



## Exploring the Role of the Multilingual Teacher in ELT in Higher Education

H. Pattio Combe

*Quest Education Group, France*

### Abstract

In higher education, the way the English language is being taught has been a debate for years in numerous European countries, and specifically, in France. In recent years, while more and more of classes are in English (English as a Medium of Instruction), there are no language classes per se; linguistic aspects such as grammar and lexis are being outsourced to an online platform where the student is perfectly autonomous. While such platforms are certainly efficient and cost-effective ways to improve students' language skills without cutting into class hours, notions of culture and diversity—fundamental aspects of learning a foreign language—tend not to be mentioned in such online settings.

Nonetheless, our students exist in a multilingual and multicultural world and therefore, need to encounter such notions in higher education contexts. Teaching a language goes far beyond the dichotomy between native and non-native speakers teachers, but “between those who know how to teach just one standard national language and those who know how to teach multilingual crossing skills.” (Kramsch and Zhang, 2018:4), and intercultural competence is a tangible proof that this need exists. At Quest Education Group, a French vocational school specialized in video games and cybersecurity, it is fundamental to raise awareness on intercultural competences. Most of our students will then work at international companies, where not only language skills will be needed, but also intercultural ones.

This paper assesses the current situation in higher education in a monolingual setting, specifically in France, then provides and suggests solutions to promote multilingualism and multiculturalism and integrate plurilingualism in the classroom. By using case studies from my own experience at Quest Education Group in France as Head of Department through narrative inquiry, this article highlights the reality of multilingual and multicultural teachers, alongside the teacher leader's reality.

**Keywords:** multilingualism, tesol, plurilingualism, higher education