

GUIDELINES

for the Effective Implementation of Linguistically Sensitive Teaching at Preschool, School and University Levels





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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
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AND YOUTH

LICENCE



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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, we have witnessed far-reaching political, social and economic changes in a global context. Society is becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual, so it is no longer relevant to view classroom/school or social reality as monolingual and monocultural. This changed reality calls for a shift in the teaching paradigm and, consequently, the development of didactic approaches that will meet the needs of multilingual and multicultural learners.

Linguistically sensitive teaching (LST) is an umbrella term for an approach that views the coexistence of different languages in education as a natural state and a means of establishing social equality, rooted in social justice and sustainable social cohesion (Lähdesmäki et al., 2020). It is an approach that incorporates into teaching not only the language(s) of schooling and other or foreign languages that form part of the curriculum, but also the minority, regional and community languages present in the local environment (Bergroth et al., 2022a). The aim of this pedagogical paradigm is to enable all pupils to have equal access to knowledge, whilst considering their linguistic diversity and simultaneously developing their academic language.¹ Languages of the individuals are understood here as an important resource for learning (Lähdesmäki et al., 2020).

Although European policy documents² have consistently emphasised linguistic diversity as a fundamental value of the European Union since the 1960s, a gap remains between the vision and the implementation of LST. There is a marked discrepancy between declarative guidelines and pedagogical practice. Education systems often prioritise dominant languages, whilst the inclusion of others remains limited and unsystematic, leading to implicit linguistic hegemony. Further obstacles include a shortage of suitably trained teachers who understand the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, as well as insufficient knowledge of didactic approaches and strategies. The latter would enable teachers to integrate pupils more easily into a new linguistic and cultural environment, whilst also helping to promote the message that all mother tongues are recognised within the school setting as valuable sources of knowledge and important building blocks of an individual's identity. This is compounded by curriculum constraints and a lack of suitable teaching materials for less widely spoken languages (Beacco et al., 2016).

Noticeable changes are also evident in the Slovenian linguistic and cultural landscape. There has been a marked increase in the number of children with migrant backgrounds (already nearly 10% in primary schools, and in some urban areas their proportion reaches as high as 40–90%). Nevertheless, multilingualism and multiculturalism in school settings are often perceived as challenges or even obstacles to learning, rather than opportunities to enrich the learning environment (Onses-Segarra et al., 2020). Although Slovenia follows European guidelines and recognises the importance of LST, research shows that this often remains at the level of principles (Knez, 2022; Retelj and Pirih Svetina, 2022).

¹ The term 'academic language' refers to language in an educational setting that goes beyond everyday spontaneous and informal communication. It is the language that pupils need to understand the curriculum, express what they have learnt, and discuss the meaning and implications of the knowledge they have acquired when interacting with others (Beacco et al., 2017).

² Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2014, 2022), Council of Europe (2007, 2020, 2023a, 2023b), Council of the European Union (2008, 2011, 2014), European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2020a, 2020b), European Education and Culture Executive Agency (2022), European Centre for Modern Languages (2020).

As part of the project *My Languages, My Strength: Developing Linguistically Sensitive Teaching at All Educational Levels (V5-24060)*, which has resulted in these guidelines, we carried out several extensive analyses. We reviewed Slovenian strategic national and legislative documents on language policy, analysed 1,665 syllabuses from 21 first- and second-cycle teacher-training programmes at five faculties of three Slovenian universities, and examined 51 Slovenian academic papers on LST. In addition, we conducted a national survey examining primary and secondary school teachers' beliefs about academic language and their everyday teaching practices.

The findings are presented below (Lemut Bajec et al., 2026a, 2026b, 2026c, 2026d). An analysis of Slovenian strategic national and legislative documents³ in the field of language policy shows that they address LST and reflect awareness of the need to respond to society's ever-increasing linguistic and cultural diversity. The documents emphasise the importance of Slovenian as the official and educational language, whilst also recognising other mother tongues as important vehicles of identity and cultural cohesion. In this context, they highlight the need to develop an inclusive educational environment that goes beyond monolingualism and systematically supports multilingualism and linguistic diversity. Attention is paid to the inclusion of migrant children, the preservation of minority languages (Italian, Hungarian and Romani) and their role in the education system. In this regard, the national guidelines are consistent with European recommendations, which view multilingualism as an opportunity to strengthen intercultural dialogue and social cohesion; however, because they are non-binding, they lead to varied implementation in practice.

