

## **Language diversity in the classroom: research needs and pedagogical approaches**

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This presentation is firmly rooted in a social justice perspective and goes on the assumption that applied linguists and teachers have a moral obligation to serve that perspective. In today's world, with so many people on the move, needing to learn and use several languages is of utmost concern and importance to many. Both emergent and expert bilingualism are thus very frequent, and need to be studied even more than they already are. However, we especially need an increased focus on the communicative needs and well-being of the many bilingual and emergent bilingual children in our (pre)schools. Children in European schools have a need to learn to speak the societal/school language. Simultaneously, they need to learn any other language(s) they might be hearing at home. There often is a clash between those needs, which negatively affects both children and families' well-being. This presentation demonstrates and explains the problem and offers ways forward in both research and teaching, so that all children who hear a non-societal language at home may develop harmonious bilingualism.

## **Multilingualism: in search of bringing practice closer to policy**

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No one argues the importance of education anymore, as it bears a huge impact not only on the development of an individual's intellectual capacity and better career achievements but also boosts the socio-economic and cultural potential of any society. Modern societies, more than ever, exhibit notable heterogeneity in ethnic composition, demographic characteristics, and literacy competences due to intensive processes of mobility, urbanization, and technological innovations.

Despite many advancements in learning titular languages by ethnic minorities in the Baltic states, research still registers facts of inadequate competence in learning majority languages, which causes poorer academic achievements and fewer career opportunities, ultimately leading to social isolation.

The presentation will discuss the current directions in language education policy. It will demonstrate results from a few studies on language performance by minority children in Lithuania, focusing on Russian. Specifically, it will concentrate on the periphery vs centre perspective, as geographically, ethnically, and culturally diverse locations demonstrate a very peculiar sociolinguistic situation. The discussion will bring to attention the prevailing debates on the *top-down* mono-ethnic state approach and the opposing (or balancing?) *bottom-up* postmodernist perspective, which calls for a context-sensitive request toward peripheral locations without applying any “grand narrative” explanations (Albury 2016) but regarding the importance of local standard and normativity instead (Blommaert 2010).

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## **Non-native speaking students in public education in Hungary**

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Historical and political events have constantly been influencing Hungarian language teaching. In 2022, Hungarian language learning became a central issue in many educational institutions due to the war in Ukraine, as refugee children of compulsory school age are obligated to enrol in public education following the law. Language skills and communication are crucial in this case, and a pressing question is how education can be effective without translators, interpreters, or an intermediary language.

Until 2014, according to the law, non-native-speaking students studied in Hungarian public education within the framework of the Intercultural Pedagogical Program, in which also teachers of Hungarian as a foreign language worked with them. As a result of an amendment to the law (2014. CV. 24. §), currently "A non-Hungarian citizen residing in Hungary (...) can participate in school education under the same conditions as Hungarian citizens". Therefore, schools cannot employ teachers of Hungarian as a foreign language subsidised by the state any more (however, educational authorities can give financial support for it). Meanwhile, plenty of foreign language-speaking children appeared in kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools where their education poses an extraordinary challenge for the employees (Joachim 2013). The linguistic and cultural integration of these children is currently the responsibility of subject teachers, especially teachers of Hungarian language and literature, although teaching the Hungarian language to non-native speakers requires a different point of view and pedagogical tools (Schmidt-Földiné 2021). In other words, public education teachers have to take responsibility for a task that they did not prepare for during their training. In order to provide professional support to primary school teachers, the Faculty of Hungarian as a Foreign Language of ELTE University in Budapest has organised workshops and lectures for them. The focus of the lectures was to shed light on the differences between the linguistic approaches in the subjects of Hungarian as a foreign language and Hungarian language and literature. The main topics of the training were the possibilities of treating students with different abilities in the lessons, the adaptation of teaching materials to non-native speaking students and the management of intercultural differences (Bennett 1998; Byram 2009; Prykarpatska 2008; Sivachenko 2020).

In my recent presentation, I would like to examine ways to provide further training for subject and literature teachers to teach non-native speaking children. Presenting the results of a questionnaire survey, I would like to talk about what kind of help they needed at the beginning of the process, and what experiences and needs they currently have after six months.

