

CHAPTER 1

Languages in our everyday life

Marta Estévez Grossi

This chapter explores the nature of languages and the role they play in our daily lives.

After completing the chapter's activities, students will be able to:

- Identify the presence and use of various languages in their daily lives
- Observe how languages are connected to each other and to different cultures
- Understand that languages and cultures are alive and evolve over time

1.1 INTRODUCTION

All human beings across the globe share the ability to speak, to express complex thoughts through language – even if we do not all speak the same language!

Languages play a very important part in our lives and are all around us, even before we are born. They allow us to express our feelings, to share our experiences and our thoughts and, in short, to communicate with one another. But where do languages come from? Why are there so many different languages in the world and in our societies? Why does language change? And what does it mean to be bilingual or multilingual? People have been asking themselves these questions for a very long time and have come up with different answers. Let's plunge into the diversity of language in this chapter and find some answers of our own!

1.2. LANGUAGES IN THE WORLD – LANGUAGES IN OUR LIVES

1.2.1 Languages and their status

It is estimated that over 7100 languages are still spoken or signed in the world today. That is an impressive number, but it should be noted

that 40% of them are endangered and at risk of disappearing. In contrast, just 23 languages account for more than half of the global population (at the time of writing, at least). Below is a list of the world's 10 most widely spoken languages, based on both native speakers and all the people who have acquired them as a second language.



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

babies can distinguish between familiar and foreign languages while still in the womb?

Some studies suggest that babies are able to recognise the different rhythm patterns of languages at least a month before they are born.

TABLE 1. THE 10 MOST WIDELY SPOKEN LANGUAGES IN THE WORLD

Rank	Language	Speakers (millions)	Language family	Script(s) used
1	English	1348	Indo-European	Latin
2	Mandarin Chinese	1120	Sino-Tibetan	Chinese characters
3	Hindi	600	Indo-European	Devanagari
4	Spanish	543	Indo-European	Latin
5	Standard Arabic	274	Afro-Asiatic	Arabic
6	Bengali	268	Indo-European	Bengali
7	French	267	Indo-European	Latin
8	Russian	258	Indo-European	Cyrillic
9	Portuguese	258	Indo-European	Latin
10	Urdu	230	Indo-European	Nastaliq

Ethnologue (2021). Source: <https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/ethnologue200>

Numbers of speakers change rapidly: some languages are continually gaining new speakers while others keep losing them. But why do some languages have so many speakers while others are on the verge of disappearing?

From a linguistic point of view, there are no superior or inferior languages. All languages have evolved to express the needs of their speakers and come with grammatical, phonetic and morphological rules that allow them to do so.

From a social and political perspective, however, some languages are considered more prestigious than others. In multilingual contexts, speakers of languages that are regarded as being of low status might feel pressured to replace their native language with the dominant one. The gradual process whereby a community abandons one language in favour of another is called “**language shift**”. A tendency towards language shift is common among speakers of **minority languages**, who often replace their native tongue with the **dominant** (and there-

fore more socially advantageous) **language** or dialect. There are many examples around the world, including the case of Irish in Ireland, Galician in Spain, Sardinian in Italy and Quechua in Peru, to name but a few. The phenomenon of language shift can also be observed in contexts of migration, where migrants and their children can feel compelled to adopt the majority language or dialect of their host country or region, often leading to the loss of their heritage language within a couple generations. Of course, there are always movements and initiatives aimed at trying to reverse such trends, the success of which depends on many different factors, including the support they receive from governmental bodies and society, the political measures taken, the number of speakers involved and the stereotypes surrounding the relevant minority languages.

Why should we care about the fate of minority languages? Why is it so important to preserve as many languages as possible? Because language is much more than a tool for transmitting a message. Language also conveys histor-

ical, cultural and social knowledge. It embodies different perspectives on life and the world and highlights human diversity. Language is also intrinsically linked to religious, ethnic and national identities. And it is through language that we express aspects of our identity, be it our geographical origin, social background, or even physical and physiological characteristics (such as age, gender, etc.).



The philosopher George Steiner once said...

“When a language dies, a way of understanding the world dies with it, a way of looking at the world.”

WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- **There are no superior or inferior languages from a linguistic point of view; from a social and political perspective, however, some languages are considered more prestigious than others.**
- **Speakers of low-prestige languages (minority languages, languages in contexts of migration) often feel socially pressured to abandon their language in favour of a majority language with greater prestige. This is called language shift.**
- **Language shift is one of the reasons for which languages gain and lose speakers and can eventually disappear.**
- **Every language is valuable since it conveys historical, cultural and social knowledge, embodies different perspectives on life and the world, and highlights human diversity.**

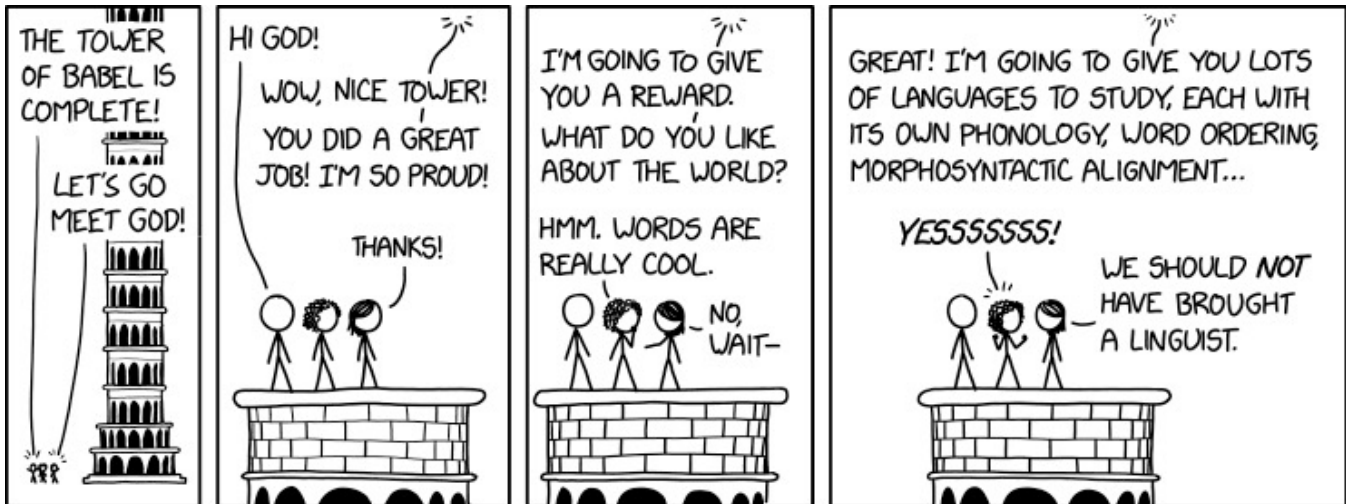
1.2.2 Where does language come from?

There are several mythologies that point to the emergence of linguistic diversity as a god's doing. One of the most famous myths is that of the **Tower of Babel** or the **“confusion of tongues”**, which appears in the Book of Genesis. In the story in question, humanity spoke a single language until they decided to build a tower so tall it would allow them to reach heaven – you could say it was the world's first skyscraper! God took their plan as a sign of vanity, however, and decided to punish them by giving them different languages so that they could no longer understand each other and scattering them around the world. According to the myth in question, language diversity is more of a curse

than a blessing. In other mythologies, however, language is considered a divine gift that distinguishes human beings from other animals.

