EMBRACING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Plurilingual approaches to teaching vocabulary in Franco-Ontarian classrooms

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Abstract

This paper examines the implementation of plurilingual approaches in the teaching of French vocabulary in Franco-Ontarian schools. Through a qualitative analysis of the practices of three experienced teachers, the study highlights innovative pedagogical practices that leverage linguistic diversity to enhance students' learning of vocabulary and foster a deeper appreciation for plurilingualism in the classroom. The findings of this multiple case study, derived from a series of semi-structured interviews, demonstrate how teaching concepts like cognates, idiomatic expressions, prefixes, and suffixes within a plurilingual framework can cultivate engaging and inclusive learning environments. Furthermore, the role of plurilingual texts and parental involvement in enriching vocabulary instruction is emphasized, showcasing the collaborative efforts between teachers, students, and families in language education. This study highlights how linguistic diversity can form the basis for meaningful vocabulary instruction in French Ontario, ultimately contributing to the vitality and longevity of the French language in the province.

Keywords: plurilingual approaches; vocabulary teaching; French Ontario; teaching practices; multiple case study

1.   INTRODUCTION

French-language education in Ontario, akin to that in other Canadian provinces where French holds minority status (e.g., New Brunswick and Saskatchewan) (Boudreau & Bourgoin, 2020; Boutouchent, 2016), is characterized by a dual mandate (Cavanagh et al., 2016; Fleuret, 2020). On the one hand, like all education systems, it has a duty to contribute to the development of tomorrow's society by training informed and critical citizens. On the other hand, its purpose is also to ensure the continuity of the French language and to foster the enrichment of the cultures intertwined with it. As a result, this educational system, enshrined as a constitutional right under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Gérin-Lajoie, 2020; Tovar-Poitras & Larocque, 2022), serves as the primary means to uphold the continuity of Ontario's Francophone communities. In this vein, Ontario boasts 12 French-language school boards, overseeing over 470 schools across the province (Éducation en langue française, 2024).

Reflecting the society in which they are situated, student populations in these schools showcase remarkable linguistic diversity (Farmer, 2016; Lory & Prasad, 2020). Due to the predominant status of English in the province, students often possess a comprehensive understanding of the dominant language, which may permeate their daily interactions both within and outside school settings (Mady, 2019). Additionally, Ontario stands out for having the highest number of immigrants compared to other Canadian provinces (Statistics Canada, 2024). Schools therefore prioritize French as the common language despite the prevalence of English in society, while students are becoming increasingly acquainted with languages beyond those formally taught (Bangou et al., 2021; Fleuret et al., 2018).

Given the outlined sociolinguistic diversity, the teaching of French assumes a pivotal role in francophone minority settings—it is mainly through this medium that schools can aspire to fulfil their mission of nurturing Franco-Canadian cultures (Cazabon, 2005; Thibeault & Fleuret, 2023). Vocabulary, an integral facet of balanced French language instruction (Anctil & Proulx, 2022; Grossman, 2018), is gaining traction in educational discourse within Francophone minority settings. Since students in these environments often encounter limited exposure to the language of instruction beyond school (Gratton & Chiasson, 2014; Thibeault, 2020), the incidental learning of vocabulary—occurring unintentionally due to extensive language exposure (Teng & Mizumoto, 2023; Webb et al., 2023)—often takes place in languages other than the one taught at school. Consequently, teachers must consider how to deliver vocabulary instruction in a manner that is meaningful, acknowledges the sociolinguistic context of students, and empowers them to enhance their lexical repertoire in the language of instruction.

In recent years, studies on vocabulary instruction in minority contexts have zeroed in on several principles that would facilitate the development of a wide-ranging vocabulary among students. From the outset, it seems important to provide contextualized (Dionne, 2021), direct and explicit (Mayer-Crittenden & Leduc, 2023)

vocabulary teaching in the classroom. This instruction should be intertwined with authentic communicative contexts and clear explanations of lexical items, facilitating learners' utilization of vocabulary across various communicative situations (Berthiaume et al., 2020; Alzahrani & Alhomyani, 2023). To optimize vocabulary teaching, integrating it into not only French classes but also other academic subjects would be pertinent (Cormier, 2020; Cormier et al., 2010). Students would thus be granted the opportunity to reflect on the lexical components of language in a wider variety of teaching contexts, multiplying their opportunities to develop a varied disciplinary vocabulary (Nation & Webb, 2011). From a sociolinguistic perspective, Blain et al. (2018), in alignment with numerous researchers in minority contexts advocating for the valorization of students' plurilingual repertoires (Cavanagh & Lavoie, 2023; Dagenais, 2020; Moore & Sabatier, 2014), suggest recognizing that students' vocabulary reflects their linguistic trajectory and may therefore be the product of interactions between standard French and other languages. These authors thus advocate for vocabulary instruction to integrate the diverse lexical knowledge of learners and utilize it to support their vocabulary growth in French.

