**Dr Shem Macdonald:** So, what does this mean for your teaching? Now, there’s a few things I just want to cover. And I’ll go through these reasonably quickly, because I’m conscious of time and I want to leave time for some questions. But these are some of the areas I want to touch on in thinking about how you might draw on your plurilingual strategies and enhance those for your learners.

Thinking about EAL learners’ languages, it’s important that we take an active interest in the languages that learners know and use. Asking them where, how and for what purposes and with whom they use their languages is a good way of doing that. And you might have...you might be familiar with language maps that have been created with plurilingual learners. And I’ll mention the work of Jacqueline D’warte, and also Yvette Slaughter has done work in this area. And some of the questions she asked learners when creating these language maps are listed there on the screen. And these are things that...diagrams, which learners create. And I don’t have examples to show you today, but you can imagine...you’ve probably seen some of the diagrams with the outline of the human...the human body, with people drawing colours and languages listed to different parts of the body. The pictures I showed you before that I use with my learners in some way are a form of diagramming their response to language use. And also, other tree diagrams and other quite elaborate maps of how and when and who learners use languages with, and how that can be a useful way to establish and understand your learners’ use of languages, the different domains in which they use them, and who they use them with.

Another thing to be aware of is that learners’ proficiency in their languages may vary, and there may be gaps, particularly in relation to written language.

This quote from the VCAA – “There will also be distinct differences between students in their home languages, their literacy and their socio-cognitive development, and in the linguistic resources they are able to draw on.” So, I guess it’s important to consider that it’s not...a learner may speak a language, but they may not necessarily be fully...they may have gaps in their ability to use that language, due to perhaps moving from one country to another, where they’re not getting exposure to that language as fully as they might, or depending on their home circumstances and who they have available to communicate in that language. And probably their writing may be one area that doesn’t keep up with their speaking if it’s not something that they need to do regularly, if their move to Australia has involved focusing mostly on English-language writing and reading. So that’s something to be aware of.

The other point... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...moving towards plurilingualism. And at the VicTESOL symposium last year, we had a panel of speakers which included Howard Nicholas and Julie Choi and Marianne Turner, who all talked about their ideas in relation to plurilingualism. And I’ll just pick up on a couple of them here.

One thing that Howard Nicholas said was, awareness is an important stepping stone towards capability of using more than one language. So, awareness is one step, but it’s not the full way. We also need to think about how we can develop capability.

And Julie Choi also mentioned, harnessing plurilingualism is more than just making the language visible in the classroom. Rather, it’s drawing on all our languages to make meaning. So it’s an active process. Learners are not necessarily able to do this consciously and purposely, but they’re moving towards doing this and thinking about ways that we... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...help our learners to do that.

I’d also argue that it’s important to engage everybody. And if we think about a culture within a school, we need to be able to try and foster a culture of interest in language and languages, and to encourage monolingual L1 English users, students or teachers even, colleagues, to explore language, and making exploring language a regular and safe activity, developing and demonstrating a genuine interest in learning about languages.

And, as a teacher, I think, working with our learners who use languages which we may not know or have any understanding of, it’s important to allow ourselves to not be the expert with all the answers. It’s not necessary to know much or a lot about the languages spoken by your learners. It can be helpful, but it’s not essential. You can use that...a little bit of knowledge to find out more about the languages spoken by your learners and create a bridge to...an opportunity for them to tell you about what they know about the language. I would suggest starting very small – experiment with different ways that you can explore learners’ languages and observe what works for you and for your learners.

It’s important we promote positive views of plurilingualism, challenging the ideas that learners who are beginning to learn English have no language. That’s not the case – they do have at least one other language, if not more. Moving towards... Students who are moving towards L1 equivalent proficiency, the notion that they are struggling I think is not a useful one to have. They’re not struggling. They’re on a developmental pathway, and they’re learning the language. So considering taking that perspective, I think, is a positive way of promoting plurilingualism. And also avoiding the notion that learners who do not write in English yet are illiterate. They may well have literacies in other languages and other modes. It’s important to acknowledge... (SPEAKS INDISTINCTLY)

And also, if we consider changes to terminology over the years, the notion...the move from talking about ‘foreign languages’ in Australia to talking about ‘community languages’ is an example of promoting more positive views of plurilingualism – rather than something that people who are not part of our country have, it’s actually part of people who are within our community use. And I think the change in terminology from ‘English as a second language’ to ‘English as an additional language’ is also evidence of that notion of, actually, learners might have more than one language, and it’s not about first and second and third, even if they’ve learnt the languages in that chronological order, but it’s also about importance of all the languages that learners speak.

