Across the globe, multilingualism is the norm. Even in nations that appear monolingual, for example France, Germany and, of course, the U.S., multiple languages are spoken. Inversely, in nations that we typically think of as multilingual, for example Switzerland, many citizens are actually monolingual.

Many questions and issues arise when multiple languages are used in and across societies: Which of the languages are considered majority or minority languages, and why? What are the educational, social and political implications? Even more fundamentally, what does it mean to identify an individual as bilingual or multilingual, or as a native speaker of one or more languages?

We will try to answer these and other questions by exploring a variety of multilingual communities and societies around the world. We will also examine the crucial role of education to foster multilingualism among, for example, heritage speakers, immigrants, and speakers of a dominant majority language such as English.