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Becoming Multilingual



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Using a Holistic Approach to Explore Language Attitudes in Two Multilingual Contexts: the Basque Country and Malta

1. Introduction

The study of language attitudes in multilingual contexts is a rather new field of research. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of investigations have focused on minority and/or on majority languages, but very few have also analysed the role of an international language, or of any other additional language(s), within specific contexts (Lasagabaster/Huguet 2007). Moreover, previous studies have been based on an approach in which each of the languages is examined as an isolated unit; in other words, in these studies the participants are asked about their attitudes towards each of the languages in contact independently, by using what we will label in this chapter as *monolingual-biased questionnaires* (Lasagabaster 2005a). As Baker points out (2008), the analysis of attitudes towards trilingualism and multilingualism is a very recent trend and there are currently very few studies focused on this field of research. Since multilingualism is becoming the norm rather than the exception in many European education contexts (De Angelis 2007; Dewaele 2005; Jessner 2006) and the world over (Clyne 2005), this is an area of study which definitively deserves further attention. In fact, this study is an attempt to help to fill this gap. Since the objective of this chapter revolves around the analysis of language attitudes towards trilingualism by means of a holistic questionnaire in two multilingual contexts (the Basque Country and Malta), we will first illustrate the differences between monolingual-biased and holistic approaches to multilingualism.

1.1. Monolingual-biased and holistic approaches

Research on second language acquisition highlights the existence of a monolingual bias through which bilingual – and by extension multilingual – speakers' language competence is assessed according to monolingual norms. This monolingual bias can be observed in several aspects of second language research:

- Until very recently bilinguals were expected to have native-like competence in their two languages: “The expectation that a bilingual should be a double monolingual and a trilingual a triple monolingual is unrealistic because people rarely do the same things in both, or all of their languages” (Clyne 2005: 27). Therefore, the fact is that multilingual speakers usually have stronger or weaker areas in each of their languages.
- The fractional view of bilingualism (Grosjean 1989, 2000) states that individual bilinguals have separate competencies and therefore the bilingual is conceived as two monolinguals within one person. Grosjean points out that this fractional view leads to a monolingual bias, as bilinguals have to be studied from a holistic perspective. A bilingual subject is not the sum of two monolinguals, but rather a specific and unique linguistic configuration. “Even though the fractional and holistic views of bilingualism specifically refer to bilingualism and bilingual competence, these two views shape and influence how multilinguals are also conceptualized” (De Angelis 2007: 17).
- De Angelis (2007) also argues that another form of bias is a bilingual bias in multilingual research, since multilinguals are observed as bilinguals with an additional or some additional languages instead of regarding multilinguals as speakers of several languages from the start.

All these arguments demand a ‘multilingual mindset’ (Clyne 2005) that should also be applied to the instruments used to gather data in multilingual contexts from a holistic perspective. In the case of quantitative attitudinal studies, there is a dire need to beat the monolingual

mindset and this course of action calls for the use of holistic research instruments, the holistic questionnaire being one of them.

1.2. Monolingual-biased versus holistic questionnaires

Traditionally studies on language attitudes in multilingual contexts have been based on monolingual-biased questionnaires. Thus, the respondents are asked about their attitudes towards each of the languages that make up their linguistic repertoire on an individual basis. For example, students in the Basque Country have traditionally been asked independently about their attitudes towards the three languages present in the curriculum:

- Item 1: I like hearing Basque spoken.
- Item 2: I like hearing Spanish spoken.
- Item 3: I like hearing English spoken.

The holistic approach creates another option, which may be used both together with and in opposition to the monolingual-biased questionnaire. Within this holistic approach certain aspects of languages, including attitudes, cannot be fully understood if languages are analysed independently. Therefore, especially in multilingual contexts, languages cannot be considered in isolation as certain features they possess, as well as their role in society, will not emerge fully. In fact, according to this approach languages should be regarded as a whole, as dynamically inter-related and dependent (Herdina/Jessner 2002). The objective is therefore to abandon the previous monolingual perspective, in order to start using multilingual parameters (Grosjean 1989, 2000; Cook 1999; Jessner 2006; De Angelis 2007). As Herdina and Jessner (2002: 144) state: “Multilingualism appears to affect the substantial cognitive and linguistic changes in the speaker which force upon the linguist investigating the phenomenon of multilingualism a view of language competences which must be described as holistic”.

If the questionnaire used in a research study into language attitudes bears a holistic and additive perspective in mind, the resulting items (unlike in the monolingual-biased questionnaire) will not ana-

lyze languages independently, but rather as a whole. Examples, taking into consideration the Basque (items 1 & 2) and Maltese (item 3) contexts, would be:

- Item 1: Speaking Basque, Spanish and English helps to get a job in the Basque Country.
- Item 2: In the Basque Country it is important to be able to speak Basque, Spanish and English.
- Item 3: All people in Malta should speak English, Maltese and Italian.

