

## **Plurilingual resources for 'welcoming' at a university service for international students**

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**Abstract**

This paper studies the situated meaning given to a so-called 'welcome' service for international students at a Catalan university. The official business of the service is to offer support with bureaucratic procedures and information about available services, including those for learning Catalan. However, the complex range of overlapping activities emerging in interactions at the service leads us to question how participants themselves (i.e. service providers and student users) understand the business of 'welcoming'. Furthermore, the use of different languages in the interactions brings us to ask what role participants assign to their plurilingual resources in accomplishing this business. The results allow us to describe the 'welcome' service as a complex and significant place for the language socialisation of newcomers to the university, as well as the central role of plurilingual resources in achieving this aim, in constructing the multilingual order and in accomplishing internationalisation. These results provide insights for policies aiming at the management of linguistic diversity in scenarios of internationalisation.

**Keywords**

Plurilingualism, higher education, internationalisation, student mobility, language socialisation, service encounters

**Word count**

7122 (without abstract, references or endnotes)

# PLURILINGUAL RESOURCES FOR 'WELCOMING' AT A UNIVERSITY SERVICE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS<sup>i</sup>

## 1. Introduction

This paper explores service encounters at the so-called 'welcome' service for international students at a multilingual public Catalan university. The interactions studied take place while newly arrived student users from the rest of Europe, Latin America and North America are registering for an international student identity card. Thus, the service becomes one of the first places for second<sup>ii</sup> language socialisation practices of newcomers in the Catalan academic environment. Language socialisation refers to the process through which "a novice acquires knowledge, orientations and practices that enable them to participate effectively and appropriately in the social life of a community" (Garret & Baquedano-López 2002, 340), and becoming a member of this academic institution is the 'business' of the service encounters. Different resources are deployed by participants in accomplishing 'welcoming', of which plurilingual resources are focused on in this paper. Our main purposes are to observe the ways participants interpret and bring local meaning to the business of 'welcoming' and to explore the value assigned to language(s) in this process.

Our research questions are: 1) How do participants interpret and bring meaning to the business of 'welcoming'? and 2) What is the role participants assign to language(s) in this process? To give account of such concerns, our paper is organised as follows: a first section presents an overview of the dynamics of internationalisation and multilingualism as they affect higher education in Catalonia (section 2). The paper continues by introducing the research site and the process of negotiating access and collecting data (section 3). Following this, a framework is sketched out for conceptualising the business of 'welcoming' as second language socialisation (section 4.1) and for understanding plurilingualism as a resource for accomplishing practical social action (section 4.2). In the analytical section of the paper, three distinct plurilingual practices of the greater project of 'welcoming' are highlighted (section 5), before summing up the findings and discussing what the study of this particular site can tell us about the opportunities for plurilingualism in similar international, institutional settings (section 6).

## 2. Catalan higher education in a context of internationalisation

Student mobility is one of the key aims and outcomes of the internationalisation of higher education, creating novel situations of multilingualism or language contact. Authors such as Grimshaw (2007) place issues of language at the heart of these internationalisation processes and the increasing hegemony of English in international teaching, administration and research, is evident across the globe (Altbach & Knight 2007, Graddol 2006, Grimshaw 2007). In fact, it has been suggested that although the promotion of English was not a specific objective of the so-called Bologna processes, the creation of the European Higher Education Area has implicitly contributed to the growing Anglicisation of European universities (Graddol 2006; Ljosland 2005). The Catalan higher education system is no exception in this regard. However, certain voices argue that internationalisation means not only '*anglització*' (Anglicisation) but also increasing '*espanyolització*' (Spanishisation) of universities (e.g. Framis & Salellas 2007). In order to

understand the implications of such a posture, a brief description of the Catalan sociolinguistic environment as it affects higher education is in order.

Officially, Catalonia is a Catalan and Spanish speaking bilingual autonomous region. The reality is, however, that more than 200 languages are spoken (Junyent et al. 2005) in the province of Barcelona, where this study took place. This is due, in large part, to demographic movements into the region since last century. Such mobility has many origins, including: immigration from different Spanish regions between the 1930s and 1970s; tourism since the 1960s; new immigration from the developing world, and in particular from Latin America; the arrival of skilled workers from abroad; and university exchange programs (Nussbaum 2005). These different population movements have contributed to creating a scenario in which Catalan is considered a minority language, especially taking into account its co-existence in many areas with Spanish and English (Nussbaum 2005), categorised as two of “the world’s very large languages” (McArthur 2005, 55).

Futhermore, while the global strength of English is more than evident, the international presence of Spanish is also strong as both a first and second language. Spain (and Barcelona) is the main destination for Erasmus exchange students in Europe, with one of the major declared motivations for this choice being to learn Spanish (*Instituto Cervantes* 2010). Although specific data for the university studied is lacking, different authors have suggested that international students arriving in Catalonia are generally partially competent in Spanish, while this is usually not the case for Catalan (De Bofarull 2005, Leprêtre 1997). Although anecdotal, the following clipping (Figure 1) from a newspaper article published at the time this research was taking place - describing Barcelona as ‘*La Meca Erasmus*’ (‘the Erasmus Mecca’) - gives an idea of the tensions alluded to in different discourses in terms of this new scenario of language contact.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Legally speaking, the officially bilingual status of Catalonia has been established since the end of the Spanish dictatorship through different mechanisms. The *Constitución Española* (1978) regulates the political organisation of Spain into autonomous communities and declares Spanish official in all of them. It also states that other languages may be declared co-official in the different autonomous regions. In Catalonia, the *Estatut d’Autonomia* (passed in 1979 and reformed in 2006) grants ‘co-official’ status to both Catalan and Spanish, but defines Catalan as Catalonia’s ‘own language’ (*llengua pròpia*). Woolard (2008) describes how this categorisation is linked to the local and national identity values of the language, or what she refers to as a discourse of authenticity (Gal & Woolard 2001), an ideology to which many minority languages – such as Catalan – owe their survival.