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## **A resource rather than an obstacle: Language awareness as a tool of meeting challenges of multilingualism in schools of Finland**

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The number of multilingual students keeps on growing in Finland. Not always multilingualism refers only to students of migrant background but also to children of various multilingual families, where several languages can be spoken at home.

Recently language awareness has become more and more popular and is seen as a tool for facing and coping with everyday multilingual challenges within the classroom. This key feature of educational philosophy was included into the new national core curriculum (2014) for basic schools. According to the curriculum, every teacher is a language role model for his/her students regardless of the subjects being taught.

Sometimes the term language awareness is misunderstood to be something about learning other languages and being multilingual. Language awareness is about respecting other languages and valuing your own mother tongue. It seems that at schools and in communities in everyday life there exist a lot of myths about learning various languages, about underestimating one's own mother tongue. The most widely spread myths vary: some tend to expect their own mother tongue to be the most important and tend to rate other languages as not important, not having a place in a national school with the country's official language of instruction; on the other hand, some tend to forget the importance of their own mother tongue while trying to acquire a good command of the country's official language. As a result children's cognitive skills, self-esteem and identity suffer. Quite often these misconceptions can be noticed among migrant families in Finland, also Estonian speaking families. Learning Finnish, the official language of the country, is seen to be of great importance and mastering a child's own mother tongue (Estonian) is seen as unimportant. This is also proven by data from the Finnish Agency for Education: the percentage of Estonian-speaking children visiting heritage language lessons is quite low when compared to other large minority language speakers.

Language awareness is a term and concept that should be known to everyone: the children, the families, the teachers and the headmasters at schools, the educational authorities. At school, language awareness is seen as an important tool for teachers to be able to understand students' difficulties in learning different languages and IN different languages. But, additionally, it is also a possibility to use students' multilingualism as a potential for teaching. Language-aware teachers help their students develop into language-aware personalities.

What does it mean for a teacher to be language aware? The presentation concentrates on giving an overview of practical ideas in using main language awareness techniques and means in schools of Finland.

## **Reading in different languages in ECEC through the eyes of educators and children**

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The richness of literacy experiences at home and in early childhood education (ECE) shapes children's language and literacy practices and predicts their academic achievements. While dialogic reading has proven to contribute to the development of skills in one or several languages, studies on early literacy practices in multiple languages are rare. Some studies on educators' reading practices in ECE have emerged following the implementation of multilingual ECE programmes in some European countries including Luxembourg. Furthermore, studies on young children's meaning-making during literacy events are rare. Based on a longitudinal mixed-method project in Luxembourg, the present paper investigates literacy practices in multiple languages in ECE settings. Drawing on surveys with educators and parents, semi-structured interviews as well as observations in three ECE centres over the academic year 2020/21, I will present the type of literacy activities, the language use of educators, children, and parents, as well as the actors' ways of interacting and engaging with texts.

The quantitative findings show that most educators read and told stories in multiple languages, mainly in French, Luxembourgish, and German, more rarely in Portuguese, though not every educator read every day. Some parents came at times to the centres to read in a home language. The qualitative data from three centres corroborate these findings and indicate that the educators' practices largely depended on the centres. Some educators deployed dialogic reading and engaged the three-year-olds in discussions around long and complex texts thereby translanguageing to activate children's semiotic repertoire. The parents who came to read tended to engage children in similar ways. Other educators chose simple books and either told stories freely or read in more traditional ways, thereby translanguageing to different degrees. Parents in those centres tended to replicate their home literacy practices while reading to children. While the former educators understood literacy as a social practice and helped children make meaning of texts in multimodal ways, the latter connected reading to cognitive and emotional benefits and perceived literacy as a skill to be developed. Independently of the centres, all children used their semiotic repertoire to engage in storytelling. They creatively reproduced the educators' literacy practices and interaction patterns when sharing books with peers, replicated strategies, and opened spaces to develop literacies in their home languages.

