GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS How to support multilingual children





Guide for educators How to support multilingual children

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Project

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YOU can make a positive change!

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Welcome

Welcome to the PEaCH guide for educators: **how to support multilingual children in daycare and education.**

The aim of our guide is to help you create a welcoming atmosphere and a supportive environment for bilingual and multilingual children in your classroom or daycare group. We explain why this is vital for the success of the children in your classroom or group and have collected easy-to-implement activities for different age groups for you to try out straight away.

About the project

This guide for educators is one of the outcomes of PEaCH, an Erasmus+ project funded by the European Commission. The acronym PEaCH was derived from the main goal of our project: 'preserving and promoting Europe's cultural and linguistic heritage through empowerment of bilingual children and families'. Focusing on the 24 official EU languages, PEaCH wants to help both parents and educators of bilingual children to support their family languages. On our website, parents can consult several other resources: the guide 'How to raise a bilingual child' for parents, as well as a large online collection of language learning materials in all EU languages and a set of videos with tips on how to pass on and maintain the family language(s).

How does this guide work?

Part 1 of our guide we answer the WHY? question. You will find out why a positive approach to language diversity is crucial to children who speak more than one language, both for their emotional, social, and educational development. You will learn why a language-friendly environment is also beneficial for monolingual children and read FAQs with answers from distinguished experts in the field.

Part 2 of our guide gives you the HOW? instructions. It combines two complementary approaches: First we present the **collective** efforts that can be made in a school or daycare center to support multilingual children. How can school heads and daycare directors together with their teams shape their institution's policies so that they respect and value language diversity? The second approach is directed at **individual educators** who work with children in a classroom or daycare center. How can they create a supportive learning environment where all languages are respected and valued?

Why is multilingualism in daycare & education important?

Part 1: Why is multilingualism in daycare & education important?

The objective of this guide is to help you create an educational environment in which bi- and multilingualism are not only respected and valued, but also part of everyday activities. In order to engage in this process, it's important to be genuinely motivated and truly believe in the value of multilingualism. So before we get into the 'how', let's first look into the 'why'. Why do bi- and multilingualism deserve a prominent role in the school context?

Multilingualism is a reality

We live in a multilingual world. People use different languages for different things; it's their normal way of life. Yet, most education systems ignore this multilingual reality. Equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all is only possible when education responds to and reflects the multilingual nature of the society. Children, youth and adults require learning opportunities that are relevant to their lives and needs, in and through their own languages.

UNESCO, Wisbey, 2016

Recognizing and accepting that multilingualism is a constantly **growing reality** in Europe and across the world is the first step towards developing a linguistically inclusive educational environment. Societies are becoming increasingly diverse. It's also true that this **diversity** in cultural, ehtnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds brings a sense of **complexity** with it. How do we find or create unity and togetherness when there are so many perceived and real differences between us? Such concerns become reality in a classroom setting: children of several backgrounds, with different language repertoires, are expected to achieve the same learning objectives over the same period of time. Managing diversity might be one of the biggest challenges faced by educational systems today (Sierens & Avermaet, 2010, p. 46), and schools and educators have the responsibility to adapt to, and reflect, social reality.

By recognizing and embracing the prevalence of multilingualism, and incorporating linguistic diversity into school policies and teaching activities, we can ensure equal learning opportunities for every child. It's important to remember that embracing a child's multilingual identity is not just about seeing its benefits and educational opportunities; developing and maintaining a child's home language is also about recognizing its importance for a child's emotional and social wellbeing.

The education should be directed to [the] development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.

UN, Convention on the Rights of the Child, art 29

Multilingualism is an asset

One of the biggest obstacles to successfully creating a positive multilingual school environment is a negative or wary attitude towards multilingualism. Some teachers, schools and even societies see multilingualism as a burden. Children who speak a different language at home can be seen as disadvantaged. Some schools incorrectly advise parents to speak the majority language at home or forbid bilingual children to use their home language on school grounds. Such measures may be well-meaning and are grounded in genuine concerns about the child's school performances, but they are based on persistent and widespread myths and misconceptions about bilingualism. Neglecting a child's linguistic repertoire disregards both the child's wellbeing and the value of the child's home language for its educational development.

Sierens, S., & Van Avermaet, P. (2014). Language diversity in education: Evolving from multilingual education to functional multilingual learning. In Managing diversity in education: Languages, policies, pedagogies (pp. 204– 222). Multilingual Matters. A collective change of perspective is key to valuing multilingualism: the belief that you can turn challenges into opportunities, obstacles into invitations for improvement and differences into strengths. A child's **linguistic repertoire** is not a problem, but a **valuable resource** that you can capitalise on to build new learning. Children's knowledge of, and skills in, their home language can serve as a foundation for concepts and patterns in other languages². Languages should be seen not just as subjects to be studied, but as instruments to support learning on a broader level. Once you embrace this attitude and share it with your team and colleagues, you'll find that making the necessary changes in the classroom will become much more self-evident. This section of the toolkit will help strengthen your understanding of the critical role of home or heritage languages in children's personal, academic and social development³.

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education

In this guide, we want to encourage you to **acknowledge**, **support and welcome children's multilingual background**. This is a fairly low-threshold way of mirroring a multilingual society, in that it doesn't require formal bilingual instruction and can be done just as well in a monolingual classroom and in schools with one instruction language. No radical changes in the school structure or curriculum are necessary in order for a school to value multilingualism. The idea is to **capitalise on the language repertoire** of every child to **stimulate language awareness** and **appreciate our multicultural societies**.

We want to stress the difference between this approach and the MTB-MLE approach. **Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education** "begins in the language that the learner speaks most fluently and then gradually introduces other languages"⁴. This approach has proven successful in guaranteeing equal learning and education opportunities. Of course, MTB-MLE requires **formal instruction** in every child's first language and, therefore, implies a radical change in the school structure, and requires the necessary support and budget at policy level. While at PEaCH we firmly believe in MTB-MLE, we recognise that most schools do not have the logistic and governmental support for this, which is why we promote a **'light version'**, which is about valuing and integrating multilingualism **within the existing system**, that can be achieved by any teacher or school, mono- and bilingual alike.

As stated in a report by the European Commission, "informal learning of mother tongues should be provided and encouraged both in the absence of formal learning

² From edweek.org

3 Lee, J. S., & Oxelson, E. (2006). "It's Not My Job": K-12 Teacher Attitudes Toward Students' Heritage Language Maintenance. Bilingual Research Journal, 30(2), 453-477.

⁴ Wisbey, M. (2016). Mother tonguebased multilingual education: The key to unlocking SG4 quality education for all. 5th International Conference on Language and Education: Sustainable Development through Multilingual Education, Bangkok. opportunities and where formal learning of mother tongues is available"⁵. This is what we stand by: even when you are unable to provide formal instruction in every child's first language, what you can always do is encourage children to use and learn their first language **outside of that formal framework**. And this is a very important step in the right direction, a way to strive for the benefits that are attributed to MTB-MLE. UNESCO has developed a diagram that illustrates the advantages of early childhood education in a child's first language. We believe that a positive multilingual policy can represent an important step in contributing to the development of these advantages.



Common Underlying Proficiency Model



The Common Underlying Proficiency Model is a hypothesis coined by Jim Cummins, a renowned professor in bilingual education and second language acquisition (whose answer to one of our FAQs can be found below). The hypothesis can be described using the idea of an iceberg. Unlike what early research in bilingual development suggested, the different languages a person speaks are not stored in separate systems. It is true that bilinguals are able to differentiate between their languages and those languages look different from each other on the surface, but what we don't see is that they share what is called a "central operating system", where concepts, cognitive skills and linguistic knowledge are stored. This system allows them to apply this knowledge and build upon it when learning a new language. In other words: skills and knowledge in one language can be transferred to a new language."

How does this iceberg model translate within a **classroom setting**? The idea is fairly straightforward. Schools and teachers can stimulate children to **utilise knowledge** they have from their first language(s) or other (foreign) languages they know, in order to **support the language learning process**. This can be done by allowing children to make connections between word meanings, concepts or sentence structure in different languages⁸. In order for this transfer to be successful, a child should feel comfortable and encouraged to use and develop its first language(s). Instruction approaches where there is room for cross-language transfer tend to give children a sense of **competence**: if they are encouraged to feel comfortable in their first language, they are more likely to feel confident when expressing themselves in other languages as well.

⁶ Image from: https:// commons.wikimedia. org/wiki/File:The_ Iceberg_Model.gif

7 Cummins, J. (2007). Rethinking m o n o l i n g u a l instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms. Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 10(2), 221-240.

Beuningen, C. van, & Polišenská, D. (2020). Durf meer met meertaligheid. Levende Talen Magazine, 107(7), 10-14-14. There is research evidence to suggest that well-developed skills in the first language can generate benefits on an even wider level than just language learning. They can facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills in other school subjects. If children are familiar with mathematical concepts in their native language, for example, they know more than just the words. They also understand the concepts. So when they learn about maths in the school language, it will be easier for them to grasp the learning contents because they dispose of (part of) the conceptual knowledge⁹. Of course, understanding math in the native language usually requires formal instruction in that language, which most children do not have access to when they live in a country where their language is not one of the official languages.

Teemant, A., & Pinnegar, S. E. (2019). The Interdependence Hypothesis. Principles of Language Acquisition. https:// edtechbooks.org/ language_acquisition/ jigsaw_reading_d



Ask An Expert

Q&A with Prof. Jim Cummins

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

As a teacher, what can I do to help my pupils capitalise on their linguistic repertoire and use it for further learning, not only of new languages but also other school subjects?

The first thing to emphasise is that you have many opportunities to use the multilingual reality of your classroom to draw pupils' attention to the structure and functions of language. When you acknowledge and value pupils' home languages, they communicate a positive message to them about their identity and the knowledge they bring to the classroom. By the same token, those teachers who ignore children's languages may inadvertently communicate that only the school language is legitimate and that their languages are not welcome. Over time, this can cause children to devalue and even reject their home language, which denies them the opportunity to develop their multilingual abilities.

Here are some specific ways in which teachers, individually and collectively within the entire school, can enable pupils to capitalise on the linguistic talents they bring to the classroom:

- Each day, teachers invite one or two pupils to share a word from their home languages with their classmates and explain why they chose that word and what it means. Over time, pupils and teachers learn a new collection of words in different languages.
- Examples of children's work in their home languages and in the school language are prominently displayed in school corridors and at the school entrance.
- School library collections have multilingual books for both children and parents to read at school and at home.
- Pupils write and 'publish' online, dual language or multilingual stories or projects.

- Teachers invite parents and community members to the classroom to read and tell stories in community languages.
- Across subject areas, teachers encourage pupils to conduct research online in their home languages for class projects.

The effectiveness of these instructional strategies will be enhanced when they reflect a whole-school philosophy. Schools that aspire to promote language improvement for all children might consider becoming a Language Friendly School <u>(languagefriendlyschool.org)</u>.

Multilingualism is part of a child's identity

The languages we speak are a **part of our identity**. For the **personal development** of children who speak languages or language varieties other than the school language at home, it's important that these languages are **treated in a positive way** at school. Ignoring languages that children bring to school or talking about them in a disparaging way can have an adverse impact on their wellbeing, their identity development and their learning outcomes. In other words: use of the mother tongue or home language at school can contribute to a child's **wellbeing** and **positive identity building**. By recognising and appreciating all the languages that children bring with them, you can offer your pupils a **positive perspective** on their own linguistic and cultural background and that of others. In this way, you stimulate **social cohesion in the classroom** and prepare children for a society in which linguistic and cultural diversity are a fact of life¹⁰.

