Can we change teachers’ attitudes towards linguistic diversity? Effects of an antibias programme

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While classrooms in modern Europe are characterised by increasing linguistic diversity, teachers’ attitudes towards language are often still influenced by standard language ideologies and monolingual bias, together with different evaluations of heritage languages (and their speakers) according to their social prestige and market value.

Is it possible to change such attitudes? In our talk, we present a programme for the continuing education of school and kindergarten teachers that tackles this problem by applying methods from diversity trainings as well as antibias and antiracism pedagogics to the linguistic domain. Unlike existing language awareness programmes (e.g., Wolfram 1993, Reaser 2006, Wheeler & Swords 2010, Malcolm & Truscott 2012), this is an intervention programme developed specifically for teacher training (rather than classroom applications for pupils).

In order to assess the programme’s impact, we measured changes in teachers’ attitudes related to their participation in the training: we conducted a tripartite questionnaire study eliciting graded responses to evaluative statements on different relevant sociolinguistic domains, in addition to (semi-)structured and free feedback on the materials. In our talk, we will discuss quantitative and qualitative results from this evaluation.

REFERENCES


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