



Video scripts for “Plurilingual aspects”

This is the script of the videos in the plurilingual competence module. The scripts follow the order of the videos, with a very brief introduction that summarises the topic for those who are interested in becoming familiar with it but do not wish to go any further, and additional sections that look at the different concepts in more detail. There is also a list of references in each of the sections.

Video 1. Introduction to plurilingual approaches

Slide 2

Plurilingualism is defined in section 1.3 of the CEFR 2001 (p. 4-5) as a concept that involves the different languages a person knows or is in contact with, that interrelate and interact to build the person’s communicative knowledge.

Plurilingual competence involves the ability to switch from one language to another or having different levels of knowledge in different skills, for example being able to understand a language but not speak it. It also involves communicating by using all our linguistic knowledge (of several languages) or being able to mediate between speakers of other languages that have no common language.

Plurilingual competence is not the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw (CEFR, p. 168).

Slide 3

The plurilingual view of language changes the focus of language education:

Language education is no longer seen as simply to achieve “mastery” of languages, each considered on their own, with the “native speaker” as the target to achieve. The aim is to develop a linguistic repertoire, in which all linguistic abilities have a place (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 3). That is, the goal is to communicate effectively by using all our linguistic knowledge, which might involve the knowledge of different languages but at different ability levels.

Talking about plurilingual competence therefore means going back to the concept of the social agent and the action-oriented approach, social agents that are capable of functioning in different languages and acting as linguistic and cultural mediators. The goal is not the language but what we do with the language; if speakers are social agents, they interact with others in society and they use languages (and other non-linguistic skills) to do that.

Languages do not exist isolated from each other: instead, they coexist and form a linguistic profile that is different and unique for everyone. An individual that speaks three languages will have a different profile than another individual speaking the same languages, because their experience with the languages will be different and the way these languages interact with other knowledge and with each other in their minds will also be different.

Slide 4

In the *Companion Volume* to the CEFR, plurilingual and pluricultural competence are included in chapter 4. The CEFR focusses on learners as social agents and gives value to the cultural and linguistic diversity of individuals.

The scales related to plurilingualism are:

“Plurilingual comprehension”, which deals with the use of one language or languages to approach the understanding of another, such as using the different translations of a webpage to understand what it says.

And “Building on plurilingual repertoire”; that is, being able to use several languages at the same time, for example in a meeting, where the attendees speak several languages.

Languages are interconnected and help build communicative competence in different social and communicative situations. Barriers between languages can be overcome. In fact, different languages can be used on purpose to convey meaning in the same situation.

References:

Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97>.

Council of Europe. 2020. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion volume*. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>.

Video 2. Plurilingual approaches: plurilingual competence

Slide 2

The CEFR makes a distinction between plurilingual and pluricultural competence and multilingual and multicultural competence, but what is this difference exactly? Let's look at the definitions of the term:

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence is the ability to use languages for communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, being proficient in several languages and having experience of several cultures. Plurilingualism is a personal feature: an individual can be plurilingual, a community on the other hand cannot.

Multilingualism is defined as “the knowledge of a number of languages or the co-existence of different languages in a given society”. Multilingualism refers to a society or a group of people; it is a societal characteristic.

A region, a country, a city, or even a school classroom is multilingual.

An individual is plurilingual.

Students in a classroom can be plurilingual; the classroom would be multilingual.

Slide 3

But what is plurilingual competence?

The concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence started to emerge in the late 90's and supported the idea that individuals could use different languages – separately or simultaneously.

It introduced a change in how the concept of communicative competence is applied in language learning and teaching, since this competence now does not only refer to an individual language, but to all languages known by the individual. Linguistic competence is not seen individually per language known, but as a compendium of all linguistic knowledge – of one or more languages. Mastery of a language is not the only goal anymore, and not only that, partial competences are not viewed negatively but seen as an asset.

The concept of communicative competence presented by Hymes in 1972 already included the idea of the speaker using their knowledge of other languages. In 1992 he states: “the competence of a person in a language is partly and variably a function of other languages he or she may know and use” (see: Hymes, 1992, p. 37).

Slide 4

But the concept of plurilingualism in the CV to the CEFR goes a step further as it considers the speaker as an active social agent who, dealing with several languages, needs to adapt to otherness, as several languages also mean several cultures. Not only that, but the development of plurilingualism also involves the development of linguistic awareness that allows the individual to control the way these languages are used and interrelate.

