

**The Necessity to Create Europeanness:
A Critical Review of European Schools' Education Project**

Silvia Zuccarello
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Department of Language and Communication Studies
University of Jyväskylä
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Faculty Humanities and Social Sciences	Department Language and Communication Studies
Author Silvia Zuccarello	
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Abstract	
<p>This research is a qualitative study of the European Schools' (ES) educational system. It was conducted from a social constructionist viewpoint, according to which language is seen as social action. ES are schools which were founded with the rise of the first European institutions to educate the children of EU's diplomats relocating within Europe. The initial aim was to ensure these children had a linear leaning experience. Today, ES became schools accessible to other pupils of Europe, with the aim of developing their European identity through a multilingual and multicultural education project. In this work I wanted to examine power discourses within ES educational mission, by specifically looking at the rhetoric of solidarity, Europeanness, and cultural diversity. The research was data-driven and used Critical Discourse Analysis to answer the question: <i>How are the ES educational mission and learning practices constructed in the language of ES official documents?</i> The data consisted of thirteen texts among which policy documents, curricula, and syllabuses. These texts are considered crucial means to track the change and developments of ES learning practices. In fact, studying official documents helped giving meaning, developing an understanding and discovering insights relevant to the research problem. The ES education project and the notion of European identity are constructed through six meta-discourses. These are (1) Essentialist understandings of identity and culture, (2) Absence of pupils' interaction and of interaction among ES and other schools, (3) Majority-centered discourses about diversity, (4) Educational elitism, Eurocentrism, and European exceptionalism, (5) Absence of definitions and persuasive narrative, (6) Economic and political discourses. The identification of these discourse patterns showed that texts can be very powerful means for the legitimization of political, economic, social objectives, such as recreating an image of a united Europe. I concluded that ES' educational system is a crucial vehicle of transmission of EU's political, economic, and social ideologies.</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

I would like to reveal that before conducting this study I was not aware of the existence of European Schools (ES). I happened to discover them by accidentally listening to a podcast of which ES were the main subject. In particular, the macro theme of the podcast was Brexit (before its final actualization), and it dealt with a main question: “What a European education project can tell us about Brexit?” (Pomerantsev & Asthana, 2019). While at the beginning of the podcast I thought that “European Schools” was an expression referring to the schools of Europe in general, I became aware of a whole new educational world. Over and above the discussion on Brexit, at that moment, ES were a revelation for me. Primarily, I was very intrigued by the adjective European ascribed to the Schools, which made me wonder: What kind of education do these schools offer? How do ES differ from other national/international schools of Europe? How come I had never heard of them before?

Based on the readings of the Schools’ official documents, I learned that ES are educational institutions initially founded to educate only the children of European diplomats (i.e., category I pupils), with the aim of offering them a linear and solid education path while resettling around Europe. However, later on, ES agreed on welcoming the children of other representatives of accredited EU institutions (i.e., category II pupils). Even more recently, also other children (i.e., category III pupils), whose parents have no connection with any EU institution, have been allowed to enter ES under specific circumstances and agreements. Substantially, documents show that these schools are destined to preselected categories, organized into well-established hierarchies. ES exist in most (not in every) EU’s member states, and they aim at providing a multilingual and multicultural education.

Their foundational principle, expressed in the ES’ motto, is educating future generations of European citizens about the greatness and richness of European culture, and to encourage students to engage in the cultural, political, economic, and social affairs of the EU. In the language of ES, creating a European common culture and making people feel European (or becoming culturally aware) implies educating people on European historical facts, EU national traditions, EU national languages, EU democratic values, etc. As communicated in the Schools’ official documents, ES education programme is structured in a way that students can experience a veritable “European dimension” in their education, because pupils come from different countries of Europe and they all bring in the values of their cultures of origin. According to the Schools, the idea is that pupils learn about each other’s values, share and compare them with their own, and become aware of different ways of being. It is assumed that ES’ multicultural and multilingual environment will help students acquire an extensive set of intercultural skills, among which, to respect and tolerate cultural diversity. Furthermore, ES claim that students will mature a particular attachment (feeling of belonging) to Europe, developing a veritable European identity. The key competence ES intend to provide to students is the ability of appreciating others’ cultural diversity while preserving their national cultures.

It is precisely this paradox of being culturally diverse while preserving national culture that caught my attention and generated my interest in analysing deeper the ES approach to education and identity construction. The first problem I found relevant to address was that these institutions seem to promote an essentialist understanding of both culture and identity (i.e., culture/identity equal nation; identity as singular and fixed, or as something to preserve rather than develop further). This approach to identity and cultural diversity has been reviewed and criticised by Dervin (2015), who introduced, instead, the idea of “diverse diversities”. The concept of diverse diversities suggests that - contrarily to what is said about having one, immutable identity and culture - we all have multiple cultural belongings. Dervin (2015) claims that we are not members of just one cultural group, but of many different groups simultaneously, and on top of this, we also have our unique and complex personal identities.

Moreover, already from a preliminary examination of the ES educational mission, it results that even the concept of multicultural experience is reduced to the copresence of multiple nations, the European nations. This leads to the second major issue of this research, namely that of Eurocentrism. Scholars (e.g., Smith, 1999; Appadurai, 2001; Huggan, 2002; Fisher and Mosquera, 2004; Robertson, 2016) have studied and widely discussed the effects of Eurocentric approaches to education. Huggan (2002) states that Eurocentrism refers to European institutions’ tendency of comparing cultures, ethnicities, and national values in multicultural discourses, aiming at reinforcing and establishing homogeneous principles of universalism, humanism, and identity.

As a domino effect, this brings us to a third problem that this research addresses. As outlined, in the context of ES, personal identity is conceived only as embedded in a bigger communal identity and as constructed in association, in relation, and in comparison, to the nations of the EU. However, scholars (e.g., Wikan, 2002; Fiske, 2003; Dervin, 2016; Paavola, 2017) highlighted that behind educational practices which involve the comparison of cultures, lay biased ideologies. Dervin (2016) has showed through his research that the comparing of cultures unavoidably creates dichotomies between the “good” and the “bad”, the “civilized” and the “uncivilised”, the “same” and the “others”.

All these considerations are a demonstration of the crucial role that educational systems play in the construction of students’ identity, and in the development of their worldview. I assume, in fact, that schools are responsible for social transformation, or even, for the consolidation of what Anderson (1991) calls an “imagined community”. In this research, “nation states” and also “Europeanness” can be regarded as such imagined communities, and ES – as institutions directly tied to the EU political machinery – are implicated in imagining such Europeanness and reproducing some types of ideologies. Having said that, it is important to bring up the case of ES, because they can be pivotal for the transmission of ideologies embraced by the EU political institutions. Foundational elements, principles, and ideas on the desired European identities can be found in educational documents (such as policy statement and curricula) and act then as the semantic bank or discursive environment for teachers to draw on, when designing and executing their teaching or interacting with their students. From here, I formulated the following research question:

RQ: How are the ES educational mission and learning practices constructed in the language of ES official documents?

While most of the research conducted so far about ES ends up promoting their pedagogical programs and their efficiency in terms of multilingual, multicultural, and intercultural education, this research is rather a critical review of ES multilingual, multicultural and intercultural education. As a student of Intercultural Communication, I learned that multilingualism and multiculturalism are a natural scenario of people's (daily) life. Hence, multilingual, and multicultural education cannot be the exclusive *raison d'être* of ES. Indeed, this would imply that, in order to become multiculturally and linguistically competent European citizens, one must attend ES. In other words, it would mean that other schools do not have either the tools or the right competences to offer to students a valid multilingual and multicultural education. Therefore, in my view, the ES pedagogical mission does not justify their existence, and this is the reason I felt the need to investigate and dig deeper into the construction of ES education project.

I organised my work into five chapters: following this introductory first chapter, Chapter 2 illustrates the key events in the history of ES and describes their policies and the developments of their pedagogical project until the present day. This Chapter is subdivided into two main theoretical sections, introduced by relevant literature describing ES as educational institutions. Hence, first it is explained how, why, and in which historical context ES were founded. The introduction on the ES also provides significant information about their internal organisation (e.g., their language policy, the different types of ES, the different pupils categories, etc). The first and second sections are concerned with ES' two main educational aims, respectively, the European identity project (section one), and their multicultural and multilingual education (section two).

Chapter 3 is entirely dedicated to the methodology and to the description of data. I determined that designing this study in the form of a qualitative research would best suit my aim of seeking answers that would clarify how the ES education experience is created and given meaning. I explain how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) represents the best method for this research. As stated earlier in this introduction, I assume that schools can be extremely influential in shaping students' worldview. This is why I consider the analysis of the School's curricula, syllabuses, and other official documents important for this study, and this is where CDA steps in in this research. ES official texts are crucial elements of analysis since I want to specifically look at how ES education is constructed, both in theory and practice, to better understand the social reality of these Schools. CDA key aim is precisely that of revealing hidden meanings behind discourses by looking at the words' choice of public discourses (Wiggins 2017). CDA supports the socio-constructivist belief that language is central to the construction of individual identity, but also to socially shared understandings of community, people, events (Burr, 2015). Therefore, to understand how ES education is constructed I used ES official documents as data, some of them defining the conditions of existence and foundation of the institutions (such as policy documents), some others defining their principles, objectives and pedagogical programme (such as curricula and syllabuses).

Chapter 4 reveals the findings of this study, which will be presented according to the main discourses individuated from the documents' analysis. Ultimately, Chapter 5 is more explicitly concerned with my individual contributions to this field of research, hence, with the final discussion, conclusions and the illustration of the possible limitations of this study.

2. EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

Historical Background

The historical context following the World Wars deeply influenced - if not inspired - the foundation of ES. In fact, since then, the ideal of a social cohesion and the desperate need for a unified Europe emerged. Discourses of peace, freedom, and social progress represented motivational strategies in inviting nations to take part to the unification process. For instance, in the speech of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) constitution – the very first form of European unification – it was declared that “to make Europe” meant “to make peace” (Monnet, 1954). On the one hand, the speech focused on illustrating the positive effects of a union among national states. On the other hand, it alerted the states about the negative consequences that division would have brought to them. The union consisted of a moral integration, which implied a sense of respect and responsibility towards each other. The World Wars had taught to Europe that, without such moral union, conflicts between nations would keep happening due to nationalistic ambitions and the fear for each other's progress. In other words, while division among states would have been the way back to war, union represented a significant contribution towards peace. Moreover, collaborating and engaging in a European integration would have made the joining states equally stronger.

In building Europe, the Europeans are laying the very foundation of Peace
(Monnet 1954, p.62)

Although the ECSC was merely an economic union, it represented a message of solidarity for the future European people; its function was to unite people rather than make a coalition of states (Monnet, 1954). However, during a post-war phase, it was difficult to establish mutual trust among peoples. Therefore, if on the one hand the ECSC treaty in 1951 marks the birth of Europe, on the other hand, it also marks the beginning of a quest for European integration in the social, political, legislative sectors. However, when it comes to education, scholars tell us that it took years of hard negotiations to establish a meaningful collaboration between the Union and the national governments (Pépin, 2006). In fact, nations were reluctant to let the Community intervene on the education sector yet considered a matter for individual member states.

Interestingly, investing in the area of cultural development became crucial in the building, sharing, and in representing European Union's ideologies. In fact, according to the fathers of the European Community, a veritable union would exist only when “it had taken shape in the hearts and minds of its people” (Pépin, 2006 p.34). In this atmosphere, discourses of moral virtue and European pride started to consolidate. At the same time, these discourses became the foundations on which institutions and organisations were established. As a result, institutions became themselves symbols of achievement, understanding and collaboration among states, proving the efficacy and the success of European integration. At this point, all that was left was to find agreement and enough collaboration among nations in the educational and cultural spheres, key areas for the diffusion of European values (CVCE, 2012 p.2).

In 1949, the first European educational postgraduate institution - the College of Europe - was established in Bruges (Belgium), with the attempt of training an élite of young and prepared executives for Europe (CVCE, 2012). This college has been defined “the first real scientific laboratory for European multicultural immersion” (Pépin, 2006 p.47). The experiment into question consisted of observing, controlling, and trying to predict how students and teachers from different European countries would co-operate. The practical function of such melting pot was to prepare European institutions to manage the already enlarged European Community, with the ultimate objective of extending even more the spirit of solidarity and mutual understanding to the Eastern countries. Currently, there are two Colleges of Europe: the first one in Bruges, and the second one was founded in 1992 in Natolin, Poland. The objective of these education projects was to train university graduates from all over Europe to live together as a cohesive community of young professionals, while constructing their careers within the fields of European cooperation and integration.

Traditional European Schools & Accredited European Schools

Having settled the economic, socio-political, and institutional bases for the European consolidation, it became of urgent matter to find schools where children of diplomats - sent on foreign assignments within the EU - would be educated. In 1953, the first kind of ES appeared in Luxembourg. Unlike the College of Europe, ES offer nursery, primary and secondary education. However, a distinction among different types of ES should be made. Today we can count 13 original - or traditional - European Schools (type I ES), and 18 Accredited European Schools (type II and III ES). The fundamental distinction between type I, type II, and type III Schools concerns the category of pupils they host. Type I ES are exclusively designed for children of diplomats, Category I pupils, and are located in the main European municipalities in proximity of the EU institutions (e.g., Luxembourg, Brussels, Mol, Varese, Karlsruhe, Bergen, Munich, Frankfurt, Alicante). Type II and III schools recruit Category II and III pupils (Board of Governors, 2013).

Category II pupils are children of parents working for those EU companies or institutions, that signed an agreement with the ES (Board of Governors, 2013). Category III students are children whose parents do not work for any European institution, but who are allowed to enter the Schools under specific circumstances (Board of Governors, 2013). In fact, the three categories are enrolled following different procedures of selection. In addition, there are financial aspects which accentuate differences amongst ES pupils. Category I is the only category that is exempt from school fees (Board of Governors, 2013). Category II pupils are also discharged from tuition fees, because they have a financial arrangement either with the Schools or with other European institutions recognised by the Schools (Board of Governors, 2013). Ultimately, Category III pupils - who are not represented by any exceptional agreement with the Schools or other EU institutions - must pay for tuition instead (Board of Governors, 2013).

Both traditional and accredited schools aim at guaranteeing pedagogical equivalence, that is, offering the same quality in terms of preparation and type of education. Overall, the exceptional feature of ES is that they grant students a European Baccalaureate (EB), an exclusive degree that fulfils basic entry

requirements for all member states' universities. Accredited ES were introduced after the ES reform of 2009, which required that the ES education system and EB should be extended to the general population in Europe (Leaton Gray et al., 2018).

Language Sections

ES aim at providing the same level of instruction that students would receive in their country of origin. Such concern especially refers to the learning of mother tongue, which is of primary importance in the context of ES education. Indeed, pupils' dominant language (L1) is the first criterion according to which students are categorized and allocated to national language sections. While in most cases it is easy to determine which language should be the students' L1 - since it is assumed that L1 corresponds to pupils' parental mother tongue - there are many other cases of pupils coming from a multilingual familial background. On this occurrence, it is stated that "the Director of the ES is in charge of determining the students' L1, based on the information given by their legal representatives" (Board of Governors, 2019 p. 7). The Board of Governors (2019) claims that this system should offer the pupils the best opportunity to study and express themselves in the language in which they are the most proficient at an academic, linguistic, and emotional level. There are 24 official languages in Europe and so far, ES managed to create 20 respective language sections all over Europe (Board of Governors, 2019). However, the 20 languages are not available in every ES nor equally distributed among the Schools. Their availability rather depends on whether there are enough native speaking teachers. The number of language sections varies from school to school, with the ES of Brussels and Luxembourg offering the maximum of the options (Board of Governors, 2019).

Consequently, some students find themselves without a language section because their L1 may not exist in the School they are enrolled (Board of Governors, 2014). These students constitute an exceptional category of pupils: Students Without A Language Section (SWALS). SWALS are required to join the sections of their second language (L2), unless the number of SWALS is consistent enough to form a class for their original L1. However, even in this case, it is essential that a native speaker teacher is available to teach in that language section (Board of Governors, 2014). Second language sections can be either English, French, or German sections. As a replacement of their L1, the other possible solution for SWALS is to be enrolled in a section in which the official language of the host country (HCL) is taught (Board of Governors, 2019).

Nevertheless, the SWALS condition just described only applies to category I and II students (Board of Governors, 2019). As for category III students, a separate language section must be created in case their L1 section does not exist in the Schools (Board of Governors, 2019). The minimum number of students required to form a new class is seven (Board of Governors, 2019). If the minimum number is not reached, category III students will have to take their current L2 as their new L1 (Board of Governors, 2019). This means that these students will also have to choose a different L2 (Board of Governors, 2019). The solution studied by the Board of Governors to ease category III pupils in such situation is that "They would be allowed two years to catch up. L1 Courses in S6 and S7, are protected from termination" (Board of Governors, 2019, p.8)

Language Education at ES

The main concern of ES is to let children of civil servants learn about their cultural heritage the same way they would do in their country of origin. Diversity tolerance - in terms of pupils' cultural backgrounds and national languages - is a crucial principle on which ES rely. The linguistic aspect, however, is deemed as the most significant for pupils' education (Leaton Grey et al., 2018). The idea is that, in the first place, students should study in their mother tongue, as well as become fluent and proficient in a second and third foreign language (Leaton Grey et al., 2018). Pépin (2006) states that ES aim at the preservation of a European linguistic diversity to allow all the European languages "to keep the command" (p.258). According to the Article 126(2) of the Maastricht Treaty (1992),

Community action shall be aimed at [...] developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States (Pépin, 2006 p.253).

In fact, according to the European Commission, the learning of European languages is considered crucial not only because it favours a greater mutual understanding between peoples - as learning each other's language would help European citizens feel more integrated in the EU community - but also because it offers an alternative to the establishment of English as a lingua franca (Pépin, 2006).

