

PLURI Online course

Languages in focus: From EU policy to Multilingual education

Project PLURI - Plurilingualism for better education, cohesion and linguistic diversity - CERV-2024-CITIZENS-REM-EUINTEGRATION

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From Monolingual Schooling to Multilingual Awareness

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Languages in Focus: From EU policy to Multilingual education



Why It Matters

- Schools still privilege one "standard" language
- Monolingualism persists in education and institutions, despite the multilingual social reality
- Monolingualism is increasingly challenged, yet still resistant to multilingual perspectives



Photo by M. Markova © Koopkultur e.V.

Learning Objectives

- Understand how monolingual schooling systems emerged
- Recognise monolingual ideologies in policy and practice.
- Explore critical linguistic approaches to effect change.

What Is Monolingual Ideology?

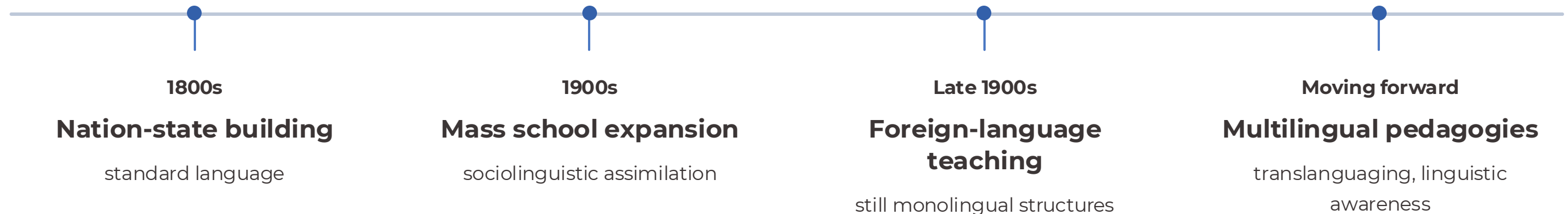
- Belief that one language should be the norm for a nation or community
- Frames monolingualism as natural, superior, and tied to authentic identity
- Promotes one standard language and devalues minority or non-standard varieties
- Historically rooted in nation-state formation through schooling, print culture, control



Flag Map of Europe WIKIMEDIA COMMONS CC-BY-SA 4.0. Source: Geography and Space Youtube

How Monolingualism Became the Norm

- **1800s** *one language = one people* becomes a political project
- **Early 1900s** National languages are enforced more rigidly as markers of identity, loyalty, and statehood
- **Post-1945** Mass education systems normalize monolingual instruction, even as societies become more linguistically diverse
- **Today** EU integration and migration reveal the limits of monolingual schooling - growing push for language rights, translanguaging, and multilingual education



Linguistically sustaining pedagogies in the classroom?

YES

Embracing Linguistic Diversity

Celebrate diversity rhetorically

Value students' identities and languages

Critique unjust language structures

BUT

Reinforcing Normativity

Standard Language needed for success

National Language/English required for tests and job

“Appropriate language” depends on context

Benefits of Multilingual Education

- Better learning outcomes and early literacy
- More inclusive and equitable schooling
- Strengthens identity, well-being and participation
- Supports linguistic rights and social cohesion
- Improves economic outcomes and innovation
- Cost-effective long-term investment for governments
- Facilitates language revitalization and cultural preservation

Case Studies

Finland

'Language-aware pedagogy' - requires schools to support students home languages alongside Finnish and Swedish.

BUT *many Finnish primary pupils still study only one foreign language at first and receive limited structured support for home languages*

Spain (Catalonia)

Requires proficiency in both Catalan and Spanish, and prohibits language-based segregation. Use of translanguaging practices in primary and lower-secondary schools

BUT *not all regions of Spain are adopting these practices*

Austria

VoXmi Whole-School Multilingual Model - a bottom-up school development model.

BUT *only around 50 schools throughout Austria are active members of the network, including primary, secondary and vocational schools*

Critical Multilingual Language Awareness

Critical Multilingual Language Awareness (CMLA) is an approach to language-related problems that refuses to separate language from social, political, economic, and historical inequalities.

The CMLA approach helps learners and teachers to recognise, question and transform the language norms that influence school life. It connects multilingual practices, critical reflection and social justice by examining which languages are valued and why.