In the literature, plurilingualism is also related to the term “translanguaging” – having a linguistic repertoire of combined linguistic features – and to the term “code-switching” – although plurilingual individuals do not really switch from one language to another, but instead use their whole linguistic competence to communicate.

Slide 5

And how is Plurilingual competence introduced in language teaching and learning?

Plurilingual competence is a paradigm shift in the teaching and learning of languages. It presents a holistic view of language, identity and culture instead of a segmented vision of them. It introduces the idea of partial competence and of unbalanced mastery of skills, while it puts an emphasis on the potential links between languages. It presents a dynamic vision of competence that changes with time and can depend on the circumstances. Language competence is not static but fluid and dynamic.

Encouraging plurilingual competence helps the speaker, as a social actor, to be linguistically aware and capable of using their language repertoire effectively. It puts the speaker in the centre of the picture and gives them a more active role.

Partial competence of a language is not seen as a disadvantage, but as part of a plurilingual competence in which it plays an important part, further encouraging and activating the construction of an interlanguage and favouring language acquisition. Interlanguage is a term used in the field of second language acquisition and applied linguistics to describe the transitional linguistic system that individuals develop as they learn a second language. It is not their native language or the target language (the language being learned) but rather an intermediate stage in the language learning process. Partial competence helps the learning process.

Slide 6

Plurilingual competence is included in two scales in the *Companion volume*:

Plurilingual comprehension is included in the section of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, which comprises activities such as reading newspaper articles on the same theme in different languages, recognizing similarities and contrast in different languages, or using their knowledge of grammatical structures in their plurilingual repertoire to support comprehension.

and

Building on plurilingual repertoire, in the section of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and including activities such as:

- participating in a conversation in two or more languages;
- identifying when to use different languages in a specific situation to facilitate communication;
- using different languages to encourage other people to use the language in which they feel most comfortable;
- using different languages to make themselves understood in a situation.

Slide 7

But besides the *Companion Volume*, what other resources are available in the European context to help deal with the notion of plurilingualism?

The *Companion Volume* specifies that developing plurilingual and pluricultural descriptors linked to CEFR levels have the goal of helping curriculum developers and teachers, and how does it do that?

It can do so by (1) broadening their perspective of language education in their context and by (2) acknowledging and valuing the linguistic and cultural diversity of their learners (*Companion Volume*, p. 124).

In the European context, however, there are other tools that have been created to deal with the complex notion of plurilingualism: an example of these are The European Language Portfolio (ELP) and the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches (FREPA).

The ELP has been designed to support learner autonomy and plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and it does so by allowing users to record their language learning journey and their experiences of using languages. Its objective is to give coherence to the experience of learning and using languages, motivating learners by acknowledging their efforts and making them aware of it, as well as providing a record of the linguistic and cultural skills acquired.

The Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches is a systematic presentation of competences and resources organised according to three broad areas: knowledge (*savoir*), attitudes (*savoir-être*) and skills (*savoir faire*).

Slide 8

If you want to know more, have a look at the following references:

Coste, D., Moore, D., & Zarate, G. (2009). *Plurilingual and pluricultural competence*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council for Cultural Cooperation Education Committee (2000). *European Language Portfolio. Principles and Guidelines*. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio>

- Grima, A. C., Candelier, M., Castellotti, V., De Pietro, J. F., Lórinicz, I., Meißner, F. J., & Schröder-Sura, A. (2012). *FREPA: A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures: Competences and Resources*. Council of Europe.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In: J.B. Pride & J. Holmes (eds.). *Sociolinguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 269-293.
- Hymes, D. (1992). The concept of communicative competence revisited. In: M. Putz (ed). *Thirty years of linguistic evolution: studies in honour of Rene Dirven on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*. Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Pub. Co., 31-57.
- Lau, S. M. C., & Van Viegen, S. (2020). Plurilingual pedagogies: An introduction. In: S. M. C. Lau & S. van Viegen (eds.). *Plurilingual pedagogies: Critical and creative endeavors for equitable language in education*. Springer, 3-22.
- Piccardo, E. (2013). Plurilingualism and curriculum design: Toward a synergic vision. In: *TESOL Quarterly*, 47(3), 600-614.
- Piccardo, E., North, B. & Goodier, T. (2019). Broadening the Scope of Language Education: Mediation, Plurilingualism, and Collaborative Learning: the CEFR Companion Volume. In: *Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society* 15(1), 17-36. Italian e-Learning Association. Retrieved November 11, 2020 from <https://www.learntechlib.org/p/207532/>.

