Dimensions 2026

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Review and Acceptance Procedures

SCOLT *Dimensions*

The procedures through which articles are reviewed and accepted for publication in *Dimensions* begin by the authors emailing manuscripts to the Editor at SCOLT.Dimension@gmail.com or prucks@gsu.edu. The Editor then uses a double blind peer review process to review the manuscripts. That is, the names and academic affiliations of the authors and information identifying schools and colleges cited in articles are removed from the manuscripts prior to review by members of the Editorial Board, all of whom are published professionals, committed to second language education at research universities. Neither the author(s) nor the reviewers know the identity of one another during the review process. Each manuscript is reviewed by at least two members of the Editorial Board, and one of the following recommendations is made: "accept as is," "request a second draft with minor revisions," "request a second draft with major revisions," or "do not publish." The Editor then requests second drafts of manuscripts that receive favorable ratings on the initial draft. These revised manuscripts are reviewed a second time before a final decision to publish is made.

The Editor of *Dimensions* 2026 invited prospective authors at all levels of language teaching to submit original work for publication consideration without having to commit to presenting a paper at the annual meeting of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching. Starting as a proceedings publication, *Dimensions* is now the official peer-reviewed journal of SCOLT that publishes national and international authors in the spring. Contributing authors' research findings and pedagogical implications are shared at the SCOLT Opening General Session with conference attendees and beyond.

To improve visibility of the authors' work, the Board voted to publish the journal on the SCOLT website in an open access format. SCOLT *Dimensions* is indexed with the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education that connects 12 million users—researchers, educators, policy makers, and students from 238 countries. ERIC metrics biannual reports indicate that *Dimensions* articles are being viewed or downloaded approximately 5,000 times a year. SCOLT *Dimensions* is dedicated to the advancement of the teaching and learning of world languages and cultures and warmly welcomes a wide readership.

Editorial Board for SCOLT *Dimensions* 2026

Introduction

Plurilingualism

The Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) held its annual conference March 20-22, 2025 at the Sheraton Music City in Nashville, Tennessee, in collaboration with the Southeastern Association of Language Learning Technology (SEALLT), and the Tennessee World Language Teaching Association (TWLTA). Starting as a conference proceeding publication with the organization's inception in 1967 under the title "SCOLT *Dimension*," this journal has long been the organization's official double blinded, peer-reviewed journal. Recognizing the multiplicity of dimensions concerning the teaching and learning languages represented by authors in the journal, the SCOLT Board voted to change the journal's name to SCOLT *Dimension***s** in 2023. *Dimensions* remains dedicated to the advancement of the teaching and learning of world languages and cultures, specifically languages other than English (in Anglophone contexts).

Dimensions publishes national and international authors once a year, sharing their research findings and pedagogical implications with conference attendees and beyond. The journal is indexed with the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education that connects 12 million users—researchers, educators, policy makers, and students from 238 countries. ERIC metrics reports revealed nearly 2,500 views and downloads of *Dimension(s)* publications during 2025. The innovative research from this year's volume by national authors is presented at the opening ceremony of the SCOLT 2026 conference, themed *Take Flight with Languages*, in Raleigh, NC, March 19-21.

The articles in this issue focus on plurilingual language learning, primarily from a European perspective, with links to rich instructional materials and descriptions of innovative instructional practices. The ultimate goal in the Call for Papers was to bridge European and U.S. perspectives on language learning and to share understanding of the terms plurilingual (individual) and multilingual (societal) widely used in Europe and internationally as they relate to the terms bilingual and multilingual (individual and societal) and translanguaging (action) that are more commonly used in the Anglophone world.

The Call for Papers aimed to inspire diverse researchers to share their understanding of theories, policies, practices, and what plurilingual language education might look like in different contexts (educational, geographical, political, etc.) comparatively or uniquely in their own state (U.S.) or country (Europe). These five questions followed:

1. Which issues are most pressing to language education fields between the U.S. and Europe and why?
2. In which way do social contexts, language policies, and language prestige influence language education in the U.S. and in Europe?
3. In what ways does learning world/foreign languages (e.g., Arabic, French,

Japanese, or Spanish) compare in the U.S. to Europe?
4. What are the teaching practices in language education on both continents? How are plurilingual aspects respected and practiced and why?
5. Which instructional and multilingual/plurilingual practices are most beneficial to increase successful communication and relationship building?

None of the U.S. article submissions aligned well with the parameters of the call, unsurprisingly given the newness of the term plurilingual in the U.S. context. Nearly all the invited European authors from the *Handbook of Plurilingual and Intercultural Language Learning* (Fäcke, Gao, Garrett-Rucks, 2015) have shared their expertise in this special issue including; three authors from Germany, three authors from France, one author from Switzerland and Austria, and two authors from Canada in addition to the U.S. Editor of *Dimensions*.

This year's volume begins with an article in which authors **Paula Garrett-Rucks** (*Georgia State University, USA*) and **Christiane Fäcke** (*University of Augsburg, Germany*) report on the language education practices, learning terms, concepts, policies, and resources across the Atlantic. In order to situate the ways in which the instructional materials, resources, and practices for plurilingual language learning that are described by European contributing authors to this special issue might look across contexts, this article addresses both European and U.S. unique linguistic landscapes and social contexts, societal norms and expectations toward speaking more than one language, socio-historical language use policies, and differing course offerings and requirements for the study of world/foreign languages in relation to U.S. and European perspectives on plurilingual language learning. Common points and differences are then identified and insights from European contributing authors of the *Dimensions* special issue are extended to the U.S. context to bridge language education fields. The article concludes by underlining how the work on Plurilingual Education provides inspiration for a view of a world that respects cultural and linguistic diversity and supports a positive, respectful and open way of life.

In the second article, **Claudia Polzin-Haumann** (*Saarland University, Germany*) and **Christina Reissner** (*Saarland University, Germany*) offer insights into some aspects of language diversity and plurilingual teaching and learning in Europe. They situate current European language policies as pivotal in fostering plurilingual competence and intercultural understanding through education. The authors offer the pluralistic theoretical and didactic model of *intercomprehension*, defining its core principles and summarizing central concepts. It highlights digital and social learning environments and shows the importance of the human factor for successful plurilingual education. In this way, the article addresses pressing issues in language education and the impact of language policy, as well as the role of language teaching practices in overcoming communication barriers and fostering relationships across languages and cultures.

Next, in the third article, authors **Michel Candelier** (*Le Mans University, France*) and **Jean François de Pietro** (*Le Mans University, France*) describe a teaching approach that proposes multilingual activities and accompanies language teaching to foster the learners' awareness of and openness to multilingualism, while increasing their reflexive metalinguistic abilities. The authors describe *Awakening*

to Languages (AtL) as a component of Didactics of Plurilingualism (DP) and its main aims and characteristics which are illustrated through multiple examples of activities and teaching materials. The authors further discuss the reported effects of AtL on learners, teachers, and parents, followed by current trends in integrating AtL in schools. They then compare core concepts of AtL and DP to *Translanguaging*, noting a lack of the abundance of European research findings and teaching resources that might expand understandings of Translanguaging. The shared goal to highlight and promote all aspects of students' linguistic repertoire is noted across examples of practices. The others conclude noting that AtL instruction prepares learners for a more peaceful multicultural world.

In the fourth article, **Michaela Rückl** (*University of Salzburg, Austria*) explores how plurilingualism is reshaping educational language policy by shifting the focus from monolingual proficiency to an integrative model that draws on learners' full linguistic and cultural repertoires. European language policies and perspectives are described, highlighting goals such as promoting global citizenship through plurilingual education. Specific attention is placed on Austria's innovative curriculum for vocational schools, which embeds plurilingual, pluricultural, and transversal competences (soft skills) in the new subject *International Communication with Focus Language* (InCo). The author reports preliminary findings from a pilot study that emphasize the value of activating learners' linguistic resources, incorporating real-life tasks, and using AI tools to enhance foreign language enjoyment and learner engagement. The article presents the framework for the design of the InCo curriculum and descriptions of instructional materials that place a strong emphasis on cognitive activation and foreign language enjoyment with tasks that encourage learner reflection, knowledge transfer, and a sense of achievement.

In the fifth article, authors **Christian Ollivier** (*Réunion Island University, France*) and **Logambal Souprayen Cavery** (*Réunion Island University, France*) present the concepts and linguistic dimensions of translanguaging and interlectal practices as defined in the literature, highlighting similarities and differences in the ways of describing and understanding language uses in multilingual contact situations. The pedagogical dimensions of translanguaging are then compared to the pedagogy of variation—the pedagogical implementation of the concept of interlect—with attention to the subtle theoretical and political perspectives inherent to each. The discussion then turns to the ways in which each practice—interlectal and translanguaging—might draw insights from the other to enhance plurilingual education. The authors conclude by proposing a blended, socio-interactional approach in which learners can learn to freely use their entire linguistic repertoire while considering social constraints.

In Chapter 6, authors **Angelica Galante** (*McGill University, Canada*) and **Yunjia Xie** (*McGill University, Canada*) report efforts to mobilize and democratize research-informed knowledge and resources for plurilingual education through the Plurilingual Lab, a research laboratory based in Canada. Situated in the highly multilingual city of Montreal, Quebec, the Lab showcases findings from research on plurilingual education and fosters collaborative knowledge mobilization among researchers and educators. Grounded in principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and decoloniality (EDID), the Plurilingual Lab's initiatives seek to advance and

inform both plurilingual research and pedagogical practices. Moreover, by making resources openly accessible, the Lab helps democratize knowledge production and dissemination, extending its reach to communities that might otherwise lack access to such scholarship. This article concludes by calling scholars across applied linguistics to undertake similar initiatives, advancing efforts to positively impact social change and promote greater equity for linguistically marginalized communities, thereby contributing to a more just and inclusive linguistic landscape—and ultimately giving all languages the attention they deserve.

As co-editors for this special issue, we worked collaboratively with the Editorial Review Board in a double blind, peer-review process and would like to extend our gratitude to them for having shared their knowledge, and expertise reviewing the articles for *Dimensions* 2026. These individuals are leaders in the field and we greatly appreciate their time and energy. On behalf of the editorial team, we believe that readers will find the articles in this edition informative and inspiring. Please be sure to thank: (1) attending authors for contributing their work to Dimensions, (2) members of the Editorial Review Board for assisting their colleagues in the preparation of the articles, and (3) the SCOLT Sponsors and Patrons for their ongoing financial support that makes Dimensions possible.

Co-editors

Paula Garrett-Rucks (*Georgia State University*)
Christiane Fäcke (*University of Augsburg, Germany*)

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Plurilingual Language Learning: European and U.S. Perspectives

Paula Garrett-Rucks
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Christiane Fäcke
University of Augsburg, Germany

Abstract

This article attempts to bridge language education fields from Europe and the United States by sharing language learning terms, concepts, and teaching and learning theories and practices across the Atlantic in response to the call for papers for the 2026 Dimensions special issue on Plurilingual Education. In order to situate the ways in which the instructional materials, resources, and practices for plurilingual language learning that are described by European contributing authors to the special issue might look across contexts, this article addresses both European and U.S. unique linguistic landscapes and social contexts, societal norms and expectations toward speaking more than one language, socio-historical language use policies, and differing course offerings and requirements for the study of world/foreign languages in relation to U.S. and European perspectives on plurilingual language learning. Common points and differences are then identified and insights from European contributing authors of the Dimensions special issue are extended to the U.S. context to bridge language education fields. The article concludes by underlining how the work on Plurilingual Education provides inspiration for a view of a world that respects cultural and linguistic diversity and supports a positive, respectful and open way of life.

Keywords: *Plurilingual education, U.S. and European language education, intercultural competence, language use*

Background and Introduction to Plurilingual Language Learning

Western civilization comprises nations with shared cultural, political, and historical roots (primarily in Europe and North America) that emphasize individualism, democracy, capitalism and technological advancement (Niall, 2011). Despite shared Western cultures, the United States (U.S.) and Europe have very different approaches to speaking and learning more than one language. One notable difference is in the use of terms, such as *plurilingual* (individual) and *multilingual* (societal) widely used in Europe and internationally as they relate to the terms *bilingual* and *multilingual* (individual and societal) and *translanguaging* (action) that are more commonly used in the Anglophone world.

Plurilingualism refers to an individual's ability to use, switch between, and combine multiple languages and cultural experiences to communicate effectively, rather than requiring perfect proficiency in each. Unlike multilingualism, which often refers to multiple languages coexisting within a society, plurilingualism focuses on an individual's dynamic, integrated linguistic repertoire. Plurilingualism views languages as interconnected in the mind, allowing for fluid switching (code-switching) and blending (translanguaging) to suit the situation. It emphasizes that one person can draw upon diverse linguistic resources, regardless of proficiency levels. Education for plurilingualism leverages a student's home language(s) to facilitate learning, rather than requiring exclusive use of the school language. The 2020 Companion Volume to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020) highlights plurilingualism as a key approach to fostering communicative and intercultural awareness.

The *Dimensions* special issue on plurilingual language learning aims at bridging language education fields from Europe and the United States. The call for papers invited diverse researchers to share their understanding of theories, policies, practices, and what plurilingual language education might look like in different contexts (educational, geographical, political, etc.) comparatively or uniquely in their own state (U.S.) or country (Europe). Select contributing authors from the international *Handbook of Plurilingual and Intercultural Language Learning* (Fäcke, Gao, & Garrett-Rucks, 2025) were invited to share their expertise in *Dimensions*' special issue. The majority of the U.S. submissions in response to the call were off topic, unsurprisingly given the newness of the term *plurilingualism* in the U.S. Consequently, the editors shifted focus of the special issue to the expert voices on plurilingualism, mostly from Europe, to share their insight and to subsequently enact the bridging of European and U.S. practices in the present article.

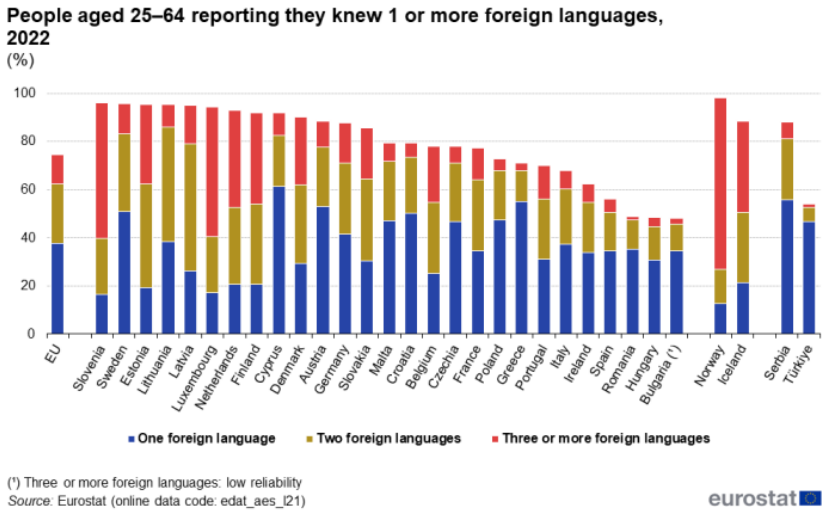
The aim of this paper is to respond to the initial questions put forth in 2026 *Dimensions*' call for papers. The call centered on the following issues in Europe and the U.S. for comparison of: (1) the most pressing issues in language education fields; (2) the ways in which social contexts, language policies, and language prestige influence language education; (3) educational requirements for the study of world/foreign languages (e.g., Arabic, French, Japanese, or Spanish); (4) the recommended language teaching practices and how plurilingual aspects are respected and practiced; and (5) the instructional and multilingual/plurilingual practices considered to be most beneficial for successful communication and relationship building (Garrett-Rucks & Fäcke, 2026). The five papers to have successfully moved through the double-blinded, peer reviewed process provide a rich overview of European practices and instructional resources for plurilingual education. Accordingly, the final section of this article draws attention to key insights from contributing authors in the 2026 *Dimensions* special issue, speculating the applicability of these insights to the U.S. context. European and U.S. perspectives and practices in language education are bridged here by contextualizing the linguistic landscape, socio-historical language use policies, world/foreign language study offerings and requirements, societal norms and expectations toward plurilingualism and otherness, starting first with the European context below.

Plurilingual Language Learning in Europe

The European continent exhibits remarkable linguistic diversity, encompassing more than 250 indigenous languages. The vast majority of these languages belong to the Indo-European language family, which has historically dominated the continent's linguistic landscape. Of Europe's approximately 744 million inhabitants, an estimated 94% are native speakers of an Indo-European language. Among the Indo-European branches, the three largest language families—Germanic, Romance, and Slavic—each comprise more than 200 million speakers. Collectively, they account for around 90% of the European population. This linguistic distribution not only reflects deep historical and cultural connections across the continent but also underscores the enduring influence of shared linguistic roots within Europe's complex cultural mosaic (European Commission, 2024).

This complex and heterogenic linguistic landscape, characterized by linguistic diversity and multilingualism (Kraus, 2018), finds its reflection in a high level of plurilingualism, as approximately 75% of European citizens between the ages of 25 and 64 report having language proficiency in one or more foreign languages (Eurostat, 2024); specifically 38% report knowledge of one additional language, 25% speak two foreign languages, and 12% are proficient in three (see Figure 1 below).

Fig. 1 *Percent of Europeans speaking one or more foreign languages per nation*



(Eurostat, 2024)

The highest levels of plurilingualism are observed in the Scandinavian and Baltic states, as well as in Slovenia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Cyprus. In contrast, countries such as Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria display comparatively low levels of plurilingualism (Eurostat, 2024). English-speaking countries, such as Ireland, exhibit relatively low levels of plurilingualism. This can be attributed both to the global status of English as a lingua franca, reducing the necessity for

language learning, and to limited national efforts to promote plurilingualism. Yet across Europe, individual plurilingualism is most common among younger, highly educated, and employed populations (Eurostat, 2022/23; 2024).

European language policy has aimed at plurilingualism for a long time. The 2006 report of the Committee on Culture and Education reaffirmed the EU's commitment to multilingualism and to "unity in diversity" as a source of solidarity and mutual understanding (Committee on Culture and Education, 2006, p. 8). Language policy in Europe has been shaped primarily by two highly influential documents: the *CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2001) and its *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020). These frameworks outline key principles that underpin European language policy.

Central to the documents is the clear conceptual distinction between *multilingualism* and *plurilingualism*, as well as between *multiculturalism* and *pluriculturalism*. The prefix *multi-* refers to societal contexts, describing the coexistence of multiple languages or cultures within a community. By contrast, the prefix *pluri-* pertains to the individual level, emphasizing the dynamic and interrelated nature of a person's linguistic and cultural repertoire (Fäcke, Gao, & Garrett-Rucks, 2025). Accordingly, a society may be described as *multilingual* or *multicultural* even though its individual members may not themselves speak several languages or belong to multiple cultures. Conversely, a *plurilingual* and *pluricultural* individual possesses interrelated linguistic and cultural competences that enable effective communication across languages and cultural boundaries (Council of Europe, 2020).

> Plurilingualism is thus seen as a form of specific competence […]. Plurilingual competence is the ability to use several languages (to differing degrees) and permits contact with other cultures, which means that relations between citizens of the member states do not have to be conducted only in an international *lingua franca*, but via all possible linguistic resources. If there is one language which Europe needs, that is plurilingualism. (Language Policy Unit, Council of Europe 2014, p. 14)

At the core of the *Companion Volume* lies the concept of *mediation*, understood as the *co-construction of meaning* that serves as the central axis of interaction, reception, and production between interlocutors. Within the process of mediation, a range of competences is activated, including sociolinguistic, pragmatic, linguistic, and digital competence, as well as plurilingual and pluricultural competence (Council of Europe, 2020).

European language policy has pursued the goal of promoting plurilingualism for several decades (Byram, 2018). A central milestone in this endeavor was established with the *Barcelona European Council* in 2002 (European Commission, 2002), which articulated what has since become known as the *Barcelona Objective* or *L+2 formula*. This objective calls upon all European citizens to achieve communicative competence in at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue. The underlying rationale is to foster linguistic diversity, enhance intercultural understanding, and strengthen social and economic cohesion across the European Union.

In practice, the Barcelona Objective reflects the EU's commitment to ensuring

that plurilingualism becomes both a right and a practical reality for all Europeans, supporting mobility, employability, and mutual comprehension in an interconnected Europe. The implementation of this language policy objective is shaped by a variety of interrelated factors. These include social mobility—manifested, for instance, through migration and tourism, the increasing influence of digitalization, which facilitates global communication via the internet, social media, and artificial intelligence, as well as the active language policies of individual nations. The latter interpret and apply the directives of European language policy to differing degrees and with varying emphases. Plurilingualism in practice becomes visible through the inclusion of one or more languages in public life, the media and press, administrative forms, driving license examinations and the systematic promotion of language learning in schools and other educational institutions (Fäcke, in preparation).

In the context of school language education, the distinction between *foreign languages*, *second languages*, and *heritage languages* is of central importance (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015). Taking the example of language instruction in Germany—a federal republic characterized by notable differences between its individual federal states—these categories acquire specific meanings. Despite regional variations, the term *foreign languages* generally refers to languages that are taught as foreign to all learners within the school system, namely English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian. The concept of a *second language* typically designates *German as a second language* (Deutsch als Zweitsprache, DaZ) for learners with a migration background whose family language is not German, but who grow up in Germany and acquire German within this linguistic environment. The term *heritage language* encompasses *allochthonous* languages spoken by communities whose members migrated to Germany several years or decades ago (Fäcke, 2021). The largest of these migration groups speak

- Turkish (following the recruitment of Turkish guest workers invited to the Federal Republic of Germany beginning in the 1950s);
- Russian (due to the immigration of ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union, particularly during the 1990s after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War);
- Arabic (as a result of immigration from Iran, Iraq, and other Arab countries, as well as from Syria in 2015 in the wake of the Syrian civil war);
- Polish (through labor migration within the European Union);
- Ukrainian (as a consequence of displacement caused by the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine) (Statista, 2025).

In addition, there is a wide range of other heritage languages spoken in Germany, including Albanian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, Farsi, Greek, Italian, Kurdish, Pashto, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbian, and Spanish, among many others.

Overall, foreign language instruction is regarded as a core subject within the German school system and is mandatory for all students. In primary education, English is compulsory for all pupils starting from the third grade. In secondary education, English typically remains the first foreign language for the majority of

learners. However, in certain federal states bordering France, such as Saarland and Baden-Württemberg, French is offered as the first foreign language. French and Spanish are generally provided as the second foreign language at the Gymnasium (academic-track secondary school), while French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian may be chosen as a third foreign language (Fäcke, 2021).

The diversity of school types and regional curricula allows additional languages—such as Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, and Polish—to be offered in some schools. Consequently, Germany provides a relatively broad spectrum of foreign language education, although its availability is not uniform nationwide. English instruction, however, is universally implemented across all school types and throughout the entire duration of schooling, ensuring that every student attains foundational proficiency in this global lingua franca. This approach reflects both Germany's longstanding commitment to plurilingualism and the practical necessity of equipping students with linguistic competencies for academic, social, and professional mobility.

Although Germany is presented as an exemplary model for implementing European language policy with respect to plurilingualism, there remains substantial criticism, particularly regarding the heterogeneous nature of language learning opportunities. While a wide range of foreign languages is offered at the *Gymnasium* (academic-track secondary school), the *Realschule* (intermediate-track school) typically provides English and, to a limited extent, French, and the *Hauptschule* (basic-track school) generally offers only English. In comparison with other European countries (see the statistics above), Germany ranks in the upper middle tier, whereas some other states have made considerably more progress in the systematic promotion of plurilingual competence (Fäcke, 2021).

Finally, it is important to highlight the different conceptualizations of the terms *multi-* and *plurilingualism* in European language policy compared to the Anglo-American discourse. In Europe, the term *plurilingualism* predominates, emphasizing the ability of individuals to draw upon multiple linguistic resources in a flexible and context-sensitive manner. One might interpret this as a deliberate counter-narrative to the global dominance of English, highlighting the value of linguistic diversity and pluricultural competence. In contrast, in the English-speaking world, *multilingualism* is the more common term, which may reflect an implicit assumption of linguistic self-sufficiency and the centrality of English as a global lingua franca. This perspective could contribute to a relatively limited recognition of the skills associated with plurilingual competence and interactive language use. Observations from the United States may provide further insights into how these attitudes shape language education and societal expectations regarding the acquisition and use of multiple languages.

Plurilingual Language Learning in the U.S.

Attitudes toward language education and societal expectations regarding the learning and use of multiple languages in the U.S. differ considerably from Europe's, despite some shared contexts. Like Europe, there are many languages spoken in the United States, including a variety of indigenous languages spoken by Native Americans and the many diverse languages immigrants have brought, yet English remains the

dominant language among the nearly 350 million U.S. inhabitants. According to the recent U.S. Census Bureau (2023) report, nearly 80% of the population (over the age of five) speaks English at home. Among people who spoke a language other than English at home (over 20% of the U.S. population), approximately 78% spoke an Indo-European language (e.g. Spanish, German, French, Italian) with Spanish being the most prevalent. Spanish (61.1%), Chinese (which includes all dialects) (5.1%), and Tagalog (including Filipino) (2.5%) were reported as the three most spoken languages at home, other than English. The majority of these speakers of other languages also reported speaking English "very well" (70% of Tagalog speakers; 61% of Spanish speakers, and 48% of Chinese speakers). Despite nearly one in five people in the U.S. using a language other than English at home, the U.S. population is largely considered monolingual.

Prior to 2025, there had never been an official national language in the U.S. (due to states' rights to choose) and only 30 of the 50 states had declared an official language (Byrne, 2025). All 30 states decaled English as an official language and three states have additional official native languages to English: Alaska (20 languages of native inhabitants), Hawaii (Hawaiian), and South Dakota (Sioux) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). However, in early 2025 the newly elected president declared English as the official language of the U.S. in an executive order (Trump, 2025). Among the resistance to this order, the Linguistic Society of America (2025) outlined social and economic reasons against declaring English as the official language of the U.S. The states that had previously designated indigenous languages as official in addition to English remain seemingly unchanged. For example, the Alaskan Office of the Governor still posts that 20 languages of native inhabitants are included as official languages of Alaska from Administrative Order 300 (Walker, 2018).

