



PLURIDENTITIES

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Work Package 5



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Problem statement

The increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in Dutch education is reshaping understandings of language learning and identity, although this transformation manifests unevenly across regions. In larger cities, pupils often bring rich multilingual repertoires into school life, while in smaller towns and rural areas, classrooms tend to remain more linguistically homogeneous. Against this heterogeneous backdrop, researchers have argued that Dutch schools still tend to operate within largely monolingual frameworks that privilege standard Dutch and, to a lesser degree, English, even as societal multilingualism expands (Joubert & De Jong, 2023). Recent policy initiatives, such as the Onderwijsraad's report *Talige diversiteit benutten* [Leveraging linguistic diversity] (2025), advocate recognising home languages as learning resources, but practice often lags behind discourse.

Language is not only a communicative tool but also a central component of personal and social identity. As García and Wei (2014) and Norton (2013) argue, language shapes how individuals position themselves and are positioned by others within social contexts. For pupils who speak a language other than or in addition to Dutch at home, this link between language and identity is particularly salient. A strong sense of belonging, the feeling of being recognised and valued within the school community, forms a crucial basis for motivation and learning (Goodenow, 1993). For multilingual pupils, this sense of belonging depends to a large extent on how seriously their linguistic and cultural identities are acknowledged (Cummins, 2001; Van der Wildt et al., 2017). In the Dutch context, where classrooms vary in linguistic composition, this means that the recognition of pupils' linguistic backgrounds is not only a matter of equity but also of educational effectiveness.

Within this evolving landscape, the Pluridentities multidimensional framework (Pluridentities, 2025) provides a relevant conceptual lens for understanding how plurilingual identities develop through the interaction of four interrelated dimensions: linguistic capital, learning environment, technology, and language policy. In the Dutch case, pupils' linguistic capital can include Dutch, Frisian, or regional languages such as Low Saxon, and a wide range of heritage languages such as Arabic, Turkish, Polish, and Berber. Yet, formal education frequently separates, suppresses, or ignores these languages, limiting opportunities for identity expression.

Research conducted in the bilingual province of Friesland illustrates a gradual shift away from such language-separation pedagogies. Günther-van der Meij et al. (2020) show how

translanguaging practices, drawing flexibly on Dutch, Frisian, English, and pupils' heritage languages, help connect school learning to pupils' linguistic realities. Their findings demonstrate that when multilingual repertoires are legitimised, pupils display increased engagement and ownership of learning. Similarly, Günther-van der Meij and Duarte (2018) propose a holistic model for multilingualism in education tested in Dutch secondary education classrooms, showing that teachers who integrate multilingual strategies report greater pupil motivation and participation. These studies exemplify the learning-environment dimension of the Pluridentities framework (2025): teacher beliefs and pedagogical choices crucially mediate how linguistic capital becomes educationally valuable.

However, most Dutch teachers still express uncertainty about implementing such approaches. Joubert and de Jong (2023) found that teachers in multilingual urban regions tend to be more positive towards using pupils' home languages, while those in more monolingual areas worry about losing classroom control or fairness among pupils. Earlier large-scale interviews with Dutch secondary teachers also revealed that few felt adequately trained to, for example, integrate multilingualism into literacy instruction or classroom discourse (Kistemaker et al., 2013). These findings point to an enduring tension between inclusive ideals and practical constraints.

Recent research also points to the ways in which teachers' attitudes and classroom practices influence whether multilingualism becomes a pedagogical resource or remains marginalised. Van Beuningen and Polišenská (2019) found that while many Dutch secondary-school language teachers recognise the potential value of multilingualism, they often lack concrete strategies or institutional support to integrate it into their teaching. Their study reveals a tension between positive attitudes toward diversity and persistent uncertainty about how to operationalise multilingual approaches within existing curricula. This aligns with the learning-environment and language-policy dimensions of the Pluridentities framework (2025), highlighting how teacher beliefs and institutional constraints mediate the recognition of pupils' linguistic capital.

The technology dimension in the Dutch context remains emergent rather than foundational. Although most schools are digitally equipped, the pedagogical integration of technology into language learning varies widely. The NRO-funded research project by Van de Guchte et al. (2016) investigated how different modes of digital interaction (video, audio, and text chat) affect pupils' target-language use and motivation in modern foreign-language education, specifically English and German. Their findings indicate that technology can promote authentic communication, sustained interaction, and greater learner autonomy in the target language.

While this research does not directly address multilingual identity, it illustrates how digital environments can enhance engagement and agency; factors closely linked to the technology and learning-environment dimensions of the Pluridentities framework (2025).