While Ontario's official discourse historically leaned towards a monolingual language standard until the early 2010s, there has been a progressive embrace of linguistic diversity and acknowledgment of its significance in both policy and teaching practices (Farmer & Lory, 2019; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2023). In research, certain authors (Thibeault et al., 2022; Trottin & Thibeault, 2023) have recently investigated the practices of innovative teachers who, in accordance with recent research trends, adopt plurilingual approaches. However, vocabulary, an essential aspect of language learning (Cardona & De Iaco, 2020), has remained relatively unexplored in these studies. Our research therefore aims to shed light on the plurilingual practices utilized by teachers in French-speaking Ontario for teaching this aspect of the French curriculum.

2.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our theoretical framework draws upon two domains: the teaching and learning of vocabulary, as well as plurilingual teaching approaches. In the subsequent paragraphs, we briefly delineate these fields to contextualize the study within this article.

2.1 The teaching and learning of vocabulary

On a linguistic level, the study of vocabulary focuses on two primary types of lexical items (LI), each playing a pivotal role in vocabulary instruction: lexemes, such as "courage" and "skyward," and multiword expressions, including idiomatic expressions like "long story short" and complex prepositions like "in between" (Zwier & Boers, 2023). These items do not exist in isolation; rather, they constitute an interconnected system within a language's lexicon (Basile, 2019; Polguère, 2016).

Understanding this system is facilitated through teaching practices that explore lexical concepts like synonymy, collocations, and affixes, which elucidate the relationships among LIs (Lavoie, 2015; Tremblay, 2021).

The teaching of lexical items and their organization within the lexicon is closely tied to the development of students' lexical competence (Jafrancesco & La Grassa, 2021), which encompasses both quantitative and qualitative dimensions (Matenova, 2023; Westby, 2024). Quantitatively, lexical competence concerns the number of lexical items an individual possesses and employs. Qualitatively, it delves into the depth of understanding an individual has regarding each item. This depth is multifaceted, involving considerations of meaning, form, and use (Nation, 2022). The meaning of a lexical item encompasses not only its definition(s), but also the semantic domains it belongs to. Regarding form, lexical items include considerations pertaining to pronunciation, spelling, and sublexical features such as prefixes and suffixes. Use, lastly, involves the contextualized application of these lexical items, whether spoken or written, contingent upon grammatical structures and syntagmatic relations; phenomena such as collocations and verbal transitivity are associated with how lexical items are used (Sardier, 2016).

Given the limitations of incidental acquisition of vocabulary through exposure (Rasinski & Rupley, 2019), particularly evident in francophone minority contexts in Canada, a growing body of research emphasizes the necessity of direct, deliberate, and targeted instruction of lexical items. This approach, advocated by scholars such as Nation (2022) and Anctil (2015), entails the explicit teaching of carefully selected LIs. Direct instruction, as opposed to relying solely on incidental learning, can complement and enhance the language acquisition process, and stands apart from practices that solely rely on spontaneous encounters with new vocabulary during reading or listening activities (Grossman, 2018; Sauvageau, 2023). Moreover, such a vocabulary instruction can be aligned with socioconstructivist principles, which are acknowledged for their relevance in vocabulary instruction (Moody et al., 2018). Under this framework, direct vocabulary instruction fosters frequent interaction and collaboration among peers, and between students and educators (Beck et al., 2013). This type of teaching frequently draws from an inquiry-based approach (Hicks Pries & Hughes, 2012), prompting students to utilize their existing knowledge to address linguistic challenges concerning various aspects of vocabulary, such as deciphering the meaning of a word or understanding the importance of a prefix. In this approach, students are encouraged to formulate hypotheses and, with the assistance of both peers and instructors, verify their hypotheses. In regions like Ontario, where a significant population of plurilingual students attends French-language schools (Fleuret, 2023; Lory, 2023), pupils often arrive with prior knowledge in languages other than the school's primary medium of instruction. Embracing plurilingual approaches therefore emerges as a promising strategy for integrating this existing knowledge into vocabulary instruction.

2.2 Plurilingual approaches for the teaching of vocabulary

Plurilingual approaches constitute a cornerstone in contemporary language education research (Moore, 2006; Piccardo et al., 2022), transcending boundaries between Anglo-Saxon and Francophone scholarly spheres. There now seems to be a consensus that students' diverse linguistic repertoires should be esteemed and effectively utilized in language instruction (Auger & Le Pichon-Vorstman, 2021; García & Wei, 2014). Specifically, by engaging multiple languages, including the language of instruction, plurilingual approaches hold the potential to enrich students' learning across various dimensions. They facilitate cross-linguistic transfers and foster the development of metalinguistic abilities (Candelier, 2016; De Pietro, 2003), notably in vocabulary instruction (Martini & Torregrossa, 2023). Moreover, they play a pivotal role in nurturing students' holistic identities, affirming and maximizing the value of their plurilingual linguistic proficiency (Brisson, 2018; Schroeter et al., 2023). Within this framework, these approaches can also foster strong connections with students' bi/plurilingual family members, who can be acknowledged for their expertise in home languages and contribute to the creation and implementation of inclusive teaching practices (Chen & Pushor, 2023; Prasad, 2017). However, achieving this necessitates educators to exhibit openness towards linguistic diversity and actively strive to establish meaningful connections with their students' families (Young, 2022).

