

Recommendations to strengthen plurilingual education in language subjects in primary and secondary education in Denmark

Working paper based on the PE-LAL project's final stakeholder workshop

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In the world today there are more than 7000 languages. Only a select few are integrated into school curricula, and the linguistic diversity in today's societies and classrooms is often viewed as a challenge. In plurilingual education, this diversity is acknowledged and valued as a resource since plurilingual education aims at including the linguistic repertoire represented in the classroom and opening up towards linguistic diversity. This is done, for example, by integrating the most widely spoken languages in the world, as well as less widely spoken and threatened languages, regional languages, and other linguistic varieties together with languages related to the languages taught in school. In this way, plurilingual education establishes links between the limited number of mandatory languages studied by students in school (e.g. by drawing on Danish in English teaching), the students' other language resources (e.g. first languages beyond Danish), and the linguistic diversity represented in the school, in Danish society, and in the world.

In plurilingual education, plurilingualism is seen as a universal human condition since all students have competencies in more than one language, as they learn multiple languages in school and also meet languages outside of school (e.g. through friends, travel, and social media).

Thus, plurilingual education benefits all students as it:

- **strengthens the students' acquisition of target languages** by enabling students to build on their previous language experiences when learning new languages in school
- **develops the students' plurilingual competencies** by enabling cross-linguistic comparisons which develop students' language awareness, language comprehension, language recognition, and general language education, thus preparing students to meet, live, and navigate in a linguistically diverse world
- **increases the practical dimension in language subjects** by enabling students to explore the world of languages and to investigate, experiment, and play with languages in ways which stimulate the students' language curiosity, joy of languages, and motivation for language and language learning
- **promotes inclusive primary and secondary education** (UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.1) – and hereby student well-being – as plurilingual education is based on a resource-oriented approach acknowledging, making use of, and building bridges across languages present in the classroom, in society, and in the world

Plurilingual education is not meant to replace language teaching but is a supplement supporting the acquisition of target languages by building bridges between languages offered in school and by opening language classrooms towards additional languages.

Recommendations to strengthen plurilingual education in language subjects in primary and lower secondary school and in *Almen Sprogforståelse (General Language Awareness)*¹ in upper secondary school

Based on discussions at the PE-LAL project's final stakeholder workshop, held on August 31, 2023, the project group formulated the following recommendations. The recommendations address different educational levels in the Danish context and reflect an ideal scenario for how plurilingual education could be strengthened by different stakeholders. However, each recommendation is a key contribution in itself. The recommendations relate to plurilingual education in language subjects in primary and lower secondary school, focusing specifically on the five mandatory language subjects (Danish, Danish as a second language, English, French, German) and in *Almen Sprogforståelse* in upper secondary school. In addition, we recommend that plurilingual education is integrated in the schools' additional language subjects and other subjects. However, these subjects are not within the scope of the PE-LAL project, which is why no recommendations have been made for them.

Recommendations addressing the macro level (curricula and teacher education)

1. We recommend that plurilingual education becomes a mandatory part of all language subjects and is implemented systematically across language subjects, grades, and levels to strengthen continuity and coherence horizontally and vertically in language teaching across the education system – from primary and lower secondary to upper secondary to teacher education to university. Therefore, we also recommend that exams in language subjects across the educational system are revised so that learners are also evaluated on both plurilingual learning strategies and plurilingual competencies.
 - 1.1 We recommend that the binding goals for primary and lower secondary education acknowledge all languages as a resource and that plurilingual education is integrated as a competence area in the curricula for all language subjects to make an impact on teaching practice in primary and lower secondary school and on teacher education curricula.
 - 1.2 We recommend that plurilingual education is integrated in upper secondary school as part of the teaching area 'global competencies' and as an objective in curricula of all language subjects to make an impact on teaching practices in upper secondary school and on upper secondary teacher education curricula.
 - 1.3 We recommend that plurilingual education is integrated in teacher education at the university colleges as a competence area in curricula for all language subjects and that plurilingual education is offered in continuing professional development courses to make

¹ *Almen Sprogforståelse* is a mandatory three-month introductory course on general language awareness in upper secondary school in Denmark.

an impact on the content dimension of teacher education and ultimately on teachers’ teaching practices in primary and lower secondary school.

1.4 We recommend that plurilingual education is integrated in university curricula for all language subjects and in the curriculum for the mandatory in-service teacher training programme for upper secondary teachers (*Teoretisk Pædagogikum*) to make an impact on the content dimension of upper secondary teacher education and ultimately on teachers’ teaching practices in upper secondary school.