Building on these earlier modes of interaction, recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) have sparked growing interest in how tools like ChatGPT can further enhance language learning. A recent meta-study by Zhu and Wang (2025) shows that AI is increasingly used to support personalized learning, provide feedback, and facilitate communicative practice, although empirical evidence from real classroom settings remains limited. One example of such emerging research is the study by Van de Guchte et al. (in press), which explores how secondary school learners and teachers perceive the integration of ChatGPT into task-based oral interaction. Their findings illustrate both the potential of AI to reduce anxiety, support vocabulary and sentence building, and increase motivation, as well as the more modest impact on learners' live oral performance. However, systematic exploration of how Dutch pupils and teachers connect such technologies with multilingual identity work remains limited.

Taken together, these studies depict a field in transition. The Netherlands hosts significant expertise and experimentation in multilingual education, but implementation is not yet widespread. Teachers' attitudes, institutional norms, and limited professional preparation continue to shape whether multilingual repertoires are valued or marginalised. Technology, while promising, has yet to be systematically leveraged to support plurilingual learning or identity development. In this context, this working paper aims to investigate how technology, language learning, and identity interact within Dutch secondary education. Specifically, it seeks to explore how pupils and teachers perceive and enact the linkage between digital practices, linguistic attitudes, and plurilingual identity formation, through the following research questions:

- Research Question 1 (RQ1). What are the attitudes and practices of Dutch upper-secondary pupils regarding the use of technology (inside and outside the classroom) for language-related activities, and how do these relate to their linguistic attitudes and identity development?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2). What are the attitudes and practices of Dutch secondary-education teachers regarding the use of technology (inside and outside the classroom) for language-related activities, and how do these relate to pupils' linguistic attitudes and identity development?

Ultimately, this research responds to the growing yet uneven recognition of multilingualism in the Netherlands. By analysing how teachers and pupils negotiate the intersections of language, technology, and identity, it contributes to understanding how Dutch education might move beyond monolingual traditions toward more inclusive, plurilingual, and technology-mediated learning environments aligned with European and global shifts in education.

Methodology

This working paper reports on a study conducted using a qualitative research design and thematic analysis. It examines the attitudes and practices of Dutch upper-secondary pupils and of modern foreign-language teachers (from both lower and upper levels) regarding the use of technology (inside and outside the classroom), as well as the potential relation of this technology use to pupils' linguistic attitudes and identity development. To address these topics, data were generated through pupil focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews with modern foreign language teachers. In line with the study's research questions, this working paper provides an initial examination of the pupil data, for which all transcripts are complete, and a preliminary look at the teacher data, for which transcription is still ongoing. As such, the report offers a first look at emerging themes in the full dataset while outlining how the subsequent, more detailed qualitative analysis will proceed. Modern foreign language teachers were selected as the focus of this qualitative inquiry as they occupy a central position in mediating pupils' encounters with multiple languages, making them a particularly relevant lens through which to analyse how multilingualism, technology, and identity intersect in classroom practice. This study was approved by the ethics committee of Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Ref. No. ECHW_593-WP4-5_Phase1) and the University of Amsterdam (Ref. No. FMG-13660), and all participants provided informed consent prior to their involvement.

Participant selection, recruitment, and description

A combination of purposive and convenience sampling strategies was employed to recruit participants for the qualitative phase of the study. Recruitment was built on the preceding survey phase, in which both teachers and pupils were invited to indicate whether they were willing to take part in a follow-up focus group or interview. Individuals who had expressed interest during the survey were contacted first, after which additional recruitment occurred through the same channels used previously.

Secondary-education modern foreign language teachers working in regular Dutch schools were invited to participate in individual interviews. Initial recruitment targeted teachers who had

completed the survey and had agreed to be approached for follow-up research. Additional teachers were subsequently recruited through the researcher's professional networks and subject-specific professional organisations, mirroring the convenience-based approach used in the survey. In selecting teachers, efforts were made to include representation of the modern foreign languages most commonly taught in Dutch secondary education (English, French, German, and Spanish). All participating teachers volunteered to take part. As with all convenience-based sampling, the resulting group reflects those teachers who were reachable through these networks and willing to participate.

Pupil recruitment likewise began with those who had participated in the survey and indicated interest in joining a follow-up focus group. Their teachers, both survey participants and teachers newly recruited for the qualitative phase, distributed information about the focus groups within their upper-secondary classes, allowing pupils to volunteer directly. As with the teacher sample, this process combined purposive and convenience elements: efforts were made to achieve diversity in pupils' linguistic profiles, including those who identified as multilingual due to speaking a home language other than Dutch and those who primarily encountered additional languages through formal schooling. In practice, however, final group composition was shaped by the availability and willingness of pupils who volunteered, reflecting the pragmatic realities of school-based qualitative research.