The adoption of plurilingual approaches intersects with a contemporary trend garnering significant attention in English-speaking educational spheres: pedagogical translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017, 2020). This educational paradigm not only legitimizes but also utilizes the learners' plural linguistic repertoire within classroom settings. These practices encompass activities such as comparing language structures (Maynard & Thibeault, 2023) and utilizing plurilingual texts (Gilman & Norton, 2020). In the field of vocabulary instruction, numerous studies underscore the relevance of employing diverse plurilingual approaches (Fuster, 2022; Galante, 2020). These investigations emphasize leveraging cognates, translations, and lexical explanations in languages familiar to students (Lee & Lee, 2022). Additionally, they advocate for fostering language exchanges among students in their chosen languages and facilitating comparisons of lexical items across languages.

Cognates are defined as lexical items sharing significant similarities in form and meaning across different languages (Younes & Mueller Gathercole, 2022) (e.g., "algebra," "algèbre," "álgebra," " الجبر," and " الجبرا" in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Urdu). Deemed "teachable and useful" (White & Horst, 2012, p. 181), they have repeatedly been recognized for their potential to enhance the learning outcomes of bi/plurilingual learners (D'Angelo et al., 2017; Hipfner-Boucher et al., 2021). For instance, Cenoz et al. (2022) undertook a study involving fifth-grade students from a primary school in Spain who engaged in an educational intervention grounded in pedagogical translanguaging. This intervention included activities centred around cognates in English, Spanish, and Basque, with the former languages

being taught as specific subjects and the latter serving as the language of instruction. Findings suggest that the recognition of cognates is influenced by the attributes inherent to cognates themselves rather than by the participants' primary language. Consequently, the orthographic and semantic transparency of cognates emerged as significant factors in their identification. Although the experimental group exhibited marginally superior performance in cognate identification, the disparities compared to the control group were not statistically significant. Nevertheless, students in the experimental cohort displayed heightened metalinguistic awareness and comprehension of cognates. The authors thus underscore the importance of leveraging students' linguistic repertoires to support language acquisition and metalinguistic proficiency in diverse linguistic environments.

In another study conducted in the same context, Leonet et al. (2020) examined the effects of a pedagogical intervention focused on the development of morphological awareness, which refers to the ability to analyze the morphemic components of words (prefixes, suffixes, etc.) and manipulate them intentionally (Carlisle, 2010). Their study involved fifth- and sixth-grade students in Spain, learning English as a foreign language while already proficient in Spanish and Basque. The activities of the experimental group primarily centred around vocabulary, including comparisons of the process of adding prefixes and suffixes using examples in all three languages, as well as searching for cognates in different texts. Results showed that students in the experimental group made greater progress in their morphological awareness in English compared to those in the control group, highlighting the benefits of plurilingual approaches in this area. Additionally, students in the experimental group found these activities useful and expressed enjoyment in completing them.

While the plurilingual practices examined in the aforementioned studies have attracted attention from researchers, there remains a gap in the literature regarding their implementation by teachers without the involvement of a research team. In other words, research has yet to shed light on how certain teachers incorporate plurilingual approaches into their vocabulary instruction independently of researchers. This study, focusing on educators working in the Franco-Ontarian minority context, thus aims to explore such plurilingual practices, specifically concerning vocabulary instruction.

3.   METHODOLOGY

The findings presented in this article stem from a broader interprovincial study aimed at describing the practices of teachers in the Canadian provinces of Québec and Ontario who employ plurilingual approaches to teach vocabulary. While this article adopts the form of a multiple case study (Roy, 2021), we specifically concentrate on the profiles of three teachers who work in Franco-Ontarian schools. However, to provide a comprehensive context for the approach guiding the data

collection and analysis concerning these teachers, it is pertinent to first introduce the overarching study from which these three cases were selected.

A total of 20 teachers, with 13 based in Québec and 7 in Ontario, volunteered to take part in the study. They were recruited through a call for participation distributed via social media channels. Additionally, the principal investigators reached out to potential participants from a prior study with a similar aim, albeit focused on plurilingual grammar instruction (Maynard & Thibeault, 2023). To qualify for participation in this research, individuals had to be teachers based in Québec or Ontario who confirmed their utilization of plurilingual approaches in teaching French vocabulary. Participants, aged between 27 and 56, possessed teaching experience ranging from 1 to 27 years. They operated in various French-language teaching contexts, including streams where French serves as the language of instruction, special education settings, and classes focusing on the inclusion of newcomers. Among the participants, 14 identified French as their first language, all were proficient in English, and some also possessed proficiency in immigration languages (such as Arabic and Kabyle) and indigenous languages (such as Innu-aimun).