Language pluralism is at the core of ES principles. From the very beginning of nursery school - hence, when children are about three to six years old - students cohabit in a multilingual environment. According to the Schools, this helps maintaining the language learning standards high. Students are engaged in the learning of modern languages since the first year of primary school; in secondary education the study of languages become even more demanding. In ES educational system the percentage of hours of foreign language learning is much more elevated as compared to other national schools' systems. According to an analysis of the ES curricula, conducted by the van Dijk Management Consultants at the University of Liège (2008), the compulsory teaching of foreign languages is more surprising at the primary education level, where the teaching of a first foreign language (L1) starts at the first year of primary, followed by a second foreign language (L2) taught at least two hours and a half per week during the first two grades, which grows up to three hours and a half from the third to the fifth grade (van Dijk Management Consultants, 2008 p.10). The choice of the L2 must be limited to the three vehicular languages English, French, or German (Board of Governors, 2014). When it comes to secondary education, on the other hand, the amount of foreign languages teaching is fairly ordinary since in almost all secondary school systems of the EU countries is required a compulsory number of hours of foreign language learning (van Dijk Management Consultants, 2008). Nevertheless, according to the study, ES seem to stand out in terms of number of languages that students can study at the same time (van Dijk Management Consultants, 2008).

In fact, not only are students asked to learn at least three mandatory languages – therefore, to specialise in their L1, L2, L3 - but they can also start learning a fourth foreign language (L4) as an optional course in secondary school (year 4), or even a fifth (L5) as a complementary course (year 6) (Board of Governors, 2014, p.5). Furthermore, besides the foreign language classes, Human Science courses are taught in L2 starting from secondary year 3, although they may be taught in L1 as well (Board of Governors, 2014, p.6). However, starting from year 4, History and Geography are only taught in L2

(Board of Governors, 2014, p.6). What is also interesting about ES languages teaching regulation, is that students' languages choice is flexible. In secondary year 6, pupils may ask for a change of L2, or for a change from a lower to higher level or vice versa (Board of Governors, 2014, p.7)

The literature presented so far looked into the basic organizational principles of ES. From the next section, I will focus on the pedagogical aims of the ES' education project to understand what do these institutions value the most in the education of their pupils? How do their academic principles and objectives differ from those of other national and international schools?

2.2 The European Identity Project

2.2.1 The European Dimension

The documents defining the principles and objectives of ES report that ES educational mission is to provide a European, multicultural, and multilingual education by instructing students - from kindergarten until the end of secondary education - on how to develop a European identity (European schools, 2019). These institutions aim at creating a prototype of European citizens, who are supposed to become in mind European and to look at their future through the eyes of the European Nation (European Schools, 2019). At the same time, ES claim that the national background is a significant component of students' identity, therefore, that it should be respected and protected (European Schools, 2019).

The existence of a European dimension (and European identity) is evoked in most of the official documents emanated by the European Commission. However, many scholars highlighted that there is no explicit definition of such dimension. In her research "The construction of European identity and citizenship through cultural policy," Tsaliki (2007) declares that growing in people a sense of belonging to Europe has become a priority for the EU. The promoting strategy adopted by the European Commission for the development of such European identity, is that of creating an empathetic relationship between the Europeans and the European cultural heritage. Hence, following Tsaliki's interpretation, the European dimension is to be found in the European cultural heritage, "the glue that unites people" (Tsaliki, 2007 p.158). Tsaliki (2007) also says that, especially in their political discourses, EU institutions insist on inviting member states to be mindful of what they have in common (i.e., the European cultural heritage), "while respecting their national and regional diversity" (p.159).

One of the most explanatory documents on the matter of European identity construction and cultural heritage preservation is "The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" (WPID), a report from the Council of Europe defining the conditions under which cultural diversity should be handled in Europe. First of all, the WPID declares that European cultural richness is represented by a mixture of different historical, religious, ethnic, and linguistic elements. However, in their critical review of the WPID, Lähdesmäki and Wagner (2015) let us notice that EU's attitude of approaching cultural diversity, with

a series of generalized representations, tends to flatten and homogenize these diversities. In fact, the WPID suggests that despite cultural diversity is what makes Europe “rich,” it also generates misunderstandings among people. Hence, it is assumed that there is an urgency in developing a shared cultural environment (the European culture) and a need for educating people to the intercultural dialogue, a dialogue based on tolerance and respect. Supposedly, then, intercultural dialogue would help people to appreciate cultural diversity while increasing social cohesion and mutual understanding. Yet, Lähdesmäki and Wagner (2015) claim that EU institutions do not really specify what intercultural dialogue consist of. However, it is clear that on both the political and legislative side the European Commission strives at establishing a common cultural knowledge for the European society through that dialogue, or at generating a European solidarity, also defined “European consciousness”. But what is such commonness and solidarity made of in practice? Lähdesmäki and Wagner (2015) point out that by common cultural knowledge it is intended the “sharing of values, legacy, and way of life” (p. 24). What are then these shared European values? Immler and Sakkers (2014) report what the European Constitutional Treaty claims being “unmistakably” European values:

[...] the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities as unmistakably EU values (p.20).

However, we should ask ourselves: aren't the values listed by Immler and Sakkers (2014) common to many societies of the world? If these values should be considered as belonging to the humankind, how did they end up being labelled as “unmistakably EU values”? In fact, by defining them “European”, education seem to play the fundamental role of confirming the existence of an imaginary European heritage of values, which are then to be transmitted to the new generations for the constitution of a solid European identity. In fact, when retracing the history of the European Unification, it is interesting to observe how much the role and the impact of education changed over few years. According to the existing literature, at the very beginning of the integration (1949) education was a taboo topic as the integration was merely an economic matter. However, within few years since the start of the unification (hence, already by 1952), education – especially, studies about cultural diversity - acquired much more importance (Pépin, 2006). The main reason was that member states kept lacking empathy, social solidarity, and mutual trust towards each other. Even today, this is still a big concern for the EU (e.g., due to the rise of Eurosceptic currents).

According to Anderson (1983), without the backup of a conscious community - proud to define itself as “European” - Europe would represent nothing more than an economic organisation. Hywel C. Jones - former Deputy Director General and Director of Education and Training for the European Community - stated that education functioned as a bridge between economic and social policies. Additionally, he claimed that education opened people's eyes to the “European richness” (in terms of cultural diversity), and that education was crucial in raising “a sense of belonging to Europe as a vital part of the individual's sense of identity” (Pépin, 2006 p.39). Yet, the European Council highlights that schools should be culture-centred, inasmuch, “culture is a powerful promoter of identity” (Council of Europe, 1997, p.11). Thereby, it can be stated the Council conducts a veritable cultural policy, which has the function of increasing the sense of togetherness among people while promoting their diversity.

However, during the recent years, there has been an evolution from merely cultivating the European cultural heritage to inviting people to experience the European dimension. Erasmus – and many other mobility programmes of the same kind – is a concrete example of European experience. The project allows university students all over Europe to temporarily move for a short or longer period (6 to 10 months) to another member state as part of their studies. The aim should be that of letting students explore European diversity in terms of education systems, but also in terms of ways of life. This way, students would create their own image of Europe (Pépin, 2006). For the future development of the Union, it was discussed that “European dimension should become an integral and natural part of all education systems” (Pépin, 2006 p. 35). That would enable younger and older generations to feel more engaged (socially, politically, and culturally), and it would keep the European dimension alive and always on progress (Pépin, 2006)

2.2.2 The Dark Side of the EU Identity Project: Critical Perspectives

In its broadest sense, the European identity project aims at establishing a model of cultural norms in the hope of creating a more inclusive education, language, legal and cultural policy (European Commission, 2012). But how are these inclusive policies being applied? In discussing the phenomenon of Europeanisation, Robertson (2016) observes that the contemporary capitalism manifested a growing interest into cultural diversity. This is an important remark to reflect on. First, he demonstrates that culture and education can be significant means of profit for Europe and for the single states. Secondly, Robertson (2016) tells us that the cultural aspect becomes a strategical scapegoat which maximizes European power and its control over member states.

For these reasons, a number of researchers posit the European identity project problematic already from its premises and assume that Europeanness (or the process of becoming European) is a subtle, almost gentle, imposition of determined ways of being rather than a spontaneous choice. However, what authors mainly criticize is the politicization of culture. According to Wikan (2002), for instance, the creation of a European identity implies that Europe acts as a super state and dictates the rules under which different national states should then operate. Wikan (2002), believes that culture – the same way as identity – is abstract, fluid, thus, indefinable. Thereby, the simple attempt to delimitate the concept of culture (e.g., by ascribing to it roles, functions, or specific values) should be considered biased and goal oriented. Furthermore, by taking into consideration the different sectors in which EU institutions operate, Wikan (2002) was able to observe that, especially on the political and economic front, culture is systematically used as a strategical tool of economic regeneration for the states in greatest need.

We can see this happening especially in cultural events such as the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC), which aims at boosting the visibility of non-capital cities by referring to them as “European Capitals of Culture.” The ultimate objective for Europe should be that of strengthening the connection among the local, the regional and European identity by inciting people to appreciate the local culture yet considering it part of European cultural heritage. In occasion of the ECOC of Pécs (Hungary, 2010) Lähdesmäki (2014) conducted a study that clarifies the purposes of ECOC programmes, and to some

extents, even confirms Wikan's concerns about EU institutions profiting from culture. In particular, Lähdesmäki explains how this seems to be an opportunity especially for non-dominant European countries: the EU would invest huge sums of money on these targeted cities, who first benefit from an aesthetical "renovation" (or revival) in the view of the event. The event is then marketed to attract lots of tourist, hence, to guarantee high incomes (meaning that these cities will then obtain an economic growth). The final objective is to sell the image of these minor cities as important pieces of the European cultural history. More importantly, the ultimate function of ECOC is that of establishing a strong network of exchange among cultural agents across Europe to guarantee the establishment of a solid common cultural heritage (Lähdesmäki, 2014). Lähdesmäki found out that, while for some cities these programmes represented a positive development and meant higher quality of life, for many others the acquisition of European identity implied a veritable transformation, even too demanding for their local/national, economic, and cultural systems. Lähdesmäki (2014) remarks that, although EU institutions invite people to produce culture together, the basis they have set seem less appropriate for a project of co-construction, rather, more suitable for the direct assimilation of a prototype of identity. The adoption of an assimilation approach (rather than of integration) is what also Wikan (2002) has vigorously condemned the EU for, something that she considers to be the dark side of the European identity project. As mentioned earlier, Lähdesmäki's study is only one example of how the invitation to become European can rather be perceived as a transformation of national cultures into something unachievable. Moreover, construction and even the transformation of identity is a process that takes time and very much depends on the variables specific of each individual, people, region, or nation. This makes it impossible, even unjust, to request nations to assimilate the high-standard prototype of European identity.

ECOC events, inspired many authors to demonstrate that the very "(re)invention of Europe" lies in the European's identity project. The Europeanisation of cities, therefore of people, takes place by means of discourses about Europeanness, common values, common well-being, or through the rhetoric of memories of socio-historical good times (Lähdesmäki, 2014). Furthermore, the fact of focusing on the cultural elements helps institutions concretizing the vague and fluctuant discourses about Europeanness: symbols (e.g., cities' monuments, flags, logos, etc.), but also cultural initiatives (e.g. the ECOC itself) become incontestable carriers of European identity. Even earlier than Lähdesmäki, Sassatelli (2002) took the ECOCs of 2000 as an explanatory example of the European attachment to symbols as the key to the constitution (or legitimization) of a "collective image". The author explains that community is a reality of the mind, and that in order to perceive the effects of collectivity, members must share the idea of community (Sassatelli, 2002).

The problem Sassatelli brings up then is that Europe has been invented on unclear basis throughout the time. She identified three perspectives delivering three different images of union: the political perspective merely points at promoting "unity" (federalist approach); the economic perspective aims at enhancing "diversity" (neo-functionalist approach); the cultural perspective revendicates the most solid and needed form of integration, which sees "unity in diversity" (critical approach) (Sassatelli, 2002). The former two approaches were especially (or more visibly) adopted in the earlier stages of the EU consolidation, while the critical approach – which promotes "unity in diversity" – is the most modern one adopted by the EU. However, Sassatelli (2002) defines the latter as a (paradoxical) technical approach, that has no real substance and allows EU institutions to stay superficial when

defining what it actually means to be a European citizen. Indeed, Sassatelli highlights a crucial fact: EU only strives at promoting not defining Europeanness. EU institutions sustain that it is by promoting Europeanness that a common culture will prosper; however, according to Sassatelli, this only confirms that the European community is de facto invented. Since a moral union does not exist it cannot be explained, but simply illustrated through imaginary borders and symbols

While analysing literature related to the ES, I realised that ES are only the initial piece of a vast project. The phenomenon of Europeanisation is a process of identification and community construction that interests every aspect of human life. This reminded me of what Brubaker (2002) refers to as “groupism”. The author suggests that the constitution of groups is always guided by (formal or informal) organizations and he explains how these organisations act then in behalf of groups. In fact, in the constitution of groupness, organizations are responsible for the classification (and hierarchisation) of society into categories, hence, of consequent ethnic conflicts. While in this research I am not focusing on ethnicity and ethnic conflicts, Brubaker’s reflections on the phenomenon of groupism made me better understand the dynamics through which the “European group” is formed. Brubaker (2002) argues that in group-making there is a general tendency “to represent the social and cultural world as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic, racial and cultural blocks” (p.164). This is something that has been emphasised by many researchers when referring to the construction of the European community, not only in the academic context, but also in public discourses. In fact, it was observed that the EU motto “united in diversity” – constantly repropounded by ES – tends to create a whole new community, with a monocultural view of Europe (e.g., Europe as one big European Culture), rather than a community made of a multiplicity of diversities and cultures.

2.3 Multicultural and Multilingual Education

2.3.1 Multicultural Education

In ES, multicultural education focuses on teaching how to respect each and each other traditions, and on teaching the different ways of living in a globalised world (Joint Teaching Committee, 2016). Activities such as “European Hours” (EH) are in fact put in place, to give students the opportunity to foster their awareness towards their national and European heritage and gain that set of skills needed to live in today’s multi-cultural world (Joint Teaching Committee, 2016). The principal outcomes of EH activities are enhancing students’ open-mindedness and their tolerance towards distinct cultures, practices, values, and traditions. According to ES the best way to achieve these objectives is by first giving pupils confidence in their own identity, so that they can build solid bases on which they will then develop their European identity and even their identity as world citizens (Joint Teaching Committee, 2016). Other elements that emphasise the multicultural perspective of ES pedagogical programme is the focus on cooperation and communication in other languages (Joint Teaching Committee, 2016). As it has been extensively discussed, language pluralism represents indeed a big deal for ES. Even when simply understood as communication tools, languages are among the leading

forces in the construction process of European identity and for the acquisition of a multicultural education. But how is multicultural education defined by ES?

According to ES' official documents, multicultural education is linked to the joint instruction of children coming from different nationalities. However, there is not a precise definition of the concept per se. This lack in definition interested many scholars and led them to question the objectives and outcomes of multicultural education. For their part, critics (Kromidas, 2011; Wikan, 2002; Kim, 2003; May, & Sleeter, 2010; Vavrus, 2010; Dervin, 2011, 2013, 2017; Holliday, 2011; Piller, 2011) state that schools have been promoting fixed images of cultures which instil students' learning with artificial, stereotypical knowledge. Additionally, it is claimed that multiculturalism has spread a rigid image of culture and delivered an erroneous perception of culture as differentiating factor (Chao, Kung, & Yao, 2015). This last assumption not only explains how culture then became the scapegoat of many existing conflicts between and among diverse communities; it also demonstrates the contradictory nature of multicultural education. Indeed, while standardized conceptions about multiculturalism advocate open-mindedness, fluidity and reciprocal respect among different cultures, multicultural pedagogical practices tend to separate and segregate cultures, exacerbating relations among diverse communities and producing otherness.

Pedagogical discourses on multiculturalism (e.g., which also concerns minorities inclusion, diversity tolerance and respect) have been re-examined from a critical perspective. May and Sleeter (2010) explained that studying multiculturalism from a critical perspective made it possible to unveil the oppression and institutionalisation of unequal power relations in education. Their conclusion is that discourses about multiculturalism rather exist to serve well-determined needs of majorities than to safeguard the cultural needs of minority groups (May & Sleeter, 2010). The thesis that most critics sustain is that it is not by coincidence that inclusive policies are made by those who provide help rather than by those who are in need. This brings us to the background issue of multicultural policies: the ambiguous relationship between cultures and power. The effects of this complex and biased relationship emerge in education through the reproduction of cultural hierarchies. On this matter Grant (2017) stresses that multicultural pedagogy has, indeed, empowered educators (or scholars in the context of education research) to narrow down the concept of multiculturalism only to few aspects of human diversity (e.g., race and ethnicity). This, in his view, is what then fuels academic ethnocentrism and elitism.

Critical Perspectives on Multiculturalism

What is also important to retain from ES education principles is that of teaching students to become multicultural while preserving and celebrating their national identity and cultural values. Bauman's (1996) view of cultural identities in education could help shading light on the questions raised previously. The author identifies two kind of issues related to pluri-cultural identities: a "modern problem of identity," whose main concern is how to construct a solid and stable common identity; and a "postmodern problem of identity," whose concern is to avoid generalization, stigmatization and fixation (Bauman, 1996 p.18). Responses to the postmodern problem concretized in a veritable celebration of diversity. The same way generalization has been conceived as one of the main limitations of multiculturalism, also the celebration of cultures has been at the source of many

criticisms. What is to be celebrated about cultures? Moreover, in the logic of culture celebration, people are assigned a culture. Although for many, this would not seem a big deal, in the light of what has been discussed so far, cultural identities are anything but easy to determine; not even when merely essentialized and reduced to nationality. Critics denouncing essentialist understandings of culture and identity (e.g., Holliday, 1999, 2000, 2011; Piller 2012; Wikan 2002; Dervin 2016; Eriksen 2001) are reluctant to cultural determinism, the principle according to which culture determines who people are. Very broadly, the idea shared by critics is that identities and cultures should not be determined at all, as people can simultaneously identify with as many cultures they want, or even change their identities depending on individual experiences, time, space, and contexts. Among the greatest exponents of this thinking, Eriksen (2001) highlights that people have the right to cultural self-determination, hence, to decide for themselves which cultural groups or social categories they want to belong to. One of the author's stronger claims is that people should have even the right not to have a culture.