At the same time, the documents highlight the need for systemic support, including appropriate infrastructure, legislative adjustments and monitoring of the implementation of measures. These documents also emphasise that appropriately trained teaching staff who understand the principles of multilingualism, apply modern teaching approaches, and incorporate LST into their daily teaching practice, play a key role in achieving these objectives (Lemut Bajec et al., 2026a).

An analysis of the curricula of teacher-training programmes shows that LST, as a holistic approach, is not systematically recognised anywhere, although its individual concepts are present, more frequently in programmes at faculties of education than in those at faculties of arts. These findings confirm an awareness of the importance of linguistic diversity, whilst also highlighting the need for a more systematic integration of LST at both curricular and broader teaching practice levels.

It should be noted here that the curriculum for a particular syllabus sets out the general objectives and structure of the programme; therefore, an analysis of the presence of LST elements within individual syllabuses only allows for an assessment of their representation, but not of how their implementation is monitored or their scope within a particular subject. For a more detailed understanding of the implementation of LST elements and the associated objectives, a review of syllabuses and teaching practices of individual subjects is warranted (Lemut Bajec et al., 2026a).

³ Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996), Gimnazija Act (ZGim, 1996), Vocational and Technical Education Act (ZPSI-I, 2006), Kindergartens Act (ZVrt, 1996), Law on the Special Rights of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Upbringing and Education (ZPIMVI, 2001), Public Use of the Slovene Language Act (2004), Rules on Slovenian Language Courses for Upper Secondary Students (2018), Resolution on the National Programme for Language Policy 2021–2025 (ReNPJP21–25), National Education Programme 2023–2033 (NPVI 2023–2033), Guidelines for the Inclusion of Children, Pupils and Students from Other Linguistic and Cultural Backgrounds into the Slovenian Education System (2024) and Implementation Instructions for the Implementation of the Bilingual Primary School Programme (2016).

An analysis of 51 Slovenian studies in the field of LST shows that, whilst this pedagogy is developing, it remains methodologically and substantively inconsistent. The field is also characterised by terminological and conceptual inconsistencies, which make it difficult to compare studies. Research is predominantly focused on the pre-school and primary school levels, whilst the secondary and higher education sectors remain under-researched. Furthermore, most studies relate to language subjects, whilst the role of LST in non-language subjects remains virtually unexplored. These findings thus raise the question of whether, in practice, LST remains primarily declarative and project-based, without any broader systemic impact (Lemut Bajec et al., 2026b, 2026c).

As part of the project, we also conducted a nationwide survey, to which 281 Slovenian primary and secondary school teachers responded. We examined beliefs and practices regarding LST, the role of Slovenian as the language of instruction, the inclusion of other languages, and the use of translanguageing. The results show that teachers quite frequently incorporate other languages into the lesson-planning phase but not into lesson delivery. However, when they do use other languages, these are mostly employed to support pupils with a lower level of proficiency in Slovenian.

Slovenian is emphasised as the primary language of instruction. However, it is concerning that 51% of participating teachers believe pupils do not have the right to use their mother tongue. Overall, the findings point to a discrepancy between language policy and pedagogical practice and highlight the need to strengthen teacher training in linguistically sensitive pedagogy (Lemut Bajec et al., 2026d).

Linguistic diversity in the Slovenian educational sector is therefore recognised as an important value, but efforts to address it and the didactic use of its potential remain limited and inconsistent. Consequently, there is a need to develop clear, research-based guidelines for implementing LST across all educational levels, enabling its systematic, effective, and sustainable realisation in practice.



LINGUISTICALLY SENSITIVE TEACHING (LST)

LST is the key term for teaching that recognises the coexistence of different languages in education as a natural situation. It is a response to contemporary social trends (globalisation, migration, etc.) that are transforming society into an increasingly linguistically and culturally pluralistic one (Arhar Holdt et al., 2024). Accordingly, it calls for critical reflection on our beliefs about languages and their use in the school setting – beliefs which we often take for granted – and seeks to shift these towards greater openness, acceptance and understanding of multilingualism. In doing so, it contributes to a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. LST thus contributes to strengthening democratic culture and preventing social exclusion (Council of Europe, 2023a).

Principles of LST

LST is based on the following principles:

Linguistic diversity as a recognised social reality

LST is based on the premise that linguistic diversity and interculturalism are integral parts of modern societies and must therefore be systematically incorporated into the educational process (Bergroth et al., 2022b; Council of Europe, 2007, 2018). In doing so, it promotes the development of linguistic and cultural awareness and intercultural dialogue (Council of Europe, 2018; Vižintin, 2018).

