

Fostering and Preventing Multilingualism at School

The boundaries of my language are the boundaries of my world.

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, 1921, 5.6

1. Acquisition of multilingualism

- ❖ Languages can be learned throughout one's entire lifetime; children are the most 'gifted'.
- ❖ Pupils with German as their mother tongue benefit from the contact with other languages and cultures.
- ❖ It is important to cultivate the spoken and written command of one's first language(s).
 - Every language is worth cultivating (prestige).
 - Survey: Which languages are present at school in which form?

2. Lived multilingualism – stimulating and inhibiting factors

- ❖ **The surfaces occupied by a certain language at school reveal its status and power.**
Oases of encounters or (the last monolingual) defences?
 - ✚ Inside presentation: staircase, corridors, classrooms/classes without a classroom of their own, magazines, libraries, mediation room, information points/bazaars, teachers' room...
 - ✚ Outside presentation: website, events, festivities...
 - **Who defines language surfaces, and who inhabits them?**
- ❖ **Whatever the subject, you teach a language.**
 - ✚ Teaching a subject in the second language, the mother language, or a foreign language depending on the pupils' first language(s)
 - ✚ Heterogeneity/differences in level/reports?
- ❖ **Supporting the teachers**
 - ✚ Letting pupils teach
 - ✚ Establishing access to specific information
 - ✚ Cultivating forms of mutual support (materials and methods)
 - Listening to profound arguments by the pupils and implementing adequate measures

3. Focussing on multilingualism as a staff resource

Multilingual teachers; teachers with a first language other than German; teachers with special professional experiences (abroad, at home); teachers trained to teach specific subjects in German or to teach German as a second language; teachers who have studied a foreign language; language assistants; teachers coming from other professional fields; cultivating teachers as a valuable hardware and using the system as a modifiable software

- A culture of learning in which the respect for both one's own and the other,
- the other languages, becomes visible.