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Secondary School Students' and Teachers' Perspectives

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List of Abbreviations

AoA	Age of Acquisition
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EU	European Union
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
L3	Third Language
L4	Fourth Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TLA	Third Language Acquisition

1. Introduction

In today's globalised and linguistically diverse world, multilingualism has become an everyday reality in many classrooms. This is also the case in Austria, where learners often grow up navigating multiple languages both at home and at school. The presence of heritage languages, alongside the institutional emphasis on English as a global lingua franca, has sparked growing interest in how multilingual backgrounds influence additional language learning. Research has shown that multilingualism can positively impact language learning, particularly in areas such as vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and fluency (Hirosh & Degani 2018; Kemp 2007). However, these benefits are not guaranteed and often depend on a range of factors, including language proficiency, the status of the languages involved, and the attitudes of both learners and teachers (Jessner 2006).

This thesis explores how multilingualism shapes the process of acquiring English as an additional language in Austrian secondary schools. Specifically, it aims to investigate two key aspects: (1) how multilingual learners perceive their own linguistic repertoires in relation to English language learning, and (2) how English teachers view and respond to linguistic diversity in their classrooms. The goal is to explore how learners and teachers perceive multilingualism in the context of English language learning, and whether it is regarded as supporting, complicating, or shaping learning in specific ways.

While learners' personal beliefs play an important role in shaping language learning outcomes, teacher attitudes and pedagogical strategies are equally influential. As Pitkänen-Huhta (2019: 139) notes, learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds affect how they relate to the target language, yet teachers may struggle to acknowledge and integrate these backgrounds into their teaching. Some teachers may support the use of multiple languages in the classroom, while others may see linguistic diversity as a challenge rather than a resource (Haukås 2016; Berényi-Kiss 2012).

To examine these issues, the study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. A questionnaire was distributed to multilingual secondary school students to gather data on their language use, self-perceived proficiency, and attitudes toward their multilingualism. In parallel, semi-structured interviews were conducted with multilingual in-service English teachers working in linguistically diverse classrooms. Given the limited number of participants, the study does not aim for broad generalisation. Rather, it offers exploratory

insights into individual learners' and teachers' experiences, which may inform more inclusive and effective language teaching practices in Austria.

The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical foundations related to multilingualism and third language acquisition, as well as empirical findings on the effects of multilingualism on language learning and teacher attitudes. Chapter 3 provides an overview of statistics and policies related to multilingualism in Austria. Chapter 4 presents the methodology and analytical approach, while Chapter 5 reports the findings from the interviews and questionnaire. Chapter 6 then discusses these results in light of the research questions and theoretical framework. The final chapter summarises key conclusions, highlights limitations, and outlines implications for language teaching in multilingual contexts.

2. Theoretical background

Since the present thesis examines phenomena that are truly complex, it is essential that they are defined and discussed. Thus, the following section sets out to explore the concepts bilingualism, multilingualism, as well as Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Third Language Acquisition (TLA). Furthermore, the notion of multilingual advantage at language learning alongside scientific literature on teachers' perspectives on said benefit will be presented. Additionally, a brief contextualization of the study will take place by summarising the current statistics and policies in the Austrian educational setting.

2.1. Defining terms

2.1.1 Bilingual, multilingual

The terms *bilingual* and *multilingual* are widely used in both everyday life and academic discourse, yet their exact meaning is not always clear. In the broadest sense, bilingualism refers to the knowledge or use of two languages, and multilingualism to more than two. However, since every bilingual could technically also be considered multilingual, the distinction is not always straightforward. Scholars have therefore tried to provide more precise definitions, which have shifted considerably over time.

Earlier definitions tended to be rather strict. Bloomfield, for example, defined bilingualism as “native-like control of two languages” (1933: 56). Such a narrow definition excludes the majority of bilinguals, as very few people achieve identical proficiency in all languages and skills. Later definitions reacted against this restrictiveness by moving towards much broader interpretations. Macnamara (1967) suggested that even minimal competence in one of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) could qualify someone as bilingual, while Haugen (1969, cited in Grosjean 1982) argued that the ability to produce “meaningful utterances” in another language should be enough. These broader views, however, risked trivialising the term, as they would also include very limited knowledge.

More recent approaches try to find a middle ground by focusing on the functional use of languages. Titone (1972), for instance, described bilinguals as those who use a second language according to its own structures rather than through translation from the first. Similarly, Mohanty (1994) emphasised the ability to meet communicative demands in everyday life, while Li Wei (2008: 4) explicitly included both receptive and productive skills in his definition. Butler (2012: 112) provides one of the most comprehensive modern accounts, describing multilinguals as people with varying levels of proficiency across skills and languages, depending on context and purpose:

Multilanguage users are defined [...] as individuals or groups of people who obtain communicative competence in more than one language, with various degrees of proficiencies, in oral and/or written forms, in order to interact with speakers of one or more languages in a given society. (Butler 2012: 112)

For the purposes of this thesis, the terms *bilingual* and *multilingual* will be used interchangeably, though *multilingual* will be preferred as it better reflects the complexity of diverse linguistic repertoires.

2.1.2 First Language (L1), Second Language (L2), Third Language (L3)

As previously mentioned, this thesis investigates aspects of the lives of persons who communicate in more than one language. Therefore, it is necessary to address the issue of how these languages are to be labelled. In the field of applied linguistics, the first language with which one gets into contact and learns is called, quite logically, “first language” or “L1” (Ortega 2008: 5). This first language is also often referred to as one’s ‘mother tongue’ or ‘native tongue’, which is typically learnt informally through parents, siblings, and other people during one’s “critical years of development”, i.e. up to approximately three to four years of

age (Ortega 2008: 5). However, it is important to emphasise that a) one can have more than one first language and b) despite the term implying that it is the language in which one possesses the highest level of competence, that is not always the case (Ortega 2008; Maftoon and Shakibafar 2011). For instance, it is not rare that a child grows up in a linguistically diverse family, in which the two parents speak two different languages. Such a child is usually confronted with two languages from the start and it is entirely possible that they learn these two languages to the same extent, thus acquiring two L1s simultaneously. If one acquires an additional language after their L1 or L1s, then that language is labelled a “second language” or “L2” (Ortega 2008: 5). If, for example, the parents of a child speak a minority language which becomes the child’s L1, he or she can acquire the majority language as an L2 once he or she enters a larger community, such as kindergarten. In this case, it is also possible that over time the child attains a higher competence level in the L2 (the majority language), and thus this becomes his or her dominant language. Also, it is likely that at some point this same child is required to learn an additional language at school, which would then be their L3. This term can refer to any language learnt after the L1(s) and the L2 and it is typically a foreign language one studies formally, in an educational setting (Jorda 2005; Lugoolobi-Naulunga 2013).

2.1.3 Types of bi-/multilingualism

As shown in the previous section, multilingualism is a highly complex phenomenon, and multilinguals “entail quite a heterogeneous group of individuals” (Butler 2012: 112). Because of the wide variety of linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds, researchers have proposed several systems of classification. The most common dimensions include the relationship between the languages, the age of acquisition, the organisation of linguistic codes and meaning units, the social status of the languages and the conditions of learning, as well as cultural identity (Butler 2012: 112). Although many of these categories overlap, some of them are particularly relevant for the context of this thesis and are therefore described below. It is important to note that while the labels usually contain the term *bilingual*, they can also apply to multilinguals with more than two languages.

One often-cited distinction is between balanced and dominant bilingualism. A balanced bilingual is described as an individual with equal proficiency in two or more languages (Peal & Lambert 1962 in Butler 2012: 113). This comes close to Bloomfield’s (1933) definition of bilingualism as “native-like control,” since it assumes equally high competence. In reality, however, this type is rare. More common are dominant bilinguals, who show greater

proficiency in one language than another (Butler 2012: 115). This distinction is particularly relevant here, as both students and teachers in the study often referred to stronger and weaker languages.

Another important dimension is the age of acquisition. A useful distinction is made between early and late bilinguals (Genesee et al. 1978 in Butler 2012: 113). Early bilinguals acquire their languages during childhood, while late bilinguals learn additional languages in adolescence or adulthood. Within early bilingualism, simultaneous bilinguals are exposed to two (or more) languages from birth, while sequential bilinguals learn another language after the first has been established. In multilingual classrooms in Austria, both types can be found, which makes this classification useful for the analysis.

Weinreich (1953 in Butler 2012: 113) described compound, coordinate, and subordinate bilingualism according to how linguistic codes are organised in relation to meaning units. Compound bilinguals link words from different languages to the same concept, coordinate bilinguals store them separately, and subordinate bilinguals access meaning in one language through another. While these categories are somewhat theoretical and less central for the present study, they are included in the overview for completeness.

Language status and learning environment have also been identified as important factors. Fishman (1977 in Butler 2012: 114) distinguished elective or *elite* bilingualism, which usually arises through formal education and is associated with prestige languages, from *folk* or *circumstantial* bilingualism, which often develops through migration and daily necessity and is linked to minority or lower-status languages. This distinction remains relevant in Austrian schools, where English learning tends to be seen as prestigious, while heritage languages often have less value attached to them.

Lambert (1974 in Butler 2012: 114) differentiated between additive bilingualism, in which both languages are maintained, and subtractive bilingualism, in which the new language gradually replaces the first. This dimension is especially important in contexts where minority languages are not institutionally supported.

Finally, bilinguals and multilinguals may identify with one, two, or multiple cultures (Hamers & Blanc 2000). While this cultural dimension is not at the centre of the present thesis, it is worth mentioning since language and cultural identity are closely linked.

The following table provides a summary of these classifications:

Dimensions	Types	Brief definition	Names of the researchers
Relationship between the languages	Balanced Dominant	Equal competence Higher level of competence in one language	Peal and Lambert 1962
Age of Onset of Acquisition	Early : Simultaneous or Sequential Late	Languages acquired during childhood either at the same time (simultaneous) or one after the other (sequential) Additional language(s) acquired later in life	Genesee et al. 1978
Organisation of linguistic codes and meaning units	Compound Coordinate Subordinate	Linguistic codes stored in the same meaning unit Linguistic codes stored separately Meaning unit is accessed through L1/the dominant language	Weinreich 1953
Language status	Elective/elite Circumstantial/folk	Additional high prestige language is learnt, typically through formal instruction Lower-status/minority language acquired from family	Fishman 1977
Effect of the additional language	Additive Subtractive	The new language does not lead to loss of L1(s) The new language replaces the L1(s) in time	Lambert 1974
Culture	Monocultural Bicultural Multicultural	Identification with one culture Identification with two cultures Identification with multiple cultures	Hamers and Blanc 2000

Table 1: Summary of categorisations of bilingualism (based on Butler 2012)

It is important to recognise that these dimensions are interconnected. Simultaneous bilingualism, for example, often aligns with balanced bilingualism, while sequential or late bilingualism tends to correlate with dominance in one language. Similarly, elite bilingualism is often additive, whereas circumstantial bilingualism is more likely subtractive (Moradi 2014: 125; Beardsmore qtd. in Duarte & Gogolin 2013: 114). Prestige frequently plays a decisive role: parents may discourage their children from maintaining a minority language if it is considered less valuable than the dominant language of society (De Houwer & Ortega 2022: 2).

At the same time, Butler (2012: 115) reminds us that these categories “fail to capture the role of context,” which is crucial for understanding language use. A student may be able to perform complex tasks in German but lack similar vocabulary in Croatian, while at the same time being more comfortable discussing personal topics in Croatian than in German. Moreover, contexts of use can change over time: a language learned in school may later be strengthened through migration, or conversely, a language once used daily may gradually fall into disuse if opportunities to speak it diminish. Such examples show that multilingualism is best understood as a dynamic, context-sensitive phenomenon, rather than a fixed set of categories.

2.1.4 Second Language Acquisition(SLA) and Third Language Acquisition (TLA)

In the previous sections, concepts such as bilingualism and multilingualism were discussed, but the question of how an individual becomes multilingual — how additional languages are actually acquired — has not yet been addressed. This section therefore provides a short overview of key theories in second language acquisition (SLA) and third language acquisition (TLA), which together illustrate the multidimensionality of multilingual learning.

Research on first language acquisition has shown that children all over the world acquire language in relatively predictable stages, regardless of which language is involved (Klein 1986; Ortega 2008; Lightbown & Spada 2013). Some theories have explained this process through imitation and reinforcement (behaviourist approaches), others through innate principles (innatist views), or through interaction with caregivers (interactionist perspectives) (Lightbown & Spada 2013). Interestingly, similar developmental patterns can be observed in SLA, despite wide variation in age, L1, and learning context (Lightbown & Spada 2013: 45).

At the same time, differences arise depending on whether a language is acquired naturally in everyday interaction or through formal instruction. In classrooms, exposure and opportunities for communication are limited, while in naturalistic contexts learners are surrounded by the language and often motivated by social necessity (Klein 1986: 59). This distinction is highly relevant in the Austrian context, where many multilingual children acquire German — the language of instruction — either simultaneously with their home language(s) or as a second language once the L1 is established.

Third Language Acquisition (TLA) refers to “the acquisition of a non-native language by learners who have previously acquired or are acquiring two other languages” (Cenoz 2003: 71). It thus explores how multilinguals learn yet another language (Bardel & Sánchez 2020). Although the term “third or additional language acquisition” (De Angelis 2007: 11) may capture the phenomenon more precisely, the label TLA will be used here for simplicity. Compared to SLA, TLA is more complex, as it involves at least three linguistic systems and multiple possible orders of acquisition (Jessner 2006: 16). Learners may acquire all languages simultaneously, one after the other, or in various mixed sequences (Cenoz 2003: 72). Moreover, the process can be interrupted or reshaped by the acquisition of further languages (Jessner 2006).

TLA is also marked by greater variation in learning contexts. While second languages are typically acquired either formally or informally, third languages may be learned in several contexts at once. For instance, in Austria many children acquire German informally at school and in peer interaction, but also study it formally as the language of instruction.

Beyond order and context, Herdina and Jessner (2000) identified distinctive attributes of multilingual acquisition: non-linearity, maintenance, individual variation, interdependence, and qualitative change. Unlike SLA, which is often described as a linear progression, TLA is non-linear, as proficiency may rise and fall depending on use and maintenance. Language maintenance plays a crucial role: without continuous use, languages are susceptible to attrition, which is influenced by individual factors such as aptitude, motivation, or anxiety (Jessner 2006: 17). The principle of interdependence further suggests that learners’ languages form a single, interconnected system, meaning that changes in one language affect the others (Jordà 2005: 14). Acquiring an additional language thus creates not only quantitative growth but also qualitative change in the overall linguistic repertoire.

Second Language Acquisition	Third Language Acquisition
At least two linguistic systems involved - complex	At least three linguistic systems involved - even more complex
Some previous language learning experience (L1 or L1s)	More previous language learning experience (L1/L1s and L2)
Simultaneous or consecutive acquisition	All languages simultaneously, all consecutively, 2 Ls after L1, 2 Ls before L3
Context of acquisition & use can vary	Even greater variation in context of acquisition & use
Considered linear	Non-linear

Table 2: Summary of the differences between SLA and TLA (Cenoz 2000; Herida & Jessner 2000)

In sum, SLA and TLA share many features, but TLA is marked by greater complexity, variability, and interaction between languages. While it is a relatively new field, research consistently highlights the importance of prior language learning experience for multilingual acquisition (Cenoz 2000; Herdina & Jessner 2000; Jordà 2005; Jessner 2006; Bardel & Sánchez 2020). Such experience is believed to place bilinguals at an advantage when learning an additional language compared to monolinguals, a point that will be important for interpreting the findings of this thesis.

2.2. Multilingual advantage in language learning

Since it has been emphasised that multilingualism is much more than the sum of individual languages (Grosjean 1982), the issue of what this means in terms of learning additional languages has also been investigated. Most notably, it has been proposed that multilingual individuals have an advantage in several, if not all, aspects of the acquisition process. This phenomenon has been referred to as “multilingual benefit” and describes “the range of advantages multiple language speakers display in comparison to monolingual speakers when they engage in complex activities such as learning a language” (Dahm & De Angelis 2018: 194). While it is important to mention that some scholars refute the existence of such advantages entirely (Morton 2014), as Dahm and De Angelis (2018: 195) point out “the positive association between language knowledge and the development of a set of advantages for the individual are far too numerous for us to dismiss in their entirety”. Thus, in

the following some of the abundant studies concerning benefits of multilingualism for additional language learning will be presented and briefly discussed. Furthermore, these will be addressed according to skill domains, namely, vocabulary, phonology, grammar, and literacy. These will be followed by a general discussion including possible explanations for the obtained results.

2.2.1 Vocabulary

Firstly, when it comes to learning lexical items in a new language, it has been found that bi- or multilinguals tend to outperform monolinguals as both adults (e.g. Van Hell & Mahn 1997; Keshavarz & Astanach 2004; Kaushanskaya 2012; Bartolotti and Marian 2012) and as children (e.g. Brojde et al. 2012; Yoshida et al. 2011; Kaushanskaya et al. 2014). When comparing the performance of multilingual and monolingual adults on learning new words in Spanish, Van Hell and Mahn (1997) found that the multilingual learners outperformed the monolingual ones. Interestingly, similar results were obtained by researchers who tested the acquisition of novel vocabulary using an artificial language. Kaushanskaya and Marian (2009), for instance, discovered that bilinguals were better at learning lexical items in a made-up language as compared to monolinguals. What is more, the items used in their study did not bear any resemblance to the languages already known by the bilinguals (Kaushanskaya & Marian 2009). Kaushanskaya's (2012) study in which she used artificial words, some of which consisted of familiar phonemes also showed an advantage for Spanish-English bilinguals even on the unfamiliar items. Bartolotti and Marian (2012) came to the same conclusion when they compared a group of English-Spanish bilinguals to English monolinguals. Moreover, they seem to have found indications that multilingual advantage can manifest itself even if new words are learnt via the L2, though it is crucial to point out that their participants all acquired their L2 at an early age (early AoA). However, there also seems to be some conditions under which the so-called "multilingual benefit" manifests (Dahm & De Angelis 2018: 194). Kaushanskaya and Rezhigel (2012), for example, compared a group of bilingual learners to monolingual learners in their ability to learn new words with either concrete or abstract translations in English and they found that bilinguals only performed better on the items with concrete translations. Interestingly, similar discoveries were made previously by Papagno and Vallar (1995) in their study of comparing the performance of bilingual individuals to that of multilingual persons. They used two word learning tasks, one of which consisted of Russian words and their Italian translations, while the other one included two words in Italian that had a particular association between them and the participants' task was to learn said association. Although they had significantly

higher recall rates on the first task, multilinguals did not perform better on the association-task.

Though there are substantially fewer studies conducted about the effect of multilingualism on novel word learning among children, the ones that exist seem to support the idea of multilingual benefit, albeit under certain conditions only. For instance, when Yoshida and colleagues (2011) compared groups of bilingual three-year-olds to monolingual ones on learning new adjectives, they found that bilinguals performed better on items that were entirely new to them, i.e. those for which they did not have an already existing label. Such a difference could not be observed, however, when the new adjectives were associated with ones the participants already knew. Similar tendencies emerged in the findings of Kaushanskaya and colleagues' (2014) study conducted amongst English-Spanish classroom bilinguals and monolinguals between the ages of five and seven. They used two sets of lexical items, one of them consisted of names of animals (familiar referents) and the other of aliens (unfamiliar referents). Bilinguals were better at matching words to pictures of animals, but not when they matched names to pictures of aliens. These findings suggest that multilingual advantage in children is present when a connection between a new word and a previously existing meaning unit was established.

2.2.2 Phonology

While phonology may be considered a part of word learning, more specifically, learning the form (sound) of a certain word, it is discussed in a separate section, as the studies listed here did focus on the sound pattern only, disregarding the orthographic form and meaning. Although this area of inquiry does not provide as many studies as vocabulary learning (with focus on connection between form and meaning), the ones that exist also point in the direction of the beneficial influence of multilingualism. Tremblay and Sabourin (2012), for instance, compared English monolinguals to English-French bilinguals, as well as a group of participants who spoke at least one more language apart from English and French with regards to learning new phonemic contrasts. Even though they did not discover a difference between the groups initially, after receiving training, members of the bi- and multilingual groups were able to better discriminate between the contrasts. A year prior, Bartolotti and colleagues (2011) measured the performance of two groups of bilinguals on learning artificial phonemes based on Morse code under high- and low-interference conditions. They found that the group that consisted of highly-experienced bilinguals (early AoA, higher proficiency,

higher frequency of use) were able to learn the code, but only when the interference was low. The less experienced bilinguals were not able to learn the code under either conditions. Furthermore, when comparing the learning outcomes on artificial contrasts with varying degrees of difficulty, Antoniou and his colleagues obtained some interesting findings (2015). At first, they contrasted the performance of English monolinguals to English-Mandarin bilinguals on contrasts that resembled words in either English or Mandarin and found that the bilingual group performed better on both types of contrasts. Later, they also included a group of English-Korean speakers, along with a set of contrasts resembling Korean words and discovered that both bilingual groups outperformed the monolinguals on the contrasts similar to English and Mandarin words. When it came to the Korean-like contrasts, however, the group of Korean-English bilinguals outperformed both other groups (Antoniou et al. 2015). A further study by Wang and Saffran (2014) was conducted on the segmentation from continuous input in an artificial tonal language. By comparing Mandarin-English bilinguals to Mandarin monolinguals and English monolinguals and a group of bilinguals speaking non-tonal languages, they found that both bilingual groups performed better than their corresponding monolingual group. These results are especially intriguing, since the advantage of the non-tonal bilinguals cannot be explained based on previous language experience.

