Navigating Linguistic Diversity: Teachers' Beliefs on Multilingual Pedagogies in Monolingual Policy Schools

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Abstract

In response to the increasing linguistic diversity in educational settings resulting from migration waves into the Global North, this study delves into the beliefs of secondary teachers regarding multilingualism within predominantly monolingual policy schools in Flanders, Belgium. Despite the recognized benefits of multilingual pedagogies, entrenched monolingual policies persist in many Western schools, posing challenges for teachers striving to navigate the linguistic repertoires of their students. Drawing on interviews with 18 teachers, including both language and content teachers across three secondary schools, this research explores teachers' perspectives on the potential implementation of multilingual pedagogies in their classrooms. Findings reveal a nuanced landscape of beliefs, with teachers acknowledging the cognitive and emotional benefits of multilingualism while expressing concerns about maintaining control and promoting Dutch proficiency. Notably, minimal distinctions were observed between language and content teachers, indicating a shared optimism tempered by practical considerations. Our study highlights the need for nuanced understanding and support for multilingual pedagogies, underscoring the complex interplay of pedagogical and instructional beliefs in navigating language diversity. Ultimately, fostering inclusive and effective language education practices requires proactive efforts to address and accommodate teachers' beliefs, promoting professional development and dialogue around multilingualism in educational settings.

Keywords: teachers’ beliefs, beliefs about multilingualism, multilingual pedagogies; linguistic diversity; secondary schools; language policy

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Introduction

In recent decades, migration waves into the Global North generated situations where linguistic diversity in the classroom has become common. However, schools are not always orchestrated to adequately support learners whose home language (HLs) differs from the language of instruction (LoI). This poses a challenge for teachers who try to navigate the broad linguistic repertoires of their students (Lee, 2009). In response, research on multilingualism and language acquisition has burgeoned, with scholars advocating for the advantages of multilingual pedagogies or tools (Fischer & Lahmann, 2020; Haukås, 2016). Despite the recognition of these benefits among international scholars, monolingual policies persist as the default approach in many Western schools (Conteh, 2018; Jordens et al., 2016), particularly in regions like Flanders, which tenuously upholds a monolingual policy resulting in classrooms where monolingual practices are the norm.

This study addresses teachers' beliefs about multilingualism (Bredthauer & Engfer, 2016; Pajares, 1992). Existing research underscores the predominantly monolingual inclinations among teachers (De Angelis, 2011; Pulinx & Van Avermaet, 2014). An emerging trend, fuelled by increased exposure to multilingualism and interaction with multilingual students, indicates a shift. These contemporary developments mark an intriguing period where monolingual beliefs persist prominently, yet a growing cohort of scholars and stakeholders support the adoption of multilingual pedagogies (Alisaari et al., 2019; Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Ramaut et al., 2013; Van Praag et al., 2016). Studies highlighting positive shifts in teachers' beliefs about multilingualism have predominantly focused on those with experience in multilingual pedagogies or language teachers (Fischer & Lahmann, 2020; Haukås, 2016). While these insights are valuable, it is crucial to approach them with a discerning lens. The optimism observed in these studies may be attributed to the professionalisation and heightened knowledge levels of these specific teacher groups regarding language, multilingualism and language acquisition. As such, this study aims to offer a more grounded exploration, examining the language beliefs of a broader spectrum of teachers within a monolingual environment, providing a balanced perspective on their stance towards multilingualism.

This study examines multilingual education's intricate and complex realm, recognising its interconnectedness with research into language ideologies, educational policies, and school development. The dynamic interplay between monolingual and multilingual perspectives is analysed by delving into the beliefs about multilingualism held by secondary teachers. The primary research question focuses on content-subject secondary teachers in a monolingual policy school in Flanders: How do these teachers view the potential implementation of multilingual pedagogies in their classrooms? The study seeks to better comprehend teachers' beliefs on multilingualism, particularly in a monolingual setting, by uncovering these beliefs. This research holds significance in bridging gaps

across diverse research domains and offers valuable insights that can guide policymakers, administrators, and researchers. Through interviews conducted with eighteen teachers in the specific context of monolingual policy schools in Flanders, the research aims to illuminate teachers' perceived challenges and reservations, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the difficulties associated with incorporating multilingual policies and practices in schools.

