



# Empowering language learners

## A motivation manifesto for the European Day of Languages

**On the European Day of Languages we celebrate Europe's rich linguistic heritage and the language learning that gives us access to that heritage.**

Europe's cultural and linguistic heritage is one of its defining strengths, enshrined in the motto "United in diversity". The Council of Europe and the European Union embrace and protect multilingualism, recognising it as a cornerstone of democracy, inclusion and social cohesion. For this reason, the teaching and learning of multiple languages in our schools is not a cultural luxury but a political necessity: the means by which we bring the European ideal to life and reinforce the pluralistic, inclusive and forward-looking values that are central to the European project.

**Languages empower us because they**



**allow us to communicate and  
establish relationships with people who speak other languages**



**help us to understand cultures  
that would otherwise remain closed to us**



**extend our identities**



**broaden our critical awareness**



**open up new pathways for academic  
and vocational study**



**enhance our career options**





## Some fundamental considerations

Plurilingual and intercultural education is founded on these and other fundamental considerations. It helps learners to develop linguistic and cultural repertoires that integrate the language(s) of schooling, curriculum languages and other languages that learners bring with them. It also encourages the establishment of classrooms and learning cultures that are democratically inspired and organised. In these ways, it equips learners with the linguistic, cultural and critical skills they need if they are to engage positively with diversity. This is especially important at a time when human rights, democracy and the rule of law are challenged by authoritarian regimes, populist discourse, social media and rapid advances in artificial intelligence. It is important to insist that while artificial intelligence can support language learning and facilitate cross-linguistic communication in many ways, it cannot replace plurilingual proficiency and person-to-person communication. In other words, it does not diminish the need for language learning. On the contrary, only by developing an integrated proficiency in multiple languages can we acquire the critical awareness that allows us to make safe and confident use of artificial intelligence across linguistic boundaries.

The role of English as a global lingua franca has given it the status of a second rather than a foreign language in some European societies, and proficiency in English has come to be regarded as a basic educational skill. But to limit second/foreign language education to English alone contradicts the very essence of European identity. If the vision that inspires plurilingual and intercultural education is to be realised, teaching and learning multiple languages must be a strategic as well as an educational and methodological priority.

Results from the [2023 Eurydice Key data report on teaching languages at school in Europe](#) and the [2024 Eurobarometer on Europeans and their languages](#) show positive progress in the knowledge of English as a foreign language: 70 per cent of young Europeans report that they can have a conversation in English, which is 9 percentage points higher than in the previous survey, carried out in 2012. However, very little progress has been made as regards the learning of other foreign languages. When asked what discourages young people from learning a second foreign language, lack of motivation was the most frequently mentioned reason, cited by 39 per cent of respondents.

This motivation manifesto is the ECML's response to this finding. The remainder of the text refers, however, to “additional” rather than “foreign” languages in order to include regional and minority languages, which are sometimes offered as alternatives to a second foreign language. Regional and minority languages are an essential part of Europe's linguistic and cultural heritage, and in some cases they survive only by being taught and learnt at school.

### Learners are empowered by their language learning if they

- belong to a welcoming and supportive learning community
- are encouraged to share control of the learning process
- are simultaneously users and learners of their target language(s)



## The key role played by intrinsic motivation in educational success

Success in formal learning requires commitment, persistence and enthusiasm, all of which are sustained by motivation. This explains why motivation is commonly identified as one of the most reliable predictors of success in language learning and lack of motivation is commonly blamed for learner reluctance and disengagement.

It is important to emphasise that motivation is not a stable attribute of the individual learner but a dynamic, process-oriented, essentially unstable phenomenon. It can be stimulated or undermined by a host of external factors, but its source is the learner her/himself: a motivated learner is cognitively and affectively engaged in the business of learning. Self-Determination Theory proposes that intrinsic motivation is what causes us to do things out of interest rather than for external reward. The theory explains that intrinsic motivation responds to three interdependent human needs and is nourished by their fulfilment. Those needs are for *relatedness* – feeling that our actions help to connect us with others in rewarding ways, *autonomy* – feeling that we are free in our actions, and *competence* – feeling that our actions bring success.