Consequently, this approach and these objectives are central to this chapter, as we will be dealing with language attitudes in multilingual contexts. It has been relatively well documented that it is very difficult to keep languages apart. Examples of this include studies on language contact (these include seminal works by Weinreich 1968 as well as more recent works such as Appel/Muysken 1987; Myers-Scotton 2002; Dal Negro/Guerini 2007), on transfer in language learning (Gass/Selinker 1994) as well as case studies where cross-linguistic transfer has been analyzed (Ó Laoire 2006). In this sense De Angelis (2007: 19) points out that:

It is rare to find studies that examine the influence between languages from a holistic perspective. The influence is usually conceived as a phenomenon that occurs between two languages, regardless of the number of other languages that are actually in the mind and that may also contribute to the manifestation of crosslinguistic influence.

The same approach can be applied to language attitudes and this is the reason why the questionnaire to be used in this study will delve into attitudes towards trilingualism from a holistic, integrated, multicompetent, additive perspective. The objective is to make student teachers aware of the predominant monolingual and monocultural bias from a critical perspective, as a way to smoothen out ethnocentric language attitudes. Consequently, beyond the statistical or quantitative function, the questionnaire can also play a pedagogic or educating role. The possibility of comparing the monolingual-biased and the holistic questionnaires could

provide food for thought for the participants and contributes to multilingual awareness. In this sense, multilingual awareness would not be focused solely on the acquisition of language skills, but rather on education for linguistic tolerance (Hélot 2008). In this way, the holistic questionnaire becomes a stepping stone within specific teacher training courses that could help student teachers become more liable to support and show empathy towards both individual multilingual pupils and multilingualism as a whole in the school context. As Pedrosa and Lasagabaster (in press) demonstrate, this type of multilingual awareness-raising courses can yield very positive results, since the process of self-exploration and reflection helps would-be teachers to reach an understanding of their attitudes and beliefs about multilingualism.

1.3. The Basque and Maltese contexts

Taking the above into consideration, in this chapter we intend to compare attitudes towards trilingualism in two European bilingual contexts, namely the Basque Country and Malta. In both contexts students are taught at least three languages at school. In the Basque Country all students have to learn the two official languages (Basque and Spanish), plus English as early as the age of four. In Malta students also learn the two official languages (Maltese and English) from the age of four and an additional language at 11 years of age. About 75% of Maltese students opt to study Italian at this age, but in some cases exposure to this language starts earlier in life, mainly through television, though recent studies indicate that this trend is somewhat in decline (Caruana 2006, 2009).

Despite being two distant contexts with highly diverse cultural, historical and linguistic settings, a number of similarities have emerged when studying attitudes towards the languages used in the Basque Country and in Malta (Lasagabaster/Huguet 2007; Caruana/Lasagabaster 2008). Attitudes towards Basque and Maltese are highly positive, especially among those speakers who have these languages as their L1. However, since these languages co-exist with other languages which are internationally more widespread, namely Spanish and English respectively, it is widely accepted that bilingualism, if not

multilingualism, is essential within the Basque and the Maltese societies. Furthermore, in both contexts the knowledge of a third language is viewed in a very positive light and it is also very much desired and encouraged within the schooling systems. Therefore both English in the Basque Country and Italian in Malta play an overwhelming role as main foreign languages.

In the case of Spanish bilingual communities, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country, the early introduction of English (at the age of 4) seems to have exerted a positive influence on students' attitudes (Cenoz 2001, 2005), although older learners who have had more hours of exposure to English held more positive attitudes towards the learning of English than early starters (Tragant/Muñoz 2000). In Malta, where both English and Maltese are official languages, most speakers have a positive attitude towards both languages. Differences, however, do emerge when orientation is concerned: attitudes towards Maltese are highly characterised by an integrative orientation whereas attitudes towards English show an instrumental orientation (Micheli 2001; Brincat 2007; Peska 2009). Italian in Malta is heavily dependent on the presence of this language via the means of communication, especially television, as mentioned earlier. Studies, including Brincat (1992, 1998) and Caruana (2003, 2006), have convincingly indicated that individuals who are exposed to Italian via television from an early age develop a better competence in the language and a more positive attitude towards it.

Therefore, both the Maltese and the Basque contexts have quite a few common features which led us to delve into language attitudes in two European settings that, despite their differences, show many linguistic parallelisms, especially as far as their multilingual educational contexts are concerned.