The *Estatut*, together with the current language policy act in Catalonia (*Llei 1/1998, de 7 de gener, de política lingüística*), establish that as the ‘own language’, Catalan is also the language of ‘normal’ use in most aspects of life, including universities. Woolard (2008) speaks of this institutionalisation of Catalan in terms of discourses of anonymity (Gal & Woolard 2001); that is, the aim has been to make the language neutral, public and accessible to everyone, regardless

of their language background. This has had a significant effect on the maintenance of the language (Nussbaum 2005), and in the case of universities, has contributed to increasing its prestige (Pujolar, González & Martínez 2010).

Melcion (2007) describes the use of Catalan and Spanish in Catalan higher education, as he perceives it. According to this author, Catalan is predominant in institutional communication, whereas in research, the language is in a clearly inferior position to Spanish. As regards teaching, the author claims that Catalan is the primary language used, but it has strong competition from Spanish. In terms of social uses (e.g. in hallways, bars, informal meetings), the same author affirms that there tends to be a balance between Catalan and Spanish. Furthermore, Pujolar et al. (2010) claim that due to the higher proportion of students who identify as L1 Catalan speakers continuing to higher education, a lot of those who identify as L1 Spanish speakers adopt Catalan in their social relationships outside of classrooms.

In response to internationalisation, the current language policy act in Catalonia (*Llei 1/1998, de 7 de gener, de política lingüística*) allows universities to establish specific criteria for using languages other than Catalan and Spanish in their teaching, research and administrative activities. In this regard, Melcion (2007) explains that English is slowly gaining significant presence at Catalan universities, and this is reflected in the recent language policy documents at the university studied. In those in force between 2003 and 2010, English was defined as a 'language of habitual use' (*llengua d'ús habitual*). In the latest document, in force from 2011 to 2015, it is defined as the 'international academic *lingua franca*' for teaching, research and institutional communication. Likewise, the most recent language planning document in Catalonia (*Pla de política lingüística per a la VIII legislatura*), recommends improving citizens' functional competences not only in Catalan and Spanish, but also in foreign languages, and in particular English. This is also reflected in the current universities act (*Llei 1/2003, de 19 de febrer, d'universitats de Catalunya*).

The current universities act also promotes capturing students from outside Catalonia, and states that these newcomers need to be 'welcomed' into the existing cultural and linguistic university milieu. Such 'welcoming' (or '*acollida*' in Catalan), is an explicit goal at the university where this study took place, and was defined in the following terms in the language planning document in force at the time of this research:

- (1) To inform students efficiently about the sociolinguistic situation of Catalonia and the university environment before they arrive at the [university], and once they have arrived (communications with universities of origin, welcome days, workshops, etc.)
- (2) Promote knowledge of Catalan language and culture among newcomers (students, administration & services staff, and teaching and research staff).
- (3) Encourage a multilingual environment (cultural and linguistic integration, areas for exchange and interrelationship, etc.) that promotes the internationalisation of the university.

Thus, it can be affirmed that second language socialisation has become a central issue when planning language policies and designing strategies to 'welcome' newcomers into the local education system. The hosting of new groups has led universities to create new interactional spaces in order to receive people, such as the so-called 'International Welcome Point' (IWP).

### **3. The IWP: a research site within a polycentric unit of practice**

In this section, the particularities of the research site within the broader context of the university are outlined. The ethnographic process of negotiating access to the site, carrying out fieldwork and collecting interactional data is also described.

#### **3.1. Introducing the IWP**

The IWP is located in a central position in the main square of the university. The data presented in this paper comes from the observation and recording of four interactions between international student users of different origins and a local employee. At the interactional level, the practical problem that the participants in our data have to deal with is that all newcomers must be registered on arrival and receive a student card, for which they need to provide certain personal and academic information. They often need additional information about university procedures and practicalities, as well as information about the city, accommodation, transport, etc. Those from outside the EU commonly need additional information about and assistance applying for work and residency permits.

Several full time employees and part time student collaborators work at the 'welcome' service. The space is organised around three rooms (see Figure 2). The main space includes five desks with computers; three placed vertically to the right of the main entry and two placed horizontally to the left of the main entry. Workers are stationed at different desks throughout the day. The spatial separation between the two groups of desks is important, as it also represents a separation of the work done at the 'welcome' service. Thus, all users go to the three desks to the right of the entry to register and get general information, and those needing additional assistance and advice about residency and work permits are attended to at the two desks to the left of the door. Two small offices, one for the director and another used as a storage area, are situated behind this main area.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

#### **3.2. Negotiating access to the site, fieldwork and data collection**

The data analysed in this paper comes from five months of fieldwork (September 2007 to February 2008) carried out by a group of scholars from the research team. One researcher negotiated initial access to the site. Another researcher carried out preliminary fieldwork at the site from September to October. Three researchers negotiated permission to video record and finally, two researchers video recorded for five hours in February, a period when a large cohort of international students arrives at the university.