An ongoing standard: monolingual policies in education

The persistence of monolingual policies in Western schools highlights a significant challenge in accommodating the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students. Schools opting for such a directive enforce a policy that allows only the use of a single language, primarily the LoI, despite the potential multilingual abilities of many of their students. Implementation of a monolingual policy in schools can be observed in the United Kingdom (Conteh, 2018), Flanders (Bollen & Baten, 2010; Jordens et al., 2016), as well as in the United States where, despite attempts to incorporate multilingual practices such as TESOL programs, the prevailing policy remains monolingual (Flores & Aneja, 2017). Some countries claim multilingual policies according to their national policy documents, yet they operate under a disguised monolingual policy, e.g. students initially receive instruction in their mother tongue but later transition to an English-only medium school system (Tyler, 2023).

When focusing on the monolingual policy in Flanders, variations in its application have been observed in the contrast between rigorous enforcement, which involves prohibiting the use of HLs, and a more lenient stance tolerating such languages. This fluctuation is aptly described as 'tolerating,' where schools informally permit the use of other languages during certain moments without explicitly acknowledging it, and 'prohibiting,' where a stringent emphasis is placed on the use of exclusively Dutch language, and non-compliance is met with penalties (Ramaut et al., 2013).

A push for multilingualism by scholars (e.g. García & Wei, 2014; Hornberger, 2002; Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014) is grounded in recent studies demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering equality and equity in education for students with a migration background. For instance, research highlights the positive impact of incorporating the HL into lessons, showing improved results in writing tasks in the LoI (Esquinca, 2011; Velasco & García, 2014). Additionally, students' well-being has been observed to improve when the use of the HL is permitted within the school environment (Cenoz & Santos, 2020; Ramaut et al., 2013). As an increasing body of research emphasises the advantages of tapping into students' complete linguistic repertoire, there is a compelling case for a paradigm shift in language policies, moving away from entrenched monolingual approaches and embracing pedagogical-didactical practices that celebrate and leverage multilingualism.

Exploring Educational Strategies: Fostering Multilingualism in Classrooms

Along with a growing advocacy among researchers for adopting multilingual policies in schools, various pedagogies exist to effectively implement such policies. We will now outline a few key pedagogical approaches that can facilitate the adoption of multilingual policies in schools; Language Awareness (LA) is an established multilingual pedagogy. LA transcends conventional linguistic understanding by fostering collaborative and analytical discussions about language. This pedagogy not only imparts knowledge of language but also cultivates independent learning skills, providing learners with a comprehensive educational experience (Borg, 1994; Hélot et al., 2018). A second multilingual pedagogy is pedagogical translanguaging (García & Kano, 2014) in which students and teachers engage in discursive practices to develop language skills. This pedagogy adopts a translingual stance, influencing teachers' pedagogical design and actions across the curriculum (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). The Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach integrates foreign languages into teaching subjects such as science and history, highlighting the dual enhancement of content and language learning (Cenoz, 2013). Lastly, Functional Multilingual Learning (FML) stands for strategically integrating the language resources of emergent multilingual learners into the educational process. Acting as a mediating tool in mainstream classrooms, FML enhances both language and content learning (Foster et al., 2021; Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014).

Language Beliefs and Policy Implementation Unity

Teachers' beliefs significantly influence school language policy implementation (Fives & Buehl, 2016; Hopkins, 2016; Nespor, 1987). These beliefs, defined as a set of views, perceptions, or propositions considered accurate by individuals (Richardson, 1996), play a pivotal role in shaping pedagogical decisions and practices (Pajares, 1992; Santos & Miguel, 2019). Within this study, our focus lies on exploring teachers' beliefs about multilingualism. This encompasses a spectrum of beliefs about language proficiency, home language, and language use in education. Notably, these beliefs often intersect with broader convictions regarding students with a migrant background (Pulinx & Van Avermaet, 2014).

Studies reveal diverse trends in teachers' beliefs about multilingualism. A persistent belief held by many teachers is that languages should be kept separate. For instance, Flemish teachers expressed a monolingual mindset and concerns about the effectiveness of multilingual education (Pulinx and Van Avermaet, 2014). Similar sentiments were found in Young's (2014) study, where only 26% of head teachers in France considered students' home languages as an added value. However, research in the U.S. focusing on 36 novice and pre-service teachers suggested that those with more negative beliefs about multilingualism often lacked in-classroom multilingual experience and knowledge (Tandon et al., 2017).

This discrepancy may highlight a potential shift in mindset influenced by growing migration influxes in Western countries. Recent studies in Finland, Norway, and Germany revealed more positive attitudes toward multilingualism among teachers, attributing this shift to factors like didactic materials reflecting students' linguistic backgrounds, seminars on linguistically responsive teaching, and intensive courses on multilingualism (Alisaari & Heikkola, 2020; Fischer & Lahmann, 2020; Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Haukås, 2016). Other authors, such as Lundberg (2019), also state that the beliefs of teachers are generally positive regarding multilingualism. However, he notes that 'sceptical views, often based on monolingual ideologies, are present and are likely to pose challenges for the implementation of pluralistic policies' (p 266). So, despite these positive shifts in beliefs about multilingualism, challenges persist as teachers experience higher anxiety and stress levels when teaching multilingual learners (Pettit, 2014; Tandon et al., 2017).

