things such as dosages of oil and its temperature and taste. This dialogue is cleverly constructed and the old robot is isolated from their discourse and made to feel unwelcome. The B.A.D. robot states his identity in Hungarian and the androids respond in Portuguese with some of the following comments: 'By my program, you're horrible … all of us have a human shape, but you're so rectangular'. The Portuguese-Hungarian dialogue shows how language can be used as a powerful tool to isolate as well as bring characters together and the B.A.D robot created by the youngest Hungarian sibling is mocked and ridiculed: 'Come back. We just want to put you in your place. Yeah … the museum … ha ha ha'. The next part of the story (in English) narrates the inner thoughts and emotions of the B.A.D. robot and his sadness. The oldest Hungarian sibling, Lázlo, was the main editor and he skilfully ends the dialogue with these powerful words spoken in Hungarian as the robot deactivates itself: 'In today's world. Nobody cares about someone who is different. They look down on them. They only care about my look. I'm going to shut myself down. I DON'T BELONG HERE!!'.

The Hungarian siblings collaborated closely on the digital story and the younger sibling surprised his older brother, teachers and parents with the rapid development of his bilingualism. The project provided spaces for him to take risks and practise his Hungarian and English engaging in complex acts of translation and imaginative discourse with his older brother. The older sibling, interpreted, translated and framed the digital story in collaboration with his younger sibling and bilingual peers. Siblings' multilingual discourse, experience, and creativity played a pivotal role in this trilingual animation:

The BAD Robot: https://vimeo.com/220581681

14.8 Concluding factors on Siblings' Multilingual Discourse

Research into siblings' multilingual discourse reveals its vibrancy and messiness. Siblings' interactions are invested with emotions that foster sibling bonding and intimacy, but also sibling rivalry and language friction. The role of siblings in childhood multilingualism is seen as conflicting and contradictory as siblings give 'languages life and vitality' (Barren-Hauwaert, 2011: 164), but they may also disrupt family multilingualism by creating a 'social space separate from adults' (Caldas, 2006: 118) who want them to speak the minority language in the home. Multilingual siblings' niche in the family affects their language experiences and their confidence and versatility to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to communicate.

Translanguaging is a useful concept to capture the creative and experimental nature of multilingual siblings' discourse and the novel ways of expression and communication (Li Wei, 2019) they uncover and invent. Research into siblings' multilingual discourse shows how important it is to create multilingual spaces that are fun and pleasurable. Multilingual siblings are seen as adept and sophisticated in their language play, humour and sense of the absurd. Multilingual siblings become very aware of how they can manipulate their languages to include or exclude others.

The Critical Connections Multilingual Digital Storytelling project (Anderson & Macleroy, 2016) demonstrated the role that schools and teachers can and should play in supporting and extending siblings' multilingualism and bridging the gap between home, school and community. The project also worked with community-based complementary schools that play a crucial role in supporting childhood multilingualism. This chapter concludes with the views of bilingual peers on siblings' discourse and interaction (rivalry and bonding) in their Bulgarian-English digital story on fairness:

The Toy Helicopter: https://vimeo.com/168812249

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