2.2.3 Grammar

As far as grammar learning is concerned, the number of scientific inquiries on multilingual advantage is quite limited. However, they still support the notion that multilingualism does have an impact on learning and using grammar in an additional language. Klein (1995), for example, conducted a study amongst adolescent multilinguals and monolinguals and found that the multilinguals outperformed monolinguals in learning English, in both lexis and syntax. Specifically, they scored better on grammaticality judgement and correction tasks. Similar results were obtained by Abu-Rabia and Sanitsky (2010), when they compared a group of Hebrew-Russian speaking 6th-graders to Hebrew monolingual ones with regards to syntactic judgement in English. Another interesting piece of research by Sanz (2007) found a positive correlation between bi-literacy (i.e. the ability to read and write) and grammar performance amongst Catalan-Spanish bilinguals, while no such correlation was observed with regards to oral competence. Despite the similarity in results, it is not quite possible to draw parallels between these two studies, since Abu-Rabia and Stanitsky (2010) did not investigate the role of literacy and Sanz (2007) did not have a monolingual control group. Stafford, Sanz and Bowden (2010) also set out to examine novel grammar learning in

connection with bilingualism, but their focus lay on the effect of AoA. While comparing a group of individuals who acquired multiple languages during childhood (average AoA= 8.3) to ones who learnt further languages later in life (AoA = 25.1), they were not able to identify any differences between the two groups.

Approaching the issue of grammar from a slightly different perspective, Kemp (2007) investigated multilinguals' grammar strategies via self-reports and his results indicate that the more languages one speaks the more grammar-learning strategies they know and use. His findings seem to be consistent with those of Dolgunsöz (2013), who examined grammar-learning strategies of multilinguals who know two languages and those who know more than two. He also found a strong correlation between the number of languages known and the usage of grammar strategies. Additionally, his data suggests that with the increasing number of languages in one's repertoire, the ability to analyse and understand grammatical patterns, as well as the ability to correct one's mistakes and their desire to be corrected also increase. Furthermore, his results indicate that the more languages one knows, the more grammar becomes automatic in production.

2.2.4 Literacy

The role of literacy in multilingual language learning has already appeared briefly in connection with grammar learning, but here it will be discussed in relation to literacy in an additional language, in particular in connection with differences between mono- and multilinguals. It is important to mention that, although this line of inquiry received somewhat less attention than the one focusing on the role of biliteracy in the acquisition of L3 literacy, there are a number of studies that touch upon multilinguals' performance in contrast to monolinguals'. For instance, van Gelderen and colleagues (2003) compared bilingual Dutch to monolingual ones in terms of English reading comprehension and found that the former group did not perform better than the latter. In fact, the monolingual participants outperformed the bilingual group on reading proficiency and sentence verification, while no difference between the groups was found on word recognition and grammar. The researchers themselves suggested that their results may be due to the fact that their bilingual participants were literate in Dutch only, so there was no difference between the two groups with regard to literacy.

This claim seems to be supported by Schwartz and colleagues (2007), as their study showed

Hebrew-Russian biliterate multilinguals outperform both Hebrew-Russian monoliterate and Hebrew monoliterate groups on phoneme analysis, nonword decoding and spelling in the process of learning English as a L3. Khan-Horwitz, Schwartz and Share (2011) obtained similar results amongst a similar population on English decoding and spelling tasks. Schwartz et al. (2014) also arrived at the same hierarchy of scores when they provided the aforementioned three groups with homophonic words embedded in short English text and tested the participants on naming accuracy, speed and orthography. Finally, the findings of a study by Mandy (2014) in a Canadian context on French proficiency of English monolinguals and a group of lifelong, as well as immigrant bilinguals showed both bilingual groups outperform their monolingual peers on the writing portion of the test. On the speaking and reading section, however, the immigrant bilinguals performed better than both lifelong bilinguals and monolinguals. These studies suggest that multiliteracy might be a crucial factor to consider when discussing the effects of multilingualism on additional language learning. Furthermore, as pointed out by Mandy (2014) social factors also need to be taken into consideration.

All in all, research into TLA suggests that multilingualism has advantages for learning a new language. Some of these benefits are believed to stem from heightened metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok 2001), better phonological memory (Papagano & Vallar 1995), extensive learning experience (Van Hell & Mahn 1997), etc. Due to the complexity of multilingualism, however, it may be difficult to pinpoint what exact underlying mechanisms affect additional language learning in multilinguals. In fact, Hirosh and Degani (2018: 892) suggest that multilingualism has “both *direct* and *indirect* influences, which affect different aspects of language learning including knowledge (vocabulary learning, phonology, grammar, and literacy) as well as fluency in the novel language”. They argue that while multilinguals’ knowledge and skills may transfer directly, i.e. “as is”, from previous experience when learning a new language, there are many factors that affect the competence in a novel language indirectly (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 892). In their proposed framework, they argue that the ratio of knowledge and strategies that directly influence language acquisition and the cognitive and social skills that affect the learning process indirectly will depend on the learner’s background and the characteristics of the language in question (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 909).

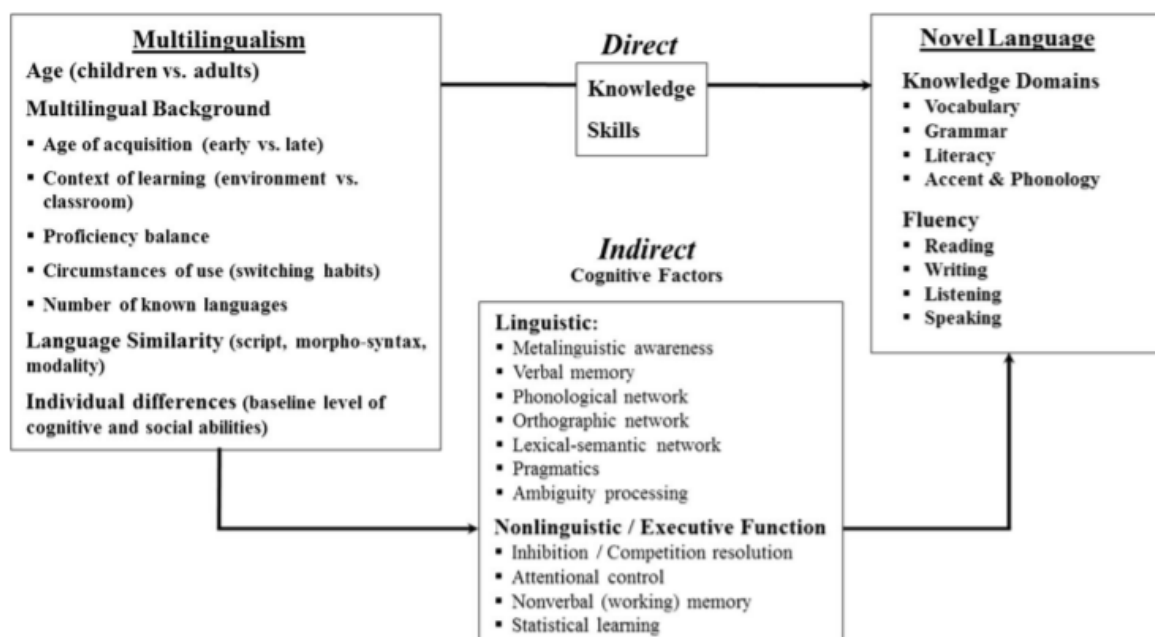


Figure 1: Direct and indirect effects of multilingualism on additional language learning (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 893)

As seen in figure 1, among the learner's characteristics the age of the person, the age of acquisition, the learning context, the proficiency and proficiency balance between the known languages, the frequency and context of use, as well as the number of languages play a significant role in determining how multilingualism might influence further language learning (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 893). They argue that while both children and adult multilinguals exhibit advantages in novel language learning, multiliteracy may be a crucial factor to consider (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 910). As far as AoA is concerned, both early and late multilinguals can benefit from their existing language knowledge, although early acquisition is generally linked to higher proficiency in the L2 (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 911). Similarly, both those who acquired their languages in a naturalistic and in a classroom setting can use their prior knowledge to their advantage. However, while the former group may experience more indirect effect, the latter group can turn their direct experience with language learning contexts and strategies into a perk (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 911). As far as current use and proficiency and the number of known languages are concerned, there is some indication that higher exposure, level proficiency and greater number of languages lead to increase in performance in the L3, however, more direct investigation into the exact role of these characteristics is necessary (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 912).

Regarding the role of language similarity, it is suggested that the degree of similarity between the languages will influence the degree of direct transfer. In general, the less similar

the languages are, the greater the multilingual advantage. However, those who know languages that are similar to each other might be able to handle cross-language interference better (Hirosh & Degani 2018: 912). It is also crucial to mention that there are other individual factors that influence one's L3 learning process, such as motivation, intelligence or the amount of exposure to the language they are learning (Jessner 2006: 43).

Having discussed the advantages of multilingualism on additional language learning, it is essential to acknowledge that despite the significant number of studies confirming the existence of multilingual advantage, there seem to be certain prerequisites for this benefit to manifest itself. Two issues that are of critical importance in this regard are language status and competence. As Cenoz (2003: 74) points out, minority languages that are "less-spread" can receive "different degrees of institutional support". As many learners, especially in the Austrian context, are likely speakers of such languages, the amount of support they are offered and the degree of appreciation exhibited toward their abilities may impact whether or not they are able to put their existing knowledge to use in the process of additional language learning. Apart from language prestige, language competence can play a crucial role in determining if previous knowledge will foster additional language learning. Cummins (1979) suggests that in order to avoid possible negative effects of multilingualism, a certain level of competence in both/all languages is necessary (lower threshold). Moreover, an even higher degree of competence is needed in order to experience the benefits of multilingualism (higher threshold). Additionally, Swain and colleagues (1990) argue that bilinguals with literacy in their home language learn additional languages faster and more effectively than ones who are not literate in their home language.

These findings may be able to explain why some studies confirm multilingual advantage and others refute it. Furthermore, they may have implications for the Austrian educational context. Nevertheless, it would be false to claim that the extent to which one can harness the benefits of multilingualism solely depends on factors within the learner and their home environment. The next section will, therefore, focus on a person whose influence on a student's linguistic habits is as great as that of the parents, namely, the (language) teacher.

2.3. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes surrounding multilingualism in an educational context

Teachers are generally perceived to have a good amount of influence on their students' behaviour. However, this influence seems to be even greater when it comes to multilingual students, especially those whose home language is a minority language. In fact, Dooly (2005: 98–99) argues that “teachers' expectations and perspectives may have more effect on minority students than on majority students” and that “low expectations may generate poor practices”. Moreover, as pointed out by De Angelis (2011: 217), teachers have pedagogical power both inside and outside of the classroom. On the one hand, they can decide whether or not they acknowledge and put to use students' languages in the classroom. By doing so they “play an essential role in fostering multilingualism” as “their actions can exert great influence on their students” (De Angelis 2011: 217). What is more, they “play an essential role in the wellbeing and academic development of multilingual children” (Knudsen et al. 2020: 2). On the other hand, “immigrant parents often turn to teachers for advice on raising children with two or more languages”, therefore teachers can influence students' language practices by advising the parents and encouraging or discouraging the use and maintenance of the home language (De Angelis 2011: 217). By discouraging the use of the home language in favour of the language of instruction, teachers run the risk of the loss of potential cognitive benefits alongside the loss of the home language (De Angelis 2011: 217). Teachers' classroom practices, as well as the advice they give tend to be determined at least to some degree by their beliefs and attitudes, which are “informal theories of learning and teaching, often influenced by their own experiences as learners” (Christopoulou, Pampaka & Vlassopoulou 2012: 47), as well as their “personal and professional backgrounds” (Knudsen et al. 2020: 4). As teachers' perspectives “can have far-reaching impact on educational opportunities” (Dooly 2005: 99), investigating these beliefs and attitudes becomes relevant when discussing the possibility of multilingualism fostering or hindering language acquisition in the foreign language classroom.

Fortunately, with the rapid changes in student populations resulting in an “astonishing and growing linguistic diversity”, several studies have been conducted to explore teachers' perspectives and practices (Bredthauer and Engfer 2016: 105). One such project by Dooly (2005) set out to examine the views of foreign language teachers in Catalonia. Her investigation involves three groups of teachers: one group of inservice foreign language teachers, a group of foreign teachers in training (intercultural group), and another group of

foreign language teachers in training (preservice group). She found that teachers in all groups perceived teaching linguistically diverse groups of students “somehow more difficult” (Dolly 2005: 107). Additionally, inservice teachers tended to have more negative associations with multilingualism, in general, they did not link any positive attributes to multilingualism or multilingual students. In fact, some participants associated poor academic performance with being multilingual. By contrast, student teachers had far higher rates of positive categorizations and they also acknowledged the importance of heritage languages for the self-confidence of learners. Furthermore, teachers in training consider providing equal opportunities for all students relevant and they regard the teacher as an active agent in the learning process (Dooly 2005: 108).

Christopoulou, Pampaka and Vlassopoulou (2012) also discovered some interesting beliefs when investigating the Cypriot context. Having collected insights from 52 teachers from 30 different public schools, they found that while the majority of teachers had beliefs about multilingualism that are in accordance with the current body of literature and they did not associate any social or emotional problems with multilingualism, with the increasing amount of teaching experience teachers also tended to believe more that multilingual pupils are at a disadvantage in the educational system (Christopoulou, Pampaka & Vlassopoulou 2012: 55). Moreover, the participants seemed to believe that whether or not multilingualism is associated with “problems” depends on the particular languages spoken by learners. The teachers participating in the study also felt that they were not knowledgeable enough on how to best handle linguistically diverse classes, as they had not been prepared to do so during their training, nor did they report having adequate resources for multilingual groups. However, they considered their efforts overall adequate for the circumstances (Christopoulou, Pampaka & Vlassopoulou 2012: 56).

The challenges mentioned by Christopoulou, Pamaka and Vlassopoulou’s participants are echoed by many teachers in Scandinavian schools, too. Knudsen et al. (2020), for instance, reported that Danish teachers consider the lack of appropriate teaching materials, as well as the fact that they cannot be familiar with all the languages and writing systems present in their students’ repertoire some of the greatest challenges of working in a linguistically diverse setting. The latter concern is especially not surprising, since participants reported a total of 51 different languages spoken by their students. Danish teachers seem to have overall positive attitudes toward multilingualism and place great value upon maintaining learners’ home languages, especially as proficiency in the home language is believed to be beneficial

for language and literacy development in further languages (Knudsen et al. 2020: 11). They seemed to be open to integrating students' languages into their teaching practices and believed that doing so can increase learners' motivation (Knudsen et al. 2020: 11-12). Moreover, Danish teachers also tended to consider overcoming possible language barriers the responsibility of the teacher and they advocated for greater parent involvement in order to boost learners' academic achievement. Most importantly, they reported to believe that "students can do well and that they tell this to the students" (Knudsen et al. 2020: 13).

In contrast to these positive attitudes, Lundberg (2019: 268) argues that "there is a discrepancy between multilingual pedagogies celebrated in the literature and current classroom practices". He suggests that while the majority of participants accepted the benefits of multilingualism and plurilingual educational approaches on a conceptual level, some of the actual teaching methods were influenced by misconceptions stemming from monolingual ideologies (Lundberg 2019: 280). He identified three sets of beliefs about multilingualism among Swedish primary school teachers. Educators in the first group had overall positive attitudes and considered multilingualism a resource for society, as well as their own teaching. They also reported individualising their practices according to students' needs and encouraging the presence of all the learners' languages in the classroom. In direct opposition to these views are the members of the second group, which consists of teachers who seemed to firmly believe in a strict monolingual policy. They found that multilingualism made communicating social values more difficult and they did not consider enabling students to use their home languages important. In fact, they did not consider multilingualism an important topic at all. The gap between these two groups was bridged by the third one, which comprised teachers who, while having a tendency of acknowledging the benefits of multilingualism, did not see the need to change current classroom practices.

In her 2015 interviews with Norwegian foreign language teachers, Haukås found that the participants generally viewed multilingualism as an asset, especially for their own language learning. Yet they did not always believe that this was equally true for their students, and only a few encouraged learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoires in the classroom. The participants mentioned not being familiar with all of the languages spoken by their learners, lack of awareness, especially of grammatical systems and terminology, as well as third language learning being too different from second language learning as some of the reasons for their views (Haukas 2015: 8-10).

De Angelis (2011) conducted a study with 176 secondary school teachers from Italy, Austria, and the UK to identify possible patterns in their views on multilingualism. Across all three

countries, teachers expressed similar beliefs when asked about the role of prior language knowledge in learning, the usefulness of language knowledge, and their own teaching practices. Many participants acknowledged the overall benefits of multilingualism and agreed that already known languages can facilitate the acquisition of further ones. At the same time, they tended to view languages as separate entities in the brain and worried that frequent use of students' home languages might delay the acquisition of the host language or cause confusion (De Angelis 2011: 227).

Teachers also appeared to assign different values to languages depending on their prestige. For immigrant students in particular, they considered competence in major international languages more important than maintaining the home language (De Angelis 2011: 228). The prevailing practice therefore seems to be that pupils' home languages and cultures are excluded from the classroom, a tendency especially strong among the Austrian teachers (De Angelis 2011: 229). One reason frequently given, similar to the findings of Knudsen et al. (2020), was that teachers felt they would need to be familiar with all of the languages they wished to include, which they regarded as unrealistic (De Angelis 2011: 229).

The studies reviewed above suggest that language teachers across Europe and the UK hold similar belief patterns regarding multilingualism. Although the Austrian context was included in De Angelis' (2011) cross-country investigation, it has not been examined in much depth. More detailed insights are provided by Berényi-Kiss (2013), who interviewed seven English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Austria about linguistic diversity and their classroom practices. Her findings suggest that there are some conflicting views on both individual and collective levels, especially concerning learners' linguistic repertoire. Firstly, although it has been noted by more than one participant that learners' cultural background is to be seen as an asset and cultural diversity in general is appraised, linguistic diversity is not regarded with the same sentiments (Berényi-Kiss 2013: 102). Secondly, while learners' competence in their native languages is seen as important, this notion only holds true for the context of acquiring the language of instruction (Berényi-Kiss 2013: 102). In the EFL classroom, "German is the starting point, the basis teachers try to build on". Therefore, teachers expect students to have high competency levels in German, as it is seen as a prerequisite for the successful acquisition of English (Berényi-Kiss 2013: 102). Moreover, some of them believe "that they are also responsible for teaching their learners German", which is arguably unreasonable in a context, where the primary goal should be that learners attain competence in English (Berényi-Kiss 2013: 102). Lastly, there is a discrepancy between teachers' desire to teach their learners another language, so that they may become multilingual and their practices prohibiting learners' heritage languages from entering the

classroom, mainly as a result of their concerns about allowing students to use languages with which they themselves might not be familiar (Berényi-Kiss 2013: 103).

Bredthauer and Engfer (2016) also confirmed teachers' reluctance to integrate all of learners' languages into the classroom. Some of the most prominent reasons they listed is the fear that community languages pose a threat to the successful acquisition of German, the concern about learners forming groups based on shared languages, as well as the fear of losing their authority once teachers are unable to understand the learners' linguistic output (Bredthauer & Engfer 2016: 113-114). At the same time, teachers also expressed their wish to implement a multilingual approach in their teaching and claimed, in general, to be advocates for multilingual pedagogical approaches (Bredthauer & Engfer 2016: 116). Yet many also pointed out that they had not received sufficient training in teaching linguistically diverse groups and, as a result, often feel "physically and mentally exhausted, unable to deal with the challenge of supporting and promoting their multilingual students", thus ending up treating these groups as though they were homogenous, disregarding learners' language experiences and learning histories (Bredthauer & Engfer 2016: 107; 117). While they believed that "acknowledging their students' multilingualism promotes tolerance, acceptance, intercultural learning, and confidence in their multilingualism", they also assumed that "language comparisons are too difficult for the majority of students" and worried that "integrating the support of multilingual skills into their lessons" would ultimately come "at the expense of their 'actual' tasks and aims" (Bredthauer & Engfer 2016: 116).

The situation is especially unfortunate as language is a "strong element of identity", and in order to "validate learners' heritage languages as legitimate", they need to be given at least some room in the (language) classroom (Berényi-Kiss 2013: 102-103). Being able to integrate learners' heritage languages into their practices also requires positive attitudes from teachers, which would enable them to "create an atmosphere of trust and appreciation in the classroom" (Bredthauer & Engfer 2016: 114). While it is evident from the studies reviewed above that the positive attitudes are largely given, the implementation of plurilingual teaching approaches is far from being considered the norm. This may put students whose L1 is not German at risk as their experiences and potential might not be valued and appreciated in the best possible way. As a consequence, the learning outcomes may be impacted, too. As Erling, Foltz, and Wiener (2021: 582) argue:

By using students' multilingualism as a resource, enhancing intercultural communication,

supporting the development of language awareness and cross-linguistic transfer, teachers in the English language classroom could support students in their development of more positive self-concepts about their abilities to learn English, to identify and value their uses of English, thereby positively influencing these students' relationship to school-based (language) learning and enhancing their language outcomes in English.