This study

On the one hand, several studies indicate that teachers' linguistic beliefs are monolingual. On the other hand, more and more studies suggest that teachers have increasing multilingual views. Most studies mentioned above involve language teachers (e.g. Alisaari et al., 2019; Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Haukås, 2016). While De Angelis (2011) justifies this focus by stating that language teachers have a higher awareness of multilingualism than teachers of other subjects, it is essential to investigate the beliefs of all teachers, as multilingual policies should not only be implemented by language teachers. In addition, many studies focusing on teachers' (more positive) multilingual beliefs involve teachers who are already experiencing or actively using multilingual pedagogies (Fischer & Lahmann, 2020; Gorter & Arocena, 2020). They are, therefore, already more comfortable opening up their classrooms to other languages, and knowledge and practical knowledge about multilingualism leave teachers more confident (Tandon et al., 2017).

In summary, language beliefs research tends to centre more on language teachers than on teachers of other subjects. Unfortunately, this constitutes an essential bias in research, as investigating the practices and beliefs of people who are already positively inclined to or familiarised with a specific didactical approach might lead to overly rose-tinted results. Consequently, this research investigates the beliefs of teachers teaching a wide range of content classes (i.e., not just language) situated in a context that has a robust monolingual policy permeating its society and schools (i.e., Flanders), where teachers have little to no hands-on experience with multilingual didactics. In doing so, this study sheds light on the language beliefs of content-subject secondary teachers within a monolingual policy school. By unveiling teacher's beliefs, we might better grasp teachers' perceived barriers and hesitations, which might hamper a broader implementation of multilingual policies and practices in schools.

Research context and methodology

The Belgian constitution recognises three official languages: Dutch, which is spoken in the region of Flanders; French, which is spoken in Wallonia; and German, which is spoken in a small portion of Wallonia. Brussels, the capital, is a bilingual region where Dutch and French are recognised. Aside from the officially recognised languages, the language landscape of Belgium is more diversified than the three languages mentioned. National and regional statistics show that almost 30% of children born in 2021 are being raised in a household where the primary language differs from the region's official language. In Flanders, those languages are primarily French (6.5%), Arabic (3.9%), Turkish (2.3%), and Romanian (2.0%) (Vlaamse Overheid, 2021). 17.5% of students in Flemish secondary schools speak another language at home other than the school's LoI (i.e., Dutch) (Vlaamse Overheid, 2021). This hyper-linguistic diversity, where sometimes up to ten languages are spoken in one classroom (AGODI, 2019), makes Flanders an exciting research context for analysing multilingual pedagogies.

The research was conducted in three secondary schools in Flanders during 2019-2021[1], where the LoI is Dutch. Three schools were selected based on two criteria: (1) the school's student body should consist of a medium to a high level (between 40-50%) of students who speak a language other than the LoI at school (Table 1). These numbers were gathered through the official database of the Flemish government (AGODI, 2019). Based on this criterion, the schools were recruited from urban areas in Flanders, where linguistic diversity is typically higher than in rural areas. Secondly (2), the schools were only recruited when they adhered to a predominantly monolingual policy. To ascertain this language policy in the selection process, the school's online policy documents were analysed to estimate this language policy. Our categorisation between schools adhering to a prohibiting or tolerating monolingual policy (Jaspers & Rosiers, 2022; Ramaut et al., 2013) (detailed in https://www.iris-database.org/details/uiNvE-0I7Qa), is based on the emphasis placed on the use of the Dutch language and the level of tolerance towards other languages within the school environment. Notably, School 2

[1] It is important to note that the data collection period (2019-2021) coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have had implications for the study. The pandemic might have affected the workload and well-being of teachers (De Laet et al., 2022). Additionally, the research process was occasionally interrupted by lockdowns, further complicating data collection. We mention this in relation to potential limitations, as the added stress and adjustments required during this period may have impacted teachers' responses and attitudes toward multilingual education. The challenges of remote learning, increased responsibilities, and the general uncertainty brought on by the pandemic could have played a role in shaping the perspectives of the participating teachers.

emerges as the most stringent in promoting Dutch language use, followed by School 1. In contrast, School 3 adopts a more flexible approach, demonstrating a greater acceptance of linguistic diversity (Table 1).