Historically, English has been centered in bilingual movements in the U.S., where the goal was to teach immigrants English to assimilate into the *Great Melting Pot* myth in which Anglo language and culture dominated. Nationally, there was little concern for home-language maintenance until the passing of the 1968 Bilingual Education Act. This Act assured federal funding for schools to offer bilingual instruction, particularly for Spanish-speaking students, while also aiming to address students' broader language needs. Efird (2023) describes this Act as "a critical measure of the Civil Rights movement" in which "the legislation recognized the necessity for educational institutions to adapt to a diverse student body rather than forcing conformity to English" (para. 2). However, over 20 years later, a political *English Only* movement emerged, falsely criticizing bilingual education for holding children back from learning English, among other attacks. At this same time, the rebranding of bilingual education as Dual Language Immersion (DLI) started to appear, seemingly shifting the emphasis from *language maintenance* for non-English speakers to fostering *foreign (world) language* skills for native English speakers (Delavan, Freire, & Menken, 2021).

Concerning world language education in public schools, there are no national requirements for language study in the U.S. and only seven states mandate one to two years of the study of a world language other than English demonstrating that "world language education is not prioritized in state-level policies" (O'Rourke, Zhou, & Rottman, 2016, p. 789). Most public schools offer world language study in

secondary schools, as universities often require two years of world language study for admission. When world languages are offered in primary schools, it is often considered *a special*, meaning it is not funded by the state, rather by local property taxes funded at the district level. Consequently, early language learning can be considered elitist, primarily offered in areas with expensive homes generating higher property taxes. DLI, however, is becoming increasingly popular as bilingual teachers are funded by the state as content teachers (often math, science, and social studies in the target language) rather than *specials* (target language) teachers. However, despite increased interest and enrollments in DLI models over the past few decades, there is some concern among bilingual educators that we risk reproducing social inequity by celebrating enrichment bilingualism for majority-group children while discriminating against minority students (Delavan, Freire, & Menken, 2021).

For most of U.S. history, the term *foreign language* was dominant in education and policy where English was assumed to be the norm, despite the country's multilingual beginnings. Civil rights and bilingual education movements began to question the term *foreign* as Spanish, Indigenous, Asian, and other community languages were clearly not foreign to millions of citizens, and many felt the term was dismissive or inaccurate for heritage speakers. In the 1990s, the term *world languages* gained traction and became institutionalized in the early 2000s as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) increasingly used the term *world languages* to emphasize communicative competence and intercultural understanding. By the 2010s, many states had officially renamed departments and standards from *foreign* to *world* languages. In 2015, ACTFL officially changed the name of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning to the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). The shift from *foreign* to *world* language was intended to recognize multilingualism as normal, local, and globally connected, not distant or *other*.

Meanwhile, unlike countries with national curricula that mandate foreign or additional language study for all students, the U.S. federal government does not require world language education for primary, middle, or secondary students. Educational authority is largely decentralized in the U.S. with states and local districts setting graduation requirements and world languages course offerings. However, federal policy and funding do influence world language education in several ways. For several decades, the U.S. Department of Education's International and Foreign Language Education Office administered Title VI federal programs with grants for strengthening world language instruction, teacher preparation, international studies, and curriculum development. Language Resource Centers (LRCs) were established in 1990 to address the national need for foreign language expertise. The LRCs started as three centers and have grown to sixteen, focusing on developing learning materials, professional development, and research. However, to date, there is a message on the National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) website (n.d.) stating:

> Federal funding for the Title VI Language Resource Center (LRC) Program has been abruptly discontinued after 35 years of work in world language education. As a result, many LRCs will be unable to

> carry out most of their activities planned for the fourth year of the current funding cycle (2025-2026). (NFLRC, n.d.)

Among the many federal funding cuts made by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in 2025, the Title VI Language Resource Centers lost their congressionally appointed funds.

Other language education related departments were cut by DOGE. The Department of Education (DOE) cut funding to research on grants associated with the terms diversity, equity, or inclusion (DEI), despite these funds having been previously appropriated by Congress. The current leadership at the U.S. DOE continues to dismantle national programs that have fostered DEI programs and equity oversite since the Civil Rights movement claiming to return power to states and local communities (U.S. DOE, 2025). Similarly, funding for the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 that funded language and cultural exchange programs for over 50 years was also cut in 2025, despite expert arguments against the closure (Ruffner, 2025). Additional funding freezes of language and culture programs, many of which have led to closure included

> …international education and exchange programs (Fulbright, Gilman, and IDEAS; professional exchanges like International Visitor Leadership Program and young leaders' initiatives; youth exchanges like YES, FLEX, and CBYX; virtual exchanges like Stevens Initiative; and more. (Ruffner, 2025, para. 5)

Despite the closure of many national language and culture programs, there is a 2025-2026 bill under review in Congress to provide grants for establishing or improving world language and DLI programs in the World LEAP Act (World Language Education Assistance Program) put forth by the House Committee on Education and Workforce to award grants to "establish and carry out new, or improve existing, world language or dual language programs" (Congress, 2025, summary para.).

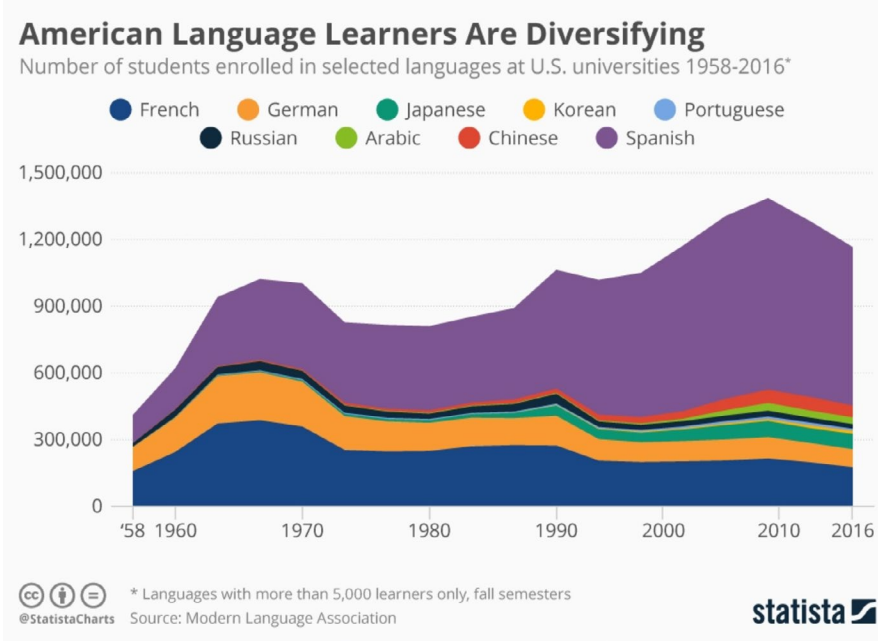
In the absence of national policy on world language instruction, ACTFL partnered with national and international language organizations to create the language proficiency guidelines (ACTFL, 1986, 1999, 2012, 2024), performance guidelines and descriptors (1998, 2015, 2024), and content standards (ACTFL, 1996, 1999, 2006). The most recent revision of the content standards, rebranded as the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (National Standards Board, 2015), continues to guide world language instruction at the national level. Centered around five goal areas—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities—the standards emphasize communicative competence and cultural understanding. These standards are adopted and/or adapted by many states for their world language frameworks for developing curricula and assessments.

Working with ACTFL, the National Council of State Supervisors for Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) is another professional network that advances policies and research-based practices. Together, the NCSSFL-ACTFL (n.d.) Can-Do Statements provide a framework of learning goals and targets for each proficiency levels outlined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2024). First originating in 1986, the Proficiency Guidelines have long provided a framework to assess a learner's proficiency by providing proficiency benchmarks, performance indicators, examples, and an

intercultural reflection tool. Today, the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (n.d.) describe what learners can do consistently in each of the communication modes—interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational—in numerous situations throughout the learning process. The Can-Do Statements help learners set goals and self-assess as they progress along the proficiency continuum.

Despite federal funding cuts and university falling enrollments in language learning, there are some noteworthy advances in the U.S. According to the American Councils Research Center (ARC) there is a growing number of DLI programs in the U.S., with over 3,600 programs reported in 2021 (American Councils, 2021). In addition, the Seal of Biliteracy (a nationally recognized language proficiency stamp on H.S. diplomas) is now offered to graduating students in all fifty states. Started in California in 2008, the Seal of Biliteracy is now awarded by a school, a district, or the state to recognize a student's demonstration of Intermediate-Mid or higher proficiency in two or more languages (often considered English plus another language). Lastly, there is an increase in the diversity of languages taught in U.S. universities, although Spanish remains the most prevalent world language studied. According to a Statista Report (Buchholz, 2019), there has been an increasing number of students studying Chinese, Korean, and Japanese from 1960 to 2016 (see Figure 2).

Fig. 2 *American languages learners are diversifying*



The recent Modern Language Association (MLA) Enrollment Report from 2021 indicates that Spanish and French remain the most common languages studied in U.S. institutions of higher education (Lusin et al., 2023). American Sign Language (ASL) still ranks in third, having displaced German's rank in 2013. Japanese ranks

fourth, German is fifth, and Chinese/Mandarin is now sixth (replacing Italian's former role). Overall, enrollments in languages other than English fell 16.6% in colleges and universities between the fall of 2016 and 2021. Of the fifteen most taught languages in the MLA Report, the only three to show enrollment gains were ASL (0.8%), Biblical Hebrew (9.1%), and Korean (38.3%).

Given the falling enrollment in U.S. post-secondary language study combined with the current Administration's funding attacks on DEI and Title VI funding ruptures, it seems world language study is under threat in the U.S. Furthermore, in September 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court of the United States issued an order (No. 25A169) that permits immigration agents to use language, specifically *the speaking of Spanish or English with an accent*, as a factor for reasonable suspicion, allowing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to stop and detain individuals in *Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo* (Supreme Court of the United States, 2025). This is an unprecedented interpretation of the Constitutional protections against racial profiling in the 14th Amendment, also known as the Equal Protection Clause, which prohibits the government from treating people differently based solely on race, religion, or ethnicity (U.S. Const. amend. 14, sec. 2). In an opposing statement to this order, Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote,

> We should not have to live in a country where the Government can seize anyone who looks Latino, speaks Spanish, and appears to work a low wage job. Rather than stand idly by while our constitutional freedoms are lost, I dissent. (Sotomayor, 2025, p. 12)

Despite current times in which speaking another language puts one's freedom in danger of detention, separation from one's family and disappearance in a mass deportation system that spares no mercy for children and pregnant women (Human Rights First, n.d.), world language education practices in Europe have some shared points of commonality and many differences from which the U.S. might seek inspiration, especially from the work on plurilingualism.

Common Points and Differences

The term plurilingual is not common in U.S. World Languages Education where the terms *bilingual* or *multilingual* are still favored. *Translanguaging* appears as a similar concept when defined as, "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential" (García, 2009, p. 140). As demonstrated here, the term *bilingual* is commonly used in the field of ESOL to indicate an individual speaking more than one language. U.S. world language educators commonly use the term *multilingualism* or other wording to recognize and encourage speaking multiple languages. Garrett-Rucks (2016) used the common U.S. term *multilingual* in her work, sharing Byram's (1997, 2021) understanding of intercultural competence to address real interactions and mixings of people across cultures. Overall, in the U.S. language education literature, the terms *bilingual* and *multilingual* remain more prevalent than the term *plurilingual.*

Like in Europe, the U.S. field of World Language Education has increased emphasis on fostering learners' intercultural competence, and both have long shifted

toward proficiency. The proficiency turn in world languages refers to a shift from grammar-based instruction *about* the language to focusing on what learners can do *with* the language in real-world situations. Proficiency-based instruction prioritizes communicative competence—speaking, writing, listening, and reading—over rote memorization. Language experts on both sides of the Atlantic emphasize fostering the learner's ability to effectively and respectfully communicate and interact with others from diverse backgrounds (Byram, 1997; Fantini, 1997).

Both Europe and the U.S. have expert entities providing similar guidelines with standardized, action-oriented frameworks for learning, teaching, and assessing language proficiency. Yet Pew reports that on average 92% of children in Europe study a foreign language in their education, compared to only 20% in the U.S. (Civinini, 2018). Clearly, historical, geographical, and societal contexts differ in the U.S. and Europe. Yet during this complex period in which U.S. plurilingual speakers need to be prepared to show evidence of U.S. citizenship to avoid detainment, it is pressing to investigate practices intended to foster acceptance of speakers of other languages. Educational practices intended to foster plurilingualism provide hope for preparing a more peaceful, multilingual world (Candelier & de Pietro, 2026).

Both the United States and the European Union are composed of diverse people, languages, and cultures representing differently across semi-autonomous regions (states or nations), each sharing a political partnership (country or supranational organization). Differing, the U.S. has a history of forced assimilation enshrined in the myth of the *melting pot*, in which people of different cultures were believed to come together and blend into one cohesive whole (Hurd, 2024). Yet this monocultural metaphor for a heterogenous society is problematic, especially given the structural power imbalances that centered Anglo cultural norms and English as the language of cohesion, empowering restrictive immigration practices and *English Only* movements.

Contrary to the use of monolingual, linguistic-restraining policy tactics, European nations have been negotiating language policy across nations and their speakers of diverse languages since the end of World War Two. Further evidence of European encouragement of plurilingualism is found in the *CEFR Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020) which introduced new descriptors for *plurilingual and pluricultural competence*, thereby advancing a rather integrative perspective on language learning and use. While commending the presence of plurilingualism in the 2020 *CEFR Companion Volume*, Rückl (2026) highlights the evolution beyond the former *CEFR* which "ultimately provided instruments for a 'measurement' of competences in single languages, it remained in an additive view of language learning and use" (p. 31).

Polzin-Haumann and Reissner (2026) note that language diversity and multilingual communication are not new, but increased human mobility and worldwide information exchanges have put plurilingualism and multilingualism at the center of European language and education policy since the 1990s. Rather than expanding linguistic diversity around this same time, the U.S. faced a growing *English Only* movement which may have planted seeds for intolerance in current anti-immigrant rhetoric. Yet today, many individuals communicate beyond national borders in digital spaces. This is precisely the type of space for which Polzin-

Haumann and Reissner (2026) describe meaningful uses of an *intercomprehension approach* and further claim the teaching and learning of plurilingual competence has become "a central research field, especially in recent decades" (p. 31).

The notion of teaching understanding across similar language families such as the Romance, Germanic, or Slavic languages through *intercomprehension* is quite foreign in the U.S. However, given Polzin-Haumann and Reissner's (2026) detailed descriptions of the EuroCom concept, projects, and links to instructional materials and practices in digital learning environments, intercomprehension practices are possible in the U.S. For example, the authors describe the digital EuroComCenter, where learners experience the intercomprehension approach and learn *optimized deduction* in practice. This type of real-world digital learning might be appealing to U.S. learners who are familiar with an appreciation of the *two for the price of one* mentality.

Candelier and de Pietro (2026) describe *Awakening to Languages* (AtL) as an asset-based approach early in plurilingual education that fosters students' metalinguistic awareness of languages in addition to recognizing and legitimizing languages and varieties of languages that some students may know to varying degrees. Perhaps the AtL gentle, identity-affirming introduction to language learning might provide a more positive learning environment than the U.S. *sink or swim* practice that encourages over 90% of target language use from the first day of class as suggested in the ACTFL position statement on target language use (ACTFL, 2010). AtL, also called *awareness of linguistic diversity* in some contexts, provides an inclusive approach to support the linguistic and cultural identity of speakers of other languages, such as the 20% of U.S. citizens who speak another language at home. Candelier and de Pietro (2026) provide convincing findings from the success of AtL classroom research projects and links to free online resources that draw from students' intercomprehension strategies and open students minds to linguistic diversity. As noted by the authors,

> Awakening to Languages is therefore less a question of arguing about languages (their beauty, their usefulness, etc.) than of getting students to work with several languages, exploring their diversity and their potential in terms of human creativity. (Candelier & de Pietro, 2026, p. 58)

Beyond language teaching, AtL helps foster students' willingness to share insights through activities that help them discover and better understand language, "including their relation to their own idiom(s) and those of their classmates" (p. 58) fostering linguistic empathy and encouraging acceptance of otherness.

Due to sociocultural and psychological factors, there are many reluctant language learners. Given the social acceptance of monolingualism in the U.S., combined with learner reluctance, the gentler European practices to beginning language learning might appeal to U.S. learners. Rückl (2026) provides insight into an innovative language learning curriculum designed for Austrian vocational students that might appeal to reluctant learners in the U.S. Rückl (2026) reports findings from a study on this new subject, *International Communication with Focus Language (InCo)*, which is a year-and-half long curriculum that emphasizes activating learners'

linguistic resources, incorporating real-life tasks, and using AI tools to enhance foreign language enjoyment and learner engagement. The emphasis in the InCo curriculum is on "cognitive activation and foreign language enjoyment with tasks that encourage learner reflection, knowledge transfer, and a sense of achievement" (p. 74). Rückl further describes the specific soft skills, or transversal competences, the InCo curriculum cultivates as "empathy, flexibility, resilience, critical thinking, problem-solving, self-management, teamwork, negotiation, openness to diverse perspectives, and foreign language specific digital literacy" (p. 72).

Given the short time frame that U.S. learners typically study foreign languages, averaging around two years if at all, the InCo-subject curriculum seems an approach worth exploring in the U.S. Garrett-Rucks (2016) has long argued for the need to foster learners' intercultural competence at beginning levels of world language instruction due to lack of continuation to advanced levels by the vast majority of U.S. learners. The positive student response to the year-and-half InCo curriculum reported by Rückl (2026), combined with evidence of the students' development of soft skills, particularly openness to diverse perspectives, warrants reason to explore the InCo curriculum in the U.S. context. Preparing learners to "interact with cultural competence and understanding" (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, para 2) is precisely the goal expressed in the U.S. Cultures Standards.

Similarly, Ollivier and Souprayen Cavery (2026) describe the great value in practices that help students develop a strong socio-interactional competence to prepare them "to make informed decisions about how to use their repertoire in specific communicative situations and interpersonal interactions" (p. 95). The authors propose a *Constrained Freelanguaging* approach that encourages the use of all language practices with an awareness of "the macrosocial and interpersonal communication constraints" and "the possibility to conform or to deviate from social rules, as well as the impact of these decisions" (Ollivier & Souprayen Cavery, 2026, p. 96). Given that 20% of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home, it is increasingly important to empower plurilingual speakers with a more peaceful language education. Candelier and de Pietro (2026) identify additional reasons to support plurilingual practices as follows.

> We are living in a time in history when some people tend to deny diversity in all its forms and impose a single way of describing the world (their way) and one single language (their own). This is precisely what makes [plurilingual practices] increasingly crucial. (p. 58)

Language teachers become the primary facilitators in this process of linguistic, cultural, and self-reflection in meaningful intercultural language learning.

As momentum builds toward bringing education for plurilingualism practices to the U.S., the Canadian Plurilingual Lab, a research laboratory based in the multilingual city of Montreal at McGill University, provides a road map to understanding plurilingual education. Galante and Xie (2026) report efforts to democratize knowledge about Plurilingual Education through the Plurilingual Lab and its website. The authors describe the Lab as "[g]rounded in principals of equity, diversity, inclusion, and decoloniality" with initiatives that "seek to advance and inform both plurilingual research and pedagogical practices" (p. 100). The

authors claim their motives for making resources openly accessible, as the Lab "helps democratize knowledge production and dissemination, extending its reach to communities that might otherwise lack access to such scholarship" and to advance efforts "positively impact social change and promote greater equity for linguistically marginalized communities" (p. 100).

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, the 2026 special issue of *Dimensions* on plurilingual language learning seeks to build a meaningful bridge between European and U.S. language education contexts. Its goal is to introduce and further disseminate European perspectives on plurilingualism and pluriculturalism within the United States. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence, as conceptualized in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and its *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2001; 2020), represents an essential capacity in today's global, interconnected, and digitalized world. Such competence fosters constructive coexistence among people of diverse linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds—because those who are able to communicate with one another are better equipped to live together.

Plurilingual Education contributes to the development of a diverse, democratic, and peaceful society and therefore deserves sustained attention across the Anglophone world, particularly in the United States. The *Dimensions* 2026 special issue offers both a conceptual framework and practical guidance, outlining instructional materials and pedagogical approaches that support plurilingual education. At the same time, further research is needed to examine how these practices and resources can be effectively adapted and implemented within U.S. educational settings.

At its core, Plurilingual Education promotes multifaceted communication and interaction among individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It encourages a positive, respectful, and open orientation toward others and toward the world. In doing so, it holds the potential to strengthen peaceful and constructive coexistence both within and across national and regional contexts.

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2

Intercomprehension in Theory and Practice: Teaching and Learning Plurilingual Competence in a European Context

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Abstract

Plurilingualism and multilingualism have long been central to human interaction. However, in the context of increasing global mobility, digital communication and ongoing migration, they have gained renewed importance. This article examines some aspects of language diversity and plurilingual teaching and learning in Europe. It situates current European language policies as pivotal in fostering plurilingual competence and intercultural understanding through education. The discussion foregrounds exemplarily the pluralistic theoretical and didactic model of intercomprehension, defining its core principles and summarizing central concepts. It highlights digital and social learning environments and shows the importance of the human factor for successful plurilingual education. In this way, the article addresses pressing issues in language education and the impact of language policy, as well as the role of (language) teaching practices in overcoming communication barriers and fostering relationships across languages and cultures. These topics are of great importance in both the European and American contexts and beyond for successful transcontinental communication and relationship building.

Keywords: *Intercomprehension, intercomprehension resources, plurilingualism, plurilingual practices, plurilingual resources, European language policy*

Multi- and Plurilingualism in Europe: History, Policies, Practices, Research. Introductory Remarks

Language diversity is a phenomenon that runs through human history, even though it is often portrayed as a characteristic feature of today's societies. Language contact and multilingual communication have, nevertheless, been defining features of human interaction for a very long time and in various historical, geographical and social contexts (see Pavlenko, 2023; Franceschini, Hüning, & Maitz, 2023). However,

international exchange and human mobility have changed significantly, especially in recent decades. Worldwide trade relations and information exchange via digital media shape global communication. Migration caused by war, economic factors or climate change, leads to new contact situations (languages, peoples, cultures) and impacts national, regional and local contexts. Multilingualism and multiculturalism are therefore, more than ever, an integral part of everyday life. While these phenomena apply in principle to all societies, each respective circumstance is, of course, influenced by time, space and socio-political conditions. In this article, we focus on the European context and discuss experiences and findings within this specific linguistic landscape (Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025).

What is specific to the European context is its political commitment to the phenomena addressed in this paper. Since the 1990s, languages, language learning, multi- and plurilingualism (i.e., languages on the societal level and languages at the level of individual speakers, cf. Polzin-Haumann, 2025) have been at the center of language and education policy efforts by various European stakeholders. For instance, the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (cf. https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages; https://rm.coe.int/1680695175 for the text), adopted in 1992 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and entered into force in 1998, is a convention for the protection and promotion of languages used by traditional minorities. Regional or minority languages are considered as parts of Europe's cultural heritage; their protection and promotion contribute to the building of a Europe based on democracy and cultural diversity.

Although the social aspect (*multilingualism*) is at the forefront of the Charter, there are many other key documents that address individual plurilingual competences as foundational for the path towards mutual understanding and comprehension among Europeans. First, the *Common European Framework of Reference* understands plurilingualism as a single, comprehensive communicative competence (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001). The framework programmatically defines:

> […] the plurilingual approach emphasizes the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor. (CEFR, 2001, chapter 1.3)

The aim of this document was to make language acquisition, language use and language competence transparent and comparable for learners and educators by formulating different levels of competence. Gradually, it became the basis for the development of curricula, guidelines, textbooks and qualifications in European language work. While the CEFR ultimately provided instruments for a *measurement*

of competences in single languages, it remained in an additive view of language learning and use. The *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020) introduced new descriptors for, among other things, "plurilingual competence" and "pluricultural competence," thereby advancing a rather integrative perspective on language learning and use.

Another important document entirely dedicated to this integrative perspective is the *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA; Candelier et al., 2012). The term *pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures* refers to didactic approaches which use teaching and learning activities involving several (i.e. more than one) varieties of languages or cultures (https://carap.ecml.at/en/). The framework covers the didactic approaches of awakening to languages, intercomprehension between related languages, the intercultural approach and the integrated didactic approach, all of them fostering plurilingualism and/or -culturalism in their own right (ibid.).

The importance of multi- and plurilingualism and the need to promote them, is beyond question. European language policies are, as shown, generally conducive to fostering multi- and plurilingualism and have gradually been integrated into curricula and syllabuses, as well as into the classrooms. However, the extent of integration varies greatly from country to country and region to region. Overall, multi- and plurilingualism, and especially the teaching and learning of plurilingual competence, has become a central research field, especially in recent decades. Contributing to this growing momentum, the focus of this article is on the intercomprehension approach in theory and practice, highlighting two aspects extremely important in today's world: individual learning in the digital space and social learning in the school community, along with the respective associated questions of knowledge transfer. Overall, we will outline the ways in which the human factor is a conditio sine qua non [an indispensable condition] for plurilingual learning and teaching.

Intercomprehension **in Theory**

Within the plurilingualism research landscape, *intercomprehension* is a pivotal concept. This section first provides the theoretical underpinnings of intercomprehension, defining its core principles and summarizing central concepts prior to introducing the widely used *EuroCom-approach*.

Defining Intercomprehension: Key Concepts and Principles

Intercomprehension is a multifaceted concept that can be understood from various perspectives, ranging from a natural phenomenon and practice of multilingual communication to an instructional approach for language acquisition (Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025). At its core, intercomprehension refers to the ability of speakers of closely related languages to understand each other without having explicitly learnt the other's language(s). Following this perspective, intercomprehension is a natural, spontaneous practice within plurilingual communication activities that allows speakers to co-construct meaning (Capucho, 2018). This phenomenon exploits the shared or similar linguistic features of the involved languages, e.g. lexical phenomena or grammatical structures, to facilitate mutual understanding.

Based on this principle, intercomprehension can be developed into a methodology and approach for learning and teaching foreign languages, by systematically familiarizing learners with the relevant linguistic foundations and the techniques and strategies to be applied (Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2020; 2026). *Intercomprehension didactics* is the most widely used plurilingual teaching concept in Germany, and the subject of the largest number of empirical studies conducted in the field to date (Bredthauer, 2018). It has been elaborated intensively for the family of the Romance languages—e.g., French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese—(cf. e.g. Meißner, 2004; 2010; Meißner & Senger, 2001), as well as for the Germanic language group—e.g., German, English, Dutch, Swedish—(Hufeisen & Neuner, 2005; Hufeisen & Marx, 2014). Recent studies also include other languages, e.g., native/family languages, but otherwise remain in line with the fundamental principles of Intercomprehension didactics (see Korb (2024) for a very comprehensive study with a longitudinal perspective).

