

First Languages in the Classroom

Teacher Attitudes towards Multilingualism in Primary Education in Utrecht



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Abstract

Multilingualism is often regarded as a hurdle for learning the main societal language, in this case Dutch. Research has found that this attitude towards (especially non-Western) multilingualism is still omnipresent in our society (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018; Agirdag, 2015; Cornips, 2012; Extra, 2011; Edelman, 2010). As a result of this attitude, a language immersion teaching model is implemented in (primary) schools, which means that the societal language is the only language used in class (Pulinx, 2017). As a consequence of this model, first languages of children are often ignored and/or kept out of the classroom, which can lead to children feeling unsafe, unwelcome and ashamed at school (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018).

The aim of this master thesis was to determine whether this focus on the societal language and aversion of first languages remains present for primary school teachers in Utrecht. It is relevant to find out what the current situation looks like, as it might have negative consequences for multilingual children.

As an answer to this question certain patterns were found: teachers seem to be more openminded towards multilingualism in the classroom when they either have had training or have practical experience with multilingual children. More awareness can thus create more openness, which can lead to a better learning environment for multilingual children in primary school.

Keywords: *Multilingualism – Multilingual classrooms – Language in primary education*

Samenvatting

Meertaligheid wordt vaak gezien als een hindernis voor het leren van de samenlevingstaal, het Nederlands. Uit onderzoek blijkt dat deze houding ten opzichte van (vooral niet-westerse) meertaligheid nog steeds alomtegenwoordig is in onze samenleving (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018; Agirdag, 2015; Cornips, 2012; Extra, 2011; Edelman, 2010). Als gevolg van deze houding wordt er vaak een taalonderdompelingsmodel geïmplementeerd op (basis)scholen, wat betekent dat het Nederlands de enige taal is die in de klas wordt gebruikt (Pulinx, 2017). Hierdoor worden de eerste talen van kinderen vaak genegeerd en/of buiten de klas gehouden, wat ertoe kan leiden dat kinderen zich onveilig, onwelkom en beschaamd voelen op school (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018).

Het doel van deze masterscriptie was om vast te stellen of deze focus op het Nederlands en de aversie tegen moedertalen nog steeds aanwezig is bij leraren in het basisonderwijs in Utrecht. Het is relevant om te weten hoe de huidige situatie eruitziet, aangezien deze negatieve gevolgen kan hebben voor meertalige kinderen.

Als antwoord op deze vraag werden bepaalde patronen gevonden: leraren lijken meer open te staan voor meertaligheid in de klas wanneer ze ofwel training hebben gehad over het onderwerp of praktische ervaring hebben met meertalige kinderen. Meer bewustwording kan zo voor meer openheid zorgen, wat kan leiden tot een betere leeromgeving voor meertalige kinderen op de basisschool.

Sleutelwoorden: *Meertaligheid – Meertaligheid in de klas – Taal in het basisonderwijs*

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1. Introduction

Being multilingual is frequently referred to as an obstacle to learning the main societal language. This negative attitude towards (especially non-Western) multilingualism has been reported multiple times (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018; Agirdag, 2015; Cornips, 2012; Extra, 2011; Edelman, 2010). Pupils learning a societal language as a second language are often described in the media as having a language delay, instead of having the advantage of having already learned one language (e.g., Bouma & Ezzeroili, 2021). This view with regards to multilingualism has led to a major focus on learning the societal language as quickly as possible, to erase this supposed delay (Sierens & Van Aevermaat, 2010).

As in other Western-European countries, this ideology is also present in the Netherlands (Extra, 2011; Agirdag, 2015). As a consequence, a language immersion model is often implemented in schools. This means that the importance of the societal language, in this case Dutch, is emphasised and that it is the only language used in class (Pulinx, 2017). First languages of students are ignored, or even kept out of the classroom or school. This, in turn, can lead to students feeling unwelcome, unsafe and ashamed in their education. Pupils might even be punished for using their first language in the classroom or in the schoolyard, which can worsen their sense that they do not belong at the school (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018).

This master thesis will attempt to determine whether this focus on the societal language and aversion of first languages remains present in Dutch primary schools, in Utrecht specifically. As research has proven that this way of managing multilingualism influences multilingual children negatively, it is relevant to discover how multilingualism is handled in practice. This thesis is mainly concerned with societal multilingualism and teacher attitudes with regards to multilingualism. For this reason, the choice has been made to use the terms *multilingualism*, *plurilingualism* and *bilingualism* interchangeably, as the differences are not necessarily relevant for the topic at hand.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Children and Multilingualism

Multilingualism, which can refer to either the language competence of one person, or the language situation in a society, has been around for an extremely long time (Clyne, 2017). However, in the past decade it has become a widely discussed topic, with opinions ranging from highly positive to extremely negative (Cornips, 2019). Moreover, partially because of this division of opinions, multilingualism has been extensively researched. Earlier research frequently came to the conclusion that speaking multiple languages might have a negative influence on the cognitive abilities of a child and on language learning (e.g., Macnamara, as cited in Bialystok, 2008). Nowadays it has become clear that these studies often had methodological flaws (Bialystok, 2008).

Multiple more recent studies have found that multilinguals develop resources which might even help them perform better on metalinguistic tasks and which can possibly slow down certain aspects of cognitive decline, too (Cenoz, 2013). Research establishes that multilingualism contributes positively to the development of children, and particularly to the development of their metalinguistic awareness and cognitive development (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010). Specifically, the results of the studies in this review show that multilingualism can be associated with various cognitive benefits, such as increased attentional control, a better working memory, greater metalinguistic awareness and abstract and symbol representation skills (Adesope et al., 2010).

A specific example of research that found positive results for multilingualism was carried out by Blom, Boerma, Bosma, Cornips and Everaert (2017). In this study, there were three groups of bilingual participants, of which two groups of children spoke Dutch and a regional language of the Netherlands (Frisian and Limburgish, respectively). The final group spoke both Dutch and Polish. The participants did two working memory tasks and two

attention tasks. The bilingual children outperformed their monolingual peers on one of the attention tasks, namely one that was based on selective attention. This meant that their multilingualism had a positive effect on their grasp of selective attention. Antoniou, Grohmann, Kambanaros and Katsos (2016) also found positive effects for bilingualism, in languages that were fairly similar: Cypriot Greek and Standard Modern Greek. When the groups of bilinguals and monolinguals were compared, the bilinguals scored significantly better on two executive functions: working memory and inhibition. This proves that these effects arise even for very similar languages.

A review study by Fox, Corretjer & Web (2019) also found that the performance of bilinguals in multiple different studies in metalinguistic tasks supported earlier second language acquisition findings that suggested that bilingual children develop metalinguistic awareness earlier than monolingual children. This suggests that learning a second language at a young age means that children have more awareness of language, which, in turn, has a positive effect for language learning in general.

Even though research has found substantial evidence for the benefits of being bilingual, a distinction between two forms of multilingualism and their possible (dis)advantages needs to be made. These two distinct forms are additive multilingualism and subtractive multilingualism (Cenoz, 2013). Additive multilingualism occurs when a second or third language is learned, while the first language remains entirely intact. This might happen for instance when a speaker of the majority language acquires a new language in secondary school. Subtractive multilingualism on the other hand occurs when a new language is acquired and (partially) replaces the first language. This can be found when immigrant students are expected to learn the societal language as quickly as possible, without the opportunity to focus on the development of their first language as well (Cenoz, 2013). Subtractive multilingualism might thus be a consequence of the *language immersion teaching*

model, in which both the enormous focus on learning Dutch as quickly as possible and no attention for the first language could have a negative impact on the multilingualism of the child.

2.2. Multilingualism in the Classroom

Most Western European countries teach language according to the aforementioned language immersion teaching model, which means that the target language is taught solely in that language, without any use of students' first languages. This is often done in combination with an emphasis on the importance of the national language for social integration (Pulinx, 2017). The language immersion teaching model focusses mainly on the use of target language (TL) and prevents the first language (L1) from entering the classroom as much as possible. This means that the societal language is seen as the norm and has more value attached to it, at least in the context of the classroom (Sierens & van Aevermaat, 2010).

Many educational systems in Western countries are characterised by great achievement divides between the native population and large immigrant groups. Agirdag, Jordens and Van Houtte (2014) note that, as immigrant populations are growing in most Western European nations, the future of those countries relies upon how well they succeed in supporting citizens with a migration background in education. However, these countries frequently respond to the growth of the immigrant populations by implementing policies that are targeted towards an assimilationist approach. This becomes apparent in the classroom when the pressure is put on linguistic minorities to abandon their first languages at school. These assimilationist policies are generally counterproductive, as they are based on the idea that language maintenance is an obstacle for social integration (Agirdag et al., 2014).

2.2.1. Multilingualism in the Classroom in The Netherlands

The trend in language education in the Netherlands is no different from language teaching in Western Europe as a whole. Language education in the Netherlands is often reliant on the idea that the L1 of a learner is an obstacle for language learning (Agirdag, 2015). Language or educational delays of children with a migration background are often attributed solely to their multilingualism, and the sole use of Dutch is seen as the solution to these delays (Edelman, 2010).

