

Multilingualism in the classroom

with the 'Bringing the
outside in' research team

Talking points

- How does the disconnect between language policy and multilingual realities impact students' learning experiences in your classroom?
- Reflecting on the article, what strategies could you implement or have you witnessed that effectively integrate students' multilingual backgrounds into the learning environment?
- In what ways do monolingual policies hinder educational equity and inclusivity, especially for students from multilingual communities?
- Considering the challenges faced by teachers in multilingual classrooms, what professional development opportunities or support systems would you find most beneficial?
- How can teachers navigate the tension between adhering to official language policies and recognising the linguistic diversity present among their students?
- From your perspective, what role do language policies play in perpetuating or challenging colonial legacies in education?
- How might you adapt existing curriculum materials or lesson plans to better accommodate multilingual learners?
- What are some practical strategies that teachers can employ to create a classroom environment where students feel empowered to use their full linguistic repertoire?
- Reflecting on your own experiences, how do language barriers impact student engagement, participation, and academic achievement in your classroom?
- What steps can educators take to advocate for policy reforms that promote multilingualism and support the diverse linguistic needs of students in educational institutions?

Activities

According to the research team, teachers should view all the languages they and their students know as valuable resources for learning, rather than obstacles. In the research project 'Bringing the outside in', they discovered that teachers often express a desire for more specific training to effectively navigate multilingual classrooms. Additionally, recommendations from their research emphasise the importance of providing teachers with the skills and support needed to teach in multilingual environments, as well as creating classroom environments that celebrate linguistic diversity and do not punish students for using their languages. As an educator, it is important to reflect on your own experiences with languages and consider how you can better support multilingual learners in your classrooms.

Consider the following questions and create a mind-map or SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to collate your answers:

- What are your own experiences with languages, both personally and professionally? How have these experiences shaped your approach to teaching multilingual students?
- Reflecting on your classroom practice, what support do you feel you need to effectively address language issues and support multilingual learners?
- If you were attending a training session focusing on multilingualism in the classroom, what questions would you ask to enhance your understanding and skills?
- Which languages do your students speak, and how could these languages be seen as valuable resources for learning? How can you celebrate and incorporate these languages into your classroom?
- Considering the recommendations from the research project, how can you establish a classroom environment that encourages rather than punishes students for using their languages?
- How could you use classroom displays to promote multilingualism and celebrate the diverse linguistic backgrounds of your students?
- Reflecting on your students' knowledge of languages, what learning activities could you design to enhance their multilingual skills and improve their learning experiences?
- Do you know what languages the students in your classroom know? If not, can you think of an activity that might help you better understand their linguistics repertoires?

More resources

Visit the 'Bringing the outside in' project website to learn more about multilingualism in the classroom: multilingual-learning.com