Once schools were selected, several teachers from the three schools who taught students between the ages of 14 and 18 were interviewed. In Schools A and B, the principals decided who would participate, while in School C, teachers were approached individually and participated on a more voluntary basis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 teachers from within the three schools. This group of teachers consisted of both language and content subject teachers. The language teachers taught the LoI and official foreign languages (German and French), and the content subject teachers ranged from history teachers to physics to pedagogical sciences. In the third school, one of the participating teachers taught the course 'Project Integrated General Subject' (PIGS). This course combines both language learning and content courses for students in the vocational track. In contrast with the student populations, almost all the school's teachers spoke Dutch at home. Table 1 gives an overview of the participating schools and teachers.

School	Language policy	Students who speak another home language than the LoI	# Participating teachers	Course subjects
School 1	Tolerating home language	47.93%	4	Content courses: Mathematics, History, Economics Language courses: French
School 2	Actively prohibiting home language	42.60%	7	Content courses: History/geography, Sciences, Mathematics, Religion Language courses: German, Dutch, French
School 3	Tolerating home language	43.85%	7	General courses: Health Sciences, Nutrition Sciences (2), Physics, Pedagogical Sciences, History Language courses: General Course Subject

Table 1

A semi-structured interview approach (see https://www.iris-database.org/details/HQjYz-ZuzPl) was chosen to gain a detailed understanding of these teachers' language beliefs and their views on

multilingual didactics (Irvine et al., 2013). The interviewees were asked about their beliefs on multilingualism in school, the broader society, and the HLs in their classrooms. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. For analysis, we opted for an inductive approach where we could identify and interpret patterns and themes in the interviews by thematic analysis. Nvivo was used for the entire coding process to conduct this thematic analysis. First, labels were attached to extracts and fragments from the interview transcripts in the open coding process. Afterwards, the axial coding phase disclosed patterns and themes among the labels. Finally, through selective coding, those patterns and themes were analysed for recurrence and connected with different themes and patterns to create a coherent theory (Mortelmans, 2017) (These themes can be found at https://www.iris-database.org/details/2hgkP-EWmTZ)

Results

In this section, we outline our findings, categorising them based on the positive and negative beliefs regarding multilingualism. We have opted for this categorisation based on our literature review, which highlighted the existence of favourable and unfavourable beliefs surrounding multilingualism in education.

Multilingualism as a lever for learning

When asked about multilingualism, all teachers see multilingualism (in their school) as a given. Multilingualism is present among the students. However, when asked about multilingualism, some teachers immediately start referring to 'languages as subjects' within the school. In the Flemish context, this is primarily French, English and German.

> *How would I define multilingualism? Well, we should start by moving away from the idea that it is exclusively and entirely Flemish. So, for me, multilingualism also involves a predominant language like English, a kind of business language. However, it is also about the fact that, in Brussels alone, there are 160 nationalities, and we should be able to experience the use of those languages. That is what makes multilingualism enriching*.
>
> *History/Geography teacher, School 2*

> *The LoI in this school is Dutch, of course; I think it is just a plus if someone knows several languages. Europe also encourages that, I guess. [...] So if you speak French, English, or Spanish. I just think it is something that enriches a person. I think your mind should think in several languages. So I have absolutely nothing against that.*
>
> Mathematics teacher, School 1

These teachers mention that speaking multiple languages can help students achieve different goals (e.g. enriching a person). Both teachers immediately refer to high-status languages even though both

of them note that migrants bring a lot of other languages. When speaking about the benefits of multilingualism, they choose examples of multilingualism as English, French or Spanish, all languages taught in classes, rather than common migrant languages such as Arabic or Turkish. The second teacher refers back to the migrant students, saying, “So I have absolutely nothing against that. With this statement, the teacher seems optimistic about the different benefits of being multilingual”. However, she does make a distinction between high- and low-status languages. A third teacher agrees with this distinction but nuances it by including the Flemish context.

> *However, I am certainly not going to say that Dutch is more important than Turkish or anything. No. Erm, but it is more useful in class. So, it is because of the linguistic context of Flanders that it is more useful.*
>
> French teacher, School 1

She thereby states that Dutch is more useful in class and should probably dominate within the school context because the school is situated in Flanders, which is historically Dutch-speaking. When teachers are asked explicitly about their students’ HLs, teachers adhere to predominantly positive beliefs about multilingualism in the context of personal benefits. For example, fourteen teachers state that when students use their HL in the classroom, they can learn the content better and in a more nuanced way because they have a more elaborate language repertoire.