In turn, when a child feels accepted in its identity, that sense of wellbeing can also benefit school performances. Children who are comfortable in their skin and feel good about who they are will engage more positively in school and classroom activities. When children are invited and encouraged to express their ideas, opinions and feelings in their native language, their self-esteem will increase, which indirectly affects their motivation to learn.¹¹

10 Beuningen, C. van, & Polišenská, D. (2020). Durf meer met meertaligheid. Levende Talen Magazine, 107(7), 10-14-14.

11 Sierens, S., & Van Avermaet, P. (2014). Language diversity in education: Evolving from multilingual education to functional multilingual learning. In Managing diversity in education: Languages, policies, pedagogies (pp. 204-222). Multilingual Matters.



Ask An Expert Q&A with Dr Yeşim Sevinç

Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication, University of Amsterdam & Center for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan (MultiLing), University of Oslo

How can I encourage children who show language anxiety to use their home language, keeping in mind that some parents may well tell their children not to speak it at school?

To support children's multilingualism and their <u>socioemotional learning</u>, such as self-esteem and emotional resilience to <u>cope with language anxiety</u>, it is crucial that you work together with families, but there are also practices you can follow at school to encourage anxious multilingual children to use their heritage language.

1. Awareness of language anxiety and resilience: When you notice that your pupils are afraid or anxious to use their heritage language, it is important that you first manage your own reactions in the situation. Overreacting or shielding children from language anxiety is not an effective way to build emotional resilience. Children should rather be taught that language anxiety is a natural reaction and a sign of their willingness for achievement. To build their resilience, you can foster children's <u>ability to understand</u> and regulate their emotional responses to adversity, for instance through <u>positive</u> <u>psychology exercises</u>. Endorsing growth language mindsets (the belief that multilingual ability can be nurtured through dedicated practices) can also encourage children to focus on their success and improvement and <u>help</u> <u>break the vicious circle of language anxiety</u>.

2. Multilingual-friendly spaces, pedagogies and practices: Creating a <u>psychological need-supportive</u> school environment both for yourself and your pupils is central to developing conflict-free multilingual spaces and pedagogies. All languages and cultures should be equally valued and considered to assure proper pedagogical and socioemotional support in multilingual/multicultural education. This way <u>language anxiety-triggering</u> <u>factors and experiences</u> at school can be minimized. A <u>multilingual approach</u> to diversity in education can then be achieved through indicators for multilingual practices such as Classroom as Multilingual Space, Interaction and Grouping Configurations, Teacher Language Use, Learner Language

Use, Language and Culture Attitudes, Metacognition and Metalinguistic Awareness, Teaching Materials and Multiliteracy.

If multilingual parents do not want their children to speak their heritage language at school, you can use <u>multiliteracy practices</u>, <u>projects and tasks</u> which involve families, their languages and cultures in homework activities. Such practices can stimulate multilingual children to use their heritage language(s) at home and to present and discuss their projects using the school language in the classroom. Reinforcing their skills both in the heritage and school language through homework can improve children's multilingual competence, which will eventually help them build self-esteem to cope with their heritage language anxiety.

Concerns and myths

Code-switching, language mixing & translanguaging

One of the most persistent yet incorrect beliefs about bilingualism is that bilinguals confuse their languages and use them interchangeably without knowing which is which. In a school or classroom context, this belief often translates into a strict separation between the school language and children's home language(s). As a teacher, you may worry that allowing multilingual pupils to use their home language in the classroom will confuse them and cause them to speak an unintelligible mix of languages.

Let us start by firmly refuting this myth: children are not confused when they learn more than one language, whether simultaneously or one after the other. While their languages share a 'central operating system' (see previous section on Cummins), their skills and knowledge in both languages develop separately from each other. Bilingual children may use words from two languages in one utterance or sentence (this is called **language mixing**), but their brain is perfectly able to differentiate between both languages. The sentences will be structured according to the 'rules' of the language they are speaking and will remain grammatically correct. Younger bilingual children tend to mix their languages unintentionally, most often when they want to say something but don't know a particular word in the language they are speaking in. Their brain will fill the vocabulary gap with the other language. This is, more than anything, a sign of **resourcefulness** ("Mummy, can I have a Keks?").

As bilingual children grow up and develop their vocabulary in both languages,

the unintentional mixing will turn into occasional conscious use of more than one language. This conscious switching between two languages depending on the communicative or social context is called **code-switching**. Bilingual children tend to do this when they speak with others who know the same languages and with whom they feel comfortable. In a classroom setting where several children share the same home language, they might switch back and forth between the home and the school languages when communicating with each other.

Why are we talking about this in a chapter called 'Multilingualism is an asset'? Because code-switching is often seen as problematic, when instead, it should be understood as the wonderful **communicative and educational resource** that it is. There is no substantial difference between children who code-switch in two different languages, and those who code-switch between the school language and a dialect or informal vernacular. Bilinguals and monolinguals alike adapt their language use according to the social environment they are in at a particular moment. It shows flexibility and sensitivity to communicative situations, which are valuable skills. As mentioned in the previous section, children's learning processes can be stimulated when you allow them to draw upon their knowledge of their native language and transfer that knowledge to other languages. Rather than dismissing code-switching – or, more generally, use of the native language – in the classroom altogether, it's better to recognise it as a **learning strategy**, find a way to integrate it in learning activities and make use of its educational capital.

On a broader level, linguists also speak of a phenomenon called **translanguaging**. Unlike code-switching, which refers to the use of words or phrases from more than one language on an individual level in a specific situation, translanguaging refers more generally to the **language practices** of bilingual people. It describes how they draw on their linguistic repertoire as a collective set of skills and knowledge, in order to make sense of their lives. But, apart from linguistic discourse, translanguaging can also be seen as a **pedagogical strategy**. Allowing children to access the full potential of their linguistic repertoire, rather than just their knowledge of the school language, can expand their thinking and facilitate their understanding of learning contents¹². In part 2 of this guide, you will find some practical resources that can help you incorporate translanguaging in the classroom.

12 García, O., Celic, C., & Seltzer, K. (2012). Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB guide for educators. (p. 1)



Ask An Expert Q&A with Prof. Fred Genesee

Professor of psychology at McGill University, specialised in second language acquisition and bilingualism research

Should I correct a child who uses two languages in one utterance, or encourage them to find the right word in the target language? How should I react?

You should never correct or make a child feel self-conscious for code-mixing. Bilingual children mix languages within the same utterance or conversation for a variety of reasons:

- to express a complex though,
- to refer to something that happened in the heritage language,
- to show a bilingual peer that they also speak both languages, or
- because they don't know the appropriate word or expression in their second language.

When bilingual children use words, sounds or grammatical patterns from their heritage language to express themselves, they are showing how resourceful they can be by using both languages to communicate. There is no indication from research that there is anything wrong when children do this. In fact, extensive research on young bilingual children shows that most of the time when they code-mix, they do so in a way that avoids violating the grammar of each language. Code-mixing is perfectly normal. Bilingual adults code-mix as well, especially if they are with other bilinguals.

As a teacher, you can use code-mixing to create learning opportunities: when you notice that a child is using their home language because they don't know specific words or expressions in the school language, you can teach them those particular words in a supportive and encouraging way. At the same time, instances of code-mixing can be important moments for you to stimulate language awareness for both mono- and multilingual children. You can use these moments as examples of how objects, concepts or ideas can have a different label in another language, or how there are words that sound similar in two languages but have different meanings. This helps children develop their metalinguistic awareness.

Taking an interest in your bilingual pupils and their language backgrounds is an important way to get to know them better so you can tailor instructions to them individually. Showing an interest in their home languages, during code-mixing or at other times, is also an important way of teaching your monolingual pupils about the richness of the language community in which they are learning.

Note

You will come across references to metalinguistic awareness in several chapters and Q&As of our guide, so it may be helpful to have a definition to refer to. Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to think about language as an object in its own right, including the different aspects of it, such as its sounds, words, sentences, structures and meanings. Out of necessity, bilingual children usually develop a metalinguistic awareness earlier than their monolingual peers as they recognize that one object (in most cases) has at least two different words connected to it.

Silent period hypothesis

The silent period is widely regarded as the second stage ¹³ of children learning their second language. It is defined as the pre-productive phase when children are not yet expressing themselves in their new language and it can last from a couple of weeks up to a year or even longer. This hypothesis is, however, not generally accepted. For example Professor Roma Chumak-Horbatsch, the founder of Linguistically Appropriate Practice, rejects the idea based on T.A. Robert's ¹⁴ research and recommends that "with acceptance, opportunity and encouragement newcomers will communicate with their classmates and teachers using all of their language resources" ¹⁵. While children do learn to understand a language before they can or are willing to speak it, it is important not to take for granted that a child is going through a silent phase, especially not for a longer period. You should, of course, not force emergent bilinguals to speak a language new to them before they are ready to do so, but neither should you presume non-participation. Instead, actively encourage children to communicate.

13 Tabors, P. O. (1997). One child, two languages: A guide for preschool educators of children learning English as a second language. Paul H. Brookes Pub.

14 Roberts, T. A. (2014). Not so silent after all: Examination and analysis of the silent stage in childhood second language acquisition. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29(1), 22-40.

Chumak-

15

Horbatsch. R (2012). Linguistically Appropriate Practice: A Guide for Working with Young Immigrant Children. University of Toronto Press. Chumak-Horbatsch, D. R. (2019). Using Linguistically Appropriate Practice: A Guide for Teaching Multilingual in Classrooms. Multilingual Matters.

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) & learning disabilities

Multilingual children are often over-diagnosed with developmental language disorder (DLD) or learning disabilities in general. DLD is characterised by persistent and impactful cognitive problems that include weaker executive functioning and ongoing difficulties understanding and/or using language. Mono-, bi- and multilingual children alike can be diagnosed with DLD or have problems with language and/or learning. The most important thing for you to remember is that such challenges are *never* a consequence of being multilingual.

The reason why **developmental language disorder** may be misdiagnosed in multilingual children is that the language profiles of children with DLD and typically developing multilingual children can overlap¹⁶. Many multilingual learners *do* have gaps in their languages: they may have a slight delay in vocabulary or difficulties speaking or understanding the school language. This, however, is perfectly normal for multilingual learners, as they are likely to catch up with their peers over time.

The same goes for signs of **learning disabilities**: they can be confused with typical signs of normal multilingual development. In their book "Bilingual and Multilingual Learners from the Inside Out", Schofield and McGeary collected a list of typical signs of language acquisition that may mimic a learning disability¹⁷:

- Better word decoding than comprehension
- Problems following instructions
- Issues with focus and attention
- Challenges learning or working with numbers in the school language
- Slow information processing speed
- Difficulties with auditory memory
- Oral language at a higher level than writing skills
- Problems recalling concepts and words due to low comprehension

It's important to realise that it's not your job as a teacher to diagnose, because you are not trained to distinguish between learning or language disorders and typical language acquisition processes. Diagnoses should be made by qualified psychologists or speech therapists who have experience with bi- and multilingual learners. However, there are a few basic guidelines that you can follow. If you are worried that a child or student is underperforming or not making the desired progress, pay attention to the following aspects before proceeding with professional assessment: **16** Garraffa, M., Vender, M., Sorace, A., & Guasti, M. T. (2019). Is it possible to differentiate multilingual children and children with DLD?

