# Language, Identity, and Cognitive Equity: Rethinking Multilingualism in Migrant-Inclusive EFL Pedagogy

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**Abstract**
The growing linguistic diversity in European classrooms, shaped by migration, presents both opportunities and challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. This study examines how migration-based multilingualism can serve as a pedagogical resource rather than a deficit. Based on a six-month qualitative study in a linguistically diverse European region, it explores three themes: cognitive benefits of multilingualism in EFL learning, the relationship between language attitudes and student identity, and policy approaches to inclusive education. Data from multilingual students and monolingual EFL teachers—collected through interviews, classroom observations, and policy analysis—reveal a tension: while students employ cross-linguistic strategies, classroom practices often discourage home language use, reinforcing stigma and limiting benefits. Teachers acknowledge the value of multilingualism but lack training to integrate it. Drawing on successful models, the study recommends translanguaging pedagogy, multilingual assessment frameworks, and community initiatives, concluding that systemic reform is essential to achieve linguistic equity and inclusion.

**Keywords:** *Migration-based multilingualism; EFL; translanguaging; identity; linguistic equity; educational policy;*

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, European classrooms have become increasingly linguistically diverse due to rising migration and global mobility. This shift presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Traditionally, EFL instruction has been guided by monolingual ideologies that treat linguistic diversity as a deficit, associating multilingualism with poor academic performance or inadequate language proficiency. Such deficit perspectives overlook the rich linguistic and cognitive resources that multilingual learners bring into the classroom.

This study reframes linguistic diversity as a pedagogical asset rather than a barrier. It aims to challenge monolingual norms and explore how multilingualism can enhance language learning, identity development, and educational equity. Specifically, it seeks to:

1.Investigate the cognitive advantages that multilingual learners exhibit in EFL learning environments.

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2.Analyze how language attitudes shape students' self-perceptions and identity formation.

3.Evaluate inclusive policy models that can effectively support multilingual learners.

## 2. Cognitive Advantages of Multilingualism in EFL Learning

### *2.1. Empirical Findings on Cross-Linguistic Strategies*

Multilingual students often engage in cross-linguistic transfer, drawing upon their existing linguistic repertoires to facilitate the acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This transfer can be both positive—where knowledge of one language supports learning another—and negative, when differences between languages lead to errors. Nevertheless, research consistently shows that multilingual learners exhibit enhanced metalinguistic awareness, which enables them to analyse, manipulate, and reflect on language structures and functions with greater sensitivity than their monolingual peers (Cummins, 2000; Bialystok, 2001; García, 2009).

One common strategy is cognate recognition, in which learners identify words in English that share roots or similar forms with those in their home languages. For example, a Spanish-speaking student may recognize the English word information as being closely related to the Spanish *información*, or hospital as identical in both languages. Such recognition allows learners to rapidly expand their vocabulary and gain confidence in reading and comprehension. Research by Nagy, Garcia, Durgunoglu, and Hancin-Bhatt (1993) has shown that students who are trained to recognize cognates between their first language (L1) and English demonstrate superior vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension compared to those who are not.

Another strategy involves the translation and reinterpretation of idiomatic expressions. For instance, a French-speaking student might interpret the phrase "kick the bucket" literally if unfamiliar with its idiomatic meaning in English. Yet, when encouraged to compare idioms across languages (e.g., casser sa pipe in French for the same idiomatic meaning), students develop a more nuanced understanding of figurative language and cultural context. Such comparative activities enhance learners' sensitivity to pragmatics and figurative meaning, as noted in the work of Cook (1992), who emphasizes that multilinguals often develop "multi-competence"—a unique cognitive system that differs from monolingual norms and includes the ability to switch registers, styles, and linguistic norms across languages.

Cross-linguistic transfer also occurs at the grammatical and syntactic levels. A German-speaking student, for instance, may initially apply the verb-final sentence structure from German (Ich weiß nicht, ob er kommt – "I don't know if he comes") to English, resulting in "I don't know if he comes." Over time, with awareness and correction, students learn to adjust their syntactic constructions to align with English norms. Studies (Ringbom, 2007; Odlin, 1989) suggest that such transfer is not inherently problematic. On the contrary, when teachers explicitly address language contrasts in grammar instruction,

students can develop more robust grammatical understanding and internalize complex structures more effectively.

