

LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION AND INTERVENTION EVIDENCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

^{1*}Hanipah Khoeriyah, ¹Kris Nurnaningsih, ¹Retna Hani Dafiska, ¹Susi Sugiarti, ¹Juntika Nurikhsan, ¹Prihantini

¹Master Program of Primary School Teacher Education, Faculty of Primary School Teacher Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author Email: nenghoney@upi.edu

Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: June 2026 Revised: August 2026 Accepted: September 2026 Published: October 2026	<i>Research on language-based discrimination in primary education remains dispersed across countries, theoretical traditions, and intervention types, limiting cumulative understanding of how linguistic differences translate into exclusion and what responses are effective. This systematic review synthesizes empirical and theoretical evidence to map the forms of language-based discrimination in primary schools, the mechanisms and actors that sustain it, its consequences for children's identity and participation, and the interventions that have been evaluated in response. Following PRISMA 2020, searches combined Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar (via Publish or Perish), with publication periods differentiated by article type (empirical: 2021–2025; theoretical: 2013–2025). Screening proceeded through title, abstract, and full-text stages; methodological quality was appraised using CASP, MMAT, and JBI tools appropriate to each design. The final corpus comprised 33 studies (20 empirical, 13 theoretical/conceptual). Empirical findings, concentrated in qualitative designs from Western European contexts, show that accent- and dialect-based mockery, teacher-enforced monolingual norms, and pull-out support programs contribute to linguistic self-erasure and reduced participation. Theoretical literature situates these patterns within monolingual habitus, raciolinguistics, and translanguaging frameworks. Evidence on interventions, including translanguaging pedagogy and collaborative multilingual tasks, indicates promising but methodologically limited support for inclusive practice. Given the predominance of qualitative, Europe-concentrated evidence, conclusions regarding intervention effectiveness should be treated as indicative rather than generalizable.</i>
Keywords Language diversity; Linguistic discrimination; Identity; Participation; Inclusive education;	
How to cite: Khoeriyah, H., Nurnaningsih, K., Dafiska, R.H., Sugiarti, S., Nurikhsan, J., & Prihantini, P. (2026). Language Diversity and Inclusion: A Systematic Review of Linguistic Discrimination and Intervention Evidence in Primary Schools, <i>JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching</i> , 14(4), 1417-1429. Doi: https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v14i4.21101	
Copyright© 2026, Hanipah Khoeriyah et al. This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA License.	

INTRODUCTION

Language is never a neutral medium of communication. In primary school classrooms around the world, the way a child speaks, the accent they carry, the dialect they use, or the mother tongue they first learned at home can become a marker of belonging or a target of ridicule. As classrooms grow increasingly linguistically diverse, driven by migration, indigenous language revitalization movements, and the coexistence of regional and national languages, schools face mounting pressure to accommodate this diversity while, in practice, often reproducing the very hierarchies that marginalize non-dominant language speakers.

Theoretical frameworks in sociolinguistics and educational sociology help explain why this occurs. Gogolin's (1994) concept of monolingual habitus describes how educational institutions, even when officially multicultural, operate on the implicit assumption that only one language is legitimate for academic purposes. Bourdieu's (1991) theory of linguistic capital further explains how certain language varieties are assigned greater symbolic and economic value, positioning speakers of non-dominant varieties at a structural disadvantage. More recently, raciolinguistic theory (Flores and Rosa, 2015) has demonstrated that linguistic discrimination is frequently inseparable from racial and ethnic discrimination, particularly for multilingual students from racialized minority backgrounds.

Despite growing scholarly attention to multilingual education, a significant gap remains in the literature. Existing systematic reviews have addressed adjacent but distinct concerns: Polat and Lange (2025) synthesized pre- and in-service teachers' beliefs about multilingualism, without examining how those beliefs translate into discriminatory practice toward students; Lange and Polat (2025) centered children's perspectives on language diversity broadly, without isolating discrimination or exclusion as the focal mechanism; and Charamba dan Ndhlovana (2025) evaluated translanguaging's effectiveness for academic outcomes, treating it as a pedagogical technique rather than as a response to documented harm. None of these reviews systematically maps the mechanisms through which language becomes a source of discrimination and exclusion, nor do they evaluate the evidence base for interventions that specifically address such harm. This review's contribution therefore lies in integrating two strands that existing syntheses have treated separately: the mechanisms of language-based discrimination (RQ1) and the evidence for interventions that counter it (RQ2), a combination that, to date, has not been addressed within a single systematic synthesis focused on primary education. Moreover, the geographical scope of existing research is heavily skewed toward Western and Northern European contexts, with limited representation from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, a gap this review also seeks to make visible rather than obscure.