Video 3. Plurilingual approaches: plurilingual comprehension

Slide 2

Plurilingual comprehension refers to the capacity to use our knowledge of other languages to approach texts in another language and achieve communication. It requires openness and flexibility.

Plurilingual competence does not necessarily involve complete proficiency of languages, it involves exploiting the knowledge of the sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences the learner has in other languages to approach a new language. Partial understanding of a language without being able to produce language is a valuable skill to develop the linguistic repertoire of an individual.

Learners are required to think about their linguistic repertoire and think about the competences and strategies that they can use to contribute to help them understand a text.

Plurilingual comprehension is related to mediation. Individuals construct meaning by going beyond linguistic barriers to make sense of a text; they are mediating across languages. Plurilingual comprehension involves actively constructing meaning by combining linguistic resources and knowledge across multiple languages. It goes beyond relying solely on the language in which the text is presented and draws upon other languages known to the individual to enhance understanding. Plurilingual comprehension involves utilizing mediation techniques to overcome language barriers and construct meaning.

Slide 3

Where can we find plurilingual comprehension in the *Companion Volume* to the CEFR?

As we mentioned in previous videos, plurilingual comprehension is contained in the section on plurilingual and pluricultural competence and it includes ideas such as the knowledge of other languages helping us understand texts in a foreign language by using different strategies.

However, to be able to do this, we need to be flexible and adapt to the different contexts.

Within this context, it is important to understand something that we have mentioned in the previous presentations of this module, which is that partial knowledge of a language is still knowledge and therefore useful, as it can help us maximise communication skills.

Slide 4

What are the key concepts in the plurilingual comprehension scale?

Plurilingual comprehension includes concepts such as:

- openness and flexibility to work with different elements from different languages;
- exploiting cues (listening to a conversation in a language we are not fully proficient in, and relying on non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language to gather additional information and context);
- exploiting similarities between languages to decipher the meaning of unknown words or sentences or recognising 'false friends';
- exploiting parallel sources in different languages to develop a more comprehensive understanding of a subject matter from all the different sources;
- and putting together information from all available sources (in different languages).

Slide 5

The plurilingual comprehension scale

The scale for plurilingual comprehension presents descriptors that describe the ability to use plurilingualism for comprehension, but it does not specify which languages, since this will depend on the linguistic profile of the user.

The progression in the scale is characterised as follows:

A levels users are able to use their knowledge of international words or words that are common in different languages to deduce the meaning of signs, short messages or short interactions. An example of this could be restaurant menus offered in different languages or basic instructions (such as how to buy an underground ticket) provided in different languages.

B1 users will be able to use what they understand in one language to facilitate comprehension in a second language or to use different documents written in other languages to understand what is written in another foreign language. Strategies would include identifying word roots or distinguishing between words that are similar and those that are 'false friends'.

B2 is the highest level in the scale as there are no descriptors for C1 and C2. B2 users will be able to identify themes, topics or situations common in specific genres, or use the main ideas and the supporting details of texts in different languages to facilitate the understanding of a text in a different language.

Slide 6

If you want to know more ...

Have a look at the following references:

Piccardo, E. (2020). "We are all (potential) plurilinguals": Plurilingualism as an Overarching, Holistic Concept. In: *OLBI Journal*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.18192/olbiwp.v10i0.3825>.

Candelier, M. (Coord.), Camilleri Grima, A., Castellotti, V., de Pietro, J. F., Lőrincz, I., Meißner, F. J., Noguero, A., & Schröder-Sura, A. (2012). *FREPA – A framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures: Competences and Resources*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. <https://www.ecml.at/Portals/1/documents/ECML-resources/CARAP-EN.pdf>.

Lüdi, G. (2021). Promoting plurilingualism and plurilingual education: A European perspective. In *The Routledge Handbook of Plurilingual Language Education* (pp. 29-45). Routledge.