A couple of ideas here from the author Piccardo, talking about a notion of all the languages in a program being of equal importance. So, this brings in, I guess, connections with languages other than English that are being taught in a context and how you might draw synergies between what’s happening in those classrooms with what you do in the EAL classroom, and finding connections. Because often the languages syllabus is quite different, has quite a different focus to what EAL syllabuses show. And so, trying to make those connections with your colleagues who teach languages and with the curriculum and how you can think about ways to combine perspectives there.

Fostering a plurilingual mindset in your school. What are some of the ways we can challenge dominant monolingual assumptions embedded in school culture? And this is a question that came up in one of the previous webinars, which I thought was an interesting one. And I’ve attempted to sort of address that here. I’d suggest involving both EAL teachers and your non-EAL colleagues. Teachers without experience of using another language may have views that language abilities are static – you’re either bilingual or you’re not. And Marianne Turner talked about teachers’ understanding shifting from being this static state – this person’s bilingual, that person is monolingual and nothing changes – to being a situation that evolved, that people would...their plurilingualism and their bilingualism would evolve and change, and having a different concept around how that worked.

Involving both your EAL learners and your English L1 learners. Encouraging learners to talk about their experiences of learning, using and living languages, whether they are fluent or whether they just know a few words in another language.

And you’re probably familiar with Jim Cummins’s work in Canada, looking at identity texts. And these are texts which learners create, which draw on their knowledge of other languages and... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...stories... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...as a stepping stone towards being able to write proficiently in either of their languages, or all of their languages, and also in working towards developing proficiency in the target language – so, in our case, in English.

And so, Jim Cummins has written about having these texts where the learners begin their planning and developing in their home language, or the language they are most confident with, and to scaffold towards translating some of that into English, finding people who can help them with that, using resources – Google Translate, bilingual dictionaries – and creating identity texts, which are then published around the school as a way of promoting their plurilingualism.

Another point about this, I just noticed there was...and I can’t remember where I picked this one up, but... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...the point made was, we can encourage learners to think about their own language and to make comparisons with English. When I read that, I thought, “Well, that’s an interesting perspective,” but it tends to sort of make the languages look like they are separate. I prefer to sort of use the sentence at the bottom – we can encourage learners to think about their languages, because English is their language, and their home language is their language. They’re all their languages. And making comparisons between all their languages is another way of creating a more plurilingual view.

You’ve probably seen this poster around by the Department of Education & Training aimed at families, with, in this case, young children, but it could apply to older children too, encouraging the use of home languages and speaking to learners in the language that you know best. And I think this is an interesting reflection on the approach taken in schools in Victoria, and also reflected in the new curriculum.

(AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...Marianne Turner at the symposium, which I thought were useful. Think about where you want your learners to go. Our objective is to help our learners to use English effectively, and how are we going to get there? Using explicit instruction, using all their language resources. And Marianne talked a bit about, if learners resist speaking English, what strategies can we adopt to get them there? So, it’s not just about, “Oh, you can use any language at any time,” but actually now is the time when we want to focus on English, now is the time when you can draw on your other languages. Because sometimes learners may need the encouragement to push ahead with the language that they’re learning. It can be challenging. It can be more work, it can be harder. But at times, that challenge is needed to get them to move to the next level. So, it’s not just about whatever language you want to use at any old time. It’s about considering how you can manage that use of language in positive ways that will develop their English in this case.

Be ready to explain how home languages can be a help rather than a hindrance to learning. And in this case, I’m thinking about when you’re talking to your colleagues, because you may hear comments made by your colleagues which suggest that they see language as a problem. And so it’s worthwhile, perhaps, opening up a conversation about, you know, how language is helpful, how two languages doesn’t impede learning. We have capacity for learning more than one language and it’s not...languages are not impeding that and not a problem. And if your colleagues can see this importance and potential value of using home languages for learning, they’ll probably be...able to come up with some creative ways to... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...have those conversations.

