



Translanguaging, Multilingualism and European Language Education Policy: Implications for Teacher Education

Konstantinos Chatzidimou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract

Linguistic diversity is a defining feature of contemporary European societies and increasingly of European classrooms. European Union language education policy has progressively emphasized multilingual competence, linguistic diversity and inclusive approaches to language learning. In particular, the Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages places multilingual competence within the broader objectives of the European Education Area and calls for greater language awareness in education. This orientation is complemented by the plurilingual perspective of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which recognizes learners' linguistic and cultural repertoires as dynamic and interconnected resources. At the same time, research on multilingual education increasingly challenges monolingual approaches to language teaching, with translanguaging emerging as a pedagogical perspective that recognizes learners' entire linguistic repertoires as resources for learning. Building on previous work examining translanguaging as a pedagogical approach in multilingual classrooms, the present paper shifts the focus from classroom practices to the European policy context. It examines the relationship between translanguaging, multilingualism and European language education policy, with particular emphasis on implications for initial and continuing teacher education. Drawing on a critical analysis of selected European policy documents and relevant scholarship on multilingual and translanguaging pedagogies, the paper explores the extent to which current European policy orientations provide conceptual and institutional space for pedagogical practices that move beyond the traditional separation of languages. The analysis focuses on three interconnected dimensions: the recognition of learners' multilingual repertoires, the development of language-aware and inclusive learning environments, and the competences required of teachers working in linguistically diverse classrooms. It argues that translating European commitments to multilingualism into educational practice requires teacher education to move beyond preparing teachers exclusively for the instruction of a single, clearly bounded language. Future and practicing language teachers need opportunities to develop critical multilingual awareness and the ability to strategically mobilize learners' linguistic resources. The paper concludes by proposing directions for integrating translanguaging-oriented competences into teacher education and highlights their potential contribution to European objectives concerning multilingualism, inclusion and quality language education.

Keywords: *translanguaging; multilingualism; European language education policy; teacher education; linguistic diversity*

1. Introduction

Linguistic diversity has become an increasingly visible feature of European societies and educational systems. Mobility, migration and the growing internationalisation of education have contributed to classrooms in which learners bring complex linguistic and cultural repertoires. Within this context, multilingual competence is increasingly regarded as an important dimension of participation in contemporary European societies. This perspective is reflected in European Union education policy. The Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages situates multilingual competence within the broader vision of the European Education Area and links language learning to mobility, social inclusion and intercultural understanding [1].

At the broader European level, the Council of Europe has contributed substantially to a shift from approaches based primarily on the separate acquisition and use of individual languages towards a plurilingual understanding of language competence. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume* (CEFR/CV) further develops this orientation by foregrounding mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competence [2]. Rather than



treating an individual's languages as isolated systems, this perspective recognises linguistic and cultural resources as components of a repertoire that can interact in communication and learning.

These developments coincide with a broader multilingual turn in language education research. Translanguaging challenges assumptions that languages should necessarily be kept separate in educational settings and draws attention to the possibility of strategically activating learners' linguistic repertoires to support learning [3, 4]. Pedagogical translanguaging has consequently been proposed as a means of moving beyond the monolingual bias that has traditionally characterised considerable parts of foreign and second language education [4].

Previous work examined the pedagogical potential of translanguaging with particular attention to multilingual classroom practices and teaching strategies [5]. The present paper extends this discussion by shifting the analytical focus to the European language education policy context. Although European policy and reference documents increasingly emphasise multilingualism, plurilingual competence, language awareness and linguistic diversity, this does not necessarily imply an explicit endorsement of translanguaging. The question is therefore whether, and to what extent, these policy orientations create conceptual and institutional space for translanguaging-oriented pedagogy.