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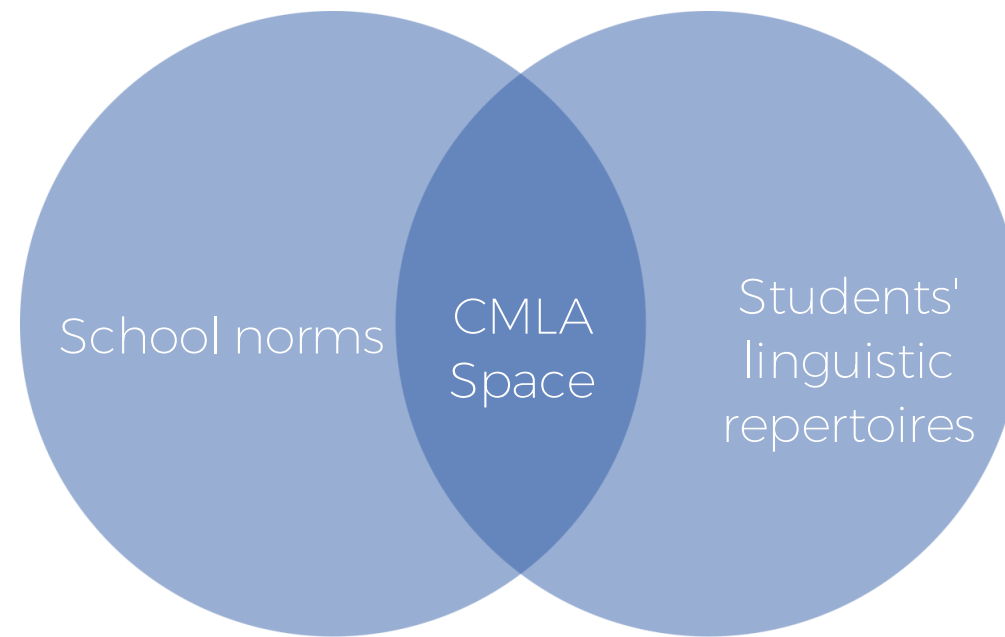
Key components:

- Awareness of language hierarchies and power relations
- Recognition of students' full linguistic repertoires
- Reflection on who defines correctness, standard language and school norms.
- Pedagogy that invites many languages into learning spaces.
- A shift from deficit thinking to resource-based thinking.

Why does CMLA matter

Although schools are multilingual, teaching often remains monolingual.

The CMLA helps to bridge this gap by empowering students and teachers to understand language as a social, political and emotional reality.



CMLA supports:

- inclusion and belonging, with all languages recognised as assets
- Recognition of students' full linguistic repertoires
- better learning outcomes: students can think and express themselves using all of their linguistic skills.
- teacher agency: educators question inherited norms and redesign their practice.
- a democratic school culture where language rights and visibility become shared responsibilities.

What Teachers Can Do

- Get to know your students and their families – linguistic body maps, invite families, multilingual classroom library etc.
- Promote translinguaging during brainstorming and drafting sessions, during group work and independent study.
- Encourage the use of multilingual resources and materials.
- Focus on evaluating content rather than accents or spelling mistakes.
- Critical sign reading - explore 'schoolscapes' for language visibility and analyse inclusion/exclusion by school messages and posters.
- Introduce the 'books bias check' - identify which languages/identities are represented or not.



Wrap-Up and Reflection

- In which ways does my classroom still promote the use of one language?
- What small changes could I make this month to boost my students' linguistic awareness and foster a multilingual environment?

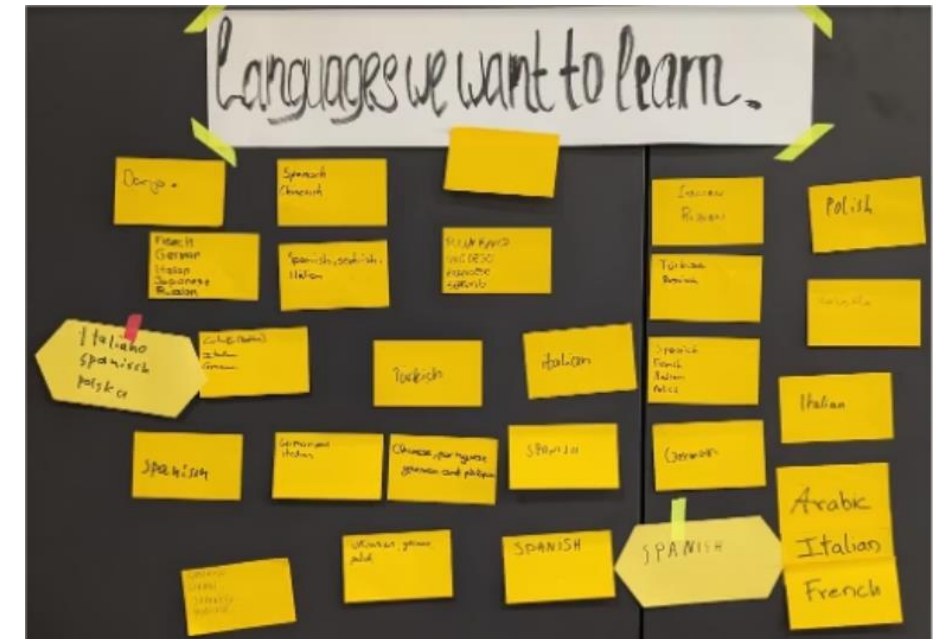


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