Multilingual learners may also demonstrate morphological transfer, such as adding derivational affixes (e.g., -tion, -ity, -ment) based on knowledge from other Latin- or Greek-based languages. A Portuguese-speaking student might correctly intuit the meaning of government from *governar* (to govern) and -mento, even before formally learning the word. This analytical approach to word formation is a hallmark of metalinguistic processing and vocabulary inference. In addition, phonological transfer plays a role in both aiding and hindering pronunciation. A Turkish speaker, for instance, may carry over vowel harmony or syllable timing into English pronunciation, sometimes resulting in accented speech. Still, when students are taught to compare and contrast phonological systems, they can become more aware of the differences and work consciously to improve articulation. This aligns with Bialystok's (2001) findings that bilingual children outperform monolinguals in phonological awareness tasks due to their experience managing multiple sound systems.

Cross-linguistic transfer is a cognitively rich process through which multilingual learners actively make sense of new language input using prior linguistic knowledge. When recognized and supported in the classroom, these strategies can significantly accelerate language learning. Educators such as García and Wei (2014) argue for a translanguaging pedagogy that not only allows but encourages such cross-linguistic practices, fostering deeper engagement and linguistic creativity. Similarly, Cummins (2001) stresses that the interdependence between languages—what he calls the "common underlying proficiency"—means that strengthening students' first languages enhances second or third language development, rather than hindering it.

### *2.2. Systemic Discouragement of Multilingual Strategies*

Ethnographic data from multilingual EFL classrooms consistently reveal a pattern of systemic discouragement of cross-linguistic strategies, despite their cognitive and pedagogical benefits. Many teachers—consciously or unconsciously—adhere to monolingual norms of instruction, often instructing students to think in English, avoid translation, or leave their first language at the door. While often well-intentioned, such directives reflect a deeply embedded monolingual ideology in language education that views English acquisition as a process best conducted in isolation from learners' other linguistic resources (Phillipson, 1992; Garcia, & Lin, 2017).

The suppression of multilingual strategies in EFL classrooms is not a neutral pedagogical choice—it reflects broader structural ideologies that prioritize monolingualism and marginalize linguistic diversity. Reversing this trend requires a fundamental rethinking of language education policy, teacher training, and classroom practice, guided by the principle that multilingualism is not a problem to be managed, but a resource to be celebrated and leveraged.

For instance, observational data from European secondary EFL classrooms show that students who attempt to discuss unfamiliar vocabulary

using their home languages are often redirected to rely solely on English, even when their discussions would clearly scaffold comprehension. Similarly, students who use bilingual dictionaries or compare grammatical structures across languages are sometimes penalized or discouraged, with the rationale that such practices may interfere with immersion. These approaches implicitly position heritage languages as obstacles rather than assets.

Such suppression of translanguaging limits learners' ability to draw upon their full semiotic repertoire and may hinder rather than help language acquisition. As García and Wei (2014) argue, multilingual meaning-making is not merely a fallback strategy; it represents a sophisticated cognitive process in which learners fluidly navigate between linguistic systems to make sense of new input, construct meaning, and engage critically with content. Denying students the right to mobilize these strategies not only undermines learning outcomes but also reinforces linguistic hierarchies that privilege English over minoritized languages. Moreover, ethnographic interviews with students often reveal that these policies are internalized, with many learners describing feelings of guilt or inadequacy when using their home languages in academic settings. Such experiences contribute to a broader silencing of linguistic identities and often correlate with reduced classroom participation and academic self-esteem (Blackledge, & Creese, 2010; Cummins, 2005).

This systemic discouragement is also linked to the lack of teacher training in multilingual pedagogies. Many educators feel unprepared to support language transfer or translanguaging strategies, especially in high-stakes environments dominated by standardized tests that assume a homogeneous, monolingual student body (Menken, & García, 2010). As a result, even teachers who appreciate the value of multilingualism may default to monolingual practices out of institutional pressure or uncertainty about how to implement alternatives. Ultimately, this dynamic reflects what Flores and Rosa (2015) call raciolinguistic ideologies—belief systems that frame certain language practices as deficient or inappropriate based on assumptions tied to race, ethnicity, and social class. Encouraging students to "think only in English" not only limits pedagogical effectiveness but also aligns with broader processes of assimilation and linguistic marginalization.

