



Beliefs on plurilingual education and plurilingual practices of language teachers: Main results from an international survey

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Research on beliefs: conceptual starting points

Beliefs are understood as part of teachers' cognition (Borg, 2003)

Definition: "an individuals' judgement of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (Pajares, 1992, p. 316)

Concepts sometimes amalgamated to beliefs: attitudes, motivations, representations, ideologies, perspectives,....

While it is admitted that beliefs might influence teachers' practices, there is no evidence that support this causality logic (Tillema, 1997) or unidirectionality (Borg, 2018). The dynamics can be more complex:

- beliefs influencing practices
- practices influencing beliefs
- both being (partly) disconnected
- both influencing each other reciprocally



Research on teachers' beliefs about plurilingualism: a brief panorama



- Research on teachers' beliefs about plurilingualism and plurilingual pedagogies is being established

Plurilingualism (at school)	Plurilingual pedagogies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Fischer & Lahmann, 2020), Haukås, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Araújo e Sá & Melo-Pfeifer, 2015; Barras, Peyer & Lüthi, 2019; Calafato, 2021; Haukås, 2016, Heyder & Schädlich, 2014; Neveling, 2013; Melo-Pfeifer, 2020; Portolés & Martí, 2018.

- Findings suggest that teachers
 - have positive beliefs about students' repertoires,
 - are aware of the affective added-value of integrating students' languages in the pedagogical activities, but
 - are not always convinced about the cognitive benefits of plurilingual pedagogies.

Some studies in a nutshell

- 'Foreign language teachers [are] generally positive towards multilingual teaching approaches (...) According to the teachers surveyed, the relatively low proportion of multilingual teaching in foreign language lessons is primarily due to time constraints' (Barras, Peyer & Lüthi, 2019, pp. 381–382; also Haukås, 2016 and Portolés & Martí, 2018).
- Future teachers recognise the cognitive and affective advantages of plurilingualism in the classroom, but see structural limitations such as monolingual assessment, the separation of school subjects, etc., as well as problems related to time and resource management (Araújo e Sá & Melo-Pfeifer, 2015; Melo-Pfeifer, 2020).
- Some surveys of foreign language teachers confirm a frequent but rather sporadic, unsystematic and even uncertain use of multilingual teaching approaches (Heyder & Schädlich, 2014; Neveling, 2013).



The research gap

- Lack of comparative studies at international level
- Lack of studies embracing HE language teachers (many studies focused on pre-service teachers - convenience sampling)
- Lack of empirical studies combining the research of teachers' beliefs about language policies (in education), their self-reported teaching and assessment practices, and their perceived needs.



The project

- Erasmus+ project (KA220)
- 2023–2026
- Consortium
 - FR - Université de La Réunion (coord.)
 - AT - Paris Lodron Univ. Salzburg (Co-coord.)
 - AT - Universität Wien
 - DE - Universität Hamburg
 - IT - Roma Tre
 - GR - [Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας](#) (Univ. of Thessaly)
 - PT - Univ. Católica Portuguesa
 - 11 associated partners



PEP's aims



General aim

- Promotion of plurilingual education, taking into account existing plurilingualism, with the aim of promoting the plurilingual competence.

Specific aims

- Better knowledge of multilingual practices in secondary education and higher education institutions
 - Scientific report
- Dissemination of adaptable teaching and assessment examples
 - Booklet of "good" practices
- Scientific publications and contributions to teacher training
 - Encyclopaedia of plurilingual education (Ollivier & Melo-Pfeifer, 2025)
 - Department of Multilingual Education at Wikiversity
- Training and continuing education modules for (future) language teachers in the field of multilingual education
 - Moodle modules and training guide

Aims of the PEP questionnaire and design

Objective: To explore self-reported attitudes and practices

Tool: International online survey in the countries of the consortium (and beyond)

- LimeSurvey
- Closed and open questions

Sections:

- Opinion on European language policy (EU and Council of Europe)
- Understanding of the concept of multilingualism and means to achieve it in an educational context
- Goals and approaches of respondents' own multilingual professional practice
- Personal details on education and professional experience



Data



- Data collection from May to early July 2024
- 800 participants (94,25% from Europe), mainly from the partner countries (81,3%).
- More than 800 questionnaires left incomplete.
- Statistical analysis of quantitative data
- Thematic analysis of qualitative data

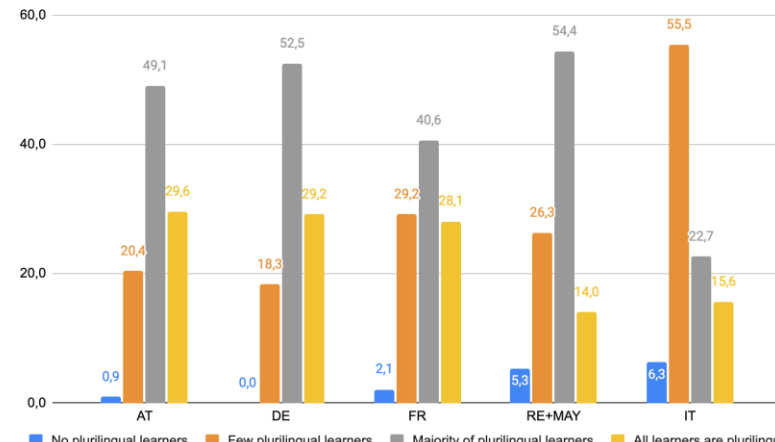
Profile of respondents

- Age: 10 (?)/ 19 to 100 years, average age 47
- Gender: predominantly female (83.2%)
- Education: high level of education (76.3% Master's or PhD); in training: 14% (based on 800)
- Work mainly in an urban context (89.6%) and with multilingual groups (56.56%: all or most of the learners are plurilingual)
- Experienced teachers: 72.3% with more than 10 years of teaching experience