In total, 21 teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews and 35 pupils took part in the focus groups. The pupil data were generated across seven focus groups, each comprising 3–7 participants, and included pupils from five different secondary schools. The teacher interviews represented staff working at 17 different secondary schools. Of the 21 teachers, nine taught English (42.86%), four taught French (19.05%), and five taught German (23.81%). Two teachers taught Spanish (9.52%), and one teacher taught both English and German (4.76%). This distribution reflects the curricular emphasis on English, French, and German within Dutch secondary schools, while also including perspectives from teachers of Spanish, which is taught in a smaller number of institutions.

Data collection

Data were collected between August and October 2025 and were conducted separately for teachers and pupils to preserve the integrity of each group's perspectives, avoid power dynamics, and reflect the distinct nature of the procedures (individual interviews versus focus groups). Both activities drew on semi-structured guides developed within the Pluridentities project and adapted to the Dutch educational context. All sessions were audio-recorded,

transcribed verbatim using Amberscript, and translated into English, with researcher notes documenting conversational cues and other relevant contextual information.

Individual semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher invited teachers to introduce themselves and describe their school context, student population, linguistic background, and teaching experience. Open-ended questions explored teachers' perceptions of technology use in relation to pupils' linguistic diversity, language learning, and plurilingual identity development. Most interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams to accommodate teachers' schedules across different school settings. Interviews typically lasted 45–60 minutes.

Pupil focus groups were conducted in person by the researcher at the participating schools to ensure a familiar environment and facilitate natural group interaction. Pupils began by introducing themselves and discussing their linguistic backgrounds before engaging with prompts about how technology use (both inside and outside the classroom) relates to their linguistic attitudes and plurilingual identity development. Sessions usually lasted 30–50 minutes. One focus group was conducted partly in English, as it involved three pupils who had arrived in the Netherlands within the past five years and for whom English served as a workable shared language.

Data analysis

The data analysis will follow a systematic, iterative process based on Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2021) thematic analysis, which supports the identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns (themes) within the data. All transcripts will be managed and coded using ATLAS.ti (version 25.0.1). The analytic process will be conducted in six phases:

1. Familiarisation with the data. The research team will immerse themselves in the data by reading and re-reading all interview and focus group transcripts.
2. Generating initial codes. Significant features of the data will be systematically coded using Atlas.ti. A preliminary coding framework will be developed independently for the teacher interviews and pupil focus groups.
3. Searching for themes. The initial codes will be collated and sorted into potential themes. At this stage, the analysis is geared towards identifying convergent and divergent themes between the two datasets (teachers and pupils).
4. Reviewing themes. Potential themes will be checked against the coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure they form a coherent pattern. This will involve refining themes, collapsing some, and splitting others. The researchers will compare their results and

discuss the parts that are different to finalise categories (i.e., groups of codes), codes, and their connections.

5. Defining and naming themes. The essence of each theme will be clearly defined and named to capture its core meaning. A thematic network will be developed to illustrate the relationship between themes.
6. Reporting results. The final analysis will be woven into a coherent narrative for publication, supported by vivid, compelling data extracts from both teachers and pupils.

Although data collection has been completed, analysis of both the pupil and teacher data is still underway, and transcription of the teacher interviews is ongoing. Accordingly, this working paper reports only on the outcomes of Phase 1 (familiarisation with the data), which involved repeated reading of the available transcripts, preliminary note-taking, and the identification of early analytic observations. The insights presented here are based on the full set of pupil focus groups ($n = 7$) and an initial subset of teacher interviews (6 of the 21 conducted). The remaining phases of the thematic analysis (i.e., systematic coding, theme development, refinement, and final reporting) will be undertaken as the analysis progresses.

Positionality

A reflexive approach is central to the research process, acknowledging that the researchers' unique perspectives and intersecting identities shaped their contributions. To ensure analytical integrity, the researchers will explicitly account for their similarities and differences, recognising how their own experiences could influence the interpretation of the data. This reflexivity will be operationalised through collaborative research dialogues to challenge assumptions and a deep, sustained immersion in the data, a practice of "living with the data" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) essential for refined thematic development. Additionally, the researchers acknowledge that translation from Dutch to English is an interpretive act. To mitigate bias, they collaboratively translated and verified key data excerpts, ensuring semantic and contextual accuracy was preserved during analysis.