Raciolinguistic ideologies refer to the intertwined belief systems that link language practices to racialized social hierarchies, effectively shaping how certain linguistic behaviours are perceived and valued within society. These ideologies do not simply judge language forms on linguistic grounds; rather, they embed language within broader structures of racial and social inequality.

At their core, raciolinguistic ideologies produce hierarchies of language that often stigmatize the linguistic repertoires of racially minoritized or marginalized communities. For example, non-standard dialects or varieties of English spoken by Black, Latinos or Indigenous peoples may be framed as "incorrect," "unintelligent," or "unprofessional" not because of their linguistic properties but because of the racialized identities of their speakers. This

process results in the criminalization and delegitimization of certain speech patterns, reinforcing systemic discrimination and limiting social mobility.

Furthermore, these ideologies function to naturalize the dominance of standard language varieties, which are often associated with whiteness, middle-class status, and institutional power. In educational settings, raciolinguistic ideologies manifest through practices that penalize or silence students for using their heritage languages or dialects, labelling them as barriers to academic success or integration. This creates a double bind where students must navigate not only linguistic expectations but also racialized social judgments.

Flores and Rosa (2015) argue that understanding raciolinguistic ideologies is crucial for dismantling the linguistic racism that pervades schools and society. By recognizing how language ideologies are racialized, educators and policymakers can better challenge deficit discourses and work toward linguistic justice, where all language varieties are valued as legitimate and integral to students' identities and learning.

### *2.3. Monolingual Bias in EFL Pedagogy*

Despite robust empirical evidence supporting the cognitive and educational advantages of multilingualism, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms continue to operate under an English-only doctrine. This orientation is not merely a methodological preference; it is the legacy of linguistic purism, shaped by colonial-era ideologies and perpetuated through global language assessments that idealize native-speaker competence (Pennycook, 1998). In this environment, multilingual students are implicitly taught to compartmentalize their languages—using English in academic spaces and relegating home languages to the private sphere. This artificial separation undermines their ability to use their full linguistic and cognitive repertoire in meaningful ways.

The dominance of monolingual instructional models is reinforced by assessment-driven education systems. High-stakes exams such as TOEFL or IELTS—and their classroom equivalents—rarely account for the linguistic flexibility of multilingual learners. These tests are designed around monolingual proficiency norms, privileging fluency, accent, and grammatical precision associated with standard varieties of English. As a result, classroom instruction often narrows toward test preparation, where alternative language strategies (e.g., translation, translanguaging, code-switching) are viewed as interference rather than legitimate learning tools (Shohamy, 2001). Students become risk-averse, focusing on correctness rather than communication, and internalize the message that their multilingual identities are a liability in academic success.

Crucially, this monolingual bias is often structurally embedded rather than consciously chosen. Many EFL teachers report a lack of pedagogical tools, curriculum flexibility, or administrative support to integrate students' heritage languages meaningfully. Teacher preparation programs in many European countries still emphasize form-focused instruction, with little exposure to

multilingual pedagogies, intercultural communication, or language transfer strategies (Cenoz, & Gorter, 2015). Without adequate training, even well-meaning educators may feel unprepared to manage multilingual classrooms, leading to reliance on restrictive language policies for the sake of control or perceived rigor.

Beyond the classroom, school leadership and national education standards often implicitly (or explicitly) reinforce English monolingualism. Policy documents may mention diversity and inclusion but fail to provide clear guidelines or funding for the implementation of multilingual teaching practices. In some cases, educational frameworks treat English as a neutral, global lingua franca—ignoring the power dynamics that shape whose language practices are legitimized and whose are erased (Makoni, & Pennycook, 2007).