To collect data aligned with our objective, participants were invited to take part in two interviews. The first interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes, prompted them to comprehensively articulate their plurilingual practices for teaching vocabulary. Questions posed were broadly framed, with subsequent inquiries aimed at eliciting detailed descriptions of each practice mentioned. Data analysis began with verbatim transcription of the interviews. Following Thomas's (2006) protocol, we conducted an inductive thematic analysis. Initially, the two principal researchers collectively coded data from four interviews to develop an initial analysis grid. This grid was subsequently refined through testing with two additional interviews, leading to the creation of a final version. Thereafter, two research assistants assumed responsibility for coding. Each interview was coded by one assistant, while the other cross-verified the assigned codes. Any discrepancies were resolved through team discussions involving all four research team members.

The resulting analytical framework consists of three distinct sets of codes. The initial category outlines the plurilingual practices revealed by participants, amounting to a total of eight, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Plurilingual practices declared by participants

#	Name of practice
P1	Inviting students to translate lexical items into languages other than French
P2	Inviting students to compare lexical items in different languages
P3	Translating lexical items into languages other than French
P4	Comparing lexical items in different languages
P5	Inviting students to invent lexical items in languages other than French
P6	Creating a plurilingual bank of lexical items
P7	Inviting students to take part in a plurilingual inquiry on vocabulary
P8	Encouraging students to (re)use lexical items in plurilingual oral or written productions

Although we are going to illustrate several of these practices when we present the three teachers we have chosen for this article, we believe it is important to distinguish from the outset between the translation of lexical items (codes P1 and P3) and the cross-linguistic comparison of lexical items (codes P2 and P4). Although translation and comparison may appear similar at first glance, we differentiated them because we wanted to isolate the moments when a lexical item is only mentioned in a language other than French—this is what we called the translation of a LI. Additionally, we identified instances where metalinguistic discussions of a cross-linguistic nature occurred—this was labelled as comparison in our coding process.

During our analysis, a second set of codes surfaced, pertaining to lexical concepts taught in a plurilingual manner. These are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Lexical concepts taught in a plurilingual manner

#	Name of concept
C1	Idiomatic expressions
C2	Synonymy or antonymy
C3	Cognates
C4	False friends
C5	Morphological structure of words (e.g., affixes, word families)
C6	Collocations
C7	Language variation
C8	Borrowings
C9	Spelling
C10	Pronunciation

Lastly, the third set of codes pertains to the plurilingual resources reported by participants for teaching vocabulary. These are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Plurilingual resources used by participants

#	Name of resource
R1	Bi/plurilingual metalinguistic resources (e.g., bi/plurilingual dictionaries)
R2	Pedagogical resources providing examples of plurilingual activities on vocabulary
R3	Texts focusing on linguistic diversity or in which linguistic diversity is depicted
R4	Bi/plurilingual texts or texts in a language other than French
R5	Bi/plurilingual memes or memes in a language other than French
R6	Bi/plurilingual songs or songs in a language other than French
R7	Bi/plurilingual games
R8	Students' parents
R9	Colleagues
R10	Invited guests
R11	Students' older peers

As previously stated, all participants were invited to take part in two interviews. While the analyses discussed in this article are derived from the first interview, it is worth noting that the second interview took the form of a teaching narrative (Audet,

2018; Desgagné, 2005). During this narrative, participants were tasked with recounting a practice of their choosing, presenting it as a story they found particularly interesting and reflective of their teaching style. In this article, alongside the results of the first interview, we occasionally include screenshots from these narrative accounts to illustrate the practices discussed by participants. Lastly, it is important to note that all interviews, as well as the subsequent analyses, were conducted in French. The primary author of this article translated the codes specifically for this paper, and these translations were subsequently approved by the research team. Additionally, he translated the verbatim excerpts presented in the results section, which also received the team's approval.

To present our findings, we centre on three Ontario teachers selected based on three criteria. Firstly, they utilize a wide range of plurilingual lexical practices; some employ a limited number of practices while others employ a broader array. Secondly, they work in diverse settings across the province, with some located in cosmopolitan urban environments and others in smaller cities. Thirdly, they teach at different levels of compulsory education, allowing us to document the implementation of plurilingual approaches across various age groups. By choosing these three teachers—referred to as Monique, Sabrina, and Laura—our main objective is to highlight the wide variety of settings and methods through which plurilingual approaches to teaching vocabulary are both embraced and implemented. Thanks to the practices of these teachers, we therefore aim to reveal the full richness and diversity of these approaches.

4.   RESULTS

To unveil the results, we will sequentially delve into the experiences of each of the three selected teachers. Initially, we will introduce them individually; we will then explore the plurilingual practices, lexical concepts, and resources central to their teaching of vocabulary. We will also offer compelling excerpts from verbatim reports, vividly describing these elements.