Nowadays, linguists have reached other, more scientific conclusions. It is estimated that human speech first appeared at some point between 100,000 and 20,000 BC. While some scholars narrow that down to a period of time between 30,000 and 20,000 BC, the truth is that it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment at which speech emerged, since there are no records of speech in those early stages for us to consult. The first evidence of written language dates from around 3500 BC.

An alternative account of the myth of the Tower of Babel



Source: <https://m.xkcd.com/2421/>

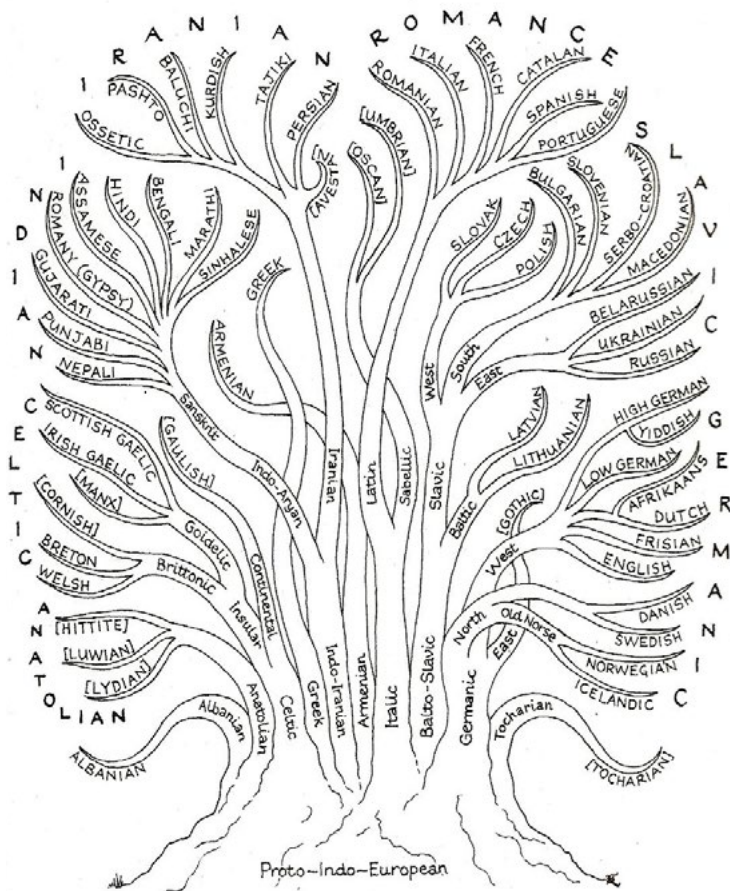
We do not know for sure if all languages can be traced back to just one initial language or if different languages appeared more or less simultaneously in different places. What we have been able to establish is that some languages are related to others, i.e. they share traits that, in some cases, indicate a common origin. The linguistic theory behind this is known as the **family tree model**, which dates back to the middle of the 19th century. The theory in question regards language as a living organism. And like living organisms of every species, including human beings, each language is considered to descend from a parent language – which may or may not exist any more. Languages that share a parent language are therefore classified as members of the same **language family**. This system allows us to classify languages from a genealogical point of view.

Let's take a look, for example, at the Romance languages, the family to which all languages derived from Latin belong. In the group in question, Latin is regarded as the parent or "mother" language, and Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Galician, Catalan, Romanian, Sardinian and many others are accordingly deemed

"daughter" languages, all of which are, at the same time, "sister" languages to one another. On a broader scale, the Romance language family is actually just a branch of a larger family tree, the Indo-European language family.



The Kish tablet, found in the ancient Sumerian city of Kish (in what is now Iraq) and dated to around 3500 BC, is considered the world's earliest written document.



Family tree of the Indo-European languages

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Around 41% of the planet's population speak an Indo-European language as their native tongue, making it the most widespread language family in the world. The language families to which the languages with the most speakers across the globe belong are shown in table 1 (the 10 most widely spoken languages in the world).

But counting speakers is just one way of thinking about the numbers involved. If we take a look at the number of languages currently spoken, the undisputed champions of language diversity are the Niger-Congo and Austronesian language families, which account for over 1500 and 1200 languages respectively – as opposed to the 444 existing Indo-European languages. The other largest language families include the Trans New Guinea, Sino Tibetan, and Afro Asiatic language families. The language families we have mentioned so far are by no means a com-



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

although German is the official spoken language of both Germany and Austria, the sign languages native to the two countries are not related to each other?

Signers in Germany use German Sign Language, a daughter language in the German Sign Language family and a sister to Polish Sign Language. In Austria, signers use Austrian Sign Language, which belongs to the Austro-Hungarian Sign Language family, a branch of the French Sign Language family.

plete list. Linguists have identified 142 different language families, in addition to **language “isolates”**, i.e. languages that have no known relatives. A European example of a language isolate is Basque, a language spoken in northern Spain and southwestern France.

And what about **sign languages**? Despite what many people might think, sign languages are also natural languages and are not related to the spoken languages of the regions or countries they are native to. Just as in the case of spoken languages, they can be classified into different sign language families, such as the French, British, Arabic, Japanese, German, and Swedish Sign Language families. The six sign language families in question account for over 70 different sign languages, but there are many other sign language families. Furthermore, there are also many sign language isolates.



WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- **We do not know exactly when human speech emerged, but it is believed that it must have happened between 30,000 and 20,000 BC.**
- **Some languages are related to others and their similarities suggest that they have a common origin or emerged from an original “parent language”. This is the basis of the linguistic theory called the (language) family tree model. According to that theory, languages can be organised into language families and sub-families, represented by the branches of a family tree.**
- **There are around 142 different language families, plus language “isolates”, i.e. languages with no known relatives.**
- **Indo-European is the world’s most widespread language family. Some of the planet’s other largest language families are the Niger-Congo, Austronesian, Trans New Guinea, Sino Tibetan, and Afro Asiatic language families.**
- **Sign languages are also natural languages and are not related to the spoken languages of the regions or countries they are native to.**

1.2.3. Why does language change?

We have seen that language is more like a living organism than a static object. That challenges one of the many deep-rooted beliefs that generally surround languages, namely the idea of a language as a complete, perfectly finished object. From that perspective, any changes in spelling, grammar or vocabulary are regarded as corruptions from which languages should be protected.

It is undoubtedly very important to learn the standard of a language, so as to be able to communicate with people from other geographical or social backgrounds beyond our closest social group. But it is also undeniable that change is part of the very nature of language and that languages are constantly evolving. The most frequent and striking changes are in pronunciation and vocabulary, although changes can also occur in grammar and even in spelling. But why does language change?

Let’s start with a couple of examples. What would you call a shop you can buy medicine from? Your answer will depend on where you come from or where you have learnt English. In British English, you would probably call it a chemist’s or a pharmacy; in the US you would probably go to the drugstore. And what about paying for a meal in a restaurant? In the UK you would probably ask for the bill, but in the US you would be expected to ask for the check. Why do such differences exist?

There are many different factors that influence **language change** and we will only be able to examine a few of them in this section. One of the clearest factors is the physical and geographical movement of people. When people migrate, the language of the group that leaves and that of the group that stays behind tend to develop in different ways and, therefore, diverge from each other.