Findings

This section presents the preliminary findings of the working paper, based on several readings of the available transcripts as part of the familiarisation phase of the analysis. The findings are organised into two parts. The first outlines pupils' perspectives on languages and technology, and the second outlines the teachers' perspectives.

Pupils' perspectives on languages and technology

Pupils generally describe technology as a practical, everyday tool that helps them navigate languages, rather than as something that independently leads to deep language competence. Face-to-face and peer/family interaction remain the strongest drivers of language learning motivation and usable competence. They consistently frame technology as something that interacts with their social contexts (family, peers, gaming, teachers) and with their own linguistic backgrounds.

Media exposure supports recognition more than full mastery

Across the focus groups, pupils frequently mention encountering languages through films, series, music, and social media. They describe this as building familiarity rather than complete knowledge. It helps them recognise words and phrases or "guess" meaning from context, often in a gradual and subconscious way. As one pupil (from NL05_F05) said: *"Just watching English films, German films, it all helps because you might not understand what they say, but you link it to the picture so you can guess what they say. It's like you learn it subconsciously"*.

Apps and translation tools are valued for quick help, but not trusted for real-life communication

Pupils report using apps and tools such as Duolingo, Google Translate, DeepL, and ChatGPT to solve immediate problems (e.g., translating a word, checking a sentence, help with pronunciation). They appreciate the efficiency, but repeatedly mention mistakes that these tools still make and also express uncertainty about whether using this technology leads to actual communicative ability. One of the pupils (from NL06_F01) aptly reflected on this: *"DuoLingo, I'm not sure I learn language because I understand the sentence. I understand what I need to do. But when reality comes, I'm like: 'what do I need to do, help me!' So yeah, sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn't work and it's hard"*.

Social interaction remains the strongest source of motivation

Pupils repeatedly emphasise the motivating effect of interacting with people in other languages, whether this occurs with family, during holidays, with friends, or through online gaming. Technology sometimes mediates these interactions, but the social connection itself is described

as the motivating force. One pupil (from NL17_F06) explained *“If I go to my family, I can understand it all. I know what it’s about. That’s motivating. Then you want to keep learning it,”* and another (from NL10_F04) shared *“On Facebook I have a lot of uncles and aunts ... and then it’s just nice to be able to talk with them in their language. ... So it’s fun to be able to talk to them again. And also, when I go there on holiday. Then you feel at home again”*.

School rules and teacher practices shape the usefulness of in-class technology

Pupils describe a wide range of school- and subject-level policies regarding laptops, online platforms (e.g., Learnbeat, Quizlet), and the recent national ban on phones in the classroom. They mention both benefits and drawbacks. Digital look-ups can be helpful but may cause them to miss explanations, and some pupils noted that screens can be distracting or that they prefer learning from paper or books. However, several pupils also reported that lessons become less engaging and more monotonous when teachers no longer use digital tools such as Kahoot.

Purpose-driven and limited use of plurilingual repertoires

Pupils describe using other languages they know, often home languages, to support in-school language learning. They mention mostly doing this to recall vocabulary and understand grammatical structures. Pupils also note that this practice is sometimes accepted by teachers but not always treated as normal classroom behaviour. One of the pupils (from NL14_F04) shared: *“I once did a French test and I didn’t remember the word ‘volunteer’ in French, but I wrote it in Spanish. Generally that’s accepted here, but it’s not seen as something normal”*. At the same time, several pupils said that once they feel confident in the target language, or once they have mastered Dutch well enough for schooling, they no longer feel the need to rely on another language as support, and some expressed the belief that using another language at that point might not help, or could negatively affect their learning of the target language.

Teachers’ perspectives on languages and technology

Teachers generally describe technology as a motivating and sometimes confidence-boosting element of language learning, while also expressing concern about its potential to weaken pupils’ linguistic agency and distort their sense of ability. Their answers suggest that technology influences how pupils view themselves as language learners, but that teachers increasingly feel responsible for counterbalancing effects that threaten authentic linguistic development. Although teachers value pupils’ multilingual identities, they do not yet integrate these identities into technology-supported pedagogy in any systematic way.