If we apply this model of motivation to education, teachers' first task is to spark and engage their learners' interest. They then feed that interest by fostering their learners' development as a community of mutually supporting learners (relatedness); sharing with their learners responsibility for choosing, planning and implementing learning activities and evaluating the outcomes (autonomy); and ensuring that they are explicitly aware of the new knowledge and skills they are acquiring (competence).

## Engaging and maintaining language learners' intrinsic motivation

When students begin to learn a new language, their interest is likely to focus on the prospect of using the language for purposes of communication. It is therefore essential that from the earliest stages teachers engage them in target language use that is spontaneous and authentic because it arises naturally from the dynamic of teaching and learning, and enjoyable and fulfilling because it gives learners an immediate sense of achievement. By the end of their first lesson students should already have a sense of themselves as language users as well as learners. If this is to have maximum impact, the language they learn must reflect their interests and priorities: to begin with, the words and phrases they need in order to describe themselves – words and phrases which, for obvious reasons, they themselves must choose. When students start to learn an additional language later in their school career, their motivation may be undermined by the gap between what they would like to say in the target language and what they are able to say. AI tools provide ways of closing this gap, enlarging students' capacity to express themselves and accelerating the development of their proficiency.





As learning progresses, the means of engaging learners' interest are almost infinite in number and scope, but under the banner of plurilingual and intercultural education they should include activities and projects that explore the benefits of plurilingualism and interculturality and the potential of digital technologies to support language learning and enhance cross-linguistic communication and cultural exchange.

In response to their learners' need for relatedness, teachers should ensure that their classroom is a place where learners feel welcome, respected, and socially and psychologically safe. Their sense of belonging is strengthened by assigning a central role to collaborative learning, and teachers may encourage the mutual support on which effective collaboration depends by asking their learners to draw up their own rules for the conduct of group work.

In response to their learners' need for autonomy, teachers should allow them the space to manage their own learning but never leave them without guidance and support. It is impossible to be an autonomous learner without acquiring the reflective skills on which effective planning, monitoring and evaluation depend. Grounded in evaluation and self-assessment, these skills are developed and refined in interaction between the teacher and her/his learners. Planning, monitoring and evaluation require documentation, so learners should keep a detailed record of their learning. AI tools can provide virtual assistance, helping to make planning, monitoring and self-assessment more comprehensive and fostering the development of learners' metacognitive capacities. When the target language is used for these reflective purposes, learners necessarily develop a proficiency that is metacognitive as well as communicative. It is important to stress that autonomy is a relational as well as an individual phenomenon; the autonomy of individual learners grows in interaction with the developing autonomy of other members of the class.

In response to their need for competence, teachers should ensure that from the beginning the target language is the preferred medium of classroom instruction and interaction. In the early stages they will have to support their learners' comprehension with mime, gesture and ad hoc translations from the language of schooling; they will also have to scaffold learners' attempts to speak and write the target language. But with persistence, and the learners' continued engagement, spontaneous target language use will soon come to seem natural. In working towards this goal, it is important to prioritise fluency over accuracy and to avoid correcting learners as they attempt to speak, which may make them anxious and reluctant to participate. Regular self-assessment and collaborative evaluation of the learning process and its outcomes help learners to maintain awareness of their progress and to identify aspects of their emerging proficiency that require particular attention. Here again AI tools might be used to help students visualise their progress and take appropriate decisions regarding their own learning path.

Although the goal should always be to maximise communication in the target language, learners cannot suppress their first language, which is the default medium of their consciousness and thus fundamental to their individual learning process. It is also important to remember that what is officially the second additional language is at least the third additional language of students who grew up speaking a minority or migrant language. The presence of multiple languages in the collective consciousness of the class is likely to prompt learners to identify lexical and grammatical similarities and differences. Such spontaneous exploration of linguistic form and function is apt to





reinforce motivation; it is also a powerful support for language learning. AI might encourage learners to use their full repertoire by helping them to compare languages via intercomprehension, reverse translation or etymological or morphological exercises.