This gap carries urgent practical significance. Inclusive, equitable, and quality education is enshrined as a global priority under Sustainable Development Goal 4, yet linguistic discrimination remains an underexamined barrier to its achievement in the specific context of early schooling, when children's academic identities and sense of belonging are first formed. Therefore, this systematic literature review aims to synthesize empirical research on how language becomes a source of discrimination and exclusion in primary schools, and to identify pedagogical practices, social interventions, and policies that have proven effective in creating linguistically inclusive school environments. Specifically, this review addresses two research questions, each guided by focused subquestions to ensure transparent mapping between the search strategy, data extraction, and thematic synthesis reported in subsequent sections.

RQ1 asks how language, whether in the form of accents, dialects, mother tongues, or other linguistic variations, becomes a source of discrimination and exclusion in primary schools. This is addressed through three subquestions: (a) what forms does language-based discrimination take; (b) which actors and institutional mechanisms are involved; and (c) what are the short- and long-term consequences for students' identity, well-being, and participation. RQ2 asks what pedagogical practices, social interventions, and policies have proven effective in addressing linguistic discrimination and building inclusive school climates for students from diverse language backgrounds, addressed through two subquestions: (a) what types of interventions have been implemented; and (b) what evidence supports their effectiveness in reducing stigma and promoting participation.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize empirical and theoretical research on how language becomes a source of discrimination, stigmatization, and exclusion in primary schools. SLR was selected because it enables systematic mapping of dispersed research landscapes, identification of convergence and divergence patterns, and thematic synthesis that is scientifically accountable (M. J. Page et al., 2021). The SLR procedures adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines, comprising four phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The review protocol was not registered in a public repository (e.g., PROSPERO); this is acknowledged as a limitation, and the full search strategy, screening criteria, and extraction procedures are reported in detail below to support reproducibility.

This review was conducted by a team of six authors, whose roles were divided by task: screening and eligibility assessment were conducted by the first and second authors; quality appraisal was conducted by the same team following completion of the full-text assessment; data extraction was conducted by the third and fourth authors; and thematic synthesis was conducted by the fifth and sixth authors. Disagreements within each team were resolved through discussion, and where consensus could not be reached, a third member of the author team not involved in that stage acted as arbitrator.

Literature Search Strategy

Literature searches combined structured querying of two indexed databases: Scopus and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), with supplementary searches of Google Scholar conducted via Publish or Perish software. Scopus was selected for its broad coverage of indexed social sciences literature, ERIC for its specific focus on education research, and Google Scholar to reach articles from publishers that may not be indexed in the other two databases. Only English-language articles were considered. The publication timeframe was differentiated by article type: for empirical articles, the range was limited to 2021–2025; for theoretical or conceptual articles, the range was extended to 2013–2025. The full Boolean search strings applied to each database are presented in Table 1. Searches across the three sources yielded an initial pool of 634 records. Following the removal of 15 duplicates via Mendeley, 619 unique records proceeded to title screening.

A limitation affecting the precision of this account is noted here and discussed further in the Limitations section: the original per-database search logs, including the exact date and retrieval count attributable to each individual database, were not fully retained during the course of this review's multiple revisions. To address this, Scopus and ERIC searches were independently re-run and re-verified on 8 September 2026 using the search strings reported in Table 1, confirming that the topic remains well-represented in both databases. Additionally, all studies retained in the final corpus (Table 3) were individually re-verified against their DOI and publisher record to confirm authenticity and continued accessibility; this verification led to the exclusion of seven previously included items found not to meet the primary-education inclusion criterion or, in one case, to be a methodological citation rather than corpus literature (see Inclusion Stage).

Table 1
Search Strings by Database

Database	Search String (TITLE-ABS-KEY / Title-Abstract)	Records
Scopus	("language diversity" OR "multilingual*" OR "dialect*" OR "accent" OR "mother tongue") AND ("linguistic discrimination" OR "linguistic exclusion" OR "linguistic racism") AND ("identity" OR "belonging") AND ("inclusive education") AND ("primary school" OR "elementary school")	24
ERIC	Equivalent Boolean combination applied to title/abstract fields	400
Google Scholar (Publish or	(multilingual education OR language diversity OR linguistic discrimination OR language bullying) AND (primary school OR elementary) AND	210

 Perish) (identity OR belonging OR participation)

Screening and Eligibility Procedures

Screening was conducted by two independent reviewers (the first and second authors). Both reviewers independently screened titles and abstracts of the 619 articles to ascertain their relevance to the research focus. Disagreements were resolved through discussion or consultation with a third member of the author team not involved in the initial screening. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa coefficient ($\kappa = 0.84$) at the abstract screening stage, indicating substantial agreement. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are summarized in Table 2

