

/ Multilingualism in modern foreign language education

REFERENCE RESOURCE FOR LESSON PLANNING

As multilingualism is daily practice for many people in our society, why not - as a teacher of modern foreign languages - introduce a multilingualism perspective into practice in your classroom? You can enrich your teaching materials through language awareness, with a focus on valorising multilingualism. Or help your pupils put their multilingual knowledge to use when learning a foreign language through functional multilingual learning. This reference resource offers seven perspectives on multilingualism that you can use to enhance your teaching materials in your class!

Language awareness

1. Multilingual awareness

Make pupils aware of multilingualism in society, as well as their own or someone else's multilingualism.

Texts and activities allow pupils to reflect on what languages they and others speak, or on what different languages mean to them.

- Use pupils' multilingualism in a language portrait or language passport. Or have them write a job application letter in which they identify their spoken languages.
- Address the multilingualism of other individuals by giving pupils a text about what languages a famous person speaks. Or give them an assignment about the languages in their family.
- Use multilingualism in society by talking about a country where more than one language is spoken, or about all the languages spoken in the class.

2. Spread of the target language

Acquaint pupils with the scope of the target language area.

Pupils explore where in the world the foreign language is spoken.

- Give pupils a text about French in Canada or Africa.
- Give pupils an assignment that requires them to look up target language areas.

3. Intralinguistic variation

Acquaint pupils with language variation within the target language.

Pupils experience regional, stylistic or pragmatic variation within the target language.

- Regional variation: assign a listening exercise in which pupils have to link accents to regions. Or address a text in a dialect and discuss the differences from the standard variety.
- Stylistic variation: use examples to explain the difference between formal and informal language, and between written and spoken language.
- Pragmatic variation: use statements to have pupils think about appropriate use of language in particular contexts.

4. Metalinguistic awareness

Make pupils aware of the similarities and differences between languages/varieties.

Pupils compare a language or variety with Dutch, other school languages or home languages.

- Compare sounds: discuss a sound in the target language. Find which sound it corresponds to in Dutch or where the difference lies.
- Compare words: have pupils guess the meaning of a word by comparing it to a word from another language. Also point out 'false friends'.
- Compare grammatical structures: when you explain grammar, include structures from other languages. For example, explain the difference between the English present perfect and the Dutch tense forms. Or discuss the similarity in sentence position of question words in different languages.

Functional multilingual learning

5. Language learning strategies

Encourage pupils to use strategies that support the language learning process.

Pupils use insights that support target language comprehension while comparing languages and cultures.

- Intonation: show that intonation can change the meaning of a word. Give pupils a pronunciation exercise that explains the intonation pattern of the target language and compares it to Dutch.
- Non-verbal communication: have pupils compare the meaning of gestures in the target language culture with those in their own culture.

6. Use existing language skills

Encourage pupils to put their multilingual knowledge to use when learning a foreign language.

Pupils purposefully compare certain aspects of the target language with a language they already know, or pupils look for similar aspects in languages familiar to them, such as Dutch, other school languages, home languages and dialects.

- Ask pupils what Dutch word resembles an unknown word in the target language.
- Give pupils an assignment that makes them aware of corresponding sounds in the target language and Dutch.
- Give pupils an assignment in which they look up words in a Spanish text that resemble English words.
- Have pupils come up with the translation of a word from the target language into their own language or dialect.
- Alert students to words that resemble words from another language they are more proficient in. If they already speak English or French, you can use that with Spanish.

7. Receptive multilingualism

Pupils can choose to use Dutch or a foreign language other than the target language if target language proficiency is not sufficient for language production.

Pupils use a language other than the target language in the answers or elaborations for an assignment.

- Give pupils a choice between two languages when answering questions. They may answer questions in Dutch or German, for example.
- Give pupils an assignment in which they process information in one language and present the outcome in another. For example, have them write a Dutch newspaper article using information from an English text.