Taking an individual's entire linguistic repertoire into account

LST does not treat languages as separate systems, but as integral parts of an individual's unified, interconnected language repertoire. It also considers an individual's partially developed abilities in different languages, which they can utilise for learning and communication (Cummins, 2007; García & Otheguy, 2020; Lambert, 1973).

Deliberate use of pedagogical translanguaging

LST promotes the systematic and reflective integration of multiple languages into the learning process, including translanguaging, thereby facilitating a more effective understanding of learning content and the development of communication skills (Bratož & Pižorn, 2026; García & Li, 2014; Li, 2011, 2018; Otheguy et al., 2019). This approach is also realised through pluralistic didactic models and the use of linguistically sensitive teaching materials (Candelier et al., 2012; García & Li, 2014; Sila & Klančar, 2024).

Conscious and adapted use of language in teaching

In LST, the teacher consciously uses and adapts language according to the pupils' needs and the learning context, whilst considering the coexistence of diverse languages within the school environment (Bleichenbacher et al., 2023).

Language as a tool for learning and creating meaning

LST views language as a fundamental tool for learning, thinking and communication, and as a factor that shapes an individual's perception of the world (García & Li, 2014; Pennycook, 2017). It conceives of learning as a holistic, multiliteracies-based process in which meaning is created through linguistic and non-linguistic resources and through the integration of different subject areas (Lewis et al., 2012; Li, 2011, 2018; Lipavic Oštir & Jazbec, 2024; Vogel et al., 2018).

Language equity and inclusion

LST emphasises the equality of all languages and highlights the danger of the dominance of major languages (Council of Europe, 2018). It advocates ensuring equal opportunities for learning and language development for all pupils and the systematic inclusion of all languages in the educational process (Beacco et al., 2016). It pays particular attention to supporting pupils from disadvantaged groups and to tackling language-related inequalities (Council of Europe, 2023b).

Development of transversal competences

The implementation of LST contributes to the development of key transversal competences, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, self-reflection and ethical conduct, which enable individuals to function successfully in multilingual and multicultural environments (Candelier et al., 2017; Council of Europe, 2018).



TEACHERS WITHIN THE LST FRAMEWORK

The successful implementation of LST is based on the development of teachers' multilingual and intercultural competences. It is crucial that teachers reflect on their own beliefs about languages and understand the diversity of pupils in terms of their social and cultural environment (e.g. family background, the languages present in their everyday lives, and the status of these languages in society) and in terms of their language development and the way in which pupils acquire and use multiple languages in the learning process (Meissner, 2011; Council of Europe 2023a, 2023b; Vižintin, 2018, 2022).

Within the framework of LST, the teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge, but also a mediator between languages and cultures and a promoter of an inclusive and respectful learning environment. Every teacher is responsible for developing pupils' language skills and for recognising the equal value of all languages (Jazbec & Kacjan, 2022).

For the effective implementation of LST, systemic support from the school is also essential; this includes ongoing professional development for teachers, collaborative learning amongst staff, the development of multilingual competences within the staff, and appropriate institutional conditions, such as a clear school policy on multilingualism, organisational support for teamwork and the integration of LST into the school's development plans, the role of the school management in promoting LST, networking and collaboration with external experts or institutions, etc. (Guzmán-Alcón & Lorenzo, 2024; Krogager Andersen & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2024).

To support the development of teachers' multilingual and multicultural competences, we have prepared a self-reflection questionnaire that enables teachers to assess their own teaching practice (Appendix 2). This covers key areas of a teacher's work, such as the use and adaptation of language in the classroom, attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity, support for pupils from different linguistic backgrounds, collaboration with families and colleagues, the creation of an inclusive learning environment, and lesson planning from a multilingual perspective. Emphasis is also placed on teachers' beliefs regarding the role of multiple languages in the learning process, which enables reflection on any implicit attitudes towards the use of languages in the classroom.



PLURALISTIC APPROACHES

In LST, both the way languages are taught, and the school environment significantly influence the development of multilingualism and multicultural sensitivity. Among LST approaches, pluralistic approaches and translanguaging play a key role. They enable pupils to draw on all their linguistic resources whilst learning, thereby making it easier for them to construct meaning in various learning situations. In addition to didactic approaches, a supportive school environment that recognises, includes and values pupils' linguistic diversity is also important for the implementation of LST.

Pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures include:

Awakening to languages is a type of pluralistic approach that demonstrates complete openness to a wide variety of languages and their variants, with the aim of presenting the linguistic diversity that stems from pupils' immediate environments as well as from the wider world, thereby broadening awareness of language and linguistic diversity in an individual's life. In doing so, pupils develop metalinguistic awareness and a positive attitude towards multilingualism by comparing languages, recognising similarities and differences, and encountering languages unfamiliar to them. The approach does not focus on acquiring specific languages, but rather on raising awareness of linguistic phenomena and developing sensitivity to linguistic diversity. This approach is particularly suitable at the start of a child's schooling, although it can be used throughout their schooling (Candelier, 2017; Candelier & Kervan, 2018; Darquennes, 2017; Finkbeiner & White, 2017; Svalberg, 2007).

The **intercultural approach**, in language education, represents a pedagogical framework that enables the achievement of language education objectives through the development of intercultural communicative competence, i.e., the ability to understand the similarities and differences between an individual's home environment and that of the target community (Council of Europe, 2020). This includes an understanding of the perspectives, practices and values of different communities, and the ability to situate them within a broader social and cultural context. This approach goes beyond merely conveying information about other cultures or describing their characteristics, focusing on a reflective and critical examination of cultural phenomena (Jazbec & Kacjan, 2022). It is crucial to develop an individual's ability to step back from their own perspective and critically assess their own and others' values and practices (Durbaba, 2021).

Intercomprehension of related languages is an approach based on the parallel development of skills in two or more related languages, one of which has already been acquired (e.g. the mother tongue, the language of education or another language already learnt). The approach focuses primarily on developing receptive skills, enabling learners to understand spoken and written texts in other languages by recognising similarities, linguistic patterns, and inference strategies. In doing so, it encourages the transfer of knowledge between languages and strengthens awareness of their interconnection.

Integrated didactic approaches to different languages, which are based on combining language and content learning, whereby learners simultaneously acquire knowledge of subject content, whilst language proficiency is developed indirectly as a tool for understanding and communication (Candelier, 2017). Integrated didactic approaches include various models that situate language learning within authentic, meaningful learning contexts, such as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), which refers to the simultaneous teaching of language and content, whereby language and content objectives are intertwined and complementary (Coyle, 2009, 2010). The cultural dimension plays an important role in CLIL, as the learning of content in a second or foreign language takes place in connection with various cultural contexts, which encourages critical reflection on one's own and other cultures, values and practices. This approach contributes to the development of intercultural competence, global citizenship and an understanding of different perspectives (Gómez-Parra, 2020).

Within pluralistic approaches, various initiatives are being developed to foster a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity and an understanding of languages as part of a learner's linguistic repertoire. Among these, language portraits are gaining recognition as a method that enables individuals to present their language experiences in a multi-modal way, thereby broadening the understanding of an individual's linguistic repertoire (Busch, 2012). Through language portraits, learners demonstrate that languages are not merely knowledge for them, but are closely linked to their lives, emotions, and identity (Lipavac Oštir & Tibaut, 2020).



DIDACTIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LST BY EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

Preschool Level

For children who do not speak the language of their environment, establishing a secure attachment and a sense of belonging is crucial. They must be given sufficient time to adapt to their new environment and circumstances. At pre-school age, this involves a highly individualised approach based on recognising the child's potential, using visual and multisensory support, and creating conditions in which the child can participate successfully and experience a sense of achievement.

It is important for the pre-school teacher to enable the child to express themselves in their first language as well, and to encourage its preservation and development, as the mother tongue forms the foundation for further learning. It is also important for the educator to allow the use of words, songs or stories from the child's home language environment. The use of translanguaging, meanwhile, promotes language awareness and thus facilitates the learning of the environment's language.

Language learning during this period occurs spontaneously through play, routines and everyday interactions with peers and adults, whereas verbal communication is often supported by non-verbal forms of communication. Through songs, stories, puppets, multilingual books, and other resources⁴, a multilingual and inclusive learning environment is established from an early age, laying the foundation for further language development and a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity. An important part of this approach is also collaboration with parents, who contribute by sharing linguistic and cultural elements from the home environment.