Cognitive Processes in Intercomprehension

Intercomprehension involves a range of cognitive activities focused on developing strategic competences. It can be trained and further developed by raising awareness about strategies for recognizing linguistic structures, e.g., the meaning of single words, phrases or even complete sentences (Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025), as well as—on a meta-level—awareness about how these strategies work in one's own learning process. Put in a somewhat simplified way, the first case is referred to as *language awareness*, and the latter as *language learning awareness* (Bär, 2009). Both concepts involve complex (meta-)cognitive, psychological, and emotional processes that have not yet been fully researched.

Many researchers concur that the key element for successful intercomprehension is transfer (e.g., Doyé, 2003; Meißner, 2004). Transfer can take place on different levels and in many different forms (Reissner, 2007). Bär (2009) presents a typology that is helpful in determining the transfer process more precisely. It distinguishes between the type, the direction, the scope, the domain and the category, each with several subcategories. At the metacognitive level, Meißner & Senger (2001) speak of a transfer of learning experiences. "Thus, the transfer-based approach mobilizes both declarative and procedural transfer resources" (Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025, p. 438).

It should be emphasized that intercomprehension is not merely the passive reception of language, but rather an active and highly dynamic process that draws on many transfer resources and takes place on many different levels. Cognitive strategies such as inferencing and hypothesis testing (for an example, cf. Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2020), strategic application of both linguistic knowledge and transferable elements from one's own linguistic repertoire and world knowledge, including situational and pragmatic elements (Doyé, 2005, p. 14; Reissner & Penth, 2023), make it a highly complex process that is difficult to fully assess for the development of learning scenarios due to its many interconnected factors. Descriptors for the assessment of intercomprehension competence have been developed within the European project EVAL-IC (cf. www.evalic.eu).

In summary, intercomprehension contributes to the development of diverse,

interacting skills that often cannot be clearly distinguished from one another. The same applies to the resources and references that learners activate in a highly individual manner when working according to the intercomprehension principles. The next section will elaborate on what has been outlined so far by presenting a concrete intercomprehension concept, based on the Romance languages' linguistic transfer inventories.

The EuroCom Concept

The EuroCom concept was initially developed for the Romance language family, with the work *EuroComRom – Die sieben Siebe: Romanische Sprachen sofort lesen können*, published in 2000 (for the English version see McCann, Klein & Stegmann, 2002). Subsequently, it has been extended to the two other major European language groups, the Germanic and the Slavic languages. EuroCom axiomatizes findings on cross-linguistic phenomena from various disciplines, applying a transversal perspective across language families (Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025, p. 438).

The EuroCom approach is primarily concerned with the receptive dimension of communication, focusing on written and oral comprehension. It aims to build solid foundations in reading comprehension, which then can serve as a basis for developing further competencies (Reissner & Penth, 2023). The overarching goal of EuroCom is to foster plurilingual competence by systematically building bridges across linguistic boundaries, encouraging learners to use their prior knowledge on all levels (cf. supra) and reflect on their own languages and their (language) learning strategies as well as on the role of languages and plurilingualism in general (Reissner & Penth, 2023).

A cornerstone of the EuroCom approach is the framework of the *Seven Sieves,* a compilation of declarative linguistic resources, categorized according to practical application aspects for language comprehension and learning, providing the basis for inter-lingual transfer. They encompass lexical, grammatical, morphological, morpho-syntactical and syntactical, as well as graphic and phonic correspondences (for a more detailed description see Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025). *Inter-lingual* refers to transfer within languages of the same language family. Nevertheless, experience shows that inference techniques can also extend beyond individual language families. The important point is to familiarize learners with skills and strategies for dealing with linguistic elements that are unknown or perceived as foreign (Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2018).

In sum, the *Seven Sieves* can be understood as a toolkit for optimized inference, enabling learners to infer meaning and structure within and across the whole Romance language family. The transfer may range from a word or a suffix to entire texts in previously *unknown* languages (Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2020) and permits the construction of meaning, and thus the understanding of the text or statement in question. What does this mean in practice for multilingual (language) learning? The following sections will address this issue by examining two selected examples.

Intercomprehension in Practice

The Virtual EuroComCenter: Fostering Autonomous Plurilingual Learning and Knowledge Transfer in a Digital Environment

The virtual EuroComCenter (www.eurocom.uni-saarland.de), currently available in German and planned to be fully accessible at the beginning of 2026 for Anglophone and Francophone users, emerges as a freely accessible digital learning environment, combining a training and learning portal with comprehensive digital information. Its core mission is to promote European multi- and plurilingualism through innovative, autonomous learning experiences designed to maximize the users' individual linguistic repertoires and to work on their attitudes towards languages and language learning.

The EuroComCenter facilitates a dynamic interplay between theory and practice. The platform not only explicitly addresses the mechanisms of interlingual transfer of knowledge and skills, but at the same time offers interactive opportunities to gather first experiences with the concept by means of interactive tasks, including the specific inventories encompassing the whole Romance language's family (Reissner & Penth, 2023). Users are independently experiencing how the approach works and understand what optimized deduction, the central transfer-based intercomprehension strategy underlying the EuroCom-concept, means in practice (https://www.eurocom.uni-saarland.de/basiswissen/das-optimierte-erschliessen/). As a central element, users are introduced to the toolkit of the linguistic transfer inventories of the Seven Sieves (https://www.eurocom.uni-saarland.de/7-siebe/; cf. supra).

Each of the *Seven Sieves* is accompanied by a training room where the learners can work with several Romance languages. The aim is to understand the underlying theoretical contents explained (e.g., grapho-phonic correspondences) by discovering them in practice. There are various task formats: preparatory tasks facilitate familiarization with the texts and topics before the actual reading, tasks accompanying the texts support the concrete exploration work, and at the end, users can test what they have learned and if their understanding was correct. Finally, reflection tasks improve retention and optimize the learning process; by means of a learning log, learners can train autonomous learning skills and evaluate their learning progress effectively (https://www.eurocom.uni-saarland.de/basiswissen/logbuch/).

The design of the EuroComCenter is built upon several pillars, including methodological chapters that articulate the research background underpinning its digital content. These chapters, informed by established research, explain key concepts such as learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, language awareness and others (https://www.eurocom.uni-saarland.de/basiswissen/). The platform further encourages learners to deepen their theoretical understanding through a commented bibliography that summarizes relevant research, as well as a glossary that provides accessible explanations for technical terms. In line with contemporary research in intercomprehension and pluri-/multilingualism, the EuroComCenter also digitally presents insights into multilingual school projects and offers field-tested teaching materials (https://www.eurocom.uni-saarland.de/schulprojekte/

materialsammlung/; see also Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2020).

Serving as a digital gateway to the intercomprehension concept and the diverse activities at Saarland University, the EuroComCenter offers resources for both scientific research and the practical application of autonomous plurilingual learning in a digital setting. It targets a wide audience of learners of all ages and levels – from individuals aspiring to acquire reading skills in multiple languages simultaneously to those engaged with intercomprehension from theoretical or applied perspectives (e.g., language teachers). The platform's design adheres to modern cognitive principles, employing a concise visual interface and intuitive graphic elements that streamline navigation and conceptually reinforce the presented content.

In addition to appealing to a wide range of target audiences, digital learning environments also allow for flexibility in terms of the individual learning path taken. Thus, the EuroComCenter supports the principles of autonomous and independent learning. Users are granted complete freedom to navigate the content at their own pace, unbound by a fixed progression. This empowers users to decide the order in which they wish to engage with subject areas or learning units, thereby personalizing their learning path. While offering this flexibility, the platform also provides concrete instructions for users who prefer more guidance, ensuring they have a clear path through the content. Doing so, the digital environment actively supports self-defined learning paths, promoting the learners' autonomy. The digital logbook allows users to systematically review and reflect on their personal learning strategies and progress, conceptualizing their learning path through the proposed material as a reflective travel diary (cf. Korb, Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025).

Plurilingual Learning in the Classroom

The aforementioned principles of multi-/plurilingual language learning raise various questions: What do they mean for institutional language learning? In how far could these principles be combined with *traditional* approaches? To do so, teachers should be familiarized with them, but how can this knowledge transfer be implemented?

Empirical studies on the effectiveness and conditions for success of multi-/plurilingual language teaching and learning are still required. To date, there are few empirically based concepts for integrating multilingual teaching into the training and continuing education of language teachers in order to prepare them to incorporate the multilingual resources of their students into their teaching (see Korb, 2024). In this section, we will examine several aspects of these questions referring to examples anchored in the German-French border region, in Saarland, Germany, where scientific scenarios of multi-/plurilingual learning and teaching have been developed, piloted, tested and evaluated for over 20 years.

Since 2009, students in different French and Spanish BA- and MA-programs in the department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Saarland University are introduced to the theoretical framework of the pluralistic approaches and particularly to intercomprehension. They are familiarized with the *Seven Sieves* and learn how to apply them in order to develop their receptive competences in the Romance language family. A particular format has been introduced for initial language teacher training: courses that include school projects on European multilingualism

and plurilingual education, with a focus on Romance languages. In these projects, theory (intercomprehension, the transfer inventories of the *Seven Sieves*, principles of plurilingual learning, etc.) and teaching practice are directly linked.

Students are first familiarized with the theoretical backgrounds of plurilingualism and plurilingual education; in a second step, they develop and realize their own plurilingual teaching activity in selected project schools. The activities are critically monitored and afterwards scientifically evaluated. From the students' point of view, these activities encourage them to perceive and utilize their individual linguistic and cultural resources. Doing so, they learn to comprehend ostensibly unfamiliar languages and foster their critical reflection on language(s) and language learning. The in-service teachers of the respective classes are also involved. Thus, we can observe knowledge transfer on three levels here: first, through students transforming what they have learned in theory into practical scenarios, second, through bringing in-service teachers in contact with *new* ways of teaching in their usual working environment, and third, the exchange between university and schools, i.e., between academia and daily places of learning. The successful integration of the multi- and plurilingual approaches into classroom settings directly addresses the desiderata mentioned above.

To consolidate and expand these activities and to systematically foster plurilingual teacher training, by building on the rich experience gained until then, the Institute for Languages and Plurilingualism (ISM) with a Teaching-Learning-Laboratory (Lehr-Lern-Atelier, LLA) was funded at Saarland University in 2017. The LLA is conceived as a research and meeting space and engages diverse audiences, including pupils, pre-service and in-service teachers, and researchers across various language-related disciplines (e.g., STEM-subjects) and nationalities. The activities include university courses, school projects, seminars and workshops on multi-/plurilingualism, plurilingual language learning and teaching, and concepts derived from multi- and plurilingual research and methodology (cf. Knopf et al., 2025).

The ISM is dedicated to theory-practice transfer in many different formats. This is facilitated by close collaborations with regional scientific and educational partners, ensuring a robust integration of research and practice throughout the educational continuum. The LLA's operational model also involves regular partnerships with numerous primary, secondary, and vocational schools within Saarland. Beyond regional schools, collaborations extend to learning laboratories in other disciplines, political stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Saarland State Chancellery, and teacher training institutions (e.g., INSPÉ in Sarreguemines/France) in the so-called Greater Region, a border region in the heart of Europe formed by parts of Germany, France, Luxembourg and Belgium (https://www.granderegion.net/en/) (for more details, see Korb, Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025, pp. 473–477).

The geographical closeness of the French language (official language in Lorraine/France, Luxembourg and Belgium) explains the role of French in the developed multi-/plurilingualism scenarios; at the same time, the educational efforts are embedded in an unquestionably authentic multilingual reality. Although the activities of the LLA also include training on how to promote linguistic and cultural diversity with digital media, the focus is on multi- and plurilingualism, (foreign)

language teaching and learning, and the methodology of neighboring languages and border regions, reflecting its commitment to a contextualized plurilingual education in a given multilingual space (see Knopf et al., 2025; Korb, Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2025, p. 476).

Synthesis and Outlook

The aforementioned examples illustrate the potential of the intercomprehension approach for multilingual learning in both digital environments and concrete multilingual spaces with their historically, politically, socioculturally, and economically shaped linguistic landscapes and specific profiles and requirements for teaching, learning, and languages. However, the approach also has further potential, in that it affects learning *as a whole*. Transferring prior knowledge to new situations, moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar, combined with inference strategies, exploration, and hypothesis formation, are fundamental cognitive processes that are beneficial not only for language learning but for learning processes in general. Experience shows that recognizing familiar elements in unfamiliar languages has a significant impact on language learning motivation. Success in understanding presumed unknown languages promotes self-confidence and trust in one's own abilities and leads to a positive attitude toward future language learning processes (Korb, 2024; Polzin-Haumann & Reissner, 2018). By analogy with the above conclusion, these findings should also apply to fields other than languages.

Whether learning individually in a digital space or learning in a community, in both cases the focus is on important human characteristics. The intercultural, affective, and emotional components cannot be captured in automatic translation or other AI-generated services. Sooner or later, language learning processes are linked to social and cultural encounters and learning processes. Plurilingual communication and intercultural communication are closely related. In this sense, by affecting the way somebody deals with linguistic (and cultural) foreignness and otherness, the intercomprehension concept contains important transversal elements (*soft skills* or *transferable skills*) for lifelong learning.

Looking at language learning from a broader perspective, it is at the core of all learning. Therefore, it is an overarching, transversal educational task. It is particularly important to consider the pluralistic realities of our time and their importance for social cohesion and peaceful neighborhood relations. Over the past years, a variety of approaches have been developed including comprehensive, holistic concepts for dealing with and promoting plurilingualism. Of particular note are the works on the comprehensive language curriculum, *Gesamtsprachencurriculum* [*Integrated Language Curriculum*] (Hufeisen, 2011), and the multilingualism curriculum, *Curriculum Mehrsprachigkeit* [Multilingual Curriculum] (Krumm & Reich, 2013). The intercomprehension approach integrates into these holistic concepts completely, as it is aimed at the systematic cross-linking and networking of language knowledge and language skills. Unfortunately, however, the sustainable implementation of such comprehensive models is still the exception in the European educational systems, to date.

Overall, teaching plurilingual and intercultural skills is essential, particularly in today's world. Living together in peace in Europe and beyond can only be

achieved by developing and teaching strategies for overcoming foreignness and misunderstandings. There is no question of the importance of anchoring both aspects more firmly than before in foreign language teaching. As demonstrated, cross-linguistic work based on the concept of intercomprehension can contribute significantly to this development, by introducing new principles and skills into foreign language teaching. For this, the human factor will continue to play a decisive role in language teaching and learning.

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3

Awakening to Languages: Preparing a Peaceful Multilingual World

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Abstract

Awakening to Languages (AtL) is a teaching approach that proposes multilingual activities and accompanies language teaching to foster the learners' awareness of and openness to multilingualism, while increasing their reflexive metalinguistic abilities. In this article, we describe ATL as a component of Didactics of Plurilingualism (DP) and its main aims and characteristics which will be illustrated through multiple examples of activities and teaching materials. We further discuss the reported effects of AtL on learners, teachers, and parents, followed by current trends in integrating AtL in schools. We then turn to a comparison of core concepts of AtL and DP to Translanguaging, noting a lack of the abundance of European research findings and teaching resources that might expand understandings of Translanguaging. The shared goal to highlight and promote all aspects of students' linguistic repertoire is noted across examples of practices. We conclude arguing the importance of AtL instruction to prepare learners for a more peaceful multicultural world.

Keywords: *Awakening to Languages, Didactics of Plurilingualism, multilingualism, openness to diversity, translanguaging.*

A First Glimpse into Awakening to Languages: The Language Flower

The school year has just begun. In this highly multicultural class in a French-speaking region, the pupils, aged 10-11, know virtually nothing about the linguistic background of their new classmates. The teacher suggests an activity that will help them to become acquainted and discover the languages that some of their classmates know. The teacher begins by asking pupils if they know anyone who speaks several languages, if they know what to call these people, etc. He or she introduces the terms *monolingual*, *bilingual*, *plurilingual*, *polyglot* and has the pupils look up the definitions in dictionaries, then asks volunteers what languages they speak, how they learned them, where they use them, etc. The teacher then distributes an *interview guide* with similar questions for pairs of students to tell each other their linguistic life story.

A class discussion follows, focusing on these languages and others they would

like to learn. Finally, the pupils write down the languages they know on separate petals of a flower. In this way, all the petals created by the pupils form a flower of languages, which is displayed and kept visible in the classroom throughout the year. Beyond the students' individual experience, this flower makes the plural linguistic knowledge shared by the class visible!

This example is a simplified version of a lesson (see FREPA website / Teaching and learning materials) adapted here to show a first example of an activity falling within the scope of Awakening to Languages (AtL). It is modest and brief, but very useful in creating an environment conducive to recognizing and acknowledging the multilingualism of the class by awakening students to the diversity of languages that are present in different ways (as for their use, the knowledge about them, the attitudes they induce). There are many, diverse AtL activities, covering a number of topics and objectives beyond the first example, several shared below.

Introduction

Awakening to Languages represents one of the teaching approaches currently used, particularly in Europe, to accompany language teaching and to promote the development of competences for living in an increasingly multilingual environment while managing one's own linguistic repertoire and openness to otherness. This approach, which was initially developed in Great Britain but seems to be largely unknown in many parts of the English-speaking world, appears to us both as important from an educational point of view and as necessary in terms of living together.

In this article, which aims to introduce AtL to a wider English-speaking audience, we will first present AtL as a component of what is called *Didactics of Plurilingualism* (Section 1). We will then trace back its emergence and early developments (Section 2), before delving deeper into its main aims and characteristics, which we will illustrate with some examples of teaching materials (Section 3). This will lead us to the question of the observed effects of AtL on learners, teachers and parents (Section 4). After having reported on the dissemination of AtL (Section 5) and some current trends aimed at integrating AtL into other school and extracurricular activities (Section 6), we will conclude by returning to the question of the potential contribution of AtL for the intended target audience. Before we start, it's useful to mention that we are using the European distinction between "plurilingualism as a speaker's competence (being able to use more than one language) and multilingualism as the presence of languages in a given territory" (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p. 8).

Awakening to Languages : A component of Didactics of Plurilingualism

Didactics of Plurilingualism (DP) emerged in Europe in the 1980s in connection with social developments such as a growing mobility of populations, migratory flows, and demands for minority language rights. This development is also linked to a growing awareness of the importance of plurilingualism as opposed to a prevailing monolingual linguistic ideology. The linguistic configuration of the European Union (which now has 27 member countries and 24 official languages) and its economic and political construction have undoubtedly played a catalytic role

in the development of a European concept of plurilingualism, clearly highlighted in the activities of the Council of Europe, a larger institution with 46 members (The Council of Europe and the European Union).

The founding of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in 1994, as well as the publication of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) in 2001 and of the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* in 2003 (Beacco, & Byram, 2003) illustrate this commitment to plurilingualism. The CEFR supports this development by defining plurilingual and pluricultural competence as

> […] the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 168)

This conception has taken advantage of research work done by psycholinguists and sociolinguists such as Grosjean, 1985; Lüdi & Py, 2003, and Herdina & Jessner, 2002 (for others, see Candelier & De Pietro, 2025).

In many European languages, terms like *didactic* can be commonly used as nouns and have been chosen in the former century to designate an autonomous scientific discipline, taking into account the various components of teaching and learning in terms of objectives, contents and processes in various contexts (Candelier & De Pietro, 2025). Didactics of plurilingualism (DP) is the discipline that aims to facilitate the development of plurilingualism, conceived as a competence of speakers. Most uses of DP seem to correspond, approximately, to those of *multilingual teaching and learning* in many English-speaking publications.

As indicated in Candelier & De Pietro (2025), we consider the following statement by Fonseca & Gajo (2016, p. 1483) as a first approach to the current understanding of didactics of plurilingualism: "Il s'agit […] de travailler à partir de plusieurs langues, en direction de plusieurs langues ou, plus généralement, avec plusieurs langues" [It is about [...] starting from several languages, towards several languages or, more generally, with several languages]. Accordingly, DP is characterized by three key features: (1) it is teaching work that draws on more than one language; (2) this teaching work benefits any language (or variety of language) involved, regardless of its school or social status; (3) languages are not the only subjects that benefit from this work, as it proves useful to draw on all available linguistic resources when getting learners to build their knowledge in any subject (biology, mathematics, history, etc.) (De Pietro, 2003).

Most researchers in the field of DP view it as a key tool for implementing the *Plurilingual Education* promoted by the Council of Europe. In the *Guide for the development of Language education policies in Europe* published in 2003, the authors state that plurilingual education embraces "enhancing and developing speakers' individual linguistic repertoires" (*Education for Plurilingualism*) and fostering "plurilingual awareness […] refer[ring] to education, not necessarily limited to

language education, whose purpose is to educate for linguistic tolerance, raise awareness of linguistic diversity and educate for democratic citizenship" (*Education for Fostering Plurilingual Awareness*) (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p. 16).

Looking at the various expected effects of DP and/or the various teaching approaches that claim to be based on it, several contributors have suggested distinguishing between two facets which broadly refer to the same distinction (Beacco, 2020; Candelier & De Pietro, 2025; Cavalli, 2008; Gajo, 2006). Even if there is no perfect match between the teaching objectives referred to by the various terms used by each author, one of the two facets converges toward a single concept, that of language learning as supported by a teaching approach involving more than one language. The other facet covers a much less unitary field, more broadly related to general education. In our words, and as a general formulation of the goals of Didactics of plurilingualism, this didactics "intends to equip learners in order to prepare them to manage and enrich the plurality of their repertoire [facet one] and helps them better understand (and accept) what living in a multilingual world implies in terms of attitudes, representations and language practices [facet two]" (Candelier & de Pietro, 2025, p. 320).

AtL is a part of the Didactics of plurilingualism that falls mainly within the scope of facet two. It is one of the approaches brought together in the early 2000s under the umbrella concept *Pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures* (PA) (Candelier 2008), alongside the *Integrated didactic approach to languages* (Candelier & Manno, 2023), an approach comparable to Cummin's *Teaching for transfer* (Cummins, 2008) but not limited to bilingual education, the *Teaching of intercomprehension between related languages* (Strasser & Reisner, 2022) and *Intercultural education* (see Candelier & Manno, 2023). Pluralistic Approaches to languages and cultures are defined as approaches that use teaching/learning activities involving several (i.e., more than one) varieties of languages or cultures." They differ from usual language teaching approaches, which deal with each language in isolation and can therefore be regarded as "singular approaches" (Candelier et al., 2012, p. 6).

PA and DP are by no way distinct didactic bodies; the didactic area that PA seeks to delineate through its definition is seen as covering the same didactic practices as those that fall within the field of DP. The concept of PA is a proposal for structuring and better understanding the DP by pointing out the specific aims that identify the various approaches that make it up and had been never clearly distinguished from one another before (Candelier et al., 2012; Candelier & De Pietro, 2025). Among these approaches, ATL is characterized

- by the fact that it directly addresses linguistic and cultural diversity, in particular by having students work on/with a (large) number of languages (including the local language(s), other language(s) taught at school, languages spoken by the students, etc.);
- by the importance it gives to (often metalinguistic) analysis and reflection;
- by the fact that its ambition is not to proceed with the learning of a particular target language, but to prepare, support, and accompany this learning.

The following section provides a deeper understanding of the specificity of

AtL, by situating it in a wider knowledge of its history, aims, specific features and potential benefits.

Awakening to Languages: Emergence and early developments

The origins of what we call AtL today clearly lie in the *Language Awareness* approach that first emerged in Great Britain under the decisive impetus of E. Hawkins (Hawkins, 1987; see also Donmall, 1985, and James & Garrett, 1991). Starting from a threefold concern about (1) the integration difficulties and frequent academic underachievement of students with migrant backgrounds; (2) the difficulties of English-speaking students in learning foreign languages; and (3) the difficulties of a significant number of students in their language of schooling, namely English, Hawkins proposed a different and complementary way of approaching language education, emphasizing competences such as observing, analyzing and comparing, applied to materials from many various languages. As we can see, these are elements that have been taken up by AtL (focus on linguistic and cultural diversity, working with several languages, emphasis on analysis and reflection, metalinguistic dimension). Hawkins and his team have published a series of booklets with activities covering areas as diverse as communication (discovering the particularities of human language), the diversity and evolution of languages (language families, loanwords), how language works (rules and functions that can be observed in various languages), how language is used (social and geographical varieties, etc.), spoken and written language (as well as different writing systems), language learning, etc. (Hawkins, 1987; Morwood & Warman, 1991).

Since the 1990s, similar approaches have been developed in other European countries, often under different names: in Germany (Begegnung mit Sprache: Haenisch & Thürmann, 1994), Austria (Kinder entdecken Sprachen: Kerschbaumer, 1998), Italy (Educazione plurilinguistica: Balboni, 1994), France (Éveil au langage / Éveil aux langues: Dabène 1995; Moore 1995), Switzerland (Babylonia 2, 1999), etc. In some countries, they have given rise to large-scale projects such as EOLE (Perregaux et al., 2003) and Evlang (Candelier, 2003).

The Evlang project, carried out at the turn of the millennium, has been particularly helpful in linking the various projects launched in various places. Conducted as part of the European Community's SOCRATES program, it brought together teams of researchers and educators from Austria, France (metropolitan France and Réunion Island), Spain, Italy, and Switzerland. It consisted in developing teaching materials for the final years of primary school and, above all, in testing and evaluating a one- to one-and-a-half-year AtL curriculum based on these materials in more than 100 classes in the various countries mentioned (Candelier 2003).

As we will see when considering the place of such approaches in some national or regional curricula (see section 5), AtL—again under different names and taking partly different forms depending on the languages concerned and the wider context —is now quite widespread in Europe but also in Canada (ELODIL – Éveil au langage et ouverture à la diversité linguistique; Dagenais & Armand, 2003-2005) and, to a lesser extent, in a few other countries.

It should be noted, however, that in some cases, activities presented as language awareness fall more broadly under the DP or even bilingual education. It should

also be pointed out that, somewhat paradoxically, the educational approach initially proposed by Hawkins under the name *language awareness* has often evolved into a more psycholinguistic direction, which differs from the didactic perspective we are adopting here; this is one of the reasons that led to the introduction of the term *Awakening to Languages*.