1.4. Previous studies in these two contexts: Malta and the Basque Country

The use of the traditional questionnaire with the same sample in these two contexts demonstrated that the participants' L1 had a definitive influence on their attitudes towards the three languages (Caruana 2007; Lasagabas-

ter 2007), in accordance with previous studies undertaken in the Basque Country (Madariaga 1994; Larrañaga 1995; García 2001; Lasagabaster 2005b) and with trends which emerge from results of sociolinguistic studies held in Malta (Sciriha 2001, 2004; Sciriha/Vassallo 2001, 2006; Caruana 2006). In addition to this, a study using a traditional questionnaire carried out by Peska (2009) among Maltese adolescents, clearly indicates that the use of English in Maltese families during pre-school years creates a significantly more positive attitude towards this language, even if English may not necessarily be the speakers' L1. In contrast to the results obtained through the traditional questionnaire, in a previous study carried out in the Basque Country wherein the holistic questionnaire was also implemented (Lasagabaster 2005a), it was hypothesized that no differences would be observed between the students' responses once they were divided according to their mother tongue.

However, the results demonstrated that the L1 still exerted some influence even when a holistic questionnaire was used, but the differences that arose between the linguistic groups (L1= Basque; L1= Spanish; L1= Basque and Spanish) via the holistic questionnaire had little to do with those obtained via a more traditional questionnaire. In fact, in the traditional questionnaire the L1= Spanish group significantly outperformed the other two groups in attitudes towards Spanish and English (the L1= Basque and Spanish also harboured more positive attitudes than the L1= Basque group), whereas as far as attitudes to Basque were concerned, the results were just the opposite: the L1= Basque group outscored the other two groups (and the L1= Basque and Spanish group did the same with respect to the L1= Spanish group). In the case of the holistic questionnaire, these trends are not so clear cut: in fact, whereas in some cases the effects of the L1 still do emerge, in other cases the effect of the L1 is less evident. Therefore the original hypothesis was not fully confirmed as there still were differences between the three linguistic groups, but it was supported in the sense that the differences were not analogous to those registered when the three languages were kept apart in the traditional questionnaire.

Moreover, it has to be considered that the sample in Lasagabaster (2005a) was rather heterogeneous, as it was made up of university students enrolled in different degrees and following their studies in different academic years, which could have had a distorting effect on

the results. Lasagabaster (2005a) proposed that further research is needed to compare results obtained in different contexts, as the differences observed when comparing a holistic and a traditional questionnaire are worth pursuing in order to attain a better understanding of language attitudes in multilingual contexts.

A number of the studies referred to above confirm that age is an important variable as far as language competence and attitudes are concerned and in many cases, in bilingual contexts, pre-university students usually show positive attitudes towards trilingualism. Therefore, since language learning is a dynamic process, there is a need to study language attitudes at a later stage in the multilingual language acquisition process, as the analysis of learners' changing identity may offer valuable insights in aspects overlooked so far (Dewaele 2005).

As a result of all this, our working hypotheses will be the following:

- (i) University students' attitudes towards multilingualism will be very positive in both contexts.
- (ii) The effect of the L1 on language attitudes in both contexts will diminish when a holistic questionnaire is implemented.

2. Methodology

2.1. *The sample*

The participants were 408 first-year university students (220 in the Basque Country and 188 in Malta), who were studying to become teachers, which allows us to control the possible effect of the specialisation variable. This specific group was chosen on the grounds that their influence on the language attitudes of their future pupils could be relevant. Moreover, we also believe that their more-than-likely impact on both the Basque and the Maltese educational systems in the next few years, once they start working within the educational system, was also worth considering.

Future teachers have to become aware of their own multilingualism if they are to make the most of the ever more multilingual contexts they will have to face once they start their professional career. The holistic questionnaire on multilingualism would thus be the first step in this process, as it should foster their reflection about who they are as multilingual speakers and how this may affect their future teaching. The teachers' influence can be beneficial or detrimental depending on the label they assign to their students' multilingualism. Language awareness has an important role to play in teacher education as it should help to develop teachers' sensitivity to language as well as lead to gain further insight of the linguistic diversities with which they will come into contact during their teaching career.

The following are the main characteristics of the sample:

	<i>The Basque Country</i>	<i>Malta</i>
Mean age	20 years old	19 years old
Gender	Female 68.5% Male 31.5%	Female 75% Male 25%
L1	Basque 24% Spanish 66% Both 9%	Maltese 83% English 5% Both 12%

Table 1: Characteristics of the sample.