2. We recommend that a national platform for plurilingual education is established at The Ministry of Education’s homepage (EMU) where plurilingual education is listed as a cross-cutting theme in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary school and integrated in the EMU sites for each language subject in primary and lower secondary school and for *Almen Sprogforståelse* in upper secondary school.

For primary and lower secondary school in particular:

3. We recommend that language subject curricula focus on plurilingual education continuously and to a greater extent as a way to both strengthen language learning and develop plurilingual competencies. In this way, plurilingual education becomes a joint responsibility and commitment introduced in the schools’ first language subject (Danish) and continued in the second (English) and third (French/German) language subjects. In addition, we recommend that plurilingual education is integrated in additional language subjects in primary and lower secondary school (Spanish, mother-tongue teaching, and minority-language teaching).
4. We recommend that national groups with representatives across the language subjects are established to raise awareness of and strengthen the collaboration between the schools’ language subjects.
5. We recommend that a new language subject is introduced in primary and lower secondary school from grade 1, bridging those languages taught in school and opening up towards the linguistic diversity represented in school, in Danish society, and in the world. We conceive the new language subject as a supplement to the existing language subjects in the curriculum. The objective of the new language subject is to learn and use languages and to stimulate the students’ language curiosity and joy of languages through an explorative and experimental approach focusing on language learning strategies, language transparency, development of metalanguage and content and language integrated learning.

For Danish as L1 subject in primary and lower secondary school in particular:

6. We recommend that Danish as L1 subject gives plurilingualism and linguistic diversity a greater value and includes languages beyond Danish to a greater extent. Danish as L1 subject might benefit drawing on experiences from Norwegian as L1 subject, which systematically

opens towards students’ language resources beyond Norwegian and towards a broader Nordic language community beyond the Scandinavian languages.

For Danish as L2 subject in primary and lower secondary school in particular:

7. We recommend that Danish as L2 subject in the context of plurilingual education is incorporated more broadly in all subjects so that the subject is not limited to supporting only literacy development.

For the foreign language subjects in primary and lower secondary school in particular:

8. We recommend that the foreign language subjects include a greater linguistic diversity going beyond bridging the schools’ language subjects and that plurilingual education is reflected to a greater extent in specific competence goals and practical instructions in curricula for the foreign language subjects.

For *Almen Sprogforståelse* in upper secondary school in particular:

9. We recommend that *Almen Sprogforståelse* continues to establish bridges between the language subjects in the curriculum, and that Latin is included with a focus on language transparency in a language history perspective. We furthermore recommend that *Almen Sprogforståelse* integrates a wider range of languages beyond the existing foreign language subjects and Latin so that students’ language resources and the linguistic diversity of today are also taken into account.
10. We recommend that plurilingual education is used as a bridge to strengthen the practical dimension in *Almen Sprogforståelse* by establishing more synergy between language awareness and analytical competencies on the one hand, and language curiosity, imagination, and creativity on the other.
11. We recommend that in-service teachers of *Almen Sprogforståelse* are offered continuing professional development courses to strengthen their competencies in plurilingual education and their ability to include languages beyond their own expertise in their teaching.
12. We recommend that a national exam of *Almen Sprogforståelse* is designed focusing on plurilingualism in accordance with the objective of *Almen Sprogforståelse*, and that upper secondary schools consider how their choice of exam formats in *Almen Sprogforståelse* may influence teaching practices.
13. We recommend that time is set aside for interdisciplinary development work for in-service teachers in *Almen Sprogforståelse*, and that upper secondary schools develop a strategy for teaching in *Almen Sprogforståelse*.

Recommendations addressing the meso and micro level (the school, the teacher, teaching materials, educational practice)

14. We recommend that language teaching is based to a greater extent on plurilingual education, opening towards students’ language resources and the linguistic diversity represented in the classroom, in society, and in the world.
 - 14.1 We recommend that language teaching focuses on languages in the world to a greater extent, to encourage and stimulate the language curiosity of today’s children and youth, thus strengthening students’ motivation for language learning.
 - 14.2 We recommend that language teaching focuses on all levels of language when languages are compared so that not only lower language levels (phonology, orthography, morphology, lexicon/semantics, syntax) but also higher language levels (texts, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, sociology of language) are taken into account.
15. We recommend that schools to a greater extent facilitate language teams and/or group meetings across the schools’ language subjects to strengthen the collaboration between language subjects and language teachers.
16. We recommend that schools and teachers to a greater extent facilitate and initiate safe and language-friendly schools and classrooms where linguistic diversity represented in the classroom, in society, and in the world is embraced and where students are willing to bring their own language resources into play.
17. We recommend that the publishing houses develop new and redesign existing teaching materials for language subjects so that the materials are systematically and continuously based on plurilingual education across language subjects, grades, and levels.
 - 17.1 We recommend that the National Centres for Teaching Materials to a greater extent inspire and support teachers to practice plurilingual education by explicitly focusing on plurilingual education in their selection of teaching materials for language subjects.
18. We recommend that in-service teachers to a greater extent initiate parental collaboration focusing on language as a resource to strengthen students’ learning and opportunities for participation in language teaching.