The current language curriculum is heavily monolingually focussed. Even though multilingualism is explicitly mentioned in the national curriculum documents for Dutch, the curriculum is primarily targeted towards pupils with Dutch as a first language (Nederlof & Smit, 2018). First languages other than Dutch are therefore not utilized positively, which means that opportunities for using multilingualism as an advantage are not exploited and the identity of multilingual pupils is ignored (Hajer & Spee, 2017). Moreover, first languages are not only ignored, they are often unwelcome in the classroom. Schools sometimes prohibit speaking the first language on school grounds, even for children with their non-Dutch speaking parents (Nederlof, 2018). Students might be penalised for using their first language in the classroom or in the schoolyard (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018).

Punishing learners for multilingualism can lead to students not feeling at home at school, not feeling safe, and feeling ashamed of their first language (Jones, Barnes & Hunt, 2005). Feeling ashamed of multilingualism correlates negatively with educational achievement (Le Pichon-Vorstman & Baauw, 2017; Agirdag & Kambel, 2018). When the focus is only on learning the societal language (Dutch), students will start to see themselves in terms of their language/educational delay. They might alienate themselves from education, because they feel their identity has no place at their school (Agirdag, 2015).

2.3. Education with the First Language and Multilingualism

A study by Agirdag, Jordens and Van Houtte (2014) has found no evidence to support the idea that speaking a mother tongue at school would impair students' academic achievement. On the contrary, research has proven that welcoming multilingualism in the classroom has an abundance of benefits (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018). For instance, it creates more tolerance for language diversity for both mono- and bilinguals. Moreover, it stimulates curiosity and gaining knowledge about other cultures and it encourages an appreciation for cultural awareness (Okal, 2014; Agirdag & Kambel, 2018). Multilingualism in the classroom principally promotes inclusivity, which benefits both students and teachers (Le Pichon-Vorstman & Baauw, 2017).

Furthermore, research has found a positive relationship between students' awareness of L1-L2 differences and their L2 performance (Ammar, Lightbown & Spada, 2010). In this specific study, a group of ESL learners with French as a first language did a grammaticality judgement task and a scrambled questions task, both concerned with English wh-questions and yes/no questions. Afterwards, several of the participants were interviewed about the tasks and their background knowledge. The researchers found that there was a positive correlation between students' awareness of the differences between French (L1) and English (L2) and their ability to correctly judge and form questions in English.

2.4. Multilingualism in the Netherlands

Multiculturalism in the Netherlands has increased over the years (Extra 2011; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021). The percentage of Dutch people with a migration background rose from 17.5% in 2000, to 19.9% in 2009, to 24.7% in April 2021 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021). Of these people with a migration background, approximately 14% had a non-Western background. The most widely represented origin

countries in the Netherlands currently are Turkey, Morocco and Suriname (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021). There are no data available for the languages that are spoken in the Netherlands, but it can be assumed that a rise in nationalities other than Dutch implies a rise in languages spoken other than Dutch.

It is estimated that more than 2.5 million people in the Netherlands are brought up with another language besides Dutch. The visibility of the multitude of different languages spoken in the Netherlands is enhanced by the digital age. Digitization has made it possible for first languages other than Dutch, such as heritage languages or regional languages, to become more prominent in online writing. If the current developments continue, the Statistics Netherlands (CBS) expects the percentage of Dutch people with a migration background to continue rising (Nederlof & Smit, 2018). This means that the Netherlands will be even more multicultural and multilingual in the future.

Even though the Netherlands has become increasingly more multicultural, multilingualism is generally not regarded as a positive phenomenon that enriches society. Multilingualism is often associated with deficient Dutch, language delays and an unwillingness to adjust to Dutch society (Cornips, 2012). However, public opinion on multilingualism is contradictory. In their report, Nortier, Brasileiro Reis Pereira and Ridder (2014) distinguish between prestigious and plebeian plurilingualism, inspired by the work of Jürgen Jaspers (2009, as cited in Nortier et al., 2014). Prestigious plurilingualism refers to the aforementioned multilingualism that is seen as an asset. It involves the multilingualism among (often highly educated) people who speak two or more European languages, which are mostly learned through formal education. Plebeian plurilingualism, on the other hand, refers to multilingualism that is primarily found in urban migrant communities. The language(s) other than the societal language, in this case Dutch, are informally learned home languages, which are often less valued economically and functionally restricted (Nortier et al., 2014). Certain

languages are thus regarded as an asset, whereas others are seen as a problem. Being fluent in languages such as English, German or French in addition to Dutch is considered a communicative advantage. Yet, non-Western minority languages are not regarded in the same manner. Languages such as Turkish or Arabic are seen as obstacles to integration into the Dutch society (Edelman, 2010).

2.4.1. *Multilingualism in Utrecht*

Utrecht is the fourth biggest city in the Netherlands. Compared to the other three bigger cities, the number of non-native Dutch inhabitants is relatively low, with 32.2% in 2014, which is still considerably higher than the national percentage (Nortier, Brasileiro Reis Pereira & Ridder, 2014). Of the non-native Dutch inhabitants, almost 22% had a non-Western background. This makes Utrecht an interesting city in the Netherlands to look at, as a high percentage of non-Western inhabitants implies a high percentage of non-Western languages spoken. The aforementioned difference between prestigious and plebeian plurilingualism is also at play in Utrecht. The idea that certain types of multilingualism are an obstacle for developing a good command of Dutch is broadly accepted in the city (Nortier et al., 2014). The language environment in primary education in Utrecht is not particularly diverse. Dutch is the sole language of instruction and the focus is chiefly on Dutch language skills. The only other language that is used is English, which is a mandatory subject in the last two years of primary school (Nortier et al., 2014). In 2014, there were nine elementary schools that offered early foreign language education, of which six schools had extra English lessons and the other three offered English, Spanish and/or French. It is very clear that the focus is on European languages and that there is little attention for non-Western languages (Nortier et al., 2014).

Up until 2004, Utrecht took part in a national program called OALT (*Onderwijs in Allochtone Levende Talen; Education in Minority Living Languages*). This program was targeted towards children who spoke a language other than Dutch at home (Nortier, 2009). In

the first four years of primary education, these children would get five hours of education in their home language per week. This program's goal was to facilitate the learning of Dutch and to contribute to cultural enrichment. OALT was cancelled in 2004, mainly because of its supposed waste of money; this cancellation happened essentially due to a lack of prestige (Nortier et al., 2014). Language lessons for minority languages can now almost solely be found outside of education, such as in community centres or mosques. The situation is remarkably different for high-prestige foreign languages, such as English. The number of schools offering lessons in high-prestige European languages is increasing exponentially (Nortier et al., 2014).

2.5. Teacher Attitudes

Not only are national, regional or schoolwide attitudes able to influence multilingualism in children, certain attitudes that teachers might have can influence their students and the school atmosphere as well. These attitudes might affect the manner of teaching, which in turn affects the students' academic achievements and the perceptions of their achievements. Research has shown that when a teacher has low expectations of a pupil, that this can lead to a poorer academic performance by this pupil (Van Aevermaat, 2015). Teachers might have a lack of knowledge concerning multilingualism, which could result in harmful attitudes towards multilingual children (Young, 2017). For instance, van Gelder and Visser (2005) have found that only 21% of primary school teachers in Groningen, a city in the north of the Netherlands, are aware of the importance of the first language for a child. Research in Flanders has found that 78% of teachers think that poor knowledge of Dutch is the most important cause of lower educational achievements of multilingual children. Moreover, only 5% of those teachers would be willing to offer support to the use of mother tongue in education (Van Praag, Sierens, Agirdag, Lambert, Slembrouck, Van Avermaet & Van Houtte, 2016). More

awareness can thus have a positive influence on the open-mindedness of primary education and can contribute to a more anti-discriminatory school system (Young, 2017).

Teachers often have lower expectations of their students with a migration background than of those with a Dutch background. These lower expectations influence the behaviour and thus also the achievements of the students (Van Aevermaat, 2015). A negative school culture about heritage languages, including negative teacher attitudes, causes feeling of rejection and reduces the sense of belonging at school for children who speak a minority language at home or at school (Agirdag et al., 2014).

2.6. Good Practices

There are certain examples of good practices in the Netherlands with regards to the use of the first languages in education. These practices exemplify how multilingualism can be deployed as an asset for children. Firstly, there are a few Language Friendly Schools, which are schools that have developed a language plan that aims at creating an inclusive and language friendly learning environment for all students (*Welcoming All Languages*, n.d.). In these schools, all children have access to a language friendly-learning environment, where they feel accepted and valued for who they are. Furthermore, children are never punished for speaking their mother tongues at school. Moreover, these schools also implement certain exercises and lessons to raise pupils' awareness and respect for different languages. There are currently nine Language Friendly Schools in the Netherlands; in Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Hilversum and Hoofddorp (*Welcoming All Languages*, n.d.). Utrecht does not (yet) have any official Language Friendly Schools.

Another example of a good practice with regards to the use of first languages in the classroom is the *Moedertaal in het onderwijs Nederlands als Tweede Taal* (MoedINT2) project. The MoedINT2 webapp has been developed by Utrecht University linguists, in

cooperation with educational and IT experts. The webapp is mainly aimed at helping language teachers overcome challenges their students face when learning a new language (Moedertaal in NT2, n.d.). Using first languages during language learning may help students to profit from their language knowledge and use their multilingualism positively (Leufkens, 2019). This webapp helps teachers to utilize the first languages of students in their lessons (Moedertaal in NT2, n.d.). Currently the Dutch version of the webapp contains twelve different common first languages, including Syrian Arabic, Turkish and Moroccan Arabic.