Aims and characteristics of AtL illustrated by examples of teaching materials

As already mentioned in the Introduction, a wide range of teaching materials have been developed for AtL and are available in various educational contexts. These materials have in common that they get students working on several (varieties of) languages (including the local language(s), the other language(s) taught at school, the languages spoken by the students, etc.). They are generally of limited duration, so as not to overload the curriculum, and are usually rooted in active, (socio) constructivist pedagogy, which assumes that students build their knowledge and skills by manipulating multilingual materials and interacting with one another. The Evlang materials, for instance, were designed along these lines and were subject to quality criteria (usefulness, feasibility, relevance to the sociolinguistic context, topics likely to interest students). The materials systematically included a task contextualization phase, a research phase, and a synthesis phase, which formulated the learning that had taken place and its significance in terms of educational aims.

Today, various websites provide direct access to materials for AtL activities, in particular:

- the FREPA website (carap.ecml.at > Materials) offers a database of approximately 150 teaching materials covering the various PA for all education contexts;
- the EOLE website (EOLE - Education et ouverture aux langues à l'école), in Switzerland, which offers more than 50 materials for preschool and elementary school levels;
- the ELODIL website (ELODIL - Éveil au langage et ouverture à la diversité linguistique), in Canada (Québec), with materials covering preschool, elementary and secondary education;
- the PE-LAL website (Plurilingual Education – Students' Language Awareness across educational Levels) in Denmark, which also covers all school levels.

The FREPA website, set up at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), covers not only AtL but all PA (the same applies to the Danish website). Its teaching materials database specifies for each material the approach(es) addressed and also allows users to access materials by selecting them according to various criteria: type of approach, educational level, theme, objectives, language(s) of teacher's materials, language(s) of student's materials.

An example activity chosen when selecting "AtL" as an approach and "English" for the teacher's and students' documents, is an activity called *From the wisdom of European peoples*. Created by a Romanian team during an ECML Training and Consultancy Event (see Section 5), the activity focuses on discovering and analyzing proverbs in different languages. Subsequent information associated with this activity (see FREPA website / Teaching and learning materials) include:

- a summary: "The project starts with animal names in different languages and expressions using these names, comparing how they are used in typical expressions. Then students have to try to explain other expressions in Italian, English, French… A famous painting by the Dutch painter Brueghel that depicts many proverbs is used as a starting point to ask students to draw a picture representing a Romanian proverb, Romanian being their language of schooling;"
- the themes covered (animals, arts/heritage, proverbs), the source, the PA involved (e.g. Intercultural approach, AtL), the educational level (ISCED 2), the supporting material (texts, images), the languages involved (French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), the language of the teacher's documents (English) and of the student's documents (English);
- links giving access to the teacher and student documents; and
- a list of what (Knowledge (K), Attitudes (A) and Skills (S)) the material helps to develop (see the descriptors below, Figure 1):

Figure 1 *FREPA Activity Descriptors*

K 6.2.1 Knows that the particular way in which each language expresses/ "organises" the world is influenced by culture.	**K 13.2.2** Knows some resemblances/ differences between social practice/customs/ values/means of expression among different cultures.	**A 3.2** Curiosity about discovering how (one's own/other) language(s)/ culture(s) work(s).	**A 5.3** Openness to languages/ cultures.
A 7.5.1 Motivation for the observation and analysis of more or less unfamiliar linguistic/cultural phenomena.	**S 3.1.2** Can formulate hypotheses about linguistic or cultural proximity/ distance.	**S 3.4.2** Can perceive indirect lexical proximity [using proximity between terms of the same family of words in one of the languages involved].	**S 3.10.3** Can compare meanings/ connotations corresponding to cultural features {a comparison of the concept of time ...}.
S 7.3.1 Can profit from previous intercultural experiences to enrich his/ her intercultural competence.			

These descriptors of activities are a key component of the tools offered by the FREPA website to support learning with PA.

As a general outline of what AtL activities can target, we would like to present four orientations that, while not exclusive, seem particularly crucial for this approach (further examples for each of these orientations can be found in the aforementioned teaching material websites and sources):

- activities aimed at discovering, acknowledging and increasing one's knowledge of linguistic diversity (and the cultural diversity it conveys);
- activities that focus on the linguistic dimensions of students' identity built through awareness and legitimization of their language knowledge and practices;
- activities aimed at developing students' reflective and metalinguistic abilities: observing, analyzing, comparing, discriminating (when listening to unknown languages, for example), that are useful and beneficial to language learning, including that of the language of schooling;
- activities aimed at bringing plurilingual practices into play.

Other ways of promoting the discovery of diversity and identity building and creating a *multilingual space* in the classroom (Perregaux, 1995) are obviously available, for example with greeting forms, their variety and the factors that generate their diversity in various languages and cultures (Launey, 2010), or through a *Bingo* game (EOLE website: bingo.pdf).

The first two listed activities were demonstrated in the aforementioned activities, the *Language flower* and *From the wisdom of European peoples*. Other activities enable additional steps to be taken in recognizing—and legitimizing—languages and varieties of languages that some students know to varying degrees, thereby contributing to their identity building. Examples include materials focusing on students' *linguistic biographies* (see Council of Europe : European Language Portfolio (ELP); EOLE website: hanumsha.pdf) or the production of what Cummins and Early (2011) refer to as *identity* texts.

When it comes to working on students' reflexive abilities, examples such as *Le cri des animaux* [animal sounds] (FREPA website: Materials; see also ELODIL website: Primary) or *Vous avez dit kikiriki ?* [Did you say cock-a-doodle-do?] (EOLE website: kikiriki.pdf) can be used, which allow students to hear the onomatopoeia of these sounds in various languages. Students can thus become aware that such differences between them rely on humans interpreting animal sounds according to the language they speak (sounds specific to each language) and not on animals producing different sounds within the same species. In other words, they discover in a fun way issues related to the relationship between *signifier* and *signified*, which can be totally arbitrary or partially linked to the object it refers to. This can help them to accept the idea that learning a new language brings us into a different organization of reality, forcing us to decenter ourselves. The call of the rooster lends itself particularly well to this discovery: *kickeriki!* in German, *¡quiquiquiquí!* in Spanish, *cock-a-doodle-doo!* in English, *cocorico!* in French, etc. Such an activity also encourages students to listen carefully to material in several languages, thereby improving their listening

skills. Like many other AtL activities, it uses the "detour mechanism" (Perregaux et al., 2003; de Pietro, 2003); discovering how different idioms deal with language to produce meaning enables students to better address certain issues in a language they know or are studying, thanks to the distancing effect caused by comparison.

The *Europanto* material (FREPA website / Teaching and learning materials) provides us with a good example of an activity that brings plurilingual practices into play. It has been inspired by a language practice invented by a European diplomat, which involves mixing several languages in press articles that must nevertheless remain understandable to readers with some knowledge of European languages. The following is an extract from the material. The first task for the students is to draw on existing knowledge in the class to work out the meaning:

> *Die Mutter van Toto lui demande* to go shopping *y le donne una liste de cosas zu kaufen. Seine Mamma le dice auch* :– Bring *la tua sorella mit ! Toto geht zum magasin, kauft todas las cosas, aber cuando er kommt zurück, seine little sorella tombe dans un loch und* disappear. *Cuando Toto* arrives at home, *seine Mutti le dice :– Wo ist ta little sorella ?* Toto answers *:– Elle est dans un loch gefallen.– Aber porque du hast elle nicht help um zu sortir ? dice la* mother.*– Porque no estaba escrito sur la liste*! answers Toto.

After having collectively reconstructed the meaning of this joke, reflected on how it is built and the strategies they have used to understand it, the students will in turn produce jokes, using the languages of all students and mixing them in a playful and understandable way, in a sort of *Classopanto* [humorous blend of languages spoken in the classroom].

In all these activities, the AtL perspective is threefold, with (1) a cognitive aspect (aimed at improving understanding of how languages work, regardless of their type or status); (2) sociolinguistic (aimed at greater legitimization of linguistic diversity, which the school is thus able to welcome and to which it can assign a status), and (3) psychological (such as approaches that lead students, particularly monolinguals, to step outside the rules of their own language to engage more easily in the learning of other languages) (de Pietro, 2003). It is therefore essential to work with a variety of languages, and in particular with languages linked to migration processes, which become more legitimate in the eyes of the students who speak them and also of their classmates when they are considered in the institutional context of the school.

Effects of Awakening to Languages on learners, teachers and parents

A quantitative study of the effects of the Evlang program, based on pre- and post-tests and a comparison with a control group, was carried out at the end of a one- to one-and-a-half-year AtL curriculum. It involved approximately 2,000 students in late elementary school (Candelier & Kervran, 2018). The qualitative evaluation focused essentially on some twenty classes. Two areas of objectives—the effect on attitudes, and the development of language related aptitudes—were investigated, each with two dimensions: interest in diversity and receptiveness to the unfamiliar, memorization / listening discrimination and syntactical analysis skills of compound elements (both on unknown languages).

For both areas, the impact of AtL on the first dimension (interest and listening skills) is statistically confirmed in a large majority of samples. The effect was also shown for the second dimension (receptiveness and morphosyntax) albeit in only a few samples. Both differences can be explained; receptiveness is more demanding than simple interest, and listening activities were more frequent than syntactical ones within the curriculum. All the effects correspond to a curriculum lasting an average of 35 hours. More detailed calculations involving the actual number of hours for each class (which varied from seven to 95 hours) clearly showed that a longer course has more chance of leading to more generalized effects with a broader scope. Moreover, it could be shown that lower-achieving pupils benefitted most from the effects of AtL on attitudes and that AtL develops a desire to learn languages, particularly minority languages, including those of migrants. A majority of students found AtL useful, even if the reasons for its usefulness were not always perceived or clearly expressed. As one young pupil said during a post-test interview: "Awakening to languages, it's for opening the world of languages" (Candelier, 2003, p. 179).

Concerning teachers, the study shows that the practice of AtL has led many of them to be more sensitive to the presence of students in their classroom for whom the schooling language is not their first language and to make use of their resources. For most of these elementary school teachers, referring to several languages simultaneously was seen as natural. They became convinced that AtL strengthens the pupils' metalinguistic aptitudes as well as interest and openness to otherness. However, their convictions seemed to be more firmly established for students' attitudes than for abilities.

As for parents, the vaste majority were positive about AtL, especially when they had the opportunity to get to know it and—even better—to participate in (Candelier, 2003). This was corroborated by findings from an investigation conducted during the Evlang follow up project *Janua Linguarum*, which however showed that some parents were "concerned that the approach might take the place assigned in the curriculum to teaching a particular language (English especially)" (Zielińska, 2003, p. 170). For more information about the effects of AtL in the Evlang program, see: Candelier, 2003; Janua linguarum website / Autres documents / Le bilan du programme européen Evlang).

These findings have been integrated into the literature review about the effects of "language awareness in mainstream and language classrooms" by Sierens et al. (2018). Although the authors of this contribution use the term *language awareness*, the definition they give of it (p. 21) shows that their review does relate to what we call AtL. It relies on a systematic examination of the research literature and refers to 40 studies (36 from Europe and North America) sorted out for their methodological quality or originality, 34 dealing with learners, 12 with teachers and two with parents (some of them deal with more than one category of participants).

With regard to the effects on students, the authors sum up as follows (p. 68–69): "There is some limited yet relatively convincing evidence for positive effects of LA [language awareness] interventions and programmes [sic] in the affective [like 'positive attitudes towards linguistic (and cultural) diversity'] and social [like 'better engagement and integration of (immigrant) minority students in linguistically diverse classroom'] domains […]. The evidence for benefits in the cognitive domain

(metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness) [when listening to different sounds and learning to differentiate them, guessing meaning from transparent words, and drawing parallels between languages] is on the whole positive. An incipient impact was also noticed in the power domain (critical LA) [minority students becoming 'more aware of the relative status of languages, of power issues at play in language contact,' and developing 'critical stances that can serve as a means of 'linguistic self-defense"] in a limited number of studies." No effect on proficiency in the school/second language and in second/foreign language teaching was found, except when these teaching programs "explicitly use CA [contrastive analysis] as a metalinguistic technique." Finally, the studies provided some evidence for the influence of length of intervention as well as some possible effects of categories of pupils (for both aspects, see Evlang above).

With regard to the findings for proficiency in second languages, it should be reminded that AtL is not in itself an approach for teaching languages, but that it can prepare or support such teaching. The reference to approaches using contrastive analysis confirms the need to use other pluralistic approaches for language learning, in particular the *Integrated didactic approach to languages*, which can however benefit from the metalinguistic competences developed by AtL (Candelier & Manno, 2023). As for the effects of AtL on the development of metalinguistic competences pursued in regular school language classes (not specifically as a second language for allophone learners), it can be added that a study conducted in Switzerland with seven- to nine-year-old students led to contrasting results, revealing areas where AtL is particularly effective (identification of text types), effective under certain conditions (for choosing the correct spelling for the transcription of a phoneme) and non-effective in others areas where it has no visible effect (Balsiger et al., 2012).

Sierens et al. (2018) observed that research data on the impact of LA interventions on teachers are still limited. However, "the available evidence makes it likely that participation in LA projects furthered positive attitudes towards language and language diversity among teachers, and contributed to their greater acknowledgement of bilingual learners' identities and competences" (p. 72). As for parents, their findings refer to "positive effects in the social domain: the relations between parents and teachers and among the parents seem[ed] to have improved [as well as] in the affective domain [since] the results indicate[d] that immigrant parents felt more encouraged to maintain their mother tongues at home" (p. 73).

Further research work, confirming or complementing the preceding studies, was conducted in northern European countries within two projects entitled DELA-NOBA (2013–2016 – *Developing the Language Awareness Approach in the Nordic and Baltic Countries*) and PE-LAL (2020-2023 – "Plurilingual Education – Minority and Majority Students' Language Awareness across Educational Levels"; see PE-LAL website). The first project, conducted in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden, focused on activities designated as language awareness (LA) but with a content very similar to AtL (Daryai-Hansen, Levefer, & Rimsane, 2019).

The second project, conducted in Denmark, involved several pluralistic approaches. The study conducted among students participating in the PE-LAL program provides further insight into what has been said about pupils' interest in AtL. Across grade levels, this interest appears to be greater than that generated by

other pluralistic approaches used (Integrated didactic approach to language and Teaching of intercomprehension between related languages). AtL "stimulates the students' language curiosity and develops their language awareness both in relation to lower levels of language (e.g. phonology, orthography, lexis/semantics) and higher levels of language (e.g. text linguistics)…[It opens] the students' eyes to both global mobility and the opportunities for living and exploring the world of today as well as acknowledging linguistic diversity" (Daryai-Hansen & Drachmann, 2024, p. 10).

Like the teachers involved in the experimentation settings referred to above, the 13 primary and lower-secondary school teachers asked in the DELA-NOBA project "believed that LA [= AtL] activities had resulted in positive outcomes for their pupils," being "surprised at how even young pupils began to notice language structure and morphological differences" and gaining "an understanding of how LA activities could benefit minority pupils." They also became aware of the positive outcomes for themselves; they "began to notice differences and similarities between languages and learned to decode words with limited knowledge of the language" (Daryai-Hansen, Levefer & Rimsane, 2019, p. 36). As part of the DELA-NOBA project, a study conducted on a limited number of schools (one Danish school, one Finnish school and one Icelandic school) confirmed (see Evlang above) that most parents view AtL activities as positive for their children's development. But it could not show any real breakdown in the usual language hierarchies with regard to the choice of languages for their children to learn (Daryai-Hansen, Layne & Levefer, 2018, p. 67, 72).

We will close this collection of findings with those from a study of the implementation of an AtL program over the course of two years at the end of the elementary school in Québec (Lory, 2015), that also highlighted positive effects on the students' representations of linguistic diversity and the development of a positive image of the languages in their plurilingual repertoire. In addition, it could show for participants with weaker academic skills an increased investment in *Language Awareness* activities.

The dissemination of Awakening to Languages – some insights

The previous sections have provided some examples of the spread of AtL, notably in terms of teaching material development and research programs. For these two aspects, a review of the contributions presented at the biannual conferences of the international association EDiLiC (Education and Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: https://en.edilic.org/), founded in 2001 specifically to promote AtL, will provide an overview of the increasing diversity of national and regional contexts where initiatives have been taken. Even though the majority of these are located in Western, Nordic and Central Europe and Canada, other parts of the world are present, notably Japan and Brazil.

In Europe, the presence of AtL—among other Pluralistic approaches—on the website of the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML) plays an important role in its dissemination, raising awareness among educational authorities and training teachers in these approaches, not only in Western and Central Europe, but also in geographically more distant countries such as Armenia and Malta. AtL is given a major place in the presentation of the

Training and consultancy services that the ECML offers for these approaches (ECML Training and consultancy Webpage / Offers / Plurilingual and intercultural education). The European Union's *Erasmus+* program is another dissemination vector for AtL, present in several projects such as LISTIAC (Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms; see https://listiac.univ-montp3.fr/clip) or the SERAFIN project (Explorer les biographies langagières: une démarche pour la formation et la valorisation du plurilinguisme; Serafin Project website), devoted to facilitating the inclusion of refugees in universities.

In this article, it is not possible to go into detail about each of the countries where AtL activities exist. However, for more details on Europe, we can point to the countries and regions where research and material production activities are most active. These are, in particular, Austria, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain (Catalonia and the Basque Country), Switzerland and to a certain extent Belgium, Germany and Slovenia.

In some countries, educational authorities have decided to publish AtL materials. This is both an important means of dissemination and a clear sign of institutional recognition. This is notably the case in the French speaking part of Belgium (De Grieve, 2020), in the Czech Republic (Havlínová et al., 2023), in France (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la jeunesse, 2023) and in Luxembourg (Perregaux & Tonnar, 2010). In most of these countries, elements of AtL have also been explicitly incorporated, in various forms and under various names, into the curricula (see Section 6).

The study by Jaekel et al. (2024), who investigated the curricula of three countries (Finland, Germany, and Norway) in order to find out the extent to which these consider PA, including AtL, clearly shows that some of the principles of these approaches can be found there. The authors report, "cultural diversity, multilingualism, heterogeneity, and the presence of different languages in the classroom are considered valuable," "[m]ultilingualism as a resource in school and society is highlighted," but also that these curricula do not specify in what ways, with which teaching procedures, schools or teachers may acknowledge and promote plurilingualism and intercultural understanding (Jaekel et al., 2024, p. 249). This is also true of many other curricula in Europe, which furthermore often tend to restrict their reference to multilingualism, interculturalism, and openness to diversity to the early stages of education (preschool, primary school), to classes with a particularly high number of students from migrant backgrounds, or to special classes set up to integrate these students.

However, a few curricula are an exception and explicitly refer to approaches related to PA, including AtL. This is the case, as we have already announced, in Luxembourg, where the website of the Ministry of Education (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché du Luxembourg, 2011) states that for children in Cycle 1 (aged 4 to 5), "the skills to be acquired fall within the following areas of development and learning: [...]: language, the Luxembourgish language, AtL (termed *éveil aux langues*) and an introduction to the French language [...]." In Cycle 2 (ages 6-7), the skills focus on literacy, German, French, and Luxembourgish, as well as AtL (termed *ouverture aux langues*).

In a "Declaration on Language Teaching Policy" (CIIP, 2003: Déclaration), the

educational authorities in the French-speaking part of Switzerland have explicitly given languages of migration and AtL a place in the curriculum. "Languages of migration also have their place in a coordinated approach to language teaching and learning. (...) In the same spirit, modules such as éveil aux langues [this means AtL] are also offered." In the *Plan d'études* [curriculum] that was subsequently developed to put this policy orientation into practice (*Plan d'études romand*), a same and unique domain (called *Languages* [*Langues*]) is defined for all languages: L1, L2, L3, classical languages, migration languages, a domain that also includes "reflection on the relationships between languages." Students are thus encouraged to "discover how language and communication work, to develop [their] interest and [their] motivation for languages, in particular through éveil aux langues [AtL] activities." The EOLE materials, distributed to all teachers and available online (EOLE - Education et ouverture aux langues à l'école), provide ways to achieve the learning objectives set out in the curriculum in a thematic area called *Interlinguistic Approaches*.

Since 2015, French preschool curricula have also referred to AtL under the terms "awareness of linguistic diversity" or "awareness of languages" ["*éveil à la diversité linguistique*" or "*éveil aux langues*"] (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, 2019). This also applies to the programs in the French-speaking part of Belgium (De Grieve, 2020), in Finland, in Val d'Aosta (Italy), and in the Swiss canton of Ticino. More detailed information on the last countries and regions can be found on the FREPA website (FREPA website / Using FREPA) (see also Daryai-Hansen et al., 2014).

With regard to teacher education, initiatives have been taken in many contexts, sometimes by educational authorities, sometimes by universities and other academic institutions, most often in connection with research conducted there. Here again, many references can be found in the proceedings of the EDiLiC association conferences (EDILIC website: https://en.edilic.org/; for example, Balsiger et al., 2012).

Integrating Awakening to Languages into other school and extracurricular activities

In connection with the dissemination of AtL, the question quickly arose as to whether it was advisable that it constitutes a school subject, just like biology or the teaching of a particular language, or whether it would be preferable to have it integrated into existing subjects, and possibly even into extracurricular projects. The dominant trend currently remains that of independent activities and dedicated websites, yet some interesting initiatives are opening avenues for such an integration. Today, some language teaching textbooks introduce other languages within activities focusing on specific aspects of the language taught (vocabulary, grammatical categories such as gender or plural, etc.) in order to raise awareness about the variety of available solutions for constructing meaning and telling about the world, thus highlighting similarities and differences (for example, the Millefeuilles textbook for French in Switzerland: Millefeuilles / Schulverlag plus; cf. Egli Cuenat et al., 2018). Furthermore, in the textbook *Ilots de plurilinguisme en classe d'histoire* [Islands of plurilingualism in history class] (Lambelet & Mauron, 2015), students' learning of history is supported by reading texts in the original language of some of the

documents, drawing on the knowledge that some students may have of specific languages or on intercomprehension strategies. Again, such a project is in line with AtL by opening students' minds to linguistic diversity and showing them through practice that diversity can contribute to learning (de Pietro, 2003).

We also would like to mention what is currently being done with oral tales and the many youth literature books that combine several languages (Audras & Maillard de la Corte Gomez, 2021; Deschoux, 2021), thus exploiting this plurality and giving rise to activities that can be classified under the four areas outlined in section 3. The topic of the latest EDILIC conference was indeed *Plurilingual Literacies in Education* (EDiLiC website / Événements / Congrès). Books available in several languages are used notably in many projects for very young children based on *story boxes* (Bezault & Guyader, 2015) or on *sacs d'histoires* [story sacks], which contain various versions of a story in a few widely spoken languages and, where possible, in the students' family languages, which children are then invited to discover with their parents (Vernetto, 2017).

In addition, AtL is increasingly at the heart of projects that implement communicative, action-oriented approaches, involving both various disciplines (arts, geography, etc.) and other actors (cultural mediators, parents, etc.). One example is an Andorran project that was also developed during an ECML Training and Consultancy event, which focuses on discovering how yogurt is made. This project involved several disciplines (biology, history, etc.) and drew on several languages, in particular the three languages used in the Andorran principality (Catalan, Spanish, and French), which the students were asked to decipher, compare, and translate.

Also worthy of mention, alongside the school setting, is the creation of multilingual Kamishibai (a Japanese storytelling technique based on images scrolling in a small theater), an activity that involves building a theater [*buntai*], writing a multilingual story, and giving a public presentation. The creation of Kamishibai has given rise to an international award, initiated by the association *D'une langue à l'autre* (DULALA), which is enjoying ever-increasing success (https://dulala.fr/plurilingual-kamishibai-contest/; see also Chenouf, 2023; Deschoux et al., 2022).

Other projects developed in collaboration with museums should also be of interest to readers, such as the PASTEL (Plurilingualism, Art, Sciences, Technology, and Literacies) project, which brings students from highly multicultural classrooms to museums and engages them in plurilingual activities based on the objects exhibited (Moore 2017; 2021), as well as various activities developed based on *linguistic landscapes* which invite students to leave the classroom to discover the linguistic and semiotic diversity of their environment and then analyze and decipher it (Dagenais et al., 2009; Moore & Haseyama, 2019; Oyama, Moore & Pearce, 2023).

Conclusion: Awakening to Languages as an asset for schools in Europe and elsewhere

Despite recent worldwide developments towards nationalism and identitarian closure, there is a genuine desire in many countries, among educational stakeholders, to value multilingualism and plurilingualism, and even to take advantage of them for learning and education purposes. This also applies to many school curricula, even if some official statements appear to be mere window dressing (disingenuous) or,

in Europe, an attempt to comply with overall European policy, without necessarily leading to action with concrete steps.

AtL and DP are reliable tools for achieving such goal in valuing plurilingualism. As its own approach among DP, AtL still faces several challenges:

- The aims, main contexts, and specific methods of the various approaches that claim to be part of DP must be clearly expressed. This is what we have attempted to do here for AtL in relation to other pluralistic approaches such as *Bilingual teaching*, *Content and Language Integrated Learning* or *Immersive language learning*, that are only a part of DP when they include several languages, crosslinguistic comparison phases, and phases of switching from one language to another within lessons (Gajo, 2008; Candelier & de Pietro, 2025; Gajo, 2008).

- In order for AtL activities to effectively contribute to openness to diversity and recognition of the plurality of languages and their speakers, it is important to prevent certain drifts, which can occasionally be observed, from inadvertently reinforcing certain stereotypes or giving rise to inappropriate views; it is for instance risky to associate languages with flags, as languages are often spoken in several countries, which in turn can be multilingual. It is also important to avoid associating countries themselves with caricatural and overly simplifying symbols such as the Eiffel Tower or cowboys.

- Efforts to convince teachers, education leaders, and parents to integrate AtL more widely into mainstream education must be stepped up, addressing material obstacles, particularly those linked to traditional school organization, and above all obstacles linked to beliefs (Andrade et al., 2007). This requires not only more training for education stakeholders but also clarifying the issue for society as a whole.

By disseminating knowledge about Didactics of Plurilingualism, we hope to mobilize others interested in the goal of valuing plurilingualism.

In a recent publication about DP, Candelier and de Pietro (2025) expressed the need to make better known, outside Europe, the body of reflection and concrete experience it has built up over the decades. This is what we intended to do here for AtL. We hope to share our plurilingual trends and research findings to educational scenes in the non-European countries. Focusing on the United States, similarities can be seen between AtL and some developments that originated there under the term *Translanguaging* (García & Wei, 2014), which have also generated interest among researchers and practitioners across the globe, including in Europe.