 17
 Schofield, A.,

 &
 McGeary, F.

 (2016).
 Bilingual and

 Multilingual
 Learners

 from the
 Inside-Out:

 Elevating
 Expertise

 in
 Classrooms
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- DLD affects all the languages of a multilingual child. If the child has difficulties in only one of their languages, this is likely to be a normal sign of multilingual development.
- It's always a good idea to involve the child's parents and find out if they have noticed any cognitive problems or difficulties with language at home. With multilingual learners, it's important to understand the broader context of their linguistic background.
- Speak with your fellow teachers and other members of the school team about your concerns. What are the experiences of the other teachers? Did they observe similar difficulties? If there's a possibility to consult a qualified advisor within the school, you may want to discuss the situation with them first.

Educators' attitudes

This toolkit was developed for and is addressed to you: teacher, educator, member of a school team, manager or employee of a daycare centre. As a **first-line practitioner**, you have the closest relationship with the children and the best idea of their family situation and cultural or linguistic background. Children's experiences with their teachers and memories of their school career can shape the way they see the world and how they function as members of society. That's why **teacher attitudes** are such a widely researched topic: your attitudes and beliefs as a teacher (whether they concern politics, culture, conventions in social interaction or, say, multilingualism) can have an **impact** on what you expect from your pupils, on the way you interact with them and, indirectly, on their academic achievements. But attitudes are not something you can simply hide or suppress. You have your own experiences, opinions, weaknesses and strengths and it's normal that those individual traits trickle down into your style and methods as an educator. However, it's always useful to reflect on your own attitudes and to be well-informed about the impact they can have.

A positive and valuing teacher attitude towards multilingualism and home language maintenance is a powerful way to support multilingual children. Research shows that teachers' attitudes and perceptions have a significant impact on children's achievements. If a teacher has **low expectations** of a particular student and doesn't believe in their potential, that attitude can have a negative effect on the student's performances. There's a kind of **self-fulfilling prophecy effect**: when a student is led to believe that they will not succeed, they tend to unconsciously work to confirm that belief¹⁸. The good news is that the reverse is also true: children who feel that their teachers believe in them tend to perform better.

16 Garraffa, M., Vender, M., Sorace, A., & Guasti, M. T. (2019). Is it possible to differentiate multilingual children and children with DLD?

 17
 Schofield, A.,

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 McGeary, F.

 (2016).
 Bilingual and

 Multilingual Learners
 from the Inside-Out:

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 Beyond.

18 Rubie-Davies, C., Hattie, J., & Hamilton, R. (2006). Expecting the best for students: Teacher expectations and academic outcomes. British Journal of Educational. Psychology, 76(3), 429-444. It seems that this also applies to teachers' expectations of non-native and **multilingual pupils.** Studies showed that children who feel that their teachers are in any way disparaging about their home language tend to perform less well on executive functioning tasks than children who perceive more appreciation for their home language. In other words: children whose home language is valued by the teacher **benefit more** from their bilingualism and its cognitive advantages than peers who experience negative attitudes toward their home language¹⁹. So if you show support for your multilingual pupils and their home languages, you're already boosting their school performance!

Teacher attitudes do of course not exist in a vacuum. On a local level, you are part of a school or daycare team that has its own values and ways of handling things and this influences the way you do your job. On a national level, you are led by a government that sets policies and makes decisions about educational issues. Research has shown that teacher attitudes tend to reflect, and be affected by, the **dominant societal attitudes**. This means that there is a role and a responsibility for policy-makers to address the **collective mindset** about multilingualism, home language maintenance or inclusion and to turn multilingualism into a positive story²⁰. We have written this guide for first-line practitioners and will not address policy-makers as such. However, we believe that anyone involved in education, whether that be on a local or a national level, should be aware that a languagefriendly education is a shared challenge and a shared responsibility, as well as opportunity.

> 19 Goriot,

С., Denessen, E., Bakker, J., & Droop, M. (2016). Benefits of being bilingual? The relationship between pupils' perceptions of teachers' appreciation of their home language and executive functioning. International Journal of Bilingualism, 20(6), 700-713.

20 Walker, A., Shafer, J., & liams, M. (2004). 'Not In My Classroom': Teacher Attitudes Towards English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom. NABE Journal, 2.



Ask An Expert Q&A with Dr Clare Cunningham

Senior Lecturer in English Language and Linguistics, York St John University

I have read that teachers' attitudes towards languages can affect children's home language maintenance – as a teacher, what should I pay attention to with regards to my views about multilingualism?

Teachers are, indeed, often the 'front line' for children in terms of either encouraging them to continue developing their full linguistic repertoire or allowing their home language to fall by the wayside, unsupported. Therefore, teachers' attitudes to linguistic diversity are incredibly important and understanding them is now the subject of a number of studies – both completed and ongoing – around the world.

One of the key predictors of positive attitudes seems to be being or having been a language learner yourself, so that's perhaps an easy win! Learning a new language can increase your metalinguistic awareness in a way that can undoubtedly be applied in your classroom. Understanding at first hand some of the challenges of learning a new language can also translate into empathy towards pupils feeling out of their depth.

You should also, however, work hard to make sure you don't fall for any of the prevailing myths about multilingualism. These myths include the idea that people should only communicate in one language at a time, that speaking in one 'language of the classroom' creates a 'level playing field' and that the more time spent using the newer language, the higher the proficiency in it will be. This is not always the case.

If you can focus on not feeling threatened by the presence of languages you may not understand in the classroom, then you may be surprised by the positive results that could ensue by allowing space for translanguaging and home languages in the classroom.

Multilingual children with a migration background

This guide aims to provide educators with tools and ideas to support multilingual children in the school environment, with a main focus on valuing and integrating children's multilingual background and their linguistic repertoire. The framework of the PEaCH project does not allow for a deep elaboration on the broader national (and often also political) context which many multilingual families find themselves in. However, we feel that it's important for anyone who works professionally with multilingual children (teachers, educators and other professionals) to realise that being multilingual is usually more than just speaking a different language at home. It often comes with experiences of migration: leaving a familiar environment behind, leaving friends and family members, starting over in a country where you don't understand the people and customs around you. Some families are forced to flee their countries of origin in distressing circumstances, for reasons of war, hardship or insecurity. Such experiences can have a profound psychological impact on a child. Your institution or school will likely have procedures and policies in place to support and guide immigrant or refugee children. If you are looking for information or tips on how to support these children, here is a list of helpful resources:

- Immigrant and Refugee Children: A Guide for Educators and School Support Staff (Learning for Justice)
- <u>Welcoming refugee children to your school</u> (National Education Union)
- <u>Ways teachers can help refugee students: some suggestions</u> (National Child Traumatic Stress Network 2006)
- <u>Helping refugee students feel safe</u> (Lore Brenneise Edutopia)
- How teachers can help migrant learners feel more included (Helen Hanna - The Conversation)
- <u>Migrants and refugees in education: a toolkit for teachers</u> (British Council)
- Helping immigrant students to succeed at school and beyond (OECD)

How to support multilingualism in daycare & education

Part 2: How to support multilingualism in daycare & education

In the first part of this guide, we talked about the role of a child's home language for its personal as well as its educational development. This information can help you to better understand how a child's different environments, the educational environment being one of them, can impact their multilingual identity and, consequently, their wellbeing. **Now let's make things more concrete**. Being motivated to support multilingualism in your school, classroom or daycare centre is one thing, but knowing where to start can be a challenge. In this second part, we will offer you **tools and ideas** for what you can do to **create a welcoming school or daycare environment** where multilingualism is represented and valued. How can you **manage language diversity** in a way that benefits all children?

We know that you have a lot on your professional plate – teachers and educators share a responsibility to tackle societal challenges and realities in their day-to-day practice and multilingualism is only one of them. That's why this toolkit offers a broad range of activities, ranked from **'low effort'** to **'high effort'**. Rather than a list of items to be crossed off one by one, we offer you a collection of ideas from which you can pick. You decide what works according to your budget, time and energy. Every effort you make will be a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of the multilingual children you work with.

General guide for schools, teachers and daycare workers

In this chapter, we lay out some important principles and approaches to create a welcoming multilingual environment, starting with broad actions that can be implemented across the school or daycare centre and then narrowing it down to the individual level, with advice for educators on how to support multilingual children in their classrooms and groups.

A constructive Language Plan

The most **sustainable** way to support multilingual children is to make it an **institution-wide effort** and figure out ways to get the whole team on board. As a director or team leader you can initiate the development of a **Language Plan**, which comprises a **long-term vision** about multilingualism at your institution. The plan

should be coherent and realistic and map out **concrete actions** to help implement that vision. This may seem an overwhelming task, but don't worry: **you decide** how broad and elaborate the plan will be and you can modify it depending on the **staff and resources available**.

To create your institution's Language Plan, you can follow the **five steps** described below. An important note: **involve the whole team** in the development of this plan. Corporate science teaches us that a **top-down approach is not the most effective way** when you want to make changes. Sit down with your team to explain what you want to do, ask for everyone's input in a **constructive atmosphere** and make sure to address their concerns and implement their suggestions to maximise their support for the plan.

Reflect on your institution's multilingual identity

Activity	Need for resources
If you haven't already done so, map out the children's population at your institution. How many different languages are spoken? What is the percentage of children with a different home language?	Low
Ask teachers to reflect upon their own linguistic repertoire: which language(s) or dialect(s) do they speak? If more than one, in which do they feel most comfortable? If they consider themselves monolingual, do they use their language in the same way in all situations and with all people? If not, why not? Have they ever tried to learn a language? If yes, how did it go?	Low
Survey teachers' opinions on multilingualism and home languages at school. Do they see multilingualism as more of an asset or a problem? Do they welcome home languages in their classrooms or rather support a 'no home language allowed' school policy? How high do they estimate their own knowledge of bilingual development to be?	Medium

Observe teachers in the classroom to see how/whether they integrate students' linguistic repertoire in their lessons and how they communicate with multilingual students

High

Formulate a vision on multilingualism in your school/institution

Based on the findings from step 1, you can assess the attitudes and knowledge of your staff. You may identify individuals who will be ready to champion the Language Plan and act as role models for their colleagues²¹. They will be your strongest allies, so keep them onboard by involving them closely in the process. You may also find staff who will need more information and support to embrace the idea of a welcoming multilingual environment.

As has become clear throughout this guide, a "no home language allowed" approach is not an option in a school that wants to respect and value multilingualism. "Research has shown that a ban on the home language does not lead to more spontaneous use of the school language. With toddlers, a ban makes even less sense, as many of them don't have the metalinguistic awareness to understand it and their school language skills are not strong enough to switch"22. Children should never be encouraged to associate their home language with negative consequences or see it as something that is bad, forbidden or of less value. To establish an inclusive vision on multilingualism, this should be the starting point. Adopt an open and positive attitude when defining your vision and keep the children's best interests in mind.

Formulate the goals you want to pursue

Here are a few **examples** of goals that you can set for your Language Plan:

- We want the languages of all the children to be visually represented in the school buildings.
- We want to motivate and help the entire teaching staff to support multilingual children in their classrooms.