Conversely, when different languages come into contact, they tend to influence one another. For that reason, languages do not normally evolve completely independently from each other (no matter what the family tree analogy might suggest). The English language, for instance, has incorporated a great number of words from the many languages with which it has come into contact. Such words are called “**borrowings**” or “**loanwords**”. English has borrowed words such as ballet, bureau, fiancé, garage, menu and restaurant from French; balcony, ballot, corridor, ghetto, scenario and volcano from Italian; armada, canyon, cargo, ranch, tornado and tuna from Spanish; and doppehganger, kindergarten, kitsch, noodle, poltergeist and rucksack from German. English has also lent numerous words to other languages, including camping, casting, club, football, internet and parking.

Many such words are borrowed because of the need to name new objects or realities that did not exist before in a given language and culture. There are plenty of examples of so-called “**international words**”, which are words that have been exported to many other languages owing to them referring to a reality that was previously unknown to most foreign languages and cultures. Some examples of international words are iceberg from Dutch, tomato from Nahuatl, sauna from Finnish, robot from Czech, goulash from Hungarian, marmalade from Portuguese, and pyjamas from Hindi (itself derived from Persian).

On the other hand, sometimes a language borrows a word from another language despite already having a word of its own to refer to an object or a reality. One of the reasons that happens is because society finds it trendier, cooler

or more fashionable to use a word from another language. Think about words like connoisseur, cuisine and rendezvous (from French, used instead of expert, cooking and meeting respectively); ciao, fiasco and finale (from Italian, used instead of bye, failure and end respectively); and aficionado, suave and vigilante (from Spanish, used instead of enthusiast, sophisticated and watchman respectively). Why do we use those words instead of the English forms? Well, even if such loanwords could initially be regarded as synonyms for their English counterparts, over time they tend to acquire new **connotations**, i.e. they come to mean something different from their English equivalent and, sometimes, even from their meaning in the original language.

And so we come to another crucial factor in language change: time. Pronunciation, meaning, grammar and spelling tend to change over time. If we look at the historical meaning of words, for instance, we might see that some words have come to signify something totally different from what they originally meant. The study of the origin and history of words is called **etymology**. Although many regular dictionaries do include some etymological explanations for certain words, it is in etymological dictionaries that we can find thorough descriptions of how words have changed over time. In such a dictionary we could learn, for example, that the word *villain* originally meant peasant or farmer and was a synonym of “villager”, or that the word *girl* used to refer to any young person, regardless of gender.

Want to put your students’ general knowledge about languages to the test? See **activity A** in this chapter, a quiz game that will do just that and teach them some fun facts about languages too.

WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?



- Language can be regarded as a living, constantly evolving organism.
- Language change is a natural process that every language undergoes. It can be observed in different aspects, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling and grammar.
- There are different reasons for language change, such as migration, language contact, social and cultural changes, and changes over time, to name but a few.



1.3. LANGUAGES IN OUR SOCIETIES

1.3.1 Multilingualism in society: languages all around us

You might not realise it, but you are surrounded by different languages on a daily basis. Pay attention to the languages people speak around you, be it on public transport, in the street, in the supermarket, in your neighbourhood, at school or at home. If you look around you more closely, you will probably spot texts in different languages too: signs, boards, graffiti, notes, flyers, advertisements, shopfronts and shop windows, and so on. You can explore the language diversity that surrounds you in **activity B** in this chapter. So, how common is **multilingualism**?

In western societies, people living in countries where a so-called **global or world language** is spoken tend to be under the impression that those who speak two or more languages are something of an exception. This is due to the fact that there is usually a high percentage of monolingual speakers in such countries. But is **monolingualism** actually all that common?

What is a global or world language?

A global or world language can be defined as a language that has a large number of speakers, is often learnt as a foreign language, and is used not only in its native country but also for international communication. English, Chinese, Arabic, Russian and, in general, most of the languages of former colonial powers can be regarded as global languages.

Contrary to what is commonly believed, monolingualism is not the norm in the world, but rather the exception. Bear in mind that there are over 7100 languages still alive and kicking across the planet, but only around 200 countries. That means that most of the world's population can communicate in two or more languages and do so on a daily basis. In many **multilingual societies**, it is not uncommon to switch between languages depending on the situation or who you are talking to.

People also generally know that there are clear social rules about when it is and is not appropriate to speak in a given language: some languages are used in informal or familiar contexts and others in more formal ones. In such societies, it would actually be unusual to only be able to speak one language!

From a political point of view, different countries and regions deal with multilingualism in different ways. And although the vast majority of countries also have their own regional or minority languages, they do not necessarily grant those languages an official status. France, for instance, has a pretty strict monolingual language policy and recognises only French as an official and national language, despite the fact that several regional languages are still spoken there, such as Alsatian, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Flemish, Franco-Provençal and Occitan – not to mention the languages spoken in its overseas territories!

Similarly, there are officially multilingual countries that recognise some but not all of the languages spoken on their territory. A good example would be the world's most linguistically diverse country, Papua New Guinea, which has

over 800 spoken languages but only four official languages, namely English, Hiri Motu, Papua New Guinea Sign Language and Tok Pisin.

On the other hand, there are also officially bilingual or multilingual countries, such as Canada, Switzerland and Belgium, where the vast majority of the population are actually monolingual.

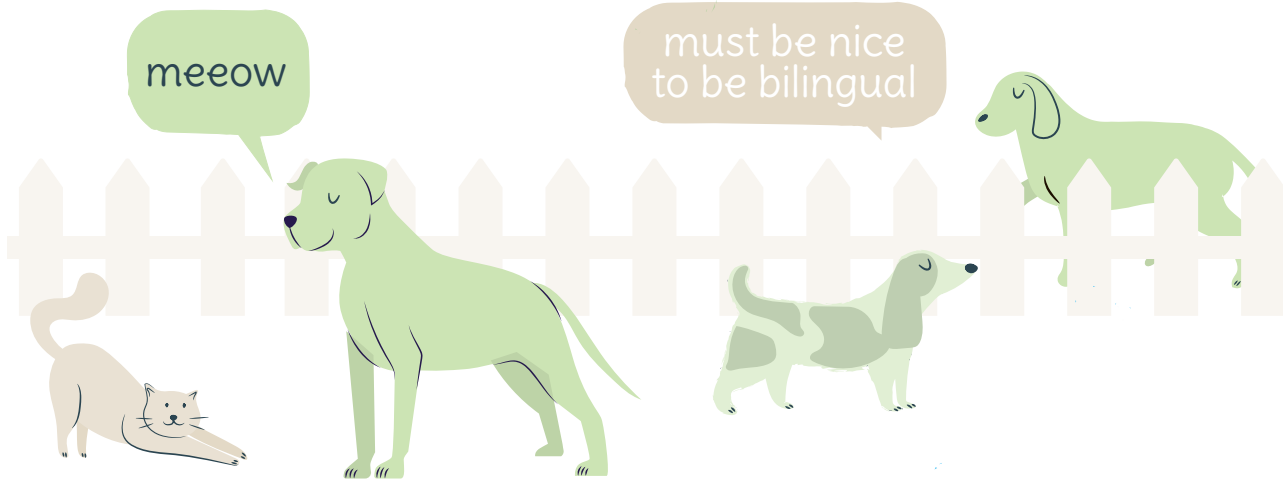
So, when it comes down to it, are all countries multilingual? The truth is that completely monolingual countries are hard to find. That is not only due to the existence of regional and minority languages, which of course account for a large part of the world's linguistic diversity. In our increasingly mobile and globalised societies, we should not forget the many languages that migrants bring with them to their host countries, languages that are also a source of linguistic and cultural diversity all over the planet.