It therefore becomes apparent that the work involved in negotiating permission to record interactions at this site was remarkable. This was largely due to the sensitive nature of much of

the business done at the 'welcome' service, especially at the two desks to the left of the entry, and to the subsequent reluctance on behalf of workers to be recorded on the job. Eventually, it was settled that only non-sensitive data from interactions taking place at the three desks to the right of the entry would be collected. The main participant in the data presented in this paper is Lídia, a full-time local employee. Service encounters involving her colleagues, Astif and Hayad, two student collaborators, were also collected, although not presented in this paper.

The workers' collaboration was essential, as the dynamic nature of participation constellations inherent to service encounters meant that permission to record had to be negotiated with each new student user. The workers took on part of the task of this constant negotiation, explaining, in their own words, the aims of the research and the presence of recording equipment. The two researchers present collected signed authorisations from all students and from the workers for their participation in the project following the interactions.

### 3.3. Patterns of language choice at the IWP

The university may be conceptualised as a polycentric unit of practice (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck 2005), or a space made up of a large variety of settings, each susceptible to distinct patterns of organisation and participation, different roles, diverse social and institutional goals, etc. Such a conceptualisation helps understand how language practices at the IWP could be considered somewhat 'out of the ordinary' in terms of institutional encounters at the university, in which, it has been pointed out above, Catalan would tend to be the 'normal' or default language, even in the presence of international participants (see Moore & Nussbaum forthcoming).

The 'welcome' service is by nature a site where different languages come into contact and where negotiating a common language is a routine part of the opening of transactions between workers and the student users, or after interruptions in the flow of the interaction. That is, language choice is not fixed *a priori*, and different interactional procedures emerge for deciding which language to use (Auer 1984, Codó 1998, Torras & Gafaranga 2002). The data reveals that such negotiation at the start of interactions may be explicit, as in the following fragment involving a Polish student in which English is established as the language for the exchange.

#### Fragment 1

KAT: Katarina (Polish student); LID: Lídia (employee)

1. LÍD: ah: do you speak English/
2. (.)
3. KAT: yes\
4. (.)
5. LÍD: yes\

In other cases, it is through alternation itself that language is negotiated, as in the following fragment involving students from Québec, following an interruption which has forced Lídia to leave the students momentarily unattended, which begins in English but quickly switches into Spanish.

**Fragment 2 (original)**

LEG: Legars, STÉ: Stéphanie (Quebeois students);

LID: Lída (employee)

1. LÍD: okey girls (0.02) I'm coming\
2. (3.0)
3. STÉ: *aquí no tenemos un: nuestra*
4. *carta: y: e:h nuestros pasaporte y:*
5. (.)
6. LEG: *y:-*
7. (.)
8. LÍD: *que bie:n\*

**Fragment 2 (translation)**

LEG: Legars, STÉ: Stéphanie (Quebeois students);

LID: Lída (employee)

1. LÍD: okey girls (0.02) I'm coming\
2. (3.0)
3. STÉ: *here we don't have a: our*
4. *letter: and: e:h our passport and:*
5. (.)
6. LEG: *and:-*
7. (.)
8. LÍD: *how great\*

A third procedure involves no explicit negotiation and no language alternation; that is, tacit acceptance of the language chosen by the first speaker in an interaction. This is observed in the following fragment involving two Portuguese students, taking place at the opening of the exchange, in which Spanish is chosen and accepted as the language of interaction.

**Fragment 3 (original)**

VAN: Vanda, JOA: Joaô (Portuguese students);

LID: Lída (employee)

1. LÍD: *hola bienvenidos\ (.) a ver*
2. *tené:is carta de admisión/*
3. (0.2)
4. VAN: *sí\*
5. (.)
6. JOA: *sí\*

**Fragment 3 (translation)**

VAN: Vanda, JOA: Joaô (Portuguese students);

LID: Lída (employee)

1. LÍD: *hello welcome\ (.) let's see*
2. *do you ha:ve a letter of admission/*
3. (0.2)
4. VAN: *yes\*
5. (.)
6. JOA: *yes\*

These three short fragments suggest – and our ethnographic work confirms – that unlike in other institutional settings at the university, Spanish and English are the most obvious candidates for doing the ‘public’ business at the ‘welcome’ service. However, the analyses presented below will also demonstrate that language choice is unstable and fluid during the interactions, with plurilingual practices of translanguaging, codeswitching and polylinguaging between English, Spanish and other resources available in participants’ repertoires emerging frequently in the corpus in accomplishing and giving local meaning to the business of ‘welcoming’. With this observation in mind, the framework guiding the theoretical and analytical sections of the paper is now turned to.

**4. Conceptualising ‘welcoming’ and plurilingual practices****4.1. Language socialisation in superdiverse institutions**

Our study aims at analysing what doing ‘welcoming’ means for participants in their daily practices within the superdiversity of a Catalan university. This means following a situated perspective acknowledging that “all interactions are potentially socializing contexts” (Kulick & Schieffelin 2004, 349). The term *language socialisation* “refers to the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the group” (Duff 2007, 308). This process, mediated by language, aims at developing the command of a repertoire and the contextual conventions to use it appropriately, as well as the adoption of appropriate identities, ideologies, and other behaviours associated with the target group and its normative practices (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986; Bayley & Schecter

1997; Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez 2002; Duff 2008; Cots and Nussbaum 2008; amongst others.).