These considerations are especially important when students are learning a second additional language, with just a few lessons each week and correspondingly limited exposure to the target language.

## The importance of teacher motivation and the need for a motivational ecology

If teachers are to spark the interest of their learners and engage them in a learning process that feeds their need for autonomy, relatedness and competence, they themselves must be motivated: committed to the language they are teaching, interested in and informed about the societies and cultures associated with it, and ready and willing to meet every pedagogical challenge. The motivation of teachers, as of their learners, starts with their intrinsic motivation: teachers need to feel that they are in control of their own teaching, that they are members of a supportive pedagogical community, and that the success of their efforts entails much more than good results in official examinations. If teachers' intrinsic motivation is engaged and nourished, they will flourish as teachers and their learners will flourish with them. To achieve such flourishing our educational systems need to develop a motivational ecology that acknowledges the equal value of all languages, recognises the value and benefits of linguistic and cultural diversity, and promotes the mutual support of all actors and stakeholders.

**This manifesto calls for the development of a motivational ecology that**

- **insists on the equal value of all languages**
- **recognises the value and benefits of linguistic and cultural diversity**

## The equal value of all languages

All languages have equal value not because they serve the same functions in global commerce or diplomacy, but because they are equally vital to human connection, understanding, and identity formation. Languages are not merely tools for communication; they are badges of identity and vessels of culture, memory, and perspective. They allow us to engage with others, broaden our worldviews, and shape who we are. The idea that some languages are inherently more “useful” or “prestigious” than others stems from a utilitarian vision that reduces language to economic capital, ignoring its deeper social scope, cultural value and personal significance. To affirm the equal value of all languages, policies must move beyond symbolic gestures and offer real opportunities for languages to thrive in education, media, public life, and digital spaces. This includes, for example, safeguarding endangered European regional languages, supporting minority language communities,





and resisting the homogenising pressures created by the dominance of Global English, paying particular attention to the role that schools can play in these efforts.

Whereas belief in the equal value of all languages is central to democratic multilingualism, languages are generally evaluated through a narrow lens of perceived utility, with English and major national languages receiving institutional preference. This has led to the emergence of the linguistic hierarchy that can be observed in many European school systems: the state language and English are compulsory subjects, while all other languages are pushed to the margins as optional subjects or excluded from the educational offer altogether. Inevitably, this hierarchy helps to shape learners' attitudes, motivation and learning outcomes. The same hierarchy is responsible for the contrast that is often drawn between "elite bilingualism", associated with social mobility and formal schooling, and "folk bilingualism", typically devalued despite being widespread in multilingual families and communities. This contrast is intertwined with how language policies are framed and who benefits from them.

## The value and benefits of linguistic and cultural diversity

Linguistic and cultural diversity offers far more than symbolic value; it represents an essential foundation for a dynamic, equitable and just society. Viewing languages as resources allows us to conceptualise multilingualism as an asset to be nurtured rather than a problem to be solved. This perspective is reflected in the European Parliament's 2009 and 2013 resolutions, which promote multilingualism as a strategic priority for integration, social cohesion and innovation, and in the EU Council's Recommendation of 22 May 2019, on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages. The same perspective informs the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1, on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture, and the [EU Council's Recommendation of 22 May 2019, on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages](#). Linguistic diversity lies at the very heart of Europe's democratic fabric.

The benefits of bi- and plurilingualism are well documented by empirical research. Cognitively and academically, learners who acquire multiple languages often develop enhanced skills in problem-solving and show greater flexibility and skills of adaptation, which are increasingly important in a constantly changing world. Moreover, creativity and metalinguistic awareness are also fostered, enhancing learners' overall academic performance. Furthermore, plurilingual and intercultural education enables learners to expand and enrich their sense of identity, making it more diverse and multifaceted. Learning a language is not merely a cognitive process but a socially and historically situated act of investment through which learners seek to acquire symbolic and material resources such as cultural capital and social recognition. Plurilingual and intercultural education also supports the development of the "ideal multilingual self": a vision of oneself as a competent and successful plurilingual speaker in the future. This includes not only the practical ability to use multiple languages but also the social roles, lifestyles and aspirations associated with being plurilingual. It can serve as a powerful motivational force for language learning.