The psychological toll of these pedagogical choices is significant. When students are not allowed to draw on their full linguistic resources, they may experience language insecurity, reduced self-confidence, and feelings of cultural alienation. Multilingual learners often perform a kind of identity fragmentation—suppressing aspects of their linguistic and cultural identity in school settings to conform to dominant norms. As Creese and Blackledge (2010) argue, such practices deny learners the opportunity to act as full linguistic agents, capable of drawing flexibly and creatively on all of their languages. Reforming this paradigm requires a fundamental shift in how language competence is conceptualized and assessed. Instead of aiming for monolingual-like performance, pedagogy should aim for functional multilingualism—the ability to move fluidly between languages based on context, purpose, and audience. Schools must create space for multilingual approaches such as cross-linguistic scaffolding, language comparison tasks, and student-led multilingual activities, which validate and extend students' existing linguistic repertoires. Moreover, teacher education programs should embed multilingualism at the core of their curricula, training future educators to design lessons that treat linguistic diversity not as a classroom management issue, but as a central pedagogical resource.

Key Examples of Systemic Monolingual Bias:

- Curricula that penalize students for code-switching during oral exams.
- Textbooks that present only standard British or American English varieties, omitting global Englishers or student home languages.
- Teacher evaluation rubrics that measure "fluency" by the absence of translation or mother-tongue influence.
- School inspections that interpret multilingual signage or discussion as a lack of “academic rigor”.

To address the monolingual bias that persists in EFL pedagogy, systemic reforms are needed across multiple levels—from teacher education and assessment design to curriculum policy and school culture. Only by dismantling the monolingual paradigm can we unlock the full cognitive, cultural, and communicative potential of multilingual learners.

## 3. Language Attitudes and Student Identity Formation

### *3.1. Linguistic Marginalization and Stigma*

In multilingual EFL classrooms across Europe, students frequently experience linguistic marginalization, particularly when their heritage languages are seen as incongruent with the academic environment. These languages—such as Somali, Kurdish, Turkish, or Roma—are often treated not as resources, but as disruptions to the presumed neutrality and dominance of English. The widespread perception that heritage languages are non-academic, confusing, or even inappropriate reinforces linguistic hierarchies that devalue students' cultural and linguistic identities (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Heller, 2006).

This stigma has profound effects on students' psychosocial development and academic engagement. Internalized messages about the illegitimacy of their languages can lead students to suppress linguistic expression, withdraw from classroom discourse, or experience shame about their cultural background. These reactions are not isolated: qualitative studies consistently report that students of African, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European descent often feel pressured to minimize their linguistic difference in order to fit in (Cummins, 2001).

One student in a multilingual Swedish EFL classroom, for example, described being reprimanded for speaking Somali with a peer while attempting to explain a difficult English text, recalling that the teachers had accused them of cheating, even though she was simply trying to understand the material This moment not only disrupted her confidence but also sent a message that only English held academic legitimacy - despite the fact that her use of Somali was a strategic, supportive act of peer scaffolding (Bigelow, & King, 2015).

Such practices reinforce what Bourdieu (1991) refers to as linguistic capital - a system where certain languages and varieties (e.g., standard English) are assigned higher value and legitimacy than others. In this system, students who speak non-dominant languages are structurally positioned as linguistically deficient, even when they possess sophisticated cross-linguistic skills.

The erasure of minoritized languages from classroom walls, textbooks, and assessments contributes to a sense of invisibility. When students never see their languages represented in school materials or hear them acknowledged in curriculum content, they receive a clear message: these languages - and by extension, the identities tied to them - are unwelcome in educational spaces. This sense of cultural and linguistic displacement contributes to disengagement and reduced participation, particularly in oral activities where linguistic confidence is vital. Combatting this marginalization requires not only policy shifts but also symbolic validation of linguistic diversity. Practices such as multilingual signage, heritage language celebrations, language-sharing circles, and integration of students' languages into classroom activities can reverse the harmful effects of exclusion and affirm students' full identities (García, & Kleyn, 2016).

### *3.2. Teachers' Perspectives and Training Gaps*

Linguistic marginalization and teacher training gaps represent two tightly interwoven challenges. Students' experiences of stigma are not only emotional responses to individual incidents - they are systemic symptoms of educational frameworks that privilege English, erase multilingual identities, and limit teacher agency. To foster equitable, identity-affirming classrooms, schools must radically reimagine their language ideologies, empower educators with appropriate tools, and create institutional cultures that genuinely celebrate, not suppress, linguistic plurality.

