
The place of French in multilingual repertoires: Findings from Andorra.

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Résumé

Multiple education systems coexist in Andorra, including the national *Escola Andorrana* (EA, Andorran school) that adopts a multilingual approach to teaching, with both Catalan and French serving as equal languages of instruction throughout primary education. In this presentation, we discuss the results of interviews with educators and administrators in the EA in order to discover how they engage their agency in the pursuit of developing learner multilingual repertoires (Gumperz 1964; Blommaert 2010), with a specific focus on developing competence in French. We then use the findings of these interviews to undertake a critical analysis of Andorran language-in-education policy.

In our interviews, we witness tensions between rigid medium-of-instruction policy (that urges teachers to use one language in the classroom) and top-down directives that foster more flexible multilingual repertoires and metalinguistic awareness among learners. Teachers ultimately need to engage their agency in order to navigate this friction successfully. We find that an important aim of repertoire building is the compartmentalisation of languages in a way that prepares the child for life in Andorra and, as such, reinforces existing social hierarchies. Repertoire building, rather than a critical act of resistance that breaks down barriers between languages, is instead used to reify hegemonic structures.

Based on these findings, we go on to question the future of French in Andorra, and how best to ensure its continued usage. French is accorded value in wider Andorran society thanks to a transnational linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu 1993) that prizes language competence as a means of onward mobility (to study or work in France) (Hawkey 2022). However, linking French language competence to a sense of Andorran identity is a complex endeavour, and we argue that this needs to be addressed if the historical position of French in Andorra is to be maintained.

References

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Mots-Clés: Language policy, Multilingualism, Primary education, Repertoires