21 See Language Champions in Step 4.

22 <u>Sierens, S., & Van</u> Avermaet, P. (2014). Language diversity in education: Evolving multilingual from education to functional multilingual learning. In Managing diversity in education: Languages, policies, pedagogies (pp. 204-222). Multilingual Matters. (page 56)

- We want to encourage multilingual children to use their home language as a resource for learning.
- We want to help children grow into confident language learners with intercultural skills, metalinguistic awareness and an inclusive perspective on the world.
- We want children to feel that all languages are equally valuable.
- We want to improve the communication and relationship with parents who are not fluent in the school language.
- Find more ideas <u>here</u> and <u>here</u>

Establish concrete actions to achieve those goals

Activity	Need for resources
Visual representation of multilingualism	
Multilingual schoolscape Translate signs in the building and on the playground into different languages. Involve parents of multilingual children in the translation, or use online translation tools.	Medium
Multilingual schoolscape Post culturally relevant items or pictures of them, as well as country and world maps onto the walls.	Medium
Multilingual greetings Use greetings in different languages during the morning announcements, in the playground and during school-wide activities. Involve parents of multilingual children in the translation, or use online translation tools.	Medium

Guide for educators: how to support multilingual children

Activity

Need for resources

Getting staff on board

Involvement

Involve your staff in the development of the Language Plan. Brainstorm together: ask them about their needs, allow them to express their concerns and address them.

- Are the actions in the Language Plan realistic for teachers to implement in their classrooms? Do they have the necessary time, resources and specific instructions?

- What are the concrete challenges the teachers face concerning multilingualism in their classroom?

- What are they already doing to support multilingual children?

- What are their positive and negative experiences with multilingualism in the classroom?

Teamwork makes the dream work

Set goals for the team to make the classrooms languagefriendly (you can find inspiration further in this guide). Agree with them on the actions to take in their respective classrooms. Discuss what is feasible and agree on a schedule. An example:

- Every teacher puts a sign on the classroom door that shows how many languages are spoken.

- The teachers create multilingual word walls in every classroom and add at least one new expression every week.

- The teachers work together to create multilingual labels for all the classrooms.

Medium

Medium

Informing & sensitising

Make accurate information available for the teachers: reading materials about bilingualism, toolkits (such as the one you're reading right now!), websites, etc.

Language Champions

If there are teachers or staff members who are particularly passionate about multilingualism, who have received specific training in this area or who have experience in working with multilingual children, invite them to become Language Champions. They can be contacts for teachers who have questions or problems and help encourage their colleagues to embrace and implement the Language Plan.

Training

If there are financial resources and suitable training programmes available, give teachers the opportunity to follow workshops or training sessions about multilingualism in the classroom. Medium

Medium

High

5

Evaluate the Language Plan

After you have taken the first four steps to create your institution's Language Plan for a language-friendly school environment, it's important to assess the effects of your policy and find out what works and what needs improving. You can conduct regular surveys among **parents** asking them how they feel about their home language in relation to the school. Ask questions such as:

- Do you feel involved and engaged?
- Do you think that the school's efforts have had a positive bearing on your child's wellbeing?
- Are you satisfied with the school's communication?

It's important to evaluate the **teachers' and staff members'** experiences as well. A good way to do this is to invite them to engage in some level of self-assessment and report on their observations. Possible questions are:

- Do you feel that the (multilingual) children have grown more confident in their (home) language use?
- Are you more open about home language use?
- Are the children more aware of language diversity?
- Do they have a better knowledge of language as a cultural and social concept?

Last but not least, do not forget to ask the **children** themselves how they feel about their languages. Ask them for example:

- Are you to use both/all of your languages at home and at schoo?
- How do they feel about your languages?

Listing different emotions such as *happy, sad, okay, worried, excited, confused* and inviting children to choose all the words that apply, will help you to understand how they feel. With smaller children you can replace the verbal options with *happy, sad* etc. faces to help them choose.

Comparing the different surveys with each other and from one term to the next will enable you to assess the progress you have made and to decide where the focus needs to be going forward.


Ask An Expert

Q&A with Dr Ellen-Rose Kambel & Dr Emmanuelle Le Pichon-

Vorstman

Founder & co-founder of The Language Friendly School

In your experience, what is the most important step in creating a language-friendly school environment? What are the main challenges?

The <u>Language Friendly School</u> – a label and a global network – views the school as a meeting place where everyone should be included: pupils, parents, teachers, and staff. To achieve this, we work with the whole team of teachers, staff and parents on developing

- intercultural skills critical thinking, listening and observation skills
- attitudes openness to others, curiosity, respect
- school cultures identities, beliefs, self-awareness, values and
- communication multilingual literacies, strengthening dialogue and implementing multilingual strategies at all levels.

Whereas all schools commit to the two basic principles of the *Language Friendly School*

1. all children have access to a language friendly environment and

2. no child is punished for speaking their home language.

The translation into practice differs according to each school's own context.

To create a language-friendly learning environment, any member of the school community, whether they are teachers, parents or pupils, can take the first step and start by talking to others about why all languages deserve to be heard, recognised and valued at school and how this can be achieved. To help schools figure out where they are, we developed a <u>Roadmap on becoming a Language Friendly School</u>. Ultimately though, the support of

the school heads is essential. Without them wholeheartedly on board, it is very difficult to create a long-lasting cultural change where linguistic and cultural diversity is considered the norm.

The main challenge for maintaining a language-friendly learning environment lies in ensuring that the school stays linguistically and culturally inclusive, now and in future. New colleagues and parents should be ready to take over when those who initiated the idea leave the school and continue building an inclusive community where difference is seen as an asset that is celebrated for the benefit of all.

Communication with parents

It's essential that the **main actors** in a child's environment (family, community, peers, teachers) are all actively involved in the child's education. In some schools and preschool settings, communication with parents who are not fluent speakers of the school language may be difficult. It's possible that some of these parents lack the confidence or are afraid to reach out to the school, because they want to avoid conversations where they have difficulty expressing themselves in a language other than their own. In addition, parents who grew up in a different country may be less familiar with the educational system and school conventions.

If the communication with parents is not facilitated, they will feel less engaged in the school activities and in their child's learning process and they may not be able to provide the necessary and **appropriate support** for their children. When a child brings home a letter with important practical information about a class outing and the parents misunderstand the message, the child might miss out on the trip. Situations like this create a **distance** between the preschool team and the parents and they can affect the children's wellbeing and sense of belonging at preschool. According to a report by the European Commission, a lack of clear communication with non-native parents can lead to exclusion and **unequal opportunities** for their children. Then again, children whose parents are positively and actively engaged in preschool activities are likely to behave better and develop more **positive attitudes towards learning²³**. A relationship of mutual understanding and trust between educators and parents can only benefit the child's wellbeing.

23 European Commission. (2016). Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms (NC-01-15-695-EN-N; p. 96). European Commission.

You are an important **point of contact** for parents and can play a central role in maintaining a positive relationship with parents of multilingual children. Involving

parents in your educational activities will make them feel that their language and cultural background are respected and valued, and it increases the amount of contact between the parents and the team. Also consider asking children's **grandparents** to get involved, as they may have more time to engage in activities which require participation during working hours.

Note

Parents of multilingual children may approach you with questions or issues about home language maintenance or language use in the family. Teachers are often perceived to have authority on this matter and since you are an important **point** of contact, parents might ask you for advice. If they do, suggest that they read our parents' guide <u>"How to raise a bilingual child"</u> (available in English, French, German, Italian, Romanian and Spanish). However, note that strictly speaking, it is not the role, or the responsibility of, the school or you as a teacher to advise parents about a child's language use outside of school. In any case, make sure not to project any **pre-existing** attitudes or personal experience on such situations which can influence parents' decisions about which languages to speak with their children at home ²⁴. For example, research does not support advising parents to stop speaking their home language with their children. Family language coaches and consultants can support parents should they have questions about home language maintenance, and for specific speech and language-related issues, you should suggest that parents seek the advice of a **Speech and Language Therapist**. The school team can contribute to a positive relationship with parents of multilingual children by **showing support** for whatever language choices the parents make.

A reliable resource with online language learning materials that you could recommend to parents when they want to work on home language maintenance with their multilingual children is the <u>PEaCH online collection</u>.

24 Angelis, G. D. (2011). Teachers' beliefs about the role of prior language knowledge in learning and how these influence teaching practices. International Journal of Multilingualism, 8(3), 216-234.

Activity ²⁵	Need for resources
Communicating with parents	
Ensure adapted, accessible and high-quality communication with parents who don't master the school language - Use simple & clear language - Use visual support (e.g. icons, pictures, cartoons, universal symbols) - If possible, translate (use online translation tools or consult a translation agency)	Medium
If there are teachers or other staff members who speak or understand some of the languages spoken by the parents, ask them to help facilitate the communication during in-person contact moments with the parents.	Medium
At the beginning of every school year, inform all the parents about the school language policy or the school's vision on language diversity.	Medium
Organise an intake for new parents of multilingual families whereyougettoknowthemandaskabouttheircommunicative needs.	25 Medium Metrotaal. E_u_r_o Commission
Provide written information on the digital school system in several languages for parents who don't master the school language.	High Commission Language learning in classroom 01-15-6 p. 96). Commission
For parent-teacher conferences, try to find volunteers or students who can attend the conversation and serve as language mediators to translate when parents and teachers do not understand each other. If possible, hire interpreters.	High

For parent-teacher conferences, try to find volunteers or students who can attend the conversation and serve as language mediators to translate when parents and teachers do not understand each other. If possible, hire interpreters.

High

Involving parents in educational activities

Help with translations

Whenever you want to provide translations in the children's home languages (e.g. to label classroom materials or teach the children phrases in each other's languages), ask the parents if they can help you with that.

Multilingual library

Involve parents in the creation of a **multilingual class library**. Ask them if they can lend or donate children's books, magazines, leaflets etc. in their home language.

Reading hour

Organise a regular 'reading hour', where a parent (or grandparent!) reads a story from a children's book in a language of their choice. Meet with the parent beforehand to find out what the story is about and prepare some explanations or translations so that all children can follow the story. If possible, ask the child whose (grand)parent is reading to moderate and explain the story to the other children.

Language lesson

Ask parents of bi- or multilingual children to give a minilanguage lesson in their native language. This doesn't need to be too elaborate: they can teach the class a few words or sentences and talk a bit about where the language is spoken and why they know that language. If necessary, or if the parent doesn't know the school language, you can meet with them in advance to prepare and act as translators or language mediators during the mini-language lesson. Low

Medium

High

High

Multilingual day

Organise a multicultural/multilingual school event for children and their families, where parents can actively participate in the organisation as experts in their languages and cultures. This could be, for example, a fair with different stands, where children and their parents present their heritage culture, using pictures, food, music, stories and so on. Cooperate with the other teachers to organise this event on a school-wide scale.

Language awareness-raising

A classroom environment can serve a range of purposes: inspiring creativity and learning, making children feel welcome and comfortable and giving them a sense of structure. It can also reflect the identities and background of the children and that's where **language awareness-raising** comes in.

Language awareness-raising is about **creating an environment** in which multilingualism is present and represented. Where language in all its forms is everpresent, both mono- and multilingual children can grow into confident language learners with **intercultural skills**, **metalinguistic awareness** and an **inclusive perspective** on society. The idea behind language awareness-raising is to sensitise children to the multitude of languages and to a multilingual reality, as well as stimulate them to develop **positive attitudes** towards languages, multilingualism and diversity. This will increase their **motivation** to learn languages and it can prevent preconceptions about the prestige of particular languages, in other words, it contributes to **language equality**. Additionally, language awareness-raising can make for a better understanding between children in the classroom.²⁶

Being familiar with the children's individual **language profiles** is helpful for raising their language awareness. Which children consider themselves monolingual? Which children are not native speakers of the school language? What language(s) do they speak at home? What language(s) do their parents speak? Your administrative team may already have some information about the children's background or family situation, which is a good start for you to find answers to these questions. You can check with the other teachers to see what they know. If it helps to gain a better overview, **keep your own records** of the children's language profiles. You will also learn a lot by observing and paying close attention to the children's language use in the classroom. Another way to find out more is to talk to the parents. If they do not speak the school language, contact the school team and/or director, to explore how communication with these parents can be facilitated.