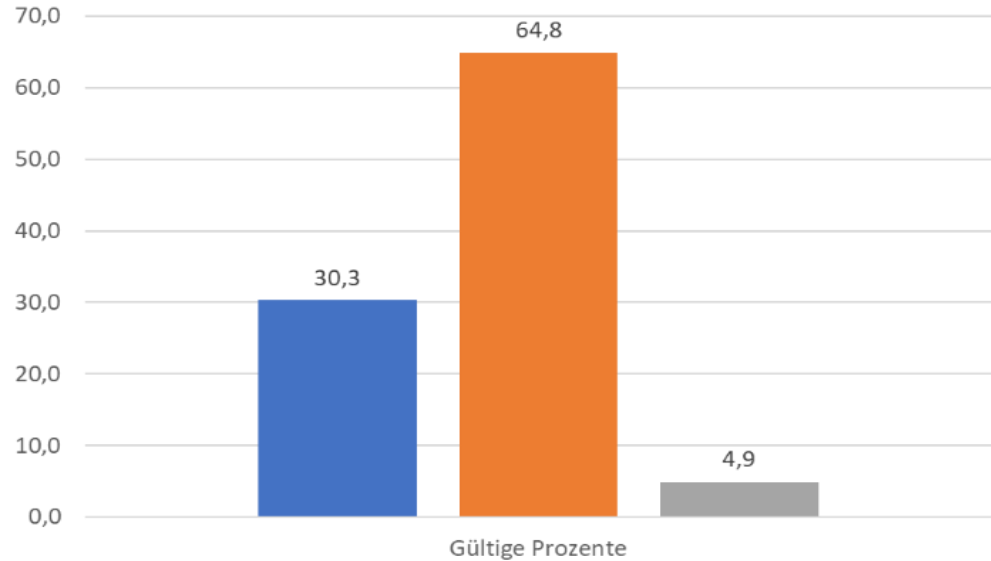
TEFL

Are your classes plurilingual?



Teachers and European language policies: the quantitative analysis

How many / which languages should (European) citizens learn?

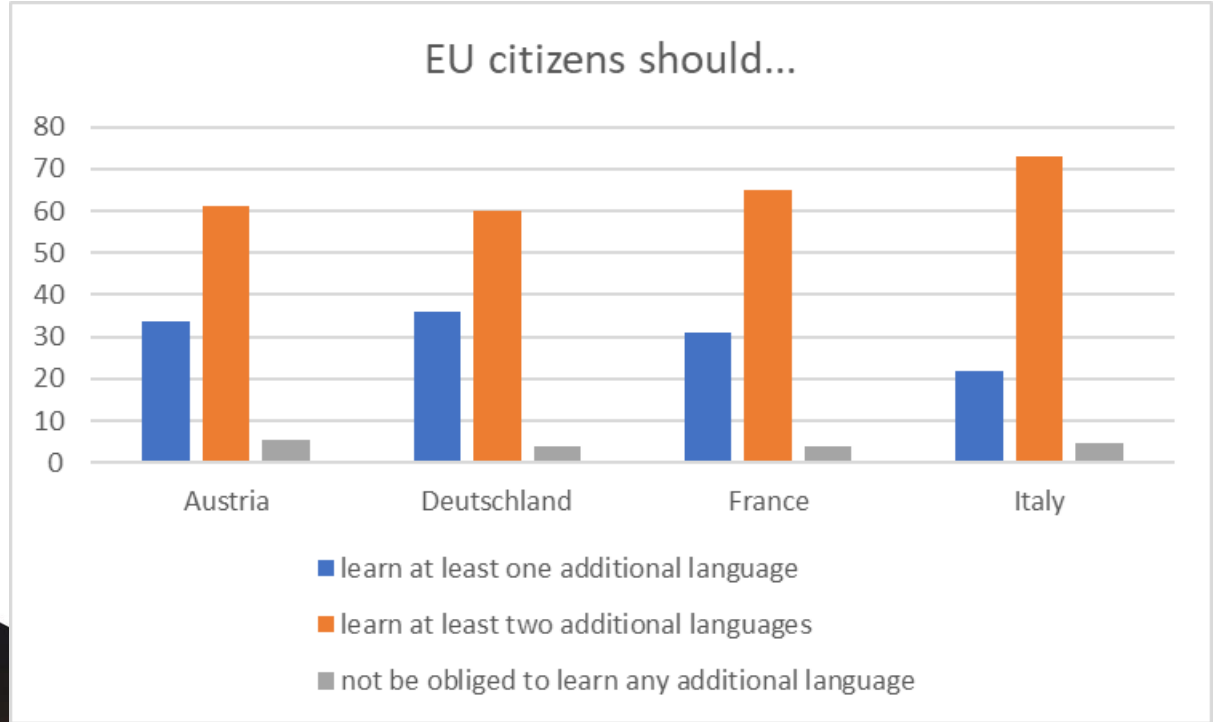


- European citizens should learn at least one additional language ("foreign" language).
- European citizens should learn at least two additional languages ("foreign" languages).
- European citizens should not be obliged to learn any additional language ("foreign" language).

Teachers and European language policies: the quantitative analysis



How many / which languages should (European) citizens learn?
(cross-country analysis)



Teachers and European language policies: discourses from the field

161 participants commented on the question “How many languages should European citizens learn?”



Minimalist beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Il me semble que l'objectif d'apprendre deux langues additionnelles est certes louable mais assez illusoire, (...)● Une langue étrangère me semble largement suffisante● Una ma per bene / eine zusätzliche Sprache ist realistisch. Es ist besser, eine weitere Sprache gut zu können, als zwei nur ein bisschen.● Anche un livello A2 sarebbe sufficiente● Idéalement ... je pense qu'il faut ne pas être trop rigide sur ce point● Es sollte keine Verpflichtung zum Erlernen von Fremdsprachen bestehen● Ideally, students would be offered more than one foreign language to learn, but this would depend on whether there is space on the curriculum.
Maximalist beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● regionale Dialekte sollten auch berücksichtigt werden● Almeno tre lingue oltre la lingua madre: una lingua internazionale (inglese) + due lingue dei paesi membri dell'unione

