



Language(s) of schooling (as a subject and in other subjects)

[Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec 2022\)1 on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture](#)

Measures

b. ii. ensure that the language dimension of all subjects is made explicit in curriculum guidelines and curriculums;

b. xiv. encourage pedagogical approaches that develop learners' language and cultural awareness [...]

c.i. assigning a central role in their own curriculums to the concepts and principles on which such education rests, including the language dimension of all curriculum subjects.

See also [Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec \(2014\)5 on the importance of competences in the language\(s\) of schooling for equity and quality in education and for educational success.](#)

What is it about?

Languages of schooling are the dominant languages used for teaching and learning, for extra-curricular activities, and for the management of educational institutions. This concept includes both language taught as a subject in its own right, such as literacy and literature, and the language used to teach other subjects such as history, mathematics, or science. In many contexts, the language of schooling is a national or officially recognised regional language, and sign languages may be used in the education of deaf learners.

Language is central to the acquisition of knowledge and to success in school. It is therefore essential that all learners develop sufficient proficiency in the languages used to teach all subjects, since these differ from everyday language. Education prepares individuals to participate actively in democratic society, and this depends in part on developing appropriate competences in the languages of schooling as well as in other languages included in the curriculum.

Why is it important and what can be done?

Knowledge in school subjects such as mathematics, biology, history, or music is conveyed through specific forms of language that often differ from everyday communication. Acquiring subject-related knowledge therefore requires both cognitive skills and an understanding of the language used in each discipline. Within a plurilingual and intercultural approach to education, all teachers share responsibility for helping learners understand and use the academic language associated with their subject, including its terminology, registers, and genres¹, while encouraging learners to draw on their full linguistic and cultural resources.

The languages of schooling include what is commonly referred to as academic language, which appears in subject teaching. This comprises specialised terms and expressions as well as textual forms and genres such as argumentation and presentation, many of which may be unfamiliar to learners. These linguistic features can be particularly challenging for students who experience educational disadvantage, as they seldom encounter such language in everyday interactions. School curricula therefore need to address the linguistic demands of learning, and teacher education should incorporate approaches that integrate language and content, such as CLIL, so that subject-related language becomes accessible to all learners and can also draw on learners' home languages.

Council of Europe resources for policy/ decision makers

Resource 1: [A Handbook for Curriculum Development and Teacher Training. The Language Dimension in All Subjects](#)

The Handbook develops responses to the current challenges of education systems highlighting the importance of language not just as a separate subject in school, but in all subjects across the curriculum.

- **Chapter 10** on **curriculum** development and academic language in the curriculum.
- **Chapter 6** on the language of schooling in primary education
- **Chapter 8** on subject-specific language requirements in secondary education

Resource 2: [A roadmap for schools to support the language\(s\) of schooling](#)

The ROADMAP enables schools to set up a tailor-made whole-school strategy to support the development of students' competences in the language(s) of schooling. The web-based tools

¹ Registers refer to language variations determined by a given context, purpose, and audience. A register is characterized by specific choices of vocabulary, tone, syntax, and level of formality. Examples include legal language, academic writing, casual conversation, and use of technical jargon. Genres are categories of discourse or text that share specific conventions, purposes, and structures. Common genres include narrative, argumentative, academic, and journalistic texts.

help schools to develop the linguistic and critical thinking skills ALL students need in ALL subjects for learning and school success. Available in English, French, German, Finnish and Swedish.

Resource 3: [Language and school subjects - Linguistic dimensions of knowledge building in school curricula](#)

The publication is addressed to authors of curricula, textbooks, the designers of tests, and teachers of all subjects. It shows how learning in all subjects relies on specific language uses and discourse genres and offers a framework for identifying these linguistic demands. It also demonstrates how making these requirements explicit helps learners engage more successfully with subject knowledge and supports the aims of plurilingual and intercultural education.

- **Chapter 3** on forms of communication in the teaching of scientific, artistic and technical subjects

Council of Europe resources for teacher educators/ pedagogical advisors

Resource 1: [A Handbook for Curriculum Development and Teacher Training. The Language Dimension in All Subjects](#)

See above

- **Chapters 11 and 12** on the language dimension in teacher education

Resource 2: [Developing language awareness in subject classes](#)

This ECML resource helps subject teachers to identify the linguistic needs of their learners and provide tailored support. They are organised in three stages: planning, teaching and learning.

Resource 3: [Teaching the language of schooling in the context of diversity – study materials for teacher development](#)

This ECML resource provides guidance and materials to help teachers build on plurilingual repertoires of their learners and in particular learners' home languages in the classroom. The activities deal with many themes that are typically present in the language of schooling curriculum: web-based texts, non-verbal communication, idioms, literary texts and texts from other genres, such as adverts and cartoons.

Various materials for teacher educators and teachers of the language of schooling are offered. These provide opportunities for reflection and practical activities relating, for example, to expanding the scope of language of schooling as a subject and the inclusion of plurilingual learners. Watch, for example, a video about Moises, a ten-year-old latino student in the US, who struggles to communicate in his new school with limited access to his native language.

Further resources

Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/languages-of-schooling>