> *I think they can indicate more sensitivities, so there is more nuance than in Dutch. […] Because then they can be more nuanced and better articulate what they mean to each other.*
>
> Pedagogical science teacher, School 3

This teacher states that, hypothetically, when students use their HL in their content learning process, they would go to a deeper meaning-making level than if they were only using Dutch. Other teachers also mention that they believe the meaning-making of those students would go faster if they used their HL more frequently in their learning process. When saying this, some teachers also reflect on their own classroom experiences.

> *I had that last year that they [multilingual students] would say, "Excuse me, sir," and I would explain that, and when they still do not understand it, I would say, "Well, use Google Translate on your mobile phone for that one word". And then it was “yes, ah yes, yes”. So then they know what it means. Or, once, I would have someone else translate it, and once you know a word, you know it.*
>
> History teacher, School 1

> *Maybe it [learning] will be quicker regarding [new] concepts. If they hear it in their language once, I think they will grasp it faster.*
>
> Nutrition Sciences, School 3

The teachers who mentioned the possible benefits for content learning were both content and language teachers (four out of five language teachers agreed with this statement). In addition, twelve teachers believe that their students' Dutch skills would also improve when using their HL during the learning process. All five participating language teachers agreed with this statement. Aside from the benefits of content and language learning, some teachers also include other possible benefits of students' HLs. For example, fifteen teachers assume their multilingual students would be more motivated to engage in the classroom and their learning process when they use their HL. They believe these students would ask more questions or have more fun in the classroom when their HL is used.

> *By allowing the HL in the classroom, students will be more motivated. Yes, I am definitely convinced of that. If you are told something in your language, about your home country, or a combination of that, yes, that just feels good. You just feel validated.*
>
> History/Geography teacher, School 2

Not only does this teacher indicate that he assumes that students' motivation will rise when applying multilingual didactics in his classroom, but he also thinks that students' well-being will increase. This is because they would feel more at ease in the classroom. Seven teachers mention that the students' well-being could improve when multilingual didactics are implemented in classroom practice.

Multilingualism in education as a threat to current classroom practices

When these teachers are asked about the linguistic space of the students' HL within their classroom context, every teacher is hesitant to apply these HLs within the social and educational space of their classroom practice. Where we see a clear distinction between four assumptions about the possible benefits of the HL in students' learning process (i.e. content learning, learning of the LoI, increase in motivation and well-being), we see more diverse reasons why teachers are hesitant to create a multilingual atmosphere in their classroom practice. Eight teachers say they will feel uncomfortable or distressed when the students talk in a language the teachers do not comprehend.

> If I hear Turkish or Moroccan in class, I comment because I think that in my class, I should be able to understand everything they say—Erm, in the sense that you know it is not about the subject matter. Come on; you do not have to make a fuss about it. […] Yes, really, only in the learning context. If I feel like this is not about my content, then they should say it in Dutch so that I understand what that is about.
>
> Physics teacher, School 3

This physics teacher does not trust that her students will use their HL in their learning process. However, she fears that her students will address this opportunity to speak in their HL as a chance to start off-topic communication. According to these teachers, this could distract students and slow the learning process. This also suggests that teachers fear losing control in their classrooms when a

language barrier occurs. This feeling of losing control is not only stated by less experienced teachers. Five out of six teachers who expressed this feeling have more than seven years of teaching experience.

Four of the eight teachers who recognise this distress also suspect they would be less quick to notice students struggling with the learning content.

> They could also find links between certain words themselves. Moreover, I would find it a shame that I cannot provide those links because I am unfamiliar with them. […] However, yes, maybe they could know some words in their language. That is a possibility. However, I cannot offer them those links, so I would be disappointed if I could not help them.
>
> Mathematics teacher, School 2

The mathematics teacher says that if she does not understand a student's particular HL, she will not be able to provide them with the necessary tools. Another teacher mentions that it would not be possible for them to check if their students comprehend the learning content correctly when discussing it in a foreign language. These teachers assume they cannot manage the students' learning pathway as closely as they would like. Furthermore, when multiple languages are spoken simultaneously, the teacher will not only be unable to understand the students, but the students will also be incapable of understanding each other. According to some teachers, this will lead to classes being slowed down and the teachers being side-lined to adopt a coaching role in the students' learning process. Mainly, the teachers who fear these consequences when applying multilingual didactics in their classrooms prefer a teacher-centred learning environment. Within this environment, they control when students are talking, and the teachers are the only persons educating the course content to the students. This preference for a teacher-centred learning environment becomes clear when six teachers state that they should be the (sole) managers of the classroom's language landscape. In addition, these teachers mention that using the HL can only occur after explicit permission from the teacher.