Against this background, the paper addresses the following research question: **To what extent do current European language education policy orientations provide a conceptual and institutional basis for translanguaging-oriented approaches, and what implications can be derived for initial and continuing language teacher education?** The study draws on a qualitative analysis of selected European policy and reference documents, interpreted in relation to relevant scholarship on multilingualism and pedagogical translanguaging. Three interconnected dimensions guide the analysis: **(a)** recognition and mobilisation of learners' multilingual repertoires, **(b)** language-aware and inclusive learning environments, and **(c)** teacher competences for linguistically diverse classrooms.

By bringing European language education policy into dialogue with translanguaging research, the paper examines how European commitments to multilingualism may be translated into educational practice. It argues that teacher education constitutes a crucial link between multilingualism as a European policy orientation and its pedagogical operationalisation in linguistically diverse classrooms.

2. Translanguaging and Multilingual Language Education

The increasing linguistic diversity of educational settings has contributed to a reconsideration of assumptions concerning the role of languages in teaching and learning. Traditional approaches to language education have frequently been organised around the idea that languages constitute clearly distinguishable systems and should therefore be taught and used separately. This orientation has been particularly visible in foreign language education, where the target language has often been treated as the preferred, and in some contexts almost exclusive, medium of classroom interaction. From a multilingual perspective, however, learners bring linguistic resources accumulated through their experiences with different languages, varieties and communicative contexts. The question therefore arises as to whether, and under what conditions, these resources can be mobilised for learning.

Translanguaging has become an influential concept associated with this multilingual turn. Contemporary translanguaging scholarship challenges an understanding of multilingual communication as the simple alternation between separate and self-contained linguistic systems. García and Li Wei [6], for example, conceptualise translanguaging in relation to the dynamic practices through which multilingual speakers make meaning by drawing on their available communicative resources. The focus thus shifts from named languages as externally defined systems towards multilingual speakers' practices and repertoires, with implications for meaning-making, identity and participation [6, 7].

For educational purposes, it is useful to distinguish translanguaging as a broad theoretical perspective from pedagogical translanguaging, understood as the planned use of multilingual resources for teaching and learning. Cenoz and Gorter [4, 8] emphasise pedagogical intentionality: teachers deliberately design strategies that activate resources from learners' linguistic repertoires to support language and/or content learning. Such practices may include cross-linguistic comparison, work with cognates, processing information in one language and producing it in another, or tasks encouraging explicit reflection across languages. Pedagogical translanguaging therefore does not imply unrestricted mixing of languages or the abandonment of target-language development. Rather, multilingual resources can complement target-language use when they are strategically mobilised for specific pedagogical purposes [4, 5]. This understanding is also consistent with Cenoz and Gorter's explicit presentation of pedagogical translanguaging as an instructional approach drawing on the learner's whole linguistic repertoire [4].



A further distinction central to the present study concerns translanguaging and plurilingualism. The concepts have emerged from partly different scholarly and institutional traditions and should not be treated as interchangeable. Translanguaging has been particularly influential in sociolinguistic and bilingual education research, whereas plurilingualism occupies a central position in the Council of Europe's approach to language education. The CEFR Companion Volume reinforces this orientation through its emphasis on mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competence [2], presenting language users and learners as social agents able to mobilise resources from their plurilingual repertoires [9]. The Council of Europe itself identifies mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competence as key areas developed in the 2020 Companion Volume [2].

Despite their different conceptual genealogies, the two perspectives display important areas of convergence. Both challenge exclusively monolingual understandings of language competence and recognise the relevance of learners' broader linguistic resources for communication and learning. Nevertheless, these points of contact should not obscure differences in terminology, theoretical assumptions and institutional context. In particular, the presence of plurilingualism in a European policy or reference document cannot in itself be interpreted as an endorsement of translanguaging.

This distinction provides the conceptual basis for the policy analysis that follows. The relevant question is not whether European institutions explicitly prescribe translanguaging, but whether European orientations towards multilingual repertoires, plurilingual competence and linguistic diversity create conditions compatible with pedagogical approaches in which learners' linguistic resources are treated as resources for learning.