In summary, research suggests that (language) teachers tend to refrain from applying plurilingual approaches in the classroom, thus leaving little opportunity for the exploitation of learners' existing language knowledge in the foreign language learning context. It is important to add, however, that although the current practices do not seem entirely positive, the general tendency is that educators have progressed a lot in an appreciative direction. The vast majority of participants in the above mentioned studies believe - at least to some degree - in the positive effects of knowing multiple languages, yet they tend to refrain from applying measures that would allow harnessing such benefits. While a good proportion of the reasons for avoiding plurilingual practices stem from lack of resources or concerns about working with languages they do not know, another important factor keeping multilingualism from entering the classrooms is the lack of information and training regarding linguistically diverse groups of learners.

Several researchers have argued that targeted professional development could help address these issues. Christopoulou, Pampaka and Vlassopoulou (2012: 57) suggest that additional training in multilingual education may encourage a more holistic, plurilingual approach in the classroom. Beyond one-off training, developing continuous support systems for schools and teachers would also help overcome obstacles and enable them to make better use of learners' linguistic resources. Lundberg (2019: 280) similarly stresses that "the more well-informed the teachers are, the more fitting their proposed course of action [is] at a pedagogical level." De Angelis (2011: 238) adds that teachers should not be "left alone when making pedagogical decisions for multilingual audiences," since this can compromise the quality of teaching for all students.

3. Multilingual recommendations

As outlined earlier, linguistic diversity has become an increasingly important topic in recent decades and has therefore been approached from multiple perspectives, including those of policy-making institutions. Since multilingualism is addressed in both national and supranational policies, the most prominent of these will be examined in the following section.

In addition, relevant statistics on multilingualism in the Austrian educational system will be presented in order to provide a clearer picture of the context in which this thesis is situated.

3.1 Multilingualism in the EU

The European Union has long promoted policies supporting linguistic diversity and language learning. It has emphasised that “knowledge of languages is one of the basic skills each citizen needs in order to take part effectively in the European knowledge society” (COM 2008/320: 1). A key milestone was the formulation of the Barcelona objectives, which aim to enable citizens to communicate in two languages in addition to their mother tongue, for example by including foreign language competence among the key competences for lifelong learning (COM 2008/566: 4).

At the same time, EU policy recognises the dual importance of national and minority languages. On the one hand, “[in] the context of increased mobility and migration, mastering the national language(s) is fundamental to integrating successfully and playing an active role in society,” and non-native speakers are therefore encouraged to include the host-country language in their “one-plus-two” combination. On the other hand, it is also stressed that “different mother tongues and other languages spoken at home and in local and neighbouring environments should be valued more highly” (COM 2008/566: 4).

Taken together, these statements show that the EU does not promote an “elite” form of multilingualism limited to high-prestige majority languages, but instead strives for a more inclusive approach that values the full range of languages spoken across its member states. This notion of being equally appreciative of all languages is also present in the Commission’s Action Plan for Promoting Linguistic Diversity :

Promoting linguistic diversity means actively encouraging the teaching and learning of the widest possible range of languages in our schools, universities, adult education centres and enterprises. Taken as a whole, the range on offer should include the smaller European languages as well as the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with ‘national’ status, and the languages of our major trading partners throughout the world. (COM 2003/499: 9)

The above-cited policy documents demonstrate a consistently positive stance towards all languages and language varieties present in the EU member states. The Council of Europe, for instance, has emphasised that the linguistic and cultural heritage of Europe represents a

valuable common resource that should be protected and developed as a source of mutual enrichment and understanding (Recommendation (82)18, qtd. in CEFR 2001: 2). Similarly, Recommendation (98)6 urges member states to maintain and further develop Europe's linguistic diversity by fostering greater awareness of national and regional languages, including those less widely taught (qtd. in CEFR 2001: 3).

This perspective is echoed in more recent initiatives. The Annex to the Proposal on a Comprehensive Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Languages (COM 2018/272: 1) stresses that learning and using multiple languages is to be viewed as both a richness and a resource. Importantly, it highlights that learners' entire linguistic repertoires can be supported in schools and used as pedagogical tools for further learning. In this way, pupils are encouraged to draw on and share their languages with peers, for example by explaining linguistic features or making cross-linguistic comparisons—an approach that resonates strongly with current research on multilingual and plurilingual pedagogy. Furthermore, it recognizes the need to acknowledge and appreciate the entirety of students' linguistic resources in order to achieve the goals set out for general education:

If the implementation of these principles is to be effective, attention must be paid to the variety of languages used by the students, including the languages of minority and migrant groups and the different language registers, acknowledging that all languages are conducive to the success of school learning processes as much as to individual fulfilment and preparation for active life and the exercise of citizenship. (COM/Rec(2014)5: 2)

Thus, it is clear that EU policies, especially those concerning (language) education, endorse an appreciative view of multilingualism and linguistic diversity. However, it is crucial to address that the above-cited recommendations are to be implemented “with respect for national, regional and/or local circumstances and in conformity with constitutional provisions” (COM/Rec (2014)5). This means that, although the policies formulated by the EU Commission apply to all member states, it is within the competency of each individual state to decide how to best implement the common policies. Hence, the following section will explore how far said policies are reflected and implemented in the Austrian educational system.

3.2 Multilingualism in Austria

As a landlocked country surrounded by eight neighbouring states in the southern part of Central Europe, Austria has a history rich in linguistic diversity. While the majority of the population speaks a variety of German, the official language of the country, there are six official minority languages¹ spoken by autochthonous communities and an array of non-official immigrant languages present in its society (Dalton-Puffer, Boeckmann & Hinger 2019: 201). This high degree of linguistic diversity is reflected in many areas of life, including the educational system. According to Statistics Austria², in the school year 2020/2021, 27.2% of students reported a habitual language (*Umgangssprache*) other than German. Although the statistics do not explicitly state that these learners' L1 is not German, the description "für die Deutsch nicht die erstgenannte im Alltag gebrauchte Sprache ist" (for whom German is not the first-named language used in everyday life) suggests this interpretation. It should also be noted that despite extensive efforts, such statistical data may not be entirely accurate, and the actual proportion of learners with non-German L1s could be even higher.

In such a linguistically complex environment, "developing and enacting a coherent and transparent language education policy is a challenging task." At the same time, however, the same context "offers unmatched opportunities for creative innovation" (LEPP 2008: 5). Several institutions support the promotion of linguistic diversity in Austria. Among them are the *Österreichisches Sprachenkomitee* (ÖSKO), the *Österreichisches Sprachkompetenz-Zentrum* (ÖSZ), and the *Center für berufsbezogene Sprachen* (CEBS) (LEPP 2008: 7–8). The ÖSKO acts as a national committee on issues related to foreign language teaching and learning; the ÖSZ is primarily responsible for innovation in language education and the implementation of European initiatives; and the CEBS supports vocational schools by focusing on languages in professional contexts.

Educational policies have also been adjusted in recent decades in response to sociocultural change and broader international discourse. At the primary level, compulsory foreign language teaching has been expanded to include literacy activities in grades 3 and 4, and assessment is to be increasingly based on effort (Dalton-Puffer, Boeckmann & Hinger 2019: 203). At the secondary level, one of the most significant reforms was the introduction of the *Zentralmatura* in 2015/16, which marked a shift towards competence-based rather than

¹ There is an additional official minority language, namely, the Austrian Sign Language (ASL) (Dalton-Puffer, Boeckmann & Hinger 2019: 201).

² https://pic.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/index.html

purely content-based assessment. In addition, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been made compulsory in higher vocational schools, where a specified number of lessons in grades 11–13 must now be taught through a foreign language (Dalton-Puffer, Boeckmann & Hinger 2019: 203). These developments demonstrate a national commitment to strengthening foreign language education, in line with EU objectives. Nevertheless, as noted in the Language Education Policy Profile, “the teaching of English dominated to the extent of sometimes seeming synonymous with foreign language teaching” (LEPP 2008: 8).

With English dominating the realm of foreign language, German clearly dominates as the language of instruction. While, it is stated in the § 16(1) of the Act on School Education (*Unterrichtsgesetz*) that the language of instruction must be German, § 16(3) allows schools to use a modern foreign language as the language of instruction under certain circumstances, such as the high number of non-native learners or an attempt at a more successful foreign language acquisition; provided it is officially requested from the responsible authorities. Though the possibility for instruction in a foreign language exists, it is not taken advantage of in the majority of cases. Instead, learners with non-German L1s are provided training in German as a second language in all school types. Those who have very limited knowledge of the host-country language and can therefore not participate in regular classes (*außerordentliche Schüler*) are required to attend separate German training classes (*Deutschförderklasse*), whereas those who are considered capable of participating in mainstream classes but still need additional help with the language of instruction have to participate in German training courses (*Deutschfördergruppe*) six class hours per week (Dalton-Puffer, Boeckmann & Hinger 2019: 203).

Despite the dominance of German as the medium of instruction and the overwhelming role of English in foreign language education, Austria has also made efforts to foster its rich linguistic diversity. The Language Education Policy Profile highlights that national language education must be viewed holistically:

[L]anguage teaching and learning in a country needs to be understood holistically, to include teaching of the national language(s)/language(s) of education, of regional and minority languages, of the languages of recent immigrant groups, of second and foreign languages.

Having discussed some of the policies concerning the national language as well as foreign languages, it is now time to investigate how immigrant and minority languages are fostered

within the Austrian educational system. One central measure in this regard is the heritage language education (*muttersprachlicher Unterricht*), which provides learners with non-German L1s, as well as learners who use a language other than German outside of school to attend training courses in their 'heritage language'. According to the data collected by Gouma (2020: 38), in the school year of 2018/19, heritage language education was offered in 26 different languages across Austria, with a total of 418 teachers and 31,173 learners taking part in courses³. These can take place during the morning as part of regular lessons or in the afternoon in the form of extra courses (to the extent of three lessons per week). Participation in such courses does, however, require a prescribed number of applicants (Csire & Laasko 2011: 95), therefore, unfortunately, not all the students with non-German L1s can benefit from this opportunity.

Further guidance for schools and teachers is provided by the *Curriculum Mehrsprachigkeit*, published in 2011 by Krumm, Reich, Dorner, and Landua, and endorsed by the Ministry of Education and the ÖSZ. The document seeks to promote language awareness, encourage students to build personal language profiles, and highlight connections across languages. According to its authors, the curriculum "serves the integration of language education" and aims to enable learners to orient themselves in a multilingual world, to acquire further qualifications, and to use their full linguistic resources across contexts (Krumm & Reich 2011: 2). It explicitly refers to students' entire repertoires, including languages acquired through socialisation, institutional instruction, and digital media. By doing so, it moves beyond the traditional duality of "mother tongue" versus "foreign language," reflecting instead the actual linguistic realities of Austrian classrooms.

While multilingual learners may not be able to directly benefit from the curriculum multilingualism⁴ the same way as they can from heritage language education, the aforementioned document still provides considerable guidance for syllabus designers and educators alike. A document that may benefit the young multilanguage speakers more directly may be the Austrian version of the reflection and learning tool initiated by the Council of Europe, namely the Europäische Sprachenportfolio (ESP)/ European Language Portfolio (ELP). This provides learners from the age of ten upwards with tools to document and reflect on their personal language profiles as well as their language learning processes⁵.

³ For more information (available in German) visit <https://www.schule-mehrsprachig.at/> or <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/> [23.03.2022.] .

⁴ A similar publication from the years following the Curriculum Mehrsprachig are the so-called KIESEL Hefte. These consist of ten issues containing suggestions for workshops, activities, etc. that aid young students in exploring various languages and multilingualism in general. For more information visit: https://www.oesz.at/OESZNEU/main_01.php?page=0151 [10.07.2022.].

⁵ For more detailed information visit the corresponding ÖSZ page: <https://www.oesz.at/OESZNEU/main.php?page=013&open=11> [10.07.2022.].

Finally, one additional tool for documenting linguistic abilities needs to be mentioned, even though this one was created for concrete groups specifically. The regional language portfolio (das regionale Sprachenportfolio) was developed so that children growing up in regions where certain autochthonous minorities are present may record and reflect their progress in each of their languages. The portfolios for the elementary and lower secondary grades include detailed competency descriptions as well as didactic notes that should help teachers assist their learners in acquiring (at least) two languages simultaneously. However, as mentioned, these portfolios are currently only available in certain minority languages, namely in Croatian, Hungarian, and Slovenian⁶.

To summarise, the Austrian government has made efforts to sustain and further develop a stance towards linguistic diversity that does not discriminate between languages. Additionally, more focus has been placed on the early language development of students, in part by enabling them to attend language courses, such as mother tongue education lessons and German training classes and in part by providing them with materials to record and reflect their language acquisition processes. Moreover, although these measures concern teachers primarily, providing educators with tools, such as the curriculum multilingualism or the didactic manual for the regional language portfolios benefit multilingual learners too as they enable teachers to approach linguistic diversity and support each individual student adequately.

4. Study design

4.1. Research aims

The central aim of the present thesis is to gain insight into multilingual teachers' as well as learners' beliefs about and attitudes towards multilingualism in the Austrian mainstream educational context, with a specific focus on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in secondary schools. Furthermore, the study seeks to gather information about teachers' practices in relation to linguistic diversity in the EFL classroom. A further area of inquiry concerns the learning habits of multilingual students with reference to English. Importantly, this thesis has not set out to evaluate or criticise the points of view or practices of either teachers or learners. Instead, its aim is to provide a descriptive account of how both groups perceive their own (and others') multilingualism in an educational setting, and to

⁶ For more information visit the website of the ministry of education:
https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulrecht/rs/1997-2017/2013_13.html [12.07.2022.].

explore possible connections between these beliefs and attitudes and the practices or habits they report in relation to additional language learning.

The underlying assumption of this study is that one's attitudes and beliefs regarding multilingualism exert a significant influence on their actions. This is especially relevant in the context of language acquisition, as teachers' stance toward multilingualism is likely to affect their classroom practices, which in turn has a direct impact on their learners. At the same time, students' own beliefs and attitudes may shape their motivation, their learning processes, and their approaches to English in a similar way.

In this study, the constructs of *attitude* and *belief* are understood as follows: an *attitude* is defined as "a mental position with regard to a fact or state," while a *belief* denotes "something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). These particular definitions were chosen because the two concepts are often discussed in relation to each other in the academic literature. Some scholars equate attitudes with systems of beliefs: "Attitude is an organization of several beliefs focused on a specific object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner" (Rokeach 1972: 159). Others regard beliefs as one of the three major components of attitudes, alongside the affective and behavioural dimensions: "Attitudes involve what people think about, feel about, and how they would like to behave toward an attitude object" (Triandis 1971: 14). While these are merely two of many existing definitions, they demonstrate well the range of perspectives surrounding these concepts. In the present study, the term *attitude* will be used in line with the latter, multicomponent definition.

Based on these aims, and employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches (teacher interviews and student questionnaires), the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do secondary school EFL teachers in Austria perceive multilingualism, and what classroom practices do they report using to address linguistic diversity?
2. What beliefs and attitudes do multilingual secondary school students in Austria hold towards multilingualism and English language learning?
3. What learning strategies and habits do these students report in connection with English as a foreign language?
4. What connections can be observed between participants' beliefs and attitudes and their reported practices or habits in relation to English language learning?

In order to answer these questions, the next chapter outlines the methodological framework

of the study, describing the participants, instruments, and procedures used to collect and analyse the data.

4.2 Data collection tools

Having discussed the aim of the present thesis as well as two of its central notions, it is now time to introduce the research design and the analytical framework used to answer the research questions. The current study employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches, making use of two complementary instruments of data collection: interviews with teachers and a questionnaire for students. The interviews provided qualitative insights into teachers' individual experiences and perspectives, while the questionnaire, although quantitative in form, was primarily used to gather a broader picture of learners' beliefs, attitudes, and habits. In this sense, the study does not represent a fully developed mixed-methods design, but rather a combination of approaches that together allow for a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This dual approach was considered beneficial, as it made it possible to examine multilingualism both at the level of individual experience (teachers) and across a larger group of participants (students). In order to provide a more transparent overview of the research design, the following sections will describe the sampling, instruments, and analytical procedures for the interviews and the questionnaire, respectively.

4.2.1. Interview

As already mentioned, the first part of the present research project consisted of a series of interviews with multilingual English teachers. This particular instrument for data collection seemed to be appropriate for the current research purposes, since interviews are often described as “one-to-one ‘professional conversations’” that allows the researcher to “obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale 1996: 5-6 in Dörnyei 2007: 134). Given that the phenomenon under investigation - multilingualism - is a highly complex issue, the decision to opt for ‘semi-structured’ interviews seemed fitting, as it enables the researcher to provide “guidance and direction” with the help of pre-prepared questions, while remaining “keen to follow up interesting developments and to let the interviewee elaborate on certain issues” (Dörnyei 2007: 136). As Dörnyei (ibid.) argues:

The semi-structured interview is suitable for cases when the researcher has a good enough overview of the phenomenon or domain in question and is able to develop broad questions about the topic in advance but does not want to use ready-made response categories that would limit the depth and breadth of the respondent's story.

Thus, guiding questions for the interviews have been prepared to provide some orientation for both interviewer and interviewee within the vast subject matter that is being investigated (see Appendix). Another crucial aspect of qualitative research is selecting participants for the interviews. According to Yilmaz (2013: 313) "purposeful sampling plays a key role" in qualitative research, as it typically relies on information provided by a smaller set of participants, that is, on a smaller sample size. Dörnyei (2007: 126) suggests that in this case "the main goal of sampling is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximise what we can learn". In the present study the *homogenous sampling* was chosen, during which "the researcher selects participants from a particular subgroup who share some important experience relevant to our study" (Dörnyei 2007: 127). In the context of the present thesis this means selecting participants who have multilingual backgrounds (e.g. grew up bilingually/acquired languages during childhood or early adolescence, actively use multiple languages in their everyday lives) and teach English as a foreign language in the mainstream Austrian educational system on the secondary school level. This sampling strategy was chosen in particular, as it allows for an "in-depth analysis to identify common patterns in a group with similar characteristics" (Dörnyei 2007: 127).

4.2.2. Questionnaire

For the second part of the current research project a questionnaire was developed. Such surveys produce results that "are typically quantitative, although the instrument may also contain some open-ended questions that will require qualitative analysis" (Dörnyei 2007: 101). That was the case in the present study, as, even though the majority of the questions were closed-ended, i.e. they did not "require the respondents to produce any free writing; instead, respondents are to choose one of the given alternatives" (Dörnyei 2007: 105), the survey also included some open-ended questions in form of clarification questions and short-answer questions (e.g. asking the respondents to provide examples). Among the closed-ended questions, the most frequent ones were *Likert-scale* items, which consist of "a characteristic statement and the respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they 'agree' or 'disagree' with it by marking [...] one of the responses ranging from 'strongly agree'

to ‘strongly disagree’” (Dörnyei *ibid.*).

Considering the nature of the questions, the survey consisted of three different types: *factual* ones, *behavioural* ones, and *attitudinal* ones. Factual questions are, as the name suggests, “used to find out certain facts about the respondents, such as demographic characteristics (for example, age, gender, and race), residential location, marital and socio-economic status, level of education, occupation, language learning history, amount of time spent in an L2 environment, etc.” (Dörnyei 2007: 102). In this case, the factual questions were utilised primarily to collect information on participants’ demographic and linguistic backgrounds. Behavioural questions, by contrast, were used “to find out what the respondents are doing or have done in the past, focusing on actions, life-styles, habits, and personal history” (Dörnyei *ibid.*). In the present survey this translates to inquiries into the past and present learning habits, and to some extent their habits of language use. Lastly, the questionnaire included some attitudinal questions as well, which are, quite logically, “used to find out what people think, covering attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, and values” (*ibid.*). In the context of this investigation, this translates to items concerning respondents’ attitudes towards their linguistic abilities, towards multilingualism in general and their own multilingualism, their (non-)existing interest in learning further languages. It is crucial to note that regardless of the type of question, none of the items used in the present inquiry “have good or bad answers”, their aim is merely to “elicit information about the respondents in a *non-evaluative* manner” (Dörnyei 2007: 103).

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of two main parts and comprised thirty questions total (see Appendix). The first part focused on participants’ demographic background and linguistic background. Information regarding informants’ gender, age, and school type was obtained via multiple choice questions. Their language knowledge, however, was investigated via a combination of open and multiple choice questions. Additionally, respondents’ self-rated proficiency in their languages was measured using five-point Likert-scale items. The competence in each of the main skills (writing, reading, speaking, listening) as well as grammatical knowledge and vocabulary was rated on separate items with the answer options ranging from 1= very low to 5= very high. Such scales were used to collect data on their self-perceived proficiency in their heritage language, in German, in English, and in an additional language (if applicable).