As is usually the case in Teacher Training institutions, the vast majority of the participants in both contexts were female. The data presented in Table 1 clearly indicate that between Malta and the Basque Country there are significant sociolinguistic differences which will have to be considered when analysing the results of the research from a comparative point of view. The main difference lies in the fact that whereas in Malta 83% of the subjects have Maltese as their L1, this percentage is significantly lower for Basque L1 in the Basque Country. These percentages are very much in line with the overall situation in both contexts: in Malta, as recent research indicates (Sciriha/Vassallo 2001, 2006), Maltese is the L1 of over 90% of the population. English is also very widespread as around 90% of the Maltese population claim to know this language. On the other hand in the Basque Country, Basque is by definition a minority language, as in this region there is a majority

of Spanish L1 speakers. Consequently one must take into consideration that we are comparing two first languages which play a different socio-linguistic role in their respective contexts. On the one hand we have Maltese, which despite being spoken by a relatively small number of speakers internationally, is the L1 of almost all Maltese nationals. On the other we have Basque, a language with an important historical, social and political heritage in the Basque Country, which however is not the L1 of the majority of the population in this region. The main problem regarding the students' L1 lies in the fact that those who had English as L1 in Malta were just 8 respondents, which is why the results concerning this group will have to be analysed with caution.

2.2. *The instrument*

The instrument used was based on Baker (1992) and was translated into Basque, Spanish and English. In the Basque Country students were given the possibility to fill in the questionnaire in either Basque or Spanish (as students completed their university degree in any of these two languages), whereas in Malta it had to be completed in English. The English version was used in Malta since at the University of Malta lectures are held in English, practically all written work is completed in English and an adequate comprehension of this language is indispensable in order to further one's studies at tertiary level. In fact the subjects, being University students, had no difficulty in order to complete the questionnaire in English. Reliability tests were performed before its implementation which showed that the translations of the instrument gave consistent results when tested on different occasions. This fact is underlined by the high correlation indexes obtained after having passed the tests twice, leaving a month between the first trial and the second. The results obtained in the test-retest are apportioned in table 2:

<i>Context</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Correlation</i>	<i>P-Value</i>
Basque Country	Basque	108	0.976	0.0001
Basque Country	Spanish	132	0.948	0.0001
Malta	English	80	0.963	0.0001

Table 2: Results of the test-retest.

The questionnaire was divided into four main parts. The first one was used to gather personal information, such as age, gender or the respondents' L1. In the second section subjects were asked to provide information about the use of the two official languages in each context. The third part included questions on language attitudes by means of the traditional questionnaire (these results are analysed in Caruana 2007 and in Lasagabaster 2007), that is to say, they were shown ten items and had to choose from a five-point Likert-scale for each of the three languages. Dörnyei (2001: 200) provides a brief but accurate explanation of Likert scales:

Likert scales (named after their inventor) consist of a series of statements, all of which are related to a particular target (e.g. the L2 community), and respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with these items by marking one of the responses ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

In the final section the questionnaire was a holistic one, following multilingual parameters, which is the part of the questionnaire we examine in this chapter.

3. Results

3.1. Results concerning the first hypothesis

The questionnaire was based on a Likert-scale and the respondents were given five options to choose from: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. In order to check our first hypothesis we will focus on the 19 items that made up the questionnaire by giving the percentage of participants who strongly agreed or agreed (their first two options) with the proposed statements:

<i>(Strongly) agree</i>	<i>Malta</i>	<i>Basque C.</i>
1. It is important to be able to speak the 3 languages	89.9%	95.9%
2. To speak one language in the Basque Country/Malta is all that is needed*	88.2%	74.9%
3. Knowing the 3 languages makes people cleverer	54.5%	58%
4. Children get confused when learning the 3 languages*	61.7%	71.7%
5. Knowing the 3 languages helps to get a job	86.2%	100%
6. All schools in the Basque Country/Malta should teach pupils to speak in the 3 languages	64.7%	82.6%
7. Speaking 3 languages is not difficult	57.4%	28.3%
8. Knowing 3 languages gives people problems*	78.7%	80.3%
9. People know more if they speak the 3 languages	58.8%	28.4%
10. People who speak the 3 languages can have more friends than those who speak one language	56.9%	30.7%
11. Speaking the 3 languages is more for younger than older people	14.4%	21.9%
12. Young children learn to speak the 3 languages at the same time with ease	35.1%	72.6%
13. The 3 languages are important in the future of the Basque Country/Malta	80.3%	66.7%
14. People can earn more money if they speak the 3 languages	43.1%	53.9%
15. I would like to be a speaker of the 3 languages	92.6%	91.3%
16. All people in the Basque Country/Malta should speak the 3 languages	33.5%	27.4%
17. If I have children, I would want them to speak the 3 languages	73.4%	91.3%
18. The 3 languages can live together in the Basque Country/Malta	75.4%	67.1%
19. Given the new European context (UE, euro, free movement of people/goods, etc.), it is very important to speak the 3 languages	79.3%	78.1%

Table 3: Attitudes towards multilingualism¹.

1 The original items have been modified for the sake of clarity. In the Basque Country the original questionnaire included *Basque, Spanish and English* and in Malta *Maltese, English and Italian* instead of *the 3 languages*.