High

26 Sierens, S., & Van Avermaet, P. (2014). Language diversity in education: Evolving from multilingual education to functional multilingual learning. In Managing diversity education: in Languages, policies, pedagogies (pp. 204-Multilingual 222). Matters

56

A bilingual is someone who regularly uses two or more languages or dialects in their everyday lives.

- François Grosjean

Please keep the following tips in mind²⁷:

- When you engage in activities that involve multiple languages, it's okay that not all the different languages spoken by the children are represented every single time, just make sure that every language is included at least once.
- Get used to and accept the mix of languages that is likely to fill the classroom during such activities. The children will naturally find their way in it and that's what counts.
- Some of the activities involve written words (e.g. putting up a 'welcome' sign in all the children's home languages). For languages that use a different script, include the pronunciation in the school language so that the children know what the words sound like.
- Be inclusive. While the activities focus on making bilingual children feel welcome by including their home languages in classroom activities, it is important to also engage children who are regarded as monolingual. Note that a child's language repertoire includes any dialects they speak, words and phrases they have learnt in any other language, not to forget sign language and even slang vocabulary. All of these can be included in the activities.

27 From: <u>'Thuis spreek</u> <u>ik ook!</u> (by Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie, P e d a g o g i s c h e Begeleidingsdienst Stad Gent, Steunpunt Diversiteit en Leren & Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer)

Go to age-specific advice and activities: <u>O to 3 | 3 to 6 | 6 to 12</u>

Tips: Omniglot.com

Many of the activities proposed in this guide require you to look up words or expressions in the children's home languages. It's impossible to learn all those languages (unless you are a very dedicated omniglot), so a source where you can find basic expressions and thematic vocabulary in all those languages might come in handy. Good news: it exists! Omniglot.com is an invaluable resource for teachers: the website contains a wide range of expressions, useful phrases and thematic vocabulary in more than 320 languages. It takes just three clicks to get a list with the phrase 'happy birthday' in all your students' languages. Not having to look up every language separately will save you a lot of time. Apart from phrases in countless languages, omniglot.com also provides information about different scripts, interesting articles about language, multilingual texts and a bookstore with language learning materials. Make sure you check it out!

Using the home language to build learning

Language awareness-raising is one way of integrating children's linguistic repertoire into classroom activities, but it's limited to learning **about** language, rather than learning languages as such. A second approach is to allow children to rely on their home language as a lever for learning. This is also referred to as **"functional multilingual learning"**²⁸. In very basic terms, it means "using language to learn new things"²⁹. This approach stimulates teachers to see and use language as an educational resource and a means to build new learning opportunities. The home language of the multilingual children in your class can serve as a **stepping stone** for them to acquire other languages and to learn new **content**. Various studies have shown that when schools acknowledge and use the pupils' multilingual repertoires, they create better chances of educational success.

Interestingly, case studies suggest that in schools where home and heritage languages are valued as resources, **monolingual children**, too, benefit from that learning environment. It helps them develop a more open and inclusive perspective. They learn that there are different ways of saying the same thing and different ways of looking at the world. This sense of linguistic and cultural awareness is an invaluable skill for every child growing up in a society where diversity is the norm.

28 Sierens, S., & Van Avermaet, P. (2014). Language diversity in education: Evolving from multilingual education to functional multilingual learning. In Managing diversity in education: Languages, policies, pedagogies (pp. 204-222). Multilingual Matters.

29 Conteh, J. (2006). Promoting Learning for Bilingual Pupils 3-11: Opening Doors to Success. SAGE.

Go to age-specific advice and activities: <u>O to 3 | 3 to 6 | 6 to 12</u>

Class management in a multilingual classroom

Language awareness-raising and allowing children to use the home language as a lever for learning are two very important strategies to support multilingual children. That said, going from a "no home language allowed" policy to a "home language welcome and encouraged" policy might affect class management in some ways. Of course, children may well speak to each other, to you, or to themselves in their home languages. This can occur in an informal context, for example when they are playing games or chatting with each other while doing crafts, but it can also occur in a learning context, when they are using words or concepts in their home language to better understand something. Many teachers report a sense of loss of control and insecurity when children speak a language they do not understand. This is a natural reaction for you to have as a teacher. As a starting point to handle such issues, it's important to realise that a child will use their home language intuitively and that it's something familiar for them to fall back on in situations where they feel misunderstood, confused or insecure. With the child's best interests at heart, the most sustainable approach is to facilitate home language use in a way that supports the child's wellbeing and learning processes, while remaining manageable for you as a teacher.

Go to age-specific advice and activities: <u>O to 3 | 3 to 6 | 6 to 12</u>

Age-specific guide for teachers & daycare workers

This part is structured along **three age categories**: zero to three years old, three to six years old and six to 12 years old. There are several reasons for this division, the first being that these categories roughly coincide with **important stages in language development**. More importantly, since this is a toolkit for educators, the age indications more or less reflect the different stages in a child's **educational journey**. It's important to note that educational systems differ from one EU country to another; not every country has the same educational structure and compulsory education doesn't start at the same age in every country. That's why the age categories in this toolkit are indicative and should be interpreted with the necessary flexibility.

1. By ages **zero to three**, we mean the years before a child enters the official educational system. In most countries, children attend daycare by the age of three, which focuses on looking after children while parents are at work. This can be organised either privately or in daycare centres. 28 Sierens, S., & Van Avermaet, P. (2014). Language diversity in education: Evolving from multilingual education to functional multilingual learning. In Managing diversity in education: Languages, policies, pedagogies (pp. 204-222). Multilingual Matters. 1. By ages **zero to three**, we mean the years before a child enters the official educational system. In most countries, children attend daycare by the age of three, which focuses on looking after children while parents are at work. This can be organised either privately or in daycare centres.

2. Ages **three to six** refers to the beginning of the school career. While kindergarten is not part of compulsory education in every country, most children between the ages of three and six do attend some form of preschool, or an education option where they engage in playful learning activities.

3. The age category **six to 12** coincides in most EU countries with the start of formal education and primary school.

Even though the educational context in your country may differ from this structure, don't worry: you can still draw on the activities in the PEaCH guide. Many of them are accessible and straightforward activities that can be carried out **in any** educational setting.

Ages 0 to 3: advice & activities

Note

By ages **zero to three**, we mean the years before a child enters the official educational system. In most countries, children attend daycare at the age of three, which focuses on looking after children while parents are at work. This can be organised either privately or in daycare centres.

How does bilingualism develop at this age?

At a few months of age, infants are already able to differentiate between two languages, as they become sensitive to the differences in the sound patterns of their parents' speech. Babies learn to recognise words throughout the first year of their lives. As they receive more and more input in each language, they start to understand and remember words they have heard before.

Gradually, they go from understanding words to producing them. Most have started to babble in repeated syllables, like *da da da* or *ma ma ma*, by their first birthday. There is a wide variation when it comes to the milestone of the first word: some say their first words as early as eight months, others do it at 18 months. The important

thing at this stage of development is that the child is able to listen to its parents and find ways to communicate with them.

The next step in a child's language development is to combine words into meaningful utterances. Once a child knows enough words (more or less 50, counted across both/all languages), they will gradually start to string words together into short phrases. By the age of two, they're able to make 2-3-word combinations, like dog eat or see car. From the age of two or two and a half onwards, children may start adding more words to their sentences and say things like *dog eat food* or *mummy go shop now*. At this point, they should be able to communicate with their parents and have simple conversations.

Keep this in mind

The languages of bilingual children may develop at a different pace from each other; a child may use only one language in the first years of its life. The balance between the languages depends largely on the amount of exposure the child gets in each language. Toddlers are already very sensitive to their parents' language choices. If one parent always speaks Spanish to them, it's likely that they will only say Spanish words to that parent. If a parent suddenly switches to a different language, they might react very strongly.

If you're interested in a more detailed overview of bilingual development, download the free PEaCH guide <u>'How to raise a bilingual child'</u>

Communication with parents

When you have an intake with parents who want to register their child in the care centre, it's a good idea to ask about the **family language situation**. If the parents are raising their child in more than one language, you can ask the following questions to find out more about the situation:

- Which language does each of the parents speak with the child?
- Is the child saying words in one, or both, of the languages?
- How does the child respond to each of the languages?
- Are the child's languages developing at a similar pace or is one developing more significantly than the other?

If the parents chose to register their child in your care centre, they will be aware of the language that is spoken there. Sometimes, parents who speak a minority language at home choose to enroll their child in a daycare centre where the majority language is spoken, because they want their child to be familiarised with it before the school starts in that language. When you speak with the parents, you may want to inquire if this is the case. When the child is not familiar with the language spoken at daycare, it's advisable to sit together with the parents and make a list of **important basic words** in the home language that you may need in certain situations ('yes', 'no', 'water', 'drink', 'food', 'eat', 'toilet', 'pain').

While the child is settling in, **update the parents** on their child's progress and behaviour at daycare, especially when it comes to language and communication. It's also a good idea to update the parents about the activities you are doing, for example, tell the parents which stories you are reading. You can suggest to them to read the same story at home in their home language (many well-known stories, like fairy tales, are translated into most languages).

More generally, if you have multilingual children at your daycare centre, we recommend you gain some **basic information about bilingual development**. As a caretaker, you are not responsible for teaching children a second language, but it's good to **know what to expect**. For example: most children who are raised in two languages don't develop both languages at the same pace. It's possible that a child only speaks and/or understands their home language upon arriving at your daycare centre. In such situations, it's important not to pressure the child to say something in the new language, but rather create a safe and supportive environment in which they feel comfortable developing their languages at their own pace. Here are a few other tips³⁰:

- Acknowledge the child's first language
- Find out what the child is interested in, then add these activities and experiences to the early childhood programme
- Encourage, support and praise the child when they show an interest in joining activities
- Support language development by modelling and repeating words and phrases, using gestures and showing them visual material, like saying, "come and play", pointing at a toy or showing them a photo
- Offer non-language activities, like picture-matching and sensory activities, like sand play, so the child can participate, learn and interact with other children
- Bear in mind that every child is different and recognise their individual strengths and needs to help them enjoy their day

30 From: https:// www.careforkids. com.au/child-carearticles/article/266/ supporting-bilingualchildren-in-child-care As an easy-to-understand guide with age-specific information about bilingual development and useful advice, we recommend you to have a look at the <u>PEaCH</u> <u>practical guide for parents</u> of bilingual children. It may help to better understand the experiences of multilingual families.

Language awareness-raising

When you have an intake with parents who want to register their child in the care Although childcare is very different from a more formal educational setting like a school or classroom, it is still a learning environment. Where there is interaction, there is learning. While playing with their peers and developing ways to communicate with the caretakers at the daycare centre, children are surrounded by social and linguistic stimuli. While it's too early for most children under the age of three to develop a sense of metalinguistic awareness, you can encourage an emerging sense of language awareness with small actions, visual elements or by the way you communicate with the children.