In conclusion, there is **linguistic diversity** in virtually every country. That is what linguists call **societal multilingualism**, the presence of two or more languages in one society.

WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- **Monolingualism is not the norm in the world, but rather the exception.**
- **Most of the world's population can communicate in two or more languages and do so on a daily basis.**
- **Different countries deal with multilingualism in different ways: some officially recognise the linguistic diversity of their societies to a greater or lesser extent, while others do not.**
- **Along with regional and minority languages, the languages of migrants contribute to the linguistic diversity of societies all over the world.**





1.3.2. Individual multilingualism: are we all multilingual?

What does it mean to be bilingual or multilingual? We could define **individual bilingualism or multilingualism** as the capability of a person to speak two or more languages. But this definition has several gaps. Traditionally, it was thought that only people who achieved native-like proficiency in each of the languages they spoke could be considered “true bilinguals” or “true multilinguals”. But what about those who learn a foreign language without mastering it to the same degree as their native language? And people who are able to understand a language, maybe one spoken in their home, but not to speak it fluently? And what about people who can speak a language pretty well but cannot write in it? And those who can read and understand a text in a foreign language but cannot actively communicate in it?

Today, we know that even if native-like command of two (or more) languages does happen in reality, it is actually rare, since the vast majority of bilinguals and multilinguals do not have the same degree of proficiency in all their languages. In fact, it is very common to have a **dominant or preferred language**, a language in which a person is more fluent or that they favour in certain domains or situations. Imagine a child who lives in the UK and speaks Russian at home with their family and English at school. They will obviously be able to speak more fluently about some topics in Russian and about

others in English. Does that mean they are not bilingual? Not at all, as we will see shortly.

It is also very common, especially among people who have learnt a second (or third!) language later in life, for one of a person’s languages to interfere with the other, something that might be reflected in their accent, certain grammatical structures, vocabulary, etc. Imagine a French university lecturer who has been living and working in England for the last 20 years. They can communicate proficiently in English in formal and informal situations alike and have published books in both English and French. And yet they still speak English with a French accent and, after so many years in England, they sometimes struggle to find the right words when talking in French. What about this person? Would you not consider them bilingual?

Bilingual continuum. Capital letters and larger font size represent greater proficiency in language A or B.

**Monolingual
Language A**

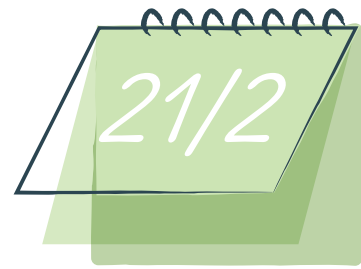
**Monolingual
Language B**

A A_b A_b A_b A_b A_b ∂B Ba Ba Ba Ba Ba B

[Taken from Valdés (2014).]

Nowadays, many linguists see bilingualism (or multilingualism) not as a state that can eventually be achieved, but rather as a continuum, i.e. a gradual progression between two opposite ends. At one end is monolingualism in language A, and at the other monolingualism in language B. Any individual with language skills in both languages could be placed between those two poles. Depending on their proficiency and fluency in each language, they would be nearer to one end or the other of the continuum. For instance, a person with strong skills in one of the languages but only limited skills in the other might be placed at **A_b**, while a person with native-like skills in both languages would be placed in the middle, at **A_B**. The idea of a bilingual continuum allows us to view bilingualism as a process and takes into account the fact that proficiency in either language can change in degree over time. It is possible to gain skills in a language but also to lose them. Under this broader understanding of bilingualism, even beginner learners of a foreign language could be regarded as bilinguals, although they would of course initially be quite close to one of the monolingual ends of the continuum.

Be that as it may, bilinguals and multilinguals have often encountered myths or misconceptions about what living life in two or more languages entails. One of the most problematic misconceptions is that exposure to various languages is detrimental to language development in children. It was previously believed that children raised bilingually or multilingually would never manage to learn any of the languages involved properly. Accordingly, parents were advised against bringing up their children bilingually or multilingually by teachers and paediatricians, and were often encouraged to talk to their children in the majority language of their society – even if they were not particularly proficient in that language themselves!



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

International Mother Language Day is celebrated on 21 February every year? It was proclaimed by UNESCO in 1999 to raise awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and promote multilingualism.

There are a number of problems with pressuring parents not to talk in their native language to their children. For instance, parents who speak their new society's majority language as a foreign language might pass on defective pronunciation and grammar patterns to their children. It has also been observed that parents who force themselves to speak to their children in a foreign language in which they do not feel comfortable might communicate less with their children and be unable to express feelings such as closeness and affection in the way they would in their native language. Additionally, by not passing on a **heritage language**, parents sever their children's link with family members living abroad, since the children will be unable to communicate with them on their own. Lastly, such an approach hinders the transmission of cultural traditions and values. The issues in question often lead to problems in family dynamics which can be difficult to solve further down the line.

Where does the idea of "language confusion" come from anyway? One of the main factors in the belief that exposure to more than one language confuses children is the observation that young children often do combine words from the different languages they speak in a single sentence. That phenomenon is called

code-switching or code-mixing, and is a typical stage in language development in young children who are being raised bilingually or multilingually.

However, code-switching or code-mixing can be observed in bilinguals of any age when they are speaking with other bilinguals. It does not mean they are confused or unable to communicate properly in a single language; it is a normal part of bilingual linguistic behaviour. The concept of “**linguistic repertoire**” should probably be introduced at this point. A linguistic repertoire comprises the communicative resources available to an individual or a speech community, i.e. the written and spoken **language varieties** that an individual is able to use or which are present within a **speech community**. The linguistic repertoire of monolingual speech communities usually consists of different registers

and **styles, dialects and accents**, and **jargons and slangs**. In bilingual or multilingual speech communities (e.g. in migration settings or in linguistically diverse countries, such as India), the linguistic repertoire includes not only different regional, social and/or stylistic varieties in each language individually, but also combinations of the different languages spoken.

Bilinguals might opt to switch and mix codes in certain communicative situations, just as a monolingual speaker might use one **register** or another depending on the context and who they are talking to. On that basis, it could even be said that, in a very broad sense, we are all multilingual, since all of us, monolinguals and bilinguals alike, must learn to juggle different language varieties in our societies.



WHAT CAN I PASS ON TO MY STUDENTS?

- **Bilingualism or multilingualism is not a state that can eventually be achieved, but rather a process in which language proficiency can change over time.**
- **Most bilinguals and multilinguals do not have an equal command of their different languages, and that is absolutely fine.**
- **Under a broader understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism, even beginner learners of a foreign language could be regarded as bilinguals.**
- **Parents should not be discouraged from talking in their native language to their children, since it is through that language that they can best communicate, express feelings such as closeness and affection, and pass on their culture and values to the next generation. In contexts of migration, children with a command of their heritage language are able to stay in contact with family members who live abroad.**
- **Different registers and styles, dialects and accents, and jargons and slangs are available to monolinguals. Bilinguals can make use of them too, but they can also mix and switch between languages when talking to other bilinguals. Doing so is a natural, normal part of bilingual linguistic behaviour, and does not mean that they are confused or unable to communicate properly in a single language.**

Let your students try **activity C**, to make them reflect on how important different languages, dialects, accents and registers are to them. It might be fun for them to compare results among friends and classmates! In **activity D**, students will have the chance to talk about code-switching and code-mixing, to discover the meaning of a text written in many different languages, and even to create their own multilingual text!