In her research synthesis on multiculturalism Winter (2014) states that one of the main issues of multiculturalism is that academic narratives tend to deem cultural diversity as responsible for conflicts between and among diverse communities. She believes, instead, that social differentiation is what causes rivalries, for it established unequal living conditions among people (meaning resources and opportunities), consequently generating incongruity in civic engagement and civic participation (Winter, 2014). According the author, social differentiation practices particularly affects schools and universities where the level of discrimination and stereotyping can be very high, and yet, go undetected. In other words, she criticizes the fact that socio-political and economical systems were developed according to the existing diversities, because this would mean that status determines what people can (or cannot) do, be and become. Winter's considerations about social differentiation directly reconducted me to ES system. In fact, in the previous sections it was explained that ES organized their education system according to a (European) selected range of diversities. It is sufficient to think of the Schools' criteria of selection, principally based on the type of relationship that pupils' parents share with EU institutions (e.g., whether they are directly employed by the EU or not). Other forms of social differentiation within the ES are the allocation of pupils to different categories (category I, II and III), schools (traditional ES versus accredited ES) and language sections (e.g. the case of SWALS). Substantially, ES are a case in point demonstrating how status can limit or expand pupils' life chances.

Another example showing that curricula, learning activities, textbooks and education policies are critical in the shaping of cultural identities is the study conducted by Zilliacus, Paulsrud and Holm (2017) on Finnish and Swedish national curricula. Specifically, they focused on how students' cultural identity is presented in curricular discourses. From their analysis, two main perspectives were identified: the essentialist and the non-essentialist one. The essentialist was associated to those curricula whose learning activities aimed at the protection, the celebration and the cultivation of students' identities. Results demonstrated that by making pupils' cultural backgrounds the center of learning activities – even when for a good cause – curricula only served to strengthen, fix and exacerbate differences between groups and individuals (Zilliacus et al., 2017). Within this perspective, it was concluded by the authors that multicultural identity is reduced to the idea of something that is “different from the ordinary” (hence, a-normal), and identities become “assigned identities” rather than an individual's deliberated choice (Zilliacus et al., 2017 p.169). On the other hand, the non-essentialist approach was associated to curricula avoiding any educational practice or discourse which

would strengthen the othering process. Contrarily, these curricula prevail students' agencies, thus, their freedom of actively forming - changing - and choosing their cultural identities (Zilliacus et al., 2017). This second perspective not only stresses the necessity to value students' agency, but even proposes an extended understanding of multiculturalism. Furthermore, the non-essentialist perspective suggests that multiculturalism is not just a cocktail of nationalities, but it is a complex of diversities which exists among cultural groups and within same cultural groups.

In the light of what Zilliacus et al. (2017) have discussed, I realized that ES understanding of multicultural education seem to coincide with the idea that being multicultural means to be different from ordinary, monocultural people, or to be a master of different cultures and to speak many languages. Hence, the essentialist approach scenario, described above, appears remarkably similar to that adopted by the ES; at least in terms of identity ascription (through selection and the categorization of pupils). This study has demonstrated not only how significant the role of schools can be in shaping pupils' identities, but it also illustrated how distant and how polarized pupils' experience of multicultural education can be depending on how multiculturalism is conceived by the schools.

From Multicultural to Intercultural Education

From the literature analyzed so far, it emerges that multicultural education, intercultural education and multilingual education are the frontline meta-disciplines studying cultural identity development, cultural integration, and the interactions of people in socio-cultural diverse communities. This highlights the significance of the research problem with which this thesis is concerned, being it that schools exert oppressive ideological pressures while constructing pupils' identities and teaching about socio-cultural diversity or cross-cultural communication. The effect of these pressures can be that pupils acquire a distorted view of multicultural, multilingual, and intercultural education.

Back to the case of ES, it is important to look at how these disciplines are approached to understand how European identity is then constructed. For example, it is stressed that becoming European implies being able to understand and interact with people of distinct cultures and to tolerate diverse ways of living. These abilities are often addressed by ES as intercultural skills. However, I found it confusing to call intercultural what is also often meant by multicultural. Hence, I believe it necessary to first shed a light on what are the similarities that multicultural and intercultural education share, secondly, to learn in what they differ according to education research.

Indeed, although one might understand multicultural and intercultural education as equivalent fields, some important distinctions were made and are still very much debated. Some scholars understand interculturalism as a replacement to multiculturalism, some others as a "renewal," and others see both as complementary to each other. Yet, some researchers (e.g., Bauman, 1999; Cattle 2012; Barrett, 2013) have focused on the rivalries between multiculturalism and interculturalism for the different (sometimes opposing) ways in which cultural pluralism is conceived. Mansouri and Modood (2020) claim that interculturalism can be understood as an upgraded version of multiculturalism which emphasizes a pro-diversity approach and the existence of a cosmopolitan society, of conviviality, of super-diversity and everyday multiculturalism. Their theory is that intercultural education emerged

from intellectuals' general disappointment (i.e., scholars and politicians) with political and academic perspectives of multiculturalism. If on the one hand they wanted to put an end to traditional discourses about diversity - which only ended up raising cultural hierarchies and exacerbating Othering episodes - on the other hand, these intellectuals felt the urge to talk about the managing of such diversity (Mansouri & Modood, 2020).

However, by reviewing both multicultural and intercultural education literature one still gets the strong impression that their points in common outnumber their differences. For instance, in intercultural education too, the essentialist/non-essentialist dichotomy highlighted by scholars in multicultural education debates reappears. The scission among scholars derives as well from opposing understandings of culture. If essentialist approaches consider that culture represents the essence of people's identity (i.e., a culture that appears static, ascribed, and depending on nationality), scholars from the non-essentialist perspective suggest that cultural diversities exist also within a same community and that culture is produced by people, not the other way around (i.e., the emphasis is put on human agency). Another straightforward evidence of the similarity between interculturalism and multiculturalism can be observed in their objectives. Both education fields aim at providing students with the basis and the learning opportunities for the development of multicultural/intercultural skills, attitudes, perspectives, and values. In other words, in both cases the aim is to form 'competent' citizens who know how to behave and to cope with cultural diversity.

Overall, from literature on multicultural and in intercultural education research and their definition within the context of ES, the conclusion I could reach is that while multicultural experience tends to refer to a plurality of cultures sharing the same space, the intercultural is more concerned with the interactions of people belonging to unfamiliar cultural communities. In other words, interculturalism focuses more on people's competence to communicate and understand each other.

2.3.2 Multilingual Education

Although it could be mistakenly taken for granted, it is crucial to stress that multilingualism is a constant condition embedded in both multicultural and intercultural contexts. As mentioned in the first section, ES curriculum is programmed in a way that language learning is included to almost all subjects (except for the scientific ones). Apart from language classes and from the study of other subjects in pupils' second (even third) foreign language, there are other several learning activities (such as EH mentioned above) during which languages are practiced the most by students. I must also recall ES rule of thumb, according to which the simple coexistence of students with different national background – who, therefore, speak different national languages – contributes to the spontaneous improvement of pupils' multilingual knowledge.

ES multilingual education is founded on the basic belief that learning each other's' languages can have a bridging function between and among national cultures. The acquisition of multilingual skills would, in fact, enable future European citizens to participate together in the cultural and creative sectors (e.g.,

generation of new jobs), to improve their life conditions (e.g., thanks to economic growth), and to strengthen their sense of belonging to Europe. This last assumption was also made by Fligstein (2008) in his study of European identity and future developments of the EU. He found, indeed, that the degree of perceived Europeanness highly depended on whether citizens were able to speak more than one language. Fligstein (2008) notes that being linguistically flexible potentially means being more active in interactions, as people have the necessary skills to exchange with other language speakers. This also increases people's chances to develop inter-national relationships (Fligstein, 2008).

Positive considerations on becoming multilingual subjects have been made also in other places of European identity construction. Few examples can be already taken from the literature above: Lähdesmäki (2014) and Sassatelli (2002), in their research on European cultural events (i.e., ECOC), both stressed that multilingualism has a pivotal influence on the circulation and transmission of socio-cultural values. The authors highlighted that multilingualism plays a critical role not only in the promotion of these events (hence, in bringing people together), but also in making the events more accessible and enjoyable to participants. In the case of ECOC, multilingualism refers to the copresence of local language and other vehicular languages (such as English, German and French). Through the translation of the city's history and works of arts into the different languages, visitors' chances to familiarize with the traditions and the stories of the cities hosting the event are maximised (Lähdesmäki, 2014; Sassatelli, 2002).

Substantially, the goal of multilingual education should be that of defeating language barriers and providing opportunities that would encourage future professionals (or yet students) to freely move within (and outside) Europe. Schools are always more concerned with the transformation of students into intercultural competent subjects. Therefore, when referring to the improvement of curricula, schools are increasingly oriented towards an increase of multilingual education, and towards the introduction of internationalisation projects. In 2019, the Council of the European Union redefined the objectives and recommendations for the teaching and the learning of languages. By then, enhancing and developing multilingualism as a Union competence is the objective that the European Commission strives at achieving for the whole European Education Area (Council of European Union, 2019). Not only multilingual competence is considered an extremely beneficial element from an academic and professional perspective, but it became one of the most valuable resources for Europe in its attempt to grow as "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" (Council of the European Union, 2009 p.2). Drawing from these examples, it can be assumed that multilingual education functions like a magnetic force, which brings together social, political, and economic interests of both institutions and people.

Critical Perspectives on Multilingualism

Scholars have outlined that whenever interests are involved, languages become powerful cultural tools. The understanding of language as a cultural tool has been harshly criticized by scholars, especially by sociolinguists, who have been particularly concerned with the issue of economically or politically powerful languages, hence, with issues deriving from relationships of language, power, and identity. On a critical note, Breidenbach and Nyíri (2011) explain that language education is central to cultural integration policies. The authors provide an extent list of examples illustrating how the different

European countries use language courses to force immigrants' integration. For example, in Germany, immigrants who refuse to participate in language and integration courses are subjects to financial sanctions (Breidenbach, & Nyíri, 2011). Similarly, in Switzerland if immigrants fail language and integration courses, they are subject to lose their residency permit (Breidenbach, & Nyíri, 2011). Breidenbach and Nyíri's reflections have showed that if, on the one hand, there is general tendency to focus only on the positive outcomes of language learning practices, in many political cases, language can rather be a powerful tool that either exclude or impose integration.

Discourses of linguistic inclusion/exclusion and of linguistic integration can be interestingly related to the situation of ES. Considering what was said about ES language policy, there is indeed a problem of inclusion of some European languages to the Schools' education plan. It is sufficient to recall that many students do not have a language section (SWALS), because some Eastern European languages are not taught in every ES. Although ES claim that all official languages have the same importance and that pupils should enjoy of the same rights, in practice, the system deprives many pupils of such linguistic rights and force them to accommodate to an alternative linguistic solution. This even demonstrates that European languages are evaluated differently within ES.

Other researchers (e.g., Owens 2013; Gorter, Zenotz, & Cenoz 2013; May 2013) explain that within the multilingual set, languages are categorized into minor or dominant national languages. Especially in education, it becomes very problematic to talk about "main languages of instruction," since that would imply that some languages are optional, eventually, less relevant. In the case of Europe, although there are 24 official languages, the European linguistic landscape is regulated by three vehicular languages, namely, English, German, and French (i.e., Western European languages). ES specifically refer to these vehicular languages when encouraging students to study at least two *main* foreign languages to boost their mobility and employability (Council of the European Union, 2014). Perhaps this is why Werlen, Gantenbein, and Tognola (2010) point out that linguistic discrimination is particularly evident in Europe. First, they claim that there is a huge discrepancy between Eastern and Western languages, with the Western ones indirectly considered as cultural resources. Secondly, they state that linguistic discrimination exists even within a same nation, inasmuch policies tend to focus only on standardized national languages leaving out minor – yet official – linguistic groups (Werlen et al. 2010). On the global scale, the minority-majority dichotomy is even more harshly reproduced and ends up ascribing to languages unequal values. On the global labor market, languages seem to be organized into hierarchies and their relevance seem to depend on their utility within the market. What is tricky and confusing then about multilingual education is that while there is a general trend to advocate the teaching/learning of all foreign languages, multilingual education practices eventually favor only those languages that assume a significant symbolic power.

An analysis carried by Ige (2010) demonstrates that the language symbolic power may generate attitudes of favor or disfavor towards languages (i.e., refusal or preference to speak/learn some languages). This is again related to the issue of minority and majority languages. Oftentimes, explains Ige (2010), dominant languages are spoken by those groups holding a greater political, cultural and economic power. The other languages are regarded as minority ones, or at least as less relevant on a global scale (Ige, 2010). Hence, the author concludes that people's desire to learn (or to use) a different language directly depends on whether they consider that language a prestigious or non-prestigious

language. Part of their motivation to learn and speak a foreign language could also derive from the desire to be part of privileged groups, or to perform an act of loyalty and solidarity towards the members (Ige, 2010).

ES are an example of such learning environment which attempts to strengthen collectivity. The familiarity between Ige's research and ES education can be especially detected from his considerations about the desire to belong to privileged groups. It can be stated that, within ES, the school community regards itself as a privileged group. It was highlighted in the previous section that ES principles and objectives points at emphasizing "the learning of we" (i.e., learning of becoming European) especially through the study of languages. At ES, pupils are incited to choose up to four foreign languages to make social connections within the schools (metaphorically within Europe) even stronger. However, it was also observed that ES direct their students towards 'privileged languages' (such as vehicular languages) as they will increase pupils' chances to be employed in the future and have a successful career. However, this is done at the expenses of other European languages (e.g., SWALS).

So far, the literature reviewed showed that there are vague evaluations of the concept of multilingualism depending on whether it is conceptualized from a social, cultural, economic, or political perspective. However, there is a passage by Werlen et al. (2010) which thoroughly summarizes what has been exposed in this section:

Above all, the term "multilingualism" is associated with two kinds of discourse: firstly, about human rights and the protection of minorities, and secondly, about the economic value of multilingualism. And while the human rights discourse values all languages equally, economic pragmatism promotes the use of single languages or preferred language combinations to increase economic success (p.24).

Other Issues Affecting Multilingual Education

According to Spencer-Oatey (2000), languages are the principal means through which cultures are operationalized. Thereby, the significance of their symbolic power. In the light of the previous literature, one of the strongest claims made about the ideology of linguistic powers, is that language should not be treated as a cultural tool, because this is what leads to the establishment of linguistic and cultural hierarchies. However, this tendency is yet very much alive in the field of foreign language education, from which multilingual education develops. I assume that, at least for a good part, the issues discussed above about multilingual education also derive from an erroneous conduction of foreign language courses, too strictly associated with the teaching of cultural practices.

Literature demonstrates that, particularly after the 50s, language teaching started to be approached from a multidisciplinary perspective. With the growing global economy, the relationship between culture and language acquired always more importance (Roby, 1992). Culture teaching in language classrooms became a matter of great interest among multilingual education researchers. Holliday (2000) states that the association of languages with ethnicity and national culture is a common feature in applied linguistic and language education. More explicitly, this means that the teaching of a foreign language (e.g., Italian) would involve the teaching of national cultures, hence, national social systems

and traditions (i.e., Italian politics, Italian food culture, Italian popular traditions etc.). Holliday (2002) is one of the pioneers in defining such an approach to language education essentialist, for it is based on an understanding of culture that tends to reduce diversity, and to rather generate episodes of otherization. The idea behind culture teaching within language classes is that each language has its own idiomatic expressions, rules and systems which are then believed to reflect the social (national) functioning. This harshly criticized conceptualization is also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, or hypothesis of linguistic relativity, which presumes that the structure of a language affects speakers' views and perceptions of the world.

Piller (2017), for her part, has criticized the Sapir-Whorf theory by pointing out that communication is trapped within a range of essentialist a priori assumptions about both language and culture. She explains that having different views of the world tend to have significant consequences in intercultural interactions, especially when the different worldviews are categorized hierarchically. In fact, Piller (2017) rejects the idea that misunderstandings derive from having different worldview and assumes that they rather depend on people's linguistic knowledge and communicative skills. She also points out that - in the view of linguistic relativity - cultural identity, difference and similarity are discursive constructions aiming reinforcing people's sense of national belonging (Piller, 2017). Ultimately, Piller (2017) highlights how this consequently incentives practices of banal nationalism, a concept developed by Billig (1995) according to which every day's representations of the nation (e.g., national flags, national traditions, and cultural practices, etc.) are used as tools to generate a sense of belonging to the nation within people and to build a solid national community.

As asserted in the previous paragraphs, banal nationalism proved to exist in foreign language education, where national cultural practices have been particularly useful for the creation of learning activities and, more generally, for the setting up of educational contexts for language studies. The idea behind the use of cultural practices in the teaching of foreign languages is that of promoting experiential learning. Through experiential learning students are called to put into practice what they know, and to acquire always more confidence by speaking the foreign language. Up to now, it has been discussed that ES heavily rely on such a method. In fact, as mentioned previously in this research, ES consider the multilingual environment of the Schools already a learning experience which constantly pushes students to speak different languages daily, within and outside classrooms.

Moreover, ES pupils are encouraged to practice foreign languages through other pedagogical activities such as the European Hours, or the European Day, and many other, in which pupils represent their national cultures and learn about each other's national food, music, art, traditions, dresses, dances, etc. However - although experiential learning methods proved to be extremely efficient - Roby (1992) observes that they involve activities (such as the ES ones) in which national traditions, behaviors and other constructed realities are reproduced the most. Similarly, it was found that textbooks are likely to play a critical role in the representation of national stereotypes, thus, encouraging the learning of national stereotypes (Roby, 1992). Even this can be observed in ES, which use a multilingual textbook for Primary Cycle Education entitled "United in Diversity" to teach pupils about cultural diversity in Europe. The book shows drawings of each country of the Union, where all the national symbols (dresses, traditions, food, etc.) are reported in the form of colourful caricatures and are supposed to

portray the cultures of each country and teach something about what it means to be French, German, Polish, Italian, Austrian, and so on.

