ERASMUS+ Enriching lives, opening minds

SME - Language Powers Europe

Linguistic diversity as a resource in schools and teacher education

Closing event of the project in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 17 January 2025

# Strasbourg Appeal

Dear participants, ladies and gentlemen,

A wide scope, a broad spectrum of teaching concepts, teaching designs and innovative ideas with a focus on multilingualism (French: plurilinguism; German: Mehrsprachigkeit) has been presented over the past three hours, all the products of three years of joint cooperation between representatives of schools, universities and educational institutions in three European countries.

The bilingual picture book, bilingual songwriting, exciting topics such as the chamber of curiosities (Wunderkammer), language-contrastive approaches, a wide range of possible uses for Tomi Ungerer's stories, little theatre performances, bilingual texts and much more can make up a multilingual lesson.

The concept encompasses many facets, from cooperation with parents at school in conjunction with accompanying efforts by the school authorities, to the flexible classroom using modern digital tools, right through to teachers‘ training at universities. The broad range of attitudes of all stakeholders were widely discussed, from a preference for multilingualism to an ongoing belief in the monolingual approach. Multilingualism is increasingly taking centre stage, and not just in the academic discourse. In Lower Saxony, a decree of the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs on the promotion of multilingualism in schools comes into force on 1 February 2025. The concept of multilingualism has now also found its way into the new curricula for the French collège. A clear trend is emerging.

The strong and continuing influx of migrants into European countries has further increased the already enormous linguistic diversity in Europe. In a classroom in Germany, France or Austria, it is not uncommon for ten or more languages to be ‘present’ if you include the many different languages that children speak in their families. Many children speak their ‘family language’ at home, German in their new living environment, for example, and they learn English and French as foreign languages at school. They are therefore multilingual and, above all, have strong language acquisition skills. In addition to the necessary appreciation of the many family languages, this must be utilised in the classroom through skillful methodological and didactic teaching concepts.

Diversity, and therefore also linguistic diversity, has always been at the heart of the European Union. The EU's interpreting and translation service recognises this. All important documents are translated into all 24 languages. According to a decision taken by the European Council in Barcelona in March 2002, every child in the EU should learn two foreign languages from an early age so that every EU citizen can communicate in at least three languages. The trilingualism of EU

citizens is therefore the language policy goal of the EU. This language policy is based on respect for linguistic diversity and thus also the diverse culture in all member states as well as the creation of an EU-wide intercultural dialogue. Diversity is not seen as an obstacle, but as an asset. The EU's motto is -after all- ‘United in Diversity’.

However, this conviction is not shared in unison. The seemingly limitless possibilities offered by the rapidly expanding field of artificial intelligence are prompting some politicians to call for the abolition of the compulsory second foreign language in schools in favour of, for example, the establishment of a ‘digital media skills’ subject. A second or even additional foreign languages are obsolete, as a button in the ear will soon be able to translate into a wide variety of languages at lightning speed. Incidentally, the same politician also considers geography lessons and spelling lessons to be superfluous in the age of satnavs and GPS. However, while AI only conveys fleeting, ephemeral information and more or less meaningless snippets of knowledge, valid knowledge only arises through the active linking of information on the part of the learner, and only reflected knowledge constitutes what the Germans call „Bildung“ (comprehensive literacy).

But doesn't a foreign language teach you far more than just the language itself? Don't you also learn about other cultures, traditions, ways of thinking and mentalities? Aren't such broadened horizons based on networking a prerequisite for a valid intercultural dialogue?

Dear participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Language powers Europe. Erasmus+ stands for diversity. And we, we make suggestions for didactics of multilingualism. Please check out the teaching concepts presented and let them inspire you. Use our digital platform ‘Lingua Creativa’. We want to use it to exchange ideas with you over the next two years. Don't be stingy with your suggestions and, if necessary, criticism. Let's enter into a constructive dialogue.

Let’s keep in contact. Thank you for taking part today.

Bernd Saur, StD. i.R.
Education Unlimited e.V.
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