Much of the debate on bilingualism and interculturality has focused on the cultural and linguistic diversity of indigenous populations in regions such as South America. In Europe and North America, on the other hand, the educational rights of migrant children are emphasised. One group that has received less attention is the speakers of regional, minority or lesser-used languages. If intercultural bilingual education addresses culturally appropriate education for migrant and indigenous students, what educational approaches might best meet the needs of minority language students? The most distinctive differences between minority language speakers and their compatriots are often, on the surface at least, linguistic rather than cultural.

This paper will address the linguistic needs of speakers of minority or lesser-used languages where English or Spanish predominate. In these contexts, minority language speakers seek to negotiate a bi- or pluri-lingual identity. The role of minority language education in supporting such an emerging identity is quite complex. Power, prestige and status lie with the dominant language and students may consider the minority language redundant with limited function. Recent translanguaging debates have caused considerable unease among minority language educators who fear further dilution of the minority language. Emerging evidence suggests that the school environment may not be the best context in which to shape teenagers’ bilingual identity because of its association with authority.

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