As in the case of the interviews, the careful selection of participants was essential for the questionnaire as well. At the time the research was conducted, several contextual factors

had to be considered. Based on the length of the questionnaire and the cognitive effort required to answer most items, it was decided that the survey would be distributed among students in the upper grades of secondary school. To avoid complications related to parental consent, only respondents aged 16 or above were included⁷. Furthermore, due to the limited accessibility of educational facilities during the COVID-19 regulations in place at that time, and the resulting restrictions on data collection, the questionnaire was distributed online. This choice not only offered a practical solution to the challenges of the period, but also allowed for more convenient administration, a higher degree of anonymity, and access to specialised populations via various online groups and forums. To prevent misunderstandings, the questionnaire was administered in German. The questions were translated by the researcher, and the first version was piloted with four German native speakers. Following the pilot, the wording of certain items was revised to improve clarity and reliability.

The final version of the questionnaire was distributed using two different sampling methods. First, snowball sampling was applied, whereby “the researcher identifies a few people who meet the criteria of the particular study and then asks these participants to identify further appropriate members of the population” (Dörnyei 2007: 98). This approach was primarily used to reach students from Viennese secondary schools. In addition, convenience (or opportunity) sampling was employed, which involves selecting participants “if they meet certain practical criteria” (Dörnyei 2007: 98). This method was particularly useful for recruiting students at the bilingual secondary school in Oberwart, Burgenland.

4.3. Data collection and analysis

4.3.1. Interview

The participation in the interview as well as the questionnaire took place on a voluntary basis. The participants replied to an online call, and they were provided additional information about the project and the interview process. Initially, seven interviews were conducted via Zoom. These conversations took place in April - May 2022 and were recorded and downloaded in MP3 format with the participants’ informed consent. Later, however, two of the initial informants were excluded from the study, as they did not meet all of the

⁷ This happened in accordance with the regulations that were in place at the time of data collection.

necessary criteria⁸. Thus, in the following parts of the thesis, only the information provided by the five remaining participants has been considered. Their interview material was then transcribed⁹, and coded with the help of MAXQDA, a software designed to aid qualitative and mixed method data analysis. Coding refers to “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data” (Charmaz 2006: 43). The analytical framework applied in this process, and thus in the project, is qualitative content analysis (QCA), which is centred around assigning parts of the data to certain categories (Schreier 2014: 170). The approach is thus used to accomplish “the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon 2005: 1278). Typically, this method involves two different kinds of codes, namely concept-based and data-driven categories; the first term describing categories that are based on previous knowledge, whereas in the latter case the categories emerge from the data itself (Schreier 2014: 176).

Within the context of the present thesis, categories were established partly on the basis of the data and partly in response to the structure of the interview questions, which themselves were informed by the literature. Additionally, it was determined to exclude non-verbal data from the analysis when establishing themes, as the interpretation of pauses, laughter, etc. could lead to ambiguity. The main themes that emerged reflected both the participants’ personal linguistic experiences and their professional practices. In addition to their individual linguistic backgrounds, they expressed their view on how prior linguistic knowledge might affect the acquisition of further languages, therefore the theme ‘effect of multilingualism on novel language learning’ was created. With regard to their professional activity, not only their insights were taken into account, but also their remarks on their teaching practices, thus a further theme was added. These themes ultimately served as the basis from which further categories (codes) and sub-codes (descriptors) emerged in the process of data-analysis. The summary of all themes, categories, and their sub-codes can be seen in Table 3 below.

Theme	Code / Category	Sub-code(s) / Descriptors
		Mother tongue

⁸ Neither of these participants had direct teaching experience in the mainstream Austrian educational system.

⁹ The interviews were transcribed according to the transcription convention (see Appendix 2).

Linguistic background	Languages	First language
		Second language
		Foreign language
	Age of acquisition	Early acquisition
		Late acquisition
	Type of acquisition	Naturalistic
		Instructed
		Combination (naturalistic & instructed)
		Language of instruction
		Other means (e.g. films, books, etc.)
Effect of multilingualism on novel language learning	Previous language learning advantage	Vocabulary
		Grammar (structure)
		Phonology
		Not realised at the time
		Depends on the languages
		Difficult to explain
	Previous language learning challenge	False friends
	Linguistically diverse groups -challenges	Unfamiliar L1s
		Switching to German may not help
		Identifying the origin of mistakes
		Neglected L1s
	Linguistically diverse groups - advantages	Brain “wired” to L learning
		Forming connections
		Not requiring translations
		Superior English skills
		Positive attitude

Insights from teaching experience	Advice to future language teachers	Motivating / encouraging / valuing
		Making learning fun
		Target language principle
		Avoiding the use of German
		Different settings
		Profiling
		Incorporating learners' L1s
		Each class is different
		Being consequent
		Reflecting on own experience
		Going abroad
		Taking learners abroad
Teaching practices	Encouraging learners to utilise prior language knowledge	Actively asking
		Showing appreciation
		Happens automatically

Table 3: Summary of categories - interview

Naturally, the coding process did not take place in a linear manner. As Thornberg and Charmaz (2014: 156) point out, “in order to be sensitive to theoretical possibilities, researchers move back and forth between the different phases of coding”. As a consequence, the initial coding frame has undergone several changes. Some categories were merged, while others needed to be split.

4.3.2. Questionnaire

As already mentioned, the questionnaire was distributed online. However, there were two different methods involved in its circulation in May - June 2022. Unfortunately, despite distributing the questionnaire via various platforms, the number of responses only reached a total of twenty-one.

The collected data were entered into the SPSS Statistics software program, where descriptive as well as inferential statistical tests were carried out in order to reveal possible patterns and correlations. Given the small number of participants ($n = 21$), the range of analyses that could be meaningfully conducted was limited. For this reason, the focus was placed on descriptive statistics and non-parametric correlation tests rather than on more complex procedures. First, frequencies and measures of central tendency were calculated for the relevant items. In the case of ordinal-scaled data, such as learners' self-ratings of proficiency in specific skills, the median (mid-point value) and mode (most frequent value) were reported, while total scores created from these individual variables were described using their arithmetic mean and standard deviation (dispersion of data relative to the mean). On this basis, additional (nominal) variables were created by grouping values according to mean or, in some cases, percentile cut-offs. For instance, the category 'overall competence in German' was divided into 'low' and 'high' competence groups. These and other derived variables were necessary in order to perform the correlational tests available within the dataset.

Correlational tests are used to obtain information about the relationship between two variables. A correlation, i.e. interdependence of variables, can be either positive or negative. In case of a positive correlation, the values of variable A and B move in the same direction, meaning that if the higher the value of variable A the higher the value of variable B. A negative correlation, however, is the opposite. If the value for variable A is high, the value for variable B is low and vice versa. In SPSS the correlation is indicated by the so-called correlation coefficient, the value of which can range from -1.0 to +1.0, -1 being the perfect negative correlation and 1 being the perfect positive correlation (Pallant 2007: 331-333). There are different proposals as to best interpret the correlation coefficient, among them is Cohen (1988: 79-83), who suggests that a value between .1 and .29 is considered small, between .3 and .49 medium, and from .5 and 1.0 a strong correlation. The second important measurement in the context of interrelationships between variables is the significance (usually p). This value indicates the percentage to which one can be confident that the results are not due to chance alone (Green 2013: 84). In SPSS this information is provided automatically and the significance may be marked by one, two, or three stars. One star means that the probability of the results occurring by chance is below 5%, while two or three stars indicate a less than 1% chance of an accidental relationship. It is crucial to emphasise, however, that a correlation, regardless of its strength, has no implications of causation. This means that it is not possible to determine whether variable A causes variable B, or the relationship works the other way around.

In the context of the present research, the aim was to determine whether certain factors, such as competence in one or more of the skill domains can be linked to participants' beliefs or attitudes about multilingualism. Due to the limited number of responses, the Spearman rank order correlation was used as this particular test can be performed on ordinal level data (Pallant 2007: 126). Furthermore, in the case of Spearman's rho, the data does not have to be normally distributed (Green 2013: 82), which is precisely the case in the present study. Thus, values of competence domains for individual languages were compared with values for creating connections between vocabulary items as well as grammatical structures. Moreover, the latter two were also used to investigate potential correlations between them and the ratings provided for learners' beliefs about multilingual advantage in terms of receptive skills, productive skills, and the general belief that multilingualism is beneficial. The results of all the relevant tests described above will be presented in the corresponding segments of the next section.

4.3.4. Research support tools

As part of the writing process, AI-based assistance (ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI), was used. This tool was employed primarily for linguistic purposes, such as proofreading, rephrasing, and formatting support. Importantly, it was not used to generate research content or to analyse the data. All critical decisions regarding research design, data interpretation, and argumentation were made by the author.

5. Findings

The following chapter introduces the central part of this thesis, namely the exploratory study, which consisted of two main parts. The first part presents the findings from the interviews, including participants' language backgrounds, teaching contexts, beliefs about their own and their students' multilingualism, as well as their reported teaching practices. The second part focuses on the learners' perspective, in particular their language-related experiences, practices, and attitudes. The overall purpose of both the interview analysis and the questionnaire-based statistical tests is to provide insight into how multilingual individuals understand and make use of their linguistic abilities, especially in the context of additional language learning, with a specific focus on English as a foreign language.

5.1 Interviews

The interviews were conducted in spring 2022, and the findings reflect the participants' perspectives and teaching contexts at that time. In order to preserve anonymity, teachers' names have been changed. It is also important to note that the participants come from diverse backgrounds in terms of age, second subjects, linguistic repertoires, and teaching experience. Their ages range from the mid-twenties to the mid-fifties, their years of service from less than one year to over ten, and together they speak eight different languages. They also teach in a variety of school types, which means each brings unique insights to the study.

5.1.1. Participants' backgrounds

Name	Age group	No. of languages known	No. languages actively used	Years of teaching
Amanda	30 - 39	4	3	4
Clara	30 - 39	4	4	10
Evelin	50 - 59	6	4	5
Steven	20 - 29	4	3	< 1
Una	30 - 39	5	3	> 10

Table 4: Summary of participants' background

Amanda grew up speaking Kazakh and Russian, the latter becoming her dominant language, and later learned English and German. She now uses English, German, and Russian actively and has been teaching English and Russian in various contexts (university practica, language courses for refugees, language institutes) for about four years.

Clara, also in the 30–39 age group, grew up with Luxembourgish, German, French, and later English, all of which she still uses actively. She has taught at a Federal Technical Institute for ten years.

Evelin, aged 50–59, speaks German, Italian, English, French, Chinese, and Spanish. She has taught English and German for five years and has worked for two years at a hospital school.

Steven, in the 20–29 age group, speaks German, English, French, and some Italian. He is

currently in his first year of teaching at a secondary vocational school, where he teaches English and history.

Una (30–39) has taught English and Hungarian for more than ten years at different school types, most recently at a vocational school and a grammar school. She grew up bilingual in Hungarian and German and also learned English, French, and Italian. In her daily life she uses German, Hungarian, and English.

5.1.2 Teachers' linguistic background

The interviews revealed how participants described and reflected on their own multilingual repertoires. While most did not explicitly categorise their languages, some made distinctions between their *heritage language*, their *dominant language*, and languages learned later in life.

For instance, Amanda described Kazakh as her “mother language” but referred to Russian as her “first language”, emphasising that Russian dominated her everyday communication (Excerpt 1).

Ex. 1.

AMANDA: so, [...] basically kazakh is my mother tongue but russian is still my first language. so, you know, growing up I still used russian much more than kazakh, and at home we would speak mostly russian. i come from the northern part of kazakhstan, which is bordering to russia, and growing up it was mostly a russian town. now it's more 50-50, i would say probably. and basically at home we spoke russian with my mum and dad, so i would speak kazakh with my dad's relatives [...].

Amanda's example illustrates both the complexity of multilingual backgrounds and the difficulties of terminology. For her, the distinction lay not only in the order of acquisition but also in perceived dominance and identity.

Una, on the other hand, first referred to Hungarian as a “foreign language” but later redefined it as a “second language” because of its role in her family and regional context (Excerpt 2).

Ex. 2.

UNA: [...] my first language experience, actually my first foreign language experience was at the volksschule. there i started to learn hungarian. since i live in a region where hungarian is pretty widespread and also within my family hungarian is more or less the second language my family members know. we don't use it on a daily basis though since my grandmother passed. but i was always surrounded by that language, so my parents thought it would also be very important to learn the standard language, the high-level language, not just the dialect we speak here in the surroundings.

These excerpts highlight how teachers themselves negotiate linguistic categories in complex ways, reflecting both personal histories and functional roles of their languages.

Category	Code	Occurrence
Age of acquisition	Early acquisition	Amanda, Clara, Evelin, Una
	Late acquisition	All participants
Type of acquisition	Naturalistic	Amanda, Clara, Evelin, Una
	Instructed	All participants
	Combination	Amanda, Clara, Evelin, Una
	Language of instruction	Amanda, Clara, Una
	Other means (e.g. films, books, etc.)	Clara, Evelin, Una

Table 5: Participants' age and type of acquisition

As far as participants' language learning experience is concerned, the general pattern seems to be that most teachers acquired additional languages both before and after the age of ten. Also, they mostly learnt their languages in a combination of instruction, mainly at school, and naturalistic acquisition, mainly via family, friends, and surroundings. As Amanda and Clara come from countries with multiple official languages, they have also been taught their languages as language of instruction. Although Una does not come from such a country, she lives in a province, where there are several dichotomous minority languages present, therefore these languages are also taught at various school types.

Category	Code	Occurrences
	vocabulary	Clara, Evelin, Una
	grammar (structure)	Amanda, Clara, Evelin,

Previous language experience as advantage		Steven
	phonology	Amanda
	difficult to judge	Amanda
	not realised at the time	all participants
	depends on languages	Amanda, Clara
	difficult to explain	Steven, Una
Previous language experience as challenge	false friends	Amanda, Clara

Table 6: Participants' view on previous language experience in the context of novel language learning

When asked about how prior language knowledge influenced further language learning, all participants agreed that multilingual experience had been an advantage. They mainly mentioned vocabulary and grammar as domains where existing knowledge facilitated learning. Clara explained that typological similarity was particularly helpful (Excerpt 3).

Ex. 3.

CLARA: i think it depends greatly on the language. because i mean still with a germanic language and a romance language it's not that far from english, we know this. of course there is a relation in the language tree and also historically. I think it would have been a lot more difficult if i was, i don't know, a native speaker of japanese. i don't think that would have helped me a lot learning english to be honest.

Others found it difficult to pinpoint exactly how multilingualism had helped them. Steven described the influence as evident but hard to define (Excerpt 4).

Ex. 4.

STEVE: it definitely did, but i find it hard to put into words how exactly, because when i was learning one of these other languages, and one of them was french, i felt like already knowing a different foreign language kind of influenced my way of learning french. and i could never quite put my finger on how exactly. i mean it started there and other languages i started learning on a basic level, it felt like okay this would be different if i wouldn't know these other two languages. and maybe i would have had a harder time if i

didn't know french, but i couldn't quite point out why exactly. maybe it's because i have some knowledge of some different grammars in different languages and it helps to categorise other stuff in a new language that i'm learning. but I never did it very explicitly [...].

Amanda noted that because she had grown up bilingually, it was hard for her to assess whether she had benefited at all (Excerpt 5.)

Ex. 5.

Amanda: on one hand, for me it's a bit difficult to judge cause i don't know any other way, right? so for me it's the only way and it's kind of difficult to know if it was easier or not [...].

Finally, when asked about possible negative effects of prior language knowledge on additional language learning, Amanda and Clara mentioned the existence of 'false friends' as a challenge. However, neither of them placed too much emphasis on this particular aspect of the language learning process, rather, they seemed to consider it a natural occurrence. Interestingly, the rest of the participants did not mention any challenges associated with multilingual language learning.

5.1.3 Teaching context

Participants' professional settings were highly diverse. Their learners ranged in age from 4 to 20, depending on the school type and teaching assignment. For example, Amanda had experience teaching children, teenagers, and adults, while Clara mainly worked with 14–19-year-olds at a technical institute and occasionally taught adults. Evelin's hospital school context meant she worked with pupils from across the school system, aged 6 to 18. Steven taught business school students (14–19), while Una taught both secondary school pupils and vocational college students.

	4 - 9 years	10 - 14 years	14 - 18 years	18+ years
Amanda	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clara			✓	✓
Evelin	✓	✓	✓	✓
Steven			✓	✓
Una		✓	✓	✓

Table 7: Teaching setting according to age groups

The proportion of multilingual learners varied by context. While Steven estimated that only about 5% of his students had multilingual backgrounds, the other four teachers reported that the majority of their students spoke more than one language—between 50–95%, depending on the school.

	Amanda	Clara	Evelin	Steven	Una
Yes		✓	✓		✓
No	✓			✓	

Table 8: Participants indicating whether they discuss learners' languages in class

Interestingly, only some teachers systematically collected information about learners' linguistic backgrounds. Una, for example, used a language portfolio as part of her school's bilingual policy, explicitly encouraging reflection on diversity (Excerpt 6).

Ex. 6.

UNA: We always do that right at the beginning with the help of the language portfolio, which we use quite often in class, so that they also understand that every language needs to be valued, even though you just speak the dialect, like me, that also this has the right to exist. So I want them to become aware of diversity, of language diversity. I want them to become aware of the differences in languages, and this is a very, actually it's a principle of our school [...] So, we do a lot, we deal a lot with that topic, not just once, but it's a re-occurring topic over the years until they leave the school. So we do projects where they compare languages, where they work with different languages and so on and so forth.

Of course, Una's context is somewhat different from that of the other participants as she is teaching at a bilingual school in Burgenland, which means that there is a special focus on languages, as well as an appreciative attitude towards all the languages in the learners' linguistic repertoires. What is more, as stated in the excerpt above, it is part of the school's policy to strengthen students' beliefs that linguistic diversity, and thus each and every language and language variety is indeed valuable.

Although the notion that every language is equal and equally valuable seems to be shared

by all the teachers who participated in this study, it might be easier for some of them to get this idea across to their learners. As seen in Una's case, the school's policy wholly supports such aspirations. In this respect Evelin may also benefit from her teaching contexts, as she works with ill and/or handicapped children who are (temporarily) unable to attend their regular school. She mostly teaches her students in individual lessons, which allows her to place greater emphasis on exploring the linguistic backgrounds of her learners, and thus better assist them on their journey.

5.1.4 Experience in teaching linguistically diverse groups (RQ3)

Category	Code	Occurrences
Linguistically diverse groups - challenges	Unfamiliar L1s	Clara, Evelin, Una
	Switching to German may not help	All participants
	Identifying the origin of mistakes	Clara
	Neglected L1s	Clara, Evelin
Linguistically diverse groups - advantages	Brain "wired" to L learning	All participants
	Forming connections	Amanda, Clara, Evelin, Una
	Not requiring translations	Amanda
	Superior English skills	Evelin

Table 9: Participants' view on advantages and challenges in linguistically heterogeneous groups

As far as teaching linguistically diverse groups is concerned, the participants delivered some valuable insights, too. Generally, all of the participants agree that teaching such groups of learners is different from working in a more homogeneous setting. When asked about what challenges they experience, one of the greatest concerns proved to be that they are not familiar with (all of) their learners' first languages. According to Clara, this may lead to issues in identifying whether mistakes that learners make are rooted in some faulty logic learners applied based on another language they know or they are simply mistakes resulting from the learners not having grasped a certain aspect of the language yet (Excerpt 7).

Ex. 7.

CLARA: [...] i mean i have had german long enough to know that when germans do write in english they put a comma before *that* because in german that's what you do and when i see this i know that okay this is a mistake from german. [...] if i have someone who speaks, i don't know, romanian as a first language, i have to look up what possible mistakes there could be, cause i don't speak that language and i don't necessarily know where interference comes from and what i could do to help it.

Another issue was whether German should be used as a support language in English lessons. Both Steven and Clara argued that switching to German was unhelpful for multilingual learners, as it forced them to process two foreign languages instead of focusing on English (Excerpts 8–9).

Ex. 8.

STEVEN: i you have a very diverse class of students with many different linguistic backgrounds that [using English exclusively] certainly levels the playing field, i would say. because then they don't have to rely on german. if you use german in your english class, students have to rely on- they have to work out your german input first before they can actually start working on the english language input and therefore language learning. so that's gonna happen. that's a hindrance, a problem to solve before you can solve the actual problem, so that doesn't quite make sense does it?

Ex. 9.

CLARA: yes, because i mean if you have kind of a monolingual classroom that's say that just Austrian kids with l1 german, it's easy, i mean it's tempting, if they don't understand something, i mean, you just explain it in german. especially with the smaller ones, and then they understand it and then you move on. if you have, however, multicultural background, i think that german does not help. because you're explaining something about a foreign language in another foreign language for them. so how is that helpful?

Considering that Steven is a native speaker of German and Clara has also been actively using the language since early childhood, it may be surprising that they do not think of German as a necessary or even helpful part of the English language classroom. In fact,

Steven calls switching to his native tongue a “hinderance” in the context of teaching English in a linguistically diverse classroom. Also, while Clara may have labelled the same practice “easy” and “tempting” in a homogeneous setting, she considers it unprofitable in a multilingual context.

