Claudia Maria Riehl, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany:

“Why multilingual education makes a difference: Educational programs and their contribution to integration"

Multilingual education is one of the key factors in fostering multilingualism and multiculturalism in modern societies. This includes both the promotion of linguistic abilities and intercultural competence in minority and majority language speakers. Moreover, programs that aim at maintaining and developing the minority language along with other languages are associated with positive academic outcomes.

In this context, this talk will inform about different aspects of multilingual education: e.g. the learning environment (implicit and explicit learning), the impact of language awareness, the use of the scaffolding function of previous learned languages, and the role of early biliteracy for the acquisition of additional languages. Specifically, arguments will be made for the promotion of early literacy in minority and national languages and the understanding for language learning as horizontal activity across all educational stages. Using data from my recent research projects I will illustrate the interconnectedness between linguistic competences in heritage and majority languages, language awareness and identity formation of multilingual adolescents.

In a next step, concepts and instructional strategies of multiple language teaching will be discussed (different types of immersion, curricula involving the whole language repertoire, models of content and language integrated teaching). Another focus will be on the question how teachers can implement cross-linguistic pedagogy to make students benefit from the dynamic relationship between their languages.

Finally, examples of best practice in multilingual education will be presented that include both minority and majority language students. I will argue why these programs are a fruitful tool to foster integration and societal participation of linguistic minorities.