The other resource is...within the Victorian curriculum is Cultural Understanding Capability, is another way that we might be able to harness a focus on languages, and to work with your colleagues in ways that are around that capability and reaching that capability, and getting...bringing language into that, or putting a strong focus on language as part of addressing that capability. So, when we have activities that relate to exploring different cultural aspects, make sure language is part of that, and find ways that your colleagues can engage with that.

There are a number of resources in the VCAA website, including the glossary, which has got some...is well worth looking through to get some ideas about... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...we think we can use to talk about language. And also on the Department site, the ‘EAL/D learners are plurilingual’ is also worth having a look at.

Here’s another resource, which I think is also well worth looking at. A number of authors, many of them Australian – both of them in Australia, I think – but it’s actually a British Council publication. ‘Using multilingual approaches: moving from theory to practice – A resource book of strategies, activities and projects’. That’s a really helpful book that has a lot of strategies that you could pick up on and use with your learners. I’d also point out Mei French has published an article in the recent edition of ‘TESOL in Context’, which is about her work in a classroom, engaging in multilingual activities with her learners.

That’s...I think, my last slide. Yes. My references are there. So, I think we... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) Kellie, were there any questions? I need to hand you back the controls – is that right?

**Kellie Heintz:** Thank you. Thank you, Shem. Now, I do have...I do have some questions here. So, I think what we’ll do is, I’ll get Shem to respond to the questions, and then I’ll refer to the last couple of slides that I have for you. So, thank you, Shem, for a very comprehensive overview of plurilingualism. I do have a question from Maryanne, which asks if you could clarify further the difference between plurilingualism and multilingualism.

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** Yeah. I guess... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...and sometimes you use these terms...used interchangeably, and when I was looking at resources that talked about this, I did find, you know, resources that were using them for the same purpose. I guess the definition that I find the most useful is...and thinking back to that picture I showed you of the head with the different languages in it... And I’m not talking about the one where they’re all in separate compartments – I’m thinking more about the one where they were just swirling around, and thinking about plurilingualism as being within an individual.

So, an individual has...can maybe speak two or three, you know, languages, or varieties of languages, and so they are a plurilingual individual, whereas ‘multilingual’ refers to a societal...or what happens within a society. So, if we think about Melbourne’s example, or Victoria, or even Australia is a multilingual society, because we’ve got different languages that exist in the society, spoken by different people. Not everyone speaks all those languages, and some people don’t speak...you know, speak some languages more than others. So, it’s a multilingual situation there, where the languages are alongside each other, not necessarily overlapping. And so I guess that’s the distinction there.

The other one is bilingualism. And bilingualism, I guess, you know, is traditionally, you know, somebody who speaks two languages. But bilingual education is often focused on two languages, but often the literature on bilingualism talks about, you know, people who speak more than two, so that’s also a bit of a fuzzy one, I guess. I hope that’s helped.

**Kellie Heintz:** Thank you, Shem. Now, the next the next question I have is from Sheila, and she’d like to know, “How can plurilingualism be harnessed and utilised when there is only one student who can speak that language within a setting?”

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** Yeah, that’s a really good question. I guess, offering opportunities for that one user, that one speaker of that language, to, I guess, demonstrate what she or he knows. Obviously, supporting them in their use of that language, or translating from that language into English as is necessary, might be more difficult for the teacher, but the learner doesn’t have the opportunity to engage with peers in speaking their home language. But there is, I guess, not ignoring that person. (CHUCKLES) Giving them the opportunity to share words from their language or aspects of their language with the others in the class, demonstrating, I guess, a view that, even though they’re in the minority... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...and creating a culture, I guess, that values their language as much as the others.

Now, in terms of how you can help them as a teacher, I guess that attitude and that position would be a useful way of doing it, but coming up with other ways... And if there are other, I guess, speakers of the language in the school, it may be some way that you connect with those as well – not necessarily, you know, every day, but in other activities that you could engage with.