I will conclude with implications for policymakers and educators. The findings show the various ways in which the educators in Luxembourg are implementing the complex national

programme that calls for multilingualism and literacy in multiple languages. There is a need for further professional development to deepen their understanding of literacy, multilingualism, and language development, help them understand the relationships between learning processes, and encourage reflection on their own practices.



## **Fostering Symbolic Competence in German Language Classes: A Case Study of a Virtual Project on German Forest between University of Kelaniya and Tallinn University**

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This paper presents the design and outcomes of a virtual project *Erinnerungsorte in Deutschland, Estland und Sri Lanka* (Memory spaces in Germany, Estonia and Sri Lanka) which was launched to support the learners' symbolic competence. The students were high-level learners of German at Tallinn University and University of Kelaniya.

The lesson design presented in this study is based on the idea that communicative language teaching should consist of carefully designed communicative tasks and prepare the students for real-life situations which require interpreting the content of a message from the intercultural 'other'. For students to understand and interpret the meanings of another culture, developing only the communicative competence is not enough. Instead the learner needs to apply a set of semiotic practices that are based on a variety of cultural and linguistic clues in order to understand the content in another language and convey their own ideas speaking in the other language. Developing this kind of competence is a complicated process, in the course of which the learner develops a multilingual and -cultural identity, and will be able to make sense of symbols of various kind and act accordingly in cultural encounters with other (native) speakers of the target language, but also adequately work and understand texts and cultural artefacts.

The paper presents a lesson design as well as an analysis of the outcomes of the project as executed in fall 2021. The goal of the analysis is not only to discuss the benefits and limitations of this particular project design but also to further the development of lesson designs which target comparisons of cultures in an intercultural setting.

## **Participant observation in the classroom: reflections on teaching Latvian in Latvia and the diaspora in times of educational changes**

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This paper discusses methodological questions of Latvian language teaching, based on a comparison of results of participant observation of on site and online teaching of linguistically heterogenous school groups in Latvia, as well as of teaching Latvian to the Latvian diaspora. It is based on ongoing research in two projects: “Proficiency in Learning Latvian” (2021-2024), supported by the Latvian Language Agency, and a part of the State Research Programme of Latvia (2022-2024) which focuses on the Latvian diaspora. Methodological discussions in both projects, particularly with regard to parameters for participant observation in language classes suggested contrastive reflections on the research process.

In this light, the paper is based on an analysis of classroom observation notes, a diary, and transcripts of classroom discussions. In addition, interviews have been conducted with students and teachers from the schools which participate in the project. Research has taken place both at schools with only Latvian as medium of instruction and at Russian-Latvian bilingual schools. In addition, I will provide short insight into online participant observation of teaching Latvian for the diaspora.

The observations are then discussed in the context of the ongoing educational reform (2018–2022) in Latvia, and amendments in the Educational Law since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022. The law aims at a transition of the language of instruction in all schools and preschools in Latvia to only Latvian by September 2025, starting with preschools and some grades already in September 2023. These changes have stimulated discussions on less political, but rather practical everyday needs at (pre)schools with regard to management questions and the organisation of teaching. Among the challenges are, for instance, to find enough teachers with sufficient proficiency in Latvian, to improve L2 competence in Latvian among some students, to organize teaching in linguistically heterogenous groups and, not least, to develop positive attitudes towards learning Latvian in mixed groups of pupils with Latvian as L1 and L2. Therefore, experiences from teaching a diaspora of L1, L2 and heritage speakers of Latvian can be a significant resource for generating ideas and adopting methodologies for language classes in Latvia. With student-centred approaches in mind, this paper therefore discusses contemplations after participant observation online and on-site from schools and diaspora groups with the aim to improve teaching Latvian in linguistically diverse groups.

## **A story of a superhero: Being a second language teacher in a school with Finnish as the language of instruction**

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Challenges of finding a common language in a multilingual school can be various: a Russian speaking child lost her swimsuit, an Amhara speaking student has to pass a test in Biology, a Chemistry teacher needs some help getting her L2 students to acquire specific terms of the subjects, a History teacher is planning his individual work and wishes it to be understandable for his L2 students, most of the school teachers find it challenging to evaluate L2 students? Where is the common ling of this network? Right! It's the L2 teacher of the school.

