



Symposium title: Changing perspectives towards multilingual education: teachers, learners and researchers as agents of social cohesion

Coordinator 1: Marta Guarda, Institute for Applied Linguistics, Eurac Research, Italy.

Coordinator 2: Maria Stopfner, Institute for Applied linguistics, Eurac Research, Italy;
Institut für Germanistik; University of Innsbruck, Austria.

Symposium format (one choice - delete the others):

- **Symposium Multimodal**

Symposium mode (one choice - delete the others):

- **Hybrid**

Sub-themes:

- ☐ **LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING:** teacher education, curricula and education, classrooms, instruction, task-based learning, EAP, study abroad, (virtual) exchanges, materials and methods
- ☐ **LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS:** autonomy, strategies, young, old, non-instructed, individual factors or differences, emotion
- ☐ **LINGUISTIC SOCIAL ISSUES:** linguistic (in)justice, power, advocacy, attitude & bias, diversity-emancipation, discriminations, ethnicity and gender, ideology, language & social justice
- ☐ **LANGUAGES IN SOCIETY:** bilingualism, multilingualism, plurilingualism, multilingual classroom, translanguaging, literacy & literacies, heritage language, home language, migrants, deaf, sign/gesture

Short abstract in English:

Over the last decades, multilingual education has gained momentum in research, language planning and practice. Discourses around the benefits and challenges of educational approaches in which two or more languages are used strategically for teaching and learning can be found at all levels of education, from pre-school to higher education. With the growing wealth of debates and research in this field, the question arises as to what extent the various social agents involved in multilingual education, including teachers, students and researchers, can change dominant language ideologies and practices and thus bring about social change.

The aim of this symposium is to engage researchers and practitioners in an exchange as to how linguistic diversity in increasingly super-diverse societies can be fostered, leveraged and given value to in class. The symposium examines in particular how a shift in perspectives towards multilingual education and multilingual identities can change dominant language ideologies and thus be a trigger for more inclusive teaching and learning practices. The focus on perspectives is key to the discussion, in that an individual's standpoint has a strong impact on their everyday choices and practices, and a change in perspectives is what can turn teachers, learners and researchers into agents of social cohesion in today's societies.



Argument:

Over the last decades, multilingual education has gained momentum in research, language planning and practice. Discourses around the benefits and challenges of educational approaches in which two or more languages are used strategically for teaching and learning can be found at all levels of education, from pre-school to higher education. With the growing wealth of debates and research in this field, the question arises as to what extent the various social agents involved in multilingual education, including teachers, students and researchers, can change dominant language ideologies and practices and thus bring about social change.

This question resonates even more strongly in view of the increasing linguistic diversity of today's complex societies, a phenomenon to which educational systems have responded in polarized ways (Van Avermaet et al. 2018). A number of programs have set proficiency in the dominant (often national) standard language(s) as the main learning goal for all students and a condition for academic achievement, and have often done so by drawing on alleged ideologies of assimilation for students of non-dominant language communities at the detriment of their super-diversified linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Gardner-Chloros 2007). Other multilingual models have opted for the promotion of socioeconomically prestigious languages, or the preservation of the linguistic and cultural identity of autochthonous minoritized communities. What is often to be seen in these types of programs, however, is the establishment of hard boundaries between languages (Cenoz & Gorter 2017) and thus the promotion of forms of parallel monolingualism that do not reflect the affordances and realities of today's multilingual practices. What is more, while schooling in regional autochthonous minority languages is advocated for reasons of fairness, social cohesion, group identity and/or economic benefits, such reasoning is rarely found in the context of migrant communities and their languages (Extra & Gorter 2008), which are still too often left out of the educational panorama, not only because of the low prestige that is usually attached to them (Hélot & De Mejía 2008) but also because of the lack of recognition of their role as a pedagogical asset for learning.

This not only concerns the perspective of teachers and their didactic approaches, but also students and their approach to languages and language learning. In this context, the socio-dynamic self of the individual "super-diverse" learner has attracted growing attention (Mercer, 2011; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), as learners position themselves in relation to family, friends and relevant communities, and may thus resist top-down language policies.

Against this complex backdrop, questions arise as to the role of *all* languages for teaching and learning, and as to how our current education systems can provide more equal, just and cohesive teaching and learning environments. The aim of this symposium is to engage researchers and practitioners in an exchange as to how linguistic diversity in increasingly super-diverse societies can be fostered, leveraged and given value to in class. The symposium examines in particular how a shift in perspectives towards multilingual education and multilingual identities can change dominant language ideologies and thus be a trigger for more inclusive teaching and learning practices. The focus on perspectives is key to the discussion, in that an individual's standpoint has a strong impact on their everyday choices and practices, and a change in perspectives is what can turn teachers, learners and researchers into agents of social cohesion in today's societies. With this in mind, we will welcome proposals related to the following thematic orientations:



- a. multilingual education: approaches and practices that promote a change in perspectives in teachers, learners and researchers;
- b. multilingual education and learner self-concepts: changing perspectives towards individual super-diverse learners and their identity, agency and ideologies in relation to multilingual education;
- c. multilingual education and assessment: changing perspectives towards the assessment of learners' linguistic and communicative competences;
- d. teacher competences for multilingual education: changing perspectives through professional development and/or participatory action research.

Contributions to this symposium can relate to any sector and level of education, from preschool to higher education. While we highly welcome contributions relating to any language and combination of languages, proposals should be submitted in English, German or Italian.

References

- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2017). Minority languages and sustainable translanguaging: threat or opportunity?. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 38(10), 901–912.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Motivation*. London: Longman/Pearson.
- Extra, G., & Gorter, D. (2008). The constellation of languages in Europe: An inclusive approach. In G. Extra & D. Gorter (Eds.), *Multilingual Europe: Facts and Policies*, 3-60. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Gardner-Chloros, P. (2007). Multilingualism of autochthonous minorities. In P. Auer & L. Wei (Eds.), *Handbook of Multilingualism and Multilingual Communication*, 469-491. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hélot, C. & de Mejia, A. (2008) (Eds.). *Forging Multilingual Spaces: Integrated Perspectives on Minority and Majority Bilingual Education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Mercer, S. (2011). *Towards an Understanding of Language Learner Self-Concept*. Berlin: Springer.
- Van Avermaet, P., Slembrouck, S. Van Gorp, K., Sierens S. & Maryns, K. (2018) (Eds.). *The Multilingual Edge of Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.