* The percentages provided in the case of these three items are related to the *strongly disagree* and *disagree* options. Since these items which subjects were asked to rate on the Likert Scale were presented in negative terms, these are the options that show the respondents' positive attitudes towards multilingualism.

The first observation that may be put forward with regards to the results presented in Table 3 is that in a number of items percentages registered in Malta and in the Basque Country vary rather marginally and that the overall attitude towards the three languages in contact in the two contexts is highly positive, thereby confirming our first hypothesis. Some other observations presented hereunder regard the items in which considerable differences were registered in the results of the two contexts.

In items 5 (*Knowing the 3 languages help to get a job*), 6 (*All schools in the Basque Country/Malta should teach pupils to speak in the 3 languages*), 12 (*Young children learn to speak the 3 languages at the same time with ease*) and 17 (*If I have children, I would want them to speak the 3 languages*) the results registered in the Basque Country are considerably higher than those registered in Malta. One may notice that three of these four items concern the exposure of young children to the three languages and clearly indicate the inclination to help children master these languages from an early age. The reason behind this positive attitude may also be attributed to the fact that in the Basque Country children are now learning the L3 (English) at a very young age, whereas in Malta the introduction of the L3 (Italian) at school only occurs at age 11. This also seems to be a plausible justification of the response to item 12 wherein results show that children in the Basque Country who receive formal instruction in English as an L3 are viewed to be able to speak three languages at the same time 'with ease'. In Malta, even though there may be exposure to Italian at a young age, this occurs through exposure to television input which, given its unidirectional nature, does not necessarily facilitate using the language productively in speaking. The response to item 5 in the Basque Country is an overwhelming 100%, clearly demonstrating the instrumental orientation towards the three languages in contact in this context.

On the other hand percentages are considerably higher for Malta than they are for the Basque Country for items 2 (*To speak one language in the Basque Country/Malta is all that is needed*), 7 (*Speaking 3 languages is not difficult*), 9 (*People know more if they speak the 3 languages*), 10 (*People who speak the 3 languages can have more friends than those who speak one language*) and 13 (*The 3 languages are important in the future of the Basque Country/Malta*). The highly

positive response to item 7 is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that in Malta the presence of Italian as an L3 is also characterised by its spontaneous acquisition through the media, especially television. Items 9 and 10 are probably the result of the fact that, in Malta, contact between L1 and L2 features regularly in everyday conversation, therefore the use of both languages is seen indispensable both to learn more and to socialise better. Finally, the highly positive response to items 2 and 13 is mainly due to the fact that as a small island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, the knowledge of more languages in Malta has always been seen as indispensable in order to bridge the physical gap with other neighbouring countries, as already confirmed in past research on attitudes in Malta, among which Sciriha/Vassallo (2006). These differences registered in the two contexts, particularly those regarding the importance attributed to languages for the future of Malta and the Basque Country, are undoubtedly the consequence of the geographical location and size as well as the result of different historical permutations.

3.2. Results concerning the second hypothesis

The items included in the questionnaire were divided into three categories. The first category comprised attitudes towards the social presence and knowledge of multilingualism, which included the following items:

- Item 1: It is important to be able to speak the three languages.
- Item 2: To speak one language in the Basque Country is all that is needed.
- Item 6: All schools in the Basque Country/Malta should teach pupils to speak in the three languages.
- Item 13: The three languages are important in the future of the Basque Country/Malta.
- Item 15: I would like to be a speaker of the three languages.
- Item 16: All people in the Basque Country/Malta should speak the three languages.
- Item 17: If I have children, I would want them to speak the three languages.

Item 19: Given the new European context (CEE, euros, free movement of people/goods, etc), it is very important to speak the three languages.

The second category included those items which concerned learning languages:

Item 4: Children get confused when learning the three languages.

Item 7: Speaking three languages is not difficult.

Item 8: Knowing the three languages gives people problems.

Item 11: Speaking the three languages is more for younger than older people.

Item 12: Young children learn to speak the three languages at the same time with ease.

The third category encompasses those items in which the participants were asked about the cognitive and social effects (including their instrumental orientation) of multilingualism:

Item 3: Knowing the three languages makes people cleverer.

Item 5: Knowing the three languages helps to get a job.

Item 9: People know more if they speak the three languages.

Item 10: People who speak the three languages can have more friends than those who speak one language.

Item 14: People can earn more money if they speak the three languages.

Item 18: The three languages can live together in the Basque Country/Malta.