**Kellie Heintz:** Thank you, Shem. Now, just some clarification. Emma asks the question about plurilingualism being included within the new curriculum, but not being assessed as part of the achievement standards. So, Shem, would you like to answer that or would you like me to?

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** Maybe you should have a go at that, Kellie. (CHUCKLES)

**Kellie Heintz:** OK, that’s fine. No problem.

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** I’ve got a few ideas, but you... (AUDIO CUTS OUT)

**Kellie Heintz:** Yeah, sure. So, when this curriculum was developed, we wanted to incorporate the concept of plurilingualism, and draw it to the attention of teachers, and to really say we would like the multiple languages that our students come to the classroom with to be celebrated rather than, in some cases...students have been asked to, you know, sit on those languages and not share them. And so, in order to do this, we wanted to make it an important part of the curriculum. But in so doing, we didn’t want to make it another extra thing for teachers to have to report on. So, no, plurilingualism does not have to be reported on. It does not appear in the achievement standards. But we anticipate and we hope and encourage that you will incorporate it and embed it within your teaching, so that your students who come with multiple languages can draw on their linguistic repertoires from all of the languages they speak, rather than just having to stick to speaking in English, which is what some of our colleagues within the EAL circles have been suggesting – that in some settings, students are discouraged from speaking their other languages. And we’re hoping to shift that mindset and to develop a much more inclusive culture that supports and celebrates these things. So, there’s absolutely no requirement for you to report on this. But nonetheless, it’s still a very important part of what we do as teachers of EAL learners.

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** Can I just add to that?

**Kellie Heintz:** Yep. Go, Shem.

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** Yeah, I think it’s interesting too to notice that often...well, the way they’re worded as strategies, and I guess strategies suggest ways that we can teach or ways that we can learn.

And the other thing is that...the example I gave you of the level C, of the different writing...plurilingual strategies for writing, if you think about it, they’re often connected with another skill. So we’re not doing those strategies in isolation, as it were. We’re doing them alongside things like developing a writing or developing listening or reading – one of the macro skills. And, like, I guess, you know, like with lots of tasks we do in classrooms, we’re not isolating and teaching skills individually – we’re integrating other things.

The point that it’s not assessed could suggest that people ignore it, but, as Kellie suggested, you know, it’s something that needs to be addressed. And I would argue that they’re actually...you know, they’re leading towards learners being able to do other aspects of the curriculum... (AUDIO CUTS OUT)

**Kellie Heintz:** Yeah.

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** And so here we’ve got the plurilingual strategies for the writing pathway C. So, obviously, it’s closely connected with developing writing skills in this case, which would...the writing would then be assessed.

**Kellie Heintz:** Thank you, Shem. And I think that’s something that, as teachers who are teaching in an environment that is driven by data and driven by reporting in many respects, it’s refreshing to have some things that are there because they’re important and because they will make a difference, but not necessarily because we want to measure them. And that’s what we would like you to think about as teachers.

Now, I’m just getting a couple more questions as we’re sitting here, Shem, so I’ll just read you the next one, which is... Faye says, “What if almost the whole class, that is 13 out of 15 students, uses their first language and relies too much on a Google translator?”

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** Yeah. That’s a good question, Faye, and it’s one that’s come up in another session, and I’m just trying to find the response that was given there.

I think one of the things to think about is strategies for when using languages and how we use languages is appropriate in a learning context. So, obviously, if everybody is only using the home language and maybe even excluding the two, in this case, who don’t speak that language, it could be a problem. And establishing some classroom rules around, you know, when you want learners to work with their home language and when you want them to focus in English. Now, I don’t think there’s a magic formula for being able to do that, and lots of different strategies. You know, I can think of using, and I’ve seen being used... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...can be quite effective. I guess the thing...a blanket rule – “No, you’re not allowed to speak your home language once you enter the classroom” – probably isn’t the best way to go about it, but perhaps it’s, “OK, in the next half an hour we’re only going to speak English.” And, you know, let’s make a game of it, and if you do slip into your other language, then there’s, you know, some task you need to do as a sort of a game or perhaps even a slight penalty, but not as a sort of a blanket, “We’re getting rid of this language in the classroom,” full stop.