1.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have introduced different aspects of languages in the world and in our daily lives. We have defined languages not as static objects, but rather as living organisms that interact with and influence each other and evolve constantly.

Languages transmit not only messages but also the cultural and social values of the peoples that speak them. Despite what we might be led to believe, multilingualism is not the exception in the world, but rather the norm. Our linguistic diversity can therefore be regarded as another form of biodiversity, one that also deserves to be protected. In **chapter 2**, we will focus on the cultural aspect of our multicultural and multilingual societies.

TEACHER'S NOTES

ACTIVITY 1A. Language trivia

In this activity, students will...

- Reflect on the fact that monolingual societies are not the norm but the exception.
- Become aware of the nature of languages as “living organisms” in constant evolution, rather than as “static objects”.

ESTIMATED
TIME

30 MIN

How to use this resource

- STAGE 1** · Ask your students to form groups of two or three and answer the quiz, either on printouts or on an electronic device (mobile phone, tablet or computer). **15'**
- OPTION 1 – Software: if you are using Socrative, start a “space race” with the quiz “EYLBID’s language trivia” (available under <https://b.socrative.com/teacher/#import-quiz/63019192>). Once you begin the race, you will be able to monitor the teams' progress in your Results tab. You can project your screen so the students can follow their progress too and see which teams score highest and win the race.
 - OPTION 2 – Printouts: give each group a copy of the quiz and let them work through it.
-
- STAGE 2** · Go through every question with your students and discuss the answers. Let them share other examples involving languages they know with the group. You can also give them the additional information provided, if you wish. **10'**
-
- STAGE 3** · Which group got the highest score? If you have used printouts, ask the students to calculate their scores and share them with the class. **5'**
- Present the winning team with their language trivia awards.

Prep time suggestions

- If you are working with printouts, print out a copy of the quiz for each group.
- If you are using software, make sure your students have an electronic device with internet access. Familiarise yourself with Socrative and its space race function. There is a step-by-step tutorial on Socrative’s support page: <https://help.socrative.com/en/articles/2155306-deliver-a-space-race>.
- Print out some language trivia awards (see below) to present to the winning team at the end of the activity.
- Read chapter 1 of the Teacher’s Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, available online (<https://pages.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), for extra background information on the topic of languages and multilingualism.

LANGUAGE FAMILIES

1. Which of the following languages does NOT belong to the Romance language family?

- Romanian
- Luxemburgish
- Sardinian
- Galician

2. Which of these pairs comprises two related languages?

- Swahili and Afrikaans
- Chinese and Japanese
- Arabic and Turkish
- Lao and Thai

LANGUAGE CODIFICATION

3. Which of the following languages are written from right to left?

- Arabic
- Chinese
- Hebraic
- Turkish

4. Which of the following languages are written in Latin characters?

- Arabic
- Chinese
- Polish
- Russian
- Turkish
- Vietnamese

A WORLD OF LANGUAGES

5. Which of the following is NOT an official language of Switzerland?

- French
- Swedish
- German
- Italian

6. Which language has the greatest number of native speakers (nearly a billion) in the world?

- Cantonese Chinese
- English
- Hindi
- Mandarin Chinese
- Spanish



A WORLD OF LANGUAGES

7. All over the world, language diversity is the norm, not the exception. The languages in the table below have been awarded official or co-official status in different countries. Match the countries in the table with their (co-)official languages, but be careful! Some languages have an official status in more than one country.

GERMANY

Scottish Gaelic

Friulian

Catalan

Welsh

Slovene

Ladin

Franco-Provençal

SPAIN

Occitan

French

Sardinian

Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian

Aranese

North Frisian and Saterland Frisian

UNITED KINGDOM

German

Catalan

Italian

Basque

English

Galician

German

Albanian

ITALY

Greek

Low German or Low Saxon

Croatian

Spanish

Scots

Danish

LANGUAGES IN CONTINUOUS MOVEMENT

8. Languages are living organisms that continually evolve and influence each other. From which languages do the “international” words in the table below originate? Match each word with the language it originally comes from.

Shampoo	Finnish
Iceberg	Nahuatl
Garage	Hindi (derived, in turn, from Sanskrit)
Tomato	Japanese or Chinese
Robot	Dutch
Sauna	Maori
Goulash	French
Soy	Hungarian
Kiwi	Czech

9. What would you call the shoes that you wear to do sports? Match the terms in the table below with the countries in which they are used.

Takkies	Australia, Canada, Scotland, Ireland
Trainers	USA
Sneakers	England
Runners	Wales
Daps	South Africa

10. Languages evolve over time. Match the words on the left in the table below with their original meanings.

Awful	Peasant / farmer
Pastor	Foolish
Crafty	Left
Sinister	Shepherd
Girl	Blissful / blessed
Silly	Strong
Nice	Any young person
Villain	Inspiring wonder or fear

1A. Language trivia solutions

LANGUAGE FAMILIES

1. Which of the following languages does NOT belong to the Romance language family?
- Romanian
 - Luxemburgish**
 - Sardinian
 - Galician

Additional information for teachers: Luxemburgish is a West Germanic language that is mainly spoken in Luxembourg. About 390,000 people speak Luxemburgish worldwide.

2. Which of these pairs comprises two related languages?
- Swahili and Afrikaans
 - Chinese and Japanese
 - Arabic and Turkish
 - Lao and Thai**

Additional information for teachers: Lao and Thai both belong to the Tai or Zhuang-Tai languages. Thai, also known as Siamese, is the national language of Thailand and one of over 60 languages spoken in the country. Lao is the official language of Laos and one of more than 90 languages spoken in the country, where it serves as a lingua franca (i.e. a language used for communication by people who do not share a native language or dialect).

LANGUAGE CODIFICATION

3. Which of the following languages are written from right to left?
- Arabic**
 - Chinese
 - Hebraic**
 - Turkish
4. Which of the following languages are written in Latin characters?
- Arabic
 - Chinese
 - Polish**
 - Russian
 - Turkish**
 - Vietnamese**

Additional information for teachers:

- Polish has always been written using the Latin alphabet.
- Turkish was written using the Arabic script until 1928, when President Atatürk introduced the Latin alphabet.
- Vietnamese was traditionally written in Chữ Nôm, a logographic writing system composed by a set of Chinese characters and local characters developed following the Chinese character model. At the beginning of the 20th century, the French colonial administration enforced the use of the Latin script. The Vietnamese alphabet based on the Latin script had been developed by Portuguese and French Jesuit missionaries in the 17th century.

A WORLD OF LANGUAGES

5. Which of the following is NOT an official language of Switzerland?
- French
 - Swedish**
 - German
 - Italian

Additional information for teachers: Switzerland has four official languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh.

6. Which language has the greatest number of native speakers (nearly a billion) in the world?
- Cantonese Chinese
 - English
 - Hindi
 - Mandarin Chinese**
 - Spanish

A WORLD OF LANGUAGES

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GERMANY

German
Danish
North Frisian and Saterland Frisian
Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian
Low German or Low Saxon

SPAIN

Aranese
Basque
Catalan
Galician
Spanish

UNITED KINGDOM

English
Scots
Scottish Gaelic
Welsh

ITALY

Albanian
Catalan
German
Greek
Slovene
Croatian
French
Franco-Provençal
Friulian
Ladin
Occitan
Sardinian
Italian

LANGUAGES IN CONTINUOUS MOVEMENT

8. Languages are living organisms that continually evolve and influence each other. From which languages do the “international” words in the table below originate? Match each word with the language it originally comes from.