Another significant challenge seems to be a consequence of the neglect of learners’ L1s. Clara and Evelin both stated that by heavily focusing on bettering their German skills learners often lack linguistic competences in their home language, which prevents them from benefiting from their existing knowledge. Additionally, as Clara points out, this may lead to the learners having incomplete knowledge of all of their languages, which in fact might hinder additional language acquisition (Excerpt 10).

Ex. 10.

CLARA: [...] well, sometimes their parents are ashamed to teach them their mother tongue because they know they’re supposed to learn german, right? and that’s the worst thing that you can do because then you have like sort of german, sort of mother tongue but nothing has a clear structure and then you put english on top of that and then it will crumble. [...] yeah, well sometimes they tell me that- they never really learnt their mother tongue. like, they speak it a bit at home but then they were supposed to speak german, so they don’t anymore. they only speak their mother tongue with their grandmother, when they’re visiting, which is sad. [...] they never learnt how to write it, they hardly read in it, perhaps text messages [...].

In terms of advantages related to teaching groups of multilingual learners, most participants mentioned the ability to form connections between languages as one of the most prominent assets found in a linguistically diverse classroom. This is not only beneficial for the students, but also for the language teacher, since by being able to relate a new language item to existing knowledge pupils may grasp new contents more easily and quickly (Excerpt 11).

Ex. 11.

AMANDA: a positive [...] in the lessons with, with people who know several languages that they could always connect something to one of the languages. so they did not have one tool in their toolbox, they always could put it next to something else. [...] because if they

learn more languages, then they can connect to so many things, and that was also extremely helpful because then you would sometimes find struggling, like oh, how can i explain this to you better? but they already found something-

All other teachers agree that being able to form connections between languages swiftly stems from the fact that the multilingual brain is “wired differently”, i.e. the brain functions in a way that allows for more efficient language learning (Excerpt 12).

Ex. 12.

AMANDA: i don't know, i might be biased, that i always see it in a positive way and i think that, they're just- their brains are much more flexible, they are a bit more open, they're also easier when it comes to mistakes, they think that okay, it's fine, cause i don't speak that language perfectly either, i'm just gonna go ahead and try. compared to people who just speak one language, they might be much more rigid and much more stressed out about making mistakes.

Notably, she describes the multilingual brain as “more flexible” and multilingual speakers as “more open”. This latter characterisation is especially interesting, given that it can entail several different meanings. On the one hand, it can imply that multiple language speakers may be more open to new information, in this case language content. On the other hand, Amanda might refer to being open to unfamiliar situations or challenges. By saying that “they're easier when it comes to mistakes” she proposes that speakers of multiple languages regard mistakes as a part of the acquisition process, and are thus not as anxious about occasionally inaccurate language production as their monolingual peers might be.

Moreover, both Amanda and Evelin suggest that in their experience the ability to learn languages more easily increases with the amount of prior language knowledge so that the more languages one speaks the faster and easier it is for them to learn an additional tongue. However, Clara also notes that this does not mean that transferring skills and/or knowledge from one language to another works in all instances (Excerpt 13).

Ex. 13.

CLARA: [...] but sometimes students also told me. like, they're doing it like this because in their language it is like this, and then i tell them, yes, but in english it's not.

Within this short extract Clara discusses several subject matters. Firstly, she indicates that her students proactively share their knowledge of one or more of their languages in the English classroom. Secondly, she suggests that her learners do not only make connections between their languages subconsciously, but that they are also aware of this process. As a consequence, they are able to articulate the conclusions at which they arrived. Lastly, by telling her learners “yes, but in English it’s not” she validates their language knowledge and delivers correct information at the same time. Consequently, the students should be less likely to refrain from experimenting with building connections between their languages in the future.

In addition to the previously mentioned advantages, there are some further notions proposed by two of the informants. Amanda, for instance, argues that it is easier for her to teach in a linguistically diverse environment, as learners in such contexts are less reliant on translations (Excerpt 14).

Ex. 14.

AMANDA: i think that, one of the things that i see as a positive is that they don't necessarily ask for a translation. they want to understand, and that's easier for me because, like for me sometimes to find a translation in german, like, ahmm, ist that this word? but i'm not sure it has the same connotations, and if i don't need a translation, i can just explain, and like put in in a context. makes it a bit easier for me and i think it's also, amm, makes it easier for them, then they can immediately connect it to something in the same language. so i actually like that part quite a bit.[...] the part with the translation is actually quite big. because, you know, it's- most of the lessons they don't look for that. they don't actively need a translation. or, or they have already the tools and the knowledge how to find that information for themselves.

Even though Amanda is not a native speaker of German, she is a highly proficient language user. Still, she prefers using such strategies for explaining English vocabulary that do not involve direct translations. One example she mentions above is using context to clarify meaning as opposed to providing her learners with the supposed German equivalent of the word in question. Moreover, she states that her students are in possession of certain skills that enable them to find the appropriate translation if necessary.

Similarly, Evelin suggests that multilingual learners possess specific abilities that allow for more efficient language acquisition. In fact, she argues that their competences in English

exceed not only those of their monolingual peers, but also their own German skills (Excerpt 15).

Ex. 15.

INTER: so, that is why i was wondering, what are your experiences in terms of teaching english in such a [linguistically diverse] context? is it more challenging? does it make a difference?

EVELIN: it does make a difference because, amm, i keep on writing a list for my english students, and i write down what we are doing because they differ so much in age, and also in knowledge. and, amm, the more i compare them, the more i'm sure that their english knowledge is better than their german knowledge. [...] usually they know- their english is better than their german. and it might be because of interest, it might be because of social media, it might be because of gaming, or because of watching youtube all the time, which is mostly in english. i have less problems teaching them english than i have teaching them german. [...] there is an intersection, it seems to me, there is an intersection. it's their mother tongue, it's german, and inbetween english pulls in, you know? all the time, all the time, so it's getting better and better, and so it kicks out german from second, and it puts it to third place. that's my impression.

In the excerpt, Evelin describes a phenomenon she observed while teaching English to multilingual students at the hospital school. While she does not specify whether this applies to all learners, she notes that many of them appear to have stronger competences in English than in German. According to her, the growing importance of English in their lives is linked to social media, online resources, and, importantly, personal interest. This last point suggests that students are often more motivated to learn English than German—a surprising finding, given that proficiency in German would be more beneficial for integration and access to educational opportunities.

5.1.5 Encouraging learners to use prior knowledge

As part of collecting information about the multilingual teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding multilingualism and additional language learning, the informants were asked whether or not they believed that it is possible to exploit their students' multilingual ability in order to facilitate additional language learning. The answer to this question was a unanimous "yes". This indicates that they view linguistic diversity as a resource, rather than an obstacle.

Category	Code	Occurrences
Encouraging learners to utilize prior language knowledge	Actively asking	Clara, Evelin, Una
	Showing appreciation	All participants
	Happens automatically	Amanda

Table 10: Participants' way of encouraging learners to use prior knowledge

The participants were also asked if they actively encourage their students to use their previous language learning experience as well as their linguistic knowledge and skills when learning English. The above table shows the responses to said question, whereby it is clearly visible that three out of the five participants, namely Clara, Evelin, and Una employ practices that involve directly inviting pupils to utilise their existing language knowledge as well as the skillset they attained during prior acquisition.

Ex. 16.

UNA: yeah.. also. one example that comes to my mind, which i always do and which i always use, and, yeah, it has worked more or less. although younger kids and younger learners are not aware that they have grammatical structures in their mind, amm. whenever i try to teach something when it comes to grammar, i ask them "how would you say that in your language? how would you use that in your mother tongue?" for example, and then we try to establish connections, amm, and this helps them to see that, okay, this foreign language is not that difficult to, to learn, yeah? or to approach, actually, because it is similar, it's just different words you use. of course, this- if you yourself know more languages, and you know how it works, amm, in your classroom this acquires [requires] more time, but like this i can make sure that they really understand what it's about.

In the segment above Una discusses one of her most frequently used strategies to invite her learners to exploit their knowledge of other languages in the English classroom. While she points out that her pupils may not always be aware of their knowledge of the language system per se, which is more likely the case with the younger students, she found the method of asking "How would you say that in your language?" to be successful in most instances. This practice not only demonstrates to pupils that their teacher shows an interest in their linguistic repertoire (and thus in their personal lives), but it also activates their prior knowledge. Additionally, by assisting her students in the process of establishing connections

between their native tongues and the target language, she aids them in attaining skills that enable them to form associations individually in the future.

According to Amanda, however, active encouragement may not always be necessary, as many learners automatically (or even subconsciously) engage their skills and knowledge from all of their languages during the acquisition of English as a foreign language. She does, however, believe that it is beneficial to draw attention to this process (Excerpt 17).

Ex. 17.

AMANDA: Well, yeah. but i still absolutely believe that - i mean i agree with you that sometimes, the students would not know that it helps them, subconsciously to build the connections, just their brain does automatically. but i think it's also important to teach them and to make it more explicit and to make them aware that they have this tool they can use to make it even more efficient.

Amanda saying that the learners “would not know that it helps them” refers to learners’ ability to connect new content to already existing linguistic patterns. This means that there can be occasions when students utilise certain language learning skills without being aware of which strategies they employ. She suggests that multilingual learners’ brains form connections between familiar structures and unfamiliar subject matter. Nonetheless, she argues that it is still profitable to directly address this process in the classroom in order for students to be able to optimise their skillset in the future.

It is crucial to note, however, that even though not all of the informants reported actively encouraging their multilingual learners to exploit their previous language learning experiences in the classroom, the reason behind this is not to be found in the lack of willingness or interest. Rather, they are uncertain about how to best assist the multilanguage speakers in their classroom in achieving their desired learning outcomes. What every one of them reported doing, however, is displaying a positive attitude towards all of the languages that are represented in their classroom. They strive to place great importance on making every single student feel that their knowledge of other languages are valued, regardless of which languages they are.

Ex. 18.

CLARA: exactly. i mean that's what i also generally try to do, because i know i have a multilingual classroom, i always try to show them by, you know, it's a great thing that you speak so many languages because sometimes you have the tendency in austria to think that, oh, people who speak english or french, they are great, but if you say, oh well i speak three languages, i speak chech, serbian and i don't know, hungarian, people look at you like - aham. like, those are eastern languages, so apparently, for some people they are worth less because they are from. and students notice this. like, you - they tell that, how many languages do you speak? yeah, i also speak croatian at home, but who cares?! and i'm like, oh well, i care. because you speak another language and that's great. even if i don't know anything about that language. and sometimes i get the feeling that you have to tell them that it doesn't matter which language it is, it is important.

In this turn Clara addresses several key issues (Excerpt 18). Firstly, she reports, as already mentioned, that she displays positive attitudes towards learners' ability to speak multiple languages. Moreover, she states that in the Austrian context there is a certain bias to associate higher values with competence in languages that are spoken by large communities, and thus generally considered more prestigious, as opposed to those that are not as widespread. Furthermore, she claims that students are able to notice such bias, which can lead to their depreciating their knowledge or even their unwillingness to admit to or display their language competences. By showing that she values and appreciates her pupils' prior experiences, she may be able to hinder this. Clara's impression that she "has to" express this verbally in order to reinforce the idea that "it doesn't matter which language it is" that the learners are able to use for communication may reveal a rather prominent problem in the current educational context, or even in society.

5.1.6 Participants' advice to future language teachers

Category	Code	Occurrences
	positive attitude	all participants
	motivating/encouraging/valuing	all participants
	making learning fun	all participants

Advice to prospective language teachers	target language principle	all participants
	avoiding German	all participants
	different settings	Amanda
	profiling	Clara
	incorporating learners' L1s	Clara
	differentiating	Clara
	being consistent	Steven
	reflecting on own experience	Una
	going abroad	Una
	taking learners abroad	Una

Table 11: Participants' advice to future language teachers

In the final section of the interviews, the participants were asked to give advice to prospective (English) language teachers who are likely to encounter linguistically diverse groups of learners. As visible from the above presented summary, the informants seemed to be in accord concerning several items. For instance, they all mentioned being positive or rather having positive attitudes towards teaching in general, but especially towards the linguistic diversity in their classroom.

Ex. 19.

AMANDA: i think always see it as a positive. always, like, even the mistakes that we make, that are connected to other languages, even this can be seen in a positive light. that it's just, i mean there's so much we don't know about our brains, like. brain's probably the most difficult thing that we can ever study, but like to see all those things as negative and not be pissed like, oh my god you're mixing it up with this language again, put it in a positive light. like you made that connection and that's great, how would you manage that in the language that we are trying to do here, so [...].

Like the other participants, Amanda suggests that upholding a positive attitude in the classroom is key to successful language acquisition (Excerpt 19). She goes as far as to state that even mistakes made by the learners should be seen in a positive light, as these indicate that the students' prior knowledge is activated, although this manifests itself as interference.

Additionally, in her turn she reinforces the notion that mistakes are a natural part of the acquisition process, rather than a result of lack of ability.

The second crucial piece of advice found in the discourse of all of the informants is aspiring to motivate and encourage the learners to learn, to use their prior experiences, and to indicate to them that their knowledge is valued. In the following extract Evelin emphasises the importance of motivation, which she deems necessary for teaching, even if the strategies to encourage students to get and stay involved in the learning process may not always prove successful. Furthermore, she suggests that teachers should communicate to their pupils that their knowledge of languages is valued in order to boost their confidence and to counteract the discrimination or stigmatisation they might face. She states that although encountering such bias might cause learners to switch school types or even to abandon their education altogether, she still seeks to motivate and support them by telling them that they are at an advantage as they are competent speakers of multiple languages, which can aid them not only in further language learning, but in developing a more positive self-image as well (Excerpt 20).

Ex. 20.

EVELIN: yeah, well, i think motivation is tip number one. so, you have to be able to motivate the students, amm, it doesn't depend on the way how you do it, but, amm, i think it's key to motivate the students. so they start reflecting and working on their own. and keep on doing this, even though they drop out from school, or they decide for different schooling, whatever. but motivate them and, amm, show them their value, you know. make sure, amm, make sure that they're self-confident about their language knowledge, you know. they can be proud of, because, amm, even though they are, let's say, turkish, because i have a lot of turkish students, i had a lot of turkish students in the past. and they feel, amm, discriminated in some place and, amm, i make them strong, telling them that they have an advantage, so just turning the whole thing around. and, this is - might be a little bit manipulating because they are young people, but, you can show them, amm, their value, you know, you can actually- you have to find easier ways to show them their value. and this is how they appreciate it, how they can live with it, you know. that's all.

Clara notes that it is her ambition to help learners develop positive attitudes towards their languages and their linguistic abilities, which she hopes will turn into an appreciation for a variety of tongues. Additionally, by using the expression “so that students can see that knowing a language is always a benefit” she fortifies the argument she made earlier (see Ex. 18.) that even if she, the teacher values every language equally, it is crucial that her pupils

adopt this point of view. Furthermore, she advocates for pedagogical approaches that emphasise the importance of language learning in terms of real-life opportunities rather than purely academic goals. She suggests students' motivation to acquire languages may increase by recognising their value (Excerpt 21).

Ex. 21.

CLARA: amm. i think you can use it, amm, i mean, as we've discussed before, it all starts with a positive attitude, first towards your own language and then hopefully towards languages in general, so that students can see that knowing a language is always a benefit. not that i have to do this but that it's a benefit because then hopefully, regardless if it's english, but in this case of course it's english, they have a more positive attitude when they start learning. so it's not i have to learn english because the professor says so, but maybe i want to learn english because it's a good thing and because it can help me. and also my other languages help me and in general they're great and i should know more of them [...].

Apart from advice concerning interpersonal relationships, the participants made suggestions concerning the practical side of teaching, too. Firstly, all informants argue that making studying the language "fun" for the students has a positive influence on the learning outcomes. Una, for instance, argues that placing too great an importance on teaching grammatical rules to learners can be extremely demotivating for them, as students are not typically interested in theories about the language system. Moreover, she proposes that detailed theoretical knowledge about how a certain language works is not a prerequisite for successful acquisition. In fact, she implies that pupils often learn to correctly use certain structures, via imitation or learning in chunks, before they become aware of the grammatical rules that govern language production (Excerpt 22).

Ex. 22.

UNA: amm. it doesn't make sense to explain every grammar unit to the tiniest bit to them, because this is just something [...] a student is not interested in the third, amm, exception to the exception of the exception. and this is not even necessary to teach, [...] this is something that comes when using the language. when you get a little bit more familiar and- with the language and when you feel safe and secure, somehow it makes click even without thinking about it. this is also this imitation principle, yeah? if you say it in the classroom 5-6-7 times, somehow they will pick it up. which does not mean that you should not teach exceptions. but not hundreds. ten are okay.

INTER: yeah. it also makes a difference, you know, the way you teach them, so, just grammar

and writing on the black board and learners copying it - and everything, and memorising it. doesn't make sense, because the point is that they can communicate using the language.

UNA: exactly, exactly. so, because it says strategies and activitie- .because i have to say. i think that grammar is important. i know that there are some theories and amm ideologies that you should not put too much focus on grammar, but i think it is important, still. but i think you can approach grammar in a funny way. through songs, through games, through videos. i mean now with the internet and all that's- all those tools we have, also thanks to Corona, which sounds stupid, but it's like this. amm there is an easier, funnier way, and more relaxed way to approach those things than just hand out worksheets where you have to fill in a word. and this is just, you know, you do that one after the other, but actually you haven't understood anything.

However, it becomes evident from the second part of the above extract that Una does not deem teaching grammar explicitly unnecessary. Indeed, she admits to considering grammar an integral element of language learning. Nonetheless, she also emphasises the importance of choosing the correct methodology for explaining and practising the use of new linguistic structures. She suggests the integration of electronic tools online resources as opposed to classical pen and paper based drills. This strategy seems to be quite popular with the other informants as well, since they mentioned tools, such as Kahoot, Mentimeter, and Padlet, etc. as teaching resources that make a regular appearance in their lessons.

Additionally, every one of the teachers emphasised the importance of using the target language in the classroom whenever possible. What is more, they claim that using the target language exclusively may be the best strategy in order to make learners feel at ease when using the target language. In the following excerpt Steven shares his experiences concerning this subject matter. While he admits that it can be challenging for teachers, especially for those at the beginning of their professional careers, to talk only in English, Steven suggests that it is a challenge worth accepting. According to him, it is possible to equip learners with all the information that is necessary for them to deduct the meaning of the teacher's utterances, as well as to ask for clarification if needed, so that there would not be a need for code-switching during the lesson. Notwithstanding, Steven also admits that on occasion it is easier for him to discuss some issues with the students in German, especially when it comes to organisational matters. He describes such instances as situations in which he opts for a switch into German for time-efficiency reasons. Of course, in his teaching context such an action is perfectly logical, as both him and the vast majority of his pupils are native speakers of German (Excerpt 23).

Ex. 23.

STEVEN: with the limited experience i have, i would definitely say. amm. when you get a class that you start teaching, i would encourage you to speak only english in class. do that

from day one and be persistent about it. it's sometimes even hard for yourself because you need to use language well and it's a different situation because it is now your class and you need to- it's a huge thing. at least- so then i would encourage others to only use english. as we said earlier, be very consequent about it. some, some. i had some teachers use some fun sanctioning about that. that a student who slips into german or who uses german has to do some small task or something. set up a, yeah- . and it seems to work in other classes. i don't do that because i wasn't that consequent with my only talking english in classes as i would've liked to be because reality gets in the way and sometimes you just need to use german instead or you feel like you need it but, it certainly would be better if you could be persistent about only using english. that does help students to, to make the best use of this limited time resource that we have. and get them immersed in the language more easily. because then they get, then- when you're only using english, you don't feel weird about using it. they don't think about it too much perhaps, and certain things, because, well, they have chunks and they know how to ask a question and stuff like that. and know how to get the information they need from the teacher in English, ideally. but, as i said, sometimes just some other stuff gets in the way and you just need to get something done before you can actually start the lesson, like organisational stuff. it's just easier to do it in german. because you get into the class and you have to do this thing but you actually want to hold a lesson, and then so you say. do you wanna do this in german? it's just a very easy thing to do and that happens to me quite a lot. and, well, you could do it differently.

In the case of the other informants, however, communicating exclusively via the target language may prove even more beneficial. The next excerpt shows how Clara discusses the same issue. She underscores the notion that, although in the Austrian educational context a large number of teachers as well as learners speak German as an L1, it is crucial to be considerate of learners for whom this might not be the case. While teachers may switch to German during their lesson to save time or to explain something they believe the learners would not understand otherwise, their strategies may fail, leaving learners confused and stressed, rather than at ease (Excerpt 24).

Ex. 24.

INTER: Yeah. Do you have time for one last question? Is that okay?

CLARA: Yeah.

INTER: Okay, so basically, last question. are there any tips and tricks that you would like to share with future language teachers?

CLARA: amm, i would say. yeah, keep in mind that switching to german, it might be tempting because we are in austria and most of the teachers, who absolved the teacher training programme here, would also be german native speakers. and it's very tempting, but keep in mind that it's not always helpful [...]