Technology as shaping pupils' motivation, confidence, and linguistic self-perception

Teachers note that digital tools can make tasks feel more engaging and accessible, which may strengthen pupils' motivation and sense of competence. As one teacher (NL03_03) explained: *"With technology and social media, or maybe ChatGPT, you have more access, easy and fast access, to information. So that helps enormously to find something quickly and to understand it well right away"*. Creative online tasks and multimodal formats can give pupils alternative ways of expressing themselves. Some teachers also note that technology helps them adjust work to different pupils' levels or needs. At the same time, teachers observe that technological ease can lead pupils to overestimate their progress or invest less effort. Automated help may affect how pupils perceive themselves as developing speakers or writers. A recurring concern is that reliance on translation tools and AI reflects not only a shortcut, but a weakening of pupils' confidence in their own linguistic resources. One teacher (NL12_13) described this clearly: *"I recently saw a student who used an app to translate my German comments on their text. Instead of asking what a word means or asking classmates, he'd rather tap an app and didn't even try himself. That really worries me"*.

Preserving authenticity and agency in the face of technological dependency

Teachers frequently emphasise that technology can obscure what pupils actually know. Automated translation and online assistance make it difficult to distinguish between pupils' own linguistic ability and what is generated by AI and other digital tools. For teachers, this directly affects pupils' development as autonomous language users. As one of the teachers (NL12_13) put it, *"If students can just let their computer do it, why make the effort? They might not understand why they should learn the language when Google has already translated it"*. In response, teachers increasingly turn to paper-based tasks, face-to-face interaction, and monitored classroom work. These choices are framed as necessary to ensure genuine learning and to encourage pupils to rely on their own linguistic resources. One teacher (NL08_08) explained the shift by noting, *"Students need to do more themselves... if they don't, they don't retain as much"*. A related concern is that pupils are not as digitally competent as often assumed. Teachers push back against the idea that pupils are "digital natives," emphasising that social media familiarity does not translate into meaningful digital literacy. One teacher (NL10_12) aptly described this gap: *"What I find really interesting is how digitally illiterate they actually are. They all grew up with social media, but they can hardly extract information from texts. I uploaded three documents to Magister, just three, and even opening them and printing them was very difficult for many pupils"*.

Plurilingual identity as an asset, but not yet integrated into digital pedagogies

Teachers generally view pupils' multilingual backgrounds positively and regard multilingualism as a valuable skill. At present, teachers' recognition of pupils' plurilingual identities occurs mainly through interpersonal interactions rather than through planned, technology-supported pedagogies. As one teacher (NL10_10) explained, *"I am, of course, aware of the multilingualism of most of the students in my class... and I try to make use of that from time to time, for example, by explicitly pointing out that it is valuable to speak more than one language"*. Yet even with such interpersonal recognition, this appreciation rarely translates into classroom practice. Teachers report uncertainty about how to use technology to support plurilingual strategies and describe the need for collaborative, school-wide learning before plurilingual approaches can be meaningfully implemented. As one of the teachers (NL03_03) put it: *"...to emphasise this as an important issue for the whole school and to work together with colleagues across subjects to give it more attention. That way, these concepts become more visible and meaningful in everyday practice. This is what I find most important, and as teachers we also need more space for it"*.

Conclusions

This study examined the attitudes and practices of Dutch upper-secondary pupils and secondary education teachers regarding the use of technology (inside and outside the classroom) and its role in shaping linguistic attitudes and identity development. This working paper provides a first, exploratory reading of the data, and the insights presented here remain preliminary. The analysis at this stage draws on the full set of pupil focus groups but only a portion of the teacher interviews, which means the patterns identified, particularly on the teacher side, may shift as the thematic analysis progresses. Another limitation in this analysis is that the data reflect self-reported attitudes and practices; therefore, observational studies could further illuminate actual classroom dynamics and digital behaviours.

Even so, several early parallels are visible. Both pupils and teachers describe technology as helpful and motivating but insufficient for developing deep linguistic competence, and both emphasise the importance of social interaction for genuine language learning. At the same time, notable divergences emerge: pupils tend to frame technology as a practical support woven into their everyday (plurilingual) lives, whereas teachers are more concerned about its potential to weaken pupils' agency and obscure their actual abilities. Similarly, while both groups value plurilingualism, pupils use their plurilingual resources pragmatically, whereas teachers struggle to integrate this into systematic practice.

These early insights indicate the importance of exploring how technology could play a more intentional role in supporting plurilingual pedagogies, both by helping pupils mobilise their full linguistic repertoires and by offering teachers feasible ways to integrate such practices into everyday instruction, while also attending to concerns about ensuring that digital tools enhance rather than replace pupils' own linguistic efforts. At present, this remains more of a possibility than a realised practice. The forthcoming thematic analysis will develop these observations further and provide a more nuanced understanding of how such issues play out across the full dataset, without presuming that technology will offer straightforward solutions.

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