Activity	Need for resources
Create a "welcome" sign in all the languages that are represented at your daycare centre. While the children are yet to learn to read, the visual presence of their language is important to both them and their parents.	Low
When parents drop their bilingual child off at daycare, show them that you acknowledge their home language . You could do this by learning how to say 'good morning' and greeting the child in their home language. These familiar words and sounds can give the child a feeling of safety.	Low
When you notice that some of the (older) children are starting to understand language as a concept (e.g. they are able to name a language, consciously switch from one to the other, or react accordingly when you ask them to say something in language X), use these moments as opportunities to further foster this emerging awareness . ("How do you say X?", "Can you say that in [language Y]?")	Medium

Positive encouragement is very important. **Express your appraisal** when you notice that a child uses a new word to show that you are proud and to make the child feel confident about their language use.

Children's songs are a fun and educational resource to work with at daycare. They are simple and repetitive. Pick an easy song and **translate** it into the home language(s) of the bilingual child(ren) at your daycare centre. You can ask the parents for help, but with such simple texts, online translating tools work really well too. Maybe there's even an existing version to be found on YouTube! Try playing or singing the song to and/or with the kids. They will love hearing a catchy tune in a language they know.

Ages 3 to 6: advice & activities

Note

Ages **three to six** refers to the beginning of the school career. While kindergarten is not part of compulsory education in every country, most children between the ages of three and six do attend some form of preschool, or an education option where they engage in playful learning activities. In this chapter, we use the terms 'kindergarten' and 'preschool' interchangeably to talk about this education option.

How does bilingualism develop at this age?

In their third and fourth year of life, children learn to say longer and **more complicated** sentences, using clauses. From age four onwards, they have normally acquired enough language knowledge to express themselves clearly and make themselves understood not only to their parents but to people outside the family as well. Between the ages of four and six, they learn to string sentences together into fairly **coherent speech**. Around this age, children also reach a level of cognitive maturity which allows them to think about, and reflect upon, language. This is called **metalinguistic awareness**. Bilingual children are becoming aware that they know more than one language, that they can switch between those languages and that other people may or may not understand either of them.

Low

High

In their third and fourth year of life, children learn to say longer and **more complicated** sentences, using clauses. From age four onwards, they have normally acquired enough language knowledge to express themselves clearly and make themselves understood not only to their parents but to people outside the family as well. Between the ages of four and six, they learn to string sentences together into fairly **coherent speech**. Around this age, children also reach a level of cognitive maturity which allows them to think about, and reflect upon, language. This is called **metalinguistic awareness**. Bilingual children are becoming aware that they know more than one language, that they can switch between those languages and that other people may or may not understand either of them.

Even before starting to learn to read or write, some children show an interest in letters and numbers. Most children learn to recognise letters between the ages of three and four – this often begins with the letters of their name. That doesn't mean they understand the connection between a letter and a sound, though. From the age of four onwards, children learn to **associate sounds with letters** and make sense of the alphabet. They start to discover the written world, as they notice magazines, leaflets, food packaging or grocery lists in the home. If those materials are available in both the home and the school language, bilingual children may start to identify differences and similarities between the forms of their languages. These initial experiences or **emergent literacy skills** are a valuable preparation for children's further literacy development.

Keep this in mind

In this phase of their lives, some children attend preschool or kindergarten. For children who have learned a different language at home, this is a big change. They are immersed in a new language and no longer hear the home language as much as before. The good news is that, while it might take them a while to adjust, for many bilingual children it takes only a few months until they start to say words or even sentences in the school language. Once they get more confident and used to the school language, they may continue using it once they come home. Parents' consistent use of the home language is important to maintain the balance in language input.

If you're interested in a more detailed overview of bilingual development, download the free PEaCH guide <u>'How to raise a bilingual child'</u>

Language awareness-raising

Did you know...

that activities to raise language awareness are just as useful in classrooms where all children speak the school language? Every child, mono- or multilingual, benefits from learning about other languages and cultures. It broadens children's perspectives and makes them more open to diversity.

The kindergarten classroom is where many children spend most of their waking hours around this age. Especially in a kindergarten context, the **classroom environment** plays a central role: rather than receiving formal teaching, preschool children learn from the objects and visual clues in their surroundings and from the way they communicate and interact with each other and with you, the teacher.

At kindergarten age, most children are in the phase of **developing their metalinguistic awareness**: they are starting to understand the concept of language and learning to reflect upon their own language use. Some children will be further along in this process than others; bi- or multilingual children are likely to be more aware of their own language use than monolingual children.

Language awareness-raising at this point is about **small actions**. Some children might understand those actions better than others, but that's okay. The mere fact that they are exposed to languages in different ways and that they are allowed the **space to reflect** is enough to foster language awareness. It helps them understand that there are different ways of saying the same thing, different words for one object, etc. And even though most children at this age don't know how to read or write yet, being surrounded by written language (just isolated words at this stage) can stimulate emergent literacy skills.

Activity ³¹

Need for resources

Low

Medium

Stimulating children to reflect on their language repertoire

Language portrait³²



To find out how children look at their own language repertoire, ask them to visualise their languages and dialects by colouring in body parts on a template of a body silhouette. Every colour represents a language. Ask guiding questions: which language do you use in your head? What is the language of your heart? Where in your body do you place each of your languages? Afterwards, have a discussion where you ask the children to explain their choices.

Language survey

Interview the class about their languages. Which/how many languages do they speak and/or are spoken in their family? Create simple graphics of the results: the languages most spoken in the class, the number of children who are bi- or multilingual, etc. To make the survey more inclusive, also include languages of which children know only a few words or phrases.

Increasing the visual presence of language

Multilingual welcome sign

Interview the class about their languages. Which/how many Create a colourful WELCOME sign in all the languages spoken by the children. Ask the children to help you translate the word in their home language. If they don't know, you can use Google Translate or write a note to the parents to ask them for help. For languages using a different script, include the pronunciation in the school language as a reminder for yourself and others who can read..

Low

31 Inspiration for/sources of the activities:

https://www.open. edu/openlearncreate/ mod/oucontent/view. php?id=64814&printable=1

Celic, C., & Seltzer, K. (2011). Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB guide for educators. The Graduate Center, The City University of New York: CUNY-NYSIEB.

Multilingual Families Project

http://www.multilingual-families.eu

Talen op een kier. Talensensibilisering voor het basisonderwijs. (by Integratiecentrum Foyer)

<u>'Thuis spreek ik ook!'</u> (by Kruispunt Migratie-In-

tegratie, Pedagogische Begeleidingsdienst Stad Gent, Steunpunt Diversiteit en Leren & Integratiecentrum Foyer)

Lesactiviteiten meertaligheid - SLO

32 Image from: http://3mproject. nl/assets/activiteittaalportretten.pdf

We speak [number] languages

Have a sign on the classroom door that says "In this classroom, we speak [number] languages". Update the number whenever a new language speaker joins your classroom.

Language tower

Have the children bring boxes and other packaging in their family language(s) and build a 'language tower' out of them.

Multilingual labels

Label objects in the classroom (equipment, toys, furniture, learning materials) in the school language as well as the children's home languages. You can use an online translating tool for this or ask the children or their parents to help you translate the labels into their language(s). To help the children distinguish between the different languages, you can use different-coloured pens or cards.

Language map

Hang a world map on the wall and list all the different languages spoken by the children in the class. Mark the areas or countries where those languages are spoken on the world map. Bear in mind that some languages are spoken in several countries.

Multilingual word wall

Create an evolving wall in the classroom with useful expressions in the children's home languages, ('hello', 'how are you', 'goodbye', 'thank you', 'sorry', 'l'm hungry', etc.). Accompany the written words with matching images, so that the children don't need to be able to read in order to understand what is meant. Once in a while, gather the children before the word wall and go over the expressions together. Point at the images and ask them if they remember them. If not, let the child who speaks that particular language help their classmates. Low

Medium

Medium

Medium

Raising (multi)cultural awareness

Travel map

Display a map in the classroom where children can mark the countries they have travelled to or their families' countries of origin.

Travel report

When a child visits their family's country of origin or a different country, ask them to tell their class about their trip and talk about a specific aspect of the country that they find interesting.

What time is it?

Hang clocks in the classroom that show the different time zones of the children's heritage countries.

Cultural artefacts

Ask children to bring an artefact or an object from home that reminds them of their culture or language and ask them to present it to the class and explain why they chose to bring this particular object.

Familiarising children with language diversity

Chosen word

Every day or week, one pupil gets to present their favourite word in (one of) their language(s). Ask them to clarify the meaning of the word, to teach the other children how to pronounce it and to explain why they chose this word. Ask the other children if they can translate the word into their own language. Collect all the chosen words in a multilingual glossary with pictures that you can look at with the children every once in a while.

Medium

Low

Low

Medium

Happy birthday

Teach the children to say 'happy birthday' in each other's home languages.

Three, two, one, go!

Have the whole class learn to count to five or ten in different languages.

Greetings

Have bilingual pupils teach their classmates a greeting in their home language, practising over several days until the class is able to use these multilingual greetings when entering the classroom. Develop a routine whereby, at the start of the day, you greet your pupils in the school language and then in each of their home languages, with the whole class responding to the series of greetings accordingly. Do the same to say goodbye at the end of the school day.

Move your body!

Print a picture of the human body for every child. Point at the different body parts and name them together in the school language. Ask a child who speaks a language other than the school language to name body parts in their language (you can look this up in advance in case they need help). The other children have to point at the body part they think their classmate is referring to. The multilingual child can then tell them if they got it right. A similar activity can be done with other thematic vocabulary: the days of the week, colours, food, etc.

Animal sounds

Print images of different animals and ask the children which sounds the animals make. If children who speak a language other than the school language make different sounds, ask them to teach the other what the animals sound like in their language. The other children can imitate them and compare.

 \rightarrow Game version:

Medium

Medium

Medium

Medium

Print images of different animals (preferably animals whose sounds are easy to imitate). Half of the children get an image stuck to their backs (so they can't see the animal). Invite the children to walk around in the classroom. On your signal (e.g. clap), the children who don't have an image on their backs pair up with a child who does and imitate the sound of the animal on the other child's back. The other child has to guess which animal they have on their back.

Sing your song

Throughout the year, all children are asked to share their favourite children's song with the class. The class listens to the song together in class. When it's in a different language, ask the child who chose this song to explain what it's about and in what language it's sung (and sing it for the other children if they feel comfortable). The group can listen to the song again and try to sing along.

Dual language audio books

When you read a story to the children in the school language, you can use dual language audio books: choose a story on a website or app with dual language books (Beelingua, Tomato/ Tomate, Unuhi) and give multilingual children access to the version in their home language. Give them some extra time to listen to the story in their language or suggest to the parents to play and discuss the audio book at home.

Letter monster game

Tell the children a story about a monster that eats all the letters and lives in a cave. One day, the letter monster eats so many letters that it throws them all up. The classroom is the monster's cave, where all the letters are hidden and the children need to find them. Hide letters of different alphabets and tell the children to put every letter they find in the right bag (one bag for each alphabet). The children play in groups, every group is responsible for one bag (so one alphabet). Once all the letters are in the right bags, have the children copy the letters of the different alphabets in writing and add them into the bags

Medium

High

High

Mother tongue pre-teaching

For this activity, we advise you to cooperate with primary school teachers and their multilingual pupils. Children with a different home language may struggle to keep up when the kindergarten teacher reads a story in the school language. Invite primary school pupils with the same home language to tutor those children. The tutors can prepare by thinking about how the story can be told in the child's home language (rather than a literal translation, try to encourage a natural retelling of the story) and by connecting words or concepts in both languages to each other. The tutor tells the story to the child in the shared home language, making use of the pictures in the book. The tutor can compare some important words or concepts and introduce them in the school language. After this pre-teaching, the main class activity takes place: the teacher tells the story to the whole class in the school language, paying special attention to the pictures. The tutors can be present during this activity to provide extra support for the multilingual children.

