

Book review of Leonardo Veliz (Ed., 2025). *Multiculturalism and multilingualism in education*. Brill.

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Introduction

On 3rd March 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump signed a historic executive order designating English as the official language of the United States. Remarkably, this decision marks the first instance of a federally mandated official language since the nation's founding nearly 250 years ago (Davies, 2025). This political act does not merely symbolise linguistic unification; rather, it exemplifies a broader global resurgence of monocultural and monolingual ideologies, at times escalating into overt hostility towards multilingual and multicultural identities. Indeed, across multiple nations, recent years have witnessed a troubling surge of what might be described as 'anti-languages madness' (Lo Bianco, 2025), where nationalist discourses promote exclusionary practices and linguistic intolerance.

Against this troubling global backdrop, we are facing a paradox: while globalisation connects diverse cultures more closely than ever, many nations simultaneously retreat into isolationism. Pluralism, a concept thoughtfully explained by Banks and Banks (2020), is essential; it describes how various cultural identities can co-exist equitably in a shared society. Yet, the deep-seated monolingual mindset remains a stubborn barrier, and superficial diversity initiatives simply are not enough. To make meaningful societal progress, genuine pluralistic approaches are urgently needed (Veliz, 2025).

Education lies at the very heart of this transformative journey. Classrooms around the world are becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual, challenging traditional educational frameworks. Educators today across all subjects require new tools, training, and perspectives to effectively teach diverse student populations (Tao & Liyanage, 2020). This makes the volume *Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in Education* (published by Brill in 2025; see Figure 1), edited by Associate Professor Leonardo Veliz, who currently serves as Head of Department – Curriculum at the University of New England, particularly timely and prominent.

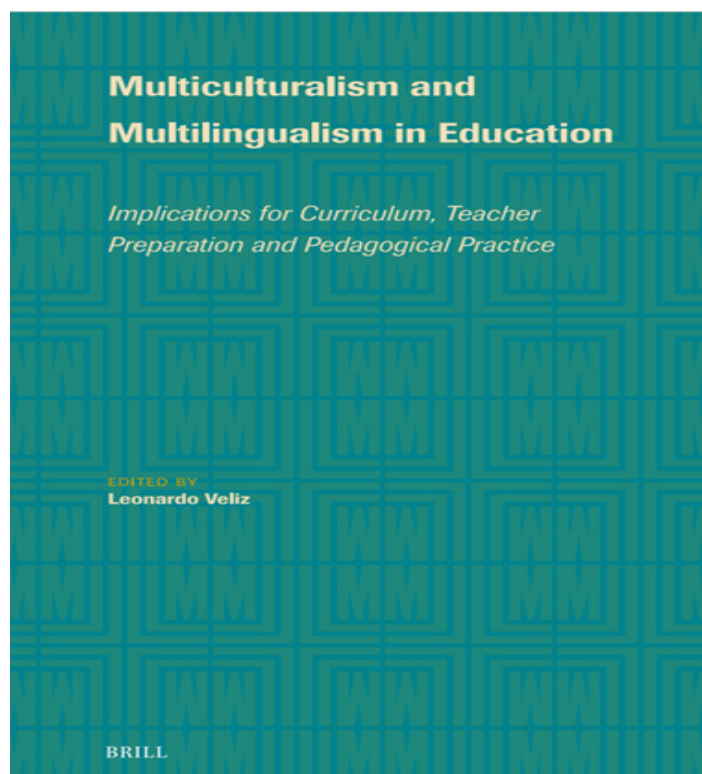


Figure 1: The book cover of *Multiculturalism and Multilingualism in Education*.

Organisation

Beyond a concise introduction that establishes its conceptual framework and previews its contents, I found the structure of this book especially helpful, thoughtfully partitioned into three thematic sections across its 13 chapters. In this review, I will mirror this tripartite structure, as it provides a coherent and effective lens through which to critique how the contributors engage with the imperative themes of language policy, teacher preparation and practice, and the social fabric of pluralistic communities.

Part One (Chapters 1-3) is dedicated to how language policies unfold in different educational contexts. In Chapter 1, Rebecca Ward examines the lack of coherent multilingual

inclusion policies for children with developmental disabilities across the UK's four nations. Drawing on a comprehensive analysis of 77 government resources, she points out a significant policy gap, urging a more consistent and supportive top-down framework. Chapter 2, by Mauricio Véliz-Campos and Fabiola P. Ehlers-Zavala, shifts the discussion to Chile, offering a powerful critique of linguistic hegemony in foreign language education. They propose a Human Ecological Language Pedagogy that recognises local contexts and supports a decolonial, socially just vision of language teaching. In Chapter 3, Anita Dewi and Cindarsatio Damarhapsoro analyse Indonesia's national language policy. Through document review and interviews, they expose the tension between policy prescriptions and everyday multilingual practices; their study highlights how code-switching between Bahasa Indonesia and local languages like Javanese can enhance both instruction and student identity.