Such claims underpin concrete methodological and analytical procedures that allow us to see the ways participants engage each other in emergent situated interactions. In particular, for the case of the IWP, detailed observations of the social, cultural and institutional context where interactions are produced become relevant, as does paying attention to the interactional patterns of participation subjects follow when interacting in their daily practices. In this sense, analytical procedures for the study of interaction from *conversational analysis* (CA) and *interactional sociolinguistics* are brought into our analysis. We also draw on certain notions for dealing with plurilingualism as a set of semiotic resources for the accomplishment of particular interactional and socio-institutional ends, such as ‘welcoming’, as will be discussed below.

#### **4.2. Plurilingualism as practical social action**

As has already been discussed above, the current scenario of internationalisation of higher education in Catalonia is one in which multiple languages are available to members and come into contact. However, there are different ways of conceptualising such contact and this is reflected in the current proliferation of terminology used in the literature (multilingualism, bilingualism, plurilingualism, metrolingualism, polylingualism, heteroglossia, heterolingualism, multicompetence, translanguaging, codeswitching... to name just a small selection of terms). In this study, we are concerned with *plurilingualism*, an umbrella term we use to refer to the mobilisation of resources from different languages – and through different practices – by individuals within the same interactional event, in accomplishing everyday practical social actions<sup>iii</sup>. In this sense, our understanding of plurilingualism is closely linked to psycholinguistic notions such as *multicompetence* (Cook 1991, 2007; Hall, Cheng & Carlson 2006) as well as to specific interactional practices such as translanguaging, codeswitching, or polylinguaging, discussed below.

Specifically, we refer to the phenomenon of *codeswitching* described by Peter Auer (1984, 1998, 1999) as one particular competence available to multicompetent, plurilingual individuals. Extending John Gumperz’ (1982) work on contextualisation cues in plurilingual conversation, and following the principles of CA, Auer showed how the same, orderly procedures that conversationalists use to construct and maintain intersubjectivity in monolingual talk can be traced in plurilingual talk. As an intrinsically emic account, Auer (1984, 1998, 1999) defines codeswitching as only those cases in which the juxtaposition of different languages is noticed and interpreted as a locally meaningful event by participants; thus, continuity and intelligibility are the two basic principles at stake (cf. Gafaranga & Torras 2002, Mondada 2007b). In this regard, Auer diverged from Gumperz (1982), who originally defined codeswitching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two grammatical systems or subsystems” (p. 59). Thus, the notions of plurilingualism and codeswitching are both highly compatible with more recently coined concepts such *translanguaging*, in the sense put forward by García (2009, p. 140):

“Translanguaging is the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential. It is an approach to bilingualism that is centered, not on languages as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable in order to make sense of their multilingual worlds. Translanguaging therefore goes beyond what has been termed codeswitching, although it includes it.”

In what Auer (1999) refers to as alternational codeswitching, a return to the previous language is not predictable from the point of view of conversationalists. In other cases, which Auer (1999) terms insertional codeswitching, a content word is inserted into discourse in another language, with the return to the previous code being foreseeable. Furthermore, in Auer’s model, as a contextualisation cue, codeswitching may be discourse-related in that it indexes speakers’ interpretations of some aspect of the communicative situation or ongoing activity. This can be seen in the following brief fragment from the IWP in which a discourse-related insertion into Catalan to name a place (the Faculty of Communication) – linked to Lídia’s filling out a computer form in Catalan – also helps ‘bring along’ (Auer, 1992) information about the use of Catalan in the local context. It could thus represent a practice of second language socialisation; one that has been identified recurrently across the corpus:

**Fragment 4 (original)**

LID: Lídia (employee), MAR: Martina (Brazilian student)

1. LID: *y: la facultad me has dicho que*
2. *no s- tenías claro si [era laEI:-]*
3. MAR: *[la com]unicación*
4. *[creo no/]*
5. LID: *[sí:\]*
6. *(\*2.4\*)*  
lid: *\*-typing into form-\**
7. LID: **comunicació:/**

**Fragment 4 (translation)**

LID: Lídia (employee), MAR: Martina (Brazilian student)

1. LID: *and: the faculty you told me that*
2. *you didn’t k- know if it [was EI:-]*
3. MAR: *[the comm]unication*
4. *[i think right]*
5. LID: *[yes:\]*
6. *(\*2.4\*)*  
lid: *\*-typing into form-\**
7. LID: **communication:/**

Code-switching may also be participant-related, in that it indexes some feature of the code-switching speaker, and thus makes relevant a speaker’s categorisation of him or herself and of others. Auer (1998) refers to preference-related codeswitching for cases of alternation that index a speaker’s ideological stance. He also speaks of competence-related codeswitching to refer to situations where a speaker’s language choice may be a means of avoiding a language in which they feel less confident, thereby indexing the exolingual nature of the talk. A slightly different, more recently defined procedure is *polylanguaging*; following Jørgensen (2008) and Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen and Møller (2011), we use this term to refer to speakers’ use of resources from languages that they know very little of. This procedure also emerges in our corpus and is arguably different from other forms of codeswitching in the directionality of the switch and the way in which speakers’ mobilise competence. That is, whereas in competence-related code-switching speakers switch out of a language they are not proficient in, in polylanguaging they switch into it.

