

Empowering Educators: Cultivating Plurilingual Teacher Competences for Multilingual Higher Education

Higher education institutions worldwide are becoming increasingly multilingual and culturally diverse. Today, both international and local students have rich plurilingual and pluricultural profiles acquired through various means, such as targeted learning, social media, personal interactions, mobility programs, and other aspects of globalized life. How can institutions take advantage of this rich potential? How can universities harness this diversity to enrich the learning experience within their classrooms? Do educators, particularly language teachers and those in other disciplines taught in multilingual settings, possess the necessary competences to leverage this diversity as a valuable educational resource? Are they actively nurturing students' plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires, and if not, should they be? How are linguistic and cultural needs of students addressed in HE courses that are provided in the official language of the country or in English, using a monolingual approach in a multilingual and multicultural classroom?

In this contribution, I will search for the answers to these questions by, first, examining existing research on multilingual higher education classrooms, language policies, and strategies, with the aim of identifying possible solutions to the challenges faced by HE institutions. Subsequently, the importance of cultivating HE teachers' plurilingual competence will be discussed, drawing on empirical research from a study on language use in HE all over Europe and teacher awareness of plurilingual approaches. Finally, the outcomes of a two-year Erasmus+ project APATCHE, which aimed at adding plurilingual approaches to higher education teacher competences, will be presented, introducing the developed descriptive scale of plurilingual teacher competences and open online course to cultivate plurilingual teacher competences and empower educators to foster a culture of continuous learning and growth in multilingual higher education settings.