The second section (Chapters 4-9) focuses on equipping teachers to navigate culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. In Chapter 4, Nell Foster and colleagues introduce Functional Multilingual Learning, a pedagogical approach that bridges language awareness and translanguaging in Belgium's complex linguistic landscape. It offers a robust model for incorporating students' full linguistic repertoires into instruction. Chapter 5, by Laura Gurney and Eugenia Demuro, explores how language teachers in Australia and New Zealand conceptualise their own multilingualism. Their findings suggest a lack of shared definitions among educators and propose the concept of 'linguaging' to better capture their lived linguistic realities.

Chapter 6 presents a grounded case study from Malta, where Antoinette Camilleri-Grima demonstrates how pluralistic pedagogy can successfully engage migrant learners in Maltese language learning, contributing to both linguistic proficiency and social integration. Chapter 7, authored by Michelle Kohler and Angela Scarino, outlines a set of pedagogical principles informed by collaborative action research across Australian schools. Their work highlights the importance of cultural responsiveness and co-designed curriculum in enabling deep intercultural learning.

In Chapter 8, Saioa Larraza and Leire Diaz-de-Gereñu investigate primary schools in the Basque Autonomous Community. Their investigation reveals that teachers embrace multilingualism even when tasked with preserving an endangered language. Chapter 9, by Adriana Diaz, rounds out this part with a compelling case for using open educational resources (OERs) in university Spanish courses. By drawing on frameworks such as critical pedagogy and decolonial theory, Diaz shows how OERs can empower students to critically reflect on language and identity.

Part Three (Chapters 10-13) examines the social realities that influence language learning and use. In Chapter 10, Yining Wang's ethnographic inquiry into Chinese immigrant children in Australia shows how family practices evolve over time to support heritage language maintenance, with children playing active roles in shaping these outcomes. Chapter 11, by Sviatlana Karpava, looks at Russian-speaking parents in Cyprus and how their engagement in their

children's English learning is influenced by perceptions of academic and social mobility. Teachers and schools are shown to play crucial roles in supporting and validating this parental involvement.

Chapter 12, written by Kelechi Anusionwu and colleagues, reflects on international students' experiences in Estonia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings speak to the importance of culturally sensitive online learning environments that consider learners' backgrounds, preferences, and identities. Finally, in Chapter 13, Giuseppe D'Orazi explores how students in Australian universities construct their ideal multilingual and multicultural selves. The longitudinal study depicts how language learning is intrinsically tied to personal identity and intercultural awareness.

Taken together, the volume's three parts demonstrate a cohesive and comprehensive approach to examining multilingualism and multiculturalism. They span systems-level critique, classroom-based innovation, and community-driven insight, which delivers a rich and layered understanding of the challenges and opportunities that define this field today.

Critical evaluation

Reflecting on this collection, I greatly appreciate its balanced and evidence-informed approach – well-researched yet accessible and practical. Its standout strength lies in effectively bridging theory with real-world educational practices, which provides teaching practitioners, policymakers, and scholars with actionable insights. The wide range of international case studies is specifically commendable, as it accentuates the global nature of multilingualism and multiculturalism in education, showcasing comparative perspectives.

One of the most impressive aspects of this book is its practical orientation. Rather than merely identifying challenges, the contributors consistently offer well-considered pedagogical strategies and solutions. This solution-focused approach ensures the book's relevance not only as an academic text but also as a hands-on resource for educators in varied classroom environments.

The coherent organisation further enhances the volume's readability. Each chapter flows logically into the next, creating a cohesive narrative that reinforces key themes and allows readers to see the connections between policy, practice, and societal impact. The contributions have covered multifaceted contexts, both geographically and culturally, which draw our attention to universal challenges and unique local solutions.

Despite its strengths, the volume could benefit from a greater diversity of methodological approaches. Most contributions relied on qualitative case studies; and while these offer in-depth insights, incorporating quantitative or mixed-method research could have broadened their analytical reach. Additionally, the inclusion of discussions on integrating educational technology into multilingual education practices would enhance the book's contemporary relevance.

Compared to similar texts, Veliz's edited book stands out due to its clear structure, coherent narrative, and actionable recommendations. It transcends mere critique of existing problems, offering tangible and practical pedagogical strategies. This quality makes it especially valuable for those directly involved in education policy and classroom practice.

In conclusion, this volume convincingly underscores that multilingualism and multiculturalism are not merely aspirational but essential for equitable education. Achieving inclusivity is undoubtedly complex, but the book provides clear pathways toward meaningful progress. Future research should further explore the intersection of technology and multilingual education to support ongoing efforts toward truly inclusive educational environments.

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