In Italy, Carbonara & Scibetta (2019) provide examples of what they call translanguaging activities for students with migrant backgrounds. The first two types of activities referred to are characteristic of AtL (orientations 1 and 2 in Section 3 above). They are the linguistic biography and the creation of a linguistic landscape in the classroom that takes into account all of the students' languages. The third type of activity brings together various modalities of group work on multilingual texts (language of schooling and the language of origin) in both comprehension and production, in which students are actively engaged (see also Cognigni, 2021, p. 11).

Depending on the texts and procedures used, these activities fall either under (1) the 4th Atl orientation identified in Section 3 (bringing plurilingual practices into play) as exemplified in the activity that used the Classopanto material or (2) genuine language of schooling learning activities, which by definition (see Section 1) fall outside the scope of AtL.

Given the similarities between translanguaging and DP, some European scholars involved in DP remain disappointed their scholarly contributions have not been taken into account by Translanguaging promoters and even, in a more radical version, believe that the concept of Translanguaging has contributed nothing beyond what European concepts and accomplishments have already made available (Cavalli & Egli, 2024).

Regarding the United States, there are some significant differences compared to the linguistic configuration specific to Europe. The latter is based on numerous languages that are of great importance to the identity of their speakers. These languages are deeply rooted in history, whether they are fully recognized national languages of a state (e.g., the official languages of the European Union) or regional/minority languages that are recognized to varying degrees (e.g., Breton in France, Catalan in Spain, Same in the Nordic countries, non-territorial Romani, etc.), or even linked to sometimes ancient waves of migration (Arabic in France, Turkish in Germany, etc.).

In addition, Europe is facing the rise of English, which in many contexts tends to take precedence over the languages traditionally used there, sometimes replacing other languages traditionally taught in schools. This situation is perceived, by some educators and parts of society, as a threat to the future of these languages. It therefore seems difficult in Europe to question the existence of distinct languages, as some Translanguaging theorists do. Nevertheless, we believe it is important to relativize the boundaries between languages in educational settings to promote practices, as Translanguaging does, that use mixing languages in order to construct meaning, thus contributing to both language and subject learning. *Crosslinguistic translanguaging*, which takes up the idea of an underlying proficiency model but without denying the existence of languages, is a possible match between AtL and Translanguaging.

Beyond the issues discussed above, it is the convergences between the two educational approaches that should be kept in mind. For AtL and the facet of DP that it represents, these convergences can be summarized as follows: AtL and translanguaging share a strong common interest in highlighting and promoting all aspects of students' linguistic repertoire in teaching; they also share a deep concern with "equitable education for all" (García, 2023, p. 101). For these convergences, which can undoubtedly facilitate the dissemination of AtL among teachers and researchers familiar with Translanguaging, see also Candelier & de Pietro (2025, p. 327) and Cognigni (2021, p. 9).

Linguistics has taught us that languages convey a worldview that is notably expressed through the way in which (morpho)syntax is organized (categories of gender and number, temporal categories, etc.) and the way things are named (like *Gulf of Mexico vs Gulf of America*). Beyond language teaching—or rather, alongside language teaching, to which it contributes by developing elements of knowledge, attitudes and skills which are useful for any language learning—, AtL aims to share

such insights with students through activities that help them discover and better understand language, including their relation to their own idiom(s) and those of their classmates. It is therefore less a question of arguing about languages (their beauty, their usefulness, etc.) than of getting students to work with several languages, exploring their diversity and their potential in terms of human creativity.

We are living in a time in history when some people tend to deny diversity in all its forms and impose a single way of describing the world (their way) and one single language (their own). This is precisely what makes AtL increasingly crucial.

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4

Teaching Materials for Plurilingual Practices: Insights from Austrian Vocational Schools

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Abstract

This article explores how plurilingualism is reshaping educational language policy by shifting the focus from monolingual proficiency to an integrative model that draws on learners' full linguistic and cultural repertoires. European language policies and perspectives are described, highlighting goals such as promoting global citizenship through plurilingual education. Specific attention is placed on Austria's innovative curriculum for vocational schools, which embeds plurilingual, pluricultural, and transversal competences in the new subject "International Communication with Focus Language" (InCo). Preliminary findings from a pilot study emphasize the value of activating learners' linguistic resources, incorporating real-life tasks, and using AI tools to enhance foreign language enjoyment and learner engagement. The article presents the framework for the design of the InCo curriculum and descriptions of instructional materials that place a strong emphasis on cognitive activation and foreign language enjoyment with tasks that encourage learner reflection, knowledge transfer, and a sense of achievement.

Keywords: *Educational language policy, plurilingual approaches, evidence-based development of teaching materials*

Background

Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism represent a paradigm shift in language education, moving beyond traditional monolingual frameworks to embrace the dynamic interplay of linguistic and cultural resources. This article examines the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of plurilingualism in educational language policy and its implementation in Europe in general and Austria in detail. Austria's innovative response to the plurilingual global trend is exemplified in the development of a new subject "International Communication with a Focus Language" (InCo) for vocational secondary schools. This curriculum integrates plurilingual, pluricultural, and transversal competences, preparing students for multilingual professional and personal contexts. A pilot study conducted in Austrian schools highlights the effectiveness of this approach, revealing that tasks emphasizing real-life communication, cognitive activation, and AI integration significantly enhance foreign language enjoyment and learner engagement.

The article concludes by discussing the implications of these preliminary

findings for future research and policy development, advocating for sustained collaboration among educators, policymakers, and researchers to scale plurilingual education across diverse contexts. By bridging theory and practice, this work offers a roadmap for creating inclusive, future-ready language curricula that reflect the realities of our increasingly interconnected world.

Reflections on the role of plurilingualism in educational language policy

Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism mark a significant shift in language education, moving away from the traditional focus on isolated, monolingual competences toward an integrative approach. This perspective emphasizes the dynamic use of an individual's entire linguistic and cultural repertoire to negotiate meaning across diverse contexts. While multilingualism refers to the coexistence of multiple languages within a society, institution, or individual—often viewed as separate systems—plurilingualism highlights the interconnected and flexible use of these languages by an individual. Similarly, multiculturalism describes the coexistence of distinct cultures, whereas pluriculturalism focuses on how individuals dynamically combine and draw on elements from different cultures (Council of Europe, 2001).

Multilingualism thus is often associated with societal or institutional contexts, where different languages are used in specific settings, such as official documents or community interactions. It does not necessarily imply that individuals are proficient in multiple languages. In contrast, plurilingualism is centered on the individual's ability to integrate and use partial competences in various languages to navigate social interactions. Plurilingual competence is understood as "the capacity to successively acquire and use different competences in different languages, at different levels of proficiency and for different functions" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 116). For example, a plurilingual person might switch between languages or dialects depending on the audience and context, leveraging their linguistic and cultural resources in a cohesive manner.

In educational contexts, plurilingualism is viewed not only as an objective but also as a foundational condition for successful language teaching (Council of Europe, 2022; Hu, 2004). Each student brings a distinct profile—age, gender, cognitive strengths (whether broad intelligence or a particular flair for languages) and socioaffective factors (motivation, emotions, attitudes, personality traits). On top of this, they contribute their home languages and any additional languages they already know. Far from being mere background knowledge, this prior experience serves both as point of departure and the instructional goal of activating and reinforcing each learner's individual linguistic repertoire to enhance their confidence and maximize the effectiveness of their language learning.

Hence, plurilingual education aims to foster interlingual transfer, language awareness, and intercultural understanding by encouraging learners to reflect on and compare languages and cultures. This approach values partial competences and promotes the use of real-life tasks to build sustainable linguistic and cultural skills. It also integrates learners' developmental trajectories, allowing them to draw on their existing linguistic and cultural knowledge and experience (Schröder-Sura, 2018). By adopting plurilingual and pluricultural methodologies, education

can better prepare learners to participate in a globalized and linguistically diverse world. Despite its potential, the implementation of plurilingual approaches faces challenges, as traditional curricula and teaching materials often prioritize singular language proficiency.

Language policy in Europe

Language policies in Europe and the United States reflect divergent historical trajectories and sociopolitical priorities, yet both are increasingly attentive to the potential of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism as educational assets. In Europe, plurilingual ideals are enshrined in supranational frameworks such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001, 2018) and the European Commission's multilingual strategy, which aim to cultivate citizens capable of operating across linguistic boundaries for enhanced social cohesion, economic mobility, and democratic engagement (European Commission, 2021). Conversely, the United States had traditionally foregrounded English-only ideologies, with bilingual education often framed instrumentally as a bridge to English monolingualism rather than as an enduring multilingual competence (Crawford, 2020; Wiley & Lukes, 2019) with gradual shifts toward valuing multilingualism and heritage language maintenance (Aguirre & Chou, 2024; Escamilla et al., 2021). Some current U.S. initiatives, such as the Seal of Biliteracy (Aguirre & Chou, 2024; Escamilla et al., 2021) and Dual Language Immersion (Farley, 2022; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2019), share key features with European plurilingual policies, including an emphasis on learner autonomy, intercultural competence, and the integration of learners' home languages as cognitive resources (Saunders, 2022).

Language policy in Europe: A commitment to plurilingualism

Europe's commitment to plurilingualism and pluriculturalism is manifested in both policy frameworks and classroom practices. The Council of Europe's CEFR (2001) originally introduced the notion of a plurilingual competence profile for individuals, which was expanded in the 2018 *Companion Volume* to include detailed scales that valorize partial competences, mediation, and flexible language use (Council of Europe, 2018). These descriptors underpin national curricula and teacher training programs across member states, embedding tasks that require learners to negotiate meaning across languages, to mediate cultural differences, and to adapt register and style for diverse audiences (Favretti, 2023; Kostouli, 2020).

At the European Union level, the Barcelona Objective "first language(s) plus two,"—advocating mastery of at least two languages besides the mother tongue(s)—remains a guiding principle (Europäische Kommission, 1996, and more recent resolutions made by the European Parliament, 2009, 2018), reinforced through Erasmus+ funding for transnational teacher exchanges and professional development (Müller & Höhne, 2023). The *European Centre for Modern Languages* (ECML) offers research-informed toolkits for integrating plurilingual pedagogies, such as portfolio-based assessment and project-based learning that valorizes community languages (ECML, 2024). To counter the widely held view that learning just one foreign language, as long as it is English, is sufficient, the Council of Europe issued a high-profile recommendation on the importance of plurilingual and pluricultural

education for a democratic culture (Council of Europe, 2022). Yet implementation varies; while multilingual settings in Luxembourg and Switzerland, which is not an EU member, feature systemic support for intercomprehension and pluricultural projects, more monolingual-oriented countries often display inconsistent or fragmented adoption.

Realizing the potential of plurilingual education requires systemic alignment of policies, curricula, and assessment practices that capture the dynamic interplay of languages and cultures in learners' repertoires (Valcke et al., 2022). Curricular developments show, however, that the *Barcelona goal* cited in the earlier text is still not within reach, although language policy goals and related plurilingual approaches have been positively connoted and explicitly mentioned in curricular preambles and general didactic principles for years. What is still missing is their specification in the descriptions of the school subjects, which continue to focus on singular language competences. The promotion of life-life plurilingualism, as a goal especially in primary education, and intercomprehension and interlingual transfer in the field of typologically closely related languages also fall far short of expectations (cf. European Commission, 2012 for claims regarding national measures; see Mayer & Plikat, 2022 for an exemplary overview of the situation in Germany; Rückl, 2018 for Austria). Furthermore, current analyses show a striking discrepancy between curricular goals and school reality and an increasing number of students learning only one foreign language (Fäcke, 2022 for Germany).

(Foreign) language learning in the context of current curricular developments in Austrian vocational schools

The recommendations outlined above—clearly aimed at fostering plurilingual and pluricultural competence—have so far made little operational impact. As a result, the teaching of second (and further) foreign languages after English has declined in importance in Austrian schools (Bergmann et al. 2022). This shift became particularly evident in 2023, when the Austrian Ministry released a preliminary curriculum draft for vocational secondary schools (Kaufmännische höhere Schulen) that replaced second foreign languages (2nd FL)—with a general *International Communication* subject offered in a severely limited timeframe of two weekly lessons for two school years. In April and May 2023, consultative forums were held to discuss this draft of a vocational school curriculum without a second foreign language. After a heated debate, in June 2023 an interinstitutional expert group on second language learning—including the author of this article—was convened to design an innovative, integrated language education framework for these schools—40 % of whose students do not speak German as their mother tongue. This plurilingual reality heightens the need to value learners' existing linguistic competence and to build an integrated curriculum that meets their concrete needs in both private and professional contexts. In a globalized world, English is certainly a key communication tool—but it does not fully reflect the complexity of today's economy. On the contrary, corporate multilingualism extends far beyond English including clients' languages, international and regional lingua francas, and local languages; it has become a genuine cultural practice within companies (Hall, 2021;

Settelmeyer, 2020). Teaching must take these multilingual realities into account (King, 2018). Integrated didactic approaches to languages are therefore especially vital for Austria's 108 vocational secondary schools, which together serve some 37 600 students.

After the approval of the conceptual framework for integrated language education at vocational secondary schools in September 2023 (Atzlesberger et al., 2023) the core elements for the new subject "International communication with a focus language" (InCo) were collaboratively defined in conjunction with the Ministry's curriculum development group. To meet both European guidelines and the requirements of vocational secondary schools, functional communicative competence in a chosen second foreign language (the socalled "focus language," e.g. the traditional second foreign school languages French, Italian, Spanish, or Russian) is fostered by employing plurilingual approaches that draw on each learner's full linguistic and cultural repertoire. This empowers students to adapt flexibly to professionally and personally relevant multilingual communication situations, while continuously embedding real-world multilingualism and digital transformation into instruction.

From January to November 2024, the detailed curriculum was written based on this integrated conceptual framework. In parallel, teaching materials were designed and an empirical classroom study was launched. The pilot phase, from September 2024 to March 2025, involved three vocational schools for data collection, and since April 2025 these results have been undergoing indepth analysis to revise the materials according to field feedback. This process has not only reintroduced second foreign languages into the curricula but has also turned vocational secondary schools into genuine laboratories of pedagogical innovation, placing an integrated approach at the very heart of foreign language instruction. Since theory-informed instructional resources are essential for embedding innovative, plurilingual curricula sustainably in the classroom, teaching materials play a crucial role in both research and practice. Furthermore, the evidence-based development of appropriate textbooks remains an urgent priority, requiring close collaboration among researchers, classroom practitioners, and textbook publishers (Egli Cuenat et al., 2018; Kofler et al., 2020; Rückl, 2023).

The following section presents the competence model for the new subject "International Communication with a focus language" (InCo), grounding it in the principal theoretical and methodological foundations of language acquisition and didactics. It then delineates the expected learner outcomes in three domains—plurilingual and pluricultural competence, communicative-functional competence in the focus language, and transversal competences. The empirical design of the pilot study is also described, with the aim of supplying teachers, teacher educators, and textbook developers with empirically validated exemplar task sequences to support effective classroom implementation.

A new subject beyond target language acquisition

The Austrian Federal Ministry's new curriculum for vocational secondary schools promotes a more integrated, interdisciplinary approach to reduce the segmentation of isolated courses and strengthen higher-order cognitive abilities

such as problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. Grounded in resource-based language education, it leverages learners' prior knowledge, intercultural reflections, and transfer-oriented comparisons to make language learning more efficient and sustainable (Candelier & Manno, 2023). Empirical research shows that activating previously acquired languages and cultural experiences boosts motivation and accelerates progress (Eibensteiner et al., 2022; García García et al., 2020), while a strong focus on individual resources and learner activity enhances the efficiency and sustainability of learning processes (Behr, 2007; Rückl, 2022; Rückl, 2023).

Specific task sequences guided by input-processing theories can further enhance acquisition (Ellis & Shintani, 2014; VanPatten et al., 2015). This learner-centered approach aligns with CEFR principles by emphasizing real-world tasks, communicative goals, and strategic language awareness. Intercomprehensive methods foster receptive competence across related languages, whereas integrative plurilingual approaches systematically coordinate students' full linguistic repertoires—standard German, family and regional languages, and foreign languages—to build durable, action-oriented plurilingual competence.

The new subject "Intercultural Communication with focus language" (InCo) exemplifies this vision, using metalinguistic comparisons at lexical, structural, and pragmatic levels to deepen awareness and unlock access to Romance and Slavic language families. Ultimately, the curriculum views linguistic diversity as a resource, aiming to develop learners' ability to mobilize and expand their cultural and language repertoires (Beacco et al., 2016) alongside transversal competences such as digital literacy, social interaction, and lifelong learning (Newby et al., 2022). To date, three sequences per language (French, Italian, and Spanish) are available in German online, with at least eight more to come in June, 2026, found at: https://sprachenspassplus.soe-sbg.at/internationale-kommunikation-mit-fokussprache-2/.

Competence model and learning outcomes

The competence model of the new mandatory subject "International Communication with a focus language" (InCo), implemented on an organizational basis of ten weekly lessons in years 1–4 and an optional three in year 5, specifies the learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve upon completing the course in three interconnected competence domains (Rückl, 2025; Rückl, 2026):

- plurilingual and pluricultural competence as a basis for interacting in multilingual and multicultural situations ("M-competence"),
- competence in the chosen focus language ("F-competence"),
- transversal competences—including personal and social competence, methodological and language-learning strategies, and digital literacy specific to foreign languages (i.e. the purposeful, reflective use of digital and AI-based tools in professional contexts and the critical revision of AI-generated language ("T-competences")).

These domains overlap to support the gradual construction of each learner's individualized plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire. Students draw on their full linguistic and cultural resources—school-taught languages, family and community

languages, and informally acquired varieties—to communicate effectively in private and professional multilingual settings, continuously expanding that repertoire for further language learning. As to the "M-competence," learners will be able to:

- acquire the focus language by building on their entire plurilingual and pluricultural experience;
- use that repertoire to understand texts in related languages (especially within the focus-language family);
- mediate across speakers of different languages in multilingual and multicultural interactions.

Instruction in the focus language ("F-competence") aligns with the economic orientation of vocational secondary schools. It emphasizes realistic professional communication scenarios, prioritizing receptive and oral tasks to prepare students for practical workplace interactions. By the end of year 4, students are expected to reach CEFR level A2+ and B1 by year 5 in both receptive and productive competences, enabling them to handle situations encountered while traveling, in international customer interactions, or with non-German-speaking colleagues. They will:

- understand written and spoken texts on a range of familiar topics (A2+ in year 4; B1 in year 5);
- communicate orally on familiar subjects at these levels;
- produce simple written texts across familiar themes, communicate flexibly and efficiently, and employ AI tools critically to draft, reflect on, and revise their output.

Transversal competences are universally applicable across the curriculum and transferable to various life and learning contexts, developing continuously in both formal and informal settings throughout life (European Council, 2018). These competences include personal well-being through mental and emotional awareness; cognitive and methodological competences such as self-reflection, autonomous learning, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving; social competence like cooperation and interaction; global competence such as intercultural awareness, democratic participation, and global citizenship. Digital competence, particularly the strategic and critical use of AI tools is also part of the "T-competences" (Newby et al., 2022).

By embedding EU and Council of Europe frameworks that emphasize plurilingual and pluricultural competence, the InCo-subject actively cultivates core transversal competences, such as empathy, flexibility, resilience, critical thinking, problem-solving, self-management, teamwork, negotiation, openness to diverse perspectives, and foreign language specific digital literacy, thereby equipping learners for success in education, profession, private life, and as citizens of a globalized world (Gössling et al., 2022).

Empirical pilot study to investigate students' perspectives on learning materials

As part of the Austrian Ministry-funded project *Rethinking Language Learning*, prototype task sequences for first-year students of the new InCo-subject

with French, Spanish, and Italian as focus languages were developed and piloted at three Austrian vocational schools (n = 54 students; n = 3 teachers; 110 tasks for each focus language; duration September 2024–March 2025). The study is guided by three primary research axes:

i. **Learners' emotions and attitudes towards language learning and multilingualism:** This axis examines how different task types influence enjoyment, anxiety, and motivation, with a particular focus on "foreign language enjoyment" (FLE, Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) in multilingual settings.

ii. **Reception and adoption of the prototype materials:** This axis investigates task load and characteristics that make tasks more accessible and engaging for students.

iii. **Integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools:** This axis explores how these technologies can enhance flexibility, personalize learning, and foster critical thinking among students.

The data collection process involved the theory-based development of prototype learning materials for the first semester in the three focus languages. Online questionnaires captured learner variables such as demographic data, language learning biographies, and attitudes, alongside task-specific metrics like cognitive load, solution rates, strategy use, and emotional factors. Teacher logbooks documented task organization, classroom management, and observed student behaviors.

The gathered data underwent a dual analysis. Quantitative methods, including descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, were used to create general performance and emotional profiles and to test correlations, such as those between cognitive load and learning strategies (Larson-Hall, 2015). Qualitative methods, specifically structured content analysis of student comments and teacher logbook entries (Kuckartz, 2016), provided insights into student perceptions, recurring challenges, and conditions that foster engagement. These findings informed a rigorous revision of the prototype task sequences, ensuring that the formats and tasks maximize both learning effectiveness and language learning enjoyment.

Key milestones in the project include the release of webcasts for schools and publishers in September 2025, online access to prototype task sequences for French, Italian, and Spanish in December 2025, and the launch of in-service teacher training in the 2025–2026 school year. The goal is to provide teachers and textbook authors with evidence-based task sequences that facilitate the efficient implementation of curriculum guidelines for the new subject "International Communication with a focus language" (InCo).

Task types for operationalizing the competence domains of 'InCo'

Resource-oriented plurilingual approaches seek to establish sustainable learning processes. To this end, instructional materials are crafted to be both authentic and engaging, activating learners' prior knowledge through tasks like interlingual comparisons, hypothesis generation, and intercultural reflection, thereby promoting cognitively demanding, autonomous work. The strategic integration of digital and AI-based tools further personalizes learning environments.

Well-designed plurilingual materials—particularly textbooks, given their

guiding role in the language classroom—can initiate lasting cycles of comparison, transfer, and reflection, thereby enhancing language awareness, intercultural learning, and target-language proficiency. Exploratory, hypothesis-driven tasks rooted in topics of direct relevance to the student's life illustrate how existing knowledge can facilitate new learning (Meißner, 2017). Multilingual grammar tables and glossaries serve as memorization and systematization aids, guiding learners to detect formal bridges between languages during individual or collaborative reflection phases. Vocabulary-expansion activities leverage learners' diverse linguistic repertoires, using inferencing strategies to introduce new words; when these activities are linked to intercultural content, they can spark curiosity and deepen cultural sensitivity.

Phases of autonomous, hypothesis-guided formalization can target misconceptions directly, while a CEFR-endorsed culture of risk-taking and self-correction can nurture deeper language awareness. Receptive intercomprehension tasks, benefiting from steeper progressions, can prepare students more rapidly for understanding related languages, whereas productive tasks, demanding a more gradual ramp-up, can allow for more creative, individualized output. This scaffolded sequencing underscores the conviction that emphasizing learners' full resources and active engagement yields more efficient and durable learning gains.

These fundamental principles of task design are essential for effectively implementing the three competence domains of the InCo curriculum in classroom practice.

- F-competence tasks encompass language reception (listening, reading, audiovisual comprehension) and productive interaction alike (spoken and written, analog and digital), enabling students to handle every day, business-oriented, and trade-fair communication in the focus language.
- M-competence tasks activate and expand learners' full linguistic and cultural repertoire—drawing on family, regional, and school-taught languages—to support intercomprehension, mediation between speakers of different languages, and intercultural understanding. Specific tasks are designed to help learners leverage this repertoire to acquire focus language structures.
- T-competence tasks emphasize personal, social, methodological, and language-learning aspects while fostering foreign-language-specific digital literacy. This involves reflecting on learning strategies and critically, purposefully using digital tools, including AI-based technologies.

Together, these tasks exemplify a competence-oriented, plurilingual pedagogy that values all of the learner's languages, prioritizes real-life oral communication, adapts professional language use to authentic contexts, streamlines written work to reinforce core grammar and vocabulary, and embeds reflective AI use within a framework that promotes lifelong, globalized language learning.

Preliminary results on learners' emotions and attitudes toward language learning and multilingualism

The intensity of students' learning emotions, attitudes toward multilingualism, and the factors that influence their engagement in language learning were self-

reported using a Likert scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Results show that students experience significantly more foreign language enjoyment (FLE, M = 3.84; SD = 1.06) than foreign language anxiety (FLA, M = 2.87; SD = 0.97), indicating that they derive more pleasure than anxiety from the tasks designed for piloting the implementation of InCo. Students also demonstrated a highly positive attitude toward multilingualism, with an average score of 3.78 (SD = 0.81). This reflects the relevance, importance, and enthusiasm for learning multiple languages. Furthermore, a Pearson correlation analysis found significant positive correlation between FLE and attitudes toward multilingualism (r=0.37, p = 0.01), suggesting that the more students enjoy learning languages, the more favorable their perspective on multilingualism becomes. Although the correlation coefficient r=0.37 indicates a moderate positive relationship between higher levels of enjoyment in language learning and more positive attitudes toward multilingualism, the significance level of p=0.01 reveals the finding is significant.

The study also identified that tasks targeting transversal competences are the most effective in triggering FLE. Classroom situations that foster the highest levels of FLE include interactive oral tasks, playful group activities, and tasks incorporating artificial intelligence tools (Frank, 2025). These preliminary findings highlight the importance of designing tasks that elicit strong emotional engagement while leveraging the potential of digital resources to support plurilingual learning. By fostering positive emotions and utilizing innovative tools, educators can enhance both the effectiveness and enjoyment of language learning.

Implications for the revision of the piloted tasks sequences

The development of task sequences for the new subject "Intercultural communication with a focus language" (InCo) has undergone significant refinement, transitioning from a theory-based piloted version to an empirically revised, modular format. The piloted version consisted of three scaffolded units designed for the first semester, containing 110 tasks per focus language (French, Italian, and Spanish). These units included tasks and solutions, a grammar section for the focus language, multilingual vocabulary and grammar glossaries, and a self-assessment grid. They were designed to promote an integrative approach to foreign language learning by incorporating the following key aspects:

- Valorization of family languages: By treating all languages as equally valuable, the materials encourage the use of learners' full linguistic repertoire and prior language learning experiences as resources for acquiring foreign languages.
- Real-life professional communication: The materials align professional communication tasks with real-world applications, positioning language as a practical tool for engaging with customers and navigating professional environments.
- Focus on reception and oral communication: Emphasis is placed on developing receptive and oral communication competence in the focus language. Tasks are tailored to real-life scenarios, such as everyday interactions, business trips, small talk, trade fair discussions, and communication with multilingual colleagues.