The EDINA project (EDucation of International Newly Arrived migrant pupils) is another example of a good way of dealing with multilingualism. The EDINA project has been developed by Emmanuelle le Pichon-Vorstman and Venhar Sariaslan. The goal of the EDINA project is to support municipalities, schools and teachers in the reception and integration of newly arrived migrant students in the school system. This project brings together policy makers, schools and researchers from Belgium (Ghent and Liège), the United Kingdom (Leeds), Spain (Oviedo) and the Netherlands (Rotterdam and Utrecht). The programme includes training modules to develop teachers' skills and (intercultural) competences and to promote active differentiation within the classroom and finally a resource base to optimize the reception, observation and transition processes of newcomers (Edina | over Edina, n.d.)

A final example of a good practice in Utrecht specifically as well is the *VoorleesExpress*. The *VoorleesExpress* is a project which helps connect volunteers to monolingual or multilingual children who suffer from language deficits. In practice, these are mostly children whose first language is a minority language. The volunteer then visits the family on a regular basis and reads to the child(ren), which enhances their linguistic sensitiveness and enlarges their vocabulary (Nortier et al., 2014).

3. Research Questions

The theoretical framework has revealed that even though research has shown that, when utilized well, being multilingual can be a great asset, multilingualism is often still regarded negatively. Nationally, regionally and schoolwide the focus is generally on the societal language, Dutch, and teachers frequently believe non-Western multilingualism to be a disadvantage. This, in turn, influences the language and academic achievements of multilingual pupils.

This master thesis will attempt to determine whether this focus on the societal language and aversion of first languages remains present in Dutch primary schools, in Utrecht specifically. Moreover, this thesis will try to discover what the influence of the policies that might be in place will be on multilingual students. These topics will be discussed by answering the following two main research questions, with three sub-questions:

1. How do primary schools and their teachers in Utrecht manage the use of non-Western first languages in their classrooms and schools?
 - What are the attitudes of teachers with regards to the use of the first language in their classrooms?
 - In what ways do teachers incorporate multilingualism (the first languages of their students) in their daily lessons?
 - What are the school policies on multilingualism and the use of the mother tongues of the students?
2. What might the implications of the teacher attitudes found in the survey be for multilingual children and multilingualism in the classroom given the current literature?

4. Methodology

The research questions will be answered through the methodology explained in this chapter.

The different research questions require different types of methods.

4.1. First Main Question

To answer the first main question a survey for teachers in primary education in Utrecht will be administered. The questions in this survey will be concerned with teachers' attitudes, school policies, multilingualism in the classroom, and the consequences of (handling) multilingualism. See appendix one: Survey Questions for the full survey in Dutch, with translations in English. The questions in this survey are adapted from different studies that have looked into teacher attitudes on multilingualism before (Visser & van Gelder, 2005; Pulinx, 2017). The survey is divided into six parts: general information, knowledge on multilingualism, school policies and language use at school, multilingualism in the lessons, language use at home and finally academic achievement and teacher attitudes. The answers to the questions will be categorized in the results section and analysed in the discussion section, in order to answer the first main question and the three sub-questions.

4.1.1. Participants

The participant group of this study consists of primary education teachers who currently teach in Utrecht, the Netherlands. The primary education teachers were contacted in different manners, one of which being through contact with their respective schools. In total there are approximately 100 primary schools in Utrecht. The survey questions were sent to these schools. Teachers were also contacted through the personal network of the researcher, in order to gain more responses.

In total, 41 different primary school teachers participated in this study. Thirty-seven participants filled in all questions in the survey, but the four unfinished responses were still

usable, as they had all filled in more than half of the questions. It was not required to give the school at which the participant taught, which made it possible to fill in the survey entirely anonymously. The question on schools was filled out by 32 participants, and nine participants preferred not to answer. Because of this, it can be inferred that the participants worked at at least fifteen different schools in Utrecht (see appendix two: Participating Schools), and possibly more. Most teachers who participated in this study had maximum of five years of teaching experience. As can be seen in figure one, at least five participants fall in each different category of experience, which means that the data collected is moderately diverse in this area.

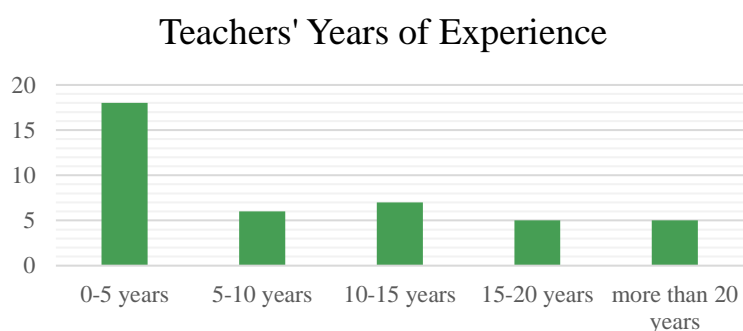


Figure 1: Teachers' Years of Experience

All but one of the teachers had had at least one multilingual student in their class. The distribution of these multilingual children in the teachers' classes can be found in figure two. As this figure shows, approximately half of the teachers who participated in this study had experience with more than 20 multilingual students during their careers (N=20).

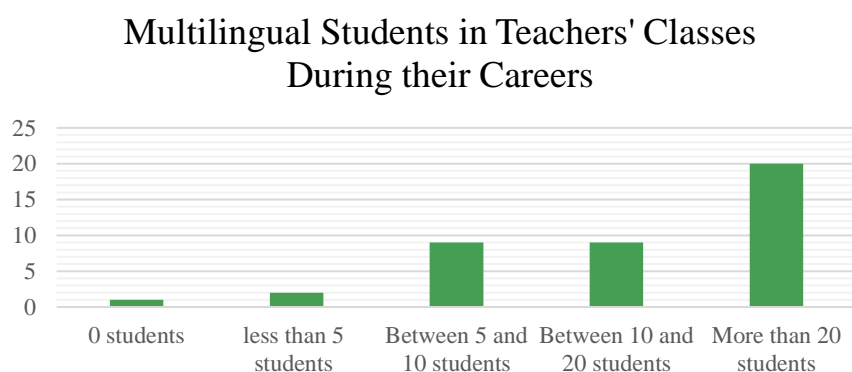


Figure 2: Teachers' experience with multilingual students

The languages spoken by these multilingual students varied greatly. The different languages that were mentioned by the teachers were: Afrikaans, Arabic (with a lot of national varieties, such as Syrian, Moroccan, Egyptian, etc.), Berber, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, English, Ethiopian, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hindustani, Indonesian, Italian, Kurdish, Lithuanian, Malaysian, Mandarin Chinese, Marathi, Nepali, Papiamentu, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Swiss German, Tamil, Tigrinya, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu and Uyghur. Every participant named at least one non-Western language in their answer, with (Syrian/Moroccan) Arabic, Turkish and Berber being the most prominent languages. This makes sense, as among the most widely represented origin countries for newcomers in the Netherlands are Turkey and Morocco (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021).

4.2. Second Main Question

The second main question will be answered by combining the theory discussed in the theoretical framework and the results found in the previously mentioned survey. The survey will include questions on what the teachers think of multilingualism in the classroom and what the consequences of certain school policies are according to them (see appendix one: Survey Questions). The results of the survey will be compared to the consequences of certain teaching strategies and teacher attitudes found in the literature, discussed in the theoretical framework. The different sections of the theoretical framework will be considered and linked to the relevant results found in the survey, in order to answer the question of the possible implications of these attitudes (also according to the teachers themselves) for multilingual children and multilingualism in the classroom.

5. Results

The survey that was administered had six different sections: general information (see 4.1.1. Participants), knowledge on multilingualism, school policies and language use at school, multilingualism in the lessons, language use at home and, finally, academic achievement and teacher attitudes. In this results section, the outcomes of the different themes will be discussed separately, following the order of the survey.

5.1. Knowledge on Multilingualism

Of the 41 participants, only 39% (N=16) had received any training on the topic of multilingualism in the classroom. They received this training mostly through teacher training (N=7) and refresher courses (N=5). On the topic of knowledge on multilingualism, most participants deemed it important to be (more) informed on multilingualism in the classroom. As shown in figure three, 56% of the participants indicated that they found it ‘important’, while 37% indicated it as ‘very important (N=23 and N=15, respectively). No participants thought it to be unimportant or very unimportant to be (more) informed on the topic.

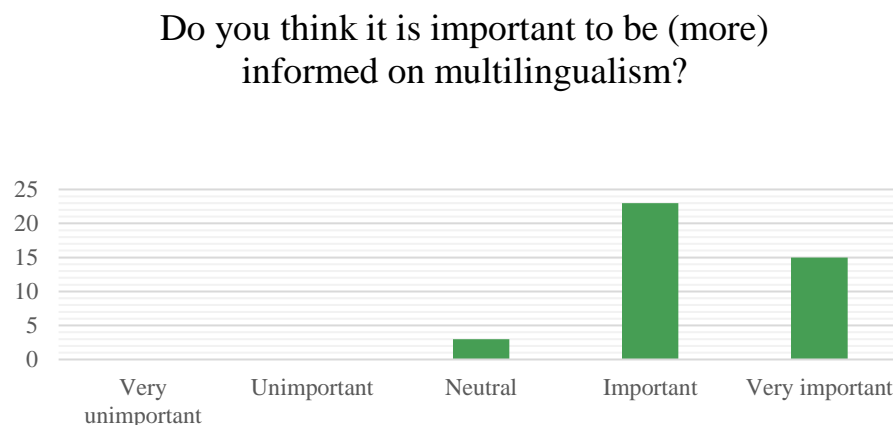


Figure 3: Importance of knowledge on multilingualism

Even though only sixteen participants had received training on multilingualism before, figure four shows that 59% of participants (N=24) felt well equipped to deal with the problems of multilingual children. Forty-one percent of the participants (N=17) indicated that they felt moderately equipped to deal with the problems of multilingual children. Interestingly, there were just as many participants who had never received training and felt well equipped as there were participants who had received training who felt well equipped (N=12 for both). However, there were far more teachers who felt moderately equipped who had never received any training (N=13), than those who had received training before (N=4).