Video 4. Plurilingual approaches: building on plurilingual repertoire

Slide 2

Plurilingual repertoire refers to the capacity to use our knowledge of other languages to approach texts in another language and achieve communication. It requires openness and flexibility. Building on our plurilingual repertoire does not necessarily involve complete proficiency of languages. It involves exploiting the knowledge of the sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences we have in other languages to approach a new language. Partial understanding of a language without being able to produce language is still a valuable skill to develop the linguistic repertoire of an individual.

Learners are required to think about their linguistic repertoire and think about the competences and strategies that they can use to help them understand a text.

In a way, this is related to mediation; individuals construct meaning by going beyond linguistic barriers to make sense of a text. They are mediating across languages. This involves actively constructing meaning by combining linguistic resources and knowledge across multiple languages. It goes beyond relying solely on the language in which the text is presented and draws upon other languages known to the individual to enhance understanding. Plurilingual comprehension involves utilizing mediation techniques to overcome language barriers and construct meaning.

Slide 3

Where can we find building on plurilingual repertoire in the *Companion Volume* to the CEFR?

As we mentioned in previous videos, building on plurilingual repertoire is contained in the section on plurilingual and pluricultural competence in the *Companion Volume* to the CEFR and it includes activities such as:

- flexibility and ability to adapt to the situation, including knowing in which situations it is appropriate to use several languages;
- adjusting language according to the linguistic competence and skills of interlocutors, that is being aware of our interlocutors and modifying our language accordingly;
- being able to blend languages and alternate between them, including the ability to explain things in different languages; and
- leading by example, encouraging plurilingualism by being plurilingual.

Slide 4

The building on plurilingual repertoire scale

The progression in the scale is characterised as follows:

A level users are able to mobilise their repertoire to deal with basic transactions and information exchanges, in everyday transactions or routine situations; they can use words that they know in another language to cover for gaps in the language spoken to make themselves understood.

B level users can use and manipulate their knowledge of other languages to be more effective in communication; they can alternate between languages when the situation requires it. B1 level users do so in everyday contexts and B2 level users are capable of more flexibility and explain concepts and offer clarification by alternating languages.

C level users take it several steps further and are able to use several languages in a conversation, alternating flexibly between them. They can adjust to the linguistic needs of their interlocutors and exploit similarities and differences between the languages, including using their repertoire for rhetoric effect or for fun in the case of C2 level users.

Slide 5

After having looked at the different concepts and at how plurilingualism is dealt with in the *Companion Volume*, how can we encourage plurilingual competence in language teaching, learning and assessment?

According to Trim (2007), the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence.

Linguistic diversity is encouraged in Europe and in the educational systems of European countries since it is rooted in the legal framework of the EU (Dendrinou, 2018), with the treaty of Lisbon being only an example of this, indicating that the EU shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.

Encouraging plurilingualism involves: (1) helping learners be aware of their knowledge of other languages and of the context in which these other languages are used, (2) helping learners take an active role in their learning process, since as we mentioned before contact with other languages and different cultures can also enrich our plurilingual repertoire, (3) working with the idea that knowledge of a language does not have to be linear or balanced, it can be unbalanced and proficiency can be partial, it will still be useful for communication and (4) recognising the value of other languages and cultures, since the learner's attitude is fundamental in the process of learning a language.

Slide 6

If you want to know more ...

Beacco, J. C. (2007). *From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*. Council of Europe.

Beacco, J., Byram, M., Cavalli, M., Coste, D., Cuenat, M. E., Goullier, F., & Panthier, J. (2016). *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. Language Policy Division.

Cavalli, M., Coste, D., Crişan, A., & van de Ven, P. H. (2009). *Plurilingual and intercultural education as a project. Languages in Education*.

Council of Europe (2011). *European Language Portfolio: Principles and Guidelines*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, available at www.coe.int/portfolio.

Dendrinis, B. (2018). Multilingualism language policy in the EU today: A paradigm shift in language education. In: *TLC Journal*, published by the ICC & RUDN University, volume 2, Issue 3. (https://icc-languages.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2019/02/TLC_ISSUE-07_September2018.pdf).

European Union (2007). *Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community*, 13 December 2007, 2007/C 306/01, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/476258d32.html>.

Trim, J. L. (2007). *Modern languages in the Council of Europe 1954-1997*. Council of Europe Language Policy Division.