The main target group of the L2 teacher at school are children with migrant background but also children coming from multilingual families, international families. This presentation provides an overview of the current system of supporting and integrating these children into a Finnish school. Finding a common language can be demanding, but essential.

A student with an immigrant background begins his path in the Finnish school system by attending Instruction preparing for basic education for one year. After acquiring the basics of the Finnish language, the student is moved to the basic education, where he/she receives instruction of Finnish as a second language, his native language and his own religion.

In addition to that, this presentation is aiming to provide answers to the following questions: what is the role of L2 teacher in a Finnish school, what are the teacher's responsibilities, what are the aims, outcomes and the evaluation of teaching L2 as a school subject and how efficient can be the teaching process and communication building in a school with a common language of instruction (Finnish/Swedish) and quite a large percentage of multilingual students.

During the discussion part it will be possible to compare roles, teaching and evaluation methods of a L2 teachers in Finland and in Estonia.

## **Picture-elicited narratives of Estonian preschool children from different SES-groups**

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Although in Estonia the need to teach storytelling skills is highlighted in didactic articles (Padrik, Hallap 2008) and in Estonian education documents and referentiality has been at the centre of several studies on the Estonian language (Hint 2015; Kaiser, Vihman 2010; Hint et al. 2020; Pajusalu et al. 2020), there is still a lack of information about children's acquisition of narrative skills. Despite of scarcity of research on the field, those that do exist (e.g. McCabe, Petersen 1991; Alt et al. 2016) show that there are links between socio-economic status of a family and children's storytelling skills. The study by Wild et al. (2013) suggests that low-SES, or more specifically, child-directed speech poverty, can be associated with children's poorer narration skills.

The rationale of the current study can be described first as the contribution to the understanding of the acquisition of storytelling and reference in general: we describe how children introduce a new referent and how they maintain referents in their storytelling. The results from typologically different languages, e.g., in Estonian as a Finno-Ugric language, could improve our understanding of the role of typological characteristics in language development and demonstrate how are the strategies used in the introduction and maintenance of reference related to typological features (i.e. use of zero reference and pragmatically driven word order) of the language. Second, for describing storytelling skills of two different SES groups the children's narratives were compared according to three parameters: the length of the story, the story complexity score and the average length of reference chains.

A total of 33 6–7-year-old monolingual Estonian children (19 of them from high SES and 14 middle-SES families, the distinction made on the basis of the mother's level of education) were tested using the story "Baby Goat" from the Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives (MAIN-test, Gagarina et al. 2019). All narratives were recorded, transcribed and analyzed according to linguistic means used for introduction and maintenance of a reference, the average length of reference chain, and the length and complexity of narratives.

Although Estonian children generally use bare nouns for reference introduction and maintenance, the frequent use of personal pronouns for reference maintenance indicates the difference in referring to a new or old referent. The use of zero reference for referent maintenance and pragmatically driven word order (VSO) for reference introduction

demonstrate the children's ability to apply language-specific reference tools in their narratives.

In comparison of high- and middle-SES families we can see that the narratives of children of middle-SES families are shorter than those of children of high-SES families. There was almost a twofold difference between the two groups in complexity scores, with the average score for the narrative of a child of middle-SES family being 4.2 points and that of a high-SES family being 7.3 points. Children of high-SES group had also significantly longer reference chains.

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## **First language instruction in Berlin: Turkish and Arabic in focus**

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Berlin is a multilingual and multicultural city. More than 40% of primary school children grow up with two or more languages. The integration of multilingualism and different first languages into the education system is present to a certain extent through bilingual kindergartens and schools, early foreign language learning as well as first (heritage) language instruction. Although the existing offers cannot cover all languages, the development towards better institutional support is evident. The interest of the community, changes in local politics and administration, and the newly created legal framework are contributing to the growing visibility of multilingualism and the expansion of first language instruction in schools. In 2021, the School Law of the Land of Berlin stipulated that students should receive additional support in their first language, if possible to organize at school. Thereupon, the offer for Turkish and Arabic, which along with Russian are among the most spoken languages in Berlin, has been increased significantly. In order to see how first language instruction is implemented at Berlin schools and how children improve proficiency in their first language within this framework, a longitudinal study will be conducted which will encompass two school grades.