High

Using the home language to build learning

Since there is **little or no formal teaching** in kindergarten and most children between the ages of three and six are only just beginning to develop literacy skills, the possibilities for using the home language as a learning tool are less elaborate than in primary school. However, as a kindergarten teacher, you can pave the way for primary school, by instilling in your preschoolers the idea that they are **allowed to draw on their home language** when they don't understand something or when they have trouble expressing themselves in the school language. You can help them realise that their **language repertoire is an asset**. You can explore with them in **which situations the home language can be helpful** and how they can make use of it. At the same time, in addition to allowing home language use for functional purposes and learning activities, it's important to make children feel that they also have an **emotional right** to speak their home language.

This table lists a number of ideas and suggestions on how to enable multilingual children to use their home language in a way that it helps them learn.

Activity

Multilingual alphabet chart

Design an alphabet chart that has example words in the different languages represented in the group. E.g. example words that start with the letter A could be apple (English), avion (French), etc. If there are children who speak a language that has a different script, you can also look up words in their language that use the same sound.

Translanguaging

Allow multilingual children to use, translate into and compare with their home language. You can encourage this by saying things like "How do you say [word] in [language]?", "In [school language] you say [word] and in [home language], you say [word]".

Multilingual teamwork

If there are children who share the same home language, allow them to use that language when they play together. When you walk by to check on the group, you can show an interest and stimulate a transfer by asking them to explain or name things in the school language.

Abstract words & concepts

A child's understanding of feelings, abstract ideas and concepts (love, sadness, thinking, etc.) is not language-specific. Once the understanding is there, it's there in every language, just represented by different words. You can help stimulate this abstract thinking by giving instructions to parents to speak with their children about abstract concepts in the home language. You can then mention these concepts in your classroom and solidify their understanding by helping them learn the words in the school language.

Class management in a multilingual classroom

Kindergarten classroom environments tend to be less structured and formal than primary and secondary school classroom environments. Rather than sitting at a desk facing the teacher, **preschool children are in constant interaction** with each other and their surroundings. As a preschool teacher, you might have a higher tolerance for noise and fuss than teachers who work with older children. Still, preschool children need to acquire physical, social and emotional skills to prepare them for school. They need to learn how to behave in group situations and to respect their peers and you as their teacher.

A common worry of teachers is the **communication gap** that occurs when they **don't understand the language** a child speaks in the classroom, and/or the other way around. Especially in a kindergarten context, this can be a puzzling situation, because a three to six-year old child is still developing a multilingual awareness. In such a situation, a ban on the child's home language is not the right approach. The child may not even understand what you mean if you tell them to switch to the school language. They are **still learning to reflect on their own language use** and may not realise that you don't understand them. Additionally, many bi- or multilingual children haven't learned or heard the school language before starting kindergarten. They are emergent bilinguals and their language skills may not be strong enough to make the **full switch³³**. There may also be more **variety** among the children, both in terms of school language and general communication skills as well as metalinguistic awareness.

Situation	A child who does not know the school language at all is about to start attending your class.
Suggestions	Create picture cards for certain crucial communication situations. For example: toilet [picture of the toilet – make sure the child knows where to go], play time [children playing], lunch time [picture of a meal or lunch box], home time [clock and parents coming to pick their children up], pen, book etc. Use the equivalent phrase in the school language every time you use a picture card for ease of learning.
Situation	A child says a word in their home language (to you or to one of their peers) and you want to encourage them to try to say it in the school language.

Sierens, S., & Van Avermaet, P. (2014). .anguage diversity in education: Evolving rom multilingual education to functional multilingual learning. n Managing diversity n education: .anguages, policies, pedagogies (pp. 204– 222). Multilingual Matters.

Suggestions

At this age, the child might not understand straightforward instructions such as "how do you say that in [school language]?". If you know what word they mean, you can model it in the school language and encourage them to imitate what you are saying, using visual aids where possible. If you don't know what the child is saying and there are no contextual clues that could help you work that out, then it's best to just let the moment pass, unless you can tell that the child is trying to tell you something urgent or important. In that case, you can try to figure out the meaning by asking simple yes or no questions in the school language ("Pain? Are you hurt? Are you hungry?"), or you can call a parent or consult a colleague to find out if there is a problem.

Situation

A few children are arguing or quarrelling. One of them says something in their home language and you are worried that it might be a curse word or something mean or insulting.

Before you react to this situation, keep in mind that children who are monolingual speakers of the school language can use bad words just as well and that you might have the tendency to react less strongly to that because you understand what they are saying. Try to adopt the same approach for any child who says mean or bad things, regardless of the language they are using.

Suggestions If you do not know whether a child has said something bad because you don't understand their language, ask them to clarify ("What did you say? What did you mean? What happened?"). Unless you are sure that they did something wrong, don't target them specifically, but make a comment about the conflict situation as a whole. Do not presume that something said in a language you do not understand is something negative.

Situation

Two children who share the same home language are chatting with each other in the language you do not understand, while you are speaking or explaining something to the class.

Suggestions In a situation like this, focus on the fact that the children are disrupting a class activity rather than the fact that you don't understand what they are saying. Imagine a situation where two children are chatting in a language you do understand – it doesn't matter what they are saying. What matters is that they are interrupting or disturbing your activity. Try to restore the calm without commenting on the language they use.

Situation	A child is addressing you (asking a question or telling a story) in their home language, which you don't understand.
Suggestions	This situation gives you an opportunity to stimulate the child's metalinguistic awareness. Contextual clues can help you understand what they are talking about (the child might be pointing at something or using body language and facial expressions). You can also give the child a piece of paper and a pencil so that they can express themselves in drawings.

Ages 6 to 12: advice & activities

Note

The age category **six to 12** coincides, in most EU countries, with the start of formal education or primary school.

How does bilingualism develop at this age?

Children have now developed enough language awareness to approach language in an analytical way and understand it as a system with rules and characteristics. They no longer learn through imitation, but by detecting and applying rules.

For bilingual children who attend school in a different language than what they speak at home, most of their days evolve around the school language. They play with classmates, read and write and learn about maths and other subjects in it. Since they learn about a wide range of topics, their vocabulary in the school language may be more varied than in the home language, although they may know more words about household or family-related topics in the home language.

The older children in this age group are about to hit puberty and this may already begin to show. Typically, pre-teens start to think about who they are and develop a set of values and stronger social connections. For bilingual children, language is an important part of their identity. Some children are perfectly comfortable with their language situation, while others might have doubts and questions about it. In what language can I really be myself? What culture do I belong to? If the school language becomes a child's dominant language, it may not only be a question of input; it can also be a choice they make, to affiliate with their peers or to belong to a group. It can also work the other way around. A child may develop a growing interest in their parents' native culture(s) and a curiosity to discover the different parts of their identity and background.

Keep this in mind

Many children who have learnt a different language at home don't have the opportunity to get schooling in that language, which is why some parents decide to put in an extra effort to help their kids develop reading and writing skills in the family language. In the PEaCH guide for parents, we advise them to think about this carefully and decide which level of literacy they want their child to achieve, as it requires quite an effort from both parent and child. When literacy instruction in the home language coincides with literacy instruction in the school language, some children might feel overwhelmed. At PEaCH, we encourage parents to estimate what is feasible for their family and to follow their child's rhythm and interest. So as not to overload the child, the PEaCH guide suggests parents start with reading activities first. If the child struggles with reading or writing in the school language, it's advisable for parents to wait a while before starting with literacy activities in the home language.

If you're interested in a more detailed overview of bilingual development, download the free PEaCH guide<u>'How to raise a bilingual child'</u>

Language awareness-raising

When they start primary school, most children will have a fairly well-developed sense of metalinguistic awareness. They understand language as a concept. They know which language(s) they speak and are able to reflect on their own language use. They are starting formal literacy instruction now, maybe even foreign language instruction and for that, it is necessary to have the cognitive skills to understand the structural characteristics of language. It's a gradual process, but most children are ready for that at this age (there's a reason why formal literacy instruction starts at a similar age in most countries).

While it remains useful with children of this age to keep fostering that metalinguistic awareness, the focus can shift to a broader, more social and cultural understanding of language. Which languages are spoken in this country and across the world? Which languages are spoken in more than one country? What does language mean to people? Sparking pupils' curiosity about other languages and cultures will help to open their perspective. At the same time, express your own curiosity about the language(s) of your multilingual pupils as well – it will give them a sense of confidence and self-worth.

A European-wide initiative to support language awareness-raising in schools is the <u>European Language Portfolio</u>. The portfolio is a **personal document** in which children can keep track of their language learning experiences (both within and outside of the school context) and reflect on their linguistic competences over time. The instrument was designed by the EU and is commonly used in schools all over Europe. Each portfolio has **three components**: (1) a language biography, where children can write about their experiences with different languages and cultures (2) a language passport, where they can describe their competences in different languages and (3) a language dossier, where they can collect examples from their work in different languages to 'showcase' their linguistic accomplishments. Teachers in all EU countries can find templates for language portfolios online and in many schools the portfolio is incorporated in the curriculum.

Activity ³⁴

Need for resources

Stimulating children to reflect on their language repertoire

Language portrait



To find out how pupils look at their own language repertoire, ask them to visualise their languages and dialects by colouring in body parts on a template of a body silhouette. Every colour represents a language, dialect or vernacular. Ask guiding questions: which language do you use in your head? What is the language of your heart? Where in your body do you place each of your languages? Why did you make these choices? Afterwards, have a class discussion where you ask the pupils to explain their choices.

Low

34 Inspiration for/ sources of the activities:

https://www.open. edu/openlearncreate/ mod/oucontent/view. php?id=64814&printable=1_

Celic, C., & Seltzer, K. (2011). Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSI-EB guide for educators. The Graduate Center, The City University of New York: CUNY-NYSIEB.

Multilingual Families Project <u>http://www.</u> <u>multilingual-families.</u> eu/

Talen op een kier. Talensensibilisering voor het basisonderwijs. (by Integratiecentrum Foyer)

'Thuis spreek ik ook!' (by Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie, Pedagogische Begeleidingsdienst Stad Gent, Steunpunt Diversiteit en Leren & Integratiecentrum Foyer) Lesactiviteiten meertaligheid - SLO

Language survey

Interview the class about their languages. Which/how many languages do they speak and/or are spoken in their family? Create graphics of the results: the languages most spoken in the class, the number of children who are bi- or multilingual, etc. You can also use the results for statistical exercises.

Language passport

For every language every child speaks, establish together what it means to them and collect this information in a language passport.

- Use: associations, persons, places, subjects, frequency
- Function: dreaming, thinking, telling secrets, getting angry, counting, talking to animals
- Strengths & weaknesses in terms of speaking, listening, reading & writing

Language portfolio

Guide your pupils through the process of developing and updating their portfolios. Follow up on their work: identify regular time slots when they will fill in the language portfolio and provide the opportunity for one-on-one teacher-student conversations where pupils can ask you for advice or help.