4.1 Monique's profile

At the time of our interview, Monique held the position of Grade 2 primary school teacher in northwestern Ontario, located in a city with approximately 110,000 residents. Most students in her classroom spoke English at home, though there had been a recent addition of a student from Chile whose first language was Spanish. Notably, Monique brings to her role 26 years of teaching experience, during which she had the opportunity to acquaint herself with plurilingual approaches while serving as a pedagogical adviser the year prior to our interview. Returning to classroom teaching just before the discussion, Monique embarked on integrating these approaches into her vocabulary instruction. Specifically, one practice, two

concepts and three resources underpin Monique's plurilingual vocabulary instruction. They are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Monique's plurilingual vocabulary instruction

#	Name of practice
P2	Inviting students to compare lexical items in different languages
#	Name of concept
C1	Idiomatic expressions
C3	Cognates
#	Name of resource
R2	Pedagogical resources providing examples of plurilingual activities on vocabulary
R4	Bi/plurilingual texts or texts in a language other than French
R8	Students' parents

Monique's plurilingual teaching primarily revolved around using cognates, a practice she incorporated into her vocabulary discussions with her students almost daily. She frequently encouraged them to recognize lexical items that shared similarities in form and meaning between English and French within the texts they read. However, with the recent arrival of the Chilean student to her class, she had expanded this approach to include Spanish lexical items as well.

Excerpt 1: Monique's teaching of cognates

In all our readings, whether it's problem solving, math problems, reading aloud to students, reading summaries—cognates are everywhere! [...] But lately, it's been about Spanish. We talk a lot about Spanish-French cognates because we have a little [Chilean] girl in class. Often, it's related to our reading in context, [but] recently I've been setting up more activities. I see this as a motivating factor. I know students are very interested, so that's what motivates me to try to integrate these activities into my practice.

As she points out, her teaching of vocabulary through cognates primarily involved using French texts with her students. She emphasized the motivating aspect of such plurilingual approaches and connected them to the study of texts that extended beyond the scope of the French discipline.

Furthermore, Monique frequently employed a valuable resource to provide her students with the opportunity to read texts in multiple languages, serving as a catalyst for teaching new lexical items. The website *Storybooks Canada* (Gilman & Norton, 2020), developed by a research team at the University of British Columbia, offers a collection of 40 stories translated into the most commonly spoken immigrant languages in Canada, alongside English and French versions. These stories are accessible online, featuring both audio and written versions. Monique found this resource particularly beneficial for integrating Spanish into her teaching, especially for working on cognates, as she highlights in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 2: Monique's use of texts in Spanish

So, we were listening to it in Spanish, and we only got through half of it because students were so interested. I really wanted them to practise the inference strategy too. […] So,

> working on word analysis in that context was really motivating for them. Tomorrow, we'll keep going, continue with the Spanish-French cognates, and then we'll listen to the story in French. I could see how proud and happy my Chilean student was.

Instead of beginning with French, Monique chose to introduce her class to stories in Spanish, placing most students in a situation where they initially did not understand the language of the text. However, leveraging the lexical similarities between French and Spanish, along with recognizing the expertise of the immigrant student, she facilitated a cognate analysis activity aimed at teaching the reading strategy of inference.

Additionally, during an activity focused on countries in social studies, Monique encouraged her students to identify greeting phrases in the languages corresponding to each group's project. Some students went beyond this task, with one student of Swedish descent selecting Sweden for her project and taking the initiative to explore this language's vocabulary. To accomplish this, she examined Swedish texts online and consulted her father, who is proficient in the language, to verify her translations. Monique's plurilingual approaches not only facilitated learning but also fostered connections between the classroom and students' families, who were recognized as valuable resources capable of contributing to teaching practices.

4.2 Sabrina's profile

Sabrina is an experienced French teacher at a secondary school in northeastern Ontario, responsible for teaching students from Grade 9 through Grade 12. The majority of her students came from English-speaking households of Canadian descent, but she also welcomed second-generation immigrant students, particularly of Vietnamese origin. When we interviewed her for this study, she had 13 years of teaching experience under her belt and, as part of her plurilingual teaching of vocabulary, she mentioned five practices, three concepts, and four resources, all of which are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5. Sabrina's plurilingual vocabulary instruction

#	Name of practice
P1	Inviting students to translate lexical items into languages other than French
P2	Inviting students to compare lexical items in different languages
P3	Translating lexical items into languages other than French
P6	Creating a plurilingual bank of lexical items
P7	Inviting students to take part in a plurilingual inquiry on vocabulary
#	Name of concept
C2	Synonymy or antonymy
C3	Cognates
C5	Morphological structure of words (e.g., affixes, word families)
#	Name of resource
R1	Bi/plurilingual metalinguistic resources (e.g., bi/plurilingual dictionaries)
R2	Pedagogical resources providing examples of plurilingual activities on vocabulary
R3	Texts focusing on linguistic diversity or in which linguistic diversity is depicted
R9	Colleagues

Like Monique, Sabrina placed a strong emphasis on cognates in her plurilingual vocabulary instruction. She notably drew inspiration from the French-English cognate activity presented on the Élodil website (Armand & Maraillet, 2013), incorporating it into plurilingual lexical inquiries themed around events such as Halloween and Valentine's Day. Collaborating with her colleague in the German department, Sabrina crafted plurilingual labels containing lexical items in various languages. For instance, during Halloween, she translated approximately ten words, such as "*fantôme*" (ghost) and "*vampire*" (vampire), into English, Spanish, German, and Italian. These labels were strategically concealed throughout the classroom and surrounding corridors, transforming the search for these words into an interactive treasure hunt. Once the labels were discovered, students formed teams based on the lexical items they had found and collaboratively categorized them in a table (Figure 1). During this activity, Sabrina adopted a relatively discreet role, allowing students to independently infer the meaning of the lexical items by fostering interlinguistic connections. It is also interesting to note that her students were not initially familiar with Spanish, German, and Italian—to take part in this inquiry-based practice, they therefore had to make lexical connections using different cognate combinations between languages without knowing many of them.