Teachers and European language policies: discourses from the field

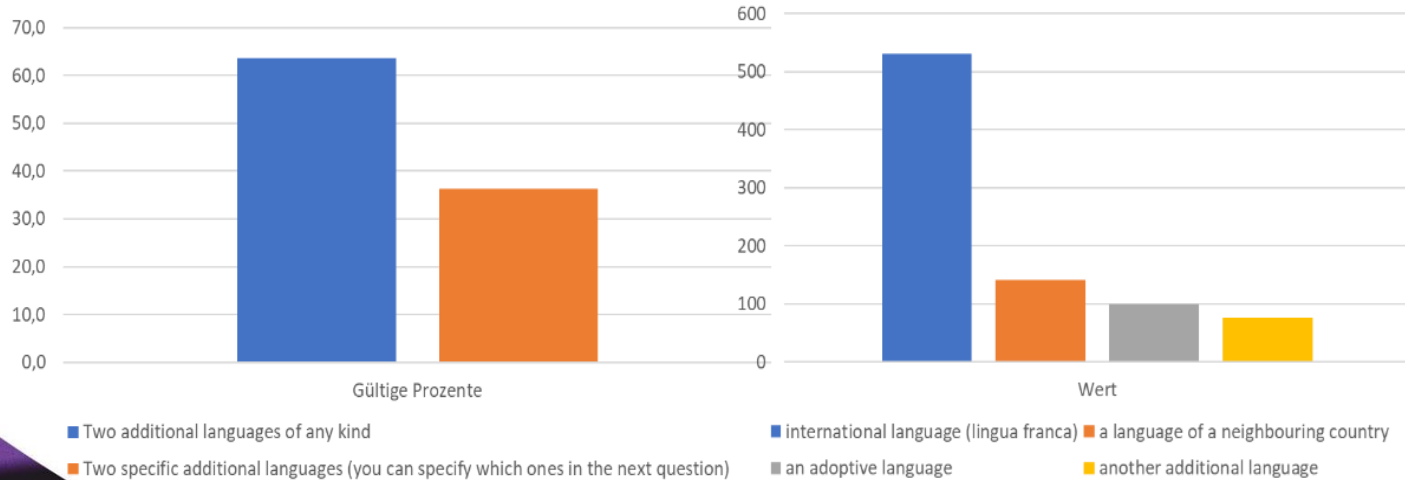


... 33 participants explicitly refer to English...

English as the first, natural choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Oltre all'inglese un'altra lingua, sia essa europea o extraeuropea● Englisch ist ein Muss / L'anglais est un must absolu
English as the inevitable choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Englisch als gemeinsame Verkehrssprache. Im besten Fall noch weitere Sprachen.● Englisch als lingua franca für Studien- und Berufskommunikation sowie auch für Alltag
English as the a menacing choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Man sollte Weg von der Annahme, Englisch sei die einzige relevante Fremdsprache in der EU.● une langue = tout anglais ; faut donc 2.

Teachers and European language policies: the quantitative analysis

How many / which languages should (European) citizens learn?

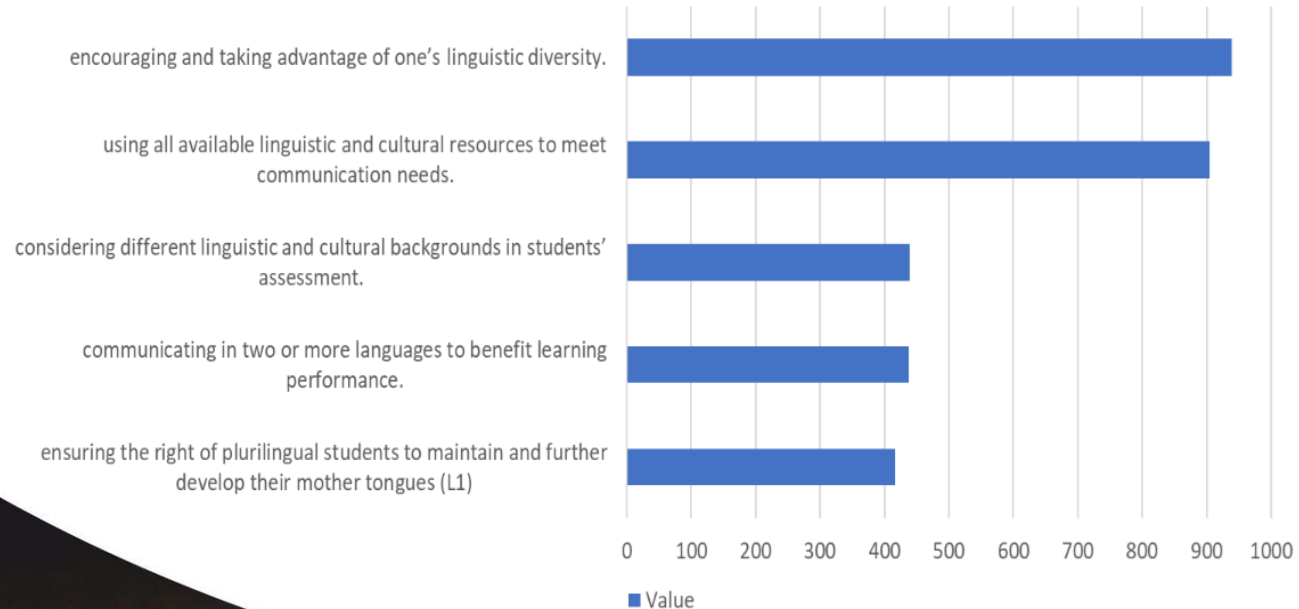


Meaning of plurilingualism in the classroom

Multilingualism in the classroom means ... (List of statements)

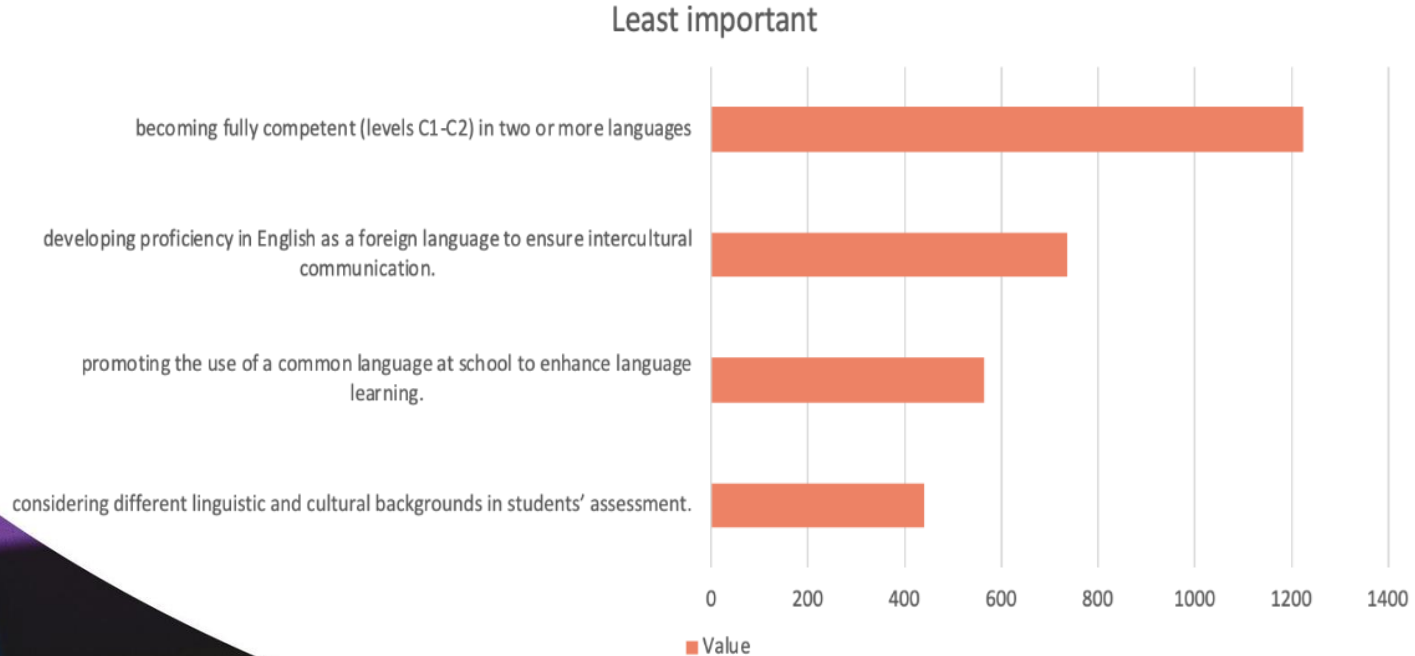


Most important



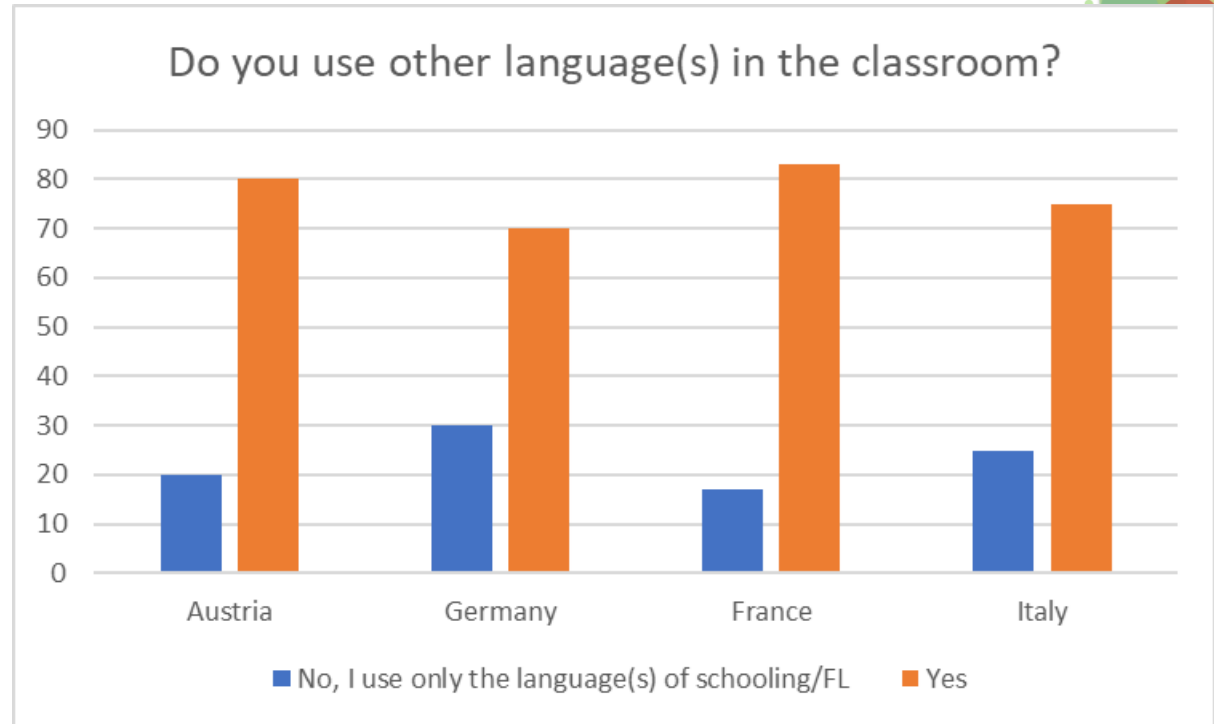
Meaning of plurilingualism in the classroom

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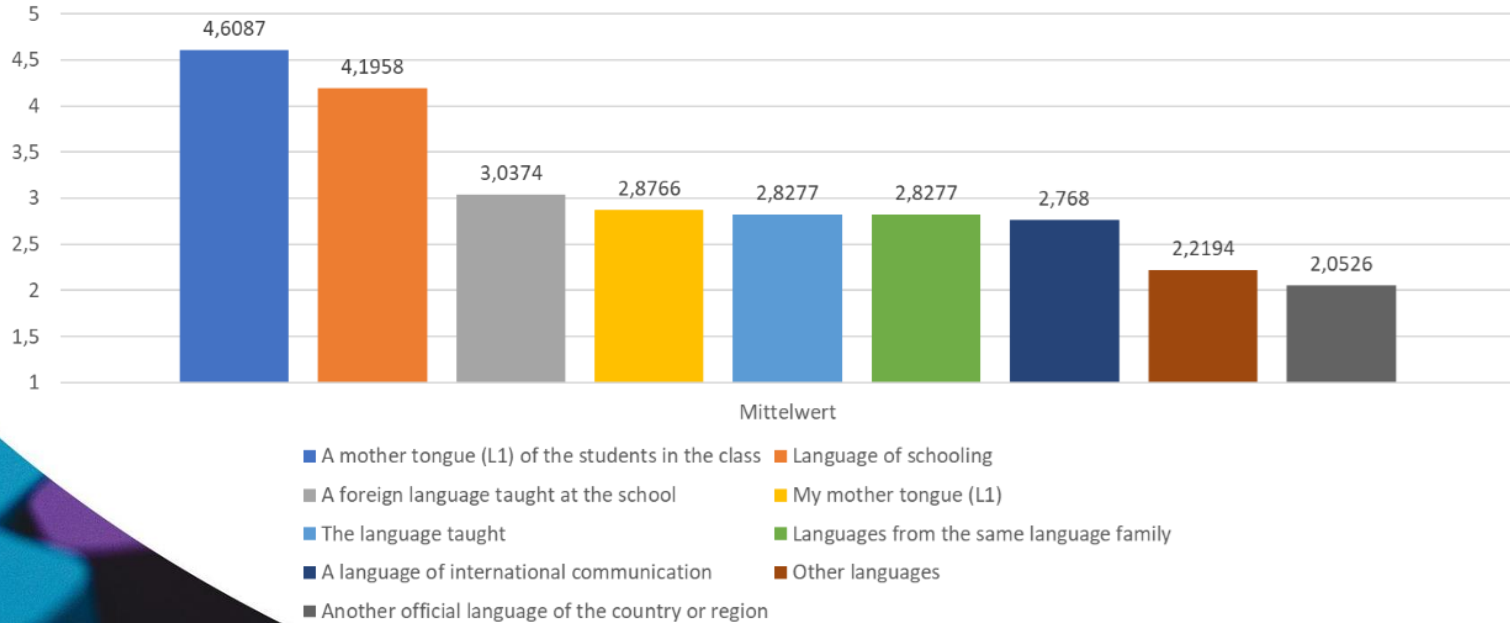
(most important statements)	A	DE	FR	IT
considering the linguistic background in assessment	7	10	6	11,5
becoming fully competent in 2 or more languages	5	2,5	6	PEP 7,5
communicating in 2 or more languages to benefit learning performance	3,5	6,5	13	8,5
developing proficiency in English	8	7,5	10	4
encouraging and taking advantage of one's linguistic diversity	20	22,5	21	28
ensuring students the right to maintain their L1	15	5	8	4
garanteeing the social integration of minorities and migrants	1	2,5	2	8,5
promoting the use of one commun language at school to enhance language learning	0	5	2,5	1,5
questioning stereotand prejudices tow. minoritized lang. and dialects	2,7	5	3,5	4
teaching/learning several languages in educational contexts	5,4	7,5	9	4
using all available linguistic and cultural resources to meet communication needs	31,5	25,8	18	18,5

Self-reported teaching practices



Self-reported teaching practices

Which languages do you use in the classroom?



Self-reported teaching practices

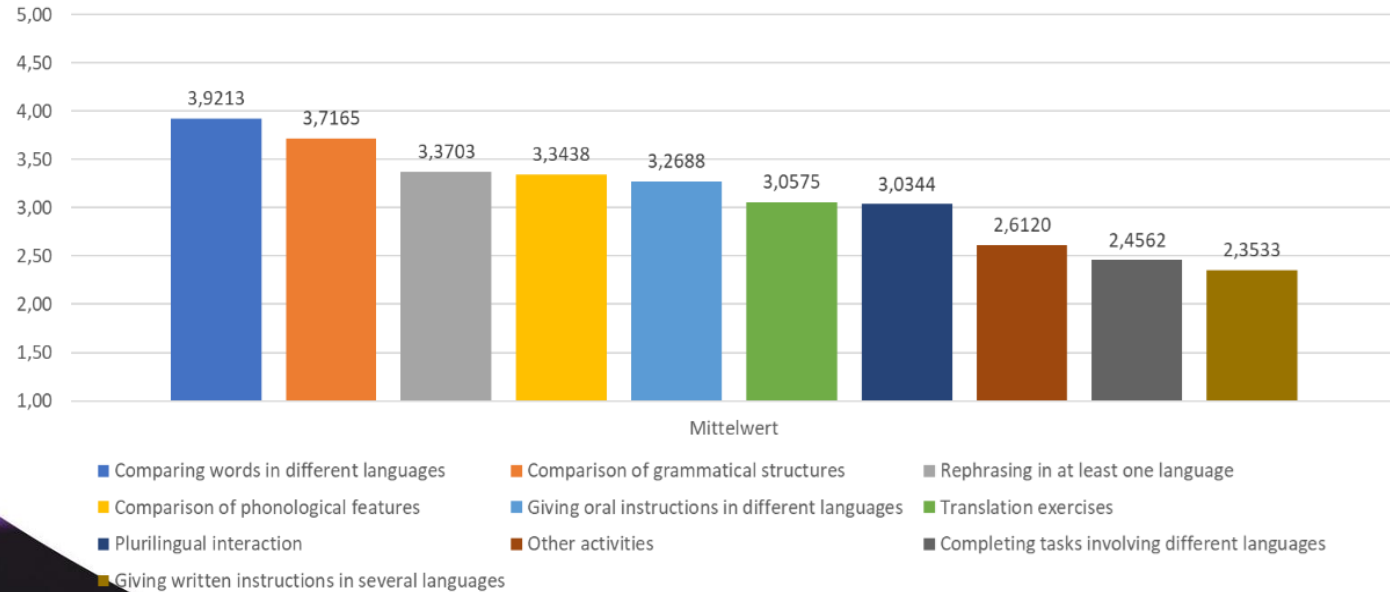
Which languages do you use in the classroom? (cross-country analysis) - Some common tendencies:



- FL is said to be used often (161 participants) or always (340);
- the language(s) of schooling is/are said to be used often (210 participants) or always (213);
- a language of international communication varies between rarely and often;
- languages of the same family are used sometimes (168 answers);
- other FL taught at school span from never (64), rarely (74), sometimes (140), often (122) and always (42);
- the L1 of the students is said to be used between never (64 answers), rarely (113), sometimes (188) and often (94);
- other official languages of countries and regions are never (165 answers) or rarely (95) used. 95 teachers do not consider the question relevant for them.

Self-reported teaching practices

Which of the following strategies do you use in the classroom?

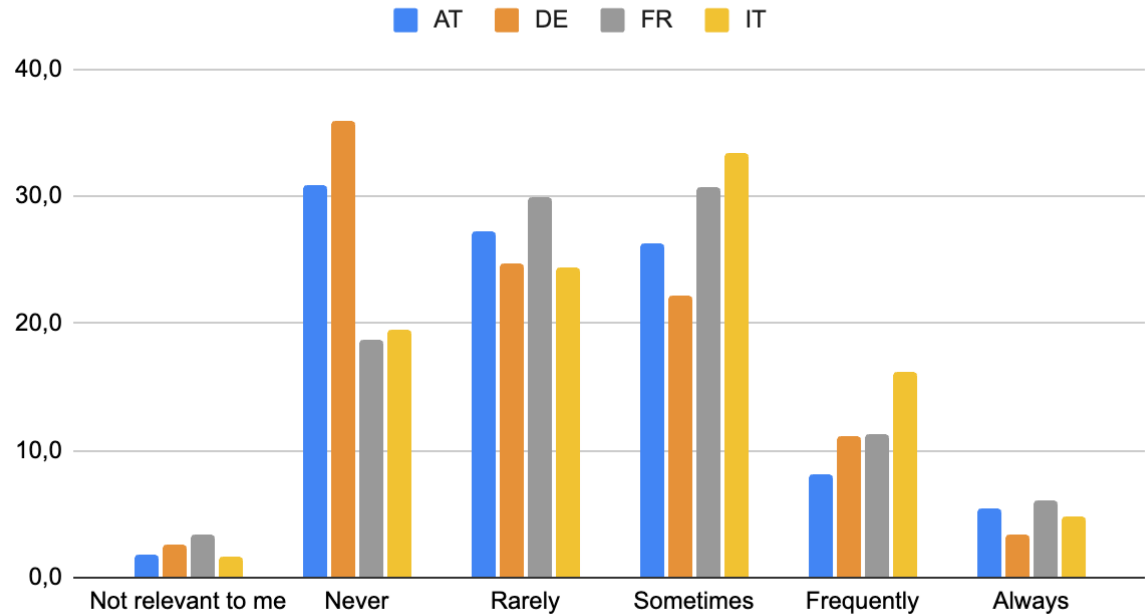


Completing tasks involving different languages

Which of the following strategies do you use in the classroom? (a cross-country comparative analysis)

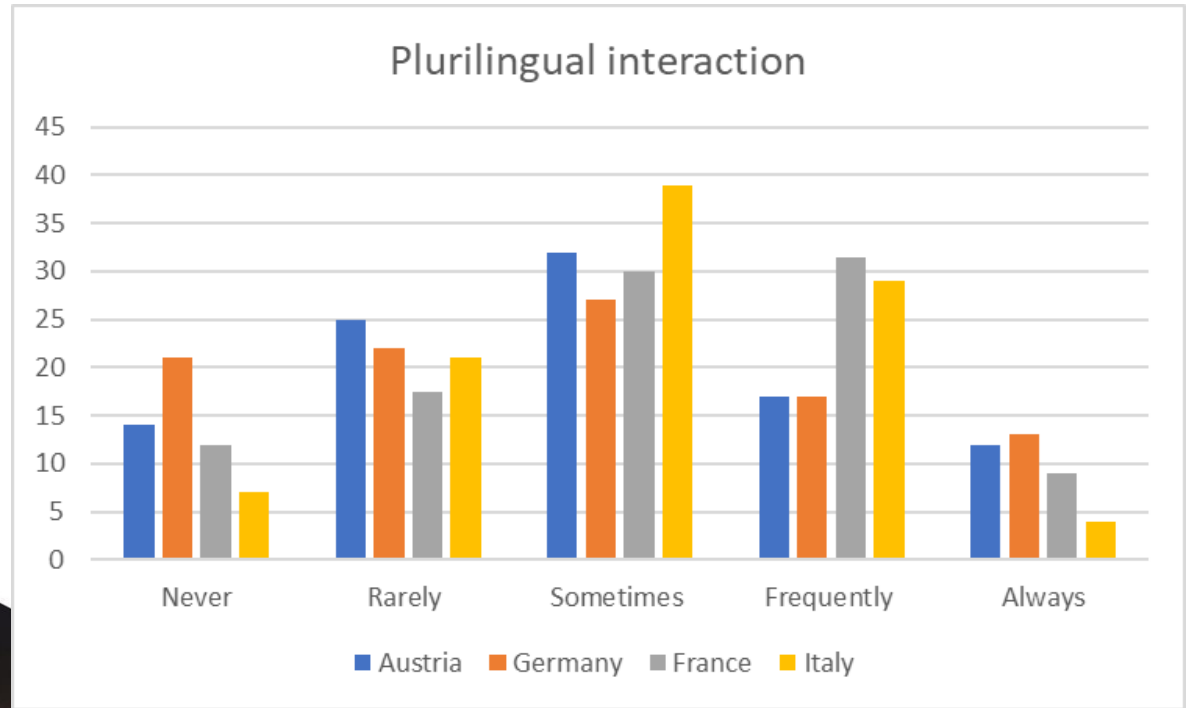


Completing tasks involving different languages



Self-reported teaching practices

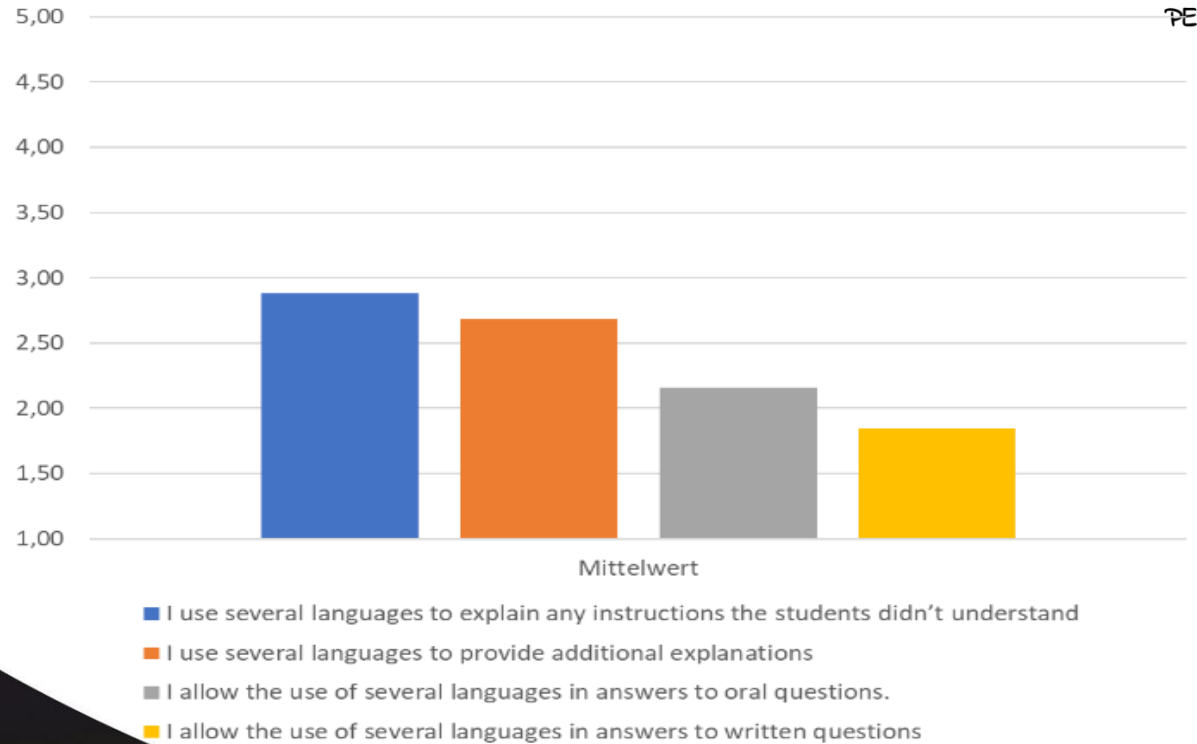
Which of the following strategies do you use in the classroom? (a cross-country comparative analysis: plurilingual interaction) 



Self-reported assessment practices



To evaluate my students, ...



Plurilingual assessment means “incorporating multilingual elements into assessments, whether they are content-related or language-related” (Vogt & Antia , 2024, p. 11).

Self-reported assessment practices



I use plurilingual instruction in assessment tasks...

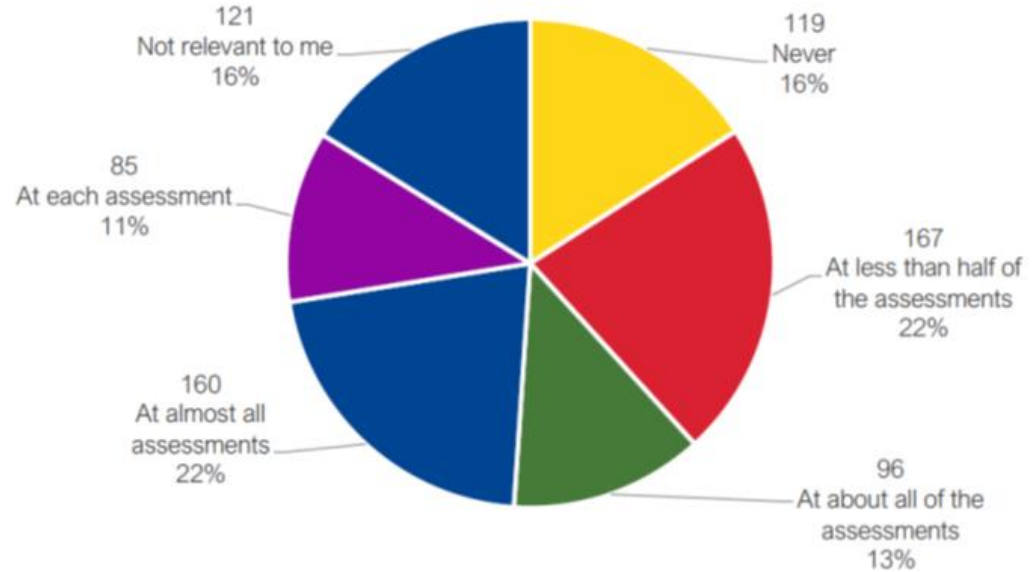


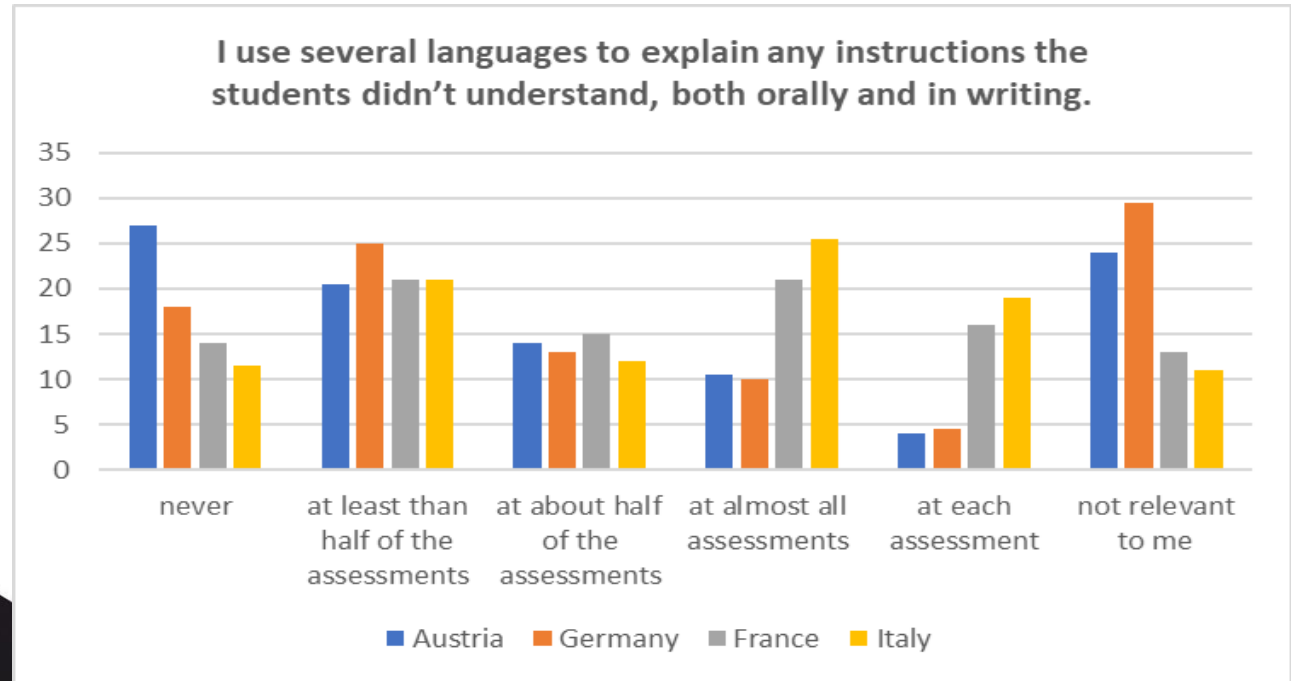
Figure 12 – Use of plurilingual instructions in assessment (Q16)

Self-reported assessment practices

To evaluate my students, ... (cross-country comparative analysis)



PEP



Plurilingual assessment means “incorporating multilingual elements into assessments, whether they are content-related or language-related” (Vogt & Antia, 2024, p. 11).

Self-reported assessment practices

I use plurilingual instructions or allow students to use several languages during assessment...

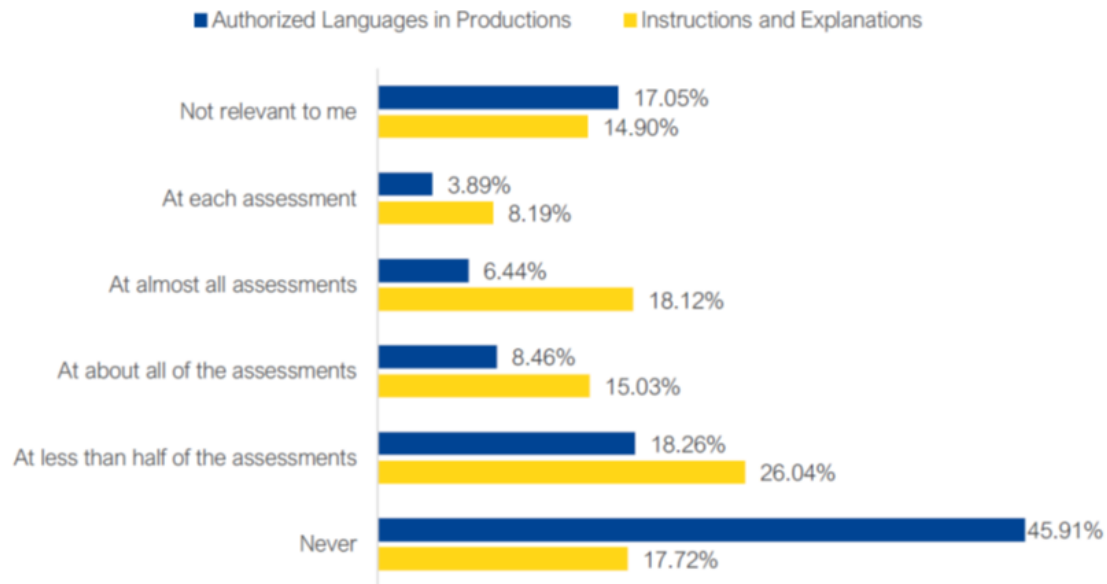
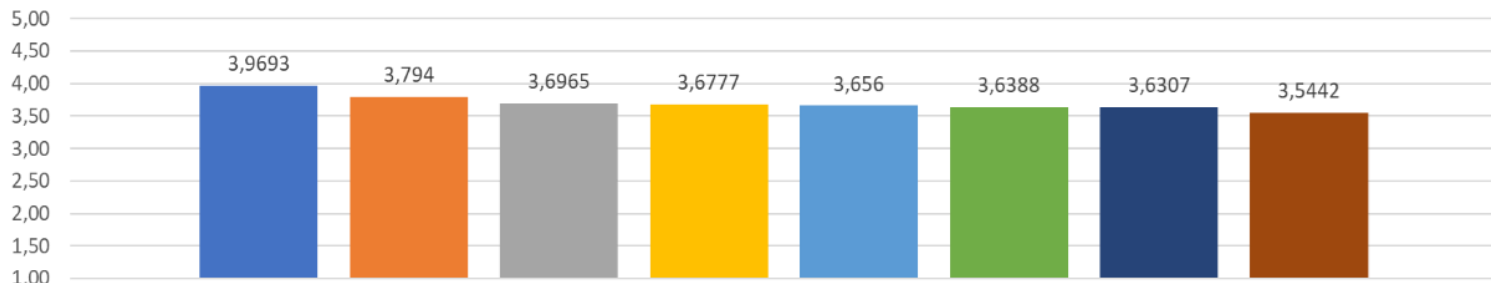


Figure 13 – Plurilingual practices in instructions and in learners' productions (Q16)

Needs



What would you need to integrate a greater variety of languages into your lessons?



Mittelwert

- More support from the institution (school, academic authority, etc.) for the implementation
- Need to develop my teaching skills in relation to plurilingualism through training
- More time for implementation in the classroom (compared to other learning activities)
- More time to prepare for the course
- More appropriate teaching resources (excluding textbooks)
- Greater interest and motivation from students
- More collaboration with other teachers
- More explicit instructions in official documents (e.g. programmes)

Conclusions



- Teachers demonstrated an understanding of common monolingual myths in education, when recognising that plurilingualism in education is not about focusing on one language at a time or using a common language to ensure mutual understanding;
- Discrepancy between multilingual turn and monolingual assessment practices: plurilingualism appears to have a limited presence in assessment practices;

Lower scored needs	Higher scored needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● textbook resources● plurilingualism in assessment● professional stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● professional stability (only with “extremely important” scores)● support from the institution

Conclusions



Convergence between

- quantitative teachers' responses and
- theories / research (repertoire, plurilingualism as a competence, language skills as a resource)

Positive attitude of teachers towards:

- students' plurilingual repertoires
- plurilingual pedagogies (but not really in the assessment process)

Mixed discourses on the language policies in the qualitative data analysis: learning two FL should not be imposed (“Es sollte mehr positive Unterstützung dafür geben, aber keinen Zwang”).

Some differences between countries **BUT** striking similarities prevail.

Towards a holistic view on teachers' beliefs

- Perception of a plurilingual context vs. Plurilingual classroom practices: Perception of teaching context as more plurilingual does not automatically lead to a more explicit and abundant self-report plurilingual practicesß use (in teaching and assessment);
- Disconnection between teaching and assessment practices: A disconnection between embracing plurilingual strategies for teaching and learning, on the one hand) and plurilingualism in assessment, on the other hand;
- (Superficial) acceptance of policies vs. Deep(er) integration in practice: General acceptance of European language policies, but not a systematic use of languages previously learnt at school (gap between ideological beliefs and pedagogical beliefs and practices?);





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