While teachers are frequently positioned as the gatekeepers of language ideologies in classrooms, interviews and classroom studies reveal that many educators hold ambivalent or conflicted views on linguistic diversity. On the one hand, many express positive attitudes toward multilingualism and genuinely want to support their students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, they often lack the pedagogical training, institutional support, and policy clarity needed to turn these values into inclusive practice (Safford, & Drury, 2013; Taylor, 2010).

This ambivalence is not primarily rooted in personal resistance, but in structural and systemic barriers. Most teacher education programs continue to focus on standardized, monolingual approaches to English instruction, rarely addressing issues such as translanguaging, language awareness, or intercultural communicative competence (García, & Lin, 2017). As a result, teachers often report feeling unprepared or unsupported when it comes to creating linguistically inclusive environments - particularly in schools with high numbers of recent migrants or refugee-background students.

Moreover, accountability systems further constrain teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices. National and regional assessments tend to emphasize standard written English, with little to no recognition of multilingual competencies. As these assessments often carry significant weight in school rankings and student advancement, teachers feel pressured to prioritize test-oriented instruction over experimental or multilingual pedagogy (Shohamy, 2006).

For example, a German EFL teacher in a recent case study reported that although she valued her students' Kurdish and Turkish skills, she felt compelled to "keep things in English" to prepare them for state exams. "I don't have the freedom to play with language the way I'd like," she explained, "because at the end of the day, they're judged by how native-like their English sounds" (Erduyan, 2019, p. 45).

This gap between aspiration and implementation leads to a kind of pedagogical inertia - where teachers, even those with inclusive values, continue using restrictive approaches because of institutional inertia, curricular rigidity, or fear of deviating from standards. Without clear policy mandates, professional development, or institutional incentives, inclusive multilingual teaching remains aspirational rather than practical.

To move beyond this impasse, education systems must invest in transformative teacher training that includes:

- Workshops on translanguaging strategies.
- Peer-exchange networks across linguistically diverse schools.
- Toolkits for integrating heritage languages in subject learning.

And ongoing mentorship and administrative backing to trial and evaluate inclusive practices.

Additionally, teacher evaluation frameworks should be revised to reward - not penalize - efforts that centre multilingualism and student voice, even when such efforts diverge from traditional test preparation norms.

## 4. Policy Approaches to Inclusive Multilingual Education

### *4.1. Translanguaging Pedagogy in Practice*

Translanguaging - defined by García and Wei (2014) as a process by which multilingual speakers navigate meaning using their full linguistic repertoires -represents a fundamental shift in how language is conceptualized in the EFL classroom. Rather than reinforcing rigid separations between English and students' home languages, translanguaging encourages fluid, strategic, and purposeful language use to deepen comprehension, foster expression, and affirm identity. Rooted in sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning, translanguaging challenges the monolingual ideology that has long governed foreign language education. It positions students' linguistic and cultural knowledge not as interference, but as foundational resources for meaning-making, critical thinking, and academic success (Creese, & Blackledge, 2010; García, & Lin, 2017).

Below are some key pedagogical strategies that operationalize translanguaging in EFL contexts, accompanied by detailed examples and implementation suggestions:

a. Comparative Grammar Activities

These exercises ask students to compare and contrast grammatical features across English and their home languages. For instance:

An English-Arabic comparison might focus on verb tense systems, highlighting how Arabic conveys aspect or modality differently than English.

Turkish-speaking learners could explore word order, noting how Turkish's subject-object-verb (SOV) structure differs from English's subject-verb-object (SVO) pattern.

Spanish-speaking learners might analyse gender agreement and article usage, considering how English diverges from gendered grammatical forms.

By explicitly engaging with cross-linguistic structures, students develop metalinguistic awareness—the ability to reflect on and manipulate linguistic form—an essential cognitive tool in language acquisition (Jessner, 2006).