Primary and Secondary School Levels

The development of the language of instruction is a shared responsibility of all teaching staff. As pupils' knowledge of a different linguistic and cultural environment is often limited when they start school, it is crucial that the school environment is safe and supportive. Learning the language of instruction takes place primarily through exposure to authentic situations; it is therefore important to create a rich environment with visual cues, gestures and other forms of supportive communication. Pupils are gradually integrated into lessons, starting with activities that have lower linguistic demands. It is particularly important to maintain and develop the mother tongue, as this contributes to the development of the pupils' overall linguistic repertoire and supports their learning and personal development.

Creating a linguistically sensitive environment also helps to reduce stereotypes about pupils with limited knowledge of the language of the environment, as it highlights their holistic language abilities and thus strengthens an inclusive educational environment that promotes the development of all languages and their equal recognition within the school setting. At the systemic level, however, it requires that multilingualism be clearly defined in school documents, that libraries be equipped with multilingual materials, and that continuous professional development be provided for teachers on multilingual approaches and methods of their implementation.

⁴ Several useful resources have been developed as part of the Erasmus+ project 'Agentive' <https://agentive.uni-muenster.de/>.

University Level

At university level, LST primarily focuses on developing the competences that will enable future professionals to work in multilingual and culturally diverse environments. The focus is on developing language awareness, whereby students understand language as a tool for thinking, learning and expression across all subject areas, not only in language lessons. In doing so, they strengthen their intercultural competence, which fosters an understanding of and respect for cultural differences, as well as the ability to create an inclusive environment. Students critically reflect on their own linguistic attitudes and teaching approaches, which may (in)directly privilege certain languages.

An important part of the training of future teachers involves developing teaching strategies for working with multilingual groups, which include adapting the language of instruction, using visual and other aids, and drawing on pupils' language resources. Emphasis is placed on the competence of interlingual switching, which equips students to meaningfully integrate multiple languages – as sources of knowledge rather than as barriers – into the learning process. Future teachers are also made aware of the importance of collaboration with parents and the community, as this helps to bridge the gap between language environments at school and at home.



STRATEGIES

LST strategies include carefully selected teaching formats, methods, techniques, activities, teaching aids and materials, through which the teacher facilitates pupils' integration into a new linguistic and cultural environment, whilst also signalling to pupils that all mother tongues within the school environment are recognised as valuable sources of knowledge and building blocks of individual identity.

Based on these principles, specific didactic strategies for LST have been developed that emphasise the teacher's active role in planning, adapting, and guiding lessons, whilst remaining focused on the pupils, their language needs, experiences, and development. They include linguistic and didactic support, differentiation of learning and assessment, the creation of a collaborative and inclusive learning environment, and the active development of learners' multilingual and intercultural competences.

The teacher provides

LINGUISTIC AND DIDACTIC SUPPORT

- provides clearly structured and simplified instructions
- repeats, paraphrases and explains content step by step
- uses verbal and non-verbal support
- combines oral and written instructions
- checks understanding as they go
- allows the use of the mother tongue as a support
- uses multilingual teaching materials and facilitates multisensory learning approaches
- uses bilingual materials and digital tools
- introduces key vocabulary in advance
- teaches step-by-step and provides ongoing support

DIFFERENTIATION OF LEARNING AND ASSESMENT

- adapts the teaching process to the pupils' needs
- adapts tasks to the pupils' language level
- uses different types and levels of difficulty of tasks
- allows for different ways of demonstrating knowledge
- allows for extra time
- monitors individual progress
- separates assessment from language difficulty

COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- organises work in pairs and groups
- forms mixed-ability groups
- encourages mentoring and peer support
- creates a safe and welcoming environment
- prevents stereotypes and discrimination
- promotes tolerance and acceptance of diversity

ACTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTILINGUAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

- enables the comparison of languages and the development of language awareness
- enables translanguaging
- raises pupils' awareness of different cultural practices, modes of communication and values
- links the curriculum to pupils' experiences from their own cultural background
- makes pupils aware of their own cultural practices and customs

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The guidelines presented for the implementation of LST stem from findings regarding the gap between the declarative recognition of linguistic diversity and its actual implementation in pedagogical practice. As the analysed documents and research show, multilingualism is recognised as a value within the Slovenian education system, but often remains confined to the level of principles, whilst in practice, established, predominantly monolingual teaching models are implemented. The guidelines therefore seek to bridge this gap by establishing a comprehensive framework that integrates teaching strategies, institutional support and the development of teachers' professional competences.