3. European Language Education Policy: Corpus and Analytical Framework

To examine the relationship between translanguaging and European language education policy, it is first necessary to identify how multilingualism, plurilingual competence and linguistic diversity are conceptualised at European level. This section presents the policy and reference documents selected for analysis and the analytical framework adopted, before considering separately the European Union and Council of Europe perspectives.

3.1 Policy Documents and Method of Analysis

The present study adopts a qualitative document analysis approach focusing on a purposively selected corpus of four European policy and reference documents. The documents were selected according to three criteria: their relevance to multilingual and language education, their implications for educational practice and teacher education, and their representation of complementary perspectives at European Union and Council of Europe level.

At EU level, the corpus comprises the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning [10] and the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages [1]. The former establishes multilingual competence as one of the key competences for lifelong learning, while the latter develops a more specific framework for language learning and language awareness. Of particular relevance is its recognition of pupils' multilingual competences, including competences in languages that may not form part of the school curriculum [1].

At Council of Europe level, the corpus includes the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume [2] and Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture [11]. The former develops plurilingual/pluricultural competence and mediation, while the latter connects plurilingual and intercultural education with social inclusion, democratic participation and linguistic and cultural diversity and explicitly addresses actors responsible for initial and further teacher education [11]. The documents are analysed through three deductively defined dimensions derived from the research question and theoretical framework: (1) recognition and mobilisation of multilingual repertoires; (2) language-aware and inclusive learning environments; and (3) teacher competences for linguistically diverse classrooms. For each dimension, the analysis considers both areas of convergence with translanguaging-oriented pedagogy and potential limitations or tensions. The aim is not to determine whether the documents explicitly advocate translanguaging, but whether their conceptualisation of multilingualism creates pedagogical space for practices that strategically mobilise learners' linguistic repertoires.



3.2 Multilingualism in European Union Language Education Policy

Multilingualism occupies an important position within the European Union's broader understanding of education, mobility and participation. The 2018 Council Recommendation identifies multilingual competence as one of the key competences for lifelong learning [10], thereby situating it within a broader framework for participation in increasingly diverse and interconnected European societies.

The 2019 Council Recommendation develops this orientation further by connecting language learning with the European Education Area, educational mobility and Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity [1]. It acknowledges the multilingual character of European schools and the need to respond to pupils with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Particularly significant is its concept of language awareness in schools, which includes recognition of pupils' literacy and multilingual competences, including competences in languages not formally taught at school [1]. This creates space for an understanding of learners' linguistic profiles that extends beyond the language of schooling and formally taught foreign languages. From a translinguaging perspective, however, recognition of multilingual competence does not necessarily entail the active mobilisation of multilingual resources in classroom interaction. EU policy provides a rationale for acknowledging linguistic diversity and developing language-aware educational environments but does not prescribe how resources from different languages should interact during learning. Translinguaging-oriented pedagogy can therefore be regarded as one possible pedagogical interpretation of these principles rather than a direct policy requirement.

This distinction has implications for teacher education. The 2019 Recommendation highlights teacher education and professional development as important to effective language learning [1]. Its language-awareness orientation also points to a broader professional challenge: teachers need to be prepared to recognise linguistic diversity as a potential educational resource and to make informed decisions about its pedagogical use.

3.3 The Council of Europe: From Plurilingual Competence to Plurilingual and Intercultural Education

The Council of Europe provides a complementary but conceptually distinct perspective. The CEFR Companion Volume gives increased prominence to plurilingual/pluricultural competence and mediation, presenting language users and learners as social agents able to mobilise available resources in communication and action [2]. This orientation challenges a conception of language competence based exclusively on the separate use of individual languages and provides an important point of contact with translinguaging-oriented approaches. As discussed in Section 2, however, plurilingualism and translinguaging have distinct conceptual and institutional histories and should not be treated as interchangeable.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 develops the plurilingual and intercultural orientation further by linking it to equity, social inclusion, societal integration, human rights and participation in democratic culture [11]. Importantly, it values linguistic and cultural diversity irrespective of whether particular languages possess official status or form part of the formal curriculum. The Recommendation also explicitly includes those responsible for initial and further teacher education, universities and educational research among the actors involved in implementing plurilingual and intercultural education [11].