Figure 1. Examples of labels used in Sabrina's plurilingual inquiry

VOCABULAIRE D'HALLOWEEN PLURILINGUE

FRANÇAIS	ANGLAIS	ALLEMAND	ESPAÑOL	ITALIEN
	Pumpkin			
Un fantôme				
		Spukhaus		
				Pietra tombale
			Cementerio	
		Maske		
Un pirate				
	Witch			
			Vampira	
				Scheletro

VOCABULAIRE D'HALLOWEEN PLURILINGUE

FRANÇAIS	ANGLAIS	ALLEMAND	ESPAÑOL	ITALIEN
Une citrouille	Pumpkin	Kürbis	Calabaza	Zucca
Un fantôme	Ghost	Phantom	Fantasma	Fantasma
Une maison hantée	Haunted house	Spukhaus	Casa encantada	Casa infestata
Une pierre tombale	Tombstone	Grabstein	Lápida	Pietra tombale
Un cimetière	Cemetery	Friedhof	Cementerio	Cimitero
Un masque	Mask	Maske	Emascarar	Mascherare
Un pirate	Pirate	Pirat	Pirata	Pirata
Une sorcière	Witch	Hexe	Bruja	Strega
Un vampire	Vampire	Vampir	Vampira	Vampiro
Un squelette	Skeleton	Skelett	Esqueleto	Scheletro

Sabrina also demonstrated ingenuity by integrating cognates into another teaching practice, employing an analysis of the Franco-Ontarian play "*L'hypocrite*" by Michael Gauthier. More specifically, she selected a French article discussing themes of friendship, mirroring those explored in the play. Dividing the article into three parts, Sabrina translated sections two and three into Spanish and German, respectively. She accomplished this task using bilingual metalinguistic tools like Linguee and

Google Translate, while leaving part one in its original French version. Students then engaged in a comparative analysis of lexical items across languages, identifying cognates and leveraging their understanding to summarize the article in French. They then verified their interpretations by referencing the original French text. This innovative practice, as Sabrina points out, not only enhanced students' comprehension of the article's content but also sharpened their linguistic skills by encouraging cross-linguistic connections.

Excerpt 3: Sabrina's use of a bi/plurilingual text

We gave it a shot, and it actually went really smoothly because students focused on the most important words. It was usually nouns that caught their attention, and they'd give it a go at figuring out what they meant. And you know what? They'd pipe up and say, "Hey, *Madame*, it's the same word in French, it's a cognate!"

4.3 Laura's profile

Laura, a high school educator with nine years of experience, teaches in an urban and metropolitan setting renowned for its linguistic diversity. She teaches French to students in grades 11 and 12 while pursuing a doctoral program in language education. In her plurilingual vocabulary instruction, Laura mentioned integrating four diverse practices, six concepts, and seven resources (Table 6). This positions her as the participant who, within this multiple case study, makes use of the widest variety of practices, concepts, and resources in plurilingual vocabulary teaching.

Table 6. Laura's plurilingual vocabulary instruction

#	Name of practice
P1	Inviting students to translate lexical items into languages other than French
P2	Inviting students to compare lexical items in different languages
P3	Translating lexical items into languages other than French
P6	Creating a plurilingual bank of lexical items
#	Name of concept
C1	Idiomatic expressions
C2	Synonymy or antonymy
C3	Cognates
C4	False friends
C5	Morphological structure of words (e.g., affixes, word families)
C6	Collocations
#	Name of resource
R1	Bi/plurilingual metalinguistic resources (e.g., bi/plurilingual dictionaries)
R2	Pedagogical resources providing examples of plurilingual activities on vocabulary
R4	Bi/plurilingual texts or texts in a language other than French
R6	Bi/plurilingual songs or songs in a language other than French
R7	Bi/plurilingual games
R8	Students' parents
R11	Students' older peers

Laura's plurilingual vocabulary teaching primarily relies on the literary works she reads with her students. For her, it is important that they study a wide variety of lexical items in context so that they can observe how the authors they read in class utilize these LIs. However, the books she uses, including Federico García Lorca's "Blood Wedding" and Jean-Paul Sartre's "No Exit," may not always align with her preferences, as they were selected by her school team. While they foster stimulating discussions in class, Laura perceived them as somewhat detached from the students' reality, in terms of both content and language. To invigorate her teaching and make the books more accessible to her students, she granted them the option to either read the texts in their original language if it is not French, or to access translated versions if available.

As she read these works with her class, she co-constructed word walls with challenging lexical items; if students read the text in a language other than French, they could also add the LIs in these languages. These plurilingual word walls therefore blended languages, creating a dynamic linguistic landscape in the classroom. Drawing from this resource, Laura conducted explicit instruction on lexical items – when they were not in French, she also translated them with the help of her students and engaged in discussion on the meaning of these items. Reading such works also allowed her to approach a wide variety of lexical concepts from a plurilingual perspective. The following excerpt, for example, highlights her teaching of idiomatic expressions.