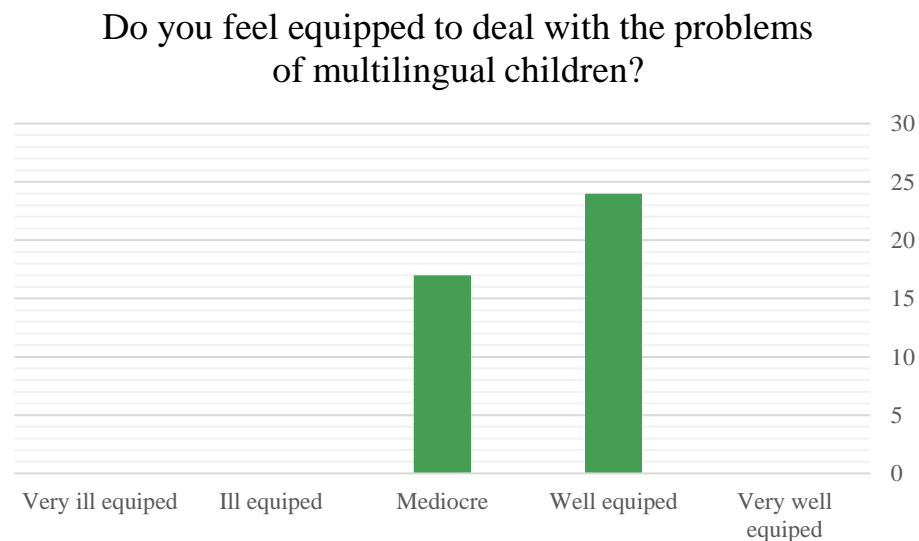


Figure 4: Equipped to deal with the problems of multilingual children

5.2. School Policies and Language Use at School

When asked what the policy on multilingualism currently is at their schools, a multitude of different answers were given by the participants. Two frequent responses were either along the lines of “there is no policy” (N=9), or “I am not aware of the policy” (N=8). Some other participants indicated that the policy that is in place consists of simply only speaking Dutch at school, and that there is virtually no differentiation possible with regards to multilingualism (N=7). Certain responses were more open in tone with regards to the possibility of

multilingualism than others. Some respondents said the policy was simply, ‘this is a Dutch school, so we speak Dutch’. Example one shows a more open outlook, where the only language spoken at school is Dutch and there is not really a specific policy.

- (1) “Geen beleid, iedereen geeft les zoals we dat "normaal" ook zouden doen en differentiëren naar wat het specifieke kind nodig heeft. Meertaligheid is geen taboe en kinderen mogen er over praten/vertellen, maar op school praat iedereen Nederlands.”

There is no policy, everyone teaches like we “normally” would, and differentiate for the children and their needs individually. Multilingualism is not a taboo and children can talk about it, but at school everyone talks Dutch.

Seven other participants expressed that there is always other help available at their respective schools, for example in the form of reading to the children or speech therapy. Three different participants referred to the *Taalschool* (Language school) in Utrecht, where children with first languages other than Dutch can get a head start before going to a regular primary school. Four participants said that the policy at their schools was based on the fact that all children and their languages should feel welcome and get attention (see example two).

- (2) “We geven les in twee talen en bevorderen andere talen, besteden aandacht aan internationalisering en verschillende culturen en talen en moedigen ouders aan de moedertaal thuis te spreken.”

We teach in two languages and promote other languages, we pay attention to internationalisation and different cultures, and we encourage parents to speak their native language(s) at home.

The next question was concerned with the influence of the school’s policy on multilingual children. Twelve participants gave answers that indicated that they thought that

the school's policy had a negative influence on multilingual children, because they believed that these children did not get the necessary amount of attention and that their identity was not appreciated, which could make them feel unwelcome. Moreover, these responses showed that the first languages of the children could disappear to the background and that this also might cause difficulties for these students while learning Dutch. See examples three and four.

(3) “Ondergesneeuwd. Niet gezien voelen, moeilijk schakelen”

(Children might feel that their identity has been) snowed under. (They might) feel invisible, (and it might make it) difficult for them to switch.

(4) “De kinderen zien school denk ik als iets Nederlands, waardoor ze minder het gevoel hebben dat thuis en school verbonden zijn. Ze kunnen hun stukje 'andere' identiteit (bijv. Marokkaans of Turks) niet kwijt op school denk ik.”

I think the children see the school as something Dutch, which makes them feel less like home and school are connected. I think they cannot bring their 'other' identity (Moroccan or Turkish for example) to school.

On the other hand, nine respondents mentioned that they thought their schools' policies influenced multilingual children in a positive manner. They indicated that, as their policy is inclusive, the children feel seen and welcome. See example five.

(5) “Ik denk dat door dit beleid heel veel kinderen welkom zijn op onze school waardoor er in één klas kinderen van allerlei verschillende culturen zitten.

Hierdoor is niemand anders of vreemd. Ik denk dat dit meertalige kinderen een prettig en veilig gevoel geeft.”

I think that a lot of children are welcome at our school because of this policy, which means that there are a lot of different cultures in one class. Due to this, nobody is different or strange. I think this makes multilingual children feel good and safe.

Nine other participants did not know what the influence of their policy would be, did not know what their policy was, or thought the influence irrelevant or insignificantly small. Four teachers mentioned that Dutch really was more important than other languages. Four teachers said that the influence of the policy was very dependable on the individual teachers and how the existing policy would be implemented. Example six illustrates that the influence really depends on the implementation of the policy.

(6) “Ik denk dat kinderen zich bij ons gezien voelen, maar dat we ook kansen laten liggen. Sommige kinderen zijn in twee talen niet volledig vaardig. Maar dat kunnen we slecht controleren.”

I think that children feel seen with us, but that we also miss certain opportunities.

Some children are not fully proficient in two languages. Yet, we cannot really control that.

The question “Do you think children should always speak Dutch at school?” yielded divided opinions: nineteen participants thought children should always speak Dutch at school, while another nineteen participants did not think this. Three participants did not have an opinion. These results are shown in figure five.

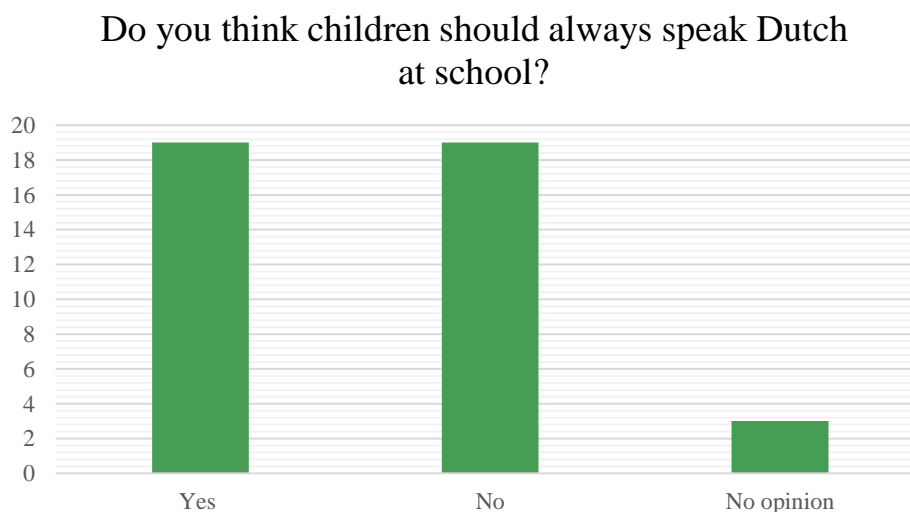


Figure 5: Children speaking Dutch at school

Respondents who said children should always speak Dutch at school often gave mutual understanding as a reason; with everyone speaking Dutch, no one feels left out. They thought it to be important that children will be able to make it on their own in the Dutch society.

Examples of these explanations can be found below.

- (7) “Zodat er een gemeenschappelijke taal is binnen de groep die iedereen verstaat en begrijpt. Zo wordt er niemand buitengesloten.”

(Everyone should speak Dutch) so that there is a common language within the group that everyone understands. That way, no one is left out.

- (8) “Nederlands is in Nederland de voertaal waarin kinderen zichzelf leren redden in de maatschappij. Dat is het doel van de school. Kinderen redzaam maken in de Nederlandse maatschappij.”

Dutch is the official language in the Netherlands, which children need to be able to make it in the society. That is the aim of the school. Making children self-reliant in Dutch society.

Respondents who thought children should not always have to speak Dutch at school mostly discussed a feeling of safety within the school. Moreover, they indicated that using their first languages might help children learn Dutch (faster). The examples below demonstrate these different explanations.

- (9) “Als het ze in het begin niet lukt om de juiste woorden te vinden, kan hun eigen taal helpen.”

If they don't manage to find the right words at first, their native language can help.