Expanding the interactional approach outlined until now, recent work by conversation analysts has demonstrated how translanguaging practices, alongside multimodal resources, not only cue aspects of the interactional, social or institutional order; rather, they are a resource for their very accomplishment (Mondada, 2004, 2007a, 2007b). In this regard, Mondada (2007a, p. 300) explains that, “choosing code-switching” (and arguably translanguaging, polylinguaging, etc.) “instead of another possible resource for organizing a given practice confers a specific accountability to the activity and to its actors”. It is to this particular hypothesis - that plurilingualism is a resource for the accomplishment of practical social actions that extend beyond the local organisation of interaction - that this study promises to contribute. This contribution will be unpacked with data from our interactional corpus in the following section.

### **5. Plurilingual socialisation practices of ‘welcoming’**

The business of ‘welcoming’ newcomers at the IWP is defined in both an institutional policy (see section 2) and an interactional script; that is, although there are obvious differences across the encounters, a basic structure to the practice we refer to as ‘welcoming’ can be identified:

1. Worker invites the student users to sit across the desk.
2. (Greeting.)
3. Negotiation of permission to record by the worker, supported by the researchers.
4. Establishment of motive for visit (e.g. first visit to register, return visit to provide additional information).
5. Worker asks questions of student users to complete computer registration form (e.g. name, contact details, host faculty, program).
6. Worker takes a photo of student users for ID card and/or gives student users a backpack with information, including information about Catalan language courses and services, and a Catalan phrasebook.
7. (Pre-closing sequence. Worker asks if she can offer any more assistance.)
8. (Question-answer sequence in which worker answers questions from student ‘clients’.)
9. (Student users receive their ID cards)
10. Closing.
11. Student users sign permission to use the recordings.
12. Student users leave the service or move to another area to be attended to by another worker.

However, we will argue here that ‘welcoming’ is simultaneously shaped by other practices emerging locally and recurrently across the corpus and that different factors make this a space for second language socialisation. These situated practices of ‘welcoming’ are accomplished through various communicative practices, of which those involving plurilingual repertoires are the most relevant to the current discussion.

Our explorations of the corpus have identified an array of such plurilingual socialisation practices, helping constitute ‘welcoming’ locally at the IWP. As previously discussed, all interactions are potential situations for (pluri)language socialisation. On the one hand, socialisation involves the adoption of appropriate identities, ideologies, and behaviours associated with receiving community. This is seen in our corpus, for example, in the practice of naming places on campus, or other aspects related to the institution, which is identified as ‘Catalan-speaking’. The analyses carried out suggest that this is most commonly done in

Catalan, in interactions taking place in another language (see fragment 4). Socialisation also involves gaining legitimacy as a member in a group; in this case, a member of a Catalan university community. This process is suggested in our corpus in instances in which participants make relevant their linguistic and cultural knowledge about the ‘other’, or their curiosities for what their interlocutor brings with them, thus leading to fluid attributions of expertise. For the purposes of this article, we focus on three interactional practices that help illustrate processes of becoming a member of the institution, or ‘welcoming’: mitigating problems (section 5.1), making jokes (section 5.2) and teaching and learning language (section 5.3). Although different procedures are used to accomplish such social action, we focus on the analysis of three fragments that help exemplify the practical use of plurilingual resources.

### 5.1. Mitigating a problem

The first fragment discussed takes place towards the end of an interaction involving Lidia, the IWP worker and three students from Québec: Véronique, Stéphanie and Legars. While Véronique’s registration has been successfully completed and she is able to receive her ID card, a problem with Stéphanie’s student record emerged previously in the interaction, meaning her registration could not be completed. The fragment begins in Spanish, the main language used throughout the interaction, with Lidia giving instructions to Véronique as to what she needs to do now.

#### Fragment 5: “Ne t’inquiète pas” (original)

LID: Lidia (employee), VER: Véronique, STE: Stéphanie, LEG: Legars (students)

1. LID: *bueno véronique\*  
 2. (0.3)  
 3. LID: *ahora vas a pasar a mi*  
 4. *compañera que te hará el carnet/*  
 5. (0.1)  
 6. VER: *sí\*  
 7. (0.3)  
 8. LID: *y ya\*  
 9. (0.2)  
 10. LID: *y entonces ya el lunes podrás*  
 11. *ir a la facultad de traducció/*  
 12. (0.5) **i interpretació** que está aquí  
 13. *arriba\=*  
 14. VER: *=[sí sí sí\]*  
 15. STE: *=[xxxx]*  
 16. (0.2)  
 17. STE: *xxxx [xxxx]*  
 18. LID *[ehm] stéphanie\*  
 19. (0.6)  
 20. LID: *ne t'inquiète pas\*  
 21. (0.1)  
 22. STE: ((laughs)) *[xxx]*  
 23. VER: *[t'inquiète pas\]*  
 24. LID: *pas de problème\*  
 25. (0.2)  
 26. STE: ((laughs))\ *[xxx]*  
 27. (0.5)  
 28. LID: *pas de tout\*  
 29. (.)  
 30. STE: *je ne vais pas pleurer\*

#### Fragment 5: “Ne t’inquiète pas” (translation)

LID: Lidia (employee), VER: Véronique, STE: Stéphanie, LEG: Legars (students)