The graphs presented in the Appendix, regarding both the Basque and the Maltese contexts, are based on quantitative measures obtained by comparing the mean score of each item through a one-way Anova analysis. As explained previously, the Likert scale produced a range of scores from 1 to 5 (1= strongly agree; 2= agree; 3= neither agree nor disagree; 4= disagree; 5= strongly disagree), through which the mean score for each item was computed. The items which therefore have a mean which is close to 1 would be those towards which the most posi-

tive attitudes are manifested. Conversely any score closer to 5 indicates negative attitudes.

In the case of graph 1, concerning the participants of the Basque Country, the first aspect that deserves attention is that there is an overlap of the means obtained by the three linguistic groups. In fact, the one-way Anova analysis performed with the mean obtained for the 8 items encompassed in this first category did not show any significant difference between any of the three linguistic groups ($F= 1.045$; $Sig.= 0.353$). A very similar pattern is also registered for the Maltese context (Graph 2), and even in this context no significant differences between the three linguistic groups are registered ($F= 1.42$; $Sig.= 0.243$).

As for attitudes towards the learning of languages, the overlap in graph 3 is even sharper in both the Maltese and in the Basque context. The mean for the attitudes towards the learning of languages harboured by the Basque sample did not produce any significant difference among the three linguistic groups ($F= 0.181$; $Sig.= 0.834$) and the same consideration also applies to Malta ($F= 0.104$; $Sig.= 0.901$).

As happened in the previous two categories, no statistically significant difference was observed depending on the Basque participants' L1 when the means for their attitudes towards the cognitive and social effects of multilingualism were compared ($F= 0.502$; $Sig.= 0.606$). The same can also be claimed for the Maltese context, however, in this case it must be pointed out that statistical significance was very narrowly missed out on ($F= 2.96$; $Sig.= 0.54$) and this indicates that further research in this area is required in order to investigate issues regarding the relationship between social and cognitive attitudes and Maltese respondents' L1. This is also necessary since the main difference that emerges from Graph 6 concerns the response of the English= L1 group, which is composed of a very small sample, namely eight subjects.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The use of a holistic approach when tackling the study of different languages in contact has been largely ignored for a long time. Moreover, research on third or additional language learning has usually been subsumed under second language acquisition research (Jessner 2006) and, due to this, attitudes have traditionally been analyzed from a monolingual perspective. In this study we have tried to avoid this bias.

As far as the Basque Country is concerned, the results obtained by means of the holistic questionnaire vary from those of the traditional questionnaire. In fact, the significant differences observed depending on the participants' L1 in the data gathered via the traditional questionnaire did vanish once the holistic questionnaire was implemented. Therefore, in this case, these results confirm the suggestion, already included in Lasagabaster (2005a) that the holistic approach sheds light on different considerations regarding attitudes when compared to approaches in which questions are asked about attitudes to individual languages, even though they may be languages that are constantly in contact with one another, as occurs both in Malta and in the Basque Country. In this respect, results regarding the Maltese situation are similar to those registered in the Basque Country. However, further investigation is necessary because the number of English= L1 speakers is very small although knowledge of this language is very widespread in Malta, especially among more highly educated individuals, such as the respondents who took part in this study.

The results registered in this study, obtained by using a holistic questionnaire, do not imply that the traditional questionnaire is not valid or reliable. On the contrary, our results demonstrate that the use of both types of questionnaire can help to reveal different aspects on the complex issue of language attitudes. The holistic questionnaire can therefore be a tool aimed at complementing the traditional questionnaire and it could lead to further knowledge on the three languages as a whole, rather than treating them separately. Furthermore, it can be a useful tool in order to enhance language awareness and enable language teachers to reflect both on their own language skills and competence as

well as on those of their students. In future research in the field it can also be useful to compare results of both types of questionnaires with respondents and ask them to reflect on their answers to become more aware of their attitudes and how they are affected by their L1.

Throughout history the motto *one nation, one language* (Strubell 2007) has brought about situations in which the presence of different languages has more often than not led to confrontation. The traditional study of language attitudes has probably suffered from the same confronting trend and, consequently, results all over the world tend to coincide in the idea that languages in contact are habitually related to linguistic disputes. In our opinion this chapter has shown that languages have to be put forward from a holistic perspective, where they are shown to add and promote each other, instead of demeaning and menacing one another. This would probably help to spread multilingualism all over Europe, especially in those areas where minority and majority languages live together and share the same sociolinguistic spaces. In this way the European Commission's discourse on the promotion of multilingualism may find an easier headway.