- (10) “Als ze net starten op school is het belangrijk dat ze zich veilig voelen. Dan kan het soms best fijn zijn om je even in je moedertaal uit te drukken. Ervaring is wel dat kinderen het Nederlands snel oppakken en meegaan in het groepsproces en Nederlands gaan praten. Jonge kinderen kunnen snel schakelen. Zelf praat ik zoveel mogelijk Nederlands.”

When they just start school, it is important that they feel safe. It can sometimes be good to express yourself in your native language. In my experience, children often pick up Dutch quickly and they participate in the group process and start to speak Dutch. Young children can switch quickly. I myself speak Dutch as much as possible.

The question about whether children should be able to speak their home language at school had similarly divided results. Nineteen respondents thought that children should not be able to speak their home language at school, ten participants explained that children should be able to speak their home language at school and for six participants it depended heavily on the context and the specific situation, which meant they could not give a conclusive answer. The reasons that were given for not allowing children to speak their home languages at school were as follows. Many teachers indicated that they wanted to prevent the formation of groups in their classes, which might happen if certain children speak a language together that other children do not understand. Moreover, they explained that the more Dutch input the students received, the better, especially as many of them do not speak Dutch at home, which makes school their sole input of Dutch. Finally, a large section (N=10 out of nineteen) of the participants thought it was important to have one main language in the classroom, especially because teachers often do not speak (all) the first languages of the children. See the following examples for these explanations in more detail.

- (11) “Nee. Ik vind het belangrijk voor elk kind dat ze de Nederlandse taal goed beheersen. Vooral omdat ik denk dat door gebrekkige kennis van de Nederlandse taal, ze minder kansen hebben om vervolgopleidingen en/of studies te volgen die bij hun niveau passen. School heeft hierin een zeer belangrijke rol. Zeker voor kinderen met een migratieachtergrond.”

No. I think it is important for every child that they have a good command of the Dutch language. Especially because I think that due to a lack of knowledge of the Dutch language, they have fewer opportunities to follow further education and/or studies that suit their level. School plays a very important role in this. Especially for children with a migration background.

- (12) “Nee, zelf kan ik de taal niet verstaan. Ik wil kunnen helpen bij conflicten. Ik wil weten wat er in de klas speelt. Dit gaat het makkelijkste als ik de gesprekken ook kan volgen.”

No, I cannot understand the language myself. I want to be able to help when conflicts arise. I want to know what is going on in the classroom. This is easiest if I can also follow the conversations.

There were also ten participants who indicated that children should be allowed to speak their home language at school. They gave the following reasons for this opinion. Firstly, it can help the students to express themselves, by using their first languages to make themselves understood. Furthermore, pupils can help each other by explaining certain concepts in their first languages. And most importantly, it gives children a feeling of inclusivity and security at school and in the classroom.

- (13) “Ja als het hen helpt om Nederland goed te leren of zaken beter te begrijpen”

Yes, if it helps them to learn Dutch well or to understand certain things better.

(14) “Ja! Inclusief gevoel, biedt veiligheid.”

Yes! A feeling of inclusivity, makes them feel safe.

As can be seen in figure six, most participants thought that speaking a home language at school would influence the learning of Dutch by multilingual children negatively (N=15). Six participants thought speaking a home language at school would not have negative consequences and twelve participants thought this would only be the case in certain situations. According to these participants, the negative influence might depend on the number of times the first language is spoken, the amount of input of Dutch the children receive, the kind of atmosphere it might create in a classroom, at which time (during which subjects) the first languages are spoken, and, finally, a so-called ‘language-feel’ these children might (not) have.

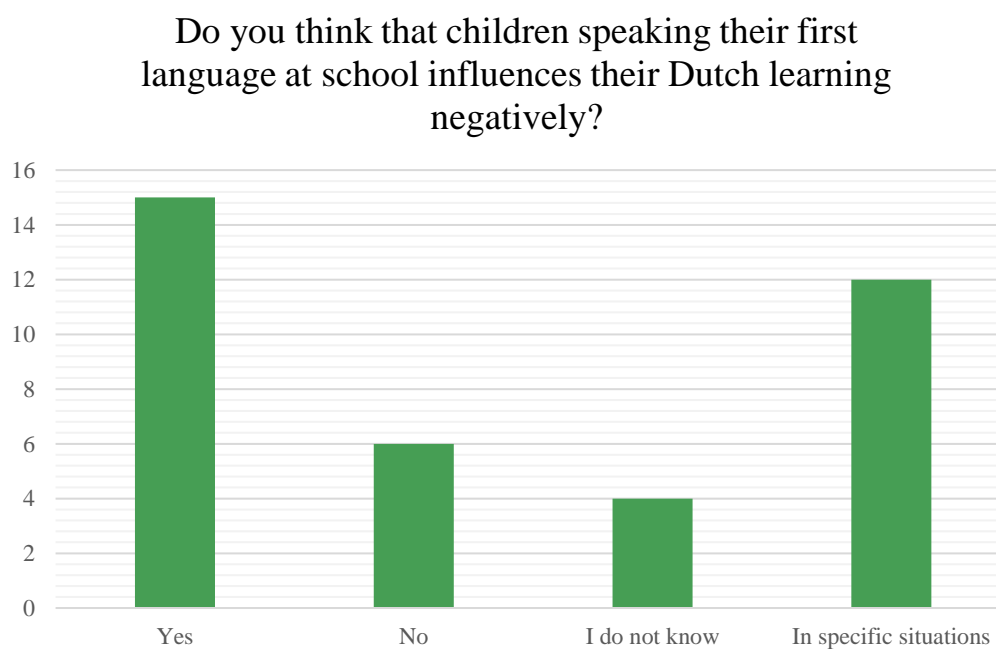


Figure 6: Influence of speaking home languages at school

5.3. Multilingualism in the Lessons

The next theme in the survey was multilingualism during lessons. This part was concerned with if and in what way teachers incorporated languages (and cultures) other than Dutch in their lessons. Figure seven shows the results of these two questions combined. As can be inferred from the figure, 21 participants have incorporated languages other than Dutch and English in their lessons, while sixteen participants have not. Of the respondents who have incorporated those languages, 38% would want to do it more (N=8), and 31% of the respondents who have never done it would like to try it (N=5). Only 14% (N=3) of the participants who had done it before, would not do it again or more. This percentage is substantially higher for the respondents who had not incorporated those languages before, 38% (N=6), which is more than those who would want to try it out of this group.

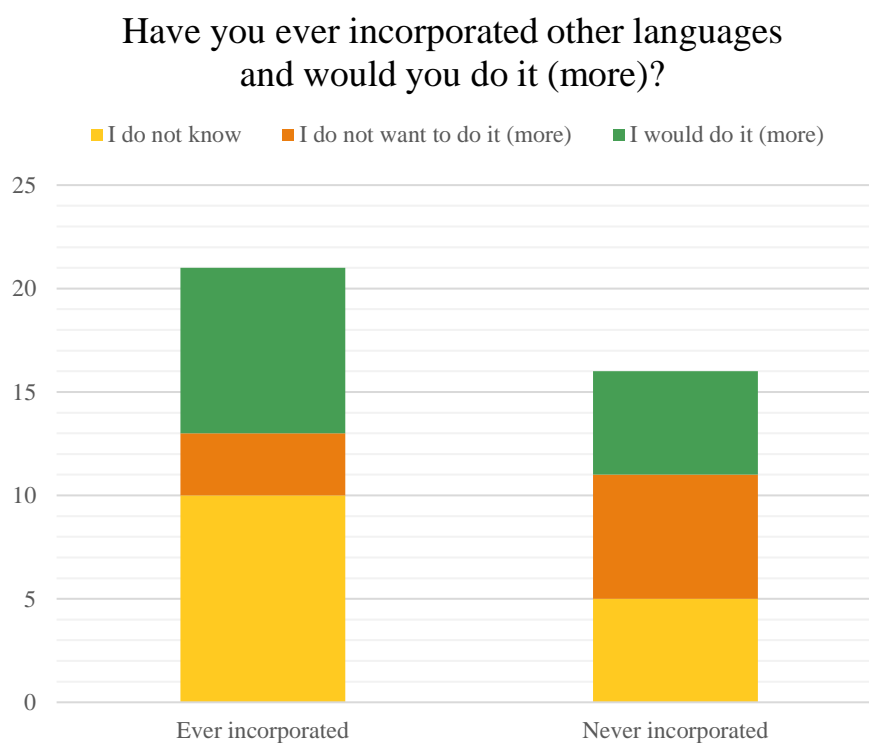


Figure 7: Incorporating first languages

When asked in which ways the teachers had incorporated languages other than Dutch and English in their lessons, they gave a variety of different answers. The answers amounted to the following approaches:

- Different projects and series of lessons on certain countries, languages and/or cultures, e.g., one day dedicated completely to one country, with language, songs, food, customs, etc.
- Letting the multilingual children explain or talk about their own languages, e.g., when a new phenomenon in language is introduced, asking children how this works in their own first languages.
- Paying attention to the “Dag van Talen” *Day of Languages*.
- Singing songs in different languages.
- Posters in the classroom on inclusivity or with words in different languages.

5.4. Language Use at Home

The next section is concerned with which language(s) should be spoken at home according to the teachers, and what the influence of certain language use is on the achievement of Dutch by multilingual children. The first question asked which language(s) multilingual children should speak at home. As shown in figure eight, most participants agreed that the first language(s) of the parents should be spoken at home, either in combination with the societal language Dutch, or on its own. One participant indicated that they thought that only Dutch should be spoken at home.