1. LID: *well véronique\*  
 2. (0.3)  
 3. LID: *now you're going to go to my*  
 4. *colleague who will make you the card/*  
 5. (0.1)  
 6. VER: *yes\*  
 7. (0.3)  
 8. LID: *and that's it\*  
 9. (0.2)  
 10. LID: *and then on monday you'll be able*  
 11. *to go to the the faculty of translation/*  
 12. (0.5) **and interpretation** which is up  
 13. *here\=*  
 14. VER: *=[yes yes yes\]*  
 15. STE: *=[xxxx]*  
 16. (0.2)  
 17. STE: *xxxx [xxxx]*  
 18. LID *[ehm] stéphanie\*  
 19. (0.6)  
 20. LID: *don't worry at all\*  
 21. (0.1)  
 22. STE: ((laughs)) *[xxx]*  
 23. VER: *[don't worry at all\]*  
 24. LID: *no problem\*  
 25. (0.2)  
 26. STE: ((laughs))\ *[xxx]*  
 27. (0.5)  
 28. LID: *none at all\*  
 29. (.)  
 30. STE: *i'm not going to cry\*

31. (0.4)  
 32. STE: *no voy a llor[ar]*  
 33. LID: *[o]k\*  
 34. (0.1)  
 35. STE: ((laughs))\  
 36. (.)  
 37. LID: *non non j'ai compris\*  
 38. (0.1)  
 39. STE: ((laughs))

31. (0.4)  
 32. STE: *i'm not going to c[ry]*  
 33. LID: *[o]k\*  
 34. (0.1)  
 35. STE: ((laughs))\  
 36. (.)  
 37. LID: *no no i understood\*  
 38. (0.1)  
 39. STE: ((laughs))

We have already commented above (section 4.2) on the emergence of insertional code-switching in naming institutional spaces. What is of interest here is the interaction unfolding from line 18. There, having finished with Véronique, Lídia addresses Stéphanie, comforting her. Interestingly, rather than continuing in Spanish, she switches to French. She therefore uses her resources from Stéphanie's first language to accomplish 'being friendly' (Houtkoop-Steenstra 1997). This is apparently successful, as Stéphanie responds with laughter and jokes in French that she will not cry, in line 30. She then translates her joke into Spanish in her following turn; potentially positioning Lídia as a novice in French, but more likely displaying her desire to practice Spanish, as part of her second language socialisation.

The fragment thus demonstrates how plurilingual resources, through alternational code-switching in this case, help mitigate a problem emerging in the interaction. The next fragment is similar, although slightly more complex

## 5.2. From mitigating a problem to 'being funny'

The second fragment analysed here involves an interaction between the employee, Lídia, and two Greek students, Costas and Uriana. It begins with Lídia typing at the computer and asking the students for their street number<sup>iv</sup>, speaking in English, which has been previously established as the main language of interaction between these participants.

### Fragment 6: "Jroña que jroña" (original)

1. LID: *\*so consell de cent/  
 lid: \*--typing-->*  
 2. (4.7\*)  
 --->\*  
 3. LID: *ay\ (0.3) i el número/  
 4. (1.3)  
 5. COS: σαράντια [τεσσάρων]  
 6. LID: *[la por]ta/  
 7. (1.1)  
 8. COS: eh\  
 9. URI: =e:h\  
 10. (0.3)  
 11. COS: [this is the:] +eskwaleta+ b  
 12. URI: [cuarenta y cuatro\  
 13. (0.6)  
 14. LID: *no\ pero el número es  
 15. cuarenta y cuatro/  
 16. (0.1)  
 17. URI: hm hm\  
 18. (0.1)  
 19. STE: ((laughs))***

### Fragment 6: "Jroña que jroña" (translation)

1. LID: *\*so consell de cent/  
 lid: \*--typing-->*  
 2. (4.7\*)  
 --->\*  
 3. LID: *ay\ (0.3) and the number/  
 4. (1.3)  
 5. COS: forty [four]  
 6. LID: *[the d]oor/  
 7. (1.1)  
 8. COS: eh\  
 9. URI: =e:h\  
 10. (0.3)  
 11. COS: [this is the:] +stairwell+ b  
 12. URI: [forty four\  
 13. (0.6)  
 14. LID: *no\ but the number is  
 15. forty four/  
 16. (0.1)  
 17. URI: hm hm\  
 18. (0.1)  
 19. STE: ((laughs))***

18. (*0.1*)	18. (*0.1*)
lid: *-typing-*	lid: *-typing-*
19. LID: [vale\]	19. LID: [ok\]
20. COS: [piso] τρία cuatro [αλλά]	20. COS: [flat] three four [but]
21. LID: [no\]	21. LID: [no\]
22. COS> i don't know [how to-]	22. COS> i don't know [how to-]
23. LID: [no no] aquí=	23. LID: [no no] here\=
24. URI: =vαι\	24. URI: =yes\
25. (0.1)	25. (0.1)
26. LID: [cuarenta y cuatro\]	26. LID: [forty four\]
27. URI: [cuarenta cuatro hm\]	27. URI: [forty four hm\]
28. (0.1)	28. (0.1)
29. COS: the door of xx\	29. COS: the door of xx\
30. (0.2)	30. (0.2)
31. LID: sí\	31. LID: yes\
32. (.)	32. (.)
33. COS: vαι vαι forty four yes\	33. COS: yes yes forty four yes\
34. (.)	34. (.)
35. LID: jr jr jr jroña que jroña ya\	35. LID: jr jr jr jroña que jroña enough
36. ((laughs)) no sé nada\ no	36. ((laughs)) i don't know anything\ no
37. porque digo lo hacen con las	37. because i say they do it with the
38. palabras ah: with the words he was	38. words ah: with the words he was
39. saying and i was like hm well what\	39. saying and i was like hm well what\
40. (.)	40. (.)
41. URI: ((laughs))	41. URI: ((laughs))
42. (0.7)	42. (0.7)
43. LID: so forty four/	43. LID: so forty four/