At the same time, it is essential to emphasise that the implementation of LST is not merely a question of lesson organisation and teaching approaches, but above all a question of fundamental beliefs about language and about education and training in general. Research shows that Slovenian, as the language of the environment, is often perceived as the only legitimate language of education, whilst pupils' and students' first languages are treated, at best, as supportive elements or, often, as disruptive factors in the learning process. Such a normative view reinforces a hierarchy of languages and limits opportunities to harness an individual's multilingualism as a pedagogical resource for full inclusivity.

We want the guidelines not only to serve as technical instructions for implementing LST but also to shape understanding of linguistic diversity. Readers are expected not to take them for granted or regard them as entirely neutral, but rather to recognise how they represent multilingualism and what consequences this has in practice. In doing so, they should consider the broader social context, the power relations between languages, and the aims of education and training.

A key challenge for the future development of LST is to understand multilingualism not merely as a tool that helps pupils acquire subject matter and the language of instruction more effectively, but, more broadly, as an approach that shapes how we understand knowledge, learning, and teaching in the first place. This requires systematic support at the level of educational policy, the curriculum and teacher training, as well as reflection on one's own teaching practices and a critical reading of documents such as this one. Only in this way will it be possible to ensure that LST does not remain merely part of normative guidelines, but becomes a practice that is implemented, contributing to equality, inclusion and the recognition of linguistic diversity in education.



Terminology related to LST

A

- **assimilation**

the process by which an individual or group gradually adopts the language, customs and values of another dominant culture

- **awakening to languages**

an approach to language education that promotes learners' awareness of the diversity of languages and cultures around them

B

- **bilingualism**

the ability to use two languages

C

- **cognitive advantages**

advantages observed in bilingual individuals relating to task switching, inhibitory and attention control

- **cultural diversity**

the existence of different cultural and ethnic groups within a society

- **code-mixing**

the use of elements from two languages in the same sentence or conversation

- **code-switching**

the process of switching between two or more languages and their variants during a conversation

- **cultural literacy**

knowledge and understanding of different cultures, including their values, beliefs and ways of life

- **CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)**

the teaching of a non-language subject in a foreign language, whereby pupils simultaneously acquire the subject content and the foreign language

F

- **foreign language**

a language that an individual learns in a community or country where it is not spoken

H

- **heritage language**

a language passed down from generation to generation within a family

- **home language/mother tongue/first language**

the language we acquire first, usually from our parents

- **heritage speakers**

speakers who acquire the language in a home environment, but may have limited formal literacy or vocabulary in that language

I

- **identification processes**

the ways in which individuals recognise, accept or align their personal or group identity

- **intercomprehension of related languages**

the ability to understand a language by drawing on knowledge of a related language

- **intercultural approach**

teaching or learning that emphasises understanding and respect for different cultures

- **intercultural competences**

skills and attitudes that facilitate communication with people from different cultural backgrounds

- **intercultural dialogue**

a respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups from different cultures

- **intercultural education**

education that involves learning about different cultures and developing skills for respectful interaction

- **intercultural sensitivity**

the ability to recognise, respect and adapt to cultural differences in communication and behaviour

- **inclusion**

ensuring equal participation of all children in educational and social environments, considering their diverse needs and circumstances

- **identity**

how individuals or groups understand and define themselves, including their characteristics, beliefs and social roles

- **integrated approaches to languages**

teaching methods that combine several languages or language skills within a single lesson or curriculum

- **integration**

the process of including individuals or groups in a wider social, cultural or educational community and establishing equal participation within it

- **international language**

a language used worldwide for mutual understanding

- **inclusiveness, inclusion**

the characteristic or capacity of a system (e.g. a school) that facilitates integration of children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds into the mainstream education system, whereby both the individual and the system adapt

- **inclusive school**

a school that ensures equal education, participation and a sense of belonging for all pupils and adapts to their diversity

- **inclusive learning environment**

a learning environment that enables all participants to participate and learn equally, whilst considering their diverse needs and characteristics

- **interference**

the influence of one language on another, which often results in errors or changes in speaking, writing or comprehension

L

- **language and cultural bias**

the evaluation of certain languages, language practices or cultural patterns as more correct, desirable or legitimate than others

- **linguistic interdependence hypothesis**

assumes that linguistic abilities in different languages are interconnected and mutually supportive

- **language hierarchy**

the power relations between languages within a society or institution, whereby certain languages (usually official or dominant ones) are valued more highly than others

- **language ideology**

a set of beliefs, values and ideas about language and its use, which are socially and culturally conditioned and often unspoken