Taken together, the selected EU and Council of Europe documents indicate a broad European orientation towards greater recognition of multilingual repertoires, linguistic diversity and plurilingual education. They neither constitute a single conceptual framework nor prescribe translinguaging as a pedagogical method. The following section therefore examines more closely where these orientations converge with translinguaging-oriented pedagogy and where a gap remains between multilingual policy principles and their pedagogical operationalisation.

4. Translinguaging through the Lens of European Policy: A Critical Analysis

The policy frameworks discussed above reveal a clear European orientation towards multilingualism, plurilingual competence and recognition of linguistic diversity. However, they do not prescribe translinguaging as a specific pedagogical approach. The relationship between European policy and translinguaging must therefore be examined at the level of underlying principles. The following analysis considers this relationship across the three dimensions identified in Section 3.1.

4.1 Recognition and Mobilisation of Multilingual Repertoires



The strongest area of convergence concerns the recognition of learners as multilingual individuals whose linguistic resources extend beyond the language of schooling or the foreign language being taught. The 2019 Council Recommendation [1] and the Council of Europe framework [2, 11] challenge approaches that render parts of learners' linguistic repertoires educationally invisible. The EU concept of language awareness acknowledges languages beyond the formal curriculum [1], while the Council of Europe's plurilingual perspective conceptualises linguistic competence as a repertoire in which resources from different languages and cultures can interact [2].

This repertoire-oriented perspective provides an important conceptual link with translanguaging. Translanguaging scholarship similarly foregrounds the resources available to multilingual speakers for meaning-making [6], while pedagogical translanguaging deliberately mobilises resources across languages for learning [4, 8]. Both perspectives therefore challenge deficit-oriented views in which learners' other languages are treated primarily as obstacles to acquiring the target or school language. Nevertheless, recognition and mobilisation should not be conflated. European policy may legitimise multilingual repertoires without specifying that learners should actively mobilise them during classroom tasks. Pedagogical translanguaging represents one possible way of operationalising such recognition but requires pedagogical decisions that cannot be derived automatically from the policy documents themselves.

4.2 Language-Aware and Inclusive Learning Environments

A second area of convergence concerns inclusion. European approaches increasingly connect linguistic diversity with educational participation, equity and intercultural understanding. The 2019 Recommendation promotes language awareness in schools [1], while Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 links plurilingual and intercultural education with social inclusion, democratic culture and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity [11].

Translanguaging-oriented pedagogy can contribute to these objectives by enabling linguistic resources that may otherwise remain marginalised to become relevant to learning. This may be particularly significant for learners with migrant, refugee or minority-language backgrounds whose repertoires do not necessarily correspond to the languages traditionally accorded educational legitimacy.

However, multilingual practices cannot be assumed to produce inclusion automatically. Learners differ in their repertoires, proficiency, educational histories and willingness to make particular languages visible, while teachers will rarely know all languages represented in their classrooms. Translanguaging-oriented pedagogy therefore requires learning conditions in which diverse resources can be recognised and strategically mobilised without making participation dependent on a shared multilingual profile.

A further tension concerns target-language learning. In foreign language education, meaningful engagement with the target language remains an important objective. A multilingual orientation should therefore not be interpreted as replacing target-language use with unrestricted recourse to other languages. Its pedagogical value depends instead on context-sensitive decisions concerning **when, why and how** multilingual resources support particular learning objectives.

4.3 Teacher Competences for Linguistically Diverse Classrooms

The third dimension concerns the teacher and represents the point at which policy principles and classroom implementation most clearly intersect. European orientations towards multilingual and plurilingual education acquire pedagogical meaning only when teachers can translate them into educational practice.

