

TITLE: Critical language awareness in multilingual educational contexts

ABSTRACT:

In this talk I will briefly present some of the salient issues concerning language education in multilingual contexts in Alsace, France, in which I have been teaching and researching for over 2 decades. Many of the challenges my colleagues and I face are similar to those encountered in other contexts and with which you may also be familiar: teachers/educators feeling ill-prepared to deal with children in their classrooms who can not yet function through the language(s) of education, multiple languages spoken by the children and their families which the teacher/educator does not speak etc. However, due to contextual differences linked to historical, political and ideological variables, some of the affordances and constraints experienced in the Alsatian setting may differ from those encountered in Norway.

Focusing on the notion of critical language awareness which acknowledges the power element embedded in language practices and attitudes, I will firstly examine why criticality should be viewed as an essential component for the language aware professional. Secondly, I will share data from several studies, from pre-school to post-graduate settings, illustrating how critical language awareness can manifest itself in the classroom and how it may be nurtured in teacher education.