At the start of the fragment, Lídia switches from English to Spanish or Catalan – linked to her work at the computer – to ask the students for “the number” (line 3). Costas provides her with their street number in line 5, speaking in Greek. In line 6, Lídia elaborates on the question, asking for the door number, but using Catalan (“*la porta*”). After hesitating, in lines 11 and 12 both Costas and Uriana respond by providing different information. Costas, in a mix of English and Spanish, gives the number of the stairwell (his “eskwaleta” is presumably an attempt at producing the Spanish word *escalera*), while Uriana provides the street number in Spanish (“*cuarenta y cuatro*”). Lídia confirms Uriana’s response in lines 14-15, also using Spanish, before entering it into the computer.

Lidia’s “*vale*” in line 19 cues a change of activity. However, in line 20, Costas continues to respond to Lídia’s previous question by providing the door number in a mix of Spanish and Greek (“*piso τρία cuatro αλλά*”). This intervention reopens the negotiation over the information required, which continues trilingually until line 33, where Costas confirms that the street number is “forty four”. During this sequence, Costas’ lack of understanding is evident and he becomes positioned as a non-expert in the situation and/or the language being used. This fact is potentially face threatening for him.

Lidia’s reaction to this situation is to display solidarity by using humour; from line 35 she attempts to mitigate or make light of the preceding confusion by drawing on her limited or ‘imagined’ competence in Greek. More specifically, she evokes what she remembers in ‘Greek’ from a Danone Greek yoghurt advertisement that was once popular in Spain (“*jroña que jroña*”).<sup>v</sup> This polylinguaging, using what little knowledge she has of Costas’ first language, is thereby constructed as a resource for displaying solidarity and ‘being funny’, and thus we argue

that it is mobilised as a resource for locally achieving the unfolding business of ‘welcoming’ the students to the university.

### 5.3. From ‘being funny’ to teaching and learning language

Closely linked to what has just been observed, a third plurilingual socialisation practice emerging in local interactional work as part of the greater project of ‘welcoming’ at the service involves the mobilisation of language (and cultural) expertise. That is, participants act interchangeably as teachers of their own languages and students of the others’ languages. This is observed in fragment 7, which begins when Lídia gives Martina and Isaura, two Brazilian students, a Catalan-Portuguese phrasebook. Until this moment, Spanish has been the main language of interaction.

#### Fragment 7: “això què és?”(original)

1 LID: *mira*\  
 2 (0.4)  
 3 LID: **diccionari portuguès català**\  
 4 (0.2)  
 5 MAR: ((*laughing*) *muy bien*)\  
 6 (0.8)  
 7 LID: *y así podrás*\ (.) *y entonces*  
 8 *[aquí:/]*  
 9 MAR: [((*laughs*))]  
 10 (1.0)  
 11 ISA: **això\ això què és\ ((laughs))=**  
 12 MAR: **=això\ (0.1) això qué es\**  
 13 (0.3)  
 14 MAR: [((*laughs*))]  
 15 ISA: [((*laughs*))]  
 16 (0.2)  
 17 MAR: **així/ això**\  
 18 (0.3)  
 19 LID: **MOLT BÉ:**\ (0.04) *pero dónde has*  
 20 *aprendido [todo eso]*  
 21 MAR: [NO no] *es que no* ((*laughing*)  
 22 *sé*)\  
 23 (0.5)  
 24 LID: [°*pues sí:*\°]  
 25 ISA: [*vivimos*] *co:n un català* (0.2) *no*  
 26 *sé qué [significa]*  
 27 LID: [*AH\ pues*] (0.1) **això**\  
 28 *ésto qué es*\ (0.2) **això què és**\ (0.2)  
 29 *ésto qué es*\  
 30 (0.5)  
 31 ISA: *ah sí/*  
 32 (0.1)  
 33 MAR: *ay [qué fácil]*\  
 34 LID: [**així així:/**]  
 35 *así así*\  
 36 (0.8)  
 37 ISA: *mira* ((*laughing*) *era una broma*)\  
 38 [((*laughs*))]  
 39 LID: [*sí*\]=  
 40 ISA: **=no cre[ia-]**  
 41 LID: [*ah*] *pues no*\ (.)  
 42 *pues lo- es que lo pronunciabas tan*  
 43 *bien que digo mira*\

#### Fragment 7: “això què és?” (translation)

1 LID: *look*\  
 2 (0.4)  
 3 LID: **portuguese catalan dictionary**\  
 4 (0.2)  
 5 MAR: ((*laughing*) *very good*)\  
 6 (0.8)  
 7 LID: *and then you can*\ (.) *and then*  
 8 *[here:/]*  
 9 MAR: [((*laughs*))]  
 10 (1.0)  
 11 ISA: **this\ what is this\ ((laughs))=**  
 12 MAR: **=this\ (0.1) what is this\**  
 13 (0.3)  
 14 MAR: [((*laughs*))]  
 15 ISA: [((*laughs*))]  
 16 (0.2)  
 17 MAR: **like this/ this**\  
 18 (0.3)  
 19 LID: **VERY GOOD:**\ (0.04) *but where did*  
 20 *you learn [all that]*  
 21 MAR: [NO no] *i don't* ((*laughing*)  
 22 *know*)\  
 23 (0.5)  
 24 LID: [°*well yes:*\°]  
 25 ISA: [*we live*] *with a catalan* (0.2) *i*  
 26 *don't know what [it means]*  
 27 LID: [*AH\ well*] (0.1) **this**\  
 28 *what is that*\ (0.2) **what is this**\ (0.2)  
 29 *what is that*\  
 30 (0.5)  
 31 ISA: *ah yes/*  
 32 (0.1)  
 33 MAR: *ay [how easy]*\  
 34 LID: [**like this like this:/**]  
 35 *like that like that*\  
 36 (0.8)  
 37 ISA: *look* ((*laughing*) *it was a joke*)\  
 38 [((*laughs*))]  
 39 LID: [*yes*\]=  
 40 ISA: **=I didn't thi[nk-]**  
 41 LID: [*ah*] *well no*\ (.)  
 42 *well it- you pronounced it so*  
 43 *well that i said look*\