In an increasingly diverse and global world, teachers have to play a fundamental role when it comes to language learning. They are ultimately the individuals who have to arouse their students' curiosity and interest in other languages, as well as tolerance towards the surrounding linguistic and cultural diversity. Languages can no longer be studied, let alone exist, in isolation and, if this is applied to a multilingual formal context such as the Maltese or the Basque schooling system, James and Garrett's (1991: 21) statement that language awareness (in its broadest meaning) starts with the teacher should be borne in mind. Thus, teachers should help to develop their students' language awareness concerning three main parameters (Wolfram 1998): not only the cognitive (centred on the patterns of language) and the social parameters (focused on the role of language in effective communication and interaction), but also the affective parameter (focused on attitudes towards languages). This is the reason why we do believe that teacher training degrees should pay special attention to this issue, as teachers have to promote a critical approach to language learning and prioritise the development of the learners' capacities to examine and judge the world (Cots 2006).

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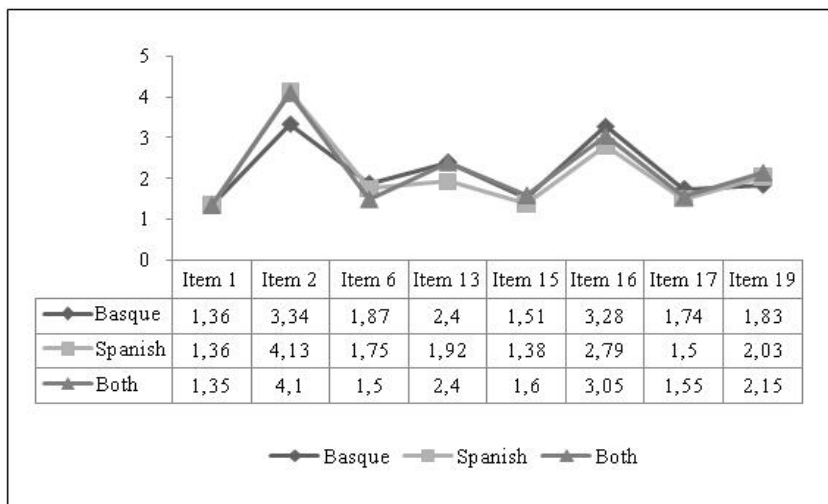
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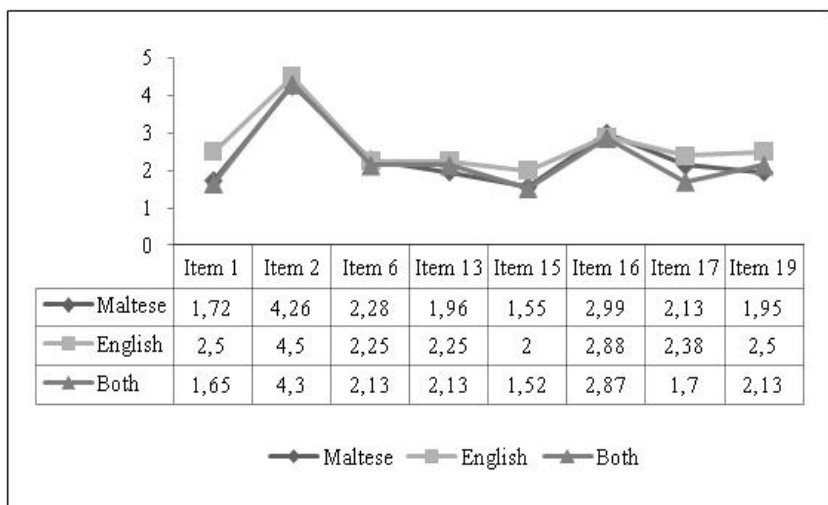
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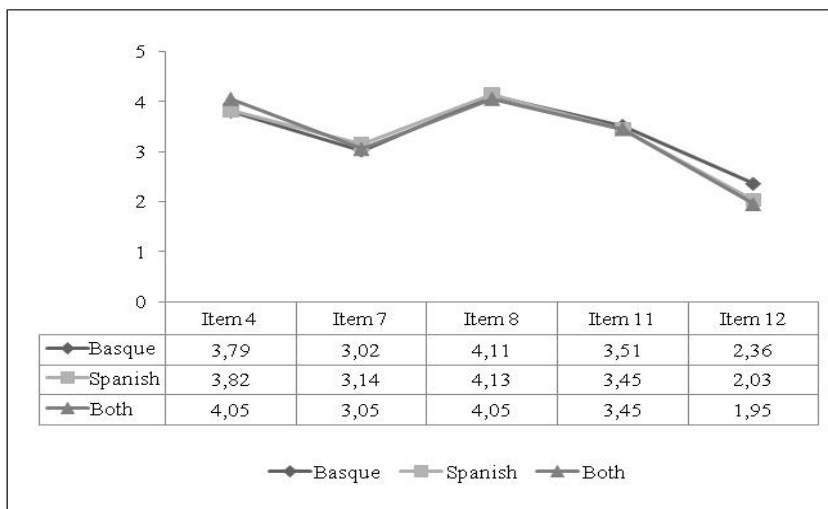
Appendix