Table 2
Criteria of Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Peer-reviewed journal articles	Books, book chapters, proceedings, editorials, reviews, dissertations
Written in English	Non-English articles
Empirical articles (2021-2025); Theoretical articles (2013-2025)	Published before specified timeframes
Focus on primary education (grades 1-6)	Focus on early childhood, secondary, or higher education
Address language diversity, discrimination, exclusion, identity, participation, or inclusion	Language teaching studies without discrimination or exclusion dimensions

After title screening, 412 articles were excluded, leaving 207 for abstract screening. After abstract screening, 127 were excluded, leaving 80 for full-text assessment. The same two reviewers independently assessed the full text of the 80 remaining articles against three fundamental criteria: focus on primary education, addressing language discrimination or exclusion, and providing relevant empirical or theoretical contributions. At this stage, 40 articles were excluded (wrong educational level, superficial treatment, absence of a discrimination/exclusion dimension, or no new conceptual contribution). Disagreements at the full-text stage were resolved through consensus discussion.

Quality Assessment

Methodological quality of included empirical studies was assessed using critical appraisal tools appropriate to each design: the CASP Qualitative Checklist for qualitative studies, the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT, 2018) for mixed-methods studies, and the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist for quantitative cross-sectional studies. Theoretical and conceptual articles were assessed for clarity of argument, originality, and conceptual contribution rather than through a standardized tool. Quality appraisal was conducted by the same two reviewers responsible for eligibility screening, with disagreements resolved through discussion or third-reviewer consultation. Studies were not excluded on the basis of quality scores; ratings were instead used to contextualize the strength of evidence in the thematic synthesis.

Data Extraction

A standardized data extraction form, piloted on five randomly selected articles, was used to record bibliographic information, study design, geographical context, participant characteristics, the specific form of linguistic discrimination examined, intervention details (where applicable), key findings, and author-reported limitations. Extraction was conducted by the third and fourth authors on all included articles using NVivo 14, with disagreements resolved through consensus discussion and referral to the first author where necessary.

Inclusion Stage

Following full-text assessment, 40 articles initially met all inclusion criteria. As part of the response to reviewer feedback, all included items were individually re-verified against their DOI and publisher record and re-checked against the primary-education inclusion criterion during the revision process. This verification identified six items that had been included in error despite concerning non-primary populations (secondary or post-primary pupils, pre-service teachers, or higher-education students), and one further item that was a methodological citation supporting the review process itself rather than literature on the review topic. All seven were subsequently excluded. The final corpus therefore comprises 33 articles, consisting of 20 empirical studies (16 qualitative, 2 mixed-methods, 2 quantitative) and 13 theoretical or conceptual articles (10 conceptual, 3 systematic reviews/meta-syntheses). The PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) summarizes the selection process.

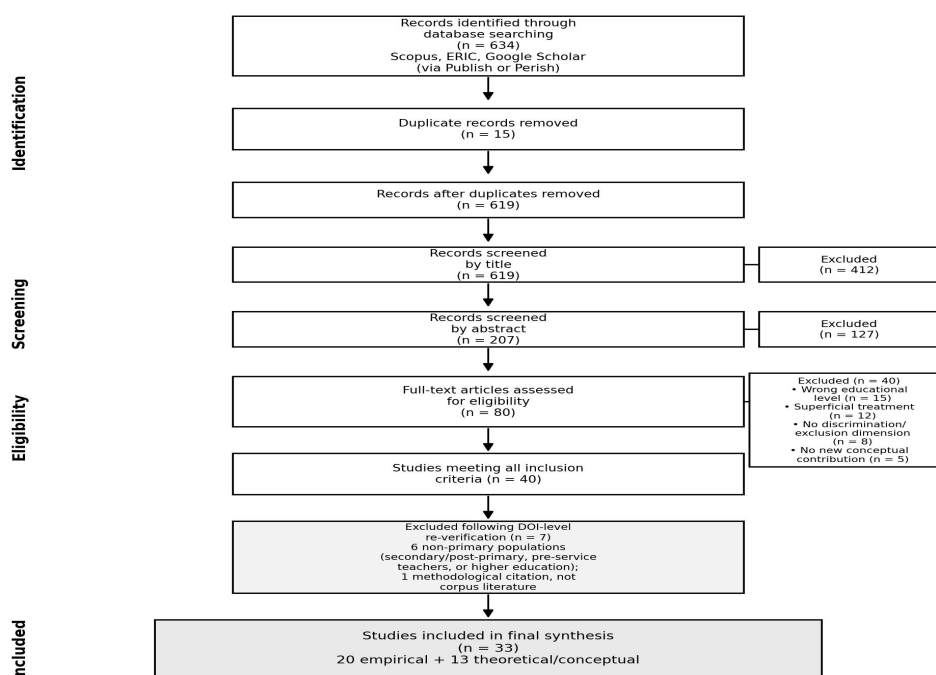


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process
Source: Author own work based on PRISMA guidelines