- Reduction of written language: Written language tasks are minimized and primarily serve to reinforce linguistic competence, such as grammar and vocabulary, rather than being a central focus.
- Reflective use of AI: The materials integrate AI tools thoughtfully, such as for AI-supported written correspondence, to enhance learning outcomes while fostering critical reflection on the use of digital technologies.

While this version offered a rich variety of activities, feedback from the pilot phase highlighted the need for greater flexibility and targeted support.

The revised version still follows the original key aspects but introduces 14 modular task sequences tailored for A1/A2 levels, with a total of 140 tasks per language. These sequences integrate activities across the three competence domains (F-, M-, and T-competences). Two new tools accompany the modular and flexible design of the revised materials: A self-assessment grid, structured around the three competence domains, enables learners to monitor their progress in a more targeted and differentiated way. Complementing this, a concise teacher's guide supports the materials with theoretical background and hands-on teaching strategies to promote all three competence areas in everyday classroom practice. The modular design of the materials enhances flexibility, allowing teachers to adapt content to diverse classroom settings while benefiting from a clear structure, evidence-based guidance, and ready-to-use tools that support effective and engaging teaching

The revised InCo materials place a strong emphasis on cognitive activation and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) by embedding tasks that encourage reflection, knowledge transfer, and a sense of achievement. Drawing on Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), the task design follows a progression from lower- to higher-order educational objectives. To give an example of the cognitive trajectory embedded in the task design, learners may begin by recalling new vocabulary related to hotel contexts through an interactive game. They then recognize recurring grammatical patterns across Romance languages, apply vocabulary in real-life role-plays, analyze structural differences between languages, and critically evaluate the use of AI tools when drafting written texts in the focus language. The sequence culminates in the creation of collaborative digital products, such as illustrated mini dictionaries developed with the help of AI assistants. Learners then review and comment on each other's contributions, reinforcing vocabulary retention and social interaction.

Further activities may include digital landscaping activities using platforms like Padlet, where learners can document and share local traces of target cultures, combining research with intercultural reflection. In pronunciation and research-focused tasks, learners can consult digital corpora or apps to refine their oral production while simultaneously strengthening methodological competences. All tasks are clearly signposted through icons, aligned with CEFR descriptors, and designed to sustain learner engagement, foster positive emotions, and promote deep, transferable language-learning strategies.

With regard to M-competence, the revised task sequences aim to make language learning more effective by activating, expanding, and interconnecting learners' entire linguistic and cultural repertoires. By drawing on related Romance

languages, students are encouraged to recognize similarities and deepen their linguistic awareness, effectively opening pathways into the broader Romance language family. Mediation tasks are directly anchored in learners' plurilingual and pluricultural backgrounds. They help students develop strategies for facilitating communication between speakers of different languages—an essential competence in both professional and intercultural contexts. These are complemented by brief, focused intercultural "flash" activities, which provide targeted cultural insights and encourage students to consider others' perspectives while reflecting on their own experience. Clear descriptors support this process by articulating expectations—for example, the capacity to use one's plurilingual repertoire to understand key structures in the focus language. Taken together, intercomprehension, mediation, and intercultural reflection work in concert to foster a robust, action-oriented plurilingual and pluricultural competence.

In the InCo curriculum, F-competence is operationalized through a diverse range of task types that collectively build comprehensive communicative proficiency in the focus language. Receptive tasks include listening to (authentic) audio texts, reading and interpreting written documents, and engaging with audiovisual content such as videos or films. Productive and interactive tasks encompass spoken interaction—through role-plays, presentations, and dialogues—as well as written communication, both handwritten and digital. To deepen language mastery, repertoire-expansion tasks encourage learners to activate prior knowledge in order to acquire new vocabulary and grammatical structures, which are then applied across varied communicative contexts. In addition, professionally oriented tasks simulate real-life scenarios—such as negotiations, business emails, report writing, or customer interactions—preparing students to navigate workplace communication with confidence. Taken together, these components promote the integrated development of language reception, production, and interaction, supporting learners in achieving communicative competence in the focus language.

T-competences—including personal, social, methodological, and digital competences—are increasingly acknowledged as essential for 21st-century learning, yet they remain underrepresented in many language teaching materials. The revised InCo task sequences address this gap by embedding digital and reflective elements throughout the curriculum. Firstly, dedicated digital tasks train learners in the critical use of AI-based tools. For example, students use pronunciation apps to improve their oral skills and AI writing assistants to draft, revise, and analyze texts—thereby deepening linguistic awareness through active error analysis. Digital extension tasks further engage learners with the focus language through online research projects (e.g., documenting local signs of target culture) or through the creation of multimedia presentations that integrate target-language content. Secondly, transversal flashes provide short, interactive prompts that target either strategic competences or digital literacies. A strategic flash may prompt learners to reflect on their personal learning strategies—such as note-taking, memory techniques, or collaboration—thereby supporting metacognitive awareness and self-regulated learning. A digital flash might introduce best practices for data privacy, responsible tool selection, or ethical AI use, fostering responsible digital citizenship. By weaving these components into the core structure of the curriculum, the InCo materials ensure that transversal competences

are not treated as add-ons, but as integral to plurilingual, action-oriented education. This holistic approach prepares learners not only to communicate effectively in multiple languages, but also to navigate the complex social, methodological, and technological demands of today's interconnected world.

Conclusion and outlook

In conclusion, the development and piloting of teaching materials for the new subject "Intercultural communication with a focus language" (InCo) in Austrian vocational schools demonstrate how resource-oriented plurilingual approaches can be effectively implemented in the classroom, bridging theory and practice. By integrating F-, M-, and T-competence tasks—clearly marked through iconography and aligned with CEFR descriptors—the materials promote deep cognitive engagement, positive emotional responses, and authentic language use. Preliminary findings from the pilot phase highlight the potential of activating learners' full linguistic repertoires, embedding digital and AI tools, and anchoring tasks in real-life contexts to enhance foreign language enjoyment and positive attitude toward multilingualism.

Moving forward, sustained collaboration among policymakers, educators, and researchers will be essential to adapt and scale this model across diverse sociocultural contexts and educational frameworks. In doing so, plurilingual education can become a central pillar of future-ready curricula that reflect the realities of a globalized world and prepare learners for academic, professional, and social success in a multilingual and interconnected society. Future research should investigate the long-term effects of plurilingual education on learners' academic and professional outcomes. Additionally, further studies are needed to explore the role of emerging technologies in supporting plurilingualism and to identify strategies for overcoming barriers to implementation.

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5

Opening a Dialogue between Translanguaging and Interlectal Practices: Constrained Freelanguaging for Peaceful Language Education

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Abstract

Translanguaging concepts and practices have gained great attention across the globe, at risk of overshadowing and obscuring the contributions of research and theories from non-Anglophone areas. For example, research from the Francophone world that has long investigated interlectal practices, a form of translingual practice in Creole-speaking areas, yet remains lesser known. This theoretical paper aims to initiate a dialogue between less-known peripheral studies about interlectal practices and the omnipresent North American translanguaging approach.

Specifically, this paper presents the concepts and linguistic dimensions of translanguaging and interlectal practices as defined in the literature, highlighting similarities and differences in the ways of describing and understanding language uses in multilingual contact situations. The pedagogical dimensions of translanguaging are then compared to the pedagogy of variation—the pedagogical implementation of the concept of interlect—with attention to the subtle theoretical and political perspectives inherent to each. The discussion then turns to the ways in which each practice—interlectal and translanguaging—might draw insights from the other to enhance plurilingual education. The authors conclude by proposing a blended, socio-interactional approach in which learners can learn to freely use their entire linguistic repertoire while considering social constraints.

Keywords: *Languages in contact, interlectal practices, translanguaging, pedagogy of variation, plurilingual education*

Introduction

Scientific dissemination is an affair of market and power and can be an arduous undertaking, particularly in relation to less well-researched areas such as Creole studies. The majority of publications on this topic are found in specialized journals

that do not necessarily aim to reach a broad audience or to build bridges between the specialists in the specific domain of interest and scholars in other, even connected disciplines. The French speaking journal *Études créoles*, for instance, is described on the website of the publisher L'Harmattan as a "petite île de rencontre et de dialogues" (a small island for encounter and dialog) that aspires to promote interaction, albeit within the confines of internal dialogue between "les créolistes et les milieux créolophones" (Études créoles, n.d.) (creolists and Creole speaking areas). This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why, for example, research on *interlectal practices*—a form of translingual practice in Creole-speaking areas—addressed in this paper, remains largely unknown beyond specialists in Creole studies.

On the other hand, some research and theories find a large audience in a very short time. This is the case of *translanguaging* as defined and promoted by García and Li Wei (2014) and a group of researchers around them. The worldwide omnipresence of the concept and the related linguistic and pedagogical theory have been emphasized and sometimes criticized by several researchers such as Cavalli and Egli Cuenat (2024). As European scholars from the bilingual Aosta Valley in Italy and multilingual Switzerland, these authors view the dissemination of translanguaging as a potential sign of the dominance of English-speaking scientific literature. They argue that the proponents of translanguaging theory overlook European research. Cavalli and Egli Cuenat (2024) conclude that, in their opinion, "la notion de translanguaging ne [leur] semble avoir rien apporté que les notions et références européennes [...] n'aient déjà permis de construire" (the notion of translanguaging seems to have brought nothing that European notions and references had not already offered) (Cavalli & Egli Cuenat, 2024, p. 6).

Further supporting their claim, Cavalli and Egli Cuenat (2024) cite various publications by recognized European scholars in the field of plurilingualism. However, they do not cite lesser-known research from peripheral areas that has explored and described translingual practices, which could inform work on translanguaging, and vice versa. The authors should not be blamed for that, since it will always be impossible to be familiar with all research results. However, this omission shows that even criticism of the omnipresence of a concept can be based on the omnipresence of other concepts and actors. In the same vein, authors contacted to produce two entries on the *pedagogy of variation* derived from studies of *interlectal practices* for an *Encyclopaedia of plurilingual education* (Ollivier & Melo-Pfeifer, 2025) did not include any cross-reference to translanguaging in their initial drafts.

The objective of this paper is to initiate a dialogue between less-known peripheral studies about interlectal practices and the omnipresent North American translanguaging approach. It is evident that the two concepts under scrutiny bear significant disparities; nevertheless, it is equally evident that they are interconnected by numerous commonalities, thereby enabling a more profound comprehension of semiotic practices that creatively engage diverse *named languages* - to employ García's and Li Wei's terminology.

The researchers writing this paper are both engaged in the study of plurilingualism and plurilingual education and are involved in a European project dedicated to plurilingual education, PEP (Promoting plurilingual education, co-funded by the European Union in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme).

Both authors live and work in a former French colony that is now a *département*, i.e. an integral part of France and the European Union. Most of the population of this region is bi- or plurilingual, using especially Reunionese Creole and French and often *meshing* them and even producing original translingual (interlectal) practices.

The first section of this theoretical paper will present the *strong version* of the translanguaging concept, which is particularly promoted by Ofelia García in the Unites States, as well as the concept of interlectal practices. The subsequent section will be dedicated to a discussion of the pedagogical implications of the linguistic aspects of interlectal practices and translanguaging, followed by a section on the similarities and differences. The final section will offer a perspective on language education that is inspired by translanguaging and the pedagogy of variation, derived from the study of interlectal practices.

Linguistic Dimension

This section will consider the linguistic perspectives of the concepts of translanguaging and interlectal practices. Both will be presented separately and then compared, in order to highlight similarities and differences in the ways of describing and understanding plurilingual practices, which go beyond the traditional understanding of languages. The present section thus focuses on the analysis and description of the language use of bi-/plurilinguals. The educational implications will be discussed in a subsequent section.

The radical concept of translanguaging

The following presentation is predominantly based on the strong version of translanguaging (García & Lin, 2017), especially described and advocated by Ofelia García who seemingly personifies the US-perspective, but it also includes references to publications of other researchers, from North America as well as Great Britain, in line with García's positions. They all signed the *manifesto* (García et al., 2021), a text against "abyssal thinking" derived from raciolinguistic ways to "stigmatize" the language practice—or "languaging" (Maturana & Varela, 1987)—of "racialized bilingual" persons (García et al., 2021, p. 205). In translanguaging, the focus is indeed not on languages as they are generally defined but, on the practice, i.e. the way individuals use their holistic semiotic repertoire for the purpose of communication.

Translanguaging is first of all a political and decolonial perspective and program on bilingualism, developed by scholars who experienced racialization and stigmatization because of their specific language practices which do not correspond to the dominant norm. It aims to provoke cognitive, pedagogical (García & Li Wei, 2014) and especially "social transformations" (García et al., 2021, p. 223) seeking for more social justice.

Linguistically, according to the "unitary translanguaging theory" (García et al., 2021, p. 215), bilinguals (or plurilinguals) do not have separate repertoires corresponding to different so-called "named" languages but only one unitary repertoire - i.e. one linguistic system. Bilingual use this whole linguistic repertoire and other semiotic means selecting adequate features to make meaning and communicate in different sociolinguistic and interpersonal contexts. Translanguaging theory posit that languages are social and political constructs rather than linguistic ("lexical and

structural," Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 287) or even mental or psychological entities (García & Li Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015) and that the language practices of bilinguals are "complex and interrelated," and therefore "do not emerge in a linear way or function separately since there is only one linguistic system" (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 14). Depending on the social interactions in which the speakers are engaged in, these practices can conform to "societally constructed and controlled 'languages'" or not. When they do not, they appear to be creative, letting new practices emerge (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 14). García and Li Wei (2014, p. 27) give the example of North American Spanish/English bilinguals who engage in "mixed-language writing" and use translanguaging in a strategic manner to achieve a literary effect. Li Wei (2011) demonstrated in a paper on translingual (multilingual and multimodal) practices of bilingual children can use "multilinguality" and multimodality "strategically and creatively" (p. 378) to gain power in educational settings (p. 382). The creative use of their entire unitary repertoire is described as a strategic choice available to bilinguals. Depending on the context, individuals can decide if they want to adhere to established rules, especially linguistic ones, or if they prefer to "flout" and transgress the (linguistic) norms of behavior, navigating between traditional and original ways of behavior (García & Li Wei, 2014; Wei, 2011).

According to García and Li Wei (2014), the fluid, creative, complex interrelated language uses of bilinguals make it difficult to describe them with the concept of code-switching, which would imply that bilinguals switch from one language to another and de facto implies that languages exist for bilinguals. This phenomenon should rather be considered as a *discursive norm* and a specific way of being and navigating beyond languages. The focus of translanguaging is therefore not on (traditional) languages but on *language use*, i.e. on *languaging*. Otheguy et al. (2015) argue that every individual—as a *languager*—possesses their own idiolect, which integrates for example words that linguists, but not the speakers themselves, would identify as belonging to different *languages*, Spanish and English for example. However, "[f]rom the insider's [speaker's] view, the question of which words belong to English and which ones belong to Spanish (and which ones to both) cannot be asked coherently," as they all belong to the person's idiolect. Consequently, bilinguals cannot be regarded as mixing their languages, but rather as employing their entire unique repertoire without awareness of using and meshing elements from different languages. Their language use is unique and specific; it transcends the traditional concept of languages.

Interlectal practices

The concept of *interlect* first appears in a paper written by Prudent (1981) entitled "Diglossie et interlecte" (Diglossia and interlect), to propose a new theoretical approach of the French-Creole language contact situation in the Creole-speaking islands of the French West Indies. Prudent's analysis refutes Ferguson's (1959) claims that French coexists with Creole in a complex relationship of dominant and dominated languages according to the concept of diglossia. Indeed, the aim is no longer to name French "the upper language" and Creole "the lower language," but to consider that these two languages can coexist by merging in complete equality. Prudent neither positions the two languages at the two poles of a graduate axis and

considering that between the basilect and the acrolect, linguistic varieties can be hierarchized in the space of the mesolect according to the theory of the linguistic continuum (Decamp, 1971).

Defined from a diachronic perspective, the linguistic continuum posits that the existence of mesolectal varieties is proof that Creole speakers are gradually abandoning basilectal Creole in a process of decreolization (Bickerton, 1980). Even if the theory of the linguistic continuum offers a less dichotomous vision of the cohabitation of Creole and French in the Creole-speaking islands, it is still too tainted by the principles of structuralism. In fact, in the discursive spaces of the Creole islands, there is not only French or Creole or linguistic varieties specific to both languages, but there are also mixed, hybrid and atypical linguistic forms that are difficult to categorize. Prudent proposes the concept of *interlect* to analyze these linguistic forms produced by speakers in Martinique, in particular "the set of speeches that cannot be predicted by grammar of the acrolect or basilect" (Prudent, 1981, p. 31). Obeying no grammatical rules and no standards, interlectal practices are neither French nor Creole, but seem to be part of both languages that come into contact and merge in the sociolinguistic macro-system of communication (Prudent, 1993).

Accordingly, the concept of interlect goes beyond diglossia, linguistic continuum and all types of code mixing as interference, code-switching or borrowing phenomena, to offer a more modern approach to the analysis of French-Creole language contacts. Prudent's theory (2005) posits that *interlectal practices* were implemented from the earliest hours of creolization and continue to develop according to the pattern of sociogenesis. As such, this hypothesis refutes that of *decreolization*. From this point, by attempting to reuse the concept of interlect to describe mixed speeches of Reunionese speakers, Souprayen-Cavery (2010) proposes a hypothesis as to the mechanism explaining the emergence of interlectal practices.

In Reunion's macro-system of communication, the situation of languages in contact gives rise to the dynamic process of *interlectalization*, in which Creole and French continue to be constructed while deviating from the respective standards. In this mechanism, interlectal practices would always be present and evolve in the processes of both creolization and francization. Consequently, the more languages there are in the macro-system of communication, the more interlectal practices there are. But the more interlectal practices there are, the fewer languages there are, as it is difficult to categorize and predict the occurrence of these interlectal linguistic phenomena. Even though the concept of interlect was conceived specifically to describe contacts between French and Creole in Creole-speaking islands, it offers relevant insights into the situation of languages in contact and their uses in multilingual contexts.

Pedagogical dimension

Translanguaging and language pedagogy

The pedagogical aspects of the strong version of the translanguaging theory are in line with the decolonial political tenets of this theory and aim at valuing and promoting translanguaging practices. Translanguaging education, as coined by

García, aims at valuing creativity and criticality:

> Translanguaging, as a socioeducational process, enables students to construct and constantly modify their sociocultural identities and values, as they respond to their historical and present conditions critically and creatively. It enables students to contest the 'one language only' or 'one language at a time' ideologies of monolingual and traditional bilingual classrooms. (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 67)

Translanguaging thus rejects plurilingual education, which aims to develop pluri-monolingualism, i.e. forms of pedagogy that attempt to separately add new languages to the learners' repertoire and think in terms of separated languages and code-switching. García and Li Wei (2014) describe various pedagogical approaches to bi-plurilingualism and conclude that all the examples demonstrate the potential of using different languages and of the interactions of bilingual students. Yet, as criticized by García and Li Wei, all of the cited scholars' conceptualizations are constrained by the frameworks of L1, L2 and code-switching, "signaling that there has not been a full shift in epistemological understandings about language, bilingualism and education in the ways in which translanguaging points" (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 62).

Translanguaging in education values and promotes the full use of the entire unique repertoire of plurilinguals. Language education is not about acquiring new linguistic structures, it is about integrating new language practices and alternative modes of being, knowing and acting, yet also about sustaining and developing the language practices of minoritized communities. Consequently, teachers are expected to consider bi-/plurilingual *languaging* as fully legitimate, thus reducing "the injustices suffered in schools by autochthonous, indigenous and immigrant language minorities" (García & Li Wei, 2014, p 68) since these populations mostly attend monolingual programs, which do not allow them to use their full communicative potential.

García and Li Wei (2014) provide examples, ranging from kindergarten to university level, which demonstrate how learners use translanguaging to facilitate their learning process and develop their bilingualism in social interactions. Kindergarteners, for instance, use translanguaging

1. To mediate understandings among each other;
2. To co-construct meaning of what the other is saying;
3. To construct meaning within themselves;
4. To include others;
5. To exclude others; and
6. To demonstrate knowledge (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 82).

García and Li Wei (2014, p. 121) propose a list of goals for translanguaging in education that demonstrate that its scope extends far beyond language and subject education:

1. To *differentiate among students*' levels and adapt instruction to different types of students in multilingual classrooms; for example, those who are bilingual, those who are monolingual and those who are emergent bilinguals.
2. To *build background knowledge* so that students can make meaning of the content being taught and of the ways of languaging in the lesson.

3. To *deepen understandings and sociopolitical engagement*, develop and extend new knowledge, and develop critical thinking and critical consciousness.
4. For *cross-linguistic metalinguistic awareness* so as to strengthen the students' ability to meet the communicative exigencies of the socioeducational situation.
5. For *cross-linguistic flexibility* so as to use language practices competently.
6. For *identity investment and positionality*; that is, to engage learners.
7. To *interrogate linguistic inequality and disrupt linguistic hierarchies and social structures*.

Even if translanguaging promotes the leveraging and expending of the entire repertoire of all students, it rejects the idea of interlinguistic transfer as a means of learning languages since the concept of transfer separates languages into L1 and L2 or L1, L2… and Ln.

Translanguaging in education is therefore transformative and transgressive. It seeks to develop new ways of understanding language and language power and to foster political and social engagement against linguistic inequality and power imbalances. Nevertheless, García and Li Wei acknowledge the necessity for language education to consider *named* languages and to prepare students to use them in specific social situations where they are expected: "Despite our valuing of the translanguaging of bilinguals as one linguistic repertoire, we agree that bilingual education programs must also build spaces where certain language practices or others are sometimes expected" (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 74), by official curricula and the prevailing societal norms. Students should therefore be provided with the opportunity to engage with these practices. But this should go hand in hand with the development of criticality. This is to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary tools to engage in profound reflection on the intricate dynamics of power and domination processes, particularly in relation to language in order to be able to initiate personal and social transformation.

Pedagogy of variation

The advent of the interlectal theory, particularly in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane and Reunion islands, and its presence in the language practices of students at schools, have led to reflection on new ways of teaching and learning French adapted to these sociolinguistic contexts. Remember that in these Creole-speaking areas, as soon as French department status was achieved [similar to an area achieving statehood in the US], a policy of mass francization helped to give prominence to French and to undermine Creole. The teaching of French developed while Creole was banned from schools. Interlectal practices produced by pupils at schools were considered as French mistakes. When Creole began to be taught in these Creole islands in the early 2000s, particular attention was paid to interlectal practices in the teaching and learning of both French and Creole. The aim was to integrate the treatment of interlectal practices into a new pedagogy.

In seeking a pedagogical implementation of the concept of interlect, Prudent (2005) proposed the pedagogy of variation. This new method considers

language uses of pupils to acquire linguistic standards. In fact, the variations of speech of the pupils are welcomed in a caring manner by teachers, in order to put them in a position of linguistic security, which is important for encouraging them to communicate. Then, teachers lead their pupils to analyze and to discuss their own language productions, to rank them and to sort out the linguistic forms in order to highlight linguistic norms. Thus, by applying the methods of contrastive analysis to interlectal practices, students can distinguish between the two standard codes, Creole and French. At the same time as they debate the analysis of their own language productions and understand how linguistic norms are used, they develop not only their linguistic awareness but also their metalinguistic skills. They understand that there is Creole and French, and that there is a space in which the two languages come into contact to produce interlectal forms.

In this teaching method, French, Creole and the interlectal forms are treated equally, at the same time as the two standard languages are taught. This is the aim of the integrated French and Creole didactics in an interlectal context proposed by Souprayen-Cavery (2014), in an attempt to think about a pedagogical approach of the Reunionese interlect. According to this scheme, interlectal practices are always taken into account in the acquisition of Creole and French. Creole is also integrated into the teaching and learning of French, just as French is integrated into the teaching and learning of Creole. In this sense, the pedagogy of variation is part of the didactics of plurilingualism, the pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures, and more particularly of the integrated language didactics.

In Reunion, the pedagogy of variation is implemented as part of the bilingual French-Creole education system, the teaching of French in Creole speaking environments and the teaching of Creole. To carry out this teaching method successfully, teachers must have linguistic skills in both languages, Creole and French, and be able to analyze all interlectal forms. For this reason, teacher training institutes in these Creole islands are gradually attaching importance to the contextualization of language teaching and to the learning of Creole.

The analysis of interlectal practices is essential insofar as it is used in the training of both teachers and pupils. Interlectal practices are so obvious that education authorities can no longer ignore them. Moreover, within the academic program for teaching French in a Creole-speaking environment at primary level, teachers increasingly work on the mixed Creole-French linguistic practices produced by pupils.

Cross-fertilization beyond similarities and differences?

There is a certain degree of similarity and difference between the two concepts of translanguaging and interlectal practices. We believe that the existence of common principles enables discrepancies to engender opportunities for cross-fertilization and the extension of the aforementioned pedagogical approaches.

A commonality between these two approaches is their emphasis on languaging and speech, i.e. the specific and often creative language practices exhibited by bilingual individuals, with a particular interest in postcolonial contexts and linguistic hegemony. It is evident that both approaches demonstrate a commitment to exploring original

and atypical forms of language use that transcend the conventional understanding of languages as distinct linguistic entities. These novel approaches challenge the prevailing paradigm of considering languages as interrelated yet discrete linguistic systems. In doing so, both concepts also go beyond the scope of code-switching and posit explicitly or implicitly that interlectal practices and translanguaging cannot be described with this concept.

The study of interlectal practices has the potential to significantly contribute to the development of translanguaging theories by demonstrating that bilingual individuals spontaneously engage in creative practices beyond *named* languages, thereby freely creating new emergent ways of expressing themselves without knowing that they are employing different socially defined languages or even creating new practices.

Moreover, interlectal studies demonstrate that even linguists are not always able to distinguish traditionally defined languages in these emergent practices. As mentioned above, the concept of linguistic continuum became inoperative and the concept of interlect emerged as a result of becoming aware of the inability to perceive linguistic boundaries. The concept of interlect therefore indicates that language practices of bilinguals often clearly transcend traditional language boundaries and are a unique and intrinsic mode of communication. Consequently, interlectal practices can be regarded as evidence that "discursive practices [of bilinguals] cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of a language" (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 22) and as an indication of the validity of the unitary translanguaging theory, on which the 'strong' version of translanguaging is based.