At the end of the school year, data will be collected in both languages of third and fourth grade students, German and Turkish/Arabic. The targeted sample is 50 participants per language and school grade. The focus will be on children's reading and writing skills as well as their narrative skills, which will be also elicited in written form. In addition, children will be asked about their experiences with first language instruction. Parent questionnaires will be used to obtain background information on children's language development. In parallel, a survey will be conducted with school administration and first language teachers to assess the implementation of first language instruction. After ten months, the same students will be tested again to monitor their language development. The data will be used to make both longitudinal and cross-sectional analyses regarding reading, writing and narrative skills in both languages of students and the development of written language in the context of first language instruction.

At the conference, I will give an overview of the implementation of first language instruction in Berlin and present the study design and its current state. Preliminary results are expected after the completion of the first phase of the study in July.

## **Chackelis Lemchenas, a contrastive linguist before contrastive linguistics**

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The field of SLA and language teaching has basically emerged from the field of EFL, and the discussion was dominated by research on “big” languages, often languages of former colonial empires. The research landscape has changed, and the field has become more diverse; nevertheless, little is known about attempts to develop, systematise and introduce teaching methods for other (small, lesser-used) languages, such as Lithuanian.

Chackelis Lemchenas (1904–2001) was a Lithuanian linguist of Jewish origin, polyglot and experienced teacher of Lithuanian as L2/foreign language. His activities for systematisation and theorising on teaching methods of L2 as opposed to L1 are not known outside Lithuania. In his articles and various textbook reviews he outlined some principles that may be applied today.

Lemchenas used the term ‘formal logic’ when describing the necessity of pointing out the differences between Lithuanian and L1, for instance, differences in underlying morphological make-up (fusion in Lithuanian vs. analyticity in German and Yiddish). What he suggested was, in fact, a contrastive linguistic approach before the emergence of contrastive analysis in the 1950s. The ‘formal logic’, in his opinion, is not applicable to the teaching of a mother tongue. He believed that teachers and textbooks should build on students’ L1, and textbooks of Lithuanian as L1 should not be used for teaching in minority language schools, which was often the case.

In the West, for a long time a monolingual native speaker was considered as an ideal teacher of L2, and teachers who were so-called non-native speakers were looked down upon (Pavlenko 2003). Quite the opposite, Lemchenas emphasised as early as the 1930s the role of a multilingual teacher who knows L1 of the students and who had mastered the target language as L2. Based on their learning experience, such a teacher would know what language learning means and would be more effective in tackling learning difficulties. According to Lemchenas, L2 teaching has to take into account the student’s L1.

The case of Lemchenas demonstrates that bright and highly relevant ideas remain unknown to the larger audience because they are expressed in a lesser-used small language. It indicates the importance of a particular sociolinguistic context for the discussion of language teaching and learning.

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## **Responsive teaching in early language education**

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Due to global migration, linguistic and cultural diversity has grown in Western societies in recent years. During the previous decade, many powerful bodies, such as international and government institutions recognized the importance of home language maintenance (e.g., UNESCO, 2020). Home language maintenance is viewed as an essential dimension of young children's well-being and development and recognized as their fundamental right worldwide. In parallel, linguistically and culturally diverse children (LCDC) struggle learning the socially dominant language/s in mainstream early childhood education. Successful encounter with a novel language and classroom culture is inevitably connected to ecological conditions such as "creating a low-anxiety and secure atmosphere" (Schwartz 2018:3). Classroom ecology can be created by developing teachers' awareness and acknowledgement of the linguistic behaviors and cultural values of LCDC and their families, namely, by linguistically and culturally responsive teaching (Hollie 2019). This educational approach can be defined as an essential teaching framework of intercultural awareness at all levels of education (Arvanitis 2018).