Excerpt 4: Laura's teaching of idiomatic expressions

We're going to define terms and expressions, because in these books, there are also plenty of expressions. For instance, I mention the expression "*pleuvoir à verse*.[1]" What does "*pleuvoir à verse*" mean? Where you come from, do you have similar expressions? They say, "Yes, we have words like that." So, these are expressions we have in French, and students might translate them literally, but they're actually expressions. So we're going to see if in their vocabulary, they have expressions like that.

As we can see, Laura's teaching of idiomatic expressions acknowledged their potential lack of direct translation between languages; she thus led her students to reflect on the concept of idiomatic expressions and to wonder if, in the languages they know, an analogous expression existed. Similarly, the books she utilized provided her with opportunities to explore the concepts of prefixes and suffixes. According to her, learning these concepts enabled learners to develop a certain autonomy in reading. To foster their proficiency in French, she therefore assessed whether students possessed the requisite metalinguistic knowledge across the languages in their linguistic repertoire.

Excerpt 5: Laura's teaching of affixes

In your language, were you taught what a prefix is, what a suffix is, what a root is? So, can you explain that to me? If you can explain it in your own words, in your language, or

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[1] "Pleuvoir à verse" is a French idiomatic expression used to describe heavy rainfall.

if you understood the meaning of the word in your language, it means you can also do it in French.

Finally, Laura stood out from other participants in this study because she designed plurilingual games aimed at teaching lexical items extracted from the books she read with her students. These games often took the form of playful activities wherein students were tasked with linking a French lexical item with its counterpart in languages familiar to them, along with its corresponding definition in French (Figure 2). To create them, she inserted a series of LIs taken from a literary work into tables[2].

Figure 2. Examples of lexical terms used in Laura's plurilingual games

Anglais	Anglais	Italien	Ukrainien	Punjabi
Contre-bande	Smuggling	contrabbando	контрабанду	ਤਸਕਰੀ
Torturer	Torturing	torturatore	Боягуз	ਤਸ਼ੱਦਦ
Louche	suspicious	ombroso	підозрілий	ਸ਼ੱਕੀ
Orgueil	Pride	Orgoglio	Гордість	ਮਾਣ
Avertir	Notify	Avvisare	Попередити	ਚੇਤਾਵਨੀ
Haïr	Hate	Odio	ненависть	ਨਫ਼ਰਤ

Then, she cut out each lexical item and inserted them into an envelope, along with a definition written in French for each signified. She formed groups of students that were linguistically heterogeneous, allowing each of them to contribute their expertise during the game. To design these games, Laura utilized online dictionaries and other virtual translation tools. This enabled her to provide translations of lexical items into languages sharing the same writing system as French (e.g., English, Italian). However, she also expressed some discomfort in translating lexical items when the writing system differs, such as in Ukrainian and Punjabi. To overcome this difficulty, she reached out to her students' parents and asked them to translate the LIs.

Excerpt 6: Laura's plurilingual games and parental support

Generally, [...] I use the dictionary, online dictionaries. [...] However, in my classroom, I have languages like Hindi and Punjabi. So it's really the parents. I'll say to the parents,

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[2] *The first column presents lexical items in French, despite the title "Anglais." We decided not to alter the table shown by Laura during her interview.*

"I'm making a game right now, a card game, can you help me with...?" So, the parent
will translate my words into all the languages and send them back to me.

By engaging with plurilingual parents and tapping into their linguistic expertise, Laura
bridged gaps in her own linguistic proficiency, thereby creating an inclusive learning
environment reflective of her students' diverse linguistic backgrounds. Through her
innovative practices, Laura not only enriched vocabulary learning but also seemed
to have cultivated a deeper appreciation for linguistic diversity within her classroom.

5.   DISCUSSION

The findings presented in this article shed light on the implementation of plurilingual
approaches in the teaching of French vocabulary in Franco-Ontarian schools. Based
on our theoretical framework, which emphasizes the importance of vocabulary
instruction (Anctil & Proulx, 2022; Nation, 2022) and plurilingual teaching
approaches (Moore & Sabatier, 2014; Piccardo et al., 2022), the results exemplified
by Monique, Sabrina, and Laura's profiles showcase innovative practices that may
not only enhance students' lexical acquisition but also foster linguistic diversity in
the classroom. To initiate the discussion, it is worth noting that the practices
employed by these educators, who value linguistic diversity as a pillar for teaching
vocabulary (Galante, 2020; Martini & Torregrossa, 2023), illustrate a point
emphasized by certain researchers in Francophone minority settings (Bangou et al.,
2021; Lory, 2023): plurilingual approaches are not contradictory to the mission of
French-language schools in Ontario, which is to ensure the longevity and vitality of
the French language (Gérin-Lajoie, 2020). In fact, embracing and celebrating diverse
linguistic backgrounds not only recognizes students' linguistic repertoires but also
offers a meaningful pathway for French education (Fleuret et al., 2018; Schroeter et
al., 2023).