However, as scholars have pointed out in their critiques, the outcomes of such teaching and learning practices are very problematic for they tend to essentialize not only multilingual, but also multicultural and intercultural education. Ultimately, Piller (2012) makes a significant overall conclusion about such cultural practices: contrarily to what is believed, she observes that cultural practices are not the mirror of national identity, but that they rather serve to create an aimed national identity (Piller, 2012). ES, then, are just an example of how language teaching and learning is approached still today. This discourse can be extended to the major issue of this research, namely, that schools are indeed responsible for the construction of social identity (consequently, pupils' identities). In the case of ES, there seem to be a veritable commitment from part of the Schools to build a European National identity (European Schools, 2019), and to make ES pupils in its image and likeness.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims of the Study

In this work I focused on the undertaking of ES pedagogical mission. The sections of the first chapter not only helped learning more about the specificities of ES, but they also illustrated the ambiguity of ES statements. Based on the literature reviewed above, I determined that there seem to be a significant gap between ES statements - hence, between their good intentions to avoid cultural discrimination and social exclusion (e.g., ES teach pupils to appreciate diversity, ES recognize equally all EU national languages within the Schools, ES advocates social equality in education, etc.) - and the practical side of ES education (e.g., celebration of cultures which actually divides students into cultural and linguistic boxes, absence of some EU's languages sections which produces inequalities in ES education, etc.). Indeed, it was discussed that ES diversity-focused projects and everyday learning activities contradict their pedagogical mission and end up reproducing stereotypical cultural diversities, or even, establishing unbalanced relations of power within the student community. Three main issues were highlighted in the introduction: ES' pedagogical essentialism, Eurocentrism, and institutional forms of discrimination. This study recriminates ES constructions of differences among pupils through institutional language. Thereby, the importance of studying documents, which create the discursive framework from which teachers build meanings. Furthermore, by means of this work, I demonstrate that within the Schools pupils are ascribed positions according to the social and economic structures rooted in the European society, and I am going to undress this by answering this specific research question: *How are the ES educational mission and learning practices constructed in the language of ES official documents?*

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and Research Philosophy

This study is qualitative in its contents and analysis and the research design employed is descriptive and explanatory. Moreover, this work it is situated within a social constructionist perspective, which supports the belief that language is extremely important in the construction of people, events, and shared knowledge. Therefore, language is not just regarded as a means for transferring information, but it is actually social action. In fact, social constructionists believe that there are multiple, intersubjective social realities and that language plays a crucial role in constructing worlds. Burr (2015) notes that it is commonplace to think that what we learn and then call knowledge is an objective, unbiased observation of the world's realities and phenomena. However, he highlights that social constructionism (SC) condemns the existence of absolute and objective truths and observes that "what exists is what we perceive to exist" (Burr, 2003 p.3). Therefore, even the process of categorizing is something that SC questions and understands as artificial artifacts not as objective portrayals of reality. In other words, SC challenges the categories of things, people, and events consequently condemning the determinism of psychology arising from it. Psychological determinism suggests, in fact, that human behavior is predictable and determined by fixed social constructions. SC proposes, instead, an anti-essentialist approach to human constructions considering the plurality, relativity and situational

character of social constructions. The principle on which social constructionism is founded is that one should always take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted worldviews, and rather ask why and how certain constructions come into being (Burr, 2015). This is why I choose to work with ES documents, because I see them not as a reflection of an objective reality, but rather as constructing some version of social reality. ES documents are very powerful for they provide teachers with frameworks to construct knowledge in their classrooms, and also establish the conditions under which categories are built within the Schools.

Although I am aware that there are other methods of discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the social constructionist method that I choose to work with because it is the method that answers the best my research question. Wiggins' (2017) research on Discourse Analysis (DA) approaches, was extremely helpful for my decision; it allowed me to ponder which kind of DA better suited my research. On a first instance, I was even tempted to combine CDA with Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP). However, I realized that I would have better worked with CDP if I choose to focus on interactions, for instance, conducting analysis of talk and using focus groups or interviews as data samples. Obviously, this is still something that could be done, especially, to give space to pupils' accounts of the ES education project. However, for reasons such as time availability, the type of research question, and the nature of the research design I limited the current work to the analysis of ES policy documents.

As for the features characterizing CDA, Van Dijk (2008) explains that "CDA is not entirely definable as a method of research, but rather as a movement of scholars" (p.822). In fact, CDA is more like a toolbox and does not offer a list of prescribed steps that analysts should follow; rather it offers ideas about what analysts could be looking at. In my research, for instance, I specifically looked at how categories are built through the use of pronouns. In addition, I paid a singular attention to the metaphorical meaning of verbs, or to those parts talking about identity, learning, and teaching practices. While examining the themes, linguistic choices, and contents of ES official documents, I primarily focused on ideological opposites, lexical choices, and even on the absence of ES concept definitions (e.g., European dimension; Europeanness; multicultural and multilingual education; European values, etc.). These are precisely the analytical tools that CDA disposes of. Moreover, CDA deals with data such as policy documents, webpages, or political debates, which I also extensively used as bases for my study (even if I did not necessarily collect them as data).

Not only CDA was appropriate then in terms of data samples and analytical tools, but I have also considered that, amongst the various DA approaches, CDA's key aims perfectly reflect my research aims. CDA aims at unveiling oppressive discourses, undermining ideologies hiding behind discursive paradoxes (e.g., appreciating cultural diversity while preserving national cultures) and challenging power-related injustices (e.g., dominant vs dominated communities). The way CDA does that is by looking at lexical choices, or at the choice of verbs (e.g., active/passive voices; whether verbs of feeling or verbs of action are employed, etc.), adjectives, nouns, subjects. etc. Figures of speech such as metaphors, personifications, oxymorons, metonymy, understatements, paradoxes, synecdoche, and so forth, have a key role in determining the nature of discourses. CDA also observes how words choices are structured and combined within a sentence, paragraph, and overall, within the text. This

means that the order of words, their position within the text, is taken into consideration. In substance, language and language uses within discourses are the main focus of CDA.

Based on the research of the principal CDA practitioners (Fairclough, 1995a; Kress, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Van Dijk, 1998a; Wodak, 1996) language is considered a social practice through which the world is represented and created. According to researchers, written or oral discourses are always related to specific social, cultural ideological contexts and derive from pre-existing interests. Hence, the choice of words and expressions within texts is purposeful, not occasional. Words and expression concretize an establish desired images of the world. Indeed, scholars have determined that discourses are strategic legitimizers of power dynamics (i.e., domination of dominant social groups over minor groups), or of episodes of discrimination, social intolerance and resistance. Ultimately, it is claimed that CDA helps reading between the lines. Its function is to study the relationship between texts and social subjects, and to explain the meaning behind texts with a series of interpretations and founded arguments.

For all these reasons, what essentially makes CDA the best approach to this research is that it allows the researchers to completely unbreak the text, and to make interpretations about what is already stated in the text. After attentive and scrupulous analysis, the researcher can use his/her interpretations as argumentations to undress issues of social nature, or to unveil narratives which reproduce illegitimate domination of a particular majority (or majorities) over minorities. About the interpretation of the texts, Wodak & Ludwig (1999, p.13) concluded that "THE RIGHT interpretation does not exist; a hermeneutic approach is necessary. Interpretations can be more or less plausible or adequate, but they cannot be true". This concept was discussed even earlier by Fairclough (1995). However, I believe that a middle ground between rightfulness and truthfulness can be found. My aim in this study is not providing the readers with exclusive interpretations about facts. Rather, I want to offer a further interpretation and add a personal contribution to what is already available on the field of multicultural, multilingual and intercultural education. To make my interpretation as transparent as possible, I will meticulously describe my analytic process in the following sections of this chapter

3.3 Description of Data

I developed the findings through the examination of the ES official documents. In conducting the analysis, I focused at first on documents describing the generalities of the Schools, their regulations, their laws, and language policies in order to understand what kind of educational organization ES present themselves as. From these documents (namely the *Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools*; the *Criteria for the setting up, closure or maintenance of European Schools*; the *Language Policy of the European Schools*; and the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools*) it emerged that ES were created for political and economic reasons. However, this is not always explicitly declared in the texts, which are attentively constructed within democratic discourses, or through a rhetoric of tolerance and social justice. If in a first instance I focused more on the theoretical aspects of the Schools, in a second instance of the data analysis, I focused more on the

description of their educational practices. This means that the analysis moved into various kinds of data, namely, policy document, syllabuses and curricula.

Before going through a selection of the syllabuses, I analysed the syllabus template (the *Structure for all Syllabuses in the system of European Schools*) to understand according to which criteria syllabuses are designed. Mainly, I was interested in knowing what basic principles and objectives are presented as foundational, or yet, how the Schools work with Human Sciences related subjects, and which elements are needed for the mise en place of courses. In order to offer a clear view of how the analysis was conducted, I created a table (see **Table 1**) where all documents are numbered and described in order of analysis. The logic behind the numeric order is that my first attempt was to understand who ES present themselves as, what they do next, to observe ultimately how they construct themselves in the practical language of curricula and syllabuses. Hence, the analysis starts from bureaucratic and formal documents and it ends with the study of descriptive documents about teaching and learning practices through the syllabuses.

However, I would underline that only some of the syllabuses were examined and considered relevant for the study. First, I focused on general education subjects and only on Human Sciences subjects being the ones which are concerned and engage with themes of identity, ideological expression and self-reflection, political and economic discourses, social interaction, and interpersonal communication, as well as other socio-cultural matters (i.e., social hierarchies, socio-cultural diversity, multiculturalism and multilingualism, social inclusion/exclusion, etc.). On the other hand, scientific subjects were excluded a priori considering that the contents of these subjects (e.g., mathematics, computer sciences, physical education, biology, etc.) are not in line with the research themes, purposes, and objectives. Although it may seem inappropriate - being language and multilingual education at the core of the research - the other subjects which were left out from the analysis are language syllabuses, few of which were even examined based on random sampling. They were not included in the research because the number of languages taught at ES is too large. Indeed, this would have implied selecting (hence, preferring) only some of the language subjects without any specific reason. Moreover, I recall that not all the ES offer the same selection of languages, hence, findings would have been imprecise.

As for the chosen syllabuses, instead, I should specify that while selecting the documents, I principally focused on the themes of the objectives expressed in the educational mission of ES, namely developing pupils' personal and cultural identity, guiding pupils in the development of a European identity, promoting and preserving cultural/linguistic differences, promoting cultural/linguistic integration, social integration, enhancing the development of a democratic European community, and setting the learning basis for a European learning experience. Although to different extents, all these themes could be found in the *Early Education curriculum*, the *Art Syllabus*, in the *Syllabus of the European Hours*, the *Discovery of the World Syllabus*, the *History Syllabus*, the *Philosophy Syllabus*, the *Political Sciences syllabus* and the *Sociology Syllabus*. Here, the focus of the analysis was to discover which considerations and which choices were made (and why) in designing syllabuses. Except for *Philosophy Syllabus*, *Political Sciences syllabus* and *Sociology Syllabus*, the above-mentioned subjects are general knowledge subjects which cover the whole period of pupils' early education. This is a significant factor because I wanted to see how children are introduced to ES education, and I was especially interested in observing how concepts of European identity, European dimension and European learning

experience are explained and defined to young pupils. After looking into Primary Cycle syllabuses, I concluded my analysis by examining Secondary Cycle syllabuses (thus *Philosophy Syllabus*, the *Political Sciences syllabus*, and the *Sociology Syllabus*) to see what is that ES retain important to gain for elder students in terms of competences, skills, and knowledge.

In the following chapter, I will present the research findings. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, findings were grouped into six master discourses. In this last paragraph, I explain how those were identified and I describe the stages of my analytical process. While analysing data, I observed that same discourses recurred from the different contexts under study (e.g., the context of each syllabus, the context set by the Schools' policies, the context of general and/or specific learning objectives, etc.). Initially, I individuated about twelve discursive categories. These were: essentialist conceptualization of culture and identity, majority-centred discourses about diversity, discourses about democracy, essentialist learning, educational elitism, eurocentrism and discourses of European exceptionalism, absence of concepts definition, persuasive narrative (e.g., through the achievement of impossible tasks), learners' individualism, absence of interaction with the world exterior to the ES setting, economic and political discourses. Continuing my analysis, I realized that some of these discourses intertwined and could not be addressed separately. Hence, based on their specific communicative function, I condensed the initial twelve categories into six actual discourse patterns. The explicit order through which findings are described depends on their visibility within texts. I start from presenting the most direct and evident discourses and I end by uncovering those discourses which could not have been instantly grasped or understood without the previous ones.

Table 1: Data collected for the analysis

DOC. NUMBER	DOCUMENT TITLE	DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION AND REASON FOR SELECTION
Document 1	<i>Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools</i>	The document presents a set of articles defining the practical aspects of the Schools, such as the instructions that each School should cover, the organisation of studies, the financial matters, the administrative aspects concerning the Schools and the students. The document was selected to understand the distinctive traits of ES as educational institutions and how they differ from other (national/international) schools. Also, it was particularly important to identify the permanent rules of the Schools in order to understand the internal functioning of the Schools.
Document 2	<i>Criteria for the setting up, closure or maintenance of European Schools</i>	This document was considered relevant because it informs about the conditions under which ES are eligible to exist or de-exist.
Document 3	<i>Language Policy of the European Schools</i>	This research is particularly concerned with ES multicultural and multilingual education; hence, knowing the language policy of the Schools was essential to understand how ES conceive and create a multilingual environment. The document also defines the rules and the rights connected to languages.
Document 4	<i>Structure for all Syllabuses in the system of European Schools</i>	This document introduces the layout of the syllabuses in the system of the ES. It explains how each subject's syllabus is described. Syllabuses are decomposed into six main areas: general objectives of the ES (which, as declared, are identical in every syllabus) followed by didactic principles, learning objectives, contents, assessment and annexes (which are, instead, specific of each subject).
Document 5	<i>Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools</i>	The document presents a framework for Key Competences and an individual description for each competence. It also defines further the structure of ES curriculum, ES approach to pedagogy and to assessment.
Document 6	<i>Early Education Curriculum</i>	The document defines the parameters of Early education and informs about the specificities of ES' early education curriculum. It describes the learning stages children go through, while developing their individual cultural and European identity. Moreover, it provides information on how the students' community is created and how it is supposed to grow within the Schools from the moment pupils enter the Schools.
Document 7	<i>Art Syllabus</i>	The syllabus claims that art is among the ES learning priorities. It is explained that cultural expression (which consists of knowledge, skills and attitude) as well as cultural identification through creativity are central to ES art education. Cultural identification is another key argument in this research; hence, it was important to analyse this document and understand the ES perspective on these points. Furthermore, the syllabus declares that art contributes to the development of children's personal identity and to the development of their social and cultural integration.
Document 8	<i>Syllabus of the European Hours in the Primary Cycle</i>	European Hours is a subject that can only be found in ES curricula. The syllabus illustrates the learning topics, objectives and activities students deal with. I was particularly intrigued by the name of this document because it is as if there were hours dedicated to being European. In this syllabus we learn what are the fundamental features of a European citizen, thus, what pupils are required to learn to become respectable European citizens.
Document 9	<i>Discovery of the World Syllabus - Primary Cycle</i>	The syllabus is concerned with giving to pupils a frame of common references (about history, geography, biology, technology and the socio-cultural). The main focus of the subject is to develop in children an understanding of themselves and of the world. Discovery of the World is considered as a crucial step of pupils' learning process, for their holistic development and for their transition to secondary education.
Document 10	<i>History Syllabus</i>	The document illustrates on which aspects of the history ES will focus. This is important to understand how and why specific periods of history were selected among member states' history, the European history, and the world's history. It is claimed that in the ES it is important to learn about history being aware of the different nations' perspectives. Learning about how history is taught in the context of ES is critical for this research inasmuch it defines what is that ES consider as the highlights of history and why should pupils retain that.
Document 11	<i>Philosophy Syllabus</i>	The subject is concerned with contents of social and civil values. It advocates the development of pupils' self-awareness, agency, identity, freedom, and responsibility as citizens. The document highlights the interdisciplinary value of philosophy as a subject which draws from epistemology, ethics, political philosophy and anthropology. I considered this document interesting for the research because I wanted to understand how pupils are taught to think, discuss, and express themselves.
Document 12	<i>Political Sciences Syllabus</i>	This course is supposed to provide pupils with the necessary knowledge to become a European citizen. It is explained that being conscious citizens means being aware of democratic values, but also engaging in critical debates and issues of the 21st century world. The syllabus emphasises the necessity of having a comprehensive vision of the world and prepare students to make correlations between Human Sciences (especially history, philosophy, geography, economics, and sociology). It also incites students to become responsible learners, hence, to take ownership of their learning process, to strive to express and maintain their ideas, and to use rhetoric. I considered this analysis crucial to know what is said about European democratic values, how these are defined, and how pupils are exposed to the variety of political ideologies.
Document 13	<i>Sociology Syllabus</i>	This syllabus focuses on matters of social interaction and is concerned with sociological phenomenon on national and international levels. It pushes students to reason on the fact that everyone's actions have an influence on other people's lives. It is also emphasised that Sociology is another subject which lend itself well to connections with other Human Sciences subjects, and it also discusses issues such as social inequalities, social classes, or failed redistribution of wealth and income (etc.). Since these are all key themes in the current research, I found it important to know how ES approach them in practical terms.

4 FINDINGS

Overall, results revealed that ES learning practices contribute to the fragmentation of the student body, and tend to represent the values, worldviews, and histories of an elite European community leaving out of their framework a significant European social minority. The most evident element of division among students is the excessive focus of ES education on national identity. Consequently, the complexity of individual's essence, identities, and personalities are objectified and extremely simplified throughout symbolic and stereotyped representations of countries and cultures. The analysis also confirmed the existence of a gap between the mission of ES education (i.e., what is stated in policy documents) and the description of teaching/learning practices (i.e., what is stated in syllabuses and curricula). The overall results have been regrouped into six main discourse patterns: (1) Essentialist understandings of identity and culture, (2) Majority-centered discourses about diversity, (3) Absence of pupils' interaction and of interaction between ES and other schools, (4) Educational elitism, Eurocentrism, and European exceptionalism, (5) Absence of definitions and persuasive narrative (6) Economic and political discourses. As announced at the end of the methodology chapter, I ordered these findings according to their logical sequence and also according to their visibility within the text (e.g., from most visible and direct discourses, to less visible and most indirect ones). I observed that these patterns are complex and intertwined, hence, one discourse is built on (also defines) the others and vice versa. The common denominator among these individuated discourses is the need of creating a common identity. Each discourse has the task of sensitizing pupils, parents, and teachers regarding the necessity of acquiring a European identity.