Scholars working on interlectal practices could benefit from translanguaging studies in their analysis of interlectal practices and the elaboration of a theory of languages. Translanguaging theory may present an opportunity to reconsider interlectal practices, with greater attention being directed towards idiolects or sociolects than languages, given that the identification of traditional linguistic codes is not always feasible. The analysis of interlectal practices would benefit from greater social contextualization, allowing for a more comprehensive consideration of the socio-interactional - i.e. interpersonal - constraints (Jeanneau & Ollivier, 2018). This analysis would facilitate a more balanced description of these practices, with a greater emphasis on their social dimensions rather than merely their linguistic aspects.

The most significant divergence is manifest in the political dimension. While this dimension is of critical importance to translanguaging, which aims to achieve cognitive, pedagogical and societal transformations, the Creole studies on interlectal practices and the derived pedagogy of variation are less political in nature. A review of the prevailing literature on interlectal practices reveals a conspicuous absence of any explicit commitment to an explicit political aim or a will to transform society. However, it should be noted that the concept of interlect possesses a political dimension due to its opposition to the concept of diglossia, which refers to the domination and superiority of French over Creole. The aim was to refute the overly colonial, structuralist view of languages and to give a recognized, legitimate and valuing place to interlectal practices in the macro-system of communication. In doing so, the studies of interlectal practices, even if developed by 'racialized' scholars, greatly differ from the strong version of translanguaging.

While translanguaging is based on a postcolonial paradigm which recognizes and challenges hierarchical power structures, the researchers working in the field of interlectal practices and analyzing similar practices as translanguaging promoters, attempt to overcome diglossia and the perception of language contact in terms of conflict. Prudent (2025) for example states that "lorsqu'ils n'adhèrent pas simplement à une vision complémentariste et conflictuelle à la fois du terme diglossie, la plupart des spécialistes réunis parlent de bi-, tri-, pluri- ou multilinguisme" (p. 359) [When they do not simply adhere to a complementary and conflicting view of the term diglossia, most of the specialists use the terms bi-, tri-, pluri- or multilingualism].

The pedagogical approach inherent in both concepts is oriented towards the valuation of plurilingual practices. The pedagogy of variation, as well as translanguaging in education, rejects the rejection of bilingual practices that transcend the rules and norms. The first step in the pedagogy of variation for example is to acknowledge all the productions of learners, regardless of their potential alignment (or not) with a "named" language. Consequently, educators and students must recognize the legitimacy of the broad spectrum of potential productions and their creative dimension. Implementing this kind of pedagogy requires teachers to have skills in both languages in contact and to know how to handle learner's interlectal practices.

The fundamental difference between the two approaches is to be found in their divergent final objectives. The pedagogy of variation, grounded in (socio) linguistics, aims to enable learners to differentiate—and thus to separate—linguistic codes for their acquisition. Conversely, translanguaging categorically rejects such activities because they posit languages as linguistic entities. Furthermore, García and Li Wei (2014) contest "the ability to distinguish and separate languages as a telltale performance indicator of a bilingual's linguistic proficiency, even competence" (p. 12).

The pedagogy of variation is intended to value interlectal forms *and* to develop the competence to distinguish languages, as well as improving skills in Creole and in the national language of schooling. Unlike translanguaging it does not provide learners with activities designed to encourage them to produce work in a translanguaging mode. While interlectal practices are valued and acknowledged as what Cenoz and Gorter (2021) call "spontaneous translanguaging" (p. 18), they are not explicitly promoted as a form of communication. This approach can be explained by the fact that this teaching method emerged in response to the persistent challenges faced by students in learning French as a result of a teaching approach that failed to adapt to the actual language usage and even rejected interlectal forms, which were perceived as illegitimate. Translanguaging places creative practices at the core of pedagogy and recognizes preparing students to socially communicate in a *named* language. In contrast, the pedagogy of variation focuses on learning Creole and the national language of schooling, promoting the ability to distinguish between different practices - interlectal and norm-adequate - and valuing interlectal practices as a means of communication - albeit as an initial step.

In a certain sense, the description of interlectal practices and derived pedagogies illustrate the two translanguaging theories (the *unitary* and the *crosslinguistic translanguaging theories,* Cummins, 2021). From a descriptive standpoint, it provides

substantiating evidence for the *unitary translanguaging theory* demonstrating that speakers are not aware of languages and the boundaries between them. Pedagogically, the integrated pedagogy of variation posits that individuals can (and should learn to) distinguish between languages and use their competence in one language to learn the other one and vice-versa. This approach is thus grounded in the theoretical framework of *cross-linguistic translanguaging*.

Translanguaging theorists could therefore critique the pedagogy of variation as an approach that is founded on evidence of the unitary translanguaging theory but trains students to think in terms of languages as linguistic entities. Even interlectal practices are linguistically named as *interlect* whereas translanguaging advocates do not use a term such as *translanguage* to designate practices, emphasizing practices over linguistic "structures" (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 10). Translanguaging is not a translanguage or a translect, it's a practice. Promoters of the pedagogy of variation could criticize translanguaging in education for being overly idealistic and disconnected from the realities of school and society, which primarily require students to learn *named* languages.

Perspectives for plurilingual language education

In our point of view, language education should provide equal opportunities for translanguaging / interlectal practices as well as for the use of *named* languages, in order to show learners that different practices can coexist legitimately and peacefully. From this perspective, the exclusive use of *named* languages would be considered as a specific practice, and all practices would be considered as socially shaped phenomena. This perspective does not promote thinking of languages as linguistic entities but rather in terms of practices as socially situated uses of the entire individual's repertoire. This perspective is integrated into a socio-interactional approach to communication and language learning (Caws et al., 2021; Jeanneau & Ollivier, 2018). Based on interactionist linguistics and language philosophy (Grillo, 2000, 2005; Jacques, 1985), it posits that all language use is shaped by the dynamic interpersonal relationship between communication partners in specific, socially defined situations. According to this paradigm, the use of *semiotic means* is largely determined by the dynamics of the relationships involved. At the same time, the way in which people communicate with each other modifies the nature of the interpersonal relationship. From a pedagogical perspective, in an attempt to value all practices equally, learners should first learn that they are free to use their entire repertoire as they wish. At the same time, however, they should also learn that this freedom is *socially constrained*.

This learning process could start with the observation and analysis of *socially situated* practices enabling learners to understand to which extent practices are possible and appropriate in diverse situations and interpersonal relationships. What matters is how appropriate the language is to the social and interpersonal relationships involved, and how it impacts these relationships, rather than the question whether language practices can be related to a *named* language (even if the name of languages can sometimes be used to help students refer to well-known ways of thinking). In Creole-speaking regions, learners could attempt to understand why, in certain situations, people only use elements from what is called Creole or French

and why they sometimes use interlectal practices. They should also understand what is appropriate (or not) in different situations as some practices might lead to a breakdown in communication or misunderstanding.

Of course, not all language practices are conscious. Thus, it can be difficult to identify the reasons behind them. However, the success of communication in relation to language use can be analyzed. Learners could, for example, become aware that using a specific *named* language or interlectal practices can, in some cases, have negative effects on communication or on interpersonal relationships. They could also reflect on how different people may understand certain utterances depending on their familiarity with the corresponding practice. And of course, learners should learn to adapt their language practices to different situations and relationships.

At the same time, learners should become aware of their own language practices and analyze to what extent they are appropriate (or not) for the various situations in which they interact or will have to interact with different partners. On this basis, they could learn to distinguish which aspects of their own repertoire to use in diverse situations and reflect on the appropriateness of their choices. And if they are not aware of these choices, they should be enabled to make choices according to the specifics of each communicative situation and their own willingness to conform to the social expectations (or not).

Instead of asking learners how to say something in French or Creole, it would be more beneficial to ask them how to phrase something in order, for example, to be comprehensible to speakers from continental France (with no experience with interlectal and Creole practices) or to align (or not) with established social conventions in French and Creole societies depending on the communication situations and the communication partners. The focus would thus be more on the socio-interactional dimension of situated communication than on linguistic aspects.

Apart from these sociolinguistically framed activities, space should be made for the specific use of interlectal practices / translanguaging. These practices should not be only the subject of analysis but also of practice as promoted in translanguaging in education. For example, creative writing activities could encourage students to use their entire repertoire. However, these activities should extend beyond language arts, as this could give the impression that translanguaging is only for artistic purposes where transgression is usual. The provided activities should also be situated in everyday situations.

The aim is not to educate language users to conform to norms but to be able to choose if they want to conform or not. Transgression, in the sense of practices that do not correspond to the social framework of communication, should also be allowed and promoted, so that there is always space for creative language use. However, learners should be encouraged to reflect on the possible positive and negative effects of transgressive practices, on how they present themselves and their communication skills, on their relationships involved and on the broader implications in terms of transforming language practices and society. They should be aware of the power of language, especially the power that comes with knowing how to use semiotic resources—without using this power to dominate others or allowing it to be used to dominate them. Languaging should be associated with freedom and empowerment, but also with the awareness that the social interpersonal framework

of communication shapes language practices. Learners should understand that we all are *constrained freelanguagers*.

Constrained freelanguaging and its pedagogy

A pedagogy of constrained freelanguaging appears to be a promising alternative to translanguaging and the pedagogy of variation in education. As constrained freelanguagers, individuals can use elements of *named* languages freely while taking socio-interactional constraints into account. Freelanguaging recognizes that individuals have semiotic resources that can be organized and considered in different ways by the individuals themselves, and that a specific competence enables them to manage this repertoire. This competence must be developed to enable the conscious and informed use of the entire semiotic repertoire.

The focus lies on freedom in language use rather than transcendence or transgression. Similar to translanguaging and interlectal practices, *freelanguaging* refers to the creative use of semiotic resources that is not confined to a particular (*named*) language. Although the pedagogy of *constrained freelanguaging* appears to be especially appropriate for postcolonial contexts, we believe it is an approach that can be applied to all contexts, as ideologies may be present in a wide range of settings. This pedagogy seeks to address all kinds of imbalances and injustices in language education. It aims to empower learners and language users to freely use and learn to use their semiotic resources for communication purposes.

However, at the same time, the *pedagogy of constrained freelanguaging* also aims to make learners aware of communication constraints and of the socio-interactional —i.e. interpersonal, political, ideological…—nature of these constraints, which can be either respected or disregarded, with communicative and interpersonal consequences. This approach posits that all languaging is a social action and should therefore be considered as such. Selecting semiotic resources is thus a social decision with consequences. This decision may be political, ideological, and so on, but each communication act is embedded in a socio-interactional context that must be considered. Language users should be aware of social expectations and the impact of their decisions to either align with or diverge from them.

Freelanguaging pedagogy accepts and values all semiotic practices, promotes the use of each individual's entire semiotic repertoire to communicate. Simultaneously, it helps students develop a strong socio-interactional competence, which allows them to make informed decisions about how to use their repertoire in specific communicative situations and interpersonal interactions.

Conclusion

This paper focuses on a dialogue between studies and theories that are particularly prevalent, in the United States and in French Creole-speaking islands, respectively. While translanguaging is now a controversial but internationally used concept, interlectal practices and the pedagogy of variation are only known within specific scientific circles. This demonstrates the domination of specific concepts published in established journals in English, in contrast to concepts that are mostly disseminated in other languages and in less widely read journals.

This is not only the case for interlectal practices and the pedagogy of variation in the French Creole-speaking islands, but also in many other regions, particularly in the Global South. In Madagascar, for example, several scholars are studying the frequent use of "frangasy" (Randriamarotsimba, 2000), "frangache" or "variaminanana" (Razafindratsimba, 2010), a form of translanguaging in which speakers creatively use resources from different *named* languages, such as French and Malagasy, and transcend normed uses. In Kenya, a hybrid linguistic phenomenon known as "Sheng" (Githiora, 2018) has emerged, drawing from a base of Kiswahili while incorporating elements of English and various Kenyan ethnic languages such as Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Kamba, and others. "Sheng" is a dynamic practice that reflects the cultural, social, and political realities of urban life in Kenya. Since it is particularly prevalent among young people, it is increasingly being considered in official language teaching and learning practices.

Even in Southern India, especially in the city of Chennai, a language dynamic made up of Tamil and English called "Tanglish" (Krishnasamy, 2008) is developing to such an extent that it has become a habitual language practice. "Francorse" (Filippi, 1992), which is a mixture of Corsican and regional French spoken in Corsica, is also very popular among young people. Much has been written about languages in contact in different sociolinguistic contexts, but above all several terms have been coined to describe how practices based on mixed use and hybridity can emerge and operate. The phenomenon of translanguaging proves that even if we want to confine languages to standardized spaces, they completely escape us. This reality is so present that schools have a duty to make room for them.

Through this paper, we aimed to promote dialogue between researchers studying similar language practices, even if they do not reach the same linguistic conclusions or advocate the same pedagogical approaches. We especially hope that research from the Global South will be given more consideration by scholars from the Global North. But first, based on a dialogue between the strong version of translanguaging and the studies of interlectal practices and the associated pedagogy of variation, we aimed to present a pedagogical approach to language uses. This approach includes, values and encourages all language practices, fosters *constrained freelanguaging* as the awareness and freedom in language use while acknowledging the macrosocial and interpersonal communication constraints and makes learners aware of the possibility to conform or to deviate from social rules, as well as the impact of these decisions. We believe that this kind of pedagogy can contribute to the education of better communicators who are aware of the challenges of each communication process and of peaceful citizens who are conscious of power relations but who do not necessarily view language use in terms of domination.

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6

Democratizing Knowledge in Plurilingual Education

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Abstract

This article reports efforts to mobilize and democratize research-informed knowledge and resources for plurilingual education through the Plurilingual Lab, a research laboratory based in Canada. Situated in the highly multilingual city of Montreal, Quebec, the Lab showcases findings from research on plurilingual education and fosters collaborative knowledge mobilization among researchers and educators. Grounded in principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and decoloniality (EDID), the Plurilingual Lab's initiatives seek to advance and inform both plurilingual research and pedagogical practices. Moreover, by making resources openly accessible, the Lab helps democratize knowledge production and dissemination, extending its reach to communities that might otherwise lack access to such scholarship. This article concludes by calling scholars across applied linguistics to undertake similar initiatives, advancing efforts to positively impact social change and promote greater equity for linguistically marginalized communities, thereby contributing to a more just and inclusive linguistic landscape—and ultimately giving all languages the attention they deserve.

Keywords: *Plurilingual education, plurilingual research, EDID, plurilingualism, multilingualism*

Introduction

Scholarly interest in plurilingualism has expanded considerably over the past decades, underscoring its growing relevance in contemporary language education and consolidating its position as a robust, well-established field of inquiry (Fäcke et al., 2024; Piccardo et al., 2021). Plurilingualism has long been championed by the Council of Europe—a leading human rights organization—through its language policy frameworks, most notably the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). For nearly thirty years, the

CEFR has offered pedagogical and assessment guidelines that attend to social justice issues affecting speakers of more than one language, particularly those who speak minoritized languages, while also promoting language learning and intercultural competence. Yet, despite its sustained presence in policy, research, and practice, plurilingual education is still perceived by some, especially in the US, as a relatively new notion which is frequently conflated with multilingual education—a more commonly used term. Plurilingualism is occasionally misunderstood as synonymous with polyglotism, a characterization explicitly rejected within the plurilingual theory as it implies native speaker proficiency levels.

These misperceptions are continually reproduced through the long-standing monolingual habitus and persistent linguistic homogenization (Gogolin, 1997) that continue to underpin both language education and applied linguistics. In educational contexts, this monolingual orientation is evidenced in the entrenched assumption that learners possess little to no meaningful linguistic knowledge beyond the target language of instruction. Such an assumption not only eclipses learners' rich and diverse repertoires but also undermines their agency to draw from these resources in meaningful ways, thereby positioning them in conditions of linguistic and educational marginalization. Thus, there is an urgent need to mobilize and disseminate plurilingual research more widely and more accessibly, ensuring that its social justice–oriented principles and pedagogical implications are understood, adapted, and enacted on a global scale in ways that remain aligned with local realities and to the identities of the communities they serve.

The goal of this article is to first introduce the concept of plurilingualism and the need for research in this area. It then shows current efforts toward the knowledge mobilization of plurilingual education, with a particular focus on bridging empirical research evidence into concrete, practice-oriented strategies for social change. We illustrate how the Plurilingual Lab, a research laboratory housed at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, is mobilizing plurilingual knowledge through multiple formats, as later presented, by engaging in projects that bridge research, pedagogy, and community outreach.

What is Plurilingualism?

Plurilingualism is a term that introduces a new vision of language, one that is dynamic and socially grounded, acknowledging how individuals draw upon their full linguistic and cultural repertoires to communicate, learn, live, belong, construct meaning and express their identities (Piccardo, 2016). Let us use our repertoires as examples of plurilingual engagement. We both immigrated to Canada, where English and French are official languages, and live in the province of Quebec, where the official language is French:

- As an immigrant to Canada from Brazil, Galante draws on her plurilingual and pluricultural competence in her everyday communicative practices. For example, she often uses Portuguese to exchange voice messages via WhatsApp with friends and family who live in Brazil. At home, she primarily communicates in English with her partner, whose first language is English, while also translanguaging in French and English, particularly when

discussing their daughter's educational experiences in a francophone daycare in Quebec. She speaks to her daughter in Portuguese, English, Spanish and a few words in Italian (these last two are Galante's heritage languages) and reads her books in these four languages. In interactions with her mother and one of her sisters, both of whom live in Brazil, Galante prefers to use Spanish in affective exchanges, as this is an additional language shared among them. Communication with her other sister, however, is maintained in Portuguese and centers on learning about, discussing, and comparing Indigenous languages and cultural knowledges in Canada and Brazil, reflecting her sister's professional engagement with Indigenous communities in the Amazon region. In her free time, Galante engages in nature walks while listening to a diverse Spotify playlist featuring music in Italian and Spanish (reflecting her cultural heritage), as well as French, English, and other languages. She is also an avid consumer of international films, which she prefers to watch in their original languages, selecting subtitles in different languages depending on her goals or feelings—when she is tired, she prefers to watch films without subtitles, so she defaults to films spoken in Portuguese, English, or Spanish, her strongest languages. Other times, she may watch a Korean film with French subtitles to further develop her French proficiency. When discussing politics, Galante prefers to use Portuguese as it is tied to her identity as a Latin American social justice activist.

- Xie has a similar yet distinct trajectory. As an international student in Canada, English functions as her primary academic and professional language, shaping her participation in doctoral study, research, and professional networking. She uses English for scholarly reading and writing, teaching related communication, and collaboration with colleagues across diverse linguistic backgrounds. In her work as a Chinese as a heritage language teacher, English also serves as a pedagogical resource. She uses it strategically to scaffold comprehension, clarify task instructions, and invite cross linguistic noticing without positioning it as the "default" or superior language. Meanwhile, Mandarin is central to her engagement with Chinese speaking networks and community life, including communicating with Chinese families and supporting learners' participation in Chinese literacy and cultural activities. Xie also draws on Sichuanese as an affective and relational resource, used selectively to build rapport, show intimacy, and sustain a sense of regional belonging in exchanges with family and friends in China. Finally, French is an additional language Xie is currently developing, and it supports her everyday navigation of life in Quebec. She uses French for routine interactions in local settings and increasingly treats it as a learning resource, experimenting with new expressions, building vocabulary for daily needs, and reflecting on how language shapes access and participation in Quebec society. When appropriate, she also engages in translanguaging in French and English in her teaching to connect with learners' lived realities and to model a stance of ongoing language learning.

Together, our trajectories illustrate how plurilingualism is not merely a theoretical construct, but a lived, evolving practice shaped by mobility, learning, and ongoing

engagement with diverse linguistic ecologies and is never ending.

In the Canadian context, both Galante and Xie navigate minoritized languages (e.g., Portuguese and Mandarin) alongside dominant ones (English and French), a plurilingual repertoire that grants them access to rich sources of knowledge and cultural insights. Yet, this linguistic advantage exists alongside experiences of discrimination and the persistent undervaluation of their languages, highlighting the complex interplay between empowerment and marginalization in their linguistic trajectories. Individuals' linguistic repertoires are intrinsically shaped by their lived experiences with language, culture, mobility, and participation in both online and offline communities (Galante, 2020; Piccardo & Chen, 2024), and are deeply intertwined with identity and modes of expression. A natural consequence of this complexity is that such repertoires evolve unevenly—manifesting varying levels of proficiency—and dynamically over time, as individuals switch between languages, translanguage, access information across linguistic resources, express themselves creatively by combining languages in their repertoire, and adapt their communication to different settings and interlocutors. These plurilingual practices are not only expected but constitute the norm (Galante & dela Cruz, 2021). It is this plurilingual normality, we argue, that all language users should have the freedom to enact and express, countering linguistic discrimination, marginalization and silencing.

In European language policy (CEFR, 2020), there is a helpful distinction between the terms plurilingualism and multilingualism to highlight the fluid nature of the pluri- prefix; plurilingualism referring to the flexible repertoire of languages and varieties of the individual while multilingualism referring to the languages present in societies but not necessarily interrelated. We go a step further to suggest that societies can also be plurilingual. A case in point is the city of Montreal, where it is common for multiple languages to co-occur within the same interaction and for diverse linguistic repertoires to intersect fluidly (Paquet & Levasseur, 2019). Although Montreal is located in Quebec—the only officially French-speaking province in Canada—everyday interactions often involve several languages used dynamically and in complementary ways. For instance, two individuals may converse in English, French, and Kanien'kéha in a Chinese restaurant where staff communicate in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. This language fluidity, and at times intentional, plurilingual practices are expressions of identity and belonging. By contrast, *multilingualism* typically denotes the presence of multiple languages within a society or community, but these languages tend to be used separately rather than interactively (Council of Europe, 2020). An illustrative example would be assuming that all residents in a city's Chinatown speak only Mandarin, while those in Little Italy interact exclusively in Italian. While not everyone makes this distinction between plurilingualism and multilingualism, we do so to highlight the interrelated nature of the prefix *pluri-* in plurilingualism, meaning a dynamic, interconnected repertoire in which languages and varieties coexist, interact, and are mobilized holistically rather than as discrete, compartmentalized systems which is the case of multilingualism.

This holistic reconceptualization challenges traditional monolingual norms that have long dominated educational systems and calls for pedagogies and policies that validate and integrate learners' lived linguistic experiences into educational

practice. Concurrently, it introduces the notion of the plurilingual individual, as described earlier—a person who draws from all their linguistic resources flexibly across communicative situations rather than treating languages as isolated systems. This perspective draws on key insights from earlier sociolinguistics and applied linguistics research (e.g., Gumperz, 1964; Hymes, 1972), which emphasize the socially situated and fluid nature of language use, as well as from communicative and action-oriented approaches, which position learners as social agents engaged in meaningful, real-world communication.

Building on these foundations, plurilingual education has evolved into a pedagogical, critical and ethical framework that promotes equity, diversity, inclusion, and more recently decoloniality (EDID) (Galante et al., 2025) recognizing learners' diverse identities and language practices. Over time, the approach has expanded beyond Europe, influencing research and practice in contexts such as Canada, Australia, Brazil, Japan, the US, and other countries, where educators have adapted plurilingual principles to local pluri/multilingual realities and sociopolitical contexts (Chen et al., 2022; Galante, 2025a).

I have argued, however, that merely celebrating the languages within individuals' repertoires is insufficient; plurilingual education must be grounded in a critical orientation—one that actively confronts inequities and dismantles the barriers that prevent people from using their languages with confidence and pride, especially in contexts with colonial legacies such as Canada and the US (Galante, 2025b). While plurilingual education now represents a global movement that advocates for more inclusive, identity-affirming, and socially responsive forms of language use, policy, teaching and learning must remain attentive to diverse contextual realities.

From Vision to Collective Praxis: The Development of the Plurilingual Lab

The Plurilingual Lab was founded in 2018 by Galante, when she joined Concordia University as an Assistant Professor and was given a dedicated space for a personal research laboratory. In contrast to conventional individual research laboratories, Galante envisioned a collective, justice-oriented hub that could mobilize research in multilingualism and plurilingualism toward more equitable educational futures. The Lab was thus conceived as a space where scholars, educators, and students could come together to (1) interrogate dominant monolingual ideologies (May, 2014); (2) cultivate alternative pedagogical possibilities (e.g., Galante et al., 2020), and (3) build solidarities and partnerships across linguistic, cultural, and institutional borders, particularly with schools, higher education institutions, non-governmental organizations, refugee centers and underrepresented communities. From the outset, the Plurilingual Lab relied on the energy, care, and commitment of student volunteers, whose behind-the-scenes labor—hosting talks, organizing logistics, producing video recordings—made its early activities possible. Their contributions underscored the Lab's ethos: that knowledge production is a fundamentally collaborative and relational endeavor.

In 2019, the Plurilingual Lab was moved to McGill University following Galante's appointment as an Assistant Professor. This transition enabled the Lab to integrate into a broader research ecosystem committed to educational innovation and social justice, while preserving the collaborative ethos and plurilingual vision

that shaped its founding. As its impact grew, the Lab secured support from the Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance (CSLP), allowing it to sustain its mission while offering modest stipends to graduate students who continue to anchor its day-to-day operations. The research conducted by the lab's teams has been consistently supported by two government agencies, provincially through the Fonds de recherche du Québec, and federally through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Without such support, the depth and scope of the scholarly work produced at the Lab would be limited.

Today, the Plurilingual Lab advances its work through this constellation of institutional support, graduate student leadership, and a global community of scholars who believe in widening access to research. All invited speakers—renowned experts and emerging voices alike—generously share their work without an honorarium and authorize its open dissemination, ensuring that plurilingual knowledge circulates beyond academic walls to areas where resources are scarce. Through these commitments, the Plurilingual Lab has become a vibrant, justice-driven space for reimagining language education; a site where research, pedagogy, and advocacy converge in pursuit of more inclusive and pluralistic learning environments.

Montreal as an Ideal Context for Plurilingual Research

Montreal presents an exceptional context for a research laboratory devoted to plurilingualism as the city is shaped by layered histories of colonialism and its enduring francophone–anglophone dynamics. Montreal is also the birthplace of research on bilingual immersion education, a model that has significantly shaped bilingual programs internationally. The origins of this approach can be traced to the landmark St. Lambert experiment initiated in 1965, just south of Montreal. Wallace Lambert and his colleagues studied a pioneering, parent-led English–French bilingual program over four years (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). These parents were dissatisfied with conventional French instruction and advocated for an alternative approach after observing that their anglophone children were not achieving high levels of French. The Canadian French immersion model was thus conceived to cultivate high proficiency in English and French—what Cummins (2008) famously called *the two solitudes*—while ensuring that students mastered academic content equivalent to that of the English-language curriculum and gained deeper insight into francophone cultures and communities (Roy, 2010). In this context, the term bilingualism is still attached to the two colonial languages, English and French.