Thematic Synthesis Procedure

Data synthesis followed the principles of thematic synthesis outlined by Thomas and Harden (2008). Extracted findings from all empirical articles were coded line-by-line by the fifth and sixth authors using NVivo 14 (initial intercoder agreement of 87%, resolved through discussion), grouped into descriptive themes through constant comparison around five core constructs (forms of discrimination, institutional mechanisms and actors, identity consequences, participation and belonging outcomes, and inclusive interventions), and refined into higher-order analytical themes through iterative discussion among all authors. Where studies reported contradictory findings, these were retained and interpreted in light of study quality, geographical context, and methodological approach rather than resolved by averaging. Evidence across qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and conceptual studies was synthesized narratively, with quantitative findings treated as corroborating rather than establishing causal patterns, given the predominance of qualitative evidence.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

General Overview of the Reviewed Studies

The review yielded 33 articles meeting all inclusion criteria: 20 empirical studies (60.6%) and 13 theoretical or conceptual articles (39.4%). Table 3 presents the classification of final articles by type and methodology.

Table 3
Classification of Final Articles by Type and Methodology

Article Type	Number	Percentage
Empirical Qualitative	16	48.5%
Empirical Mixed-Methods	2	6.1%
Empirical Quantitative (quasi-eksperimental)	2	6.1%
Theoretical/Conceptual	10	30.3%
Theoretical (SLR/Meta-synthesis)	3	9.1%
Total	33	100%

Table 3 indicates that empirical qualitative studies represent the largest proportion of the reviewed literature, accounting for 16 articles (48.5%) of the total 33 publications. This finding demonstrates that qualitative approaches remain the dominant methodological orientation, suggesting that researchers frequently explore phenomena through in-depth investigation, contextual analysis, and interpretation of participants' experiences. Meanwhile, empirical studies employing mixed-methods and quantitative quasi-experimental designs each contributed 2 articles (6.1%). The relatively limited use of these approaches indicates that integrative and experimental methodologies are less frequently applied compared with qualitative inquiry, possibly due to the complexity of educational and social phenomena that often require contextual understanding.

In addition to empirical research, theoretical and conceptual articles comprised a substantial proportion of the reviewed studies, with 10 articles (30.3%), followed by systematic literature review (SLR) or meta-synthesis studies with 3 articles (9.1%). The considerable presence of conceptual and review-based studies highlights the continued importance of theoretical development, synthesis of existing knowledge, and critical examination of emerging perspectives within the field. Overall, the distribution suggests that the literature is characterized by a strong emphasis on exploratory and interpretive approaches, while methodological diversification through quantitative, mixed-methods, and evidence-synthesis designs remains an area that could be further strengthened in future research.

In addition, the geographical distribution of the 20 empirical articles, revealing a strong concentration of research in Western and Central Europe (11 studies), followed by Asia (3), North America (3), Northern Europe (2), and Eastern/Southern Europe (1). No studies meeting the inclusion criteria were identified from Africa, Australia, or Latin America, despite an active body of literature on multilingual education in these regions; this geographic gap is discussed further in the Limitations section. Figure 2 illustrates this distribution, confirming that research on language-based discrimination in primary schools has been most actively conducted in European contexts, with more limited representation from Asia and North America. The data can be presented in Figure 2.

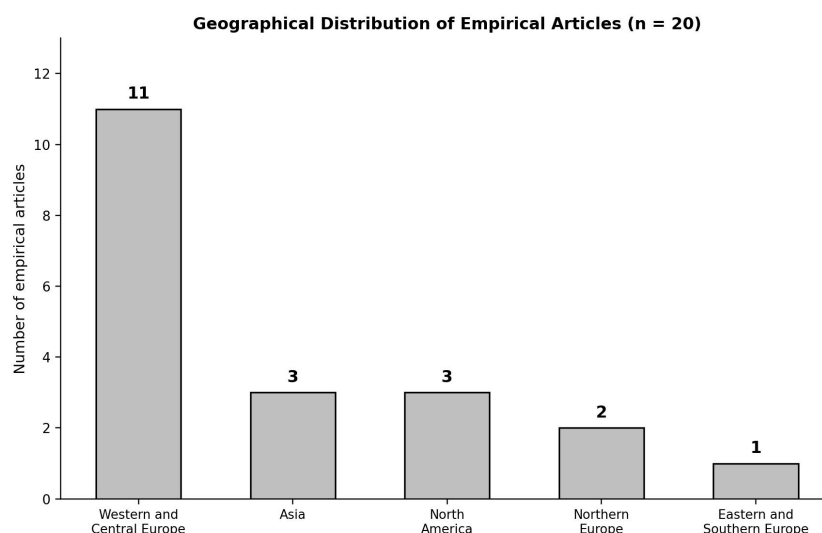


Figure 2. Distribution of Empirical Articles by Region (n=20)