The 2019 Council Recommendation highlights teacher education and professional development [1], while Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 explicitly includes actors responsible for initial and further teacher education in the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education [11]. The CEFR Companion Volume, through its emphasis on mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competence [2], similarly has implications for teachers working with linguistically diverse learners. Taken together, these orientations suggest that language teachers require not only competence in the language they teach but also an understanding of multilingual development and the pedagogical implications of linguistic diversity.

From a translanguaging perspective, teachers need to identify learners' linguistic resources, recognise cross-linguistic connections, design activities that purposefully mobilise these resources and evaluate their contribution to specific learning objectives. They also need to reflect critically on assumptions



concerning language separation, target-language use and the educational status of different languages. A teacher may recognise multilingualism as an educational value while continuing to organise classroom practice according to essentially monolingual assumptions.

This exposes a policy–pedagogy gap. European frameworks create an environment in which multilingualism, plurilingual repertoires and linguistic diversity are increasingly valued, but are necessarily less prescriptive about the concrete pedagogical practices through which these principles should be realised. Teacher education therefore constitutes a crucial mediating space between European policy orientations and classroom practice.

The analysis thus indicates convergence without equivalence. European policy frameworks and translanguaging scholarship share a movement away from exclusively monolingual understandings of language education and towards recognition of multilingual repertoires. Yet recognition of multilingualism at policy level does not in itself constitute translanguaging pedagogy. The decisive step lies in the pedagogical operationalisation of these principles, making teacher education central to their implementation.

5. Implications for Initial and Continuing Teacher Education

The analysis presented above suggests that the implementation of European multilingual and plurilingual policy orientations depends substantially on teachers' capacity to interpret linguistic diversity pedagogically. Recognition of multilingualism at policy level does not automatically lead to classroom practices that mobilise learners' linguistic resources. Teacher education therefore constitutes a critical space in which European policy orientations can be translated into informed and context-sensitive pedagogical practice.

Based on the three analytical dimensions examined in Section 4, five interconnected competence dimensions are proposed for initial and continuing language teacher education.

First, European multilingual policy awareness involves the ability to understand major European orientations concerning multilingualism, plurilingual competence, language awareness and linguistic diversity. Teachers should be able to relate these orientations to their own educational contexts rather than treating European policy as detached from classroom practice.

Second, critical multilingual awareness concerns teachers' understanding of multilingualism as an educational resource and their capacity to examine critically assumptions concerning language separation, linguistic hierarchies and the status attributed to different languages in education. This includes recognising learners' linguistic repertoires without reducing them to formally taught or socially dominant languages.

Third, pedagogical mobilisation of multilingual repertoires refers to the capacity to design and implement activities in which learners' linguistic resources are purposefully activated to support language and/or content learning. Such competence requires pedagogical intentionality: teachers need to determine when, why and how multilingual resources contribute to specific learning objectives.

Fourth, inclusive and intercultural multilingual pedagogy involves creating learning environments in which linguistic and cultural diversity can contribute to participation and learning. Teachers need to take account of differences among learners' repertoires and experiences while avoiding practices that marginalise particular languages or require learners to display linguistic identities they may not wish to make visible.

Fifth, reflective pedagogical judgement concerns the capacity to evaluate multilingual practices in relation to context, learner needs and learning objectives. Rather than applying translanguaging as a universal technique, teachers should be able to balance the pedagogical use of multilingual resources with sustained opportunities for target-language development.