Sauna ————— Finnish
 Tomato ————— Nahuatl
 Shampoo ————— Hindi (derived, in turn, from Sanskrit)
 Soy ————— Japanese or Chinese
 Iceberg ————— Dutch
 Kiwi ————— Maori
 Garage ————— French
 Goulash ————— Hungarian
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 Takkies ————— South Africa

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 Pastor ————— Shepherd
 Crafty ————— Strong
 Sinister ————— Left
 Girl ————— Any young person
 Silly ————— Blissful / blessed
 Nice ————— Foolish
 Villain ————— Peasant / farmer





CERTIFICATE

Language Trivia Winner

Awarded to team

.....

Name

.....

Date

.....

TEACHER'S NOTES

1B. Linguistic landscape

In this activity, students will...

- Identify the presence and use of various languages in their daily lives.
- Become aware of the linguistic and cultural diversity of their society and community.
- Understand the value of their own linguistic and cultural knowledge.

ESTIMATED
TIME35-40 MIN
2 SESSIONS**How to use this resource**

- STAGE 1** · Explain to your students that we often fail to notice that we live in a multilingual and multicultural society, even if the evidence is right in front of our eyes. Tell them that you are going to do a linguistic landscape project. Explain to them that a linguistic landscape is formed by all the languages present around us in public places, e.g. in street names, graffiti, notes and advertisements; on signs, boards and flyers; etc. **10'**
- Show your students a couple of pictures of linguistic landscapes (you can use those provided or take them from <https://lingscape.uni.lu>, for example) to make sure they have understood the concept properly. You can ask them: What languages are being used? What do you think the signs say? Where was this picture probably taken?
 - Ask your students to form groups of three or four. For the next session, each group should bring three pictures of signs in their neighbourhood or town. If your school is in a rural location, an alternative is to allow your students to search for signs on the internet. Each sign must be written in a language other than the majority language, although the majority language can be present on it too. Ask the students to print out pictures of three signs they find especially interesting and bring them to class, even if they are not sure what languages the signs are written in or exactly what they mean.
-
- STAGE 2** · Allow each group to discuss their pictures with another group; encourage them to try to make sense of the signs. It might be useful to remind them of the original questions about each picture: **10'**
- Where was the picture taken?
 - In what language(s) do you think the sign is written?
 - Why do you think the sign has been written in the language(s) in question?
 - Who might have written it? Who is it aimed at?
 - What do you think the sign says?
- This task can be gamified. For example, as the group who took each picture will know where it was taken and might well know what it means, the other groups could try to guess what it means. The group with most right answers could "win" something.
-
- STAGE 3** · Ask your students to share the signs they find most interesting with the whole class. Is there a sign whose meaning is not clear? Are there any signs written in an unidentified language? Let the group discuss what languages the signs might be written in and what they might mean. Maybe there is someone in the class who can speak one of the languages used. **10'**

- STAGE 4** · Discuss the similarities and differences between the pictures taken. On the board, write up a summary of the main results of the project: **5-10'**
- What types of signs were shown in the pictures? What types of institutions, businesses or individuals put them up?
 - What languages were present in the pictures? Apart from the majority language, which were the most common languages?

Prep time suggestions

- For stage 1 (first session)
 - Bring the linguistic landscape pictures provided or some pictures of local linguistic landscapes (you can take them yourself or look for them on the internet). You can either print them out or use an overhead projector to display them.
 - Print out the instruction sheet.
- For stages 2-4 (second session): if the students are not going to be printing out their pictures themselves, ask them to send or give them to you in advance and print them out for them (or, if working with electronic devices, place the pictures in a shared folder from where the students can access them).
- Read chapter 1 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, available online (<https://pagines.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), especially section 1.3.1, for extra background information on the topic of multilingualism in our societies.

Are you ready to discover the multilingual and multicultural diversity of your neighbourhood or town?

Divide into groups of three or four students and take to the streets to photograph the linguistic landscape of your neighbourhood or town. Look out for all kinds of signs, boards, graffiti, notes, flyers, advertisements, shopfronts and shop windows, etc.; their texts must be written in a language other than English – although English can be present too! Take pictures of the three most interesting signs you find.

Once you have your pictures, print them out and bring them to class. As a group, prepare answers to the following questions in advance:

- Where was the picture taken?
- In what language(s) do you think the sign is written?
- Why do you think the sign has been written in the language(s) in question?
- Who might have written it? Who is it aimed at?
- What do you think the sign says?



TEACHER'S NOTES

1C. Language portrait

In this activity, students will...

- Identify the presence and use of various languages in their daily lives.
- Reflect on the role languages and multilingualism play in everyone's daily life.
- Become aware of their own multilingualism and that of others.

