



Call for papers

International conference

Plurilingualism and language education, an invisible pillar of democracy? Critical perspectives and contemporary perspectives

12-14 May 2027, Sorbonne Nouvelle University

<https://plurilingdemo.sciencesconf.org/>

In partnership with the European Observatory of Plurilingualism, API Education Forum and the UFR LLD - The New Meetings at la Sorbonne Nouvelle

This call for papers builds upon our existing expertise in sociolinguistics and language teaching. However, the conference we are organizing aims to broaden this dialogue to include other disciplines and geographical areas. It seeks to provide a space for reflection and scholarly dialogue on the role of multilingualism and language education in building and preserving democracies.

« Comment conjuguer différences et démocratie ? » (Wieviorka, 2019, p. VII).

Contemporary democracies face political and social crises fueled by discriminatory and xenophobic ideologies that challenge the legitimacy of diversity and the recognition of the other (Piccardo, 2017; Dalgalian, 2017; Spaëth, 2010; Rancière, 2005)¹. In this context of

¹ Taking the case of France, the construction of a national imaginary (Anderson, 2002) in the 19th century aimed to establish a nation-state. A nation-state is a legal concept that links administrative functions to a defined identity. That is to say, a type of government and institutions corresponds to a population presumed to belong to the same identity group within a defined territory (Rosanvallon, 1990). The consolidation of the French nation-state during the 19th century was accompanied by debates on the importance of the French language and on the implementation of a standardized French curriculum for schools, intended to linguistically unify the territory (Balibar, 1985). The 19th century thus corresponds to the rise of a monolingual ideology, aiming to impose the paradigm “one language = one nation.” We can therefore conclude that, at least in France, while multilingualism is a very common reality in the lives of speakers, official language policy has a monolingual

growing nationalism (Billig, 1995), this conference proposes to examine, from a critical perspective and in light of recent global events², the role of multilingualism and language education in the construction and preservation of democratic systems (Dănișor, 2025; Diagne, 2024; Brudermann, Aguilar Río & Abouzaïd, 2019).

Institutional and Personal Links Between Languages and Democracy

Democracy is a polysemous concept, the meaning of which varies according to the contexts and ideological interpretations to which it refers. For example, for C. Taylor (2019, 2014), it can be considered, in light of pluralism, as a system of sharing based on a form of reciprocity within societies. According to this view, the principles of equality-participation and equality-redistribution governing social relations would then rest on productive diversity³, implying a systematic circulation of knowledge, resources, and services.

Furthermore, the institutional recognition of this diversity and its inclusion in political practices would constitute one of the foundations of democracy, a political regime that the Council of Europe (2019) considers a culture that can be taught through multilingual and intercultural education⁴. In this case, multilingualism describes the linguistic practices of people capable of using several languages, registers, or linguistic varieties (Juillard, 2007), but not only that, because “language is at the heart of the individual, both a personal expression—and their means of communication—with the Other. From this perspective, language is for each person—far more than their social, professional, or economic status—inseparable from their being in the world, from their personality” (Dalgalian, 2017, p. 83). Beyond the social phenomenon, multilingualism is a political and scientific concept that aims to promote linguistic plurality (Nelde, 2004).

Representativeness of Democracies and the Agency of Plural Populations on a Given Territory

The issue of recognition and appreciation by political bodies of the diversity of people within democratic systems relates in particular to the question of the agency (Bandura, 2001) of minority populations in our societies: speakers of endangered languages, social groups marginalized for political and cultural reasons, foreign nationals, refugees, etc. (Wei & Schnell, 2025). It also refers to the modalities of their inclusion (whether through integration or assimilation (Schnapper, 2007) via language teaching and learning, as well as the mechanisms of linguistic capital hierarchy in the “language market” (Heller 2023 [2002];

ideological tradition. What are the implications of this paradox? Multilingualism is both an individual reality for speakers and a value to be defended. The work of the Council of Europe, carried out with language teaching specialists (for France, D. Coste, D. Moore, and G. Zarate), has resulted in texts providing language teachers with tools to address multilingual issues. In parallel, the development of sociodidactics, particularly in Grenoble, following the work of L. Dabène, has led to the identification and creation of techniques for exposing children to the diversity of the world's languages (1994).

² Such as the normalization of extremism and its access to power, territorial conflicts linked to expansionist logics or the weakening of democracies in favor of autocratic regimes.

³ Productive diversity is “a system of work in which primary value is located in human skills and knowledge, work group and client relationships, and continuous organisational learning. Local and global differences are used as a productive resource, and products and services customised for niche markets” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012, p. 106).

⁴ Multilingual and intercultural education « valorise la diversité culturelle, elle valorise le respect de la différence culturelle et l'ouverture aux autres croyances, conceptions du monde et pratiques, et elle vise à développer des facultés d'analyse et d'esprit critique tout en élaborant des connaissances et une compréhension critique du monde » (Conseil de l'Europe, 2022, p. 21).

Calvet, 2002; Bourdieu, 1982), where certain languages are assigned a higher political and economic value than others.