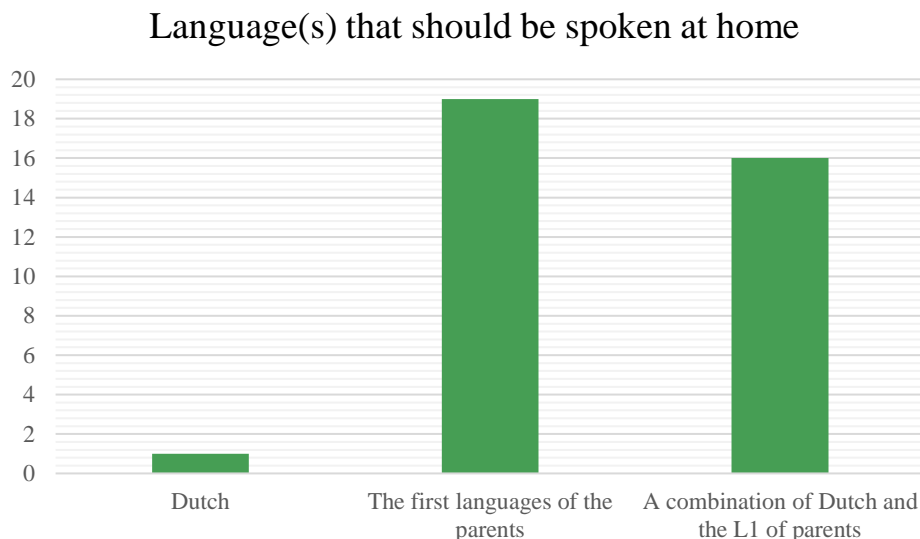


Figure 8: Language(s) that should be spoken at home

When asked whether they ever advised parents, who did not speak Dutch as their native language, to speak Dutch at home with their children, half of the participants (N=20) expressed that they never gave this advice, as can be seen in figure nine. Three of the participants sometimes gave this advice, and one participant gave this advice often. Coincidentally, this was also the participant who thought that parents should only speak Dutch with their children at home. Twenty-seven percent of the participants only advised parents to use Dutch with their children in certain situations, such as when one or both parents spoke Dutch well enough to make it work (N=5). Three respondents explained that they sometimes advised parents to do simple Dutch tasks with their children, such as watching Dutch television or practicing certain easy words. Two participants expressed that they gave this advice to also help the parents to learn Dutch, and one other participant said that they only gave this advice for parents of toddlers, to provide them with enough input.

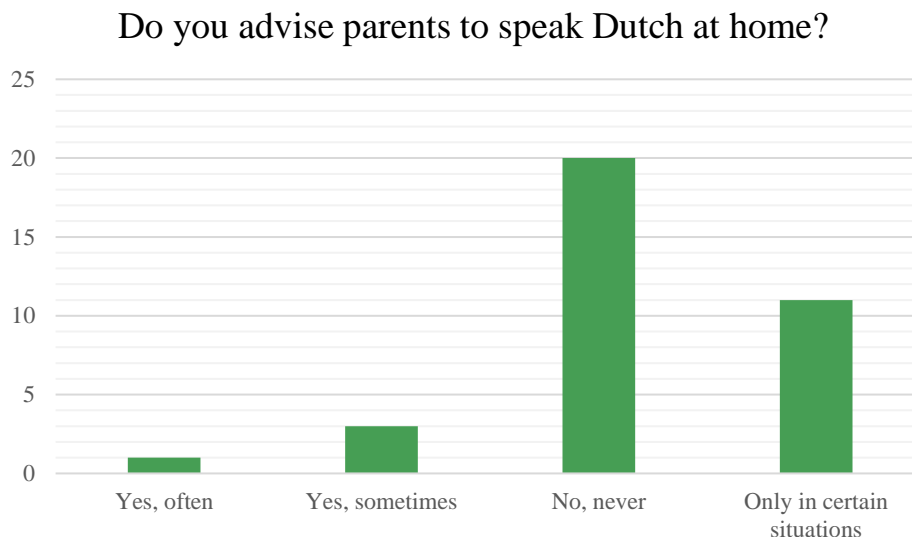


Figure 9: Advising parents to speak Dutch at home

The next question was concerned with the influence of speaking a different language than Dutch at home on learning Dutch. Figure six showed what teachers thought the influence of speaking a heritage language at school would be on learning Dutch, in figure ten the distribution for the assumed consequences of speaking a heritage language at home is shown. No participants indicated that they thought it would have a negative influence. Eleven teachers thought it had a delaying influence, four teachers thought it had no influence and four other teachers thought it had a positive influence. The largest group of participants did not choose one of the fixed answers, but rather gave their own explanations. These explanations could all be categorised as “positive, but...”. The three different kinds of explanations that could be separated are “it depends on the how well the parents speak the home language and whether it is their first language” (N=7), “it depends on the child and the specific situation” (N=5) and finally “there might be a short delay” (N=2). See examples fifteen and sixteen for these explanations.

- (15) “Het heeft een positieve invloed. Het leren van Nederlands gaat beter wanneer er thuis veel/rijk taalaanbod is. Het zou mogelijk iets van vertragende invloed hebben op korte termijn. In grote lijnen is het een verrijking. Uiteindelijk denk ik niet dat een andere thuistaal in de weg staat om goed Nederlands leren.”

It has a positive influence. Learning Dutch works better when there is a lot of rich language input at home. It might have somewhat of a delaying effect short term.

Generally, it is an enrichment. Ultimately, I do not think a different home language stands in the way of learning Dutch well.

- (16) “Ik vind het heel erg aan de situatie liggen. In sommige gevallen krijgen kinderen een heel goed taalgevoel als er meerdere talen worden gesproken, terwijl in andere gevallen dit het taalproces enorm kan vertragen doordat talen door elkaar heen gehaald worden.”

I think it really depends on the situation. In some cases, children get a very good sense of language when several languages are spoken, while in other cases it can slow down the language process enormously because languages are mixed up.

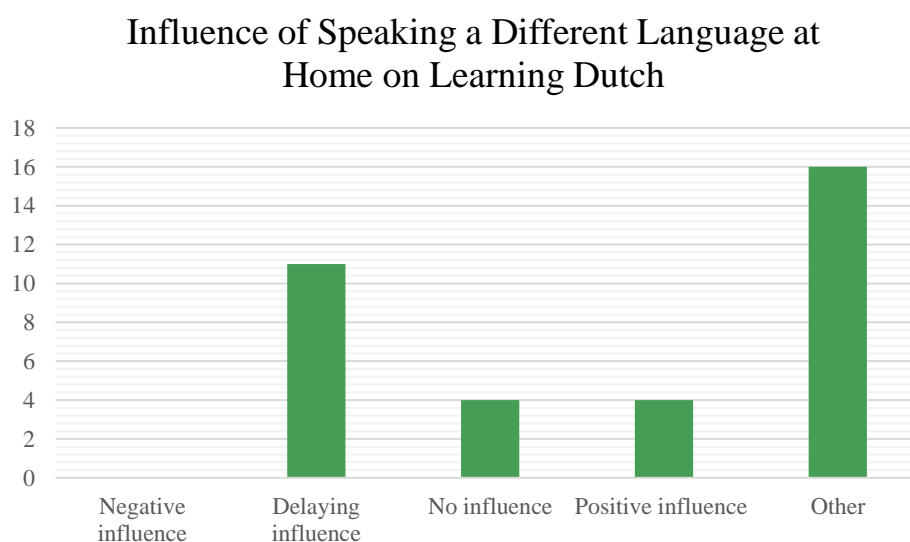


Figure 10: Influence of home language on learning Dutch

5.5. Academic Achievement and Teacher Attitudes

The final section of the survey was concerned with academic achievement of multilingual children and bringing the home language to school. The first question dealt with what the respondents thought the influence of speaking a language other than Dutch would be on academic achievement. Most teachers said that they thought it had or could have positive consequences for the child (N=11), six participants said that it really depended on the child and the situation. Eight participants suggested it could lead to delay or confusion and that it would thus have a negative influence. Four participants thought it would have no influence and seven participants said they did not know what the influence would be.

Figure eleven shows the answers to the next question, which asked whether the school library should also have books or other media sources available in the first languages (other than Dutch or English) of the children. The majority of the respondents (N=17) thought this should be the case. Ten respondents thought this should not be the case. Four participants said yes, but restricted in a certain way and three respondents gave a different answer. The restrictions that were given were as follows:

- It should be restricted to certain days/times when everyone can read together
- The books should be bilingual, so that everyone can read them
- Learning Dutch should be prioritised

One participant thought it would not be realistic, as there should then be too many books in too many different languages.