ESTIMATED
TIME

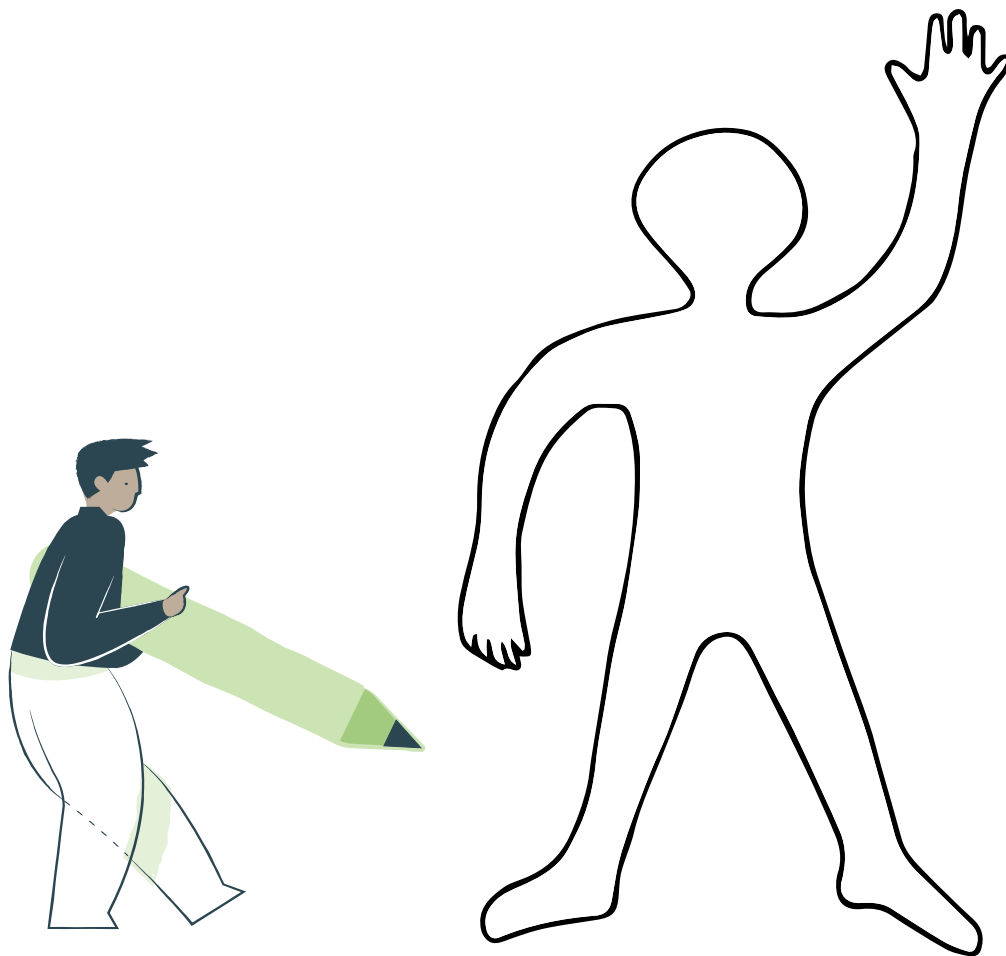
30 MIN

How to use this resource

- | | | |
|----------------|--|------------|
| STAGE 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that everybody uses different languages, dialects, registers and ways of speaking on a daily basis, even if we are sometimes unaware of it. • Ask your students to reflect on the different languages or ways of speaking they use with different people (parents, brothers and/or sisters, grandparents, cousins, friends, classmates) and in different settings (at home, at school, on holiday, at the supermarket, in the park, etc.). Which languages do they prefer? Which languages are important to them and why? • Distribute the sheets with the body outline. Ask your students to colour them in to reflect the languages, dialects or registers that they use and are part of them. What colours and parts of the body (head, heart, hands, legs, etc.) do they associate with them? There is no right or wrong way to do this exercise, students can also draw an alternative body outline or add new details to the existing one; the only limit is each student's imagination! • As some students might feel embarrassed or reluctant to reveal their own linguistic diversity, you can offer them the options of producing their own language portrait or that of a famous person or fictional character known to be multilingual. | 5' |
| STAGE 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the students work on their language portraits on their own. | 15' |
| STAGE 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option A: have volunteers show their language portraits to the rest of the class and explain what the different languages mean to them. • Option B: have the students work in pairs and explain their language portraits to each other. • Option C: display all the language portraits in the classroom and give your students the opportunity to look at each of them. | 10' |

Prep time suggestions

- Print out one sheet per student. Remember not to provide examples of completed language portraits, since doing so would influence the students and limit their creativity.
- Provide the students with coloured pencils or felt tip pens, or make sure they bring their own.
- Read chapter 1 of the Teacher's Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, available online (<https://pagines.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), especially section 1.3.2, for extra background information on the topic of individual multilingualism.
- For a similar activity with a different approach (using emojis), which might be more appealing to older students, see activity 1G in the [Resource Bank](#).



Draw your very own language portrait

On the sheet provided, you will find a blank outline ready for you to fill with colour and life. The outline in question is just an example; you can use it if you want to, but please feel free to draw an outline that better represents you.

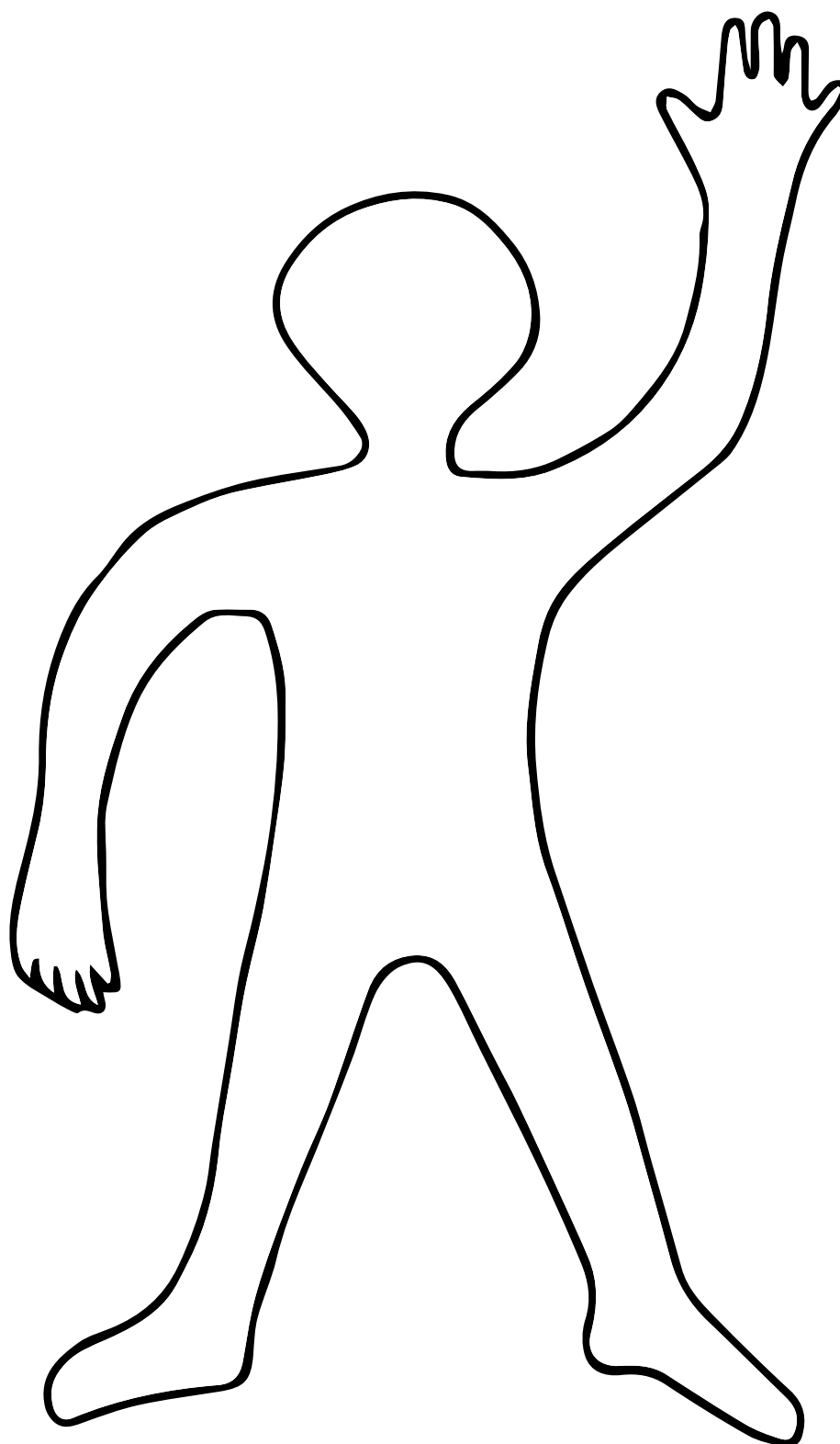
You can either do your own portrait or that of a famous person or fictional character known to be multilingual.

Before you start drawing and colouring in, think about the following questions:

1. How do you speak with your parents, grandparents, brothers and/or sisters, cousins, best friends and classmates?
2. What languages, dialects, accents or other ways of speaking do you use at home, at school, when you are on holiday, or in other situations?
3. What languages do you usually listen to music in? What languages do you watch films or series in?
4. Which languages do you like?
5. Which languages would you like to learn in the future?
6. Which languages are important to you?
7. If you could speak any languages, which ones would they be?
8. If you were asked to assign a colour or a pattern to the different languages or ways of speaking mentioned above, which ones would you choose?
9. Which colours and which parts of the body (head, heart, hands, legs, etc.) do you associate with each of the languages or ways of speaking mentioned above?



Draw your very own language portrait



Source: heteroglossia.net

Note: this outline is just an example; you can use it if you want to, but please feel free to draw an outline that better represents you.

TEACHER'S NOTES

1D. My text in Europanto or Cosmopanto

In this activity, students will...