Source: Author's own work based on analyzed articles

The geographical distribution of empirical articles ($n = 20$) presented in the figure reveals an uneven concentration of research across different regions. Western and Central Europe contributed the highest number of empirical studies, with 11 articles, representing more than half of the total empirical publications. This dominance indicates that this region has been a major contributor to empirical investigations within the reviewed field, potentially reflecting stronger research infrastructures, established academic networks, and sustained scholarly interest. In comparison, Asia and North America each contributed 3 empirical articles, showing a moderate level of research activity, while Northern Europe accounted for 2 articles and Eastern and Southern Europe contributed only 1 article.

The distribution pattern highlights a geographical imbalance in empirical research contributions. While studies from European regions collectively represent the majority of empirical evidence, contributions from other regions remain relatively limited. The presence of studies from Asia and North America indicates growing international engagement; however, the lower representation of other geographical areas suggests opportunities for expanding future research to achieve broader contextual diversity. Increasing empirical investigations across underrepresented regions could provide richer comparative perspectives and improve the generalizability of findings by incorporating diverse educational, cultural, and institutional contexts. It can be presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Geographical Distribution of Empirical Articles (n=20)

Region	Country	Number of Articles
Western and Central Europe	Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Belgium, England, UK, Poland (multi-country study)	11
Asia	Indonesia	3
North America	United States	3
Northern Europe	Sweden, Finland (multi-country study)	2
Eastern and Southern Europe	Italy	1
Total		20

The specific foci of discrimination and exclusion identified across the empirical articles, ranked qualitatively by how frequently each theme recurred across the corpus. Given the corpus revisions described above, frequency is reported here in descriptive terms (most,

several, a smaller number) rather than exact counts, since individual theme attributions have not been independently re-verified against full text for every remaining study.

Table 5

Distribution of Final Articles by Focus of Linguistic Discrimination and Exclusion		
Specific Focus	Relative Frequency	Countries with Strongest Findings
Social exclusion due to language differences	Most common	Austria, Switzerland, Indonesia
Accent or dialect-based ridicule and mockery	Most common	Germany, Austria, Switzerland, England, Indonesia
Internalization of shame / identity concealment	Common	England, Germany, Indonesia, Switzerland
Systematic peer bullying	Common	Austria, Germany, England, Indonesia
Teacher discrimination via mother-tongue prohibition	Common	Germany, Austria, Poland, Belgium, Indonesia
Stigma from pull-out language support programs	Several studies	Austria, Germany
Raciolinguistic discrimination (language+race)	Smaller number of studies	United States, Indonesia

Findings Related to Research Question 1 (RQ1)

RQ1 asked how language becomes a source of discrimination and exclusion in primary schools, including the forms experienced by students, the actors and institutional mechanisms involved, and the consequences for identity, well-being, and participation. The synthesis of empirical studies revealed five major findings.

First, language differences, namely accents, dialects, and mother tongues, consistently trigger ridicule and bullying across diverse contexts (see Table 3 in the Method section for the full list of contributing studies). In Germany, Chamoun (2026) documented Syrian refugee children mocked for Arabic-accented German. In Austria, Woltran and Schwab (2025) found children with Turkish or Bosnian mother tongues called “the tourist.” In Indonesia, Dewantara et al. (2024) reported Papuan students mocked for accented Indonesian, withdrawing from classroom participation. In the United States, Chao et al. (2025) documented Arab-American children mocked for both accent and religious identity.

Second, teachers and pull-out language support programs unintentionally perpetuate stigma. Several studies reported teachers explicitly prohibiting mother-tongue use, including a Polish school displaying a sign reading “Only Polish may be heard here” (Wagner, 2021). Other studies reported that students removed for pull-out language support were stigmatized as “stupid” or “slow class” (Gitschthaler et al., 2024; Öztürk et al., 2025). In Indonesia, Rafael et al. (2024) found that the absence of local-language representation in school signage constituted institutional micro-aggression.

Third, students internalize shame and engage in linguistic self-erasure. Several studies reported multilingual students hiding their mother-tongue abilities after repeated discrimination. Chamoun (2026) documented Syrian refugee children in Germany pretending not to speak Arabic; Wehrli (2025) termed this phenomenon “linguistic self-erasure” in the Swiss context. Fourth, discrimination severely impacts participation, belonging, and well-being. A majority of the reviewed studies reported withdrawal from classroom activities among discriminated students, very low school belonging, or psychological impacts including anxiety and low self-esteem, consistent across the qualitative evidence base. Fifth, discrimination operates through multiple actors: peers, teachers, and institutional policies. Peers were the most frequent perpetrators, often unaware their teasing constituted bullying;

teachers contributed through prohibition and non-intervention; institutional policies such as pull-out programs were criticized for legitimizing language hierarchies.