> Moreover, urm (signs), if that helps to explain something once, that is fine. However, I think you should ask me first. You have to tell me, 'Hey, I am going to talk to her [another student] in Turkish because she does not understand'.
>
> French teacher, School 1

This teacher tells her students when and when not to use their HL. In conjunction with permitting to speak the HL, seven teachers (five already mentioned that HL use is only accepted after explicit consent) see using the HL in the classroom as a last resort after they have tried multiple other (differentiation) methods.

> *No, no, that is only if they already have a word they do not understand and you have already explained it once in Dutch, then you [the student] still do not understand it, then I say look [in a(n) (online) dictionary]what that is in your language.*
>
> Teacher of religious education, School 2

By stating this, the teacher mentions that he agrees with having languages other than the LoI in his classroom. However, these languages should only be used as a last resort and when clearly instructed.

Another frequently stated concern is the importance of the boosting Dutch (LoI) proficiency. Eleven out of eighteen teachers mentioned this. By introducing the HL into the classroom, students would potentially speak less Dutch and, therefore, have fewer practice opportunities in the LoI.

> *Yes, they sometimes use their HL among themselves instead of speaking Dutch. While it might be better just to use Dutch in class and practice Dutch*
>
> Pedagogical science teacher, School 2

Eight teachers (mainly language teachers) also comment that the students' HL quality might be insufficient to adopt the HL in their classroom practice.

> *A few weeks ago, one of my Turkish students said his father sometimes laughs at his Turkish proficiency. His parents know the grammar of their language, but their children only know it because they speak it with family and friends […]. It means that some things he might know in his HL and others not when they would have to write something will probably not work out.*
>
> History teacher, school 1

Moreover, some didactical strategies like writing a summary will not be an option as many students with a migration background cannot write in their HL. Therefore, the teachers will not adopt these multilingual strategies. Four teachers suggest that adopting multilingual strategies should be already in place at the beginning of the student's school career to be helpful in secondary education. They also indicate that those multilingual pedagogical approaches might be practical for newly arrived immigrant students as they mostly have sufficient scholarly skills in their HL.

When discussing multilingual didactics in their classrooms, teachers often suggest they are unprepared. Out of all eighteen teachers, only one teacher (History, School 1) has had a (two-hour) course about multilingual didactics.

> *If I knew that it is advantageous in terms of language, erm, that it would be better for them if they use it [the HL], then I would allow it. However, I do not know if that is the case because even the Dutch language teachers ask their students only to speak Dutch.*
>
> PIGS teacher, School 3

This teacher mentions that she was not taught about the benefits of HL use in the classroom. Thereby, she has no guidance on this topic or knows about specific tools or didactic strategies to use the HL in the classroom. Lastly, four teachers say they do not allow the HL in their classroom as it does not align with the school's language policy.

> *I ask them not to use their HL in the classroom. That is the school's rules of conduct. So I apply it so they cannot speak another language. Moreover, I address them when they do.*
>
> French teacher, School 2

This teacher does not allow the HL in the classroom, even though she believes there are multiple benefits to using the HL in the learning process. This is an interesting quote as the teacher of religious education from the same school says that he sometimes allows the HL in the classroom and is the one who decided this; thereby, he explicitly does not adhere to the school's language policy.

When we compare the findings, we do not see a clear link between the teachers who state advantages of HL use and their concerns when implementing it in their classroom practice. The teachers who are very optimistic about the cognitive and emotional benefits of HL use also have some criticisms and concerns. Overall, every teacher sees both positive aspects and hurdles. We also do not find any clear distinctions between teachers from different schools. Within every school, some teachers see multiple advantages, and some mention only one advantage. Every school also includes teachers who saw numerous risks compared to those who see a small number of risks. This leads us to believe there are no noteworthy differences between the three schools. The differences are situated more on the individual teacher level.

Discussion

This study aimed to assess how secondary teachers within a school with a monolingual policy perceive the idea of multilingual pedagogies in their linguistically diverse classrooms. A notable incongruity in their beliefs about multilingualism emerged through interviews. Similar findings have been reported in other studies, indicating that teachers can simultaneously support and oppose the adoption of multilingual pedagogies (Lundberg, 2019; Martínez et al., 2015). Lundberg (2019) stated that those 'sceptical views' (p.266) are based on deeply grounded monolingual ideologies, whereas Jaspers and Rosiers (2022) stated that this incongruity in beliefs is a result of teachers' ideology of top-down teaching. Evidence of both is seen in our findings. In our discussion, we aim to explore the barriers teachers face in implementing multilingual policies and the motivations that influence their perspectives.