- Take a playful approach to multilingualism.
- Observe how languages are connected to each other.
- Become aware of different language learning strategies (intercomprehension between languages, working out meaning from context).
- Become aware of their own multilingualism and that of their classmates.
- Learn about the phenomenon of code-mixing or code-switching as a natural form of bilingual speech.
- Express their multilingual skills through their own multilingual text (optional activity, stage 5).

ESTIMATED TIME

55 MIN

+30 minutes
for optional
activity**How to use this resource**

STAGE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Explain to your students that code-mixing is a natural phenomenon that occurs among bilinguals. · Ask your students if they ever switch or mix codes in any way. Even monolinguals might use words from other languages in their speech. · Give your students the worksheet with the text in Europanto and ask them to read it on their own. 	10'
STAGE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ask your students if they have understood the text. Why? Why not? · Ask your students which languages they think appear in the text and to highlight the different languages in different colours (solution provided below). 	15'
STAGE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Make your students aware that they can guess the meaning of some words based on context or on words in other languages that they speak. · Put your students into small groups and have them try to work out the meaning of the words they do not know. They can help each other (each student will probably have different skills in different foreign languages) and use dictionaries (online or otherwise). · Once they have finished, ask your students if they were able to guess the meaning of all the words. Let the different groups help each other in a class discussion. A glossary listing all the words, the languages they belong to and their translations is included below. 	20'
STAGE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ask your students if any of them can speak (to any degree) any of the languages used in the text. Ask them if they speak other languages besides those used in the text. Let them discuss the multilingualism present in the classroom. 	10'

STAGE 5
(OPTIONAL
ACTIVITY)

- This is an optional activity that can be done in class or as homework.
- Explain to your students that Europanto is an invented language that has no particular rules and is based on mixing different European languages. Tell them that it would be possible to invent another language, Cosmopanto (derived from “cosmopolitan”), by combining languages from all over the world, rather than just European languages.
- Ask your students to create their own Europanto or Cosmopanto text using the languages they speak. The text can be a joke, an anecdote, a proverb or a tale. Encourage your students to be creative; there is no right or wrong way to do this activity! Grammar is not relevant here; the focus is on the multilingual nature of the text.
- You can let your students use multilingual dictionaries and the internet if they are unsure about the spelling of any words.
- If you think your students might not be feeling creative, you could bring in some texts containing well-known jokes, proverbs or tales and ask the students to “translate them” into Europanto or Cosmopanto.
- At the end of the activity, the students’ texts can be presented in class, shared among small groups or made into a Cosmopanto book.

30'**Prep time suggestions**

- Print out the instruction sheet and the worksheet for your students.
- Bring in different bilingual dictionaries (Italian – English, German – English, Spanish – English, French – English) or print out copies of the glossary provided.
- If you think your students might not be feeling creative, you can bring in some texts containing well-known jokes, proverbs or tales as a fallback and ask the students to “translate them” into Europanto or Cosmopanto.
- Read chapter 1 of the Teacher’s Book *Inclusion, Diversity and Communication Across Cultures*, available online (<https://pagines.uab.cat/eylbid/en/content/teachers-book>), especially section 1.3.2, for extra background information on the topic of individual multilingualism.

My text in Europanto or Cosmopanto

Toto et sa

little

sorella

Discover Europanto

On the worksheet you will find a text in “Europanto”, an invented language made up of different European languages. This is what you should do with it:

- 1) Read the Europanto text *Toto et sa little sorella* on your own. What do you notice? Which languages are used in the text?
- 2) Highlight the words in the text according to the language they belong to. Use a different colour for each language.
- 3) In small groups, try to fill in the table on the worksheet with the words you do not understand. You can use a dictionary.
- 4) Try to explain the story in English.

Write your own text in Cosmopanto (optional)

- 5) Write your own Cosmopanto text with words from the different languages you speak (they do not have to be European languages, that is why we have called it Cosmopanto!). Your text can be a joke, an anecdote, a proverb or a tale. If you are unsure about the spelling of words in different languages, you can look them up in a dictionary.

Toto et sa little sorella

Die Mutter of Toto lui demande to go shopping y lui donne una liste de things zu kaufen.

Seine mamma le dice auch: “Nimm tua little sorella mit!”

Toto geht in das magasin, kauft todas things, aber quando er herauskommt, seine little sorella falls dans un Loch y disappears.

Quando Toto arrive at home, seine Mutti le dice: “Wo ist ta little sorella?”

Toto answers: “Elle est dans un Loch gefallen.”

“Aber por qué du hast her nicht helped to sortir?” dice la mother.

“Porque it was not aufgeschrieben sur la Liste!” answers Toto.

Word	Language	Translation

My text in Europanto or Cosmopanto (solutions)

Toto et sa little sorella

Die Mutter of Toto lui demande to go shopping y lui donne una liste de things zu kaufen. Seine mamma le dice auch: „Nimm tua little sorella mit!“

Toto geht in das magasin, kauft todas things, aber quando er herauskommt, seine little sorella falls dans un Loch y disappears.

Quando Toto arrive at home, seine Mutti le dice: “Wo ist ta little sorella?”
Toto answers: “Elle est dans un Loch gefallen.”

“Aber por qué du hast her nicht helped to sortir?” dice la mother.
„Porqué it was not aufgeschrieben sur la liste!“ answers Toto.

Toto and his little sister

Toto’s mother asks him to go shopping and gives him a list of things to buy. His mum also tells him: “Take your little sister!”

Toto goes to the shop and buys all the things, but when he leaves his little sister falls in a hole and disappears.

When Toto arrives at home, his mum says: “Where is your little sister?”
Toto answers: “She fell in a hole.”

“But why didn’t you help her to get out?” says his mother.
“Because it was not written on the list!” answers Toto.

English – French – German – Italian – Spanish

Source: Österreichisches Sprachen Kompetenz Zentrum (ÖSZ) (2007): Kinder entdecken Sprachen. Europanto. Graz: ÖSZ, page 11. Available online at: <https://silo.tips/download/praxisreihe-kinder-entdecken-sprachen-europanto-32>



Europanto Glossary

Word	Language	Translation
aber	German	but
answers	English	--
arrive	French	arrives
at home	English	--
auch	German	also
aufgeschrieben	German	written
dans	French	in
das	German	the
de	French	of
demande	French	asks
dice	Spanish	says
die	German	the
disappears	English	--
donne	French	give
du	German	you
elle	French	she
er	German	he
est	French	is
et	French	and
falls	English	--
gefallen	German	fell / fallen
geht	German	goes
hast	German	has
helped to	English	--
her	English	--
herauskommt	German	leaves
in	German	in
ist	German	is
it was not	English	--
zu kaufen	German	to buy
kauft	German	buys
la	Spanish	the

Word	Language	Translation
la	French	the
le	Spanish	him / her
liste	French	list
Liste	German	list
little	English	--
Loch	German	hole
lui	French	him
magasin	French	shop
mamma	Italian	mum
mother	English	--
Mutter	German	mother
Mutti	German	mum
nicht	German	not
nimm ... mit	German	take
of	English	--
por qué	Spanish	why?
porque	Spanish	because
quando	Italian	when
sa	French	his/her
seine	German	his/her
sorella	Italian	sister
sortir	French	to leave
sur	French	on
ta	French	your
things	English	--
to go shopping	English	--
todas	Spanish	every / all
tua	Italian	your
un	French	a
una	Italian	a
wo	German	where
y	Spanish	and