Increasing the visual presence of language

Multilingual welcome sign

Create a WELCOME sign in all the languages spoken by the children. Ask the children to help you translate the word in their home language – if they don't know, you can use Google Translate or write a note to the parents to ask them for help. For languages using a different script, include the pronunciation in the school language.

Low

Medium

Medium

High

We speak [number] languages

Have a sign on the classroom door that says "In this classroom, we speak [number] languages" and list them. Write the native names of the languages, for example: Deutsch, English, Polskie, Suomi and so on.

Language tower or artwork

Have the children bring boxes and other packaging in their family language(s) and build a 'language tower' out of them. Alternatively, ask them to bring cuttings from magazines or leaflets and create a piece of language artwork.

Multilingual labels

Label objects in the classroom (equipment, toys, furniture, learning materials) in the school language as well as the children's home languages. You can use an online translating tool for this or ask the children or their parents to help you translate the labels into their language(s). To help the children distinguish between the different languages, you can use different-coloured pens or cards.

Language map

Hang a world map on the wall and list all the different languages spoken by the pupils in the class. Mark the areas or countries where those languages are spoken on the world map. Bear in mind that some languages are spoken in several countries.

Multilingual word wall

Create an evolving wall in the classroom with useful expressions in the children's home languages, ('hello', 'how are you', 'goodbye', 'thank you', 'sorry', 'l'm hungry', etc.). Accompany the written words with matching images.

Low

Medium

Medium

Medium

Raising (multi)cultural awareness

Travel map

Display a map in the classroom where children can mark the countries they have travelled to or their families' countries of origin.

Travel report

When a child visits their family's country of origin or a different country, ask them to tell their class about their trip and talk about a specific aspect of the country that they find interesting.

What time is it?

Hang clocks in the classroom that show the different time zones of the children's heritage countries.

Cultural artefacts

Ask children to bring an artefact or an object from home that reminds them of their culture or language and ask them to present it to the class and explain why they chose to bring this particular object.

Familiarising children with language diversity

Chosen word

Every day or week, one student gets to present their favourite word in (one of) their language(s). Ask them to clarify the meaning of the word, to teach the other children how to pronounce it and to explain why they chose this word. Ask the other children if they can translate the word into their own language. Collect all the chosen words in a multilingual glossary with pictures that you can look at with the children every once in a while.

Medium

Low

Low

Medium

Happy birthday

Teach the children to say 'happy birthday' in each other's home languages.

Greetings

Have bilingual children teach their classmates a greeting in their home language, practising over several days until the class is able to use these multilingual greetings when entering the classroom. Develop a routine whereby, at the start of the day, you greet your pupils in the school language and then in each of their home languages, with the whole class responding to the series of greetings accordingly. Do the same to say goodbye at the end of the school day.

Sing your Song

Throughout the year, all children are asked to share their favourite song with the class. The class listens to the song together in class. When it's in a different language, ask the child who chose this song to explain what it's about and in what language it is sung (and sing it for the other children if she/he feels comfortable). The group can listen to the song again and try to sing along.

Diversity everywhere

Diversity can exist in language, but also in culture, religion, ideas, or love. It's important for young children to be exposed to as many contexts as possible, in order for them to develop a tolerant and open attitude. Try to establish this in your classroom by showing diversity in learning materials such as books, stories, images, music, videos, etc. Low

Medium

Medium

Tutoring kindergarten children

Kindergarten children with a different home language may struggle to keep up when the teacher reads a story in the school language. Invite your primary school pupils with the same home language to tutor those children. The tutors can prepare by thinking about how the story can be told in the child's home language (rather than a literal translation, try to encourage a natural retelling of the story) and by connecting words or concepts in both languages to each other. The tutor tells the story to the child in the shared home language, making use of the pictures in the book. The tutor can compare some important words or concepts and introduce them in the school language. After this pre-teaching, the teacher tells the story to the whole class in the school language, paying special attention to the pictures. The tutors can be present during this activity to provide extra support for the multilingual children.

Using the home language to build learning

In formal education, it becomes increasingly relevant for children to be offered tools and guidance on how to use their home language as a lever for learning. As was mentioned in the first part of this guide, a language-friendly teacher attitude and positive encouragement of multilingual children is an important start. Implicitly and explicitly, make sure that your multilingual pupils know that all their languages are valued. This will enhance their confidence about their language repertoire, which can only benefit their performances. More specifically, allow and even encourage them to use their home language in the classroom for learning purposes. Of course, pupils need to speak and learn the school language, so it might be a good idea to make clear arrangements about when and how pupils can rely on their home language. Ask your multilingual pupils for input based on their experiences: in which situations do they rely, or fall back on, their home language? How do they feel their home language helps to better process learning content? Are there specific aids that could help them navigate this? Also recognise that some pupils may feel selfconscious or even reluctant to use their home language at school. See this Q&A for further thoughts on encouraging children to use their home language.

Overall, the most important strategy is to recognise that some multilingual pupils may have additional needs in order to reach the same learning goals as their peers who were raised in the school language. **Differentiation** is key in this respect: where possible and necessary, facilitate the learning process for multilingual pupils to ensure they have the same learning opportunities as the other pupils.

High

Activity

Multilingual alphabet chart

Design an alphabet chart that has example words in the different languages represented in the group. E.g. example words that start with the letter A could be apple (English), avion (French), etc. If there are children who speak a language that has a different script, you can also look up words in their language that use the same sound.

Translanguaging

Allow multilingual children to speak, translate into and compare with their home language. You can encourage this by saying things like "How do you say [word] in [language]?", "In [school language] you say [word] and in [home language], you say [word]".

Multilingual teamwork

If there are children who share the same home language, allow them to team up for group work and use their shared language while they are working. After the group work, ask these groups to report to the class in the school language.

Online tools

Allow multilingual children to use translating tools or dictionaries in class. Make concrete arrangements: a physical dictionary may be easier to control in terms of class management, but if the school rules allow mobile devices for educational purposes, then you can let your multilingual pupils use a translating app.

Shifting languages

Allow pupils who struggle in the school language to use their home language when they answer a question. Encourage them to use the school language where they can, but tell them it's okay to use words from their home language where they don't know the equivalent. Involve the other pupils in figuring out what their classmate is trying to say and helping each other to find the right words.

Homework

Tell parents that it's okay to use the home language when they help their children with homework. If the child reports in the home language on what they learned at school, it helps them to deepen and solidify their understanding and processing of the learning content.

Other differentiation strategies ³⁵

- Allow more time to finish a task for pupils who struggle with the school language.
- If possible, provide alternative texts with similar content for pupils who struggle with reading in the school language.
- Provide essential vocabulary for particular tasks and let the multilingual children access it during an assignment or test.
- Check with your multilingual pupils if they understand all the instructions for a particular task.
- For oral presentations in the school language, allow multilingual pupils to use aids, such as slides, notes or videos.
- For individual brainstorming or preparation of tasks, allow multilingual pupils to work in their home language.

Class management in a multilingual classroom

Managing a (home-)language-friendly classroom in primary school is more straightforward than in kindergarten, because school-aged children have a rather well-developed sense of metalinguistic awareness. This means that they will understand when you say things like: "Can you say that in language X" or "Can you switch to language X". This allows you to make clear arrangements with the pupils. Agree with them in which situations they can speak or use their home language and in which situations they are expected to use the school language. It's a good idea to make these arrangements at the beginning of the school year and to involve all pupils in a class conversation.

35 Schofield, A., & McGeary, F. (n.d.). Bilingual and Multilingual Learners from the Inside-Out: Elevating Expertise in Classrooms and Beyond.

Situation	A child who does not know the school language at all will start attending your class.
Suggestions	Create picture cards for certain crucial communication situations. For example: toilet [picture of the toilet – make sure the child knows where to go], play time [children playing], lunch time [picture of a meal or lunch box], home time [clock and parents coming to pick their children up], pen, book etc. Use the equivalent phrase in the school language every time you use a picture card for ease of learning.
Situation	A child says a word in their home language (to you or to one of their classmates) and you want to encourage them to try to say it in the school language.
	Asking them to switch to the school language is one option, but there are ways of encouraging school language use that are more indirectand less prescriptive. If you know what word the pupil means, you can model it in the school language and

the pupil means, you can model it in the school language and encourage them to imitate what you are saying, using visual aids (like gestures or images) where possible. You can also ask the child to express themselves in drawings. If you don't know what the pupil is saying, involve the other pupils. Maybe there are pupils who do understand that language, or who have learned certain words or expressions from that pupil in the playground or outside of school. If they know what the pupil means, ask them to help their classmate with the school language equivalent.

Monitor the child's facial expressions and body language: if you feel that they are trying to say something urgent or important (e.g. that they are feeling poorly), try to figure out the meaning by asking simple yes or no questions in the school language ("Pain? Are you hurt? Are you hungry?"), or you can call a parent or consult a colleague to find out if there is a problem.

Suggestions

Situation	A few children are arguing or quarrelling. One of them says something in their home language and you are worried that it might be a curse word or something mean or insulting.	
Suggestions	Before you react to this situation, keep in mind that children who are monolingual speakers of the school language can use bad words just as well and that you might have the tendency to react less strongly to that because you understand what they are saying. Try to adopt the same approach for any child who says mean or bad things, regardless of the language they are using.	
	If you are not sure whether a child has said something bad because you don't understand their language, ask them to clarify ("What did you say? What did you mean? What happened?"). Unless you are sure that they did something wrong, don't target them specifically, but make a comment about the conflict situation as a whole. Do not presume that something said in a language you do not understand is something negative.	
Situation	Two children who share the same home language are chatting with each other in the language you do not understand, while you are speaking or explaining something to the class.	
Suggestions	In a situation like this, focus on the fact that the children are disrupting a class activity rather than the fact that you don't understand what they are saying. Imagine a situation where two children are chatting in a language you do understand – it doesn't matter what they are saying. What matters is that they are interrupting or disturbing your activity. Try to restore the calm without commenting on the language they use.	

YOU can make a positive change!

Dear Educator,

Thank you for reading our guide! We hope that it inspires and supports you to create and maintain a welcoming environment for the bilingual and multilingual children you have in your group, classroom, or school. Whether you are taking the very first steps on the journey to make it truly language-friendly or are already further along the path, remember that every step you take will be a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of all the children you work with.

We live in a multilingual world, and your institution's actions, atmosphere, and attitudes should reflect this. You decide the pace, the importance lies in the continued progress towards a goal where a child's every language is valued, present and represented in the educational environment. Together we can support all our children to become active participants in, and advocates for, a more inclusive and equal multilingual future.

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Rita Rosenback is a Family Language Coach assisting families to make the most of their languages. She is the author of Bringing up a Bilingual Child. On her website <u>multilingualparenting</u>. <u>com</u> you can find hundreds of articles and Q&As on the topic of bilingual and multilingual children. She also runs a large <u>Facebook group</u> focusing on raising children to speak more than one language. Rita is co-author of the PEaCH guide for parents 'How to raise a bilingual child' and the guide for educators 'How to support multilingual children'.

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Resources

- <u>Multilingual Families Project</u>
- <u>TI-AIE: Multilingualism in the classroom</u>
- <u>CUNY-NYSIEB Translanguaging guides</u>
- Lucide Project Toolkit
- <u>Teaching English Learners Toolkit</u>
- Supporting Multilingual Learners during the 2020-2021 School Year
- <u>Metrotaal.be</u> (Dutch)

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