It is worth recalling here that every speech act—whether produced in a first, second, or foreign language—is inseparable from its conditions of performance. A performative utterance, for example, can only acquire social existence if it is supported by the institution that confers legitimacy upon it; outside this framework, it loses its social significance (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 71). Consequently, speakers of regional or foreign languages see their power to act is weakened, and they find themselves relegated to inferior positions in the civic sphere. As S. Breidbach (2003) emphasizes, legal rights can only be exercised if individuals have the necessary means to claim and access them. Consequently, those excluded from social, linguistic, and cultural capital find themselves marginalized in the exercise of their rights: a situation that underscores the crucial role of language teaching and learning.

Faced with these challenges, the question then arises of the legitimacy of linguistic norms, their transmission, and their variations—often rooted in institutionalized cultural habits—and the corollary question of the marginalization of norms originating from minority groups (Guerin, 2023; Costa, 2022). Such ideological processes are likely to produce a feeling of linguistic insecurity among speakers and to fuel discriminatory and/or xenophobic social representations, thus contributing to the reproduction of relations of domination (Francart, 1997).

On this basis, by questioning the role of multilingualism and language education in the construction and stability of democracies, this colloquium ultimately aims to instill pluralistic values into linguistic, educational and migration policies, as well as into teaching practices that lack them, while revitalizing those that are currently weakened by extremist drifts.

Prospective themes of the conference

Proposals should align with at least one of the following themes:

- **Language Education, Democracy, and Inclusion.** This theme aims to explore how language teaching and learning can contribute to the emergence of an inclusive democratic society. What connections can be established between language education, democracy, and inclusion? How do current approaches foster the development of learners' agency in the classroom and in society? How can language teaching contribute to citizenship education? To what extent does considering learners' emotional experiences allow for a renewed reflection on living together through languages?
- **Democracy and Minority Languages.** This theme examines the challenges related to the preservation and promotion of minority languages and populations in the sustainability of democracies. To what extent are these populations, as well as their linguistic and cultural practices, represented and included in democratic systems by political institutions, and according to what mechanisms? What are the obstacles to the revitalization of their languages and cultures? How do speakers' experiences of linguistic domination or marginalization influence their relationship to democracy? The role of language transmission as a link between minority populations and political institutions can then be examined.

- **Language Policy and Democracy.** This theme focuses on the active roles of language and education policies in the establishment and preservation of democracies, as well as the methods of their implementation. To what extent does language education promote democratic participation in a given territory? What mechanisms allow language and education policies to influence the dynamics of inclusion or exclusion within democratic frameworks (Pradeau, 2025, 2021; OECD, 2025)? Finally, it seeks to determine the extent to which language policies explicitly or implicitly embody democratic values.
- **Language Practices and Migration.** This research area focuses on language practices developed in situations of voluntary or forced migration, embedded within complex processes of globalization, particularly those linked to (de)colonization, wars, and climate change. It adopts a critical perspective attentive to power relations, linguistic inequalities, and the conditions for the effective democratization of language education. To what extent do language practices promote or hinder democratic participation and the agency of people in migration situations? What are the democratic challenges related to access to civic participation and the recognition of migrants' multilingual repertoires?
- **Multilingualism and digital citizenship.** Democracies can be challenged by the lack of regulation of institutional bodies and by the dynamics of deterritorialization and reterritorialization inherent in the digital realm (De Lespinois, 2017). This research area focuses both on tensions between languages in digital spaces (Aguilar Río and Brudermann, 2024; Faucompré and Putsche, 2023) and on digital citizenship education within the framework of language teaching and learning, considered from a pluralist perspective (Ollivier & Jeanneau, 2023). How do individual and community ideologies circulating in digital spaces interact with the principles of digital citizenship, and what trends emerge? In what ways do these spaces contribute to the revitalization of minority languages, and what representations and experiences of multilingualism do they help to shape?

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Submission of proposals

Possible presentation formats:

- Individual presentations (20-minute presentation followed by a 10-minute discussion);
- Symposia (90 minutes);
- Workshops (90 minutes);
- Escape games (90 minutes);
- Video (10 minutes, if unable to travel).

Presentations are open to practitioners in the field.

Note: All presentation formats (oral/PowerPoint) must be bilingual (English, French, or another language).

Submission guidelines:

Proposals must be submitted by October 10, 2026, via the *SciencesConf* conference platform: <https://plurilingdemo.sciencesconf.org/>

Proposals should be no more than 500 words and include bibliographic references. Each proposal must include two abstracts, presented in a bilingual format and including at least English, French, and/or Spanish.

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Publication

A publication will be considered following the symposium.

Important dates

1. Call for papers opens: May 2026
2. Call for papers closes: October 10, 2026
3. Notification of results to authors: mid-December 2026

4. Conference registration: January - February 2027
5. Program submission for review: March 2027
6. Final program submission: April 2027
7. Submission of PowerPoint presentations or other software: May 2027
8. Conference: May 12-14, 2027

Practical information

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Tram: T3A.

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