Findings Related to Research Question 2 (RQ2)

RQ2 asked what interventions have proven effective in addressing linguistic discrimination. The synthesis identified interventions with varying levels of supporting evidence. Translanguaging pedagogy showed the most direct primary-school evidence, with Sah and Li (2024) reporting that recognizing and using students' full linguistic repertoires reduced stigmatization associated with dominant-language-only instruction. Given the limited number of studies directly evaluating translanguaging in primary-school settings following the exclusion of several studies found to concern non-primary populations (see Method), the certainty of this conclusion is rated as low-to-moderate, and further primary-level evaluation is needed before broader claims can be made.

Collaborative multilingual tasks showed positive effects in two quasi-experimental studies from Switzerland (Buchs, 2025; Buchs et al., 2023), which found that students previously mocked for their mother tongues became more valued once their linguistic contributions were essential for task completion. Because this evidence derives from only two studies concentrated in a single national context, certainty is rated low, warranting replication elsewhere. Peer support programs such as the Young Interpreter Scheme in England (D. Page et al., 2025) reduced social isolation by training monolingual students to assist multilingual peers. Given that only one mixed-methods study evaluated this intervention, certainty is rated low. Institutional policy coherence, examined through qualitative case studies in Finland (Huilla et al., 2024) and Indonesia (Rafael et al., 2024), suggests that bridging the gap between policy and practice, for instance, valuing local-language competence as a resource rather than a barrier, enhances the effectiveness of other interventions. As with peer support, the evidence base is limited to a small number of qualitative case studies, yielding low-to-moderate certainty.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic review provide evidence that language differences in primary schools systematically trigger discrimination, bullying, and exclusion across diverse geographical and cultural contexts. This discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing theoretical frameworks, compares patterns across contexts, and draws implications for practice, policy, and future research.

Language as a Site of Power, Exclusion, and Bullying

The finding that accents, dialects, and mother tongues become targets of ridicule confirms the theoretical concept of monolingual habitus (Gogolin, 1994), which describes how educational institutions implicitly recognize only one language as legitimate. This mechanism recurs across contexts: refugee children mocked for Arabic-accented German in Germany (Chamoun, 2026), Turkish-speaking children called “the tourist” in Austria (Woltran & Schwab, 2025), Papuan students taunted for accented Indonesian (Dewantara et al., 2024; Fiharsono et al., 2025), and Arab-American children mocked for Arabic accents in the United States (Chao et al., 2025). This aligns with Bourdieu (1991) concept of linguistic capital: when a Polish school displays a poster reading “Only Polish may be heard here” (Wagner, 2021), the message concerns not merely language choice but who legitimately belongs: an act of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) with real consequences for children's well-being.

Differentiating Mechanisms Across National Contexts

While monolingual habitus and symbolic violence offer a shared theoretical vocabulary, the findings caution against treating all national contexts as operating through identical

mechanisms. In the migration-based European contexts that dominate this corpus (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), linguistic discrimination is primarily entangled with recent immigration and refugee resettlement. In Indonesia, by contrast, Dewantara et al. (2024) describe discrimination rooted in long-standing indigenous and ethnic hierarchies predating any migration narrative. In the United States, Chao et al. (2025) and Cioè-Peña (2021) describe a racially stratified system in which language discrimination is inseparable from a longer history of racialization. These distinctions matter for intervention design: a translanguaging program calibrated to ease newcomer integration in Vienna may not address the historical ethnic hierarchies underlying discrimination against Papuan students, which require redress at the level of institutional representation and curriculum content rather than classroom language practice alone.

The Paradox of Pull-Out Language Support

One of the most counterintuitive yet consistently replicated findings concerns the stigmatizing effects of pull-out language support programs. Across several studies from Austria and Germany, students removed from regular classrooms for additional language instruction reported being called “stupid” or “slow class” by peers (Gitschthaler et al., 2024; Öztürk et al., 2025), echoing what Slee, (2018) terms the “inclusion-exclusion paradox.” Rather than concluding that pull-out models are inherently harmful, the evidence is better read as identifying the conditions under which different support models increase or reduce stigma. Four models appear across the literature: (a) pull-out support, which consistently increased stigma when delivered as visible spatial removal without accompanying peer education; (b) in-class support/co-teaching, common in Sweden and Finland (Huilla et al., 2024; Paulsrud et al., 2023), which appears to reduce stigmatization by keeping the learner spatially integrated; (c) bilingual support programs, suggested by Rafael et al. (2024) as institutionally embedding minority languages; and (d) hybrid models, which remain underevaluated. The determining factor appears to be the visibility and institutional framing of support, not the pull-out format per se.