From the analysis of data, it emerged that within each document there are many discursive patterns and that some of these discourses are in opposition to discourses featuring in other documents. For instance, statements about the interactive nature of ES or discourses of togetherness fall in contradiction with discourses of pedagogical individualism, according to which pupils should be as independent as possible in their learning process. As a consequence, pupils become lonely learners who can at best interact only within their section or within ES community. Also, discourses supporting equality within education are challenged by the hierarchic categorization of students (category I, II, III; SWALS). Discursive paradoxes will be discussed and be presented in the context of those individuated discourses. I have also reported some of the most significant and demonstrative extracts, to which I will refer by the respective document number and document's page number.

4.1 Essentializing identity, cultures and learning process

When describing the didactic principles of the History Syllabus, it is stated that students should learn to *understand the impact of historical developments* by distinguishing the national from the European and the global, and that they should reach *an awareness of one's own historical identity* (Doc. 10, p.3). In this syllabus, *historical identity* indirectly refers to pupils' national origins and to the history of their country of provenance (*the historical experiences of different cultures*). The use of the personal pronoun "own" all along the document entails that pupils own an identity of which – however – they are unconscious and to which their eyes should be opened. Hence, the word *awareness*. This implies that pupils only apparently own an identity, or rather that pupils are being owned by a pre-existing (*historical*) model of identity whose standards they should abide by, understand, and be conscious of.

Statements of this kind can be also found in the Art Syllabus, European Hours Syllabus, Discovery the World Syllabus, and even the Early Education Curriculum. In the general objectives of the ES, which are identical in each syllabus, it is stated that

Awareness and experience of a shared European life should lead pupils towards a greater respect for the traditions of each individual country and region in Europe, while developing and preserving their own national identities (Doc. 4, p.2)

The need of learning about the differences of national traditions is explicitly stressed, as well as the need of preserving them. Students are asked to observe, detect, and classify what surrounds them, to make of national traditions a solid base upon which they can build their identity. Yet, pupils are exhorted to be mindful of *their own* space, to know where they belong to, and to claim what is "theirs".

These are not just examples of how culture and identity can be imposed on students; they are also a demonstration of how students' identities are essentialized in their learning process. Identity (intended as both cultural and personal) is conceived as a static, immutable entity to safeguard rather than develop and grow. It is as if identity was sealed in the past (e.g., *historical identity*) and was only determined by the past (e.g., *family history*). In fact, pupils' past is about Europe, pupils' present (at the ES) is about Europe, and pupils' future is about becoming European citizens. It is as if what children construct day-by-day as free individuals - meaning it outside the logic of European culture - did not have an impact on who they were, who they are, and will be. Essentially, students are slaves of their origins, which is what prescribes and ascribes them an identity.

In addition, it is also important to remark that in ES documents identity is always indicated in the singular form. This is a further example of how ES education contributes to the fossilization and essentialization of pupils' identities. I observed that the notion of identity becomes more elastic when it comes to European identity (although always indicated in the singular form). Authors recurrently use verbs such as *nourish* or *develop*, metaphoric expressions which suggest movement and progress. Initially, one could get the idea that - unlike personal identities, which are fixed, a priori assumptions - European identity is *fostered*, *discovered* little by little. However, becoming European it is still about developing a heightened awareness of an existing European identity. In fact, the verb to *discover* means that this identity already exists for the students to be found. Hence, becoming European means finding

the European identity one was already born into, and not creatively constructing one's own version of Europeanness.

Therefore, discourses on European identity are only apparently more elastic, because they suggest that becoming European is an itinerary whose stop-offs are predetermined by ES. ES establish what students should learn and what they should do with that knowledge. This is an additional manifestation of cultural essentialism, since culture is conceived as a set of notions and practices that one cumulate and keep in the back of their minds. Discourses on European identity hint that there is a moment in which pupils of the ES will finally become European (e.g., when they will acquire the European competence and will be able to *think, feel, and act European*, Doc.8, p.9). Yet again, these considerations demonstrate that ES promote an essentialist understanding of both culture (culture as finite construct; culture as immutable and static; culture as nation; culture as the essence of people, people *belonging to* and *depending on* culture) and identity (identity as finite construct, limited by time and space; identity as an ascribed feature; identity as singular).

Similarly, tracks of essentialism emerged also from the descriptions of ES' teaching and learning practices. Textual analysis tells that these are specifically centered in comparing pupils' cultural origins. According to documents, in order to reach a multicultural understanding, pupils are asked to *compare, contrast, analyze, describe, define* and *evaluate* behaviors (their own and those of others) as well as cultural similarities and differences (e.g., national celebrations, national traditions, family history etc.). Particularly, it is assumed that students would gain benefits from this comparative learning system. Finding differences and similarities between and among their cultures would help them develop their critical thinking. In addition, it is believed that the act of comparing would be beneficial for the development of students' *empathetic understanding* of similar/dissimilar human situations.

However, I argue that adopting a comparative approach as predominant learning philosophy easily engenders the segregation of pupils into social, cultural, and ethnic categories within the ES community. For instance, it is outlined that the ES learning system only *invites comparisons between, but not judgments of different cultures, political systems and national traditions* (Doc. 10, p.4). However, pupils are asked to *evaluate* and *define* their own identity and culture, and those of others. Evaluating and defining are activities that unavoidably lead people to judge or construct an opinion, eventually, to assert what is good and what is bad. Therefore, the risk of such a statement is that pupils may start forming (social) hierarchies based on the information they receive about each other. Not to mention that what they learn from comparing national and ethnic features can be highly stereotypical.

For instance, in the learning objectives of Discovery the World Syllabus (specifically, in the historical and socio-cultural learning areas), children are asked to *collect* and *record* information about their families (e.g., *aspects of the lives of their grandparents when they were young, where they lived, their homes, the work they did, their clothes and food, how they travelled, their games, hobbies, toys, dances and songs* – Doc. 9, p.16), to describe, and compare them. The verbs *to collect* and *to record* suggest a mechanic (almost robotic) approach to learning, rather than critical. In fact, documents suggest that students focus on identifying what it is taught them to be different (or similar) and that they repeatedly put those elements in contrast. Documents entail that pupils' critical thought is not acquired through

spontaneous confrontations with each other, but through the execution of *recording* exercises which aim at opposing pre-selected features or information. Finally, when it comes to the European Dimension's learning outcomes, it is required that pupils *describe a celebration in the child's cultural background* (Doc.9, p.17), or that they *compare, contrast and discuss similarities and differences between any two EU member states with regards to culture (e.g., art, music, national sports, national dishes, habitats, etc.)* (Doc.9, p.18).

Essentially, it looks like everything is explained with culture to pupils. The academic focus on ethnicity suggests that ES approach multiculturalism and cultural diversity from an essentialist perspective, since the multicultural is always restricted to Europe. This clearly contradicts ES mission of promoting multicultural education, which cannot be enclosed within the European geographic space. As for multilingual education, ES' approach suggests that academic knowledge is acquired through pupils' national language, referred as *dominant language* in ES documents. For instance, it is stated that

every pupil should enjoy the benefit of learning in his/her dominant language; competence in all the other languages that pupils have in their curriculum is built on the dominant language; continued improvement in competence in the dominant language is conducive to the learning of other languages (Doc 3, p. 4, 5).

From this extract it can be observed that there is a great focus on pupils' national/dominant language, which emphasize a mono-lingual approach. Somehow, ES seem to be anchored to an understanding of language as a native construct, as if languages were finite constructs which pupils should learn to perfection. In fact, one of the learning objectives for pupils is to learn foreign languages as native speakers and, to ensure the quality of language learning at ES, policy documents declare that teachers of foreign languages must be native speakers. Moreover, by analyzing ES documents, I determined that language is seen as an institutional means. In the ES syllabuses and policy documents language is conceived as a national symbol of identity, which is typical of the notion "one nation one language". Hence, multilingualism is an emblematic tool that serve to promote collectivity through the languages of Europe. Overall, it was found that both multiculturalism and multilingualism are respectively reduced to a monoculture (European culture) and to monolingual views of language (preservation of national languages).

In addition to what was said up to now, it is claimed that *Learning is situational* (Doc.6, p.5), that learning should be constructed taking into consideration social situatedness (i.e., environmental, social and cultural factors). At least theoretically, the learning path designed by the ES is student-centered, for it encourages students to construct meaning based on socially constructed models. This constructionist approach is very explicit in ES curricula by constantly evoking the European culture, the European heritage, the European perspective. However, I observed that the European model is not only omnipresent, but it is actually the only model proposed. Being "European reality" the only social model existing, it would not even be appropriate to say that such model is proposed to students; rather, it is indirectly imposed to them.

For example, in the general principles of the Sociology Syllabus we read that ES aim at *instilling in students a growing awareness of the richness of European culture* (Doc. 13, p.2). The verb *to instill*

suggests a firm imposition of an idea or attitude in a person's mind. The statement also entails that pupils' minds are in the Schools' hands, that ES can direct them towards *awareness*. Moreover, when it is determined that ES educational system provides students with the right conditions to be active agents in their learning process, it is also said that students are *enabled to process and interpret* (Doc.6, p.5). However, the verb "to enable" (used very often) portrays students as passive learners rather than active agents. In addition, put in this way, it seems that the activity of learning is just about assimilating what teachers (and the schools) construct for students. If the learning is frequently limited to what is selected, over time, this could affect children's creative learning instincts, their curiosity, and learning motivation. Based on a set of statements, I concluded that ES learning environment appears static rather than dynamic as the activity of learning always turns around the assimilation and the transferring knowledge about Europe.

The notion of European Heritage is another case in point. It is stated that *The child should be enabled to: Describe and discuss the need to preserve heritage (e.g., local and national traditions, monuments etc.)* (Doc.9, p.17). Moreover, students are exhorted to *celebrate the European Culture, to promote the European perspective, and to preserve the European Heritage*. Verbs such as *to celebrate, to promote, and to preserve* are frequently used in the texts, supposedly to make the learning experience look positive and engaging. In fact, the verb "to celebrate" indicates that something enjoyable is happening and shows happiness (like in a celebration). The verb "to promote" implies that something should be supported, encouraged, or brought to a higher level, and that people will be attracted by it. Ultimately, the verb "to preserve" suggests that something admirable, beautiful and prestigious should be kept safe. Overall, these linguistic choices deliver a positive image about the European culture, heritage, and perspective. Nevertheless, they also hide the static nature of these very elements. Hence, notions of culture, heritage, and identity are strongly essentialized and are deprived of fluidity and dynamism whenever mentioned (e.g., earlier it was observed that these terms are always indicated in the singular form).

Besides, discourses of protection and conservation also suggest that heritage is used as a boundary concept. Although it is claimed that national cultures and traditions should be distinctively preserved, paradoxically, the intellectual heritage of all member states is clustered and regarded as private European property (yet, separated from the intellectual heritage of rest of the world).

In the Art Syllabus it is requested that teachers *Scan all historical periods and plan to include major artworks from our European heritage* (Doc.7, p.13). To be noted in the extract, the use of personal pronoun *our* referring to European heritage. The pronoun *our* indicates ownership and it is constantly attributed to European art, history, community or environment (e.g., *our environment, our nations, our schools, etc.*). From the Art syllabus, art is described as if it was trapped within nations and within Europe. Substantially, works of art become national symbols like flags are.

The examples presented above have unveiled the oppressive nature of ES learning system, in which every aspect of the learning experience is attributed to national cultures of Europe. This demonstrates that a significant work is done to keep active the principle of heritage conservation. In the context of ES, pupils are also constantly asked to adapt to the European culture (dimension, philosophy, and so on) and to *describe how own and others' behavior should be adapted to place, time and people* (Doc.

9, p.17). This extract suggests that there is a model of conduct students are exhorted to follow. The verb *should*, is employed here to indicate correctness, and more generally, a duty. Yet, *should* is generally used to criticize someone's actions (thereby, the need to *describe* or *evaluate* each other's' behavior) and to indicate a desirable state in which all the students behave appropriately according to the ES standards. Finally, even if only lightly mentioned, it can be stated that the concept of adaptation is conceived as a process which depends on established conditions, namely *place, time, and people*. As already remarked, ES learning material focus on the juxtaposition of European cultures, to which follows the evaluation and definition of similar pupils versus different others. This suggests that, when talking about adaptation, those who are deemed as different should be the ones adapting and changing who they are into what they *should* be.

4.2 Majority-centered discourse about diversity

Results demonstrated that the setting in which ES activities take place – regulated by principles and norms presented in the official documents – contributes to the consolidation of hierarchic classes within the Schools' community. Particularly evident is the dichotomy between dominant and dominated groups on the social, economic, political, cultural and linguistic front. I assessed that discourses about sociocultural diversity essentially aim at advocating a univocal generic diversity (*unity in diversity*) which, instead of bringing benefits *to all the individuals* of Europe, ends up favoring majorities and neglecting (even silencing) minorities. Hence, the denomination “majority-centered discourses about diversity”, which recur in all ES documents.

These discourses highlight some controversial gaps among ES mission, ES policies, and the description of learning practices. In fact, while ES discourses on diversity apparently suggest that the Schools are engaged in creating a more inclusive and diverse community within the schools, in the ES policies and definition of practices, it results that only socially powerful groups are representative of European economic, political and sociocultural standards. The risk that may derive from these discourses is the strengthening, rather than mitigation, of power structures.

For instance, in several documents (particularly Doc.1 and Doc.2) it is claimed that not all students undergo the same admission process:

The purpose of the Schools is to educate together children of the staff of the European Communities. Besides the children covered by the Agreements provided for in Articles 28 and 29, other children may attend the Schools within the limits set by the Board of Governors. (Doc.1, p.2).

The access of Category I and II pupils to ES (*children of the staff of the European Communities* - Doc. 1, p.1) should be prioritized over that of *other children* (Category III pupils). This implies that ES education is primarily reserved to Category I and II pupils, while others (Category III) only *may attend the Schools within the limits set by the Board of Governors*. Even before pupils are admitted to the Schools, they are separated into *children of the EU staff* and *other children* and relocated into

hierarchic categories. The word *other* immediately circumscribes a minority group of students and place them on a lower level. This becomes even more evident when looking at the hierarchic ranking of pupils: categories I, II, and III. The expressions *Category III* and *other* indicate that there is a significant distance between these pupils and the rest of ES community, as if they were not welcome in ES, or as if they did not belong there at all. Indeed, the fact that they *may attend* the Schools only under certain circumstances, almost suggests that the ES made a gesture of generosity towards those *other* pupils by allowing them to benefit from ES education.

An additional example: it is expressively stated that the existence of ES depends on the number of Category I students; in case their number is not consistent enough, there will be no reason for the schools to exist (*When the small number of Category I pupils on roll no longer justifies the School's continuing existence* – Doc.2, p.3). Yet, the “Criteria for the setting up, closure or maintenance of ES” reads:

For a European School to be viable, it would be desirable: [...] For the number of Category I pupils to be a minimum of 70% of the total number of pupils on roll in cities where Community institutions and bodies are heavily concentrated (Brussels and Luxembourg at present) and 50% in other cases (Doc. 2, p.3).

The same happens with the language sections: *the small number of Category I and II pupils calls into question the existence of a language section* (Doc. 2, p.3).

As also indicated earlier, students' categories are numbered as first, second, and third order which undeniably implies that there is a hierarchy established among pupils. Texts explicitly tells who the privileged ones are. Additionally, it is specified that Category III is the only category that should pay to enroll in the Schools. Furthermore, category III pupils are rarely mentioned in the documents; this either suggest that they are not worth mentioning or that their presence in the schools is not significant. In fact, as indirectly stated in the extract just above, even if the number of category III pupils was superior to the number of category I pupils, ES would still not exist. Hence, the problem is not reaching the minimum number to form classes, rather, which students reach that number.

By privileging Category I and II pupils, ES substantially created an elite class of future Europeans made of “pure” Europeans, people directly related with EU institutions. At the same time, *other* communities of the European people are marginalized, such as Category III pupils. Although those pupils may not be born from a family of EU officials, they are still European citizens.

Someway, this hints that the dichotomy between dominant-dominated categories of Europeans exist outside the Schools in the first place and that it is then intentionally reproduced within ES. In fact, the fragmentation of the ES student community perceived from the texts reflects the EU's community fragmentation. Especially, what stands out is the division among Western (dominant) and Eastern (dominated) communities, harshly debated by scholars as I have discussed in the first chapters of my work. What scholars criticize is that EU institutions speak up for majorities by generalizing, eventually reducing the concept of diversities to a single diversity.

The same pattern can be observed in ES discourses about cultural and linguistic diversities. ES refer to a singular European Culture, European dimension, European history, European people, European identity, and to *Europe as a whole* (Doc.6, p.33). As contrasted with diversities, or the concept of “diverse diversities” (Dervin, 2015), diversity itself is addressed in the singular form. ES univocal approach isolates the different communities, rather than bringing them together, eventually encouraging the predominance and the representation of a bigger European culture.

As claimed, within this large European culture, the presence of politically and economically dominant groups matters the most (i.e., Category I, II pupils: or dominant linguistic groups). SWALS are a straightforward example when it comes to linguistic diversity and representation. The acronym stands for “Students Without A Language Section”. I remarked that, too often in the texts, students’ identities are reduced to the abbreviation SWALS which has a negative and pejorative connotation. In fact, the word “without” suggests that students displaced in these sections are somehow at fault, that they lack something. Although they are not accountable for their position, these students suffer the consequences of their condition. Indeed, curricula tell that they face more learning challenges than those pupils benefiting from tuition in their (recognized) dominant language. This is problematic inasmuch it entails that pupils’ presence within the Schools is more or less relevant according to their national languages. Therefore - although it is repeated that *all* the European national languages must be respected and equally represented within the schools - SWALS are the proof of a broken promise. Instead, SWALS confirm the supremacy of vehicular languages (English, French, German).