Nevertheless, to what extent teachers (should) adhere to the English-only norm is highly context-specific, thus it may make sense in Steven's classroom to discuss organisational matters in German and then begin the lesson in English, while the same strategy could prove unsuccessful in Clara's case. Still, informants agree that communicating via the target

language is at the centre of their teaching policy, as their aim is to increase exposure as well as student talking time.

Having presented the pieces of advice present in all of the informants' discourse, the following segment is dedicated to suggestions that only one or the other of the teachers mentioned during the interviews. The first such recommendation comes from Amanda, who argues that it would be beneficial to create opportunities for the learners to practise language use focusing on fluency and authenticity, rather than being fixated on grammatical accuracy. While such strategies have been discussed in the literature (see *Haukås 2016*), Amanda emphasises the importance of establishing distinct settings to support students transitioning from form-focused activities to more fluency based language production (Excerpt 25).

Ex. 25.

AMANDA: so, to think. it kind of all comes down to this prescriptive-descriptive language approaches that we try not to be like, oh we're supposed to speak like perfect you know. I mean the whole system goes to that, the whole system. you know pass the matura and so on and so forth. but you know that's not the end of the world. although we're still supposed to prepare them for that so i think that's the most difficult part, like how can you deliver that message and then say that you know when you write the matura it has to be like this or like that. so this is challenging. i, i mean, i guess what probably could be done in light of this, you know, the things that we try to achieve to get them to a certain level. to have idon't know two separate settings in which like, one setting is like, okay we are in matura mode now and then a setting where it's actually a bit more natural. we can then allow ourselves to make mistakes and then be a bit more flexible and not think about how but more about content and what do we do and how do we do that. like what are we talking about exactly. [...] i mean kind of i think we all do that anyways. we all do that but we don't do like completely different settings. like now we turn off the matura head. but we would still explain: okay, so this is how, like in the perfect grammar this is supposed to be. people in real life actually make that mistake and it's fine. so just kind of make that distinction and raise awareness that the real language and the perfect language are not the same thing. i think we still do that and i think this is important.

Furthermore, she calls attention to the imperfect nature of real-life language use, which, according to her, should be used as a model during the fluency-focused sequences. Nonetheless, she acknowledges that accuracy is also crucial, especially in light of the requirements the learners will have to fulfil in order to pass their school-leaving examinations (Matura), yet she implies that it is necessary to make students aware of how language is used outside of the school-context and to let them engage in similar interactions.

The next suggestions were provided by Clara, who starts by highlighting the importance of collecting information about the students' linguistic background. While she primarily does this

to gain some insight into learners' prior experiences, she adds that this may also help her in identifying the origin of her pupils' mistakes, an issue which she addressed in an earlier turn (see Ex. 7). She elaborates on this point in the following excerpt (Ex. 26), where she explains how she collects language profiles to connect students' errors to their linguistic repertoires.

Ex. 26.

CLARA: Yeah, and ehm. a tip would be. i don't know the name of the book now, try to, and i mean this is something that i actually learnt from elt class at the english department, so i did not invent this. try to get to know your students' languages as soon as possible, like in the first lesson i always have them fill out a language profile. which languages do they speak. so to understand and i just collect this for myself, and then try to- if again, what- in writing or when they're speaking, if they do make mistakes, see if you can find out where these mistakes come from because you have a list of what languages they speak. and even if it's a multicultural classroom there will be similarities, i mean you will have probably five serbian kids, three croatian kids, and so on. amm and at least for the language issue you can put them in one box because they come from the same slavic language family and they will make the same mistakes.

Directly related to her previous piece of advice, Clara recommends that teachers should also incorporate their learners' languages into their lessons whenever possible. So, essentially she invites prospective language teachers to not merely collect information, but also to use it for educational purposes. While writing happy Easter wishes in different languages may seem like a minor act, it has the potential of reinforcing to the learners that their linguistic abilities are valued and appreciated. Also, integrating other languages to the English lessons may encourage students to activate their prior knowledge and to connect to the contents of the lesson on a different level emotionally (Excerpt 27).

Ex. 27.

CLARA: and also try to incorporate the students' languages in some way. i mean if there is a unit- i mean we have one unit in the coursebook like this, about cultural identity, things like that. so use units like this in your textbook to talk about different languages, amm, i remember when we did this once, it was around easter, and we wrote happy easter wishes in twelve different languages. because at the end of the lesson just everyone wrote their easter greetings kind of on the blackboard.

Clara's last recommendation is a reminder not to overgeneralise when it comes to teaching, especially in a linguistically diverse context. In the following extract she starts by stating that her "tips" are not sensational novelties, but results of careful research, followed by periods of trial and error. She then stresses that certain methods or approaches can be extremely successful with one group of learners but fail to achieve any kind of positive outcome with another. However, in her case a possible failure does not seem to be an impeding factor, she still experiments with different teaching methods and approaches (Excerpt 28).

Ex. 28.

CLARA: and i mean i did not invent most of those, it's part of what i have been taught and then own experience, learning by doing basically.

INTER: yes. of course, i mean you hear things, you learn about theories but when you have your own experience, sort of, as a confirmation that this one really works i think that just makes a whole lot of difference.

CLARA: that's true, but also what i notice is, in general notice what works perfectly in one class is a disaster in the next one. well, maybe not that bad but things that work perfectly in one classroom might not work that well in another on, but- well i always try and see.

The next suggestion made by Steven appears in a context discussing the principle of using only English in the classroom. In the extract below, Steven starts by referring to switching to German in the English lesson as "weird", especially when this happens in a heterogenous setting. Then, he discusses his struggle upholding the target-language-only rule, as, in his experience, learners occasionally code-switch to get him, the teacher to do the same. While according to his observations the reason behind such attempts is not the lack of linguistic resources but the lack of readiness to try using the target language in certain situations, he also admits that at times he struggles to stand his ground. Yet, he advises prospective language teachers to be persistent about their decisions and consistent with their actions (Excerpt 29).

Ex. 29.

STEVEN: it's weird when you think about it, yeah. especially for someone who has more diverse groups of students. and also not just with them but also with more, let's say homogenous groups. they- you talk german to them, they will talk german back to you and, they try to use it on me anyways, when something gets too difficult, they will switch to german because they know i understand german [...] just simply refuse and in such a situation it doesn't help when you let it slide and actually switch to german. that's when as a teacher you need to double down and say. we're doing this in english now, and you will understand it in

english because i know that you *can* understand it in english. yeah. but you have to be very persistent and consequent with these things, too.

Next, three of Una's proposals are to be presented and examined. The following excerpt contains two important pieces of advice, namely to reflect one's own experience and to visit a country where the target language is spoken. She suggests that by deliberating their own learning process, teachers may be able to identify successful (or unsuccessful) methods and strategies, which they will be able to include in (or exclude from) their lessons. Alternatively, they might be able to provide their students with recommendations for their learning which occurs outside of the classroom (Excerpt 30).

Ex. 30.

INTER: yeah, definitely. amm so is there any piece of advice that you would like to give to prospective english teachers?

UNA: yeah, that they should really reflect on their own language experience. what helped them, what they found useful as a kid. i mean that's not that long ago that you were in school. amm, what i also would tell every future teacher is, go to the country where they speak the target language. and try to soak in as much authentic input as possible. do not really just rely on the netflix experience. amm you really have to go to the country and see how it works and how they speak, so you can also teach something else than just grammar and language and vocabulary. tell them something about the so-called landeskunde, yeah? so, tell them something about traditions, to make it more interesting. i mean we all know what halloween looks like because we know all the hollywood films, but if you go there yourself and see it and experience it yourself, then it sounds a bit more authentic. amm, yeah.

INTER: Yeah.

UNA: cause i always find it really, really sad when you meet young people like you, and you ask them where have you been? and they say no- nowhere i did not do that, i don't need that. yeah, i don't think this is- this is okay. yeah, for example, you can also do cooking in teaching. you know, it's nice to do that once or twice a year before christmas or before the end of the school year. that you try to cook something together. Yeah.

In the majority of the turn, however, Una discusses the one suggestion she seems to find most crucial for prospective language teachers, i.e. to go abroad. There seem to be two main reasons she mentions for doing so is collecting authentic language input and gaining insight into the sociocultural circumstances. She argues that by bringing one's personal experience into the classroom, one might be able to provide the learners with more authentic input. This might make certain aspects of the target language and the related culture(s) more tangible for the students, which in turn might provide additional motivation for the acquisition.

Finally, a piece of advice from Una that is potentially more difficult to realise is to take one's pupils to the country where the target language is spoken, if circumstances allow. While this

task seems rather challenging, especially in light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions, Una argues that providing learners with the opportunity to gain first-hand linguistic and cultural experience is not only beneficial in terms of language acquisition, but also in terms of substantial memories. Moreover, she implies that such an experience can put pupils on the path of lifelong learning, which is one of the ultimate goals of the Austrian educational system (Excerpt 31).

Ex. 31.

UNA: exactly. and try to bring your students to the country where they speak the language. this is also- i know that it's cost- that it costs a lot, it can be expensive but if you prepare the parents early enough that in two years we plan this or that and try to save a little bit of money and also prep the students. tell them, okay, whenever you get something, maybe try to find a common ground with your parents that you pay half and they pay half. especially when they're older they can go and do a summer job, save some of that and maybe find a compromise like this. cause this is an experience. whenever you meet students after the matura. this is something they will always remember not the 50th game or method you used in your language classroom, but the authentic experience where they had to use the language and see that it actually makes sense what they are doing at school. amm this is a memory for life, and hopefully it gives the most motivation to continue language learning in the- in the sense of lifelong learning. yeah? that it does not stop when you have your matura certificate and off you go.

5.1.7 Summary Interviews

Overall, the interviews with multilingual teachers highlighted that their own prior language learning experiences were generally perceived as beneficial for acquiring further languages, particularly with respect to vocabulary and grammar. At the same time, some teachers stressed the difficulty of pinpointing precisely how previous knowledge shaped later learning, or noted that benefits depended on the specific languages involved. In terms of classroom practice, participants agreed that teaching linguistically diverse groups differs from working in more homogeneous contexts. While they identified challenges—such as limited knowledge of students' L1s or the limited usefulness of switching to German—they also emphasised advantages, including learners' ability to form cross-linguistic connections and their greater openness to experimentation. All teachers regarded multilingualism as a resource that can and should be drawn upon, although not all felt confident about how best to encourage learners to use prior knowledge. Finally, participants unanimously underscored the importance of valuing every language represented in their classrooms and highlighted

motivation, positive attitudes, and consistent use of the target language as key elements of effective teaching in multilingual settings.

Having investigated teachers' perspective on the central subject matter, it is now time to make inquiries into learners' view on the matter. Hence, the following section will focus on the results from the online questionnaire that was distributed among students in the upper-secondary grades of several Austrian schools. After presenting the relevant survey outcomes, these will then be discussed in light of the interview results in order to identify possible similarities and differences.

5.2 The questionnaire

The following section presents the findings from the questionnaire, which, as described in section 5.2, was distributed online in 2022 using snowball and convenience sampling. Participation was voluntary, and despite repeated invitations only 21 students completed the survey. While the limited number of responses does not allow for broad generalisations, the data still provide useful insights into the ways in which individual learners perceive their multilingualism and their English learning. In particular, the responses shed light on aspects directly connected to the research questions, such as students' language backgrounds, their beliefs about the role of prior language knowledge in learning English, and their attitudes toward multilingualism in the school context. The results therefore contribute to a more nuanced picture of learners' individual experiences, complementing the interview findings presented earlier.

5.2.1. Participants' demographic and linguistic background

As indicated, the total number of students who participated in the study was 21 (N=21), 71.4% of whom are female (N=15) and 28.6% male (N=6). The table below shows their distribution in terms of age. 42.9% (N=9) of the respondents were aged seventeen upon filling out the questionnaire. The second largest group in terms of age was that of the

sixteen-year-olds with 38.1% (N=8). Lastly, the percentage of eighteen as well as nineteen year old participants amounts for 9.5% (N=2).

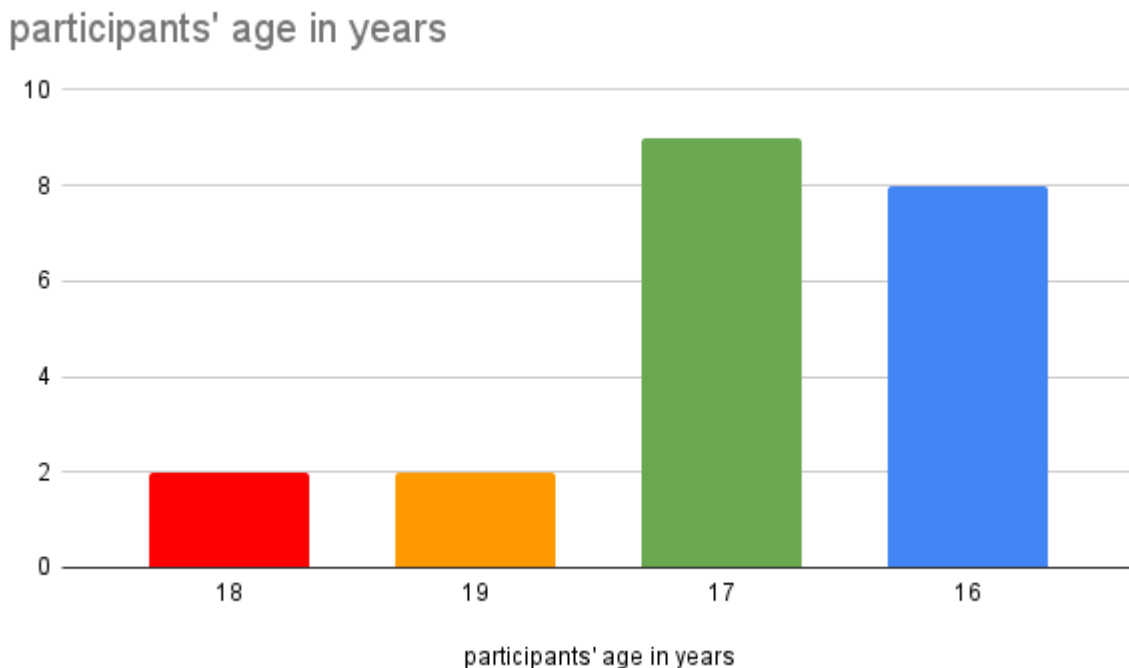


Figure 2: Participants' age

As far as school types are concerned, 95.2% (N=19) of the respondents indicated attending a so-called AHS (Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule /academic secondary school), while 4.8% (N=1) of the participants attended a BMS (Berufsbildende Mittlere Schule /secondary vocational school). Additionally, 90.5% (N=19) of the students declared that they attended a school that has a centralised focus on languages or language acquisition. This means that only two learners (9.5%) went to a non-language-focused secondary school at the time of completing the survey.

A closer glance at participants' linguistic background reveals a total of twelve languages in their collective repertoire, which is quite a significant number considering the number of participants. The languages and the number of their occurrences are displayed in the chart below. Of course, all of the participants know German, as it is the language of education in Austria, and English, as it is typically the first foreign language students learn at school (in many cases as early as primary school). Furthermore, a large number of participants speak Hungarian, which is most probably due to the questionnaire having been distributed among the students of the bilingual secondary school in Oberwart. The next language that appeared several times is Spanish, which might be the second foreign language for many of the

respondents. There are also three mentions of French and two of Arabic and Russian. Finally, there is one occurrence of Albanian, Italian, Japanese, Latin, and Slovakian, respectively.

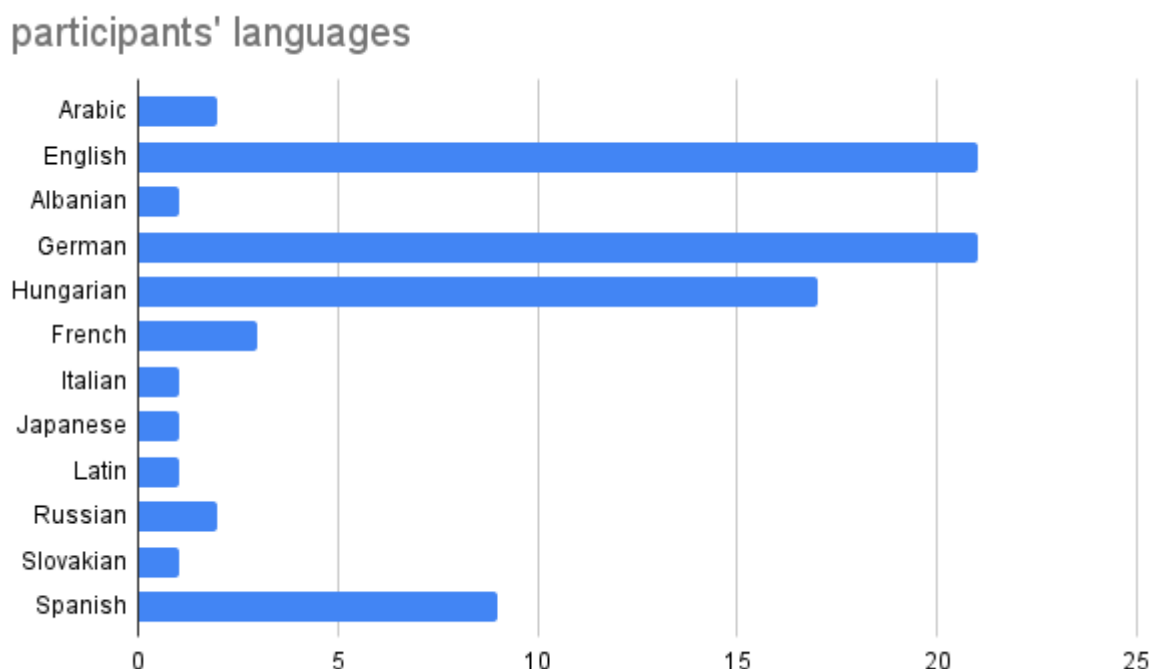


Figure 3: Participants' languages

In terms of the number of languages spoken by the participants it was observed that they spoke a minimum of three and maximum of seven languages. The majority, that is 52.4% (N=11) of the learners were speakers of three languages. Four learners (19%) indicated that they were quadrilinguals and five (23.8%) of them had five languages in their repertoire. Lastly, there was one person among the participants who used seven different tongues for communication. Furthermore, the responses suggest that over half of the participants (76.2%, N=16) are literate in all of their languages.

As far as context of acquisition is concerned, the data reveals that 76.2% of the participating students learnt their heritage language from their parents, whereas 23.8% learnt it in a combination of different contexts. In the case of German, 61.9% acquired the tongue in a combination of contexts, while 14.3% learnt it from their parents or family, another 14.5% from other people in their immediate surroundings, and 9.5% mastered the language via some kind of educational institution or instructor.

Language	From parents /family	From others in the surroundings	At school / from a teacher	In combination
Heritage language /language of the family	16	-	-	5
German	3	3	2	13
English	-	3	9	9
Further language	1	3	11	6

Table 12: Summary of participants' context of acquisition

With reference to English, the responses indicate that 42.9% of the participants attained their linguistic skills at school, another 42.9% learnt the language at school, and 14.3% learnt English from other people in their surroundings. Lastly, the respondents provided information on the acquisition of a further language they know. The answers show that 52.4% of the contributors learnt an additional language at school, whilst 28.6% acquired such a language in a combination of contexts. 14.3% of the participating students learnt a further language from others in their surroundings and 4.8% from their parents or family.

Regarding respondents' mother tongues, 76.2% (N=16) of the students reported to have one mother tongue, while 23.8% (N=5) indicated that they had two mother tongues. The frequencies of the occurring languages and language combinations are presented in the table below. Nearly half of the respondents (47.6%) mentioned Hungarian as their mother tongue. The next most frequent answer was German alongside German and Hungarian with 14.3%. Two (9.5%) of the contributors reported having Arabic as their mother tongue, while the combinations Hungarian and English as well as Hungarian and Slovakian are represented by one participant each.

Mother tongues	Frequency
German	3
Hungarian	10
Arabic	2
Albanian	1
German and Hungarian	3

Hungarian and English	1
Hungarian and Slovakian	1

Table 13: Learners' mother tongues

5.2.2 Self-assessed language competence

In order to gain an even deeper insight into participants' linguistic backgrounds, they were asked to rate their proficiency in their heritage language, in German, in English, and in a further language (if applicable). They judged their competences in terms of their productive skills (writing and speaking), receptive skills (reading and listening), as well as their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. The assessment was carried out with the help of items consisting of five-point Likert-scale ratings, ranging from "very low" to "very high", for each of the skills and subskills. The table below displays the median and mode¹⁰ of students' ratings of their own language competencies. The data suggest that all of the participants are (rather) highly competent speakers of their home languages across the skill domains. Additionally, as seen in the table, their ratings of their productive skills do not show a significant difference from those of their receptive skills, except for the category "additional language". However, it is also crucial to point out that not all of the participants provided ratings of their skills in an additional language, since some of them are speakers of three languages, which were accounted for in the categories "heritage language", "German", and "English".