Raciolinguistics and the Intersectional Nature of Discrimination

The finding that language discrimination cannot be separated from race, ethnicity, and religion, documented in a smaller number of studies from the United States and Indonesia, supports the raciolinguistic perspective developed by Flores and Rosa (2015). In the United States, Latinx children labeled as emergent bilinguals and also identified as having disabilities faced layered discrimination based on language, race, and disability status (Cioè-Peña, 2021). These findings demonstrate that linguistic discrimination always intersects with other axes of marginalization, including race, ethnicity, religion, and disability (Crenshaw, 1989) with direct implications for intervention design: programs focused solely on language without addressing underlying racial and ethnic prejudice are unlikely to succeed.

The Psychological Toll of Linguistic Self-Erasure

Perhaps the most concerning finding concerns the internalization of shame leading to linguistic self-erasure, documented across several qualitative studies. Children as young as six or seven were reported to pretend not to speak their mother tongues and actively suppress their accents to avoid mockery. Chamoun (2026) described this as “linguistic self-erasure,” while Wehrli (2025) termed it “internalized oppression” in the linguistic domain, consistent with theorization in social psychology (Pyke, 2010). This finding elevates linguistic discrimination from an educational issue to a matter of mental health and cultural survival.

Research Limitations

This review has several limitations. First, the evidence base is predominantly qualitative and small-sample, concentrated in Western and Central European contexts, which constrains

the generalizability of both the discrimination-mechanism findings and the intervention-effectiveness claims. Second, no studies meeting the inclusion criteria were identified from Africa, Australia, or Latin America, despite active bodies of literature on multilingual education in these regions; this represents a geographic gap in the current evidence base rather than an assessment that discrimination does not occur there. Third, documentation of the search process was affected by incomplete retention of the original per-database search logs across this review's multiple rounds of revision; Scopus and ERIC searches were independently re-verified in September 2026, and every study in the final corpus was individually checked against its DOI and publisher record, but the exact historical per-database retrieval counts could not be fully reconstructed. Fourth, this verification process itself led to the exclusion of seven previously included items that did not meet the primary-education criterion or were methodological rather than topical citations, underscoring the importance of rigorous population-level screening in future replications of this review. Finally, given the predominantly qualitative and correlational nature of the evidence, the findings support an association between school-based practices and linguistic discrimination but do not permit strong developmental or causal claims about how individual children acquire discriminatory attitudes.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review synthesized evidence from 33 articles to address two research questions on language diversity and educational inclusion in primary schools. In response to RQ1, language differences, namely accents, dialects, and mother tongues, consistently become sources of ridicule, bullying, and exclusion across the reviewed contexts, operating through peer teasing, teacher-enforced monolingual norms, and institutional practices such as pull-out support and the absence of linguistic representation in school spaces. Consequences include linguistic self-erasure, reduced participation, and psychological harm. In response to RQ2, several intervention types show emerging but methodologically uneven support: translanguaging pedagogy, collaborative multilingual tasks, peer support programs, and institutional policy reform.

This review's contribution lies in integrating the mechanisms of language-based discrimination with the evidence for interventions that address it within a single synthesis focused specifically on primary education, a combination not previously addressed by existing reviews on teacher beliefs, children's perspectives, or translanguaging effectiveness alone. The limitations of this evidence base are discussed above. Building inclusive primary education, on the basis of this evidence, requires coordinated change across peer culture, teacher practice, language-support organization, and institutional representation, each evaluated according to its specific national and institutional context rather than applied as a uniform template. Future research should prioritize longitudinal and quasi-experimental designs, greater representation from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and methods that directly center children's own perspectives.

FUNDING

This research received no external funding from any agency, commercial sector, or not-for-profit organization.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Generative AI (Claude, Anthropic) was used during the revision of this manuscript to assist with drafting, language editing, and reorganizing responses to reviewer feedback. All AI-assisted revisions were reviewed, verified, and approved by the author(s), who take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the final content. AI was not used to generate, fabricate, or verify empirical data, citations, or study findings.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting this review are derived entirely from previously published peer-reviewed journal articles, all of which are cited in the reference list. No primary data were collected. The search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and article selection process are described in detail in the Method section. Any additional data or coding materials used during the thematic synthesis are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the editors and anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback, which significantly improved the quality of this manuscript. The authors also thank their respective institutions for providing academic support and access to scholarly databases during the research process.

