

## Beyond Borders: Unravelling Multilingual Tapestries - Maltese Teachers' Identities, Organic Linguistic Practices, and Evolving Pedagogies

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### Abstract

Malta, a small island in the Mediterranean is shaped by a diverse cultural heritage and a history of foreign rule and colonisation. Bilingualism stands as a defining characteristic of Maltese identity, and both Maltese and English are official languages of the country. The majority of Maltese people are fluent in the two languages, using them both equally and interchangeably in their daily communication. Teachers' perspectives on language use are frequently linked to their biographies, and may stem from either language purism, thus advocating language separation, or from a preference for fluid language practices. Recent and unprecedented changing demographics on the island are shifting Malta's bilingual status into a multilingual one, and Maltese classrooms are increasingly being populated by linguistically and culturally diverse students. Maltese educators build their own teacher identities and pedagogies on their personal, educational, and professional experiences. This study focuses on how Malta's socio-cultural context influences teachers' linguistic identities, impacting their language practices and pedagogical approaches, based on their background and experiences. It also explores how Maltese teachers are organically using cross-linguistic practices such as codeswitching and translanguaging during their lessons to meet the requirements of all the children in their class. Finally, this paper discusses the way in which pedagogies are inevitably evolving due to the transition from bilingualism to multilingualism on the island in order to ensure inclusion and social justice for all students.

**Keywords:** teacher identity; bilingualism; multilingualism; codeswitching; translanguaging.