Example Activity:

Students create bilingual grammar tables, identifying how the passive voice is formed in English and their home language, and then write sample sentences in both languages to compare usage and meaning.

b. Multilingual Glossaries and Visual Aids

Teachers can co-create living glossaries with students, listing vocabulary items in English alongside equivalents in students' heritage languages. These glossaries may include:

- Translations, Phonetic transcription, Part of speech, Sample sentence, Visual representation.

This approach supports academic vocabulary acquisition while validating linguistic diversity. Including student contributions personalizes the glossary and builds ownership.

Visual aids, such as multilingual anchor charts (e.g., sentence starters, grammar reminders, or vocabulary webs), also serve as accessible, visible scaffolds that reinforce key concepts while normalizing linguistic plurality.

Example:

A "Climate Change Vocabulary Wall" includes terms like carbon emissions, sustainability, and biodiversity in English, Somali, Kurdish, Polish, and Arabic - with icons or diagrams to aid comprehension.

c. Cross-Linguistic Group Projects

Project-based learning offers fertile ground for translanguaging. Students can be tasked with researching global issues, cultural practices, or science topics using sources in their home language(s), then synthesizing and presenting the content in English. This method:

- Encourages critical reading and synthesis.
- Builds academic language in English.
- Fosters collaboration across linguistic boundaries.

Example Project:

In a unit on migration, students interview family members in their heritage language about migration stories and present them in English as digital narratives, combining video, subtitles, and voiceovers. This not only strengthens language skills but also fosters empathy and intercultural awareness.

d. Multilingual Classroom Dialogue

Creating space for small-group or pair discussions in home languages before whole-class sharing in English can unlock students' higher-order thinking and improve task performance.

This strategy functions as cognitive pre-processing, enabling students to explore complex ideas, clarify misunderstandings, and build conceptual knowledge without being constrained by English proficiency. The follow-up in English develops academic language output, aligning with curriculum goals while honouring students' linguistic identities.

Example Structure:

Step 1: Discuss in heritage language.

Step 2: Take collaborative notes (bilingual if possible).

Step 3: Share out in English as a group.

Research shows that students engaged in translanguaging practices retain information more effectively and show increased classroom participation (Canagarajah, 2011).

Translanguaging pedagogy is not simply a strategy but a paradigm shift in how we understand language, learning, and identity. By embracing students' entire linguistic repertoires, educators can create more inclusive, cognitively engaging, and socially just EFL classrooms. Still, successful implementation requires institutional support, teacher training, and curricular flexibility—issues further explored in the following sections on assessment and systemic reform.

### *4.2. Systemic Shifts for Linguistic Equity*

Achieving true inclusivity for multilingual learners in EFL education requires more than isolated classroom innovations - it necessitates structural transformation across policy, leadership, and legal frameworks. Multilingualism must be repositioned not as a liability to be managed, but as a core educational asset, central to equity, identity affirmation, and democratic participation (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

These reforms must tackle entrenched assimilationist models that privilege dominant languages - often linked to nationalistic ideologies such as Leitkultur in Germany or English-Only movements in Anglophone countries - while marginalizing students' linguistic and cultural capital. Below are key systemic measures to build institutionally supported multilingual education.

#### *4.2.1. Public Investment in Multilingual Teacher Training and Curriculum Development*

Robust multilingual pedagogy requires ongoing, well-funded professional development. Teachers must be equipped not only with strategies for translanguaging and intercultural competence, but also with a deep understanding of language ideologies, power dynamics, and linguistic justice.

Key Measures:

National and regional governments should allocate dedicated budgets for multilingual education, including:

Pre-service and in-service training on translanguaging practices.

Modules on culturally responsive pedagogy, linguistic human rights, and inclusive assessment.

Teacher exchanges and study visits to schools implementing multilingual models (e.g., in Luxembourg, Catalonia, or Finland).