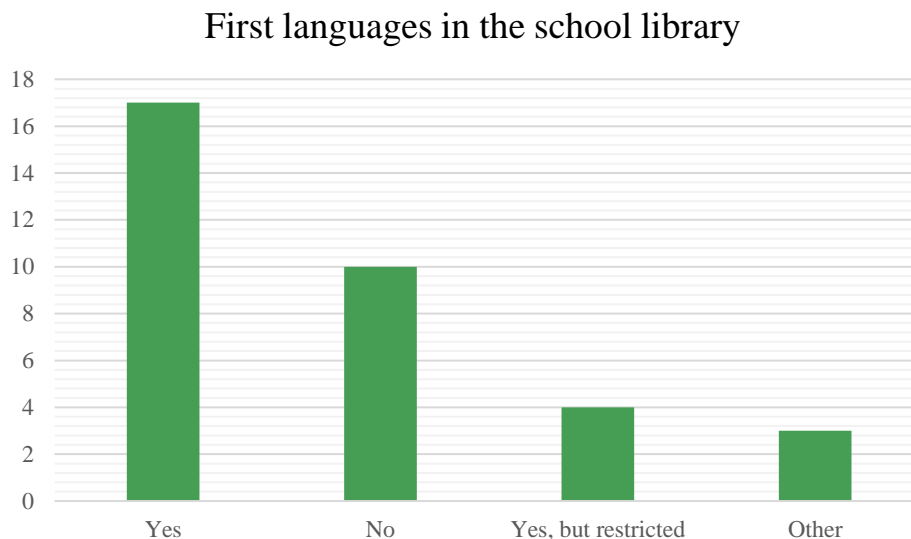


Figure 11: First languages in the school library

The final question was concerned with whether children should get the opportunity to also learn their home language at school. The majority of participants did not think this would be a good or feasible idea, for two main reasons. Thirteen teachers indicated that it would be nice, but that it would not be feasible time-wise. Moreover, because the school time is restricted this would mean that the Dutch input would diminish, which would not be good according to them. Thirteen other participants did not think it a good idea, because they explained that a primary school was not the place to learn a home language in their opinion. Six participants thought that it was a good idea and that a primary school would be the place to learn a home language. See the examples below for the explanations in detail.

(17) “Nee, de school moet al erg veel doen en ik zou de prioriteit op school bij beter Nederlands leren leggen.”

No, the school already has a lot to do and I would prioritize learning better Dutch at school.

- (18) “Ja, vind ik wel. Ik denk dat het de motivatie tot leren vergroot. Kinderen trots kan maken, omdat ze elkaar dan over hun taal kunnen leren (en de leerkrachten ;)) ik denk dat het als verrijking kan worden ingezet.”

Yes, I think so. I think it increases motivation to learn. It can make children proud, because then they can teach each other about their language (and the teachers ;)) I think it can be used as an enrichment.

- (19) “Nee, ik werk op een openbare normale school. Dit is niet de plek als je het mij vraagt.”

No, I work at a normal public school. This is not the place if you ask me.

- (20) “Nee, de basisschool heeft weinig tijd om de basis aan kinderen aan te leren. Een extra taal leren is een keuze van de ouders. Net zoals bijvoorbeeld een pianoles.”

No, primary schools have little time to teach the basics to children. Learning an extra language is a choice of the parents. Just like, for example, a piano lesson.

6. Discussion

In this discussion, the attention will be turned back to the research questions. Firstly, the three sub-questions of the first research question will be discussed individually. Then the first main question will be answered. Subsequently, by retrieving the second research question and referring back to the theoretical framework, the theoretical implications of this thesis will be looked at. Finally, the limitations of this study and the recommendations for further research will be considered.

6.1. Teacher Attitudes on First Languages in the Classroom

As can be inferred from the results of this research, the attitudes of teachers with regards to the use of first languages in the classroom are multi-faceted and divided. Some teachers are aware of the advantages of including first languages in the classroom, while others mainly underscore the negative effects, such as the formation of subgroups and unintelligibility within classes.

When the years of experience of teachers were compared to their ideas on multilingualism, no significant results emerged. The amount of teaching experience the teachers had did not necessarily directly influence their ideas on multilingualism in the classroom in this study. Another form of experience did have an influence: the amount of experience with multilingual children. The more multilingual children a teacher had had in their class, the more nuanced they were. The majority of teachers who had had more than twenty multilingual children in their classroom indicated that they thought speaking a first language at school would only negatively influence the Dutch learning of the children in certain situations, instead of always. Moreover, only teachers who had less than ten multilingual students in their classes during their career indicated that they had no idea what the influence of speaking a first language at school on Dutch learning would be. Therefore,

having practical experience with multilingual children might give teachers a better idea of the workings of multilingualism at school, and its influence on learning Dutch.

As presented in the results section, there was an equal number of teachers that either thought Dutch should always be spoken at school or that thought Dutch should not always have to be spoken at school (N=19 for both). If these results are compared to whether teachers had ever received training on multilingualism, an interesting pattern emerges. Of the teachers who had never received any training, 65% indicated that, in their opinion, children should always speak Dutch at school (N=15). On the other hand, the majority of the teachers that had received training before, 73%, indicated that speaking Dutch at school was not always necessary (N=11). This could lead to the conclusion that not only practical experience, but training on the topic of multilingualism can cause teachers to be more open to the idea of different first languages in their classrooms as well.

6.2. Incorporation of Multilingualism into Lessons

The majority of the participating teachers had incorporated languages other than Dutch and English in their lessons before. They did this in a multitude of ways, e.g., with different projects on certain cultures or countries, or by hanging certain posters in their classrooms. As could be inferred from figure seven, teachers who had incorporated different languages before would do it again and/or more often, more so than teachers who had never incorporated them before. Out of those who had not received any training on the topic, only 38% (N=6) had incorporated languages other than English and Dutch in their lessons. It could be the case that these teachers did not have a good idea of the possibilities, as they had never received any training or information on the subject. So, teachers who had never received training had incorporated these languages less than teachers who had, and would be less likely to start doing so in the future.

All but one of the teachers who had received training before, but did not incorporate first languages, felt well equipped to deal with the multilingualism of the children in their classrooms. On the other hand, teachers who had never received training and did not incorporate first languages predominantly only felt moderately equipped to deal with these problems (70%; N=7). It would seem that those who had received training or information felt more equipped to deal with multilingualism in their classrooms and were able to make their own considerations on the topic of incorporating first languages in the classroom or not, while the teachers who had not received any training did not really have this option, as they had too little information available to them. Furthermore, teachers who had incorporated languages other than English and Dutch were relatively more open to the idea of having a more varied school library, with materials in the home languages of children. This again ties in with the idea that practical experience and knowledge on the topic could also ensure more openness to idea of first languages at school.

6.3. School Policies on Multilingualism

This study found that the language policy at the schools with regards to multilingualism is often either unclear to the teachers or absent. This means that the task of handling multilingual children comes down to the teachers themselves, as there is no (clear) schoolwide policy. The kind of policy and the knowledge of this policy, seemed to be connected to whether teachers had training on the subject before. The majority of teachers who did not know what the policy was, worked at a school with no policy, or who worked at schools where there was a policy in place that meant children should only speak Dutch had never had any training on the subject before (N=17, versus seven participants who had received training before). Vice versa, at schools where the focus was on all languages being welcome, the majority of teachers had received training on the topic before (N=3, out of the possible four).

As shown in the results section, there were a multitude of different school policies in place, some with a major focus on Dutch, others with a focus on making all languages feel welcome. Often, teachers were not aware of the policy at their schools, or there were no policies in place. When these results are compared with how equipped the teachers felt to deal with the problems of multilingual children, an interesting pattern emerges. The teachers who knew that there was no policy often felt well-equipped, whereas the teachers who did not know if there was a policy and if so, what it entailed, more often felt moderately equipped (N=5 out of 8). Moreover, at schools where the policy was to only speak Dutch, the majority of teachers only felt moderately equipped to deal with the problems of multilingual children (N=6 out of 9). On the other hand, on schools where the policy consisted of making all languages feel welcome, all teachers felt well-equipped to deal with these problems. This might suggest that experience, again, plays a major role. At schools where the policy in place entails that all languages are welcome, teachers probably have more experience with multilingual children, and thus feel better equipped to deal with their problems. For the 'Dutch-only' schools, this might work the other way around.

6.4. The Management of First Languages by Teachers and Schools

The sub-questions were all discussed in order to attempt to answer the first main question: 'how do primary schools and their teachers in Utrecht manage the use of non-Western first languages in their classrooms and schools?'. The finding that was most prevalent in this regard was that it really differed between schools and teachers. All teachers had different ideas about first languages and first language use at school, differing from a very open view towards all languages to a more Dutch-centric view.

Furthermore, two main factors seemed to influence teachers' views on first language use: the amount of training/information and the amount of (practical) experience. Both these factors ensured more awareness and thus also more openness towards the potential use of first

languages in the classroom. This is in line with earlier research, which suggests that raising language awareness within primary education has a positive effect on the open-mindedness of education (Young, 2017). Of course, these results are not necessarily significant due to the research design, but it is interesting that this pattern kept returning. It seems that knowing more about multilingual children because of experience would result in a more open outlook on the use of first languages other than Dutch. This finding is in line with the literature as multiple studies have found that a lack of knowledge on multilingualism could lead to more negative attitudes towards multilingual children and multilingualism in general (van Gelder & Visser, 2005; Van Praag et al., 2016; Young, 2017).

Another result found was that the majority of the dealing with problems of multilingual children comes down to the teachers themselves. Often, there is no schoolwide policy, or it is not widely known, which means that teachers have to make their own plans. Even teachers who have never had any training or information on the subject regularly have to devise their own solutions. This suggests that it might be good to have more schoolwide policies or training days on the topic. Moreover, multiple teachers indicated that they were already very busy and time-constricted, so it is hard for them to include this topic as well, which is another argument to arrange the issue schoolwide, instead of putting the work on the individual teachers.