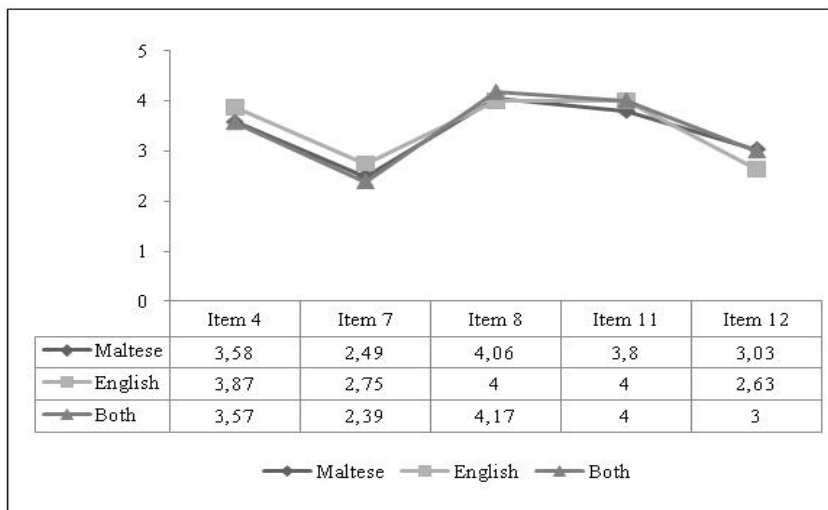
Graph 1: Attitudes towards the social presence and knowledge of multilingualism depending on L1 (the Basque Country).



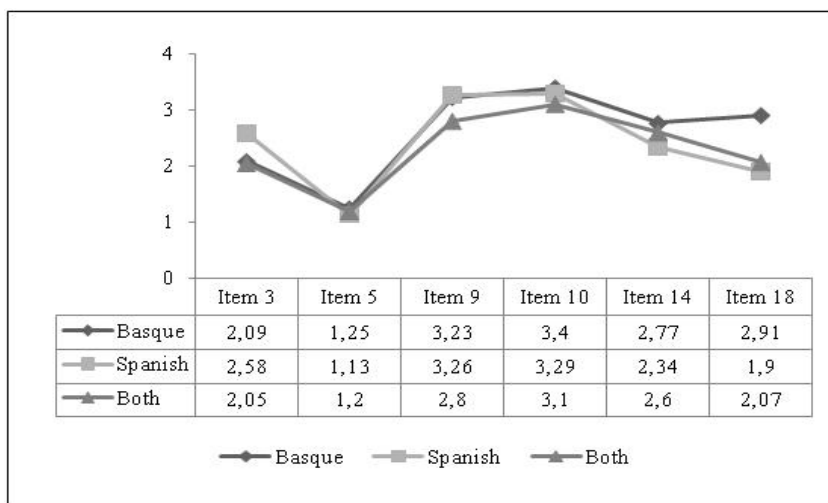
Graph 2: Attitudes towards the social presence and knowledge of multilingualism depending on L1 (Malta).



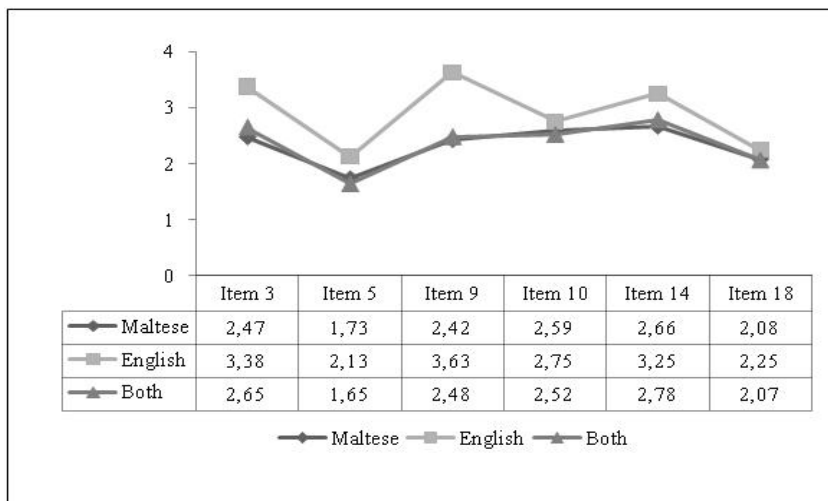
Graph 3: Attitudes towards the learning of languages (the Basque Country).



Graph 4: Attitudes towards the learning of languages (Malta).



Graph 5: Attitudes towards the cognitive and social effects (including their instrumental orientation) of multilingualism (the Basque Country).



Graph 6: Attitudes towards the cognitive and social effects (including their instrumental orientation) of multilingualism (Malta).