- **language competences**

the knowledge and skills required for effective language use

- **language endangerment**

a language that is at risk of extinction

- **language policy**

a set of principles, decisions and measures through which a state, supranational communities (e.g., the European Union) or institutions regulate the use, status and development of languages within a society or organisation

- **language repertoire**

all the languages and varieties that an individual uses or understands

- **language sensitivity**

an awareness of and respect for linguistic differences and the use of language in communication

- **linguistic awareness**

an understanding of how language works and how it is used in different contexts

- **linguistic/language heritage**

languages and dialects that an individual inherits from their family, community or culture

- **linguistically sensitive teaching**

a teaching approach that considers pupils' linguistic backgrounds and promotes awareness of linguistic diversity

- **lingua franca (from Italian 'common language')**

a term for a common functional language used by speakers of different languages to communicate with one another; the global language of international communication

- **learning through language**

the acquisition of knowledge or skills in a particular subject using language as a means of learning

M

- **minority language**

a language spoken by a smaller community of speakers within a country

- **multiculturalism**

a way of life in which different cultures coexist and are equally respected

- **multilingualism**

the ability to use or know several languages

- **monolingual normativity**

the belief and practice that the use of a single (usually dominant) language is the only appropriate, correct or legitimate form of language in each social or educational context

N

- **national language**

a language officially recognised by the state and frequently used in the government and public life

O

- **official language**

a language chosen by a state for legislation, schools and administration (there may be more than one)

- **one-person-one-language or OPOL strategy**

a language strategy in which each caretaker consistently speaks to the child in only one language

P

- **phonological awareness**

the ability to recognise and manipulate smaller units of a spoken language, such as rhymes, syllables and individual sounds

- **plurilingualism**

the use of an individual's entire linguistic repertoire

- **plurilingual education**

an approach to education that promotes the learning and use of several languages

R

- **regional language**

a language spoken in a specific area within a country

S

- **second language**

a language that an individual learns after their first language and is usually used at school or in society

- **sequential bilinguals**

individuals who learn a second language after having already mastered their first

- **simultaneous bilinguals**

individuals who are exposed to two languages from birth and naturally develop linguistic competence in both

- **sign language**

the language of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, based on the use of hands, facial expressions and gestures

T

- **translanguaging**

the flexible shifting between different languages within an individual's entire linguistic repertoire

Teacher Reflection Questionnaire

This is a self-reflection questionnaire. It will help you assess how you support language development and intercultural diversity in your teaching. For each statement, assess the extent to which you agree with it based on your day-to-day work with pupils. Rate your agreement on a scale from 1 (rarely/never) to 5 (always/almost always).

Area	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Communication and language use in the classroom	I adapt my language to the pupils' age, prior knowledge and needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I also use other languages to help explain new concepts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I highlight similarities and differences between languages.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I encourage pupils to use a variety of ways of expressing themselves.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I incorporate multiple languages into my lessons (pupils, materials, explanations).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity	I show interest in pupils' linguistic and cultural diversity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I treat diversity with respect.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I see multilingualism as an advantage.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I encourage a critical response to instances of stereotyping, discrimination and labelling.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I recognise and address cultural differences that may lead to misunderstandings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Support for pupils from different linguistic backgrounds	I recognise language needs of individual pupils.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I enable pupils to progress at their own pace.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I encourage pupils to use language with confidence.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Cooperation and community involvement	I work closely with pupils' families.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I share experiences with my colleagues.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I draw on families' linguistic and cultural resources.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I accept and use feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creating an inclusive learning environment	I create a safe and inclusive environment for all pupils.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I consider the emotional needs of pupils from different backgrounds.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I encourage collaboration among pupils.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Planning and delivering lessons	When preparing for lessons, I use resources in various languages.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I systematically incorporate activities designed to develop language skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I use teaching materials in different languages.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I use digital tools to support language development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My views on the use of languages	Using multiple languages in the classroom supports learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Switching between languages can be confusing for pupils.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Pupils have the right to use their first language in their learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Incorporating other languages enriches lessons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Examples of Good Practices

EXAMPLE 1

Objective: to develop language awareness

Why is it important to develop this?

Through personal experiences, pupils/students develop respect for different languages and cultures, come to see diversity as something normal and positive, whilst at the same time develop their metalinguistic skills.