6.5. Theoretical implications

To answer the second research question: ‘What might the implications of the teacher attitudes found in the survey be for multilingual children and multilingualism in the classroom given the current literature?’ this section will refer back to the theoretical framework. The same chapters will be employed: children and multilingualism, multilingualism in the classroom, education with the first language and multilingualism, multilingualism in the Netherlands, teacher attitudes and good practices. The information in these chapters of the theoretical

framework will be linked to the results of this research. Finally, a concluding answer to the second main question will be given.

6.5.1. Children and Multilingualism

The ideas on the influence of multilingualism on children were found to be quite contradictory. While all teachers but one agreed on the fact that children of non-native speakers of Dutch should be able to speak the first language(s) of their parents at home, most teachers did not think this might have a positive influence on learning Dutch (see figure ten). Research has found that multilingualism contributes positively to the development of children (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson & Ungerleider, 2010). Fox, Corretjer & Webb (2019) found results in multiple studies that imply that being bilingual at a young age means that children have better metalinguistic awareness, which can have positive consequences for language learning in general. This would be considered additive multilingualism (Cenoz, 2013). It seems that the teachers were not always aware of the difference between the subtractive and additive forms of multilingualism as mentioned in the theoretical framework.

Even though most teachers did not consider speaking a different language at home an advantage for learning Dutch, the majority of the teachers did suggest that it might be an advantage with regards to academic achievement (N=17). This is a positive finding for multilingual children, as better teacher attitudes for multilingual children regarding academic achievement might actually lead to better academic achievement (Van Aevermaat, 2015). However, in multiple parts of the survey a pattern emerges. The percentages of teachers who do not know the influence of being multilingual, who have not had any training on the subject, and do not feel entirely equipped to deal with problems of multilingual children is quite high. This lack of knowledge might lead to less awareness, which in turn might lead to less openness to first languages (Young, 2017). It is thus vital that more training and information becomes available for teachers. This training must not require too much time and

effort, as first languages and training on the subject are also often avoided or missed out of practicality.

6.5.2. Multilingualism in the Classroom

In the Netherlands, a language immersion model is often in place at schools (Pulinx, 2017). This means that the societal language is the only language spoken in class and at school. The results of this survey also showed some of the teachers and schools used this model in their classrooms. About half of the teachers in the survey indicated that they thought children should only speak Dutch at school. However, only seven teachers stated that their schools handled a ‘Dutch-only’ policy. Additionally, there are also sixteen participants who either did not know the policy or who knew that there was no policy in place. So, in total approximately half of the teachers taught at schools with either a language immersion model in place, or no model in place, which almost always meant that the teachers themselves implemented a language immersion model.

Often, in a language immersion environment, the importance of the societal language is emphasized for social integration (Pulinx, 2017). There were multiple teachers who indicated that they indeed thought that learning Dutch was (more) important, as this would increase children’s professional and educational chances. This makes sense, as children do need Dutch to become a functional member of Dutch society. However, this idea becomes problematic when the societal language is the only norm and thus has more value than home languages (Sierens & van Aevermaat, 2010). There was a divide between teachers who indicated that Dutch was important, but that children should not have to leave their other identity behind, and teachers who indicated that home languages really have no place at school, and that they should be something to leave at home.

This attitude might lead to policies in which the first language is completely prevented from entering the school and the classroom. About half of the teachers (N=19) thought home languages should not be spoken at school at all, while the other half thought it was always okay, or allowed in certain circumstances. So, these policies that completely keep out first languages are not omnipresent (anymore), but they are certainly not absent. The reasons that were given for preventing first languages from being spoken in class were the importance of Dutch input for the future of the children and the prevention of group formation and exclusion through having one main language in class. These ‘policies’ are thus not implanted out of ill will, but more out of practicality, good intentions, ignorance or a combination of the three.

Another reason for keeping the first languages out of the classroom might be that teachers feel that speaking a first language is an obstacle for the learning of Dutch. Fortunately, no teachers thought that speaking a different language at home would have a direct negative influence on Dutch learning. Most teachers indicated that the influence of speaking a different language than Dutch at home on learning Dutch might depend on the student and the situation. So, the reason for not allowing first languages into the classroom does not seem to stem from the idea of seeing first languages as an obstacle, or seeing first languages as the reason for educational delays. However, these policies might still influence multilingual students negatively, as they might feel unwelcome, unsafe and even ashamed in their education. They might get the idea that they and/or their identity does not belong at the school (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018).

6.5.3. Education with the First Language and Multilingualism

On the topic of education with first languages divided results were found in this study, some more positive, others more worrying. The majority of teachers had incorporated languages other than Dutch and English into their lessons before (N=21), and the teachers who had done it were also more likely to do so again. Here there was an argument to make for more training,

as the teachers who had received no training before, had incorporated other languages far less than those who had received training, and were thus also less likely to start doing so.

Incorporating other languages of course is not the same as allowing the students to speak their own first languages at school. Most teachers did not think children should be allowed to speak their home language at school (N=19), and ten teachers thought they should be allowed to do so. Furthermore, a great number of the teachers were convinced that speaking a home language at school influenced Dutch learning negatively (N=15), while only six teachers thought it had no influence. So, first languages are incorporated, and the more training teachers receive, the more likely they are to do so. However, the ideas of speaking first languages at school still had a very negative connotation for most teachers.

This is unfortunate, as welcoming multilingualism into the classroom can have an abundance of benefits, such as a tolerance for language diversity, stimulating curiosity, improving the knowledge of other cultures and promoting inclusivity (Agirdag & Kambel, 2018; Le Pichon-Vorstman & Baauw, 2017). Moreover, awareness of differences between the first and second language can improve second language performance (Ammar, Lightbown & Spada, 2010). However, the results of this study on this topic are in line with research that shows that opportunities for multilingualism as an advantage are not exploited often (Hajer & Spee, 2017).

6.5.4. Multilingualism in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has become more multicultural and thus multilingual over the years (Extra, 2011; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021), which also became clear in this research, as all teachers except for one had had multilingual children in their classes. Half of the teachers had even had more than twenty multilingual children in their class during their careers. An idea that remains prevalent, even though the Netherlands has gotten more multicultural over

the years, is that of plebeian versus prestigious multilingualism (Nortier et al., 2014). This division between certain languages being seen as an asset and others being seen as a hurdle for development and language learning also emerged in certain teachers' answers. Multiple teachers indicated that their schools had lesson plans or policies available for Dutch/English bilinguals, but that heritage languages were not welcome or supported at their schools (N=7).

Even though the languages might not be entirely banned from the school grounds, there is still no support for learning heritage languages at primary schools. This might have to do with the lack of prestige for programs such as OALT (Nortier et al., 2014). These negative attitudes towards or lack of knowledge about non-Western multilingualism might cause children to be unable to fully develop their first language. This, in turn, could lead to one of their languages being underdeveloped, which would mean that they cannot take advantage of the benefits of being bi- or multilingual.

6.5.5. Teacher Attitudes

The results on teachers' attitudes were very diverse, not always concrete and sometimes even contradicting. Teachers' attitudes are able to influence students and the school's atmosphere. Research has shown that when a teacher has low expectations of a pupil, that this can lead to a poorer academic performance by this pupil (Van Aevermaat, 2015). Some of the teachers' attitudes were very negative towards heritage languages, e.g., the majority of teachers thought that speaking a home language at school would influence Dutch learning negatively (N=15; twelve more teachers indicated that it could have negative consequences in certain situations). A negative school culture about heritage languages, including negative teacher attitudes, causes feeling of rejection and reduces the sense of belonging at school for children who speak a minority language at home or at school (Agirdag et al., 2014). These harmful attitudes might not come from a place of ill will, teachers might have a lack of knowledge concerning multilingualism, which could result in harmful attitudes towards multilingual children. This

could be worrying as the results from this research showed that a substantial number of teachers had never received any training or information on the topic of multilingualism. This might lead to unawareness, which, as mentioned before, might have a negative influence on the students.

However, not all attitudes were negative. For instance, more than 60% of the teachers thinks that there should be multilingual material available in the school library. The fact that the results in this section are often contradictory could be related to the fact that there often is a lack of knowledge and/or a schoolwide policy. This means that teachers cannot rely on general knowledge available to them, but that they need to devise their own ideas and solutions for each question or problem individually. This might not have positive consequences for the multilingual children in their classes, as they cannot always know where they stand and their multilingualism is generally not utilised positively.

6.5.6. Good Practices

Training and information during teacher training and refresher courses are examples that might help raise more awareness for teachers about multilingualism. The good practices mentioned in the theoretical framework could do the same and also provide help for teachers who would like to learn more and/or utilise the benefits of multilingualism (more). Some teachers mentioned a few good practices, such as the VoorleesExpress and de Taalschool. It would be good to make these more widely available, so that teachers easily know where they can turn. This could possibly happen through the school, so that teachers have enough options to consult via their school environment.

6.5.7. Conclusion Theoretical Implications

From comparing the literature to the results found in this research, some interesting patterns emerged. Firstly, the practice is more divided and a little less bleak than it sometimes seems

in the literature consulted. The language immersion model is for instance still in place in approximately half of the schools of the teachers interviewed, but the ‘only Dutch’ view has diminished somewhat in certain aspects. More than 60% of the teachers thinks that there should be multilingual material available in the school library for instance.

However, there are two weaker points in the current system. Firstly, for a great number of teachers quite some aspects of the problems and solutions of multilingualism in children are unknown. This is regrettable, as this incomprehension does not help to provide more awareness, which would lead to more openness towards first languages in the classroom. The negