

Lost for Words? : Maltese Teachers' Views on Cross-linguistic Practices and Flexible Language Pedagogies in Bilingual and Multilingual Primary Classrooms - *Dr Michelle Panzavecchia*

As a result of globalisation, bilingualism and multilingualism are becoming more of a norm rather than an exception and speaking two or more languages is associated with multiple benefits. Malta, is one country currently seeking ways in which to adapt to the realities of today's linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. This paper forms part of a doctoral study focusing on bilingual teachers' identities and the ways in which their backgrounds impact their perceptions and pedagogical practices. Data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine purposely selected primary school teachers, to explore their bilingual identities and beliefs, how being bilingual may affect their pedagogical practices, and to investigate whether they believe they are using cross-linguistic practices during lessons. This study supports previous research advocating the use of fluid and hybridised language practices such as codeswitching and translanguaging as the way forward in meeting the super-diversity of today's classrooms. Demographic changes on the island call for an appraisal of the pedagogical use of judiciously hybridising languages in order to support multilingual students whilst striving to preserve the Maltese language, ensuring the provision of a socially just and equitable education for all. In view of these findings, recommendations are made to policy makers, stake holders and practitioners to improve the effectiveness of initial teacher education programmes and professional practice within the evolving multilingual situation in Malta and beyond.