Initially, when questioned about the potential of students' HLs within the students' overall learning process, teachers saw the HLs as an asset for learning despite lacking experience with implementing multilingual teaching methods. All teachers, across all eighteen interviews, believed multilingualism could be an asset for students. They provided various justifications including the advantages of learning the content (14), learning the LoI (12), increasing student motivation (15), and even improving student

well-being (8). All these beliefs hold validity, as we observed their alignment with the expectations of teachers confirmed in existing research studies (Esquinca, 2011; Ramaut et al., 2013; Velasco & García, 2014). Although the participants were unaware of these positive research outcomes, they expressed a sentiment that it would be 'logical' for students to derive learning benefits from incorporating their home language into their educational journey.

Notably, there was no discernible distinction between the benefits highlighted by language teachers and those emphasised by content teachers. The shared perception among participants, regardless of their awareness of research findings, suggests a common intuitive understanding of the potential advantages associated with leveraging students' HLs in the learning process. Furthermore, clear distinctions between the various schools were also lacking, as each school exhibited a mix of teachers citing either multiple advantages or only one advantage of the HL on students' learning process.

These positive beliefs were somewhat surprising. Previous research in the Flemish context showed that almost 78% of secondary teachers who participated in a survey agreed that students who speak a language other than the LoI at home should be forbidden to speak their HL at school (Pulinx et al., 2014). Other Flemish research confirmed Pulinx' research when they found teachers mostly disagreed with the statement that "the school must allow students with a migration background to speak a language other than Dutch at school"(Centre for Diversity and Learning, 2022; Roose et al., 2019). A possible explanation could be that teachers who participated in the interviews gave more socially acceptable answers. On the other hand, it could also mean that teachers gave more nuanced answers. This could suggest that even though teachers agreed with a monolingual policy, they simultaneously recognise that providing the students a space to use their HL can speed up the learning process. As a result, they may be inclined to use the HL as '*a last resort'*. Hence, the benefits that teachers now associate with their students' multilingualism remain situated around the students own position and do not involve advantages on the classroom level. A third explanation is that the participating teachers were teaching in highly linguistically diverse classrooms, resulting in them being more exposed to the potential struggles of multilingual learners. Within the sample of Pulinx' (2014) research, 27% of the teachers who worked in schools were a small minority (0 – 20%) of students with multilingual backgrounds.

Keeping those positive results in mind, a significant discrepancy appeared when we focus on other results. Contrary to the results that teachers believed the HL could be an asset for the students' learning, they were not persuaded or in favour of adopting multilingual pedagogies themselves. This outcome that a teacher can be for and against multilingualism at the same time is not a new finding as both international (Creese & Blackledge, 2011; Lundberg, 2019; Martínez et al., 2015) and national

(Jaspers & Rosiers, 2022; Pourbaix et al., 2023) research previously described this tendency. However, our research aimed to delve deeper into why a teacher can simultaneously support and oppose the adoption of multilingual pedagogies. After examining these reasons, it became apparent that our analysis showed that teachers tend to express more negative beliefs when addressing issues that directly impact their classroom procedures.

This became noticeable when many interviewed teachers preferred that students would not speak their HL in the classroom, even though they saw benefits in the students' overall learning process if those students would use their HL. The results reflect those of Berben et al. (2007) and Sierens & Van Avermaet (2014), who found that teachers do not always trusted their students to stay on-topic. This also aligns with Jaspers and Rosiers' (2022) statement that teachers opposing the adoption of multilingual pedagogies tend to favour teacher-centred instructional approaches and bottom-up learning strategies. Our study corroborates this finding, as teachers expressing reluctance toward multilingual pedagogies predominantly preferred a quiet classroom environment and demonstrated less engagement in developing student-centred learning experiences.

Some teachers also expressed uncertainty about how to effectively integrate students' HLs, while others harbour concerns regarding their students' proficiency in the HL, doubting their students' proficiency level of the HL is suitable as a linguistic resource for learning. When teachers see multilingual pedagogies as an option, it was mainly a last resort or a privilege for recently arrived immigrant students. This sentiment aligns with prior research findings wherein Flemish teachers voiced apprehension about the HL proficiency of their Turkish students (Ağırdağ et al., 2014). Such deficit-oriented thinking about the 'too weak proficiency level of migrant students' is pervasive in the literature. Despite a growing positive orientation towards multilingualism among teachers (Alisaari et al., 2019; Fischer & Lahmann, 2020; Gorter & Arocena, 2020; Haukås, 2016), this kind of deficit thinking remains embedded within teachers' linguistic beliefs.

Similar to the positive beliefs about multilingualism, there were no discernible distinctions specific to schools or courses taught among teachers. Those teachers who expressed numerous positive beliefs may also simultaneously convey significant reservations about potentially embracing multilingual pedagogies. For instance, the French teacher at School 1 articulated the benefits of content learning, LoI acquisition, motivation, and well-being while simultaneously stating eight distinct objections to adopting multilingual pedagogy in her classroom context.