In this talk I will explore the role of responsive teaching in creating an ecology of language learning in early years. Specifically, I will discuss: (1) Ecological perspectives in early language education viewing teachers, parents, children, and their peers as agents in interaction; (2) Dilemmatic aspects of linguistic and cultural diversity in preschool classroom; (3) Barriers and facilitators for interaction between teachers and parents with immigrant backgrounds; (4) Teacher-family partnership (Schwartz 2018; 2022; Ragnarsdóttir 2022); (5) Practical steps in facing challenges of classroom diversity: An innovative project, 'City speaks languages.'

Drawing on current international research, I will illustrate how mainstream teachers can behave as policy makers in a time of change. I will show how they can enact their agency through openly discussing dilemmatic aspects of approaching linguistic and cultural diversity and seek practical solutions. In addition, I will give examples of how teachers' activity promotes teacher-family partnership. Attention will be paid to reciprocal relationships between preschool and home in shaping partnership. Finally, I will illustrate how policy makers and teachers as agents in early childhood education may promote a novel language education policy and development of practices on the micro-level, in one city in Israel. This case is in particular intriguing because the city comprises about 45,000 residents, most of whom are immigrants from all over the world.

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## **Monolingualism as a mindset and as an obstacle to successful language acquisition**

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The paper deals with the issues of language ideology and its impact on the process of teaching and learning languages, with the focus on applying this theoretical perspective to the situation with language teaching in Estonia. The term monolingual mindset (or monolingual bias) has been used since the 1980s in second language acquisition research (Baratt 2018) to challenge the traditional approach which had taken monolingualism as a starting point modelling second language learners as acquiring some ideal monolingual variety of target language (May 2014). In more general perspective, monolingualism as a language ideology is inherent for many western societies relying upon the idea of national state with homogeneous population speaking one and the same language which works against all minority language speakers, both local ethnic minorities and migrants. The problem, though, is not only that monolingualism is maintained by a linguistic majority and / or educational system. Minority language speakers can adhere to the same monolingual bias and, therefore, see acquisition of the majority language as an existential threat to their native language and ethnic identity. This mindset can be a significant barrier to successful language acquisition, as it prevents individuals from fully engaging with the target language and culture (Kramsch 2014). We suppose that this conflict of different monolingual perspectives can be responsible for insufficient language acquisition and, as a consequence, social exclusion of minority language speakers; overcoming this challenge is an important task for language practitioners.

In the presentation, we will analyze the situation with acquisition of different second languages (Estonian by Russian speakers, English by both Estonian and Russian speakers, Russian and other foreign languages by Estonian speakers) and suggest the ways language attitudes of teachers, students and their families, and their respective impacts on language acquisition can be studied in Estonia.

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## **Dialogue interpreting task as a translatorial activity in EFL classroom**

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This paper proposes dialogue interpreting tasks as a tool for introducing “principled use” (Levine 2009, 145) of the first language, and integrating translatorial activities into foreign language teaching curricula. The results of case studies run in two Estonian high schools, with Estonian as the language of instruction in one and Russian as the language of instruction in the other, show that first language interference was prominent only for those with low foreign language proficiency. Even without prior instruction, students with good foreign language proficiency demonstrated the use of translation-communication strategies. The author suggests that the translatorial nature of dialogue interpreting in the foreign language classroom provides students and teachers with authentic examples for comparing and valuing languages that are used in the plurilingual societies where they live and study.

Monolingualism in foreign language instruction is being put to the test by globalisation and migration. Teachers today frequently find themselves teaching speakers of many different first languages with varied cultural backgrounds in the same classroom, rather than teaching speakers with the same first language to communicate with an idealised native speaker. Even within a single country, communities are more and more mixed, and the foreign language teachers exist in this different reality. In Estonia, where the language policy is predominantly monolingual, the sociolinguistic situation is quite complex and it can affect the classroom environment.

The dialogue between the fields of professional language practice in translation and educational language practice in foreign language learning should not be neglected because of the indissoluble nature of the union between Language Pedagogy and applied Translation Studies (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022). Using both these fields in an interdisciplinary way is critical for overcoming monolingual bias and fostering intercultural awareness among plurilingual language learners, and also for developing mediation skills. Much depends on language teachers’ understanding the notions of “translation” and “mediation”, and they should not miss the opportunity to reflect on translation as a scaffolding tool in L2 learning that can be applied through complex multi-skill communication activities like dialogue interpreting. Dialogue interpreting itself could help restore the reputation of translation as a tool for teaching foreign languages and give grounds for analysing and appreciating the differences and commonalities of all the languages that students learn or use in their daily lives in plurilingual Europe.