Example of an activity:

The teacher encourages pupils to compare the languages they know (their mother tongue, foreign languages, and local languages). Pupils actively look for similarities and differences between languages and discuss them. When exploring a specific topic, they compare the spelling, pronunciation or meaning of words and expressions (for example, on the topic of 'family', they compare terms for family members in different languages). For older pupils/students, the activity can be extended to include a comparison of technical terminology in different languages, including Latin. Pupils explore how the same concepts appear in different subject areas (e.g., biology, medicine, law) and how these terms are linked to their Latin or Greek origins (e.g., in Ancient Greek, the heart is 'kardia', hence 'cardiologist' and 'cardiogram').

EXAMPLE 2

Objective: to develop positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity

Why is it important to develop this?

Positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity contribute to a more inclusive and safe learning environment, in which pupils learn to respect different languages and their speakers. At the same time, we boost the self-confidence of pupils whose first language is not the language of instruction.

Example of an activity:

The teacher and pupils work together to create a multilingual environment (e.g., with signs in the classroom in different languages, posters featuring multilingual expressions, greetings in different languages at the start of the lesson, etc.). Older pupils/students can create an interactive language map of the class or school: each adds words, expressions, proverbs or phrases in a language they know or are learning.

EXAMPLE 3

Objective: recognising and overcoming stereotypes

Why is it important to develop this?

Raising awareness of stereotypes helps to prevent negative attitudes towards speakers of different languages and cultures and contributes to a more inclusive learning environment.

Example of an activity:

The teacher creates a space for discussion about stereotypes and prejudices; pupils identify stereotypes and evaluate them critically. For example, the teacher presents statements such as "All ... are ...", and pupils discuss why these might be problematic and look for examples that do not fit the stereotypes. Older pupils or students can explore stereotypes in the media or in adverts, or they can conduct a survey among their classmates on attitudes towards different languages and cultures.

EXAMPLE 4

Objective: to raise pupils' awareness of different cultural practices, modes of communication and values

Why is it important to develop this?

Pupils/students develop intercultural competence, which enables them to communicate effectively and respectfully in diverse environments. Understanding different cultural practices reduces misunderstandings, fosters empathy and strengthens the ability to adapt in intercultural situations.

Example of an activity:

The teacher introduces different ways of communicating (e.g., direct/indirect expression, use of formal/informal forms of address, the importance of non-verbal communication). Pupils compare how respect, disagreement or politeness are expressed in different cultures. For younger pupils, the activity may involve role-play (e.g., greetings, expressions of thanks in different cultures), whilst older pupils can analyse specific situations (e.g., business communication, school etiquette) and discuss potential cultural misunderstandings.

EXAMPLE 5

Objective: to apply multi-modal learning

Why is it important to develop this?

Pupils and students differ in their learning styles, prior knowledge and language abilities; therefore, diverse approaches enable more equitable inclusion. Providing different pathways to understanding the subject matter increases motivation, improves comprehension and helps each pupil to develop their own areas of strength.

Example of an activity:

The teacher presents the same learning content in a variety of ways, e.g., through text, audio recordings, visual aids (pictures, diagrams) and physical activities. When learning about a new topic, pupils rotate between learning stations (e.g., reading station, listening station, practical experiment, creative task). Older pupils/students can choose between different ways of presenting their knowledge (e.g., written summary, presentation, video, model).

EXAMPLE 6

Objective: to use multisensory learning

Why is it important to develop this?

Engaging multiple senses (sight, hearing, movement, touch) promotes deeper understanding and longer-term retention. This approach is particularly effective in language learning, as it enables the linking of words, meanings and experiences.

Example of an activity:

The teacher incorporates visual aids, sound, movement and the handling of objects into the lesson. When learning vocabulary, pupils associate words with pictures, movements or concrete objects (e.g., when studying the topic of food, they taste, describe and sort different foods). For older pupils or students, the activity may involve creating thought patterns, role-play or simulations where they use the language in real-life situations.

EXAMPLE 7

Objective: incorporating multi-modal learning materials

Why is it important to develop this?

Multimodal materials (text, images, sound, symbols, graphs) facilitate a better understanding of complex content and support different learning styles. Pupils learn to recognise and connect information in various forms, which strengthens their functional literacy.

Example of an activity:

The teacher uses a combination of text, images, videos, infographics and symbols. Pupils analyse how different modes of presentation affect understanding (e.g., comparing a text and an infographic). Older pupils can create multimodal materials themselves (e.g., poster, digital presentation, short video).

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

Examples of good practice can also be found in the materials developed as part of the Languages Matter (JeŠT) project (C3330-17-319012); <https://jeziki-stejejo.si/>.

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If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

Nelson Mandela