All in all, I estimated that ES’ exigence is that of creating “the” European social, order based on a range of features which *all individuals* (Doc.4, p.2) must identify with to become respectful European citizens. Once more, it is important to stress that majority-centered discourses about diversity flatten the concept of multicultural education, reducing it to a big mono-cultural framework.

Ultimately, I observed that despite the concept of diversity is majority-centered within ES and leaves at the margins a large portion of the European society, it is always considered EU’s main source of richness (*European diversity*). Moreover, in the documents there seem to be two opposite views about diversity. The European cultural diversity is nice, ordinary, and predictable. The diversity of the outside world, instead, belongs to those different others (e.g., immigrants, refugees, ethnic minority groups) who are unpredictable, troublesome, and not as elite or prestigious as Europeans. In fact, it is as if the diversity of the outer world was considered as a challenge which negatively affects the stability of European Community.

4.3 Absence of pupils and schools' interaction and discourses of individualism

Although policy texts refer to the *interactive nature of European Schools* and declare that the concept of European dimension depends on co-operative learning - as well as on human sciences, civic competences, and on the interaction of pupils in foreign languages - from the analysis of syllabuses it emerged that collaborative work and interaction among pupils are unbalanced concepts. Overall, the relational and socially constructed aspects of identity are often disregarded, and students are portrayed rather as isolated learners. Indeed, in the texts it is emphasized that pupils have *their own place in the world*. However, instead of breaking down social barriers and encouraging interaction, the statement reinforces the idea that pupils are segregated into distinct communities. Despite ES education focuses on creating a common European culture, in the syllabuses and policy documents pupils are recurrently relegated to "their own" community of origin. Intuitively, it is as if during their learning path students were expected to hone their skills and become perfect representatives of "their" culture. It is not by coincidence, indeed, that even multiculturalism and multilingualism are reduced to a situational co-presence of isolated cultural communities.

According to the documents, ES appear as suitable places for culture building practices aiming at creating a self-directed community of trust and excellence. In fact, it seems that the ultimate goal of ES education project is that of raising a renewed European community through educational elitism and Eurocentric pedagogic perspectives. Although this theme will be discussed later on a separate section, this consideration helped detecting two analogous gaps here: one between ES and other schools' communities, and one between Europe and the rest of the world. The social reality that documents construct hardly include the world existing outside the Schools. Even when referring to *others* or other cultures, it is constantly meant other pupils and cultures of the ES. This intuitively implies that ES pupils uniquely encounter and mingle with pupils of various ES.

Another fact worth reporting is that there is no mentioning of collaborative or relational learning in the assessment sections of syllabuses. Instead, *individual learning* and *autonomy of study* appear to be the most relevant aspect of pupils' assessment (e.g., in the *Assessment of European Competence*). Substantially, the less children *depend* on their classmates and teachers, the higher their grade. Students showing an enhanced predisposition to work independently are regarded as more competent than those who may have a greater need of learning by being together, creating together, and relating to the others. However, being together, creating together, and relating to each other allow students to form and acquire interpersonal skills, which are missing in the assessment criteria of ES syllabuses. While these last observations reject the initial claim about the *interactive nature of European Schools*, they also misrepresent the image of the independent learner. Indeed, even if pupils may feel confident in learning independently, developing relational and interpersonal skills is yet needed for both their academic and personal growth.

As for discourses of individualism, I found interesting that in ES documents personal identity is systematically evoked in association with culture and language. It is claimed that cultural identity is the *bedrock* for students' development as citizens. For instance, it is asserted:

The following general objectives defined by the European Schools are specific to implementing the European dimension:

- to give pupils confidence in their own cultural identity - the bedrock for their development as European and world citizens [...] (Doc. 8, p.6).

In the language of ES documents, being a confident individual means having a solid cultural identity. Personal identity including individuals' personalities and behaviors, are very rarely mentioned, instead. If so, personal identity always appears in correspondence of cultural origins, or family history, and it is never linked to students as agents acting on their behalf.

Discourses about students' individuality recur and intersect with those of respect, tolerance and diversity preservation. For instance, in the "General Objectives of the ES" from the Art Syllabus, it is stated that *A solid understanding of one's own culture and a sense of identity can be the basis for an open attitude towards and respect for diversity* (Doc. 7, p.5). The statement implies that in order to respect others, pupils should first understand their personal cultural belonging. It also suggests that culture is *at the basis* of respect. Hence, students are encouraged to build their *sense of identity* on their *own* culture. As mentioned in the description of previous results, despite the personal pronoun *own* may suggest that culture is a pupils' choice, the fact of referring to students' culture in the singular form rather tells that they have been assigned a precise culture. About *respect for diversity*, the extract suggests that it is others' cultures that one should respect before the individual. Once again, this highlights the omnipresence of culture.

Continuing the analysis, *open attitude* may refer here to pupils' interest in knowing more about the cultures of others. Alternatively, openness may concern students' flexibility, or their ability of understanding and accepting unfamiliar cultural practices. However, one can only make interpretations based on the overall context of the document since is not explained what is intended by *open attitude*, and it is not even clear how *a solid understanding of one's own culture* would be beneficial. On the contrary, conceptually the lexical combination *solid understanding* and *open attitude* constitute an oxymoron. The adjective *solid* suggests a univocal, firm, and limited perception of things from which it may be actually hard to develop *open attitude*. Another possible interpretation is that students are invited to understand cultures of others as if these were their *own culture*, assuming that pupils accept and voluntarily respect what is deemed as their own culture. From this point of view, however, students' agency is directly restricted, and they appear as empty bodies which function as containers of cultures and cultural artifacts.

In conclusion, these interpretations about discourses of individualism suggest that, at least in the documents, little attention is given to students' agency and their freedom to choose and create their culture.

4.4 Educational elitism, Eurocentrism and discourses of European exceptionalism

Especially from the analysis of the bureaucratic documents, it emerged that ES explicitly advocate forms of capitalism and social elitism. More specifically, I was able to remark that in the documents, ES express a strong belief in educational and political superiority over other national schools. First, ES declare that their educational system is *sui generis* because it is the fruit of a significant compromise among member states, and between member states and European institutions. From Document 1 (p.1), we read:

the European School system is 'sui generis'; considering that it constitutes a form of cooperation between the Member States and between them and the European Communities while fully acknowledging the Member States' responsibility for the content of teaching and the organization of their educational system, and for their cultural and linguistic diversity

Secondly, it is proudly stressed that ES are amongst the most competitive schools in the world's education economy; due to that, the existence of ES keeps enriching the European cultural capital. ES are schools of elite because - as verified in the previous discourse patterns' discussions - they are not for all European children. ES appear isolated from the other schools of Europe and from the schools of the rest of the world. In fact, documents repeatedly describe ES as state-of-the-art kind of schools, with a unique identity and *raison d'être*.

Seemingly, students of ES are described as super-diverse children, somehow better educated children, and as pupils having an edge over other schools' pupils in multicultural and multilingual contexts. For instance, it is stated that *ES pupils will have an understanding and critical appreciation of the values of other citizens* (Doc. 8, p.3). The fact that ES pupils are entitled to *appreciate* the values of *other citizens* somehow suggests that they observe those *other citizens* from the above. The adjective *critical* stresses the evaluative nature of *appreciation*, which constructs ES pupils as suspicious judges called upon to analyze the merits or faults of others' values. Therefore, from documents it emerges that ES and their pupils should be considered as role models within and outside Europe.

A clear element of ES elitism is the European Baccalaureate. In fact, ES grant a European Baccalaureate which – within the EU – function as *pass-partout* diploma allowing ES pupils to be admitted to any university of any member state, without facing admission tests or showing additional requirements. This tells that there are unbalanced learning opportunities for ES students and students coming from other national schools. The latter are clearly more disadvantaged as they are subject to the entry tests set by universities.

Moreover, the fact that ES are reserved to a selected community of pupils and that within the Schools this community is ulteriorly subdivided into hierarchic groups, shows that discourses of privilege aim at raising a leader category of students. Eventually, all these considerations demonstrate that while on the one side ES portray the European community as a big, united community of people (*Children in the European Schools embrace a European Spirit – celebrating their own culture and that of Europe as a whole* - Doc.6, p.33), on the other hand, they accentuate the dramatic fragmentation of the student

body. Texts locate themselves in contradictory positions as they simultaneously promote and undercut unity. Similarly to what was stated earlier about the community fragmentation, I conclude from this that also European elitism is bidimensional, that it exists within and outside the schools.

Overall, Europe is depicted as a leader on the international scene, and this condition of supremacy (or distinctiveness) is directly inherited by the ES. Texts reveal that the key word behind ES' uniqueness and exceptionality is *expertise*. Always indirectly, ES put their education system in comparison with that of other schools within and outside Europe, and claim offering an advanced education which would derive from the rich expertise of Europe as a contributor of human rights, cultural diversity, social democracy and educational health (considered as *European values*). This implies that, unlike other institutions, ES boast of an added value.

The supremacy of the ES among other schools is demonstrated by statements which claim, for instance, that *ES educational principles and objectives have been unquestioned and valid since the foundation of the first school* (Doc.5, p.11). The use of passive voice and the use of extreme case formulations - at least for the employment of strong adjectives like *unquestioned* and *valid* - serve to convey the idea that ES system is objective and unchangeable. *ES educational principles and objectives* are presented as objective things, rather than as results of human actions. This suggests that ES education system is somehow perfect as it is, that even if it could be changed or innovated, it does not need to. Yet, it is stated that:

Learners need to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, for their personal fulfilment, so that they can actively engage with the society in which they live and to ensure that they are prepared for a constantly changing world (Doc. 5, p.3).

This question is addressed again later in the description of ES Key Competences: *Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship* (Doc. 5, p.5). The idea is that in order to overcome *the challenges of a rapidly changing world* and to feel *personally accomplished*, to be politically active, socially integrated and become employable citizens, *all individuals* (of Europe and of the world) *need* the key competences on which ES curricula are based on. Something else that can be extrapolated from texts, is that while the world out there is challenging, rapidly changing, and somehow to be fixed Europe remains a stable, safe, and perfect place. In fact, ES documents also emphasize the *enhanced awareness of the richness of the European culture* (Doc.4, p.2). Here too, the extract presents interesting extreme case formulations which can be interpreted as a way to legitimize the claim that ES are, above all, Schools of excellence and that *richness* is an exclusive feature of the European culture.

Discourses of European elitism and exceptionality intersect with Eurocentric discourses about education. They implicitly regard European culture as pre-eminent. In fact, while praising the exceptionality and efficiency of ES education, in the ES' mission it is stated that ES pupils are the future generations of Europe and that it is extremely important that they learn how to become proper European citizens. The analysis of ES' mission and ES' syllabuses demonstrated that the whole ES educational program focuses on European culture or history, and that this prevents children from

having a wider view of the world. One of the most explicit form of Eurocentrism can be found in the “Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools” (Doc.1), in which it is stated that *European dimension must be developed in the curricula* (p.3). The use of the imperative *must be developed* intimates an ideological imposition of the European dimension, spirit, culture, etc. Statements of this kind can be found in every syllabus text. I can also cite a short extract from the syllabus of the European Hours: *The ‘European reason’ behind projects and activities should be made explicit in every project and activity* (Doc.8 p.10). Additionally, it is stated that during European Hours classes, students are taught how to *Think European – Feel European – Act European* (Doc.8, p.9). According to the different criteria established within the ES assessment model, being able to think, feel and act European means having acquired a European Competence.

In conclusion, earlier in the findings it was remarked that when referring to cultural diversity it is always meant a European diversity, which pupils should be able to distinguish (e.g., *get to know several famous works and famous artists or local and European heritage; call on his/her artistic knowledge in other subject fields* – Doc.7, p.7). Therefore, intellectual heritage is regarded as an element of inclusion and exclusion, rather than a symbol of progress of the humankind.

Despite everything is about Europe or about becoming European, the most striking fact is that it is never explained what being European means. This finding will be properly discussed in the following discourse pattern.

4.5 Absence of definitions & Persuasive narrative

The analysis of syllabuses and policy documents have evidenced another crucial factor: although *European dimension* (*European spirit, European reason, European learning experience*, etc.) are redundantly evoked, they are never defined. When these concepts appear in the texts they are never followed by descriptive verbs (e.g., *European identity is; European dimension means*). The conceptual gap created by a significant lack in definitions is filled with an extensive use of passive syntactic structures. The main effect produced by this narrative style is postponing the explanations of concepts and distracting readers from the usefulness of knowing their meaning. Authors keep arguing about Europeanness and giving artificial information about the components of European culture. However, objectively nothing new and meaningful is being said about Europeanness. In fact, not even after a meticulous analysis of the different documents one can really say what it means to be a European citizen, what are European dimension, spirit, culture, awareness, or consciousness. These concepts are filled with abstractness and vagueness.

According to syllabuses and curricula, students’ academic performances depend on the knowledge of these “floating signifiers”, an expression coined by Dervin and Marchart (2015) to refer to words and notions that mean too much or too little. Consequently, it becomes also difficult to understand on what exactly these students are being assessed.

The recurrent use of statements which communicate a certain urgency, is an additional strategy adopted by authors to avoid explaining things. For instance, let's take again the last two examples showed in the previous finding section: *European dimension must be developed in the curricula* (Doc.1, p.3), and *The 'European reason' behind projects and activities should be made explicit in every project and activity* (Doc.8 p.10). The alert created by verbs such as *must be* push the readers to only care about what is deemed important in the text. Additionally, when it is stated that European reason *should be made explicit* in every learning project or activity: we only know that European reason is a priority, without knowing what European reason is, or why should it be a priority. This is one of the most recurrent narrative frames characterizing the documents.

Another technique used to avoid providing exhausting definitions, is the employment of metaphors. Metaphors are powerful not only because they can be powerful means in constructing a positive image of Europe and the Schools. Most importantly, they allow to concretize the abstractness of those undefined concepts. For example, *cultures*, *nations*, *ES environment*, and *ES education system* are personified, treated as if they were human body to be *nurtured*, *preserved* or which can be *healthy* or *happy*. The idea of ES community (and the European community) is eventually associated the to the image of a big, happy, inclusive family. Images of happiness, healthiness, and togetherness easily stick in the reader's mind.

For example, in the ES motto it is stated that children will be *educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices* (Doc.8, p.5). The use of the words *side by side*, *untroubled* and *infancy* somehow evoke positive feelings and emotions in the reader. This demonstrates that words are very powerful means for the legitimization of ES' ideas of solidarity and social union. ES positivistic attitude - explicitly manifested in the lexical choices of documents - naturalizes, justifies, and even obfuscates the directive language which is simultaneously employed in ES documents. Therefore, I consider the systematic avoidance of defining concepts as a form of persuasive narrative.

By persuasive narrative I mean that texts are purposefully structured to capture readers' emotions for them to build an empathetic relationship with the Schools. This feature is more accentuated in the foundational documents of the Schools than in syllabuses such as *Philosophy*, *Political Sciences* and *Sociology*, in which the energy of persuasive speech weakens together with the necessity to create Europeanness. In the case of these three subjects, didactic principles focus much more on the description of the subjects' characteristics, and learning objectives focus on developing practical competences, namely learning how to conduct a written research and how to present it orally, learn to engage in discussions, learn how to study theories and how to challenge them, learn to understand politics and different political perspectives, etc. The impression one gets from the overall analysis of these texts is that all of the sudden, the focus on Europeanness, European culture or European democratic values disappears making space to a scientific description of courses. I think that even this omission should be regarded as a strategical linguistic choice, because it helps portraying ES as politically and socio-culturally neutral institutions.

Contrarily, the rest of syllabuses (such as *Art Syllabus*; *Syllabus of the European Hours*; *Discovery of the World Syllabus*; *History Syllabus*) and the other policy documents (such as *Early Education curriculum*; *Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools*; *Criteria for the setting up*,

closure or maintenance of European Schools; Language Policy of the European Schools; Structure for all syllabuses in the system of European Schools; Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools) are the texts attempting the most to persuade readers to trust in the ES education system. This is done, for instance, by stressing that ES have *experience* in delivering the right competences to their students. The Schools use the word *experience* to claim expertise or construct themselves as experts. In fact, it is stated that ES' educational *key competences have been unquestioned and valid since the foundation of the first school* (Doc. 6, p.11). Here, the extreme case formulations (*unquestioned* and *valid*), the passive voice, the mentioning of demonstrative facts (i.e., *the establishment of the first school*), all this is highlighted to readers to create an identity of rightful experts.

Another strategy used to legitimize and back up ES views consists of stating that ES key competences were approved by respectable educational institutions (such as the OECD), or that ES key competences they were integrated into international education programmes (such as PISA). It is stated that *Europe is not alone in this move towards key competences; core competences; essential skills; 21st century skills in education systems* (Doc.5, p.4). In the same page, it is added:

The emerging Future of Education and Skills: OECD Education 2030 Framework places a strong emphasis on competences and states that “A competence is the ability to mobilise knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, alongside a reflective approach to the processes of learning, in order to engage with and act in the world”. The new OECD Global Competence, to be tested in PISA 2018, was constructed on this model (OECD, 2016)

The strategy here consists of ensuring that programmes and competences have been *tested*. Linguistic devices such as this can be referred to as corroboration. Other respectable institutions are brought into play to corroborate ES' version of the world. However, “competences” in itself is not defined.

Another persuasive strategy adopted is linking the notion of *experience* to the teaching of democratic values. However, the insistence by which texts allude to the history of the EU, and to the fact that Europe was born from democracy to advocate democracy results quite ambiguous and does nothing but reveal a deep instability of EU (in terms of social and political union). This can be verified by reading documents such as “European Hours Syllabus”, “Early Education Curriculum” and “Discovery of the World Syllabus”, in which is asserted that within the European society *human rights, peaceful co-existence and equal rights* are guaranteed (Doc.8 p.12). The liaison with European history is always present in texts as to set an example of durable and solid union among the community, or even to persuade parents that ES are successful institutions and safe spaces for their children. In fact, I noticed that persuasive discourses seem to be mostly addressed to pupils' parents, as if ES wanted to reassure them that their children are enrolled to the best schools.