Plurilingual and intercultural education can also produce important social and cultural advantages. By encouraging intercultural understanding, it helps to promote social cohesion in diverse societies, including schools, and helps to foster greater educational equity. Beyond the classroom, plurilingualism strengthens civic participation and broadens representation in public discourse, thereby enhancing democratic engagement. It also strengthens diplomatic and international relations by fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. Finally, and especially in view of rapid advances in artificial intelligence, proficiency in multiple languages is a highly valued asset in the global labour market and greatly enhances the individual citizen's economic and professional opportunities. The debunking of linguistic and cultural bias depends on the ability to recognise and explore linguistic and cultural diversity, and the same ability shapes a critical approach to artificial intelligence.

**The development of a motivational ecology depends on the mutually supportive efforts of**

- **policy makers, legislators and administrators**
- **curriculum developers**
- **language teacher educators**
- **school inspectors**
- **regional and local authorities**
- **school principals and managers**
- **language teachers**
- **language learners**

All actors and stakeholders in the educational process have a role to play in developing and sustaining a motivational ecology; indeed, the successful implementation of each role ultimately depends on the successful implementation of all the others.

## **Policy makers, legislators and administrators**

Any government that wishes to promote the learning of multiple languages and is worried about learner motivation should consider adopting a language education policy that is informed by the principles of plurilingual and intercultural education and underpinned by an explicit acknowledgement that all languages are of equal value and linguistic and cultural diversity brings positive benefits to societies, communities, families and individuals. If appropriate, policy should be enshrined in legislation. If policy makers, legislators and administrators are committed to the learning of multiple languages in their country, policy implementation must be supported by adequate resourcing. Sufficient numbers of teachers must be recruited in an appropriate range of languages, and they must be provided with appropriate pre- and in-service education in the language(s) they are to teach and in the motivation-enhancing teaching methods outlined above. In countries where educational services are funded nationally, the relevant authorities must provide schools with sufficient resources to equip classrooms with digital and other technologies apt to support language learning and cross-linguistic communication.







## Curriculum developers

Curriculum developers should explicitly base their curricula on plurilingual and intercultural principles. Curricula should describe the means by which teachers are expected to accommodate and develop learner autonomy; they should also propose ways of including home languages in the teaching and learning of curriculum languages. In all aspects of their work, curriculum developers should take account of the findings of research into language learner motivation, plurilingualism and interculturality.

## Language teacher educators

Language teacher educators should ensure that pre- and in-service teachers understand the principles on which plurilingual and intercultural education is based and are equipped to challenge traditional language hierarchies and cultural stereotypes. Courses should focus on the creation of a welcoming classroom culture that accommodates and develops learner autonomy; explore the varieties of classroom discourse that promote language learning through language use; help teachers to develop the competences they need if they are to manage linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms to the benefit of all learners; and equip them with strategies to engage and motivate their students. Teachers should also have the opportunity to develop AI literacy: understanding how AI works, using it to support language learning and enhance cross-linguistic communication, and reflecting critically on its impact and added value. In general, pre- and in-service language teacher education should provide learning experiences that engage teachers' intrinsic motivation by meeting their need for autonomy, relatedness and competence.

## School inspectors

School inspectors should be fully aware of the factors that influence motivation to learn additional languages and should bear these in mind when they visit language classrooms; their inspection reports should include discussion of student and teacher motivation.

## Regional and local authorities

Regional and local authorities should encourage, support and (where appropriate) fund activities that enable learners of all ages to make social and cultural use of their developing plurilingual repertoires. Possible initiatives include events that celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity and create opportunities for plurilingual communication and cultural exchange. Twinning with cities, towns, villages and communities in other countries should also be facilitated. In countries where regional authorities are responsible for funding educational services, those authorities should provide schools with sufficient resources to equip classrooms with digital and other technologies apt to support language learning and cross-linguistic communication.