The context for the recommendations

The 18 recommendations are formulated based on discussions at the PE-LAL project's final stakeholder workshop, held on August 31, 2023, at the University of Copenhagen. The aim of the workshop was to discuss recommendations to strengthen plurilingual education in language subjects in primary and lower secondary school (Danish, Danish as second language, English, French, German) and in *Almen Sprogforståelse* in upper secondary school with representatives from different parts of the Danish educational context (including The Ministry of Education, The National Centre for Foreign Languages, teacher organizations, teacher education, publishing houses, school managements, teachers) to take diverse perspectives and voices into account. The workshop was introduced with a presentation of the PE-LAL project and the project's key research results, followed by group discussions on how plurilingual education can be strengthened in language subjects in primary and lower secondary school and in *Almen Sprogforståelse* in upper secondary school. In conclusion, the group discussions were summarized in plenary and the summaries of the group discussions were sent to the project group.

The following people attended the workshop – *the recommendations listed above do not reflect the opinions of each individual:*

- Anne Holmen (Professor and Head of Center, Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use, University of Copenhagen)
- Anne Vibeke Vennerstrøm (Head of *Theoretical Pedagogy*, University of Southern Denmark)
- Camilla Franziska Hansen (Associate Professor in German, University College Southern Denmark)
- Charlotte Keck (Upper secondary teacher, Københavns Åbne Gymnasium)
- Christine Friis Lippert (Education coordinator, Københavns Åbne Gymnasium)
- Frida Klevenhaus (Student assistant, the publishing house Alinea)
- Gro Caspersen (Primary and lower secondary teacher, Nymarksskolen)
- Hanna Gramsbergen (Editor, the publishing house Alinea)
- Hanne Wachter (Head of Center, The National Centre for Foreign Languages)
- Iben Schneider (Chairman, The Association for French Teachers)
- Ida Roholm (Primary and lower secondary teacher, Vigerslev Alle Skole)
- Kristine Kabel (Associate Professor in Danish, Aarhus University)
- Line Krogager Andersen (Postdoc, University of Southern Denmark)
- Line Olsen Lyhne (Learning consultant for German, The Ministry of Education)
- Liselotte Lenz (Learning consultant for French, The Ministry of Education)
- Marianne Ancker (Learning consultant for English, The Ministry of Education)
- Marie Rehfeld (Editor, the publishing house *Gyldendal Uddannelse*)
- Merete Smith-Sivertsen (Educator in Danish as second language, VUC Storstrøm Erhverv)
- Mette Skovgaard Andersen (Head of Center, The National Centre for Foreign Languages)
- Mogens Skot-Hansen (Upper secondary teacher, Københavns Åbne Gymnasium)
- Natascha Drachmann (PhD fellow, University of Copenhagen & University College Absalon)
- Niels Randbo Back (Project leader for foreign languages, the publishing house Systeme)

- Petra Daryai-Hansen (Associate Professor in foreign language education, University of Copenhagen)
- Petra Klimazsyk (Associate Professor in German, University College Absalon)
- Roar Rimmel Gaardsøe (Education coordinator, Aarhus Gymnasium Tilst)
- Stine Nørgaard Klarskov (Upper secondary teacher, Aarhus Gymnasium Tilst)
- Tine Jensen (Primary and lower secondary teacher, Nørre Fælled Skole)
- Tom Steffensen (Senior Associate Professor in Danish, University College Copenhagen)

The following people unable to attend the workshop have commented the working paper – *the recommendations listed above do not reflect the opinions of each individual*:

- Cecilie Bøgh (Editor in Chief, the publishing house Daneklærerforeningens Forlag)
- Frank Hansen (Pedagogical leader, Skovvangskolen)
- Karen Margrethe Aarøe (Associate Professor in German, University College of Southern Denmark)
- Lone Wulff (Chairman of the national Danish-as-a-second-language group in teacher education and Associate Professor in Danish as second language, University College Copenhagen)
- Rita Mogensen (Chairman, The Association for Language Teachers)