Montreal is also home to linguistic tensions, despite its rise in English and French bilingualism (Dufresne & Ruderman, 2018), along with multilingualism (Galante & dela Cruz, 2021; Leimgruber, 2020, 2025). Montreal is situated in a province where French is the sole official language but in a country with English and French bilingual policies. It embodies the intricate sociolinguistic ecologies that plurilingual scholarship seeks to illuminate and its continual negotiation of plurilingual policies. Across its neighborhoods, communities enact rich and fluid translanguaging practices, negotiating identity, access, and belonging in ways that reflect both local realities and global linguistic flows.

Yet, language laws in the province of Quebec pose challenges to linguistic plurality and marginalize communities that are non-francophone (Chiras & Galante,

2021). One infamous example is the introduction of mandatory French-language schooling policies in 1977, not providing an option for immigrant parents whose language is not English to enroll their children in English-speaking schools in the Quebec province. In this law, children of immigrant parents were obliged to attend French-speaking schools, a government plan to boost the number of French speakers in the province. This law forced an increase in the proportion of plurilingual students enrolled in French primary and secondary schools from 14.6% in 1971 to a staggering 89.4% in 2015 or an overall provincial enrollment of 90.4% in French-language schools (Office québécois de la langue française, 2017).

Quebec remains the only Canadian province to operate both English and French higher education systems, and provincial language policies often stand in tension with shifting linguistic demographics, yielding important insights into how such policies shape social and educational experiences. These tensions render Montreal not merely a backdrop, but a living laboratory where the Plurilingual Lab can engage meaningfully with questions of equity, social justice, and educational transformation, situating its research and pedagogical initiatives within the dynamic interplay of language, culture, and social change in this context and beyond.

Despite these tensions, Montreal is a city that vividly embodies Canada's official bilingualism with a rapidly evolving plurilingual landscape. This linguistic diversity is clearly reflected in recent demographic data. According to Statistics Canada (2023), the rate of English–French bilingualism in Quebec rose from 40.8% in 2001 to 46.4% in 2021, indicating a steady increase in official-language bilingualism. Yet, this bilingualism alone does not capture the full linguistic complexity of the province. Between 1996 and 2021, the share of Quebec residents whose mother tongue is neither French nor English increased from 8.9% to 13.4%, signaling a substantial rise in linguistic diversity closely tied to immigration (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2025).

Montreal's everyday linguistic practices further demonstrate its deeply plurilingual character. The city's well-known greeting of *Bonjour–Hi*, for instance, encapsulates the fluid alternation between French and English in daily interactions (The Canadian Press, 2024), while many residents also weave heritage and immigrant languages, such as Arabic, Mandarin, and Spanish, into their social and family lives (Galante & dela Cruz, 2021; Paquet & Levasseur, 2019). Moreover, Quebec's strong policy commitment to language learning, illustrated by its publicly funded *francization* programs that provide free French language education to residents, further strengthens the city's plurilingual vitality. Language programs in languages other than French, however, receive little to no public provincial funding which highlights the inequities and marginalizations of minoritized languages.

Together, these dynamic and inclusive language practices highlight Montreal's vibrant plurilingual ecology and underscore its relevance as a context for examining how plurilingualism is enacted and negotiated across social and educational spheres, particularly amid the political tensions and inequitable policies that, contradicting the social reality, continue to marginalize plurilingual practices. It is in this complex context that the Plurilingual Lab is housed. As such, while Montreal's unique sociolinguistic dynamics deeply inform the research conducted at the Plurilingual Lab, the insights generated extend far beyond the city. They resonate with and

contribute to examining superdiverse, multilingual contexts internationally, where similar negotiations of language, identity, and equity are at play.

Plurilingual Lab's Mission and Knowledge Mobilization Initiatives

Mission

The mission of the Plurilingual Lab is to advance research, pedagogy, and policy that recognize and value the rich plurilingual repertoires of individuals and communities. Grounded in principles of EDID the Lab's goal is to generate research-informed knowledge and mobilize it globally to support plurilingual education and foster linguistic justice in diverse contexts. Through collaborative projects with educators, students, and community partners such as schools, universities, refugee centers, and communities, the Lab transforms research insights into pedagogical and policy innovations, and resources to empower language learners, teachers, and language users to embrace and take pride in their plurilingual identities and linguistic practices, ultimately promoting their well-being and sense of belonging.

With its mission of knowledge mobilization, the Lab has four main open access initiatives—the Plurilingual Lab Speaker Series, Grad Talks, My Research Story, and Resources—each described below:

- *Plurilingual Lab Speaker Series*

The *Plurilingual Speaker Series* brings together renowned and emerging scholars from around the world to engage in critical conversations on contemporary language issues. Grounded in the values of linguistic diversity and social justice, the series explores themes such as linguistic discrimination, plurilingual pedagogies, language policy, and the identity experiences of plurilingual individuals. Through interdisciplinary dialogues, invited speakers shed light on how languages intersect with culture, power, and belonging, while examining the implications of plurilingualism for education, policy-making, and intercultural communication. By fostering open exchange among researchers, educators, and community members, the series serves as a platform for advancing equitable and inclusive understandings of language in today's multilingual societies. Offered entirely free of charge and accessible to participants across the globe—from educators and researchers to policy makers and community practitioners—this initiative distinguishes itself through its commitment to the democratization of plurilingual research, fostering inclusive and equitable participation in critical dialogues on language, identity, and education.

Each talk lasts approximately one hour and is followed by a 30-minute discussion where participants can ask questions and engage in conversations with the presenters. To enhance accessibility, the talks are video recorded and available through the Plurilingual Lab YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/@PlurilingualLab) where subscribers receive a notification when a new talk has been made available. Table 1 includes a list with accessible links of the talks hosted in the past 7 years.

Table 1 *Plurilingual Lab Speaker Series talks hosted between 2018 and 2025.*

Presenter(s)	Title of Talk	Link to Recorded Talk on YouTube
2018		
Sunny Man Chu Lau	Affordances of plurilingual pedagogy in second language classrooms	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC4foPV_qhI&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=38
Julie Kerekes	Collaboration on a settlement organization's ESL curriculum	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lE2NM7KAJk&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=37
2019		
Susan Ballinger	Translanguaging's awkward adolescent phase?	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IeBPTk2n_9A&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=36
Caroline Payant	Plurilingual approaches to language instruction	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVH7fetfwOc&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=35
Mela Sarkar	Non-interventionism as research in critical applied sociolinguistics	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zgnrumIMEE&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=34
William G. Lindsay	Reconciliation through language teaching and learning	youtube.com/watch?v=CmJP4VyawVg&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=33
Vijay Ramjattan	Raciolinguistic ideologies at work	youtube.com/watch?v=xAFaDA1Nv1o&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=32
Saskia Van Viegen	Translanguaging as pedagogy	youtube.com/watch?v=fQuki6bWGlw&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=31
2020		
Joël Thibeault	Towards an inclusive grammar in francophone schools	youtube.com/watch?v=__ZxdVlwdbA&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=30
Shakina Rajendram	Translanguaging as transformative for minoritized language learners	youtube.com/watch?v=izC7jl3nBS8&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=29

Nina Woll & Pierre-Luc Paquet	Promoting plurilingual practices in higher education	youtube.com/watch?v=X1L8YSPY5Mo&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=28
Ron Darvin	Online scholarly identities and investment	youtube.com/watch?v=i8O0O8Naa_k&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=27
Li Wei	Multi-competence, translanguaging, and mobile self-directed learning	youtube.com/watch?v=p6XPCEYIZ5Q&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=26
Sender Dovchin	Injustice, translingualism, and linguistic discrimination	youtube.com/watch?v=MeCDP0clhKA&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=25
Sunny Man Chu Lau, Saskia Van Viegen, Angelica Galante, Avril Aitken & Loretta Robinson	Plurilingual pedagogies book launch	youtube.com/watch?v=hHA51qJo064&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=24
2021		
Jasone Cenoz & Durk Gorter	Pedagogical translanguaging in multilingual education	youtube.com/watch?v=GeqKR7u6SYI&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=23
Enrica Piccardo	The role mediation for plurilingualism in language education	youtube.com/watch?v=8Q53te9vcqU&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=22
Beth Anne Paulsrud, Zhongfeng Tian & Jeanette Toth	English-medium instruction and translanguaging book launch	youtube.com/watch?v=Fx2HFU6hShw&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=21
Amir Kalan	Sociocultural and power-relational dimensions of multilingual writing	youtube.com/watch?v=iKDoukoxxIA&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=20

Peter De Costa	Unpacking profit and pride in EMI higher education	youtube.com/watch?v=eA8puT1ALIQ&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=19
Caroline Payant & Angelica Galante along with 22 scholars	Plurilingualism and translanguaging: Pedagogical approaches for empowerment and validation	youtube.com/watch?v=7yJOFxjgQrg&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=18
2022		
Zhu Hua	Culture talks: Who makes culture relevant and why?	youtube.com/watch?v=j00LmQEDbuY&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=17
Ryuko Kubota	Two faces of neoliberal communicative competence in Japan	youtube.com/watch?v=CxlD27_aC74&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=16
Steve Marshall	Plurilingualism across the disciplines in Canadian higher education	youtube.com/watch?v=yzE92fjnE4U&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=15
Marianne Turner	Promoting multiliteracies through translanguaging pedagogy	youtube.com/watch?v=tx_cXYzFTME&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=14
Euline Cutrim Schmid	Technology-mediated plurilingual language learning	youtube.com/watch?v=eoUtpTCZpm4&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=13
Enrica Piccardo, Geoff Lawrence, Aline Germain-Rutherford, & Angelica Galante	Activating linguistic and cultural diversity in the language classroom	youtube.com/watch?v=U0R8SkpE6cw&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=12
2023		
Åsta Haukås	Exploring plurilingual pedagogies in Scandinavia	youtube.com/watch?v=_uMt-BiLuGw&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=11

Marcelyn Oostendorp	Towards surviving mastery in applied linguistics	youtube.com/watch?v=Rgf59u8ZsUs&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=10
Ruth Fielding, Gary Bonar, & Anuschka van't Hooft	Multilingualism, identity and interculturality in education	youtube.com/watch?v=av8yxDs5m_I&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=9
2024		
Lourdes Ortega	What's the "multi/plurilingual turn" in SLA got to do with social justice?	youtube.com/watch?v=EXfgZxd2tbM&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=8
Stephen May	Linguistic racism(s): Origins, developments, and implications	youtube.com/watch?v=_lYz5GOadhU&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=7
Joseph Lo Bianco	Language rights and peace building: New directions for multilingualism and policy	youtube.com/watch?v=yOlhT1Nq3qg&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=6
Laxmi Prasad Ojha, Jennifer Burton, Shakina Rajendram, Lucía Cárdenas Curiel, Angelica Galante, Darío Luis Banegas, & Laura Mahalingappa	Critical teacher education for equitable learning in multilingual classrooms: A possible way forward	youtube.com/watch?v=7UBjnpol97c&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=5
2025		
Sultan Turkan & Jamie Schissel along with 13 scholars	The racialized nature of academic language	youtube.com/watch?v=33UG4wetaR8&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=4

Christiane Fäcke & Paula Garrett-Rucks	The handbook of plurilingual and intercultural language learning	youtube.com/watch?v=4BIRW4paQlo&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=3
Maria Gonzalez Davies	A model for an integrated plurilingual approach to language learning	youtube.com/watch?v=fVgoovBqToE&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=2
Mi Yung Park along with 11 scholars	(En)countering linguistic discrimination in higher education	youtube.com/watch?v=ctcRGSZGENY&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9
2026		
Angelica Galante, Enrica Piccardo, Faith Marcel, Lana F. Zeaiter, & John Wayne dela Cruz	Plurilingual, decolonial and digital (PluriDigit) pedagogy: From critical practice to learner empowerment	youtube.com/watch?v=gJ_d68Q27pU&list=PLRZo5YABmOi6GefqXsWhB283ZIVDo9Gl9&index=1

These talks serve to inform the audience of recent research on plurilingual education in an engaging manner. Pedagogically, they have been used in higher education and teacher education programs to complement course syllabi. For example, course readings by the authors featured in the series can be enriched by the video recordings of their talks, allowing students to engage with the same research through multiple modalities. The talks are widely advertised through our social media networks, listserv and the lab's recent news webpage, https://www.mcgill.ca/plurilinguallab/ . We extend our sincere gratitude to all presenters in the Plurilingual Lab Speaker Series for their generosity in sharing their expertise without an honorarium and for agreeing to make their talks freely accessible worldwide through the recorded sessions on YouTube.

- *My Research Story*

My Research Story is a student-led video initiative coordinated by Xie (second author) which showcases high-quality graduate research through accessible storytelling. Each video presents the aims, methods, and key insights of a project while inviting participants to share the motivations and life trajectories that shape their scholarship. The project seeks not only to make graduate research more engaging and understandable for diverse audiences but also to encourage reflexivity among participants. My Research Story invites graduate researchers to reflect on their positionality, including their worldview, theory of knowledge, and value commitments (Holmes, 2020). These orientations shape every stage of their research, from the formulation of questions to the interpretation of findings. By foregrounding

positionality, their research project humanizes scholarship and situates academic knowledge within lived experience.

To date, the series has highlighted themes such as plurilingual pedagogy, language policy, classroom practice, and the identity experiences of plurilingual users, learners and teachers across diverse contexts globally. Through concise storytelling, participants illustrate how languages intersect with culture, schooling, and everyday life, and discuss implications for teaching, policy, and intercultural communication. In doing so, the series enables graduate researchers to translate complex insights into context-rich narratives that travel beyond academic circles, making their work more accessible to educators, practitioners, and community members who might not otherwise engage with journal articles (Bourbonnais & Michaud, 2018).

The series, comprising 13 videos thus far, equips graduate students with the skills to communicate complex ideas in engaging and understandable formats. This experience has seemed instrumental in building students' confidence to mobilize their own work in academic conferences and participate in national competitions such as the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's (SSHRC) *Storytellers*. For example, after recording her video to *My Research Story*, Kiana Kishiyama, MA in Second Language Education at McGill University and currently a PhD student at Carlton University, was a finalist in the 2025 SSHRC's Storytellers competition. The value of this narrative work is echoed in Kishiyama's reflections, reported by Gombay (2025), where she described the value of learning to express her ideas in a video format in a way that is understandable to the general public. In this way, the series not only supports graduate researchers in refining how they communicate their work, but also fosters open exchange among researchers, educators, and community members. My Research Story expands equitable access to cutting-edge work conducted by graduate students in today's multilingual societies. All of the videos are accessible through the lab's YouTube playlist here: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRZo5YABmOi6lnxQu4OXaoxItEQU8wM9x&si=-aUca3Lmwm4vKVlD.

- *Grad Talks*

The Grad Talks series provides a collaborative space where graduate students in language education and applied linguistics share their research and engage in meaningful scholarly dialogue across institutions worldwide. With the aim of peer learning, knowledge dissemination from diverse contexts, mutual support, and academic community building among emerging researchers, Grad Talks welcomes work at any stage, including initial ideas, ongoing projects, and completed studies. It encourages presenters to reflect on the questions, challenges, and insights that shape the development of their plurilingual research.

To date, 36 presenters from institutions across the world have shared their MA and PhD research work through the series. Their talks span an impressive range of themes, including language policy, bilingual and plurilingual development, teacher education, heritage and minority language maintenance, classroom interaction and instructional design, sociolinguistic identity, and the experiences of migrant, Indigenous, and transnational communities. Many of these projects engage directly with issues of social justice by examining how language intersects with power, access,

and equity across diverse educational and social contexts. These presentations reflect the intellectual breadth and global scope of contemporary research in language education, demonstrating how emerging scholars contribute new perspectives to long-standing questions about language, learning, identity, and equity.

Through these varied and international contributions, the Grad Talks series has become a vibrant hub for sharing early-stage scholarship and strengthening connections among graduate researchers committed to advancing socially just and inclusive understandings of language in multilingual and multicultural societies. At the start of the new academic year, often in September, the Plurilingual Lab sends out a call for papers through its social media networks where graduate students can submit an abstract of their work. After a peer-review process by the lab members, presenters whose work is aligned with the lab's mission are chosen to present. The line-up of presenters for the present academic year is complete and the schedule along with past presentations can be seen on the lab's page: https://www.mcgill.ca/plurilinguallab/grad-talks.

- *Resources*

The resources produced at the Plurilingual Lab are firmly grounded in empirical research, reflecting a commitment to ensuring that pedagogical tools and materials are both evidence-based and contextually relevant. By drawing on cutting-edge scholarship in multilingualism, translanguaging, and plurilingual pedagogy, the Lab translates complex research findings into free accessible resources for educators, students, and scholars. This research-informed approach is significant because it bridges the often-observed gap between theory and practice, enabling practitioners to implement strategies that are not only innovative but also demonstrably effective. Furthermore, by situating resources within a framework of social justice and linguistic equity, the Lab ensures that its outputs do more than inform practice—they actively contribute to transforming educational spaces, fostering inclusive learning environments where diverse linguistic repertoires are recognized, valued, and leveraged as assets.

Several resources comprise empirically validated language tasks designed through an asset-based lens that foregrounds what students *can* do with language—rather than what they cannot. These tasks adapt CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020) *can-do* descriptors to the local context, and support plurilingual and pluricultural competence, oral interaction, and a range of additional communicative abilities. Other examples include pedagogical guides for language teachers to transform their language classes into plurilingual spaces, guides for pre-service teachers to create action-oriented plurilingual tasks for their language classes, tutorials with plurilingual practices, and samples of existing tasks that have been piloted and validated by research. Importantly, all resources are research-informed. Table 2 shows a description of each resource and its accessible weblink.

Table 2
Key Resources and Research Outputs of the Plurilingual Lab

Resource	Description
Plurilingual Guide: Implementing Critical Plurilingual Pedagogy in Language Education (Galante et al. 2022)	As part of the international FRQSC-funded research project Plurilingual Shift in Language Education, the Plurilingual Guide was designed to support practitioners who aim to help students learn an additional language while valuing and incorporating their unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It introduces five plurilingual strategies along with ten classroom tasks that demonstrate how these strategies can be implemented in practice. These strategies have been disseminated as YouTube video tutorials (https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRZo5YABmOi6Dr7RRRaXbxLYp4A2x_FdO&si=FSZU7-sdmBevRoXC)
	Accessible link: escholarship.mcgill.ca/concern/books/0c483q268
Learning Languages through Action: Unlocking Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence through the Action-oriented Approach (Galante et al. 2025)	As part of the international Canadian and German-funded research project (CSLP and the University of Paedagogische Hochschule Schwaebisch Gmünd) Plurilingual Virtual Exchange in Teacher Education, this open-access book integrates action-oriented approaches into plurilingual language education. All of the tasks included in this book were designed by pre-service teachers who piloted their tasks during their practicum and received positive feedback. Building on the Plurilingual Guide, this book places a stronger emphasis on addressing social justice topics in the language classroom through plurilingualism. It offers ten step-by-step tasks, beginning with goal-setting based on CEFR descriptors (2020) and moving toward in-class, action-oriented activities that combine plurilingual strategies. This is a valuable resource for both in- and pre-service teachers who are interested in designing their own tasks or adapting the ones present in the book to their own social contexts.
	Accessible link: escholarship.mcgill.ca/concern/books/0c483r11v

PluriDigit Language Tasks: Plurilingual, Decolonial and Digital	As part of the international SSHRC-funded research project Plurilingual, Decolonial and Digital (PluriDigit) Language Education, the PluriDigit tasks were co-designed by a team of researchers and nine language teachers (Spanish, French, English, and Arabic) to support language teachers and empower language learners. Using plurilingual and decolonial pedagogies with digital tools such as VoiceThread, teachers and students engage in communication in the target language along with the languages in their repertoire. VoiceThread is an asynchronous agentive digital tool that affords the learner to create and initiate dialogues with peers and the teacher by creating topics and responding with audio, text and video comments. These tasks aim to enhance speaking skills and plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Moreover, they provide practical, classroom ready activities that help teachers scaffold speaking, value multiple languages and foster learner agency, and are currently available in English, French and Spanish.
	Accessible link: https://escholarship.mcgill.ca/concern/books/0c483r11v
Video Resources	The video resources available highlight the concept of plurilingualism and demonstrate its application in language education through a range of illustrative examples and formats.
	Accessible link: mcgill.ca/plurilinguallab/resources/video-resources
Breaking the Invisible Wall	As part of the SSHRC-funded research project Plurilingual or Monolingual? A Mixed Methods Study Investigating Plurilingual Instruction in an EAP Program at a Canadian University, this website showcases language tasks that were used in a collaborative intervention study. The research project examined the impact of plurilingual instruction by comparing it with monolingual approaches in an English for Academic Purposes program in Canada. It includes the ten instructional tasks that were piloted by seven participating teachers, with 129 students whose CEFR levels ranged from B2 to C1.
	Accessible link: breakingtheinvisiblewall.com/

Plurilingual and Pluricultural Scale	The Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence (PPC) scale is a validated instrument designed to measure individuals' flexible use of linguistic resources alongside their cross-cultural awareness. It consists of 22 items on a 4-point Likert scale that capture how plurilingual speakers draw on their repertoires to communicate, interpret cultural differences, and navigate multilingual interactions. The PPC scale can be used in research and pedagogy to assess overall trends in learners' plurilingual and pluricultural development.
	Accessible link: mcgill.ca/plurilinguallab/files/plurilinguallab/ppc_scale.pdf
Publications	This collection showcases recent Plurilingual Lab's scholarly contributions to plurilingualism, language education, and teacher development. Our peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, edited volumes, and professional pieces examine language learning and use across diverse contexts and offer theoretical insights, innovative pedagogical approaches, and critical perspectives on language ideologies, equity, and inclusion. Together, these publications deepen understandings of plurilingual practices and provide research-informed guidance for educators, policymakers, and researchers.
	Accessible link: mcgill.ca/plurilinguallab/publications/publications

Democratizing Knowledge

A defining contribution of the Plurilingual Lab lies in its sustained commitment to democratize knowledge through open access resources, initiatives and events. This commitment is tied to deliberate efforts to reach audiences who are too often excluded from scholarly conversations, particularly where financial and infrastructural constraints limit access to research. To this end, the Plurilingual Lab Speaker Series serves as a venue that brings current scholarly knowledge on plurilingual research and discussions on the presentation topics. Recordings of all talks are edited and made openly available on a dedicated YouTube playlist, which currently hosts 37 talks and has reached over 28,000 views. The wide dissemination of these talks has enabled educators and researchers in regions with limited financial mobility or conference access to engage with cutting-edge scholarship that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

Moreover, the Lab's resources—grounded in empirical evidence, pedagogical innovation, and accessibility—are developed and disseminated with the explicit goal of removing barriers to participation in knowledge uptake. These materials

have achieved substantial global engagement; for instance, a YouTube playlist of six tutorials on plurilingual pedagogies has accumulated more than 16,000 views since published in 2020, with viewers spanning over 30 countries including China, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. By providing free and open access to empirically validated pedagogical guides, language learning tasks, and research instruments, the lab ensures that educators, researchers, and practitioners—regardless of institutional affiliation or local resources—can adapt and use these materials in their own contexts.

Central to the Lab's knowledge mobilization strategy is the meaningful involvement of students. All graduate students hold positions within the lab and contribute directly to its outreach initiatives. One notable example is *My Research Story*, coordinated by the second author, Yunjia Xie. With 13 videos and over 2,000 views to date, My Research Story not only broadens public understanding of graduate research on language issues but also fosters students' confidence and capacity to mobilize their work across audiences and platforms.

The Lab's global visibility is further supported by an extensive international network of academic and non-academic members, maintained through a listserv with over 3,000 subscribers and a robust social media presence across multiple platforms (X: 2.5k followers; Facebook: 1.4k; YouTube: 1.4k; Instagram: 833; LinkedIn: 500+). These platforms regularly amplify the lab's initiatives, with posts frequently circulated by external organizations and community groups, thereby extending the reach, relevance, and impact of the lab's knowledge mobilization efforts. By prioritizing open access dissemination, removing financial barriers, and centering inclusive outreach—including to audiences historically marginalized in global scholarly exchanges—the Plurilingual Lab demonstrates how research groups can meaningfully contribute to equitable knowledge mobilization and the democratization of language education research.

Conclusion

The growth of scholarly interest in plurilingualism, coupled with its longstanding policy recognition and theoretical consolidation, underscores both its relevance and urgency in contemporary Language Education and Applied Linguistics research. By reconceptualizing language as a dynamic, socially situated, and interconnected repertoire, plurilingualism challenges monolingual norms, highlights the agency of learners, and foregrounds the inseparability of language, culture, identity, and social practice. The Plurilingual Lab exemplifies how these principles can be translated into collective praxis, bridging research, pedagogy, and community engagement while fostering inclusive, equity-driven, and decolonial approaches to language education.

The Lab leverages institutional support, student leadership, and global collaboration to mobilize knowledge widely—through open-access talks, tutorials, and storytelling—ensuring that research transcends academic boundaries and reaches diverse audiences worldwide, especially in underserved areas. Ultimately, the Lab's work affirms that plurilingualism is not only a descriptive reality of individual and societal linguistic repertoires but also a normative and empowering framework: one that promotes linguistic justice, validates diverse identities, and equips educators, learners, and communities with the conceptual and practical tools

to enact more equitable, socially responsive, and transformative language practices.

In closing, this article underscores the urgent need for continued collective engagement in reshaping the linguistic landscapes of our educational and social institutions. The reflections and initiatives of the Plurilingual Lab discussed here point to the transformative possibilities that can emerge when scholars, educators, students, and communities work collaboratively to challenge entrenched monolingual norms and uplift the voices of those who have long been linguistically marginalized. We acknowledge that we are part of a broader ecosystem of centers, labs, associations, and research networks engaged in similar work, though open and readily accessible resources are not always a defining feature of these initiatives. We further recognize the crucial role of provincial and federal research funding in Canada, which has strengthened the Lab's capacity to undertake robust research initiatives and to develop high-quality, evidence-based resources. We therefore call on researchers across Language Education and Applied Linguistics to pursue similar commitments—advancing scholarship and praxis that meaningfully contribute to social change and foster greater equity for diverse linguistic communities. Through such efforts, we move closer to cultivating a more just, inclusive, and plurilingual world, one in which all languages are valued and afforded the visibility and recognition they rightfully deserve.

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