## School principals and managers

School principals and managers should adopt a whole-school language policy that welcomes linguistic and cultural diversity and stresses the importance of plurilingualism and interculturality. The policy document should be prominently displayed in the school; it should also be regularly reviewed in consultation with teachers, students and their parents, and updated as necessary. As part of this process, parents should be informed of the value of linguistic and cultural diversity and the benefits of plurilingual and intercultural education. School principals and managers should support teachers' efforts to develop their learners' plurilingual repertoires and intercultural competence by organising whole-school events and activities that embrace curriculum languages and the various home languages students bring with them. Promoting language-friendly learning environments contributes to learners' wellbeing and their progress in all subjects.

## Language teachers

Language teachers' success depends on their ability to spark the interest of their learners, engage their intrinsic motivation and respond to their need for autonomy, relatedness and competence. In order to do these things they require access to digital and other resources and regular opportunities to refresh their linguistic and cultural knowledge and pedagogical skills. Their own motivation is likely to suffer if they do not feel themselves to be supported by official policy, the curriculum they are required to teach, the organisational framework within which they work, the in-service education to which they have access, the colleagues with whom they need to collaborate, and the larger community of teachers to which they belong. The more effectively integrated the elements of the motivational ecology, the more strongly motivated and effective language teachers are likely to be.

## Language learners

Within an educational ecology that is truly motivational, students can experience language learning that meets their need for relatedness, autonomy and competence. They come to understand that plurilingual and intercultural education enriches their personal and academic life, they can embrace diversity as a source of learning, and they can appreciate the importance of respect and empathy for people from different cultures and languages. Learning achievement of this kind feeds back into the motivational ecology by confirming its value; each generation of successful, motivated, plurilingual learners will further strengthen the motivational ecology.

**The motivational ecology also requires the support of civil society, especially:**

- **teachers' professional associations**
- **parents' associations**
- **NGOs that are concerned with minority and regional languages, international relations and cultural exchange**





The issues raised in this manifesto are of political, social and cultural as well as educational importance. The various actors in the ecology of language education should therefore take appropriate steps to make civil society aware of the manifesto and the ambitions it embodies. It is especially important to engage the active support of teachers' professional associations, parents' associations and NGOs concerned with minority and regional languages, international relations and cultural exchange.



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## Appendix

The Motivation Manifesto was developed by a team of experts recruited for the purpose by the ECML within the ECML's Cooperation Agreement with the European Commission: Ada Bier (University of the Basque Country), Debora Carrai (University of Oslo), Jonas Erin (Ministry of Education, France), Ingela Finndahl (University of Gothenburg) and David Little (coordinator, Trinity College Dublin). The manifesto is the ECML's and the European Commission's response to a specific challenge: the evident reluctance of students to learn additional languages other than English. It does not contain academic references, but its development was informed by published research in many relevant areas. The purpose of this appendix is to indicate the main strands of research on which the authors have drawn; it is by no means exhaustive.

### Europe's rich linguistic heritage

The European Parliament's resolution of 24 March 2009, [\*Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment \(2008/2225\(INI\)\*](#), underscores the vital role played by linguistic diversity in Europe's cultural, social and economic fabric. It advocates the "mother tongue plus two" approach and encourages the international promotion of European languages. The resolution calls for EU institutions and member states to actively support linguistic diversity, safeguarding it as a core element of European identity and cohesion.

The European Parliament's resolution of 11 September 2013, [\*Endangered European languages and linguistic diversity \(2013/2007\(INI\)\*](#), emphasises the need to safeguard and advocate for regional and minority languages as integral components of Europe's cultural heritage. It highlights the pivotal role of education in preserving linguistic diversity, calling for stronger support for teaching and media access in minority languages. The resolution urges coordinated EU and national action to avert language extinction and guarantee linguistic rights.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, on [\*the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture\*](#), emphasises the cognitive, linguistic and social benefits of learning several languages, demonstrating the ways in which plurilingual and intercultural competences contribute to educational success, to societal integration and to understanding, assessing and formulating the arguments and opinions that are essential to democracy.

The [\*EU Council's Recommendation of 22 May 2019, on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages\*](#), has closely similar goals to Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 and envisages that continued cooperation between the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the ECML will support the development of innovative teaching methods and increase awareness of the crucial role of language learning in European societies.





