



One school many languages: bridging research and school practice through plurilingual education

The team of the project “One school many languages” / “Sprachenvielfalt macht Schule (SMS 2.0)” hosted by the Institute for Applied Linguistics, Eurac Research Bolzano/Bozen (Italy), is pleased to announce its closing conferencing event to be held on 4-6 December 2023. The main theme of the conference will be plurilingual education.

Multilingualism, in other words the presence of more than one language or variety within a geographical area (Council of Europe 2007), and plurilingualism, i.e. the interconnectedness of languages within individuals’ repertoires (ibid.), are not recent phenomena. Yet, the super-diversification of today’s societies (Vertovec 2007) and the subsequent diversification of languages, language users and linguistic practices that characterises most human activities, have made multi- and plurilingualism an even more central issue for modern civilizations (Aronin & Singleton 2012).

Within the European Union, the importance of multi- and plurilingualism has been acknowledged and promoted for decades (Le Pichon-Vorstman, Siarova & Szőnyi 2020). A recent policy document of the Council of Europe (2022) reaffirms the importance of developing plurilingual and intercultural competences through education and recognizes the role of these competences “for personal and professional development, equity, societal integration, the exercise of human rights and participation in democratic culture” (p. 5). The document also encourages schools, universities and other institutions of post-secondary education, as well as organisations for life-long learning, to promote pedagogies that welcome and valorise linguistic and cultural diversity and foster the development of complex and integrated linguistic repertoires. Within such pedagogies, learners are stimulated to bring a variety of languages and varieties into interaction with one another, thus not only the language(s) of schooling, but also the languages that the learners bring with them in the classroom.

The contents of the Council of Europe’s 2022 recommendation are in line with what research on plurilingual education has shown and proposed over the last decades. The systematic and functional integration of two or more languages in the classroom has proved to have a beneficial impact on learners’ cognitive development (Cenoz 2013), positive identity construction and social inclusion (Sierens & Van Avermaet 2014), intercultural learning (Auger 2014), as well as language and metalinguistic awareness (Hélot et al. 2018; Sordella & Andorno 2017).

Despite this, the monolingual habitus of schools, as first described by Gogolin some thirty years ago (1994), still seems to persist. Indeed, the common understanding of multilingualism in schools often reduces the diversity of languages and varieties to a few prestigious languages, which are usually taught and learned strictly separated from each other (Cenoz & Gorter 2017). And even if, in many multilingual areas across Europe, the teaching of official minority languages is welcomed and supported by politics and society, this is usually not the case for those languages and communities that have settled in Europe over the last decades (Extra & Gorter 2008). The question thus remains as to how monolingual school traditions and teaching routines can be broken and pluralistic approaches and practices can be sustainably introduced into everyday school life so as to realise what Conteh and Meier (2014) describe as the multilingual turn of languages education.



As stressed by several authors (e.g. Le Pichon-Vorstman, Siarova & Szőnyi 2020; Vetter & Slavkov 2022), a key factor for the successful implementation of plurilingual pedagogies is teacher education. The inclusion and mobilisation of learners' linguistic repertoires for learning, in fact, require specific competences, i.e. skills, attitudes and knowledge, on the part of teachers (Guarda & Hofer 2021). This generates a need for educational and professional training.

With this in mind, the conference organised by Eurac Research aims to be a venue for exchange and dialogue on recent qualitative- and/or quantitative-oriented research within the realm of plurilingual primary and secondary education, with a focus on the following thematic orientations:

- Practices, challenges and opportunities for reciprocal learning and knowledge transfer between researchers and educational stakeholders;
- Empirical evidence of the sustainability and impact of in- and pre-service training in plurilingual education on teachers' competences, attitudes and teaching practices.
- Projects, initiatives and best practices aimed at valorising language diversity, developing curiosity and interest towards languages, cultures and linguistic phenomena in diverse educational contexts.

For this conference, we particularly welcome contributions reporting on research initiatives that explicitly and actively involve teachers in their design and implementation, e.g. through participatory action research (Macdonald 2012).

For information regarding abstract submission, please check the conference website <https://sms-project.eurac.edu/conference/> or send an email to sms.info@eurac.edu

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