44 (0.3)  
45 LID: *y luego mira de català:/*  
46 (0.2)  
47 MAR: *vale\*

44 (0.3)  
45 LID: *and then look for catalan:/*  
46 (0.2)  
47 MAR: *ok\*

As we have observed in Fragment 6, in line 11, after Lúdia has given the students a copy of the phrasebook, Isaura initiates a joke by mobilising her little knowledge of Catalan, or by polylinguaging. Martina, in her following turns, aligns with the joke by also using Catalan in lines 12 and 17. In line 19, Lúdia takes the floor and praises the girls in Catalan, before switching back into Spanish to ask them where they had acquired ‘all’ their knowledge of that language; thereby positively evaluating their efforts. After the girls claim that that they do not actually know the meaning of what they have said, Lúdia ‘teaches’ the meaning to them from line 27 by translating the expression into Spanish.

Thus, in the fragment, an activity unfolds that resembles what is done by teachers and students in a classroom. That is, we observe a sequence where the newcomers position themselves as novices to ask for the meaning of an unknown utterance, while Lúdia takes on the role of an expert who organises scaffolding to support the ‘students’ language learning (Cazden, 1998), leading to a sort of didactic contract (Brousseau, 1986). What is interesting in our corpus is that these processes often include cultural as well as linguistic novice/expertise, and that they are bidirectional; that is, at other times, it is the institutional employee who positions herself as learner. In this regard, the data is different from that contributed by Kurhila (2004) in a similar institutional setting, where positionings of linguistic and cultural novice were most often avoided.

## 6. Conclusions

Although the so-called ‘welcome’ service for international students where this research was carried out is officially a place for supporting bureaucratic procedures, in this article it has been argued that the practices emerging locally can be understood in more complex terms through the lens of second language socialisation. Taking a language socialisation perspective that looks to link a fine-grained data analysis with macro-processes has allowed us to understand various overlapping and simultaneous processes that unfold locally and help constitute the situated ‘business’ of the site. The paper has explored the ways participants, under certain institutional and contextual conditions, bring meaning to and manage the social action of ‘welcoming’ newcomers into a higher education institution interactionally. In this sense, ‘welcoming’ international students at the IWP was defined as a ‘macro’-practice guided by both an institutional policy – centred on informing about and promoting the use of the local language – and an interactional script for providing an international student ID card, that at the same time is shaped by other complex, local practices identified recurrently across the corpus.

In this paper, three of these ‘micro’-practices have been focused on. On the one hand, we have explored how locally emerging problems are mitigated, and at the same time, how a friendly footing is achieved by actors. We have then taken this analysis a step further, exploring the local emergence of a joke in overcoming a possibly face-threatening situation. Finally, we have explored what is potentially the most novel contribution of this paper in the light of recent

literature, being the willingness of participants to orient to their linguistic (and cultural) expertise or novice and engage in teaching and learning practices.

Furthermore, it has been highlighted that the common feature running through these practices is that they are all accomplished through the mobilisation of various communicative resources, of which plurilingualism, and specific procedures such as codeswitching and polylinguaging, constitute a preeminent strategic repertoire available to participants in international scenarios for achieving social action. This dynamic mobilisation of such resources for the conjoint accomplishment of 'welcoming' allows us to conceptualise plurilingual socialisation as a key practice in the local construction of the multilingual order and for doing internationalisation.

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## List of Figures

**Figure 1:** Clipping from the newspaper article 'La Meca Erasmus' (Tusell 2008). Translation:

**Why did you choose Barcelona to study?**

Because in my Spanish classes they taught me that it's the city that never sleeps. There are always parties!

**What do you like the most about the city?**

The best thing are the discotheques, and also that the people are open and not at all conservative. They live relaxed and without ties.

**And the least?**

The Catalan language. I don't understand it. And there is too much division between those that speak it and those that don't.

**Figure 2:** Spatial distribution of the IWP

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<sup>i</sup>This research was funded by the European 6th Framework Project 'Dynamics of Language Management' (DYLAN), project reference: CIT4-CT-2006-028702. The authors received support for the production of this article from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation R+D+i projects DALE-APECS, project reference: EDU2010-15783 and PADS, project reference: EDU2010-17859.

<sup>ii</sup>The term second language is used only to simplify description. In most cases in the corpus, however, the 'second' language is actually speakers' third or fourth.

<sup>iii</sup>As opposed to the term multilingualism, which we understand to merely acknowledge the social presence or knowledge of different languages.

<sup>iv</sup>Consell de Cent, line 1, is the name of the street.

<sup>v</sup>This advertisement is available for viewing at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWeU-QPFjiY>