## The global dominance of English

Two decades ago, in his study *English next: Why Global English may mean the end of “English as a foreign language”* (British Council, 2006), David Graddol argued that English was swiftly evolving from a conventional foreign language into a basic global skill that has more non-native than native users. He showed how globalisation, technology and changing economic power dynamics were transforming the status and use of English, and called for the development of an approach to teaching English that would more accurately reflect its role in a multilingual, interconnected global world.

[“The impact of global English on motivation to learn other languages: Toward an ideal multilingual self”](#) (*The Modern Language Journal* 101(3), 2017, 469–482), by Ema Ushioda, points out that the dominance of English appears to undermine interest in other languages. Drawing on macro-sociological and theoretical perspectives, she calls for a shift away from traditional SLA (second language acquisition) paradigms to a linguistic multi-competence framework. This reorientation positions multilingual speakers as normative and encourages the formation of ideal multilingual selves within language education.

## “Additional” rather than “foreign” languages

In his article [“Domesticating the foreign: Globalization’s effects on the place/s of languages”](#) (*The Modern Language Journal*, 98(1), 2014, 312–325), Joseph Lo Bianco contends that globalisation has transformed language education by blurring the distinction between national and foreign languages; traditional notions of “foreign” languages no longer fit a world where multiple languages coexist within nation states. Increased migration, cultural interchange and rapid communication create a need for classrooms to reflect multilingual and multicultural realities. Lo Bianco advocates for dialogue among language educators to reform curricula and pedagogy in line with today’s globalised, diverse world.

This global perspective is foundational for Kris Van den Branden’s 2022 book *How to Teach an Additional Language: To task or not to task?* (John Benjamins), which provides a wide-ranging research-based account of how people learn additional languages. The book is noteworthy for its comprehensive treatment of the motivational and affective dimensions of language learning and its emphasis on task-based approaches, which assign a central role to language use in the learning process.

## Self-determination theory and language learner motivation

Much of the literature on motivation and language learning has been grounded in Edward Deci and Richard Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory. Since introducing the theory in their book [\*Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior\*](#) (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), they have published numerous books and articles, and their work has influenced a wide range of research areas. They synthesise four decades of research in their 2017 book *Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development and Wellness* (Guilford Press). In her article [“Self-](#)







## Classroom dynamics

Classroom dynamics are explored in two articles that focus on the impact of the learning environment on classroom activities in general and language learning more specifically. “[Group dynamics and foreign language teaching](#)”, by Zoltán Dörnyei and Angi Molderez (*System* 25(1), 1997, 65–68), highlights the importance of the dynamics of the learner group in shaping the language learning process, and “[The role of individual and social variables in oral task performance](#)”, by Zoltán Dörnyei and Judit Kormos (*Language Teaching Research* 4(3), 2000, 275–300), explores the effects of a number of affective and social variables on foreign language learners’ engagement in oral argumentation tasks.

## Affective elements in language learning

Many studies focus on the emotional dimension of language learning and how this may affect learning outcomes and student performance. In “[Foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety: The right and left feet of the language learner](#)” (in *Positive Psychology in SLA*, edited by Jean-Marc Dewaele, Tammy Gregersen and Sarah Mercer, Multilingual Matters, 2016, 215–236), Jean-Marc Dewaele and Peter MacIntyre argue that a positive environment where students are encouraged to experience agency and autonomy is likely to create the right conditions for fostering enjoyment. In “[‘You can’t start a fire without a spark’: Enjoyment, anxiety, and the emergence of flow in foreign language classrooms](#)” (*Applied Linguistics Review* 15(2), 2022, 403–426), the same authors focus on the conditions that favour the emergence of flow experiences in the language classroom. They argue that by creating enjoyable moments, teachers involve their learners in individual or collective tasks, empowering their agency, enhancing their awareness and helping them to bond with classmates.