These five dimensions are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Proposed Competence Framework for Translanguaging-Oriented European Language Teacher Education

Competence dimension	Teacher should be able to...	Possible focus in teacher education
European multilingual policy awareness	understand and interpret European multilingual, plurilingual and	Analysis of EU and Council of Europe policy/reference



	inclusive education orientations and relate them to educational practice	documents; links between European orientations and national/institutional contexts (comparison with national curricula and institutional practices)
Critical multilingual awareness	recognize learners' linguistic repertoires and critically examine assumptions about language separation, linguistic hierarchies and target-language use	Reflection on language biographies and on teacher beliefs; critical analysis of classroom discourse and practices
Pedagogical mobilization of multilingual repertoires	design purposeful activities that activate learners' linguistic resources for language and/or content learning	Cross-linguistic tasks; mediation; multilingual materials; pedagogical translanguaging strategies
Inclusive and intercultural multilingual pedagogy	use linguistic diversity to support participation and learning while responding to differences among learners; recognize and value diverse linguistic repertoires while ensuring equitable participation	Multilingual classroom scenarios; intercultural case studies (migration and minority-language contexts); inclusive task design
Reflective pedagogical judgement	evaluate when, why and how multilingual resources support learning objectives and target-language development, and whether they should or should not be mobilized	Lesson planning and analysis; observation; microteaching; reflective practice and action research

The framework is relevant to both initial and continuing teacher education, although its implementation will necessarily differ across contexts. In initial teacher education, the five dimensions could be integrated into courses on language didactics, multilingualism, intercultural education and teaching practice. Prospective teachers could analyse European policy documents, examine multilingual classroom scenarios and design, implement and reflect on multilingual tasks. In continuing professional development, the same dimensions could support practising teachers in critically examining established classroom routines and experimenting with context-appropriate multilingual strategies.

The proposed framework should not be understood as a prescriptive model or as an argument for translanguaging in every classroom situation. Its purpose is to identify competences that can help teachers make informed decisions within linguistically diverse educational settings. The emphasis is therefore on professional judgement rather than methodological prescription.

At institutional level, this also requires teacher education programmes to move beyond treating multilingualism exclusively as a specialised topic relevant only to teachers working in explicitly multilingual settings. If linguistic diversity and plurilingual competence constitute broader European educational concerns [1, 2, 11], the capacity to work with multilingual repertoires should form part of the professional preparation of language teachers more generally.

6. Conclusions

This paper examined the extent to which current European language education policy orientations provide a conceptual and institutional basis for translanguaging-oriented approaches and considered the implications for initial and continuing language teacher education. The analysis indicates substantial convergence between contemporary European orientations towards multilingualism and key principles underlying translanguaging pedagogy. Both recognise the importance of learners' multilingual repertoires, challenge exclusively monolingual understandings of language competence and emphasise the educational value of linguistic and cultural diversity.

This convergence, however, should not be interpreted as equivalence. The European policy and reference documents examined do not prescribe translanguaging as a particular pedagogical approach. Rather, they establish a policy environment in which multilingual and plurilingual repertoires are increasingly recognised and valued. Translanguaging-oriented pedagogy can therefore be understood as one possible means of translating these broader principles into educational practice. The distinction between recognition of multilingualism at policy level and pedagogical mobilisation of multilingual resources is central in this respect.



This distinction places teacher education at the centre of the policy–practice relationship. Based on the analysis, the paper proposed five interconnected competence dimensions: European multilingual policy awareness, critical multilingual awareness, pedagogical mobilisation of multilingual repertoires, inclusive and intercultural multilingual pedagogy, and reflective pedagogical judgement. Together, these dimensions provide a framework for connecting European policy orientations with the professional preparation and continuing development of language teachers.

The study is limited by its focus on a small, purposively selected corpus of European policy and reference documents. Moreover, document analysis can identify conceptual orientations and pedagogical implications but cannot demonstrate how these are interpreted or enacted within national, institutional or classroom contexts. Future research should therefore examine how multilingual policy principles are incorporated into teacher education programmes and how prospective and practising teachers interpret and implement them. Comparative research across European educational contexts would be particularly valuable in identifying both common tendencies and context-specific constraints. Ultimately, promoting multilingualism in European education requires more than recognising linguistic diversity as a European value. It requires teachers who can transform that recognition into purposeful, inclusive and context-sensitive pedagogical practice. Teacher education therefore constitutes a critical space in which European multilingual policy can move from principle to practice.

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