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1990). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Buchs, C. (2025). Multilingual cooperative activities for classroom social climate in heterogeneous contexts. *Intercultural Education*, 36(1), 68–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2024.2426949>
- Buchs, C., Margas, N., & Hascoët, M. (2023). Evaluating an inclusive program for promoting equal-status participation in classrooms with high sociolinguistic diversity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1257372>
- Chamoun, T. (2026). Navigating Linguistic Identity at Primary School in Germany: Refugee Children's Attitudes Toward German and Their First Languages. In *Language Education and Learners of a Refugee Background* (Vol. 72, pp. 191–210). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-16947-1_12
- Chao, X., Aloraifi, I., & Masarwa, N. (2025). “I Guess They Couldn’t Spell Eid”: A Transnational Arab-Muslim Family’s Multicultural and Multilingual Navigation in a U.S. School. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2025.2543481>
- Charamba, E., & Ndhlovana, S. N. (2025). Multilingualism as a Resource: A Systematic Review on the Use of Translanguaging for the Well-Being of Students in Primary Education. In *Using Positive Psychology Interventions to Promote Well-Being Among Students in Higher-Education Institutions* (pp. 303–327). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-88793-2_16
- Cioè-Peña, M. (2021). Raciolinguistics and the education of emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled. *The Urban Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00581-z>
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), 139–167.
- Dewantara, J. A., Budimansyah, D., Darmawan, C., Martono, Prasetyo, W. H., & Sulistyarini. (2024). Language, Cultural Sentiments, and Ethnic Conflict: Understanding Verbal Violence and Discrimination in Multi-Ethnic Schools in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2024.2408451>
- Fiharsono, A., Carey, M. D., Hyde, M., & Beazley, H. (2025). Enhancing school belonging for Indigenous students in Papua, Indonesia. *International Review of Education*, 72(1), 135–159. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-025-10157-2>
- Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(2), 149–171. <https://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.85.2.149>

- Gitschthaler, M., Kast, J., Corazza, R., & Schwab, S. (2024). Inclusion of multilingual students—teachers’ perceptions on language support models. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(9), 1664–1683. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.2011439>
- Gogolin, I. (1994). *Der monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule*. Waxmann.
- Huilla, H., Lay, E., & Tzaninis, Y. (2024). Tensions between diverse schools and inclusive educational practices: pedagogues’ perspectives in Iceland, Finland and the Netherlands. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 54(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2022.2065461>
- Lange, S. D., & Polat, S. (2025). Multilingualism from the Perspective of Primary School Children: A Meta-Synthesis Study. *Qualitative Research in Education*, 14(3), 176–197. <https://doi.org/10.17583/qre.14812>
- Öztürk, N., Hassani, S., & Schwab, S. (2025). Insights into students’ experiences of social inclusion and exclusion during attending language pull-out classes. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 29(14), 2549–2562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2024.2367537>
- Page, D., Flynn, N., Dinneen, A., & Serratrice, L. (2025). Exploring intercultural competence in children: the role of the young interpreter scheme. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2025.2541070>
- Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., & Bossuyt, P. M. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>
- Paulsrud, B., Juvonen, P., & Schalley, A. C. (2023). Attitudes and beliefs on multilingualism in education: voices from Sweden. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 20(1), 68–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2022.2098678>
- Polat, S., & Lange, S. D. (2025). Systematic review on pre-service and in-service primary school teachers’ beliefs on multilingualism. *Review of Education*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.70046>
- Pyke, K. D. (2010). What Is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don’t We Study It? Acknowledging Racism’s Hidden Injuries. *Sociological Perspectives*, 53(4), 551–572. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2010.53.4.551>
- Rafael, A. M. D., Artawa, K., Satyawati, M. S., & Purnawati, K. W. (2024). The Visible Languages on Landscape Linguistics in Primary Schools in Kupang and the Implementation of Education Language Policy. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 11(1), 2376360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2376360>
- Sah, P. K., & Li, G. (2024). Toward linguistic justice and inclusion for multilingual learners: Implications of selective translanguaging in English-medium instruction classrooms. *Learning and Instruction*, 92, 101904. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2024.101904>
- Slee, R. (2018). Defining the Scope of Inclusive Education. In *The SAGE Handbook of Inclusion and Diversity in Education* (pp. 1–16). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526415561.n1>
- Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 8, 45.
- Wagner, J. (2021). Flags, crucifix, and language regimes: Space-marking in three primary schools. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 20(4), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.11576/jsse-4517>
- Wehrli, A. (2025). Heritage speakers in Switzerland: Plurilingualism and social justice in a multilingual country. *AILA Review*, 38(2), 237–261. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.24068.weh>
- Woltran, F., & Schwab, S. (2025). Language as a distinguishing feature or common ground? A participatory study on manifestations of intergroup relations in the lived experiences

of multilingual students. *Linguistics and Education*, 85.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2024.101379>