And I guess it’s the same with any inappropriate behaviour within a classroom. You develop rules as a teacher and you explain why those rules are in place to your learners and, you know, you find ways to sort of, I guess, get your learners to cooperate along those lines. I think one of the important things is being explicit about why you’re asking them to do that, rather than just saying, you know, “No other language than English spoken here,” or something – to give an extreme – without giving justification.

And I remember, I think it was some of the work done by Yvette Slaughter, looking at where she was doing the language maps – I think it was Yvette – was they found that opportunities to use English weren’t enough for the learners. They weren’t using English outside the classroom. So there was a view then to maximise the amount of English being spoken in the classroom, because their home language was being used a great deal outside the classroom, and so in the class was really the only place that they could get to use English. So making, you know, rules that fit the learners I think is important.

**Kellie Heintz:** Thank you. Shem, I’ve got another one, from Frederici – “Is plurilingualism included and explored in teacher training institutions generally, and especially where EAL is one of the methods taken up by a pre-service teacher?”

**Dr Shem Macdonald:** Well, I can talk... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) Some of the materials I’ve shown you today I use with my pre-service teachers in the course. The Piccardo reference, for example, is one that we look at. And there’s been some interesting discussion about plurilingualism amongst different groups of learners over the years that I’ve taught. I think, increasingly, materials, too, that come through that we’re looking at, and initial teacher education students are looking at, you know, do take a plurilingual perspective. And I think that’s a really great focus for learners, because often ITE students, you know, are pretty focused on, “What am I gonna teach when I go out on my practicum?” So they’re looking for useful materials, so I think... (AUDIO CUTS OUT) ...I would suggest sort of directing learners to those kinds of new resources, which take that approach.

**Kellie Heintz:** And I can also support that, because I have moved from initial teacher education into my role at the VCAA, and I worked in the English and EAL methods, and plurilingualism is definitely part of training, but it just depends upon what other methods students do as to if they’re exposed to that. So, our EAL students who are studying to teach TESOL are definitely exposed to plurilingualism and those concepts, and some English methods students are as well. But that’s not necessarily the case across the board for all subjects.

OK, thank you, Shem. I think that might be the last of the questions. And I’d just like to now make you aware of our EAL webinars that are yet to...that are yet to commence, but also that we’ve added two more. So I would just like to draw your attention to the fact we have another webinar on Thursday for assessment and reporting. Then, next week, we have one on whole-school curriculum planning with the new curriculum. We’ve added two more webinars, and I think that they’re something that you may be interested in. Firstly, there’s one on 22 October, which talks about EAL differentiation strategies. It’s particularly for teachers who have EAL learners in mainstream classes, and how you can support those students. And I think that’s a really important thing to consider. And then we also added one more webinar, which we’re having...setting it up as a Q&A, where when you register, you can put in any question that you might have that has yet to be answered in all of the webinars that we’ve had. But also, we’re just going to talk about some of the struggles that you have had this year because of COVID and because of the interruptions you’ve had in schools, and how you can manage these things to successfully implement the curriculum next year as planned. So that’s something we would really encourage you to consider telling your colleagues about, if you’d like to register for those extra webinars.

And finally, we have our contacts here, which covers all areas. So, the VCAA is responsible for the curriculum itself, the Department of Education and Training EAL unit is responsible for all of the other aspects of EAL, and then the Catholic Education Commission is also responsible for, you know, supporting the rollout of this curriculum. So if you belong to either of those sectors and have specific questions you would like, you can direct them to Mollie or the team at the department, or otherwise, anything else you can direct towards...to me at VCAA.

So I think we might draw this webinar to a close. I’d like to thank Shem Macdonald very much for his presentation today. It was comprehensive, it got us all thinking, and really our hope is that you can go into schools and celebrate the other languages your students speak and really bring that to the fore.

So, I hope that I can see many of you all over the next few webinars, because they should be really interesting and, hopefully, provide you with lots of information. Thank you also to Alicia and Craig in the background. And I hope to see you all soon. Thanks to everyone.

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