For instance, it is stated that ES offers programmes and activities which will prepare children to become confident individuals and which aim at guiding pupils in every aspect of their life. This communicates to parents that everything is taken care of, and that they should not be concerned about children's education and rather trust in ES' expertise. Additionally, parents are repeatedly invited to

become main partners of the schools. It is claimed that it is *essential* for parents to establish a partnership with the schools *as parents are the prime educators of their children* (Doc. 6, p.2). However, from an overall analysis, it results that such collaboration would better serve ES' interests and be essential for the Schools rather than for pupils or parents. In fact, documents claim that in order to educate children appropriately, parents should support, sustain, replicate, reinforce what children learn in ES. The indirect objective then, is to give parents directions on how they should be 'supervising' children's learning to keep alive Schools' principles also outside the schools (i.e., at home).

Ultimately, ES persuasive narrative becomes particularly useful when making a series of impossible promises (perhaps still with the aim of impressing parents and earn their trust and the respect). For example, it is stated that children *will be untroubled by divisive prejudice* (Doc.8, p.5). This is an example of what I call impossible promise. In fact, by denying that episodes of prejudice will occur one actually tells that they are likely to occur. The likelihood that prejudice may occur is even more obvious or when the kind of prejudice *divisive* is specified. Not only the text relegates prejudice to a cultural issue - thus, depending on pupil's cultural diversity - but it actually excludes countless of other undeniable forms of prejudice. Viewed the young age of pupils and the context in which they are embedded (kindergarten, primary school and secondary school) it should be considered that at this stage children are just about to start interpreting reality. Hence, even being taller/shorter or wearing glasses can be an excuse to create prejudices. Therefore, the exposure of pupils to prejudices (of any kind) cannot be denied the same way children cannot be exempt or prevented from difficulties.

Instead, in the Early Education Curriculum (Doc.6, p.4) it is specified that ES prevent children from *any difficulties*, or support *children's growth into ethical and responsible members of society*, and monitor *children's physical and psychological wellbeing, including social, cognitive and emotional development*. Again, the text insists on making direct and ambitious predictions about pupils' future. Moreover, despite these claims should reassure parents that their children are safe within the Schools, the consecutive use of expressions such as *prevent*, *support*, and *monitor* shows that there is a constant control upon students, and manifests the directive and oppressive nature of ES discourses. Especially, the use of expression such as *monitoring physical and psychological wellbeing* should, on the contrary, warn parents. Instead, using these verbs should somehow encourage parents to build a solid empathy with the Schools, while students become subjects of manipulations.

ES claim themselves to be able to somehow detect *the real needs of every child* (Doc.6, p.5) and congratulate themselves for having created an educational plan tailored to pupils' needs. A similar statement is done also when referring to the development of European dimension as *a step-by-step learning process which takes into consideration the individuality of each pupil* (Doc. 8, p.4). In the documents it is explained that *individuality* corresponds to cultural diversity. Hence, at first instance, the use of a rhetoric of tolerance and respect for students' diversities and individualities helps making glossy and shiny assumptions about the inclusive character of ES system. However, what these linguistic strategies hide is that the construction of a European dimension is a process of homogenization rather than a process which supports variety in terms of pupils' individualities and diversities.

4.6 Economic and Political Discourses

After a comprehensive analysis of documents, I realized that ES are the most concrete realization of a utopic political union. In particular, the foundational texts portray ES as emblematic educational institutions. However, from the analysis it also emerged that these Schools were tailor-made to fit a desired European lifestyle. The most explanatory statement is the ES mission, which declares that pupils *will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe* (Doc. 8, p.5). This extract tells that the Schools have a strong interest in (re)creating a desired model of Europe and of European citizens. Even in the text, “becoming Europeans” is mentioned before students’ schooling. This entails that the urgency of becoming Europeans may be rather an institutional need.

The analysis of ES curricula, syllabuses and foundational documents shows, in fact, that the need to create a European dimension in education – hence, the need for ES students to develop a European identity – derives from the EU’s quest for cohesion and functional collaboration between member states and EU institutions. There is a direct statement in the “Criteria for the setting up, closure or maintenance of European Schools”, confirming that creating ES was a *political decision*.

The decision to set up and maintain a European School is a political decision which takes into consideration a number of factors associated with the *raison d’être* of these schools (i.e. to ensure the smooth functioning of the Community institutions and bodies and to facilitate the performance of their tasks). (Doc.2, p.2)

As also stated in Doc.1 (p.1), establishing ES all over the EU would ensure the proper functioning of the EU institutions, consequently strengthening their power of control. This even sheds more lights on the questions raised previously about pupils’ admission criteria (elitism), or about the academic Eurocentrism. In fact, it is as if ES institutions tended to reproduce a sociocultural variety that appears politically appropriate to Europe, or as if ES student community was “the” correct version of European community. Potentially, ES are an opportunity for institutions to fix what in the current reality does not work. Yet, another demonstrative example is the statement just below:

The setting up of a European School is therefore justified when it is vital to ensure the optimum operation of an essential Community activity, but economic constraints and minimum conditions for the school’s viability to be met are also part of the equation (Doc. 2, p.2).

The extract is interesting for two reasons: first, it reconfirms the political function of ES; secondly, it reveals the economic bond which links ES to EU institutions. However, this information is cleverly overshadowed by lexical devices. From an analytical point of view, the text presents an overlexicalization for the most consisting of adjectives. For instance, words such as *vital*, *optimum*, and *essential* are employed to *justify* the existence of ES. However, it is not explained *when* ES are vital, nor what *optimum operation* stands for, or what is meant by *essential Community activity*. It is unknown whether authors refer to a particular kind of activity according to which the ES existence is vital. Moreover, these adjectives (*vital*, *optimum*, *essential*) have the precise function of communicating necessity, or the achievement of great performances. Paradoxically, however, they are

also useless and empty concepts. In fact, if authors alternatively wrote “the setting up of European School is justified to ensure the operation of Community activities” readers would have had the same information than they get from reading the original sentence.

Therefore, the function of the language here is to showcase the usefulness and merits of ES, while placing out of view the main concern about the optimum operability of EU’s institutions. ES predominant position changes in the second sentence of the paragraph, in which it is stated that ES existence (*school’s viability*, now even indicated with the lower case “s”, not anymore as *European School*) depends on EU’s institutional finances and decisions (*economic constraints and minimum conditions to be met*). The second clause of the statement is introduced by the conjunction *but* (*but economic constraints and minimum conditions for the school’s viability to be met are also part of the equation*), which indicates that what follows is in contrast to what was said in the first sentence and that, after all, ES are not as *vital* as it was previously deemed. ES downgrading is attributed to *economic constraints*, and it is a result of force majeure. It is almost as if the text wanted to justify this point. Ultimately in the extract, the word *equation* suggests that ES and EU institutions are somehow equal agents. However, the use of negative linguistic nuances such as *but*, *constraints*, or *conditions* tells readers that, in the end, the *vital* institutions are actually those who finance.

The most concrete demonstration of a political and economic bond between EU Institutions and the ES is expressed in the following statement:

European communities are anxious to ensure the education together of these children and, for this purpose, make a contribution to the budget of the European Schools (Doc.1, p.1).

First, it should be noted the incipit of the extract *European communities are anxious*. The use of the adjective *anxious* proves that EU institutions have a significant interest in ES pupils’ (*these children*) education. However, anxiety may suggest that such interest comes with expectations. Moreover, the remark *these children* highlight that it is specifically in their education that European communities want to focus on. The interest of EU institutions is strong at the point of *making a contribution to the budget* of ES. The word “contribution” indicates that there is a commitment, a compromise; eventually, it suggests that ES will have to pay back for this contribution. Indeed, it is stated that whenever ES fail in facilitating the operations of the Community activities, their existence will be questioned (Doc.2, p. 2). At this point, it would be safe to claim that developing an education entirely based on Europe, on the concept of Europeanness, on the *celebration* of the *European Culture* and *Heritage* are all ways in which ES pay off EU’s contribution. Not surprisingly, teachers are asked to encourage the *promotion of a European perspective* (Doc. 9, p.5), and students to *discuss the need to preserve European Heritage* (Doc. 9, p.17).

When referring to European Heritage, heritage is often written with a capital H, as well as when alluding to the European Culture, culture is often indicated with capital C. Although heritage is already a strong marker of economic power or prestige, the use of capital letters adds emphasis and makes both culture and heritage even more significant in the texts. Also, capital letters are used when referring to proper names. Hence, objects and abstract concepts are empowered, almost “humanized”, by

linguistic techniques. Yet, another example is that both heritage and culture are subjected to the nominal adjective European, a strong indicator of socio-political power. Besides, the term heritage can assume multiple meanings: it indicates property, status, or it may refer to monetary value. This suggests that, especially within the ES and European education context, a political economy is applied to intellectual knowledge and to cultural heritage, meaning it art, music, archaeological sites, material artifacts (e.g., *Heritage and Society: [...] -The child should be enabled to: Describe and discuss the need to preserve heritage (e.g., local and national traditions, monuments etc.)* – Doc.9, p.17).

In the documents, the political and economic pressures of ES education manifested in several forms. It is stated, for example, that the general Key Competences that ES' pupils should acquire were *stipulated* by the European Council and European Parliament, almost in the form of a contract (Doc.1, Doc.2). Moreover, when referring to pupils' education there is an implicit emphasis on economic matters: discourses of employability aim at recalling the competitiveness of the world's knowledge economy. For instance, it is explained that *Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship* (Doc.5, p.5). Those Key Competences are supposed to bring indispensable advantages to students. Somehow, such discourses serve to reassure parents about ES education by presenting it as an education that by all means invests in the pupils' future. In other words, this highlights that parents made a good investment in choosing ES for their children education, whose future economic success seems to be certain. All these ambitious declarations aim at showing off the competitiveness of ES education and at building a reputation within the world's knowledge economy.

ES syllabuses and curricula emphasize a strong link between the European Community and its European socio-cultural heritage. The institutional presence can be detected especially from discourses about democracy. In the documents, the European Community is depicted as the place of birth of democracy, and democracy is described as “the” fundamental form of governance. However, as was previously discussed, European Culture is often imposed on pupils. Hence, the use of social democratic discourses helps placing ES authoritarian attitude out of view. This discursive strategy consists of equalizing democracy to the European culture. It is as if imposing European culture or democracy meant advising something good for better academic, economic and social achievements. Apparently, it does not look like an obligation at all, however, it still is.

The ES' motto is extremely rich in terms of linguistic tools used to cover up the despotic rather than democratic attitude of ES. In the foundational documents, it is claimed that the following motto is inscribed on parchment and sealed in each of the Schools' foundation stones:

Educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices, acquainted with all that is great and good in the different cultures, it will be borne in upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe. (Doc.8, p.5)

From this extract it emerges that discourses of solidarity (*Educated side by side*), as well as a rhetoric of tolerance (*untroubled[...]by divisive prejudices*), or discourses of cultural respect and freedom (*all that is great and good in the different cultures; Without ceasing to look to their own lands*) are used to

justify and normalize the imposition of a unique European culture (*it will be borne in upon them that they belong together; they will become in mind Europeans*) and to lighten the weight of a substantial call of duty (*schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers*).

In fact, already from a very young age (*from infancy*), students are given the responsibility of unifying Europe on the tracks of their parents and forefathers. Here is where discourses about solidarity, love, pride, and family values are quite strategically used to bring up memories about the European history, memories of a union among member states at the moment of its consolidation. Hence, the use of narrative memory has the effect of persuading students, of making them feel powerful as they are given an important task. It generates empathy and sentiment belonging to Europe. However, it should be stressed that the motto does not refer to pupils' memories but to the history of Europe. It is very unlikely that children can feel *love*, and *pride* for a land they haven't had the time to know. It is not children's choice to end what their fathers had started.

Therefore, the function of narrative memory is not remembering something that happened in the past. Rather, it is a tool for reconstructing the past and changing the present according to those reconstructions. The aim of the motto is essentially that of growing a sense of togetherness in pupils (*they belong together*), eventually solving current issues of social union (*to bring into being a united and thriving Europe*), a union which - as the use of indefinite tense (*to bring*) suggests - was never achieved. Nevertheless, students are told that they are part of a moral union based on principles of democracy, tolerance, equality, respect (e.g., *pupils being educated together*- Doc.1, p.1,2; *the promotion of unity of the School* – Doc.1, p.3; *mutual understanding among people of different cultures* -Doc.1, p.3). This also serves to reassure (or persuade) readers that social justice exists within the ES community (e.g., *diversity of children is taken into consideration and gender equality is promoted* - Doc.6, p.3).

I could conclude by stating that the analysis documents demonstrated me that ES do not focus much on explaining and presenting the contents of subjects; rather the texts focus on building a community of future European citizens.

5 DISCUSSION

This study demonstrated the tight intertwining among education, politics and economics. It addresses issues of power within schools, often responsible agents for the establishment of desired political, cultural, and social orders. Researchers have claimed that schools can also be the authors of normative and hegemonic discourses which may oppress and undermine students' individual agency and freedom of choice. Paavola and colleagues (2017) addressed this problematic phenomenon in their study "Constructing norms and silences on power issues related to diversities displayed in school spaces". By analyzing the schools' objects, the schools' visual representations, and the schools' space they determined that schools are like "silent partners" for they tacitly participate in the institutional construction of univocal and uncritical discourses about diversity. While these discourses satisfy the desires of privileged and dominant social groups, they also contribute to the oppression of marginalized social groups. In the light of my research, ES can be regarded as the living proof of what Paavola et al. (2017) call silent partners. However, in this work I was interested in investigating:

How are ES educational mission and practices constructed in ES official documents?

The answer to this research question is that ES mission (mostly expressed in the policy documents) and ES educational practices (mostly expressed in syllabuses and curricula) are constructed upon a redundant and unjustified principle that pupils "need" to become Europeans. This is done through an extensive and strategic use of rhetoric devices such as the consistent absence of definitions, the use of metaphors, the use of passive voice, overlexicalization (e.g., extensive use of adjectives), corroboration, personification of objects and abstract concepts, etc. The examination of rhetoric devices revealed the essentialist, despotic, and oppressive attitude of ES. Although this is a claim that I have supported with several analytical arguments when presenting findings, it still deserves to be deepened and recontextualized in this final discussion.

The ES Education Project is based on Conflicting Discourses

Widely recapitulated with the aim of building up a society of culturally aware and respectable European citizens, ES' mission recurs in all documents used as data for this research and it is redacted throughout contradictory discourses of respect, equality, and appreciation of socio-cultural diversity. Overall, I remarked that discourses defining the ES objectives and learning practices are for the most characterized by textual hybridity, as they recurrently refer to two opposing interests: that of constructing a common European culture, and that of preserving each one's national identities, languages, and cultures. What is striking about this, is that the paradox featuring such objective is totally normalized by ES narrative, to some extents even erased. Findings have showed that the European culture, dimension, community constitute an imagined reality which must be at the center of every pedagogical discourse or practice, and which should be constantly perceived by pupils.

Somehow, the urgency of acquiring a European identity is always presented as a greater moral duty, which is where the directive and oppressive side of ES stands off the most. Nevertheless, ES claim giving great importance to students' personal identity construction. In truth, their identities are

uniquely conceived as embedded in a bigger communal kind of identity, such as national or European identity. Identity then is regarded as an ascribed innate feature, which should be discovered by being in constant comparison with identities and cultures of others. While the main concern for educators should be that of indistinctively celebrating national cultures of each pupil, students are asked to observe, describe, and distinguish their identity. I noticed that the use of the concept of discovery as a way for identity development is not accidental. Indeed, according to ES, personal identity is not created by pupils themselves or co-created throughout relationships, but it is something that exists a priori. Substantially, it is claimed that pupils discover their “real” nature while comparing their national cultures and traditions, deemed as critical elements for the determination of their behaviors and individual development.

Europeanness is an Artificial Reality

In the theoretic background I have mentioned that Holliday (2011) strongly criticizes the use of national culture as an explanation to predict people’s behaviors. Holliday (2011) analysed the relationship between ideology and culture and outlined two opposing views of culture: the essentialist and the non-essentialist one. The essentialist perspective is characterised by the belief that it is possible to predict what kind of people can be found in a particular place because stereotypes and the national cultures become the essence of people (Holliday, 2011). The non-essentialist perspective is much more neutral and aims at demonstrating that cultures are complex, and so are individuals. Therefore, according to this view, people identities should not be associated to national belongings (Holliday, 2011). Specifically, he talks about the negative effects deriving from relegating people to designated cultural places such as nations. Amongst the most serious implications of cultural essentialism Holliday (2011) mentions the discourse of Othering, claiming that whenever people are othered, these others are not regarded as “real” members of a community.

In the case of ES, I remarked that Othering phenomena is at least textually produced within what is supposed to be a unique cultural place or a united cultural community. Discourses on European identity are associated to discourses of cultural awareness, meaning that respectable Europeans citizens should be fully aware about European culture. It was determined through the documents’ analysis, that cultural awareness entails being thoroughly instructed on European historical facts, democratic values, and European cultural richness. Documents are, indeed, very concerned with specifying that this is done excellently and incomparably at ES (ES are sui generis schools). ES claim that they aim at forming perfect European citizens (ES pupils will become in mind European).

From an ethical point of view this is extremely problematic as it implies that students from other types of schools, yet of Europe, should not be regarded as true Europeans. Alternatively, it suggests that their education somehow lack of Europeanness. Even then, it is not clear how this shall be necessarily seen as a lack, hence, negatively. Although Europeanness is never defined (however, always present in ES educational mission, practices and objectives) findings help understand that Europeanness is a floating abstract concept which becomes a needed requirement in the world of European Institutions. Therefore, ES pupils are addressed as the real European citizens, while automatically other students of Europe are relegated to inferior positions.