Domains	Heritage language	German	English	Additional language
Writing	5	5	4	3
Reading	5	5	4	4
Speaking	5	4	4	3
Listening	5	5	4	4

¹⁰ This measure of central tendency was selected as the Likert-scale data are ordinal scaled and thus not allow for calculations of mean and standard deviation.

Grammar	5	3	4	3
Vocabulary	5	4	4	3

Table 14: Participants' self-assessment of their language skills (mean values)

The overall pattern suggests that the participants are the most proficient in their heritage languages. Interestingly, most participants rated their knowledge of German grammar as “average”, which is lower than the value assigned to their knowledge of English grammar. In comparison to the responses in the domain “grammar”, respondents rated their knowledge of German vocabulary higher. Interestingly, however, in that case no one mode could be identified, as the labels “average”, “rather high”, and “high” received equal amounts of responses (seven each).

5.2.3 Language use

As far as the participants' habits of language use are concerned, the answers indicate that the majority of the participants tend to use more than one language both at school (76.2%) and outside of school (57.1%). While 23.8% suggested that they only use German or Hungarian outside of school, 61.9% indicated the use of two languages. There were two respondents who use three languages, and one of the students communicates in four different varieties when not at school. By contrast, 42.9% of the contributors claimed to use one language at school (28.6% German, 14.3% Hungarian). Additionally, 28.6% of the informants suggested communicating in two languages, namely German and Hungarian, and 19% of them reported using three languages (German, Hungarian, and English) at their educational institution. Finally, one participant indicated the use of four, and another one the use of five languages at school. The concrete languages as well as their frequencies are also summarised in the table below.

Outside of school		At school		In English lessons	
Languages	Frequency	Languages	Frequency	Languages	Frequency
German	1	German	6	German	1
Hungarian	4	Hungarian	3	English	4
Albanian & German	1	German & Hungarian	6	English German	12

Arabic & German	2	German, Hungarian & English	4	English, German & the language of the family (heritage language)	3
German & English	2	German, Hungarian, English & French	1	English, German & Spanish	1
German & Hungarian	7	German, Hungarian, English, French & Spanish	1	-	-
Hungarian & Slovakian	1	-	-	-	-
Hungarian, English & German	2	-	-	-	-
Hungarian, English, German & Japanese	1	-	-	-	-

Table 15: Participants' language use (self-reported)

As also shown in the above table, the participants provided information on what languages they tend to use during their English lessons at school. The majority of respondents (57.1%) claimed to use both the target language and the language of education in the English classroom. Four contributors (19%) stated that they used the target language exclusively, while one disclosed that they only used German. Three of the participants (14.3%) mentioned English, German, and Hungarian as languages they would typically use in the course of their English lessons. Lastly, one respondent revealed that they tend to communicate in English, German, and Spanish in the EFL classroom.

5.2.4 Learning strategies

Having explored participants' demographic and linguistic backgrounds, as well as some of their habits of language use, in the next section some of their language learning strategies will be explored. Specifically, whether or not they tend to attempt forming connections between their existing language knowledge and the additional language they are learning, in this case English. In order to collect information regarding this subject matter, participants

were asked to respond to two statements and decide to what extent they agree with said statements. The answer options ranged from “completely disagree” to “completely agree” with an opportunity to provide a neutral answer.

Firstly, responses concerning the domain “vocabulary” will be presented. As seen in the bar chart below, the majority of participants indicated that they tend to try to establish connections between new lexical items and words or phrases from other languages that they know. In fact, there was only one person who chose the option “completely disagree”, and while four more participants opted for “rather disagree”, the combined percentage for the categories “rather agree” and “completely agree” is significantly higher than for the group “disagree”, the former being 57.1% and the latter amounting to 23.8%. It is also clearly visible from the graph that the option “completely agree” received the highest number of responses (N=7), followed by “somewhat agree” (N=5). Furthermore, although 19% of the respondents provided a neutral answer, this ratio is still smaller than that of both other groups.

In addition to their ratings, participants were also asked to provide examples for connections they had managed to establish between new and familiar lexical items. Unfortunately, as this item was marked as “optional” in the survey, it did not get many responses. Among the ones received there was one example of what languages the participants use to establish connections. They mentioned Spanish and English, as well as Spanish and Albanian as languages between which they managed to form connections in terms of vocabulary. The rest of the answers contained concrete words or phrases that participants linked to each other, such as “apple - Apfel - alma” (English - German - Hungarian) or “dead serious = halál komoly” (English - Hungarian).

Wenn ich neue Vokabeln auf Englisch lerne, versuche ich Verbindungen zwischen diesen und Wörtern in meiner anderen Sprachen herzustellen.

21 responses

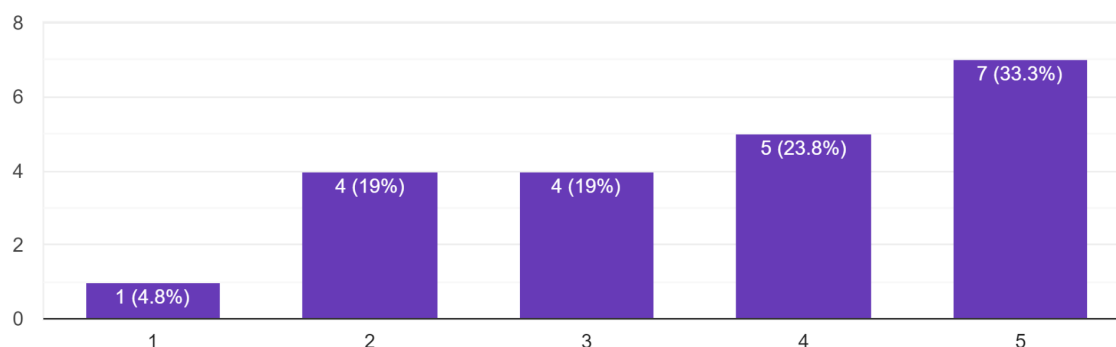


Figure 4: Participants' responses to the item 'forming connections vocabulary'

The second statement on language learning strategies focused on the learning of grammatical structures. As with vocabulary, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement "When I learn new grammatical structures in English, I compare it to the structures I know from other languages". As displayed in the graph below, the responses to this item are substantially different from the ones concerning vocabulary learning. While both extremes ("completely disagree" and "completely agree") were chosen by one participant each, the categories "somewhat agree" and "neutral" received seven responses, leaving these to be the most frequently chosen options. By contrast, five participants answered "somewhat disagree". However, when looking at the percentages for the combined categories "agree" and "disagree", it is clear that the former one is greater, with a total of 38.1%, as opposed to the 28.6% for the group "disagree". Nevertheless, when asked to provide examples for connections between grammatical structures, none of the participants were able to do so.

Wenn ich eine neue grammatische Struktur in Englisch lerne, vergleiche ich diese mit den Strukturen, die ich von anderen Sprachen kenne.

21 responses

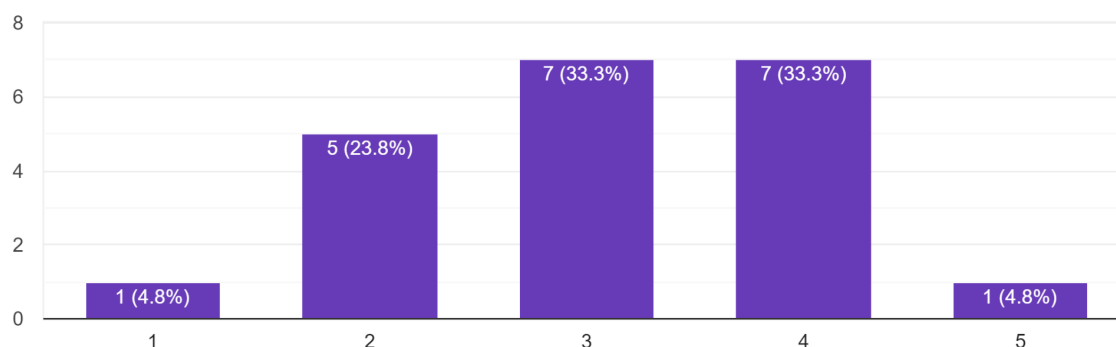


Figure 5: Participants responses to item 'forming connections grammar'

Having investigated participants' responses to the two items individually, the relationship between the answers to these two items was examined. Due to the nature of the data (ordinal scaled) Spearman rank correlation was used to determine whether or not there is an interrelation of values. The test revealed a strong positive correlation between participants' responses to the statements on learning vocabulary and grammatical structures. Moreover, the correlation was found to be significant at the 0.01 level.

Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
.579	.006	21

Table 16: Results of Spearman rank correlation on the items of 'forming connections vocabulary' and 'forming connections grammar'

In summary, results indicate that over half of the participants tend to link new lexical items to ones known from other languages, with less than a quarter of the participants opting for a neutral answer. In the case of forming connections between grammatical structures from the target language and those of other known languages, a higher percentage of the respondents chose to remain neutral, while six decided to disagree and eight to agree. Finally, Spearman rank correlation revealed that participants who tend to form connections between new and familiar lexical items also tend to do the same when it comes to grammatical structures.

5.2.5 Beliefs about multilingualism

After discussing some of the participants' language behaviours, the following segment is dedicated to their beliefs about multilingualism. To obtain information on whether the informants consider their prior language knowledge beneficial in the context of EFL, the respondents were asked to express their beliefs with assistance in the form of three statements and the corresponding five-point Likert-scales. Similarly to previous items, answer options ranged from “completely disagree” to “completely agree” with the possibility of remaining neutral. First, the results for each item will be presented individually, then possible correlations between these constructs and other values will be discussed.

The first statements aimed at discovering if participants perceived their experience with multiple languages beneficial in terms of learning vocabulary and/or grammar in English. The chart below displays the distribution of the informants' responses across the five possibilities. As seen below, a total of fourteen participants chose to agree with the statement, with an equal number of them voting for “agree” and “completely agree”. By contrast, one participant opted for “completely disagree” and none of them chose “disagree”. Additionally, six respondents provided neutral answers.

Ich glaube, dass meine Erfahrungen mit unterschiedlichen Sprachen beim Vokabellernen und/oder Grammatiklernen in Englisch von Vorteil sind.

21 responses

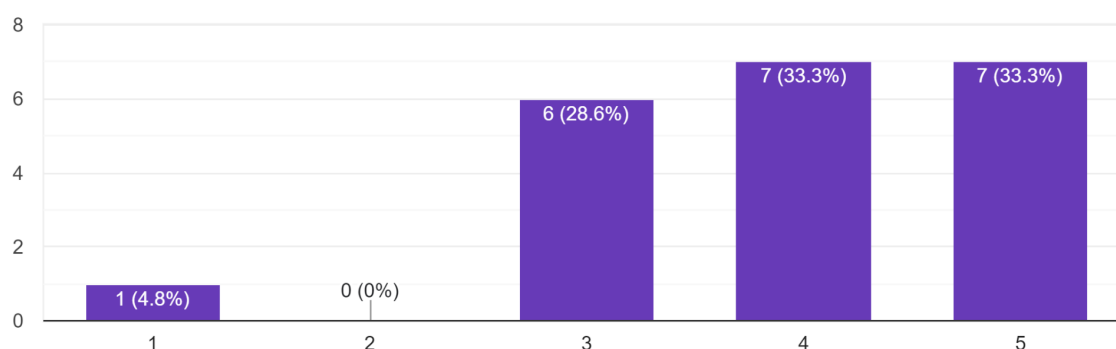


Figure 6: Participants' responses to item 'belief multilingual advantage vocabulary and/or grammar'

When asked to provide an explanation for their ratings three of the participants mentioned that their prior knowledge is beneficial for learning vocabulary, since many English words are similar to lexical items in other languages. Two contributors indicated that their previous

experience with languages helps them form connections between similar grammatical structures, even if the languages are not related to one another. One informant suggested that it is easier to build on existing knowledge of languages when learning a new one, while another respondent argued that knowing multiple languages allows for greater comparability and building more connections between those languages. Furthermore, one participant referenced an increased ability to learn from audible input.

Regarding informants' beliefs concerning multilingual advantage in English listening or reading activities, it seems that 66.7% (N=15) of them found their previous experiences helpful. By contrast, one person chose the option "disagree" and six people provided a neutral answer. When asked to elaborate on their choice, one participant suggested that there are too many differences between languages to benefit from connection when engaging in receptive communication. Another respondent argued that prior experience may be beneficial, provided one listens or reads carefully enough. Additionally, three informants stated that they find it easier to understand and/or memorise "things" due to connections they managed to establish between languages.

Ich glaube, dass meine Erfahrungen mit unterschiedlichen Sprachen beim Hören und/oder Lesen auf Englisch von Vorteil sind.

21 responses

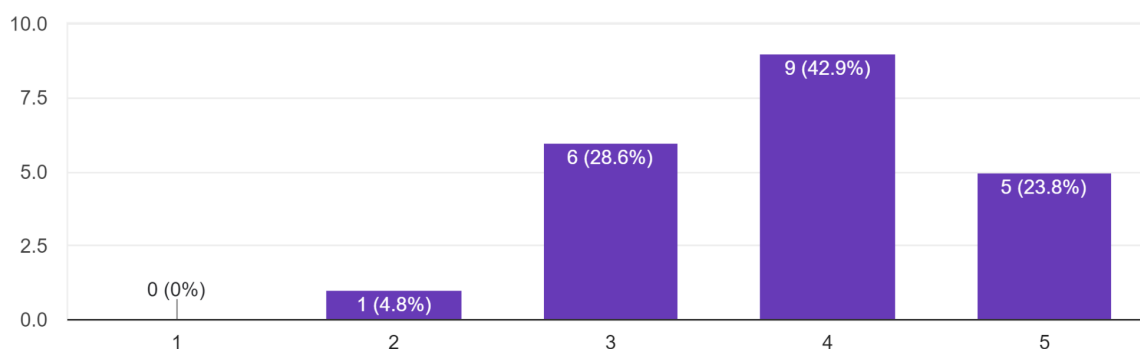


Figure 7: Participants' responses to item 'belief multilingual advantage receptive skills'

When it comes to multilingual advantage in the domain of productive skills, i.e. writing and speaking, the results deviate from those in the domain of receptive skills. In this case, a total of 90.4% of the respondents agree that their previous experiences with languages are to their advantage and the other 9.5% provided a neutral answer. Unfortunately, despite these ratings, very few participants provided an explanation for their choices. However, two

respondents suggested that they benefit from using chunks of language or certain grammatical structures when writing or speaking in English.

Ich glaube, dass meine Erfahrungen mit unterschiedlichen Sprachen beim Sprechen und/oder Schreiben von Vorteil sind?

21 responses

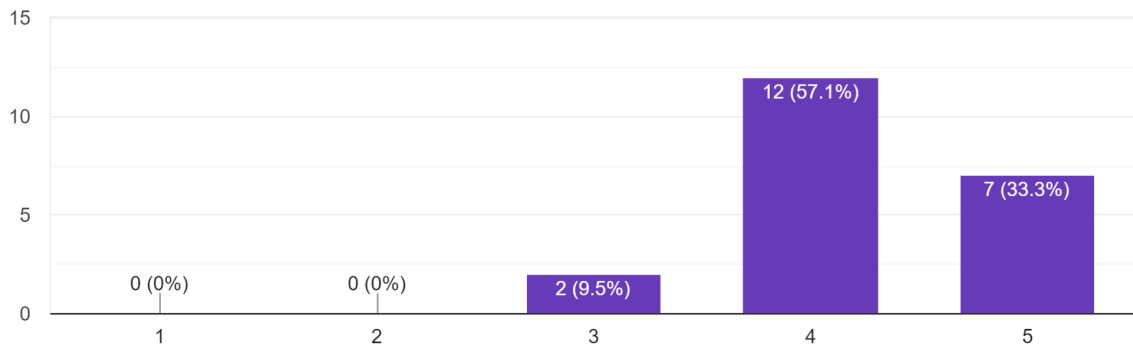


Figure 8: Participants' responses to item 'belief multilingual advantage productive skills'

Beside investigating informants' beliefs about their multilingual ability in the context of learning English, it was essential to inquire after their beliefs about multilingualism in general. The figure below shows the responses to the statement 'Generally I believe that my existing language skills are beneficial', with the vast majority (81%) completely agreeing, 14.3% agreeing and 4.8% remaining neutral. This means that a total of 95.3% of the participants consider their multilingualism an advantage. Moreover, when asked if they would consider learning another language in the future, 70.59% replied with a definitive 'yes', 17.65% answered 'maybe', and 11.76% responded with 'no'.

Generell glaube ich, dass meine bereits vorhandene Sprachkenntnisse von Vorteil sind.

21 responses

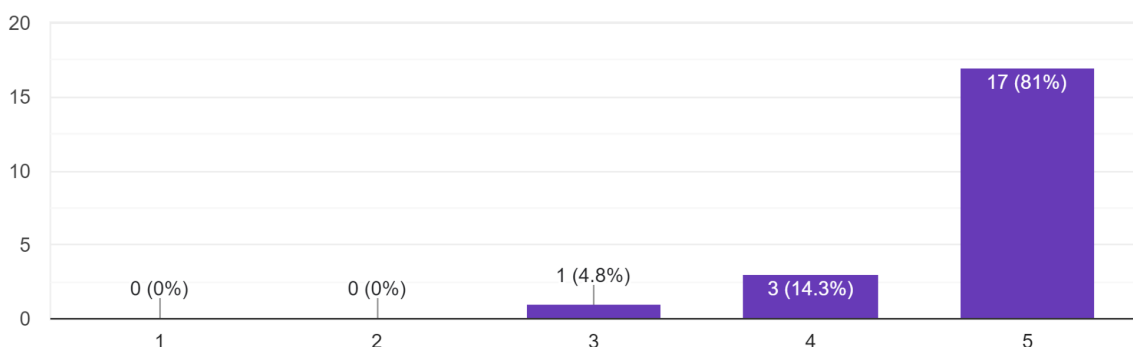


Figure 9: Participants' responses to item 'general belief about multilingual advantage'

Having investigated the individual items designed to gain information about respondents' beliefs concerning multilingual advantage, the following paragraphs will investigate possible relationships between the previously discussed constructs. The Spearman's rho correlation test showed strong positive associations between the variables 'connections vocabulary' and 'belief multilingual advantage vocabulary and/or grammar as well as 'belief multilingual advantage receptive skills'. However, no correlations were found between the variables 'connections vocabulary' and 'belief multilingual advantage productive skills' or 'general belief multilingual advantage'.

	Connections vocabulary		Connections grammar	
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
Belief multilingual advantage vocabulary and/or grammar	.549	.01	.436	.048
Belief multilingual advantage receptive skills	.653	.001	.434	.049
Belief multilingual advantage productive skills	.3	.186	.007	.976
General belief multilingual advantage	.251	.272	.326	.150

Table 17: Summary of Spearman's rho correlations between language behaviour and beliefs about multilingual advantage

Similarly, 'connections grammar' also correlated with 'belief multilingual advantage vocabulary and/or grammar' and 'belief multilingual advantage receptive skills', although these correlations were not as significant (significant at .05 level). Also, the responses on the item 'connections grammar' did not display any association with the answers on 'belief multilingual advantage productive skills' and 'general belief multilingual advantage'.

Thus, in general it seems that the informants tend to find their multilingualism beneficial in the context of learning lexical items and/or grammatical structures, in the context of reading and/or listening, as well as in terms of writing and/or speaking in English. Moreover, the vast majority of participants considered their multilingualism an advantage in general, and most of them indicated that they would be willing to add further languages to their repertoire. In addition, test findings indicate that those participants who reported forming connections between their existing language knowledge in the domains vocabulary and grammar, were not only more likely to agree that their multilingualism benefits them when learning new

words and/or grammatical structures in English, but they also tended to agree that their ability to speak multiple languages aids them in receptive communication in English.

5.2.6 Summary Questionnaire

In sum, the questionnaire results suggest that the participating students draw on a wide range of linguistic resources and generally perceive their multilingualism as advantageous for learning English. While most respondents reported high levels of competence in their heritage languages and German, English was also rated positively, particularly in terms of productive skills. Patterns of language use indicated that several students habitually employ multiple languages both in and outside school, with English frequently appearing alongside German and Hungarian. The data further revealed that learners were more likely to report forming cross-linguistic connections in the domain of vocabulary than in grammar, though a significant correlation was found between these two strategies. Overall, the vast majority of students expressed the belief that their multilingualism benefits them in learning English and showed openness to acquiring additional languages in the future. These insights, though based on a limited sample, provide an important complement to the interview findings by offering a learner-centred perspective on multilingual advantage in the Austrian secondary school context.

6. Discussion

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study in relation to the theoretical framework and existing literature. The results from both teacher interviews and student questionnaires provide exploratory insights into how multilingualism is perceived and experienced in Austrian EFL classrooms. These findings are interpreted in light of established theories in multilingual language acquisition, metalinguistic awareness, and pedagogical practice, with particular reference to the Austrian educational context. Given the small number of participants and the absence of classroom observation, the following interpretations should be viewed as tentative and illustrative rather than conclusive.