Funding should also support the development of multilingual curriculum resources, including textbooks, digital

## 5. Conclusion: Toward Linguistic Justice in EFL

This study underscores the urgent imperative to reconceptualize EFL education through a framework of linguistic justice, equity, and inclusion. In increasingly diverse classrooms across Europe and beyond, multilingual

learners bring not only linguistic plurality but also rich cognitive, cultural, and experiential assets. However, entrenched monolingual ideologies - reflected in pedagogical norms, institutional practices, and national policies - continue to restrict the potential of these learners and reproduce social inequities. To chart a more inclusive and socially just future, EFL education must centre the following critical insights:

### *5.1. Cognitive Advantages Remain Underleveraged*

Extensive research in psycholinguistics and applied linguistics has shown that multilingual learners possess heightened metalinguistic awareness, advanced executive functioning, and greater cognitive flexibility [48-50]. These students frequently utilize cross-linguistic strategies, such as code-switching, translation, and grammatical comparison, which enable deeper language processing and abstract thinking. Yet in many EFL classrooms, these cognitive strengths are stifled by a narrow "English-only" ideology. Rather than nurturing students' full linguistic repertoires, instruction often reinforces linguistic compartmentalization, marginalizing the very strategies that could accelerate language development. This represents a significant loss of intellectual capital within educational systems.

To move forward, EFL pedagogy must not only permit, but actively cultivate multilingual meaning-making, recognizing translanguaging not as a sign of linguistic deficiency but as an expression of complex, agentive learning.

### *5.2. Language Attitudes Shape Identity, Belonging, and Engagement*

Language is not merely a tool of communication—it is a carrier of identity, memory, and social belonging. When students' home languages are ignored, suppressed, or framed as barriers to learning, this sends powerful symbolic messages about whose knowledge counts and whose voices matter (Norton, 2013; Blackledge, & Creese, 2010). This study reveals how students experience shame, exclusion, and disengagement when their linguistic identities are devalued in school. Conversely, classrooms that affirm heritage languages foster stronger learner agency, academic motivation, and cultural pride.

Educational justice therefore requires disrupting linguistic hierarchies and embracing pedagogical practices that reflect and celebrate the sociolinguistic realities of students' lives. Affirming language diversity is not a pedagogical luxury - it is a moral and democratic necessity.

### *5.3. Policy Innovation is a Prerequisite for Structural Change*

Pedagogical change alone is insufficient without systemic policy support. For multilingual approaches to take root, national education systems must realign standards, curricula, and assessments with the sociolinguistic diversity of contemporary classrooms.

This includes:

•Embedding translanguaging frameworks into national curricula and teacher training standards.

•Expanding assessment models to include portfolios, oral presentations, and community-informed evaluations.

•Funding inclusive curriculum development and recognizing bilingual/multilingual proficiency in certification and graduation pathways.

•Enacting legal protections for linguistic rights, ensuring no learner is penalized for using their home language.

As García and Kleyn (2016) argue, linguistic inclusion must be systematized, not treated as an exception or innovation. Only then can schools become genuine sites of democratic pluralism rather than mechanisms of linguistic assimilation.

### *5.4. A Call for an Intercultural and Antiracist Paradigm Shift*

The challenges faced by multilingual learners intersect with broader systems of racialization, migration politics, and educational inequality. Linguistic marginalization often overlaps with racial and ethnic discrimination, particularly for students from refugee, immigrant, and minoritized backgrounds (Creese, & Blackledge, 2011; Paris, & Alim, 2017).

Thus, the movement toward linguistic justice must be situated within wider antiracist and intercultural education frameworks. This involves:

•Decolonizing curriculum content.

•Recognizing and resisting language-based oppression.

•Building school cultures that reflect the multilingual, multicultural world students already inhabit.

Future research and policy design should focus on scalable, sustainable models of inclusive education, supported by longitudinal studies that trace outcomes over time and across diverse contexts. These efforts should foreground student voices, recognizing multilingual learners not as problems to be fixed, but as agents of knowledge, creativity, and change.

### *5.5. Final Reflection: EFL as a Site of Democratic Renewal*

An EFL education grounded in linguistic justice is not only more equitable - it is more educationally effective, culturally responsive, and intellectually rigorous. By dismantling the dominance of monolingual norms and reimagining language learning as a collaborative, identity-affirming endeavour, educators and policymakers can transform EFL classrooms into laboratories of democratic participation, intercultural dialogue, and cognitive empowerment. Such a transformation will require courage, investment, and sustained commitment. But the reward is a generation of learners who are not only proficient in English - but also proud of their multilingual identities, empowered to navigate diverse worlds, and equipped to build a more just and inclusive society.

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