It is worth noting that these teachers primarily employ cognates in their
plurilingual vocabulary instruction. Monique and Sabrina dedicate a significant
portion of their pedagogical reflection on plurilingual approaches to this concept
(D'Angelo et al., 2017). They recognize its pedagogical potential and consider it a
valuable means to leverage students' existing vocabulary knowledge (Cenoz et al.,
2022; White & Horst, 2012). Of particular interest is Sabrina's approach: in addition
to teaching cognates in English, a language familiar to all her students, she introduces
them to lexical items that share form and meaning elements in languages initially
unfamiliar to them. She sees this as an opportunity to expose them to linguistic
diversity and nurture their interest in acquiring a wide range of lexical items.
Similarly, Monique tasks her students with reading texts in Spanish and guides them
in constructing the meaning of these texts with the help of cognates and the
assistance of a recently arrived Spanish-speaking student in the class. As for Laura,
her approach to teaching vocabulary from a plurilingual perspective goes beyond
cognates. She acknowledges that various vocabulary-related concepts such as
idiomatic expressions, prefixes, and suffixes can be effectively taught in a plurilingual

manner (Leonet et al., 2020). She encourages her students to explore these concepts in languages from their linguistic repertoire, thereby facilitating connections with their French counterparts.

Moreover, all participants in this study acknowledge the significance of contextualized vocabulary instruction (Dionne, 2021; Nation, 2022), drawing from texts originally intended for purposes other than education. Each of them employs plurilingual approaches to target lexical items by utilizing texts containing multiple languages or versions written in languages other than French (Gilman & Norton, 2020). Monique, as previously mentioned, utilizes stories from the *Storybooks Canada* website, Sabrina translates sections of an article into different languages for her students to then translate back into French using cognates, and Laura immerses her students in reading literary works in their preferred language. They thus view the presence of multiple languages in texts and the classroom as opportunities to delve into vocabulary from a crosslinguistic perspective, prompting students to compare French vocabulary with that of other languages (Galante, 2020). These comparative analyses, whether focusing on meaning, form, or use of lexical items, serve as the foundation for inclusive vocabulary teaching.

Every teacher, furthermore, is dedicated to implementing pedagogical practices that actively engage students cognitively (Beck et al., 2013; Moody et al., 2018). Sabrina, who favours inquiry-based approaches (Hicks Pries & Hughes, 2012), motivates her students to study cognates across various languages through questioning and hypothesis testing. Similarly, Laura creates playful association activities to prompt students to study word meanings by comparing them with equivalents in other languages. The integration of plurilingualism into these practices enables students to transition fluidly between roles as language experts and learners, thus nurturing collaboration as a fundamental component. Given that students may not possess vocabulary knowledge across all languages involved in a practice, such collaboration emerges as essential.

Lastly, it is important to highlight that the plurilingual dimension of these practices enables teachers to establish concrete connections with students' families (Chen & Pushor, 2023). Monique and Laura recognize the support that plurilingual parents can offer in preparing and implementing such practices (Prasad, 2017; Young, 2022). For example, Monique engages students in a social studies project where they incorporate lexical items in languages unfamiliar to them but known to their parents. In the same vein, Laura solicits input from parents when devising plurilingual vocabulary games involving languages with writing systems she may not know. Plurilingual parents are therefore esteemed as valued allies, actively contributing to both teaching practices and their children's educational journey. Ultimately, the integration of plurilingual practices in vocabulary instruction expands the traditional boundaries of the classroom, involving stakeholders such as parents who undoubtedly influence learners' development.

6.   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our study, aimed at exploring plurilingual approaches in the teaching of French vocabulary in Franco-Ontarian schools, exemplifies innovative and inclusive practices that contribute to enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition. Teachers such as Monique, Sabrina, and Laura have exemplified the importance of explicitly teaching lexical items (Berthiaume et al., 2020; Mayer-Crittenden & Leduc, 2023) while consistently prioritizing considerations of diversity and inclusion (Dagenais, 2020; Moore, 2006). By embracing students' linguistic repertoires and leveraging their existing knowledge, these educators seem to create dynamic and enriching learning environments where plurilingualism is legitimzed and utilized as a pathway to strengthen French education (Lory, 2023).

Moving forward, it is important to acknowledge some limitations and potential areas for future research in the field of plurilingual teaching approaches. One limitation of this study is the small sample size, as it focused on three teachers in Ontario. In this context, future research could involve a larger and more diverse sample of educators to explore the scalability and generalizability of plurilingual practices in vocabulary instruction. Collaborating with teachers in studies adopting an action-research design to adapt such practices might also be an interesting path to pursue. This approach would not only enrich the research process by incorporating the perspectives and experiences of classroom practitioners but also facilitate the implementation of relevant plurilingual practices tailored to the specific needs of diverse learners, especially in Francophone minority settings. By addressing these limitations and exploring new avenues for research, the field of plurilingual teaching approaches in language education can continue to evolve and adapt to meet the diverse linguistic needs of students.

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