In “[Secondary school pupils’ language choice satisfaction in the L3 classroom: The roles of teaching, motivation, language choice and language classroom anxiety](#)” (in *Second Language Learning Before Adulthood: Individual Differences in Children and Adolescents*, edited by Vanessa De Wilde and Claire Goriot, De Gruyter Mouton, 2022, 225–260), Debora Carrai draws on the results of a large-scale survey to explore the relation between students’ language choice satisfaction and the independent variables teaching quality, differentiated instruction, motivation, language choice, classroom anxiety, and learning environment. The study highlights the key role of teaching quality and its interplay with differentiated instruction and intrinsic motivation regardless of language choice.

## The importance of teacher motivation and teacher well-being

Against the background of increased rates of attrition in the language teaching profession and threats to teacher motivation from various socio-contextual developments, including the rise of AI, a recent special issue of the *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning* (7(1), 2025) brings together research from four continents. The six articles in the special issue showcase different facets of language teacher motivation and engagement in diverse sociocultural contexts and explore their









## The value and benefits of linguistic and cultural diversity

In “[Keeping the promise of the Millennium Development Goals: Why language matters](#)” (*Applied Linguistics Review* 4(1), 2013, 1–21), Suzanne Romaine maintains that language plays a key role in both education and development, and that delivering education primarily in international languages at the expense of local languages perpetuates inequality. She endorses mother tongue-based multilingual education as a way of enhancing learning outcomes, reducing marginalisation, and encouraging more equitable access to knowledge and opportunity.

Richard Ruiz’s 1984 article “Orientations in language planning” (reprinted in *Honoring Richard Ruiz and His Work on Language Planning and Bilingual Education*, edited by Nancy Hornberger, Multilingual Matters, 2017, 13–32) outlines three orientations to language planning, viewing language as a problem, a right or a resource. Endorsing the last of these approaches, Ruiz frames multilingualism as beneficial for individuals and society. This perspective supports multilingual education for its cognitive, social, cultural and economic advantages, and underscores the necessity for cooperative, contextually aware language planning.

In “Focus on multilingualism as an approach in educational contexts” (in *Heteroglossia as Practice and Pedagogy*, edited by Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese, 2013, Springer, 239–254), Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter consider three key elements: the multilingual speaker, their whole linguistic repertoire, and the surrounding context. They view languages as resources for communication and identity-building rather than as isolated systems and the central aim of multilingual education as the development of multilingualism and multiliteracy.

In “Language awareness in minority language contexts” (in *The Routledge Handbook of Language Awareness*, edited by Peter Garrett and Josep M. Cots, Routledge, 2017, 402–417), David Lasagabaster discusses language awareness in minority language contexts, focussing on the case of Basque to explore the role of multilingual education in promoting language awareness and fostering positive attitudes. He argues that strong policies and social support are necessary for minority language revitalisation, with education being a crucial tool for language maintenance and normalisation.

In their 2015 article “[Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics](#)” (*Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 36–56), Ron Darvin and Bonnie Norton show how deeply language learning is tied to learners’ identities and their investment in learning. They argue that language learning is not merely a cognitive process but a socially and historically situated act of identity negotiation, and that “investment” better captures the complexity of learners’ engagement than more traditional conceptualisations of motivation.

In “[L2 motivation and multilingual identities](#)” (*The Modern Language Journal* 101(3), 2017, 548–565), Alastair Henry challenges the monolingual bias in L2 motivation research by proposing a “multilingual motivational self system” in which a learner’s motivations across languages are interconnected. Central to this system is the “ideal multilingual self”, a mental representation of who the learner desires to be as a multilingual person. Henry argues that this broader identity is critical in understanding and encouraging motivation in multilingual education.





## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The four-year ECML project [AI for Language Education](#) (AI Lang) is concerned with the effective and ethical use of AI technology in language education. It investigates ways in which teachers can use AI tools to plan lessons, design materials and conduct formative assessment and at the same time enable their learners to use AI responsibly for more effective, autonomous language learning.

[The State of Artificial Intelligence and Education across Europe](#) (October 2024) presents the results of a Council of Europe survey of member states. It looks at how different European countries are responding to the challenges of AI in terms of policy and strategy in general and in education. It also provides information on how governments inform stakeholders, regulate AI use, and determine funding priorities and governance regarding the use of AI tools in schools.