Overall, in examining teachers' perspectives on multilingualism in the classroom, a nuanced pattern emerged wherein positive beliefs are predominantly centred around the potential benefits for students. In contrast, negative beliefs primarily revolved around the implementation of multilingual

pedagogies. The positive outlook hinges on the idea that students could gain advantages in content learning, learning of the LoI, motivation, and overall well-being through using their HLs. However, the reluctance to adopt multilingual pedagogies is multi-faceted. Teachers express uncertainty about the practicalities of implementation, acknowledging a lack of knowledge on how to incorporate multilingual pedagogies effectively. This feeling can be traced to lacking experience or professionalisation in multilingual pedagogies. Interestingly, they also place a level of responsibility on the students, expressing apprehension about their ability to use multilingual pedagogies to their advantage. This lack of trust in students was coupled with concerns about the perceived inadequacy of some students' HLs as linguistic resources in the classroom. Notably, these negative perspectives aligned with the positive views rooted in high-status languages, potentially reflecting linguistic hierarchies. This connection raises questions about linguicism (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995) Linguicism refers to discrimination based on language, which can result in lower expectations from teachers towards students with migrant backgrounds. These lower expectations may influence teachers' beliefs and create reservations about adopting multilingual pedagogies. Such biases can impact the willingness of teachers to integrate multilingual approaches, despite the potential benefits these strategies offer for enhancing educational outcomes.

Conclusion

This study aimed to deepen our understanding of teachers' beliefs regarding multilingualism and implementing multilingual pedagogies in secondary education within monolingual school policies in Flanders, Belgium. Our findings shed light on several key aspects of teachers' perspectives, offering insights on the barriers and hesitations that may impede the broader integration of multilingual policies and practices in schools.

In response to our research question, we uncovered three main findings. Firstly, we observed only minimal differences between language and content teachers, with language teachers exhibiting a stronger emphasis on the benefits of home language didactics for language learning and the potential challenges posed by students' varying levels of HL proficiency. Secondly, our study revealed a more optimistic outlook among teachers regarding multilingualism compared to previous research in Flanders (Pulinx et al., 2017; Strobbe et al., 2017; Van Der Wildt et al., 2016). Lastly, a prominent finding was the fluctuating nature of the teachers' beliefs about multilingualism. Prior studies (Jaspers & Rosiers, 2022; Lundberg, 2019) have already noted that teachers may hold both positive and negative beliefs regarding multilingualism, which is confirmed in this study as well. However, upon closer examination of these beliefs, we discover that teachers' beliefs concerning multilingualism actually

span across two (sub)sets of beliefs: pedagogical beliefs about multilingualism and instructional beliefs about multilingualism.

We define teachers' pedagogical beliefs about multilingualism as teachers' beliefs about how their (multilingual) students learn through language. These pedagogical beliefs also take into account students' well-being. This factor might clarify why these pedagogical beliefs about language might be more favourable than the general beliefs about multilingualism in previous research, albeit with lingering deficit thinking and adherence to normative language standards. In contrast, instructional beliefs about multilingualism are the beliefs teachers uphold about how they could best coach and support the learning of their (multilingual) students. Within our sample, teachers are less willing to support their students in actively addressing their HL as a lever to learning in the classroom. This leads teachers, in terms of instruction and multilingualism, to more frequently opt for a teacher-centred approach, which reflects concerns about maintaining control and quietness (Vantieghem et al., 2020) in the classroom and highlights the absence of professionalisation and institutional support for multilingual pedagogies.

These findings contribute to our understanding of the nuanced interplay of beliefs surrounding multilingualism in education, highlighting the complexity of teacher perspectives in navigating language diversity in the classroom. However, the study is not without limitations. The impact of COVID-19 on teachers' workload and well-being during the data collection of this study may have influenced their receptiveness to multilingual pedagogies, warranting caution in interpreting the findings. Additionally, the relatively small sample size and focus on schools with monolingual policies limit the generalizability of the results.

Moving forward, further research with more extensive and more diverse samples is recommended to explore the applicability of these findings across different educational contexts and policy environments. In light of this study, we want to encourage (Flemish) schools to open the conversation on multilingualism and provide professional development opportunities for teachers to effectively incorporate multilingual pedagogies into their practices, for instance, Functional Multilingual Learning. Despite the challenges, our study underscores the importance of understanding and addressing teachers' beliefs as a crucial step towards fostering inclusive and effective language education practices in multilingual settings.

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