One of the central tendencies emerging from this study is that participating teachers and students generally perceive multilingualism as an asset in the process of additional language learning, particularly in the domains of vocabulary and grammar. This is in line with the theoretical construct of the *multilingual advantage* (see section 2.2), which suggests that

knowledge of multiple languages can facilitate further language learning. In particular, the statistically significant correlation between cross-linguistic strategy use and perceived advantage in vocabulary and grammar acquisition appears to resonate with Cummins' interdependence hypothesis (1979), which posits that skills and knowledge in one language can positively influence the development of another. However, given the limited number of questionnaire respondents, these findings should be seen as indicative rather than as evidence of generalisable trends.

The questionnaire results also correspond with Jessner's (2006) claim that multilingual learners tend to develop heightened metalinguistic awareness. Several students reported drawing comparisons between their languages, which allowed them to identify similarities and differences across linguistic systems. While such reflections were not universal, they suggest that multilingual advantage may be manifested in both direct effects, such as transfer of vocabulary or grammatical structures, and indirect effects, such as a broader awareness of how languages function (Hirosh & Degani, 2018). At the same time, the reliance on self-reported data means that the degree of metalinguistic awareness could only be inferred from students' accounts rather than observed in practice.

From the teacher perspective, the interviews indicated that educators often recognised the value of their own multilingualism in shaping their language awareness and pedagogical decisions. Teachers described how prior language learning experiences influenced their empathy toward learners, their strategy use, and their ability to explain linguistic concepts. This aligns with research suggesting that multilingual teachers are often more attuned to the needs of their students (De Angelis, 2011; Haukas, 2015). Still, the interviews also highlighted some inconsistencies between teachers' expressed beliefs and the extent to which they actively integrated students' home languages into their classrooms. Without observational data, however, it is not possible to determine how far these practices are enacted in daily teaching.

The findings also carry potential implications for teaching practices in multilingual classrooms. Students' accounts point to the value of incorporating their full linguistic repertoires in English lessons, for instance by allowing them to draw cross-linguistic connections. Teachers, however, tended to favour English-only instruction, occasionally resorting to German for efficiency or clarity. While this approach is consistent with a long tradition of target-language emphasis in foreign language teaching, it may limit opportunities for students to mobilise their other linguistic resources. These tentative observations echo calls in the literature for plurilingual pedagogical approaches (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015),

although further research with a larger and more diverse sample would be needed to explore this more robustly.

From a policy perspective, the present findings appear broadly consistent with the European Commission's and Austria's stated aims to value linguistic diversity in education (COM 2008/566; LEPP 2008). At the same time, teacher interviews—together with earlier studies (Bredthauer & Engfer, 2016)—suggest that, in practice, institutional arrangements and curricula may tend to foreground German and English, with minority or immigrant varieties receiving comparatively less systematic support. While mother-language instruction exists in Austria, access seems to vary across schools and is often contingent on local demand and resources. If Austria is to align more fully with the EU's multilingual vision, incremental policy measures that normalise support for a wider range of learner languages—beyond the most prestigious—could be beneficial.

As with any study, the limitations must be acknowledged. The relatively small number of participants — 21 students and 5 teachers — restricts the scope of the conclusions that can be drawn. The quantitative analyses, in particular, should be read as exploratory due to the low statistical power. The reliance on self-report data further constrains the strength of claims, since perceptions may not always reflect actual practices or competences. Additionally, the study was conducted in upper-secondary schools at a particular moment in time (2022), which means the findings are context-bound and may not apply to other age groups, school types, or more recent developments. Finally, the lack of classroom observation makes it impossible to determine whether reported practices fully align with teaching reality, an issue that has also been highlighted in previous multilingual education research (Lundberg, 2019; De Angelis, 2011).

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how teachers and students in the Austrian context perceive multilingualism in EFL classrooms. While the findings cannot be generalised, they provide valuable insights into the potential advantages multilingual learners experience, the challenges teachers face, and the ways in which institutional and policy frameworks shape classroom practices. Future research with larger and more varied samples, longitudinal designs, and classroom-based observation would help to substantiate and expand on these preliminary results.

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study in relation to the theoretical framework and existing literature. The results from both teacher interviews and student questionnaires provide valuable insights into how multilingualism is perceived and experienced in Austrian EFL classrooms. These findings are interpreted in light of established theories in multilingual language acquisition, metalinguistic awareness, and pedagogical practice, with particular reference to the Austrian educational context.

One of the central findings of this study is that both teachers and students generally perceive multilingualism as an asset in the process of additional language learning, particularly in the domains of vocabulary and grammar. This finding supports the claim that multilingualism provides cognitive and linguistic benefits that go beyond the sum of individual languages (Grosjean, 1982; Hirosh & Degani, 2018). Students who reported being able to draw on their existing linguistic knowledge — particularly through cross-linguistic comparisons — were more likely to perceive multilingualism as beneficial to their English learning. The statistically significant correlation between cross-linguistic strategy use and perceived advantage in vocabulary and grammar acquisition aligns with Cummins' interdependence hypothesis (1979), which posits that skills and knowledge in one language can positively influence the development of another, provided a certain threshold of competence is reached.

These results also corroborate previous research by Jessner (2006), who argued that multilingual learners develop a heightened metalinguistic awareness, allowing them to monitor and analyze language more effectively. In the context of this study, learners' reflections on similarities between languages — for instance, between their L1, L2 (often German), and L3 (English) — exemplify this kind of cognitive flexibility. These findings also support Hirosh and Degani's (2018) framework of direct and indirect influences in multilingual language acquisition. In particular, the students' ability to transfer vocabulary strategies and grammatical patterns across languages can be understood as a direct effect, while the general awareness of how languages work reflects an indirect influence shaped by broader learning experience.

From the teacher perspective, the interviews revealed that educators often recognized the value of their own multilingualism in shaping their language awareness and pedagogical practices. Teachers noted that their prior experience learning languages enhanced their empathy, strategy use, and ability to explain linguistic concepts to students. This supports findings by De Angelis (2011) and Haukas (2015), who found that teachers with multilingual backgrounds are often more attuned to the cognitive and affective needs of their learners. However, the results also show a degree of tension between conceptual support for multilingualism and classroom implementation.

The findings of this study have several important implications for teaching practices in multilingual classrooms. First, the evidence suggests that both students and teachers stand to benefit from greater incorporation of learners' full linguistic repertoires in the English language classroom. While many teachers in this study maintained a preference for English-only instruction — occasionally switching to German for clarity or classroom management — the students' reflections highlight the value of using their L1 or L2 to draw connections and deepen understanding. These findings echo calls in the literature for a more plurilingual pedagogical approach (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015), one that acknowledges all of a learner's languages as potential resources rather than distractions.

However, the observed gap between teachers' positive attitudes toward multilingualism and their limited use of students' home languages in practice suggests that conceptual support alone is insufficient. As De Angelis (2011) and Lundberg (2019) argue, teachers need practical strategies and institutional support to translate theory into action. This could take the form of professional development courses on translanguaging strategies, multilingual materials, or collaborative lesson planning with colleagues who share students' L1s.

From a policy standpoint, these findings support the European Commission's and Austria's own stated commitments to valuing linguistic diversity in education (COM 2008/566; LEPP 2008). Yet, as reflected in teacher interviews and supported by previous research (Bredthauer & Engfer, 2016), institutional structures and curricula often prioritize German and English at the expense of minority or immigrant languages. While Austria does offer mother tongue instruction in some schools, access is inconsistent and often dependent on numbers and resources. If Austria wishes to fully implement the EU's multilingual vision, further policy efforts will be needed to mainstream support for all languages spoken by learners — not just those of high prestige.

As with any study, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size, particularly for the quantitative component, was relatively small. With 21 students completing the questionnaire and five teachers participating in interviews, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory rather than conclusive. A larger and more diverse sample could yield more generalizable insights, especially regarding the statistical patterns observed.

Additionally, the study focused solely on upper-secondary schools in one national context. It would be valuable for future research to investigate how younger students or learners in vocational tracks perceive their multilingualism, as well as how teachers' attitudes may vary across subject areas. Longitudinal studies could also provide a richer picture of how multilingual competence evolves over time and influences academic achievement or language attitudes.

Finally, while this study explored perceptions and reported practices, it did not include direct classroom observation. Including this in future work would help to bridge the gap between what teachers say they believe and what they actually do — a distinction that has emerged repeatedly in multilingual education research (Lundberg, 2019; De Angelis, 2011).

7. Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate the beliefs and attitudes of multilingual EFL teachers and students in the Austrian secondary school system, with the aim of exploring how multilingualism influences language learning and teaching. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study combined interview data from five teachers with questionnaire responses from 21 upper-secondary students. While the sample was small and context-specific, the findings nonetheless provide exploratory insights into the role of multilingualism in EFL settings, and they contribute to the growing body of research supporting a more inclusive, resource-oriented view of language diversity.

The results suggest that multilingualism is generally perceived as a benefit rather than a barrier—especially in the domains of vocabulary and grammar learning. Students who reported drawing on their linguistic repertoires also tended to express greater confidence in their English learning. Similarly, teachers indicated that their own multilingual experiences shaped their pedagogical practices and their ability to empathise with learners. At the same time, the findings also highlight a gap between positive attitudes toward multilingualism and its full integration into classroom practice. Institutional structures, limited training opportunities, and entrenched monolingual norms appear to continue influencing what happens in everyday lessons.

In light of these exploratory findings, it seems valuable for educational policy and teacher training in Austria to place greater emphasis on plurilingual pedagogies. Encouraging reflective and strategic use of all languages known by students could enhance language awareness, promote equity, and support more effective learning. However, further research — particularly with larger, more diverse samples and classroom-based observation — will be essential to confirm and extend the present results. By continuing to investigate how teachers and learners perceive and mobilise their multilingualism, educators and policymakers may find ways to better support linguistic diversity in the 21st-century classroom.

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9. Appendix

Abstracts

English

This thesis investigates the influence of multilingualism on the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Austrian secondary schools. Drawing on both learners' perspectives and teachers' attitudes, the study aims to determine whether and how multilingual backgrounds affect English language acquisition. Employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, data were collected through questionnaires completed by multilingual students, while additional insights were obtained from interviews with teachers. Findings suggest that multilingual learners generally perceive their linguistic backgrounds as beneficial for vocabulary acquisition, grammar learning, and communicative fluency, although this advantage strongly depends on individual language proficiency and teachers' attitudes toward multilingualism. Teachers, on the other hand, recognize the potential benefits of multilingualism but often struggle to incorporate students' linguistic resources effectively into classroom practice. This thesis underscores the need for educational policies and teacher training programs that explicitly support multilingualism as a resource in language education.

German

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit untersucht den Einfluss von Mehrsprachigkeit auf das Erlernen von Englisch als Fremdsprache an österreichischen Sekundarschulen. Dabei berücksichtigt die Studie sowohl die Perspektiven der Lernenden als auch die Einstellungen der Lehrkräfte, um herauszufinden, ob und inwiefern mehrsprachige Hintergründe den Erwerb der englischen Sprache beeinflussen. Mithilfe einer Kombination von qualitativen und quantitativen Ansätzen wurden Daten durch Fragebögen von mehrsprachigen Schülerinnen und Schülern erhoben sowie weitere Einblicke durch Interviews mit Lehrkräften gewonnen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass mehrsprachige Lernende ihre sprachlichen Vorkenntnisse überwiegend als vorteilhaft für den Wortschatzerwerb, das Grammatiklernen und die kommunikative Flüssigkeit empfinden, wobei dieser Vorteil stark von der individuellen Sprachkompetenz und der Einstellung der Lehrkräfte gegenüber Mehrsprachigkeit abhängt. Lehrkräfte erkennen zwar die potenziellen Vorteile der Mehrsprachigkeit, haben jedoch oft Schwierigkeiten, die vorhandenen sprachlichen Ressourcen der Schülerinnen und Schüler effektiv im Unterricht einzusetzen. Diese Arbeit hebt hervor, wie wichtig bildungspolitische Maßnahmen und Weiterbildungsprogramme für Lehrkräfte sind, um Mehrsprachigkeit als Ressource im Fremdsprachenunterricht aktiv zu fördern.

Interview questions

Interview planned for (multilingual English teachers)

- 1) Thanking the person for participating, providing information on the project, outline the interview procedure, collecting written permission to record the interview and to transcribe & use the data, etc.
- 2) Warm up - easing into the conversation

(transitioning to the first main part)

- 3) First main part of the interview - the participant as a language learner; questions planned:
 - Can you tell me a bit about your experience as a language learner? What languages have you encountered and learnt to communicate orally (via speaking), in writing or receptively (through listening or reading) ? How did you learn these languages - naturally, i.e. from family/friends/other sources, like films, books, the Internet or formally, at school? Maybe both?
 - Which of these languages do you use today (on a daily basis and on a regular basis)?
 - When learning a foreign language, did you find that your previous experience with language learning helped? If yes, in which area(s): learning (new) grammatical structures, learning new vocabulary, understanding texts (spoken and written), speaking or writing?
 - Is there anything else that comes to mind when you think of your journey as a language learner?

(signalling the end of the first section, transitioning to the second section)

- 4) Second main part of the interview - the participant as a language teacher:
 - Can you tell me about the context in which you are teaching? (school type, grades, etc.) How long have you been teaching there?
 - What do you know about the language background of your students? Do you think that there is a high percentage of bi/multilingual learners in your classes? What languages are represented in your classroom(s)?

- What is your general impression of teaching linguistically diverse groups? Is it different from teaching a more homogeneous group? Is it more challenging? Can you recall any concrete examples or situations?
- Can you think of any challenges and advantages you experienced when teaching a group where learners have diverse linguistic backgrounds? Can you recall any concrete examples or perhaps situations?
- Do you discuss learners' linguistic backgrounds in class? Why/Why not?
- Do you actively encourage multilingual learners to use their previous language learning experience as well as their linguistic knowledge and skills when learning English?

5) Closing questions (still related to the second main part, but it is meant to round up the interview):

- In your opinion, is there a way to “use” learners’ multilingualism as a resource in the English language classroom? If yes, what strategies/activities do you suggest?
- What advice would you give future English teachers, who are just about to start working in linguistically heterogeneous settings?
- Do you have any further comments or questions?

Questionnaire

Mehrsprachigkeit im Rahmen des Englischunterrichts

Liebe TeilnehmerInnen,

mein Name ist Dalma Milos und ich bin Lehramtsstudentin der Universität Wien. Im Rahmen meiner Masterarbeit im Unterrichtsfach Englisch führe ich ein Projekt im Bereich "Mehrsprachigkeit und Englisch als Fremdsprache" durch. In dieser Arbeit beschäftige ich mich unter anderem mit Sprachgewohnheiten österreichischen SchülerInnen und ihre Einstellungen gegenüber Mehrsprachigkeit im Rahmen des Englischunterrichts.

Voraussetzung der Teilnahme ist, dass du mehrsprachig bist (zu Hause auch eine andere Sprache als Deutsch verwendest) und dein 16. Lebensjahr vollendet hast.

Die Umfrage dauert zwischen 10-15 Minuten und sie ist vollkommen anonym. Deine Angaben werden vertraulich behandelt und nur im Rahmen dieser Masterarbeit verwendet.

Vielen Dank für deine Teilnahme,
Dalma Milos

Wenn du Fragen zur Verarbeitung deiner personenbezogenen Daten hast, kontaktiere mich per E-Mail unter a01448224@unet.univie.ac.at

* Indicates required question

1. Ich stimme zu, dass ich mein 16. Lebensjahr vollendet habe und, dass meine personenbezogene Daten gemäß den hier angeführten Angaben verarbeitet werden.

Mark only one oval.

☐ zustimmen

Hintergrund

Bitte beantworte die folgenden Fragen zu deinem persönlichen und sprachlichen Hintergrund.

2. Zu welchem Geschlecht fühlst du dich angehörig? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ weiblich
- ☐ männlich
- ☐ keine Angabe
- ☐ Other: _____

3. Wie alt bist du?

4. Welchen Schultyp besuchst du? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ AHS
- ☐ BHS
- ☐ BMS
- ☐ Berufsschule
- ☐ Polytechnische Schule
- ☐ Other: _____

5. Gehst du in eine Schule, welche einen Schwerpunkt auf Sprachen setzt? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nein

6. In welchen Sprachen kannst du dich verständigen?(Liste bitte alle Sprachen auf, in denen c schriftlich und/oder mündlich kommunizieren kannst.)

7. Wie hast du diese Sprachen gelernt? *

Tick all that apply.

	von den Eltern/der Familie	von anderen Menschen in deiner Umgebung	im Unterricht (in der Schule oder von einer Lehrperson)	in einer Kombination vor mehreren Kontexten
Deutsch	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sprache/n der Familie (Herkunftssprache/n)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Englisch	☐	☐	☐	☐
andere Sprache, die du kennst	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Welche Sprache/n würdest du als deine 'Muttersprache/n' bezeichnen? *

9. Welche Sprachen verwendest du außerhalb der Schule, z.B. zu Hause mit deinen Eltern, m Freunden?

10. Welche Sprachen verwendest du in der Schule (im Unterricht und in der Pause)?

11. Kannst du lesen und schreiben auf ... *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Deutsch
- ☐ Englisch
- ☐ der Sprache/n deiner Familie (Herkunftssprache)
- ☐ Other: _____

12. Falls in deiner Familie mehrere Sprachen gesprochen werden, in welche/n von diesen Sprachen kannst du lesen und schreiben?

13. Wie würdest du deine Sprachkompetenz in der Sprache/n deiner Familie (Herkunftssprache) einschätzen?

Tick all that apply.

	sehr niedrig	eher niedrig	mittelmäßig	eher hoch	sehr hoch
im Bereich 'Schreiben'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Lesen'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Sprechen'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Hören'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Grammatik'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Wortschatz'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Wie würdest du deine Sprachkompetenz in Deutsch einschätzen? *

Tick all that apply.

	sehr niedrig	eher niedrig	mittelmäßig	eher hoch	sehr hoch
im Bereich 'Schreiben'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Lesen'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Sprechen'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Hören'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Grammatik'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Wortschatz'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. Wie würdest du deine Sprachkompetenz in Englisch einschätzen? *

Tick all that apply.

	sehr niedrig	eher niedrig	mittelmäßig	eher hoch	sehr hoch
im Bereich 'Schreiben'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Lesen'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Sprechen'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Hören'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Grammatik'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Wortschatz'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. Wie würdest du deine Sprachkompetenz in einer anderen Sprache, in der du kommunizieren kannst (schriftlich/mündlich, durch verstehen/produzieren), einschätzen?

Tick all that apply.

	sehr niedrig	eher niedrig	mittelmäßig	eher hoch	sehr hoch
im Bereich 'Schreiben'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Lesen'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Sprechen'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Hören'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Grammatik'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
im Bereich 'Wortschatz'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. Wenn du die vorherige Frage beantwortet hast, um welche Sprache handelte es sich?

Mehrsprachigkeit im Englischunterricht

Bitte beantworte die folgenden Fragen zu deinen Sprachgewohnheiten im Kontext des Englischunterrichts.

18. Welche Sprachen verwendest du im Englischunterricht? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Englisch
- ☐ Deutsch
- ☐ die Sprache deiner Familie (Herkunftssprache)
- ☐ Other: _____

19. Wenn ich neue Vokabeln auf Englisch lerne, versuche ich Verbindungen zwischen diesen und Wörtern in meiner anderen Sprachen herzustellen.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
stim	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	stimmt vollkommen zu

20. Wenn die letzte Aussage auf dich (eher) zutrifft, könntest du ein kurzes Beispiel geben?

21. Wenn ich eine neue grammatische Struktur in Englisch lerne, vergleiche ich diese mit den Strukturen, die ich von anderen Sprachen kenne.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
trifft	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	trifft vollkommen zu

22. Wenn die letzte Aussage auf dich (eher) zutrifft, könntest du ein kurzes Beispiel geben?

23. Ich glaube, dass meine Erfahrungen mit unterschiedlichen Sprachen beim Vokabellernen und/oder Grammatiklernen in Englisch von Vorteil sind.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
trifft	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	trifft vollkommen zu

24. Warum/warum nicht? Könntest du ein kurzes Beispiel geben?

25. Ich glaube, dass meine Erfahrungen mit unterschiedlichen Sprachen beim Hören und/ode Lesen auf Englisch von Vorteil sind.

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

trifft ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ trifft vollkommen zu

26. Warum/warum nicht? Könntest du ein kurzes Beispiel geben?

27. Ich glaube, dass meine Erfahrungen mit unterschiedlichen Sprachen beim Sprechen und/oder Schreiben von Vorteil sind?

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

trifft ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ trifft vollkommen zu

28. Warum/warum nich? Könntest du ein kurzes Beispiel geben?

29. Könntest du konkrete Situationen beschreiben, in denen du empfunden hast, dass deine Mehrsprachigkeit im Englischunterricht oder zu Hause beim Lernen von Vorteil war?

30. Generell glaube ich, dass meine bereits vorhandene Sprachkenntnisse von Vorteil sind. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

trifft ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ trifft vollkommen zu

31. Möchtest du in der Zukunft noch mehrere Sprachen erlernen? Warum/warum nicht?

32. Hast du weitere Kommentare oder Fragen?

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