The essentialist attitude explained by Holliday (2011) is objectively visible in the description of ES learning practices. However, documents claim that ES comparative learning approach is particularly constructive for it allows pupils to develop their critical thinking while encouraging interactions. Based on the analysis of data, I assessed that the comparing of cultures can be constructive also for the establishment of segregated cultural groups. In fact, these children are primarily addressed as representatives of some nations, rather than simply as kids. I believe that, among pupils, this may encourage the development of relationships based on cultural constructs or on stereotyped representations of sameness and otherness. According to the findings, students seem to be confined into cultural bubbles for national culture and national languages preservation. In such a learning atmosphere, students' understanding of cultural diversity risks to become nothing but a dividing concept. However, this claim cannot be proved by the exclusive analysis of texts.

Ideology of Nativism

Discourses about cultural diversity are always associated with discourses of cultural celebration, characterized by deep and sensitive narratives whose main subjects are pupils' individual identities, their individual freedom, and individual rights. While these discourses talk about respecting the different others and about enhancing individual freedom, all they do is restraining it. In fact, findings have showed that discourses on pupils' individuality deeply neglect pupils' agency. This is a key issue that I faced in the findings, and which has been addressed by Wikan (2002). She asserts that people are imprisoned in "their" native cultures coining the expression "straitjacket of culture". Metaphorically speaking, cultures are like uniforms that people have been forced to wear. She points out that the process of culture attribution begins with childhood, when children are defenseless due to their young age and are easily prevented from becoming someone else. Wikan (2002) condemns the conventional claim that "children should remain 'in their culture'" (p.20), because it does not show the least concern for the implications that this culture may have on children. Wikan's (2002) objections against cultural determinism are linked to issues of social justice, especially in terms of personal rights, individual freedom, and well-being. Similarly, as I also mentioned in the literature review, Eriksen (2001) addresses this matter revindicating the right of not having a culture.

Instead, in the ES documents, discourses of European identity are infused with an ideology of nativism, according to which one can be truly European only by having been born in a European country (this explains then the persistent allusions to national identities). Yet, a final observation about identity discourses. In the light of what was discussed until now, if on the one hand it is safe to state that ES pupils' identities are extremely essentialized because always understood as singular or determined by culture, on the other hand, it is still imprecise to state that these ascribed identities are fixed. Indeed, I have noticed that those national identities, redundantly celebrated in the documents, are not that unmovable and well-preserved. The concept of national culture, as well as the idea of a European culture, are used upon convenience to generate sense of collectivity and consensus.

This last note reminds me of one of the most famous statements of Piller (2012): “Culture is sometimes nothing more than a convenient and lazy explanation” (p.172). It is implied that whenever one finds it hard to clarify the reasons (and meanings) behind decisions, opinions, or attitudes, culture is a universal alibi.

However, Piller’s (2012) utmost criticism refers to the biased and ideological use of culture. In line with Wikan’s (2002) and Piller’s (2012) assumptions, also Dervin (2015) addressed the same question about culture, claiming that the concept is too often misused, especially in terms of physical or symbolic violence, xenophobia or identity reduction. He suggests, no less, that the simplistic and overgeneralized idea of culture should be removed from education and should rather be substituted with specific and precise expressions (Dervin, 2015). In this way, one would also avoid relegating the concept of identity to national cultures. Dervin (2015) points out that education often induces pupils to understand their identity as singular, stable, and fixed. However, the author highlights that this is a fictitious and misleading representations of the self, since there are countless unpredictable variables (e.g., health, mood, readiness to speak, etc.) which may affect our beings and make us be diverse in same, similar, or different occasions. In regard to this, I recall Dervin’s (2015) concept of “diverse diversities”, which recognizes that people have different identities, and that these identities are constantly evolving as they are constructed and negotiated through everyday interactions with others.

Eurocentric and Monocultural Perspectives

Interaction is another fundamental key point to discuss. Documents underline that ES are interactive schools and that this aspect especially derives from the multicultural and multilingual side of their education project. Nevertheless, I also determined that documents depict the ES community as an elite community and that students seem to be isolated from other social realities. This is why in the findings I refer to ES pupils as lonely learners. Alternatively put, texts suggest that students exchange and interact exclusively between and among ES pupils. I deepened this aspect also by looking at extracurricular activities of the ES, such as cultural events and festivals; it emerged that those can only be attended by members of ES community. Yet, from personal experience, I can tell that as a student enrolled to regular national schools I have never heard about ES, nor encountered and exchanged with ES pupils. Although this could be regarded as a simple coincidence or as an isolated case, in syllabuses and curricula there is no trace of cooperation among ES and other national/international schools. Eurocentric discourses and discourses of European culture preservation suggest that the absence of others is not accidental.

The problem into question is that ES take advantage of their multicultural and multilingual look to prove their interactive nature. Hence, I cannot help but question the kind of interculturalism, multiculturalism, and multilingualism ES promote. Research shows that discourses on multicultural education easily become a tool for the establishment of monocultural approaches to education, which silence cultural diversity by limiting the recognition of minority cultures (Paavola et al., 2017; May & Sleeter, 2010; Parekh, 2006). According to the findings, I assert that interculturalism, multiculturalism, and multilingualism are constructed from a Eurocentric (and rather monocultural) perspective. Indeed,

if on the one hand ES claim promoting multicultural education, on the other hand, they reduce the concept of multiculturalism to “the multiple cultures of Europe”. Furthermore, ES discourses about multiculturalism marginalize some communities of Europe and exclude cultures from rest of the world.

Elitism

All in all, findings proved that official documents are means through which ES build their reputation as powerful, multicultural, and elite institutions. CDA was crucial to unveil that discourses on multicultural, intercultural, and multilingual education hide a substantial fragmentation of the ES community. In fact, ES’ student body is deeply hierarchized according to their cultural, social, national, and linguistic differences. These classifications do not reflect the ideal of union and equality which is so much emphasized in the ES principles and objectives. Instead, there are privileged and less privileged categories of pupils within the Schools. In the documents, the less privileged (Category III pupils) are addressed as other citizens (despite being European). At the same time, they are also told to be free, unsubordinated, and accepted individuals. These paradoxes, which strongly characterize the ES educational mission, are accentuated by other essentialist and majority-centered discourses about diversity. Leaton Grey et al. (2018) stated that ES can be described as “company schools” (p.85) for they provide facilities to a certain type of employers. This claim was confirmed by findings of this research, which clearly showed the presence of elite categories such as Category I and Category II pupils.

In the theoretic background I referred to Wikan (2002) as one of the authors majorly recriminating the “politization of culture”, which consists of using culture as a tool for social segregation, marginalization, and discrimination. Yet, Kim (2011) linked the issue of the politics of culture to pedagogical multicultural programmes. The author states that these programmes tend to reproduce, rather than minimise, the cultural hierarchies. Once again, the results of my analysis confirm these statements. Instead of perceiving a multicultural community as a complex of “diverse diversity” (Dervin, 2015), ES refer to it as a community representing Europe as a whole. The analysis verified how this approach ends up flattening diversities (and multiculturalism) inciting the radicalization of a European monoculturalism, eventually, supporting only dominant cultures.

European Exceptionalism and Boutique Multiculturalism

Despite it being stressed that Europe is part of the world, in discourses of globalization or international transformations Europe still results isolated from the global dimension. Unexpectedly, I found that discourses about Europe and the rest of the world mutually exclude each other’s presence. In the documents not only ES but also Europe is portrayed as a *sui generis* world. For example, when referring to issues related to linguistic and cultural diversity, the external world is considered responsible for changes while Europe is not part of the problem. Rather, Europe provides solutions

and brings innovations for which European excellence and expertise are frequently evoked. Somehow, the European environment is viewed as the only safe space.

These considerations brought me to the ultimate conclusion that multiculturalism (as well as multilingualism) is addressed from two opposite perspectives on diversity. When referring to the outer world, diversity is something that should be kept out because it challenges and destabilizes the harmony of ES environment. The diversity of the exterior world is problematic and negatively constructed; it is about people of less social prestige. Within ES, instead, diversity is a positive concept, it is nice, and boutique. Hence, this diversity should be preserved and nourished because it constitutes the European heritage. The concept of “Boutique Multiculturalism” was introduced by Fish (1997), who explains that the traditions and cultures of others are only apparently accepted (or “appreciated” in the ES’ words), sympathized, and recognized as legitimate. Fish (1997) argues that boutique multiculturalists will never fully approve others’ cultures, especially when the core values and practices are not aligned with already established social norms.

The Political Interests behind the ES Mission

The excessive emphasis on Europeanness in the building process of students’ identity, the biased conceptualization of intercultural, multicultural and multilingual education made me realize that, not only pupils, but also teachers become pawns set up by EU’s institutions in their political agenda. In fact, first and foremost teachers must be native speakers to be able to teach in language sections; secondly, they become role models for students by adequately representing their nations. Altogether, these individuals constitute ES’ imaginary of a proudly united European community. As I reported in the literature review, the EU and ES construct their idea of European community based on the assumption that “culture is a powerful promoter of identity” (Council of Europe, 1997). From this, I conclude that the fundamental issue laying behind the ES pedagogical mission, learning objectives, and practices is that they are constructed on misleading and ambiguous identity talks to serve political interests rather than those of the school community. Identity talks strongly characterize the sixth and last discourse pattern individuated, namely the one concerning economic and political discourses about identity, Europeanness or cultural diversity

Brubaker and Cooper (2012) indicate that identity talks are de facto real phenomena and that they are especially powerful on the political front. They claim that identity talks - at national, supranational and international level - that identity becomes a tool to promote political ideologies and to frame political claims (Brubaker, & Cooper, 2000). However, Brubaker and Cooper (2012) remind that identity must be understood as abstract, fluid and always changing. Consequently, the attempt of understanding who we truly are by creating categories, to which one should then identify, is in itself a contradiction (Brubaker, & Cooper, 2000). This can be observed when identity discourses aim at creating a sentiment of belonging to a specific community (cultural solidarity) and at justifying “sameness” through collective action (Brubaker, & Cooper, 2000).

Back to the European context, this persuasive discourse activity can be observed in the EU's motto "unity in diversity". Brubaker and Cooper (2012) also observe that identity politics is closely related to politics of race, ethnicity, and nation which often implies that identity politics have biases. That is actually why categories tend to be reinforced or reproduced. In fact, EU's motto provides a message of social union and cultural solidarity by stating that "we are all the same", but it also reminds that "we are all different", hence, that our differences indicate our place in the world. Substantially, this twofold message is very similar to the one characterizing ES' mission: becoming European while maintaining national cultures.

The European Identity Crisis

One last but not least important consideration made by Brubaker and Cooper (2012) is that the question of identity construction appears on the political scene especially during periods of crisis. This statement gives food for thought as for the necessity to become Europeans which must be recontextualised in a contemporary key. Looking at the current socio-cultural, political, economic situation of Europe, to whom is Europeanness important? Why do students even need to become in mind Europeans? Where does this need for European identity comes from? In the light of Brubaker's and Cooper's (2012) last assumption, the question naturally arises: Is the European identity under threat?

In the literature review it was stated that the consolidation of Europe was never truly accomplished, especially in terms of social cohesion and social union. Yet, in 2012 the European Commission redacted a policy review entitled "The development of European identity/identities: an unfinished business". In this review, the European Commission admitted once more that "only few people have 'Europe' as their primary locus of identification" (European Commission, 2012 p.11). Moreover, "identification" is addressed here as an "unfinished business", thus, as a matter of political and economic necessity. The ES education project is only one amongst the many initiatives aiming at fostering Europeanness.

In the last few years there have been important discussions on whether being a member of EU was the healthiest solution for all EU nations. To see which conclusions drawn from these discussions, I referred to the Eurobarometer surveys conducted in March 2018 and July 2019. The surveys demonstrate that the majority of EU member states located in northern and western geographical areas of Europe are satisfied with their membership and feel attached to EU politically, economically and socially. These are called Europhile states. At the same time, Europe is still facing Brexit and the challenges deriving from it. Eastern and Southern European states are the ones claiming a deeper crisis in European confidence. From this other area of Europe, most of anti-EU parties have risen giving space to an always increasing current of Euroscepticism.

Moreover, facts tell us that the feeling of attachment to EU is not evenly distributed among member states (Mantzakidi & Desvignes, 2019). Although in minority, there are several European countries showing their willingness to leave the union. However, these voices keep being silenced by European

mass politics, which functions as a protective barrier against Eurosceptics' wishes of differentiation, diversification, or even disintegration. Hence, it can be stated that there is a conventional unity, or as many scholars call it, a union of élites.

Amongst them, Bergman (2000) refers to the European politics as the “arena of élite negotiations and intergovernmental bargaining” (Winzen, 2020 p. 7). Thereby, besides demonstrating the exclusion of Eurosceptics from having any form of authority in the decision-making process, Winzen's (2020) study shows that the EU forces integration rather than a constructing it with the actual collaboration of all member states. In fact, if the voices of those who think differently are silenced and ignored, What is the European “unity” made of? How can the ES' positivistic promotion of European culture/identity/community be justified within the context of Euroscepticism and European identity crisis?

The theme of Europeanness - intended now as feeling of belonging to Europe and as feeling of trust in the EU - is extremely complex, to some extents, even unethical. As stated, ES education project is only one amongst many projects of EU unification. However, the analysis revealed that discourses of unification and Europeanness aim at forming a society of significant social majorities and elites.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has demonstrated that language is action in the construction of worlds. Discursive techniques can help institutions to influence, shape, and reshape social realities. With their indefinite arguments on cultural solidarity and Europeanness, ES aim at forming communities of reliable Europeans and at reaching a position of elite also within the global education economy. These deductions imply that ES curricula and syllabuses have a specific agenda for culture formation: the development and growth of a unique European Culture. In the documents, ES function as the ideological spokesperson for the EU institutions. The use of CDA demonstrated that successful ideologies work by using images, symbols, rituals, and national habits. What I understood from the ES story is that, overall, the important aspect of a change is the belief in that change. This explains why ES aims at reaching the hearts and minds of pupils in the first place.

At the same time, analyzing the moves made by the ES in constructing Europeanness helped me understand why the EU is being such a failure in its project of unification. In fact, how could the mission of social unification ever be accomplished when it is at the same time so restraining and elitist? On the contrary, this clarifies why the European crisis is going on since the beginning of the consolidation. The European identity project is built on conceptual paradoxes and unbalanced linguistic and cultural powers, on which basis a united and thriving Europe can never exist. This becomes a message for all of the EU institutions that are implicated in this identity construction project, not only ES.

Since this study proved that ES education focuses on political functions of culture, I suggest that the entire program should be refocused on innovative and non-essentialist approaches. More specifically, the program should be decentralized from ideologies of nativism (i.e., nationalism and Eurocentrism), and from cultural determinism. Students should be empowered to develop their critical thinking not by comparing national cultures or identities, but they should be given the chance to learn from the multiple perspectives that research offer. In fact, ES's conceptions of multilingual, multicultural and intercultural education are very old-fashioned and from the analysis of syllabuses it seems that pupils do not get to know the critical perspectives of such disciplines.

Ultimately, I am aware that these Schools were primarily created to ease the children of diplomats, who are subject to relocate after a certain period of time. Nevertheless, the Schools could exist also without the establishment of discriminating hierarchies and norms (e.g., Category I, II and III), especially when the main objective is to foster unification within the student community. Moreover, establishing categories based on the status of pupils is a useless practice because it has no constructive result and rather limit their learning progress.

Limitations of the research and further developments

The purpose of this research was to look at how ES educational practices and mission are constructed in the language of ES documents. The prevalent method of analysis for written material is qualitative content analysis. However, when it comes to qualitative studies, there is big concern among scholars about their trustworthiness, validity, and about the authenticity of the investigation (from the collection of the data, to the presentation of the findings). The reason is that interpretations are never entirely objective, hence, the risk is that researchers' intuitions may affect the analysis of data and compromise the findings. Scholars have agreed on the point that a qualitative research can be considered authentic when the author clearly and appropriately displays a variety of realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2012).

Amoussou and Allagbe (2018) make a similar claim about the use of CDA as method of analysis. They claim that in order to be effective, the analyst must always consider that CDA embraces a wide range of social problems and ideological positions. Hence, when conducting the analysis, the researcher should combine different methods and approaches (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018). They explain: "This means that the linguistic approach should be combined with historical, socio-political, sociological, anthropological, sociolinguistic, etc., perspectives" (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018, p.16).

Drawing on Whitemore et al. (2001), Elo et al. (2014) concluded that "the reporting of the content analysis process should be based on self-critical thinking at each phase of the analysis" (p.8). Therefore, in order to demonstrate the integrity of a qualitative study, researchers must provide the most transparent and detailed explanation about how results were prepared, organized, and reported (Elo et al., 2014). According to the authors, this way the reader himself will get a clear indication of the overall trustworthiness (Elo et al., 2014).

Besides limitations that qualitative studies may presents, there are more specific limitations which can be found in my work. As mentioned on several occasions, the analysis of the schools' official

documents was crucial to this study to understand how ES education is developed and structured. However, I missed knowing what it happens in practice in these Schools. At this point of the research, it would have been interesting to study pupils' experience at the ES and see how the interpretations of texts relate to their perceptions.

Furthermore, I think that the question of multilingual education could have been deepened more. In fact, although I intentionally limited the study to the analysis of policy documents, curricula and syllabuses of general subjects, I was able to determine that ES multilingual education is constructed upon an ideology of native-speakerism (e.g., teachers are employed only if they are native speakers so that pupils can be trained to speak as native speakers) and that multilingualism is still often approached from a bilingual or even monolingual perspective. However, in this case CDA would not have been the best methodological approach and I would have needed a different set of data.

Nonetheless, all these flaws can be seen as inputs for a further development of this study. For instance, I would be interested in conducting on-site research (e.g., ethnographic study) and observe language teaching practices and learning activities, or yet observe how pupils interact to better examine how the relationships between language and identity are built from the pupils' perspectives. Furthermore, it would be thought-provoking to see whether students use their different linguistic repertoires creatively in interactions with one another. If so, maybe even use their dialogues as data. In fact, conducting a study on ES multilingual education practices would help verifying whether at least ES' mission of providing a multilingual education is actually accomplished.

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