A 2024 working paper of the OECD, [The Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Equity and Inclusion in Education](#), focuses on learner-centred, teacher-led and other institutional AI tools. It highlights the potential of AI to support adaptive learning and address challenges such as access, inherent bias and the need for comprehensive teacher training. The paper emphasises the importance of balancing the potential benefits of AI with ethical considerations and notes the risk that AI may exacerbate existing inequalities. It highlights the need to address privacy and ethical concerns, enhance cultural responsiveness, manage techno-ableism and provide continuing professional learning in AI. Stressing the importance of maintaining educational integrity amidst growing commercial influence, the paper encourages research on the implications of AI tools for equity and inclusion to ensure that AI adoption in education supports a more equitable and inclusive learning environment.

[Empowering Learners for the Age of AI](#), an AI literacy framework for primary and secondary education, is a collaborative initiative of the European Commission and the OECD, supported by Code.org and international experts. It aims to equip primary and secondary students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to understand and engage with AI responsibly and ethically. The framework emphasizes the integration of AI literacy across various subjects, encouraging students not only to use AI tools but also to co-create with them and reflect on their ethical implications. It serves as a resource for educators, policymakers and curriculum designers, offering guidance on incorporating AI literacy into educational settings. As such it is a key tool to reflect on the impact of AI on learners' and teachers' motivation and the transversal importance of plurilingual and intercultural education. The final version of the framework will be published in 2026.

The European Commission's European School Education Platform recognises AI as a powerful tool for supporting multilingual education ([Artificial Intelligence as an Asset to Language Learning in Europe](#)). AI can be used to facilitate the design of personalised learning pathways, the gamification of language learning, and real-time feedback, making language learning accessible to learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds and living in remote communities.

Concerned with how AI is likely to shape the future of English language teaching, the British Council's 2023 report [Artificial Intelligence and English Language Teaching: Preparing for the Future](#) discusses the use of AI tools in language classrooms and the challenges they pose. Recognising that motivation





is a central concern in language learning, the report notes that AI-powered tools can boost motivation by providing engaging and personalised resources, though evidence for increased motivation due to AI is limited and often depends on individual learner preferences. Overall, motivation is a complex issue, and AI can be seen as a means of enhancing autonomous learning but also as a potential threat to motivation if learners' over-dependence on technology causes them to lose interest in language learning.

Finally, three recent articles provide a research perspective on the current use of AI tools in language education. "[Artificial Intelligence in Language Instruction: Impact on English Learning Achievement, L2 Motivation, and Self-regulated Learning](#)" (*Frontiers in Psychology* 14 , 2023), by Ling Wei, examines the effects of AI-mediated language instruction on English learning achievement, L2 motivation, and self-regulated learning among learners of English as a Foreign Language in a Chinese university. The results show that AI-mediated language instruction promises to revolutionise language learning, and the author highlights the positive impact of AI-driven educational technologies.

"[The Impact of Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) on Students' Academic Development](#)" (*Education Sciences* 15(3), 2025, 343), by Aniella Mihaela Vieriu and Gabriel Petrea, examines the impact of AI on students' academic development at the National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest. Carried out with 85 second-year students, the study found that AI enhances personalised learning, improves academic outcomes, and boosts student engagement. However, the authors also express concern regarding over-reliance on AI, reduced critical thinking skills, data privacy, and potential academic dishonesty. The research underscores the need for a structured integration of AI in education, emphasising the importance of ethical guidelines to mitigate risks while maximising benefits.

While some educators view AI tools as a threat to human creativity in the learning process, others see their potential to promote critical thinking and enhance creative skills. In her article "[Generative KI-Tools: Die Zukunft des kreativen Lernens](#)" (*Zeitschrift für Interkulturellen Fremdsprachenunterricht* 29: 1, 2024, 375–405), Agnieszka Cieżka argues that generative AI can support language learning in a variety of ways and outlines pedagogical proposals designed to demonstrate the potential benefits of generative AI tools and illuminate their impact on the role of the teacher.