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## **CLIL Tandem Teacher Beliefs**

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The presentation will report on a study which investigated the beliefs of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) subject and language teacher tandems in a situation where they worked in close contact to develop and teach a CLIL course. The aim of the study was to uncover their underlying beliefs concerning four specific aspects: setting learning goals, developing academic language proficiency, using authentic materials and cooperative tasks, and managing assessment. In the study, teachers' professional collaboration is viewed through Kelchtermans' (2006) theoretical framework, which suggests that CLIL teacher professional development be investigated in the light of the benefits brought about by the subject teacher (ST) and language teacher (LT) working in tandem, combining each teacher's didactic qualities in collaboration. The current study discusses contexts where teachers collaborated to design and implement a CLIL course together. Because STs and LTs were working in tandem and in this process experienced collaboration on many levels (planning, material design, teaching and reflection), it was these experiences that displayed accordance or diversity in the teachers' beliefs in relation to a CLIL course core characteristics. The present study fills an important gap in understanding how CLIL ST and LT beliefs shape classroom practices when those teachers work in tandem. The following research questions were posed:

- a) Which teacher beliefs emerge in a CLIL course design and implementation context when subject and language teachers work together in tandem?
- b) Are the beliefs shared between subject and language teachers or are they unique to each group?

The Interpretative Phenomenological Approach, used for data processing and analysis, showed both accordance and diversity in the beliefs about all the studied aspects. The shared beliefs included the dominance of subject learning goals over language goals, the need to develop academic language proficiency, the use of authentic materials and cooperative tasks as sources of subject knowledge and skills, as well as the need for appropriate assessment. Differences emerged in the process of goal setting, the understanding of the essence of academic language proficiency, the meaning of authentic learning materials and the number of scaffolding tools available for managing learning and assessment.

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## **Child Language Research in Latvia: Contemporary Problems and Solutions**

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Today's dynamic society increasingly expects children to have up-to-date knowledge and social skills that cannot be successfully implemented without a well-developed language. Latvia has historically developed as a country where both Latvians and ethnic minorities live. One of the most important values in our country is the Latvian language, which has been granted the status of a state language. Consequently, the issues that determine successful acquisition of the official language in both pre-school and school become relevant. This set of circumstances determined the activity of our interdisciplinary research group – initially to conduct research on language acquisition in early childhood, and further to use the data obtained in the study of language acquisition of preschool children, both Latvian-speaking children and children of minorities. The latter have been a special research group, as different ways have been sought to help these children learn Latvian more successfully in order to ensure better success in school, which will be conducted exclusively in Latvian from 1 September 2023. Research is also being carried out with teachers who are involved in the children's language learning.

Further, we would like to offer a description of the tests and questionnaires used in the research. One of the first research methods was the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories (CDI), a parent questionnaire that assesses the communicative development of infants and young children, where we adapted two questionnaires: CDI Words and Gestures, designed to assess language development in children aged 8–16 months old, and CDI Words and Sentences, designed to assess language development in children aged 16–36 months old. Next, our group of researchers developed a picture-based phoneme production test to test Latvian language acquisition in two populations - monolingual Latvian-speaking children and bilingual Russian-dominant children - to investigate the phonemic language development in children aged 3–6 years old.

With the transition of all educational institutions to Latvian-language education, the researchers decided to conduct an in-depth analysis of the Latvian language skills of ethnic minority children, using children's speech recordings and preschool teacher surveys. This research is supported by the State Research Programme “Letonika – Fostering a Latvian and European Society” project No. VPP-LETONIKA-2022/1-0001 “Use and Development of Contemporary Latvian Language”. It was important to compare the preschool teachers' assessments with the children's speech recordings. Although there is a massive shift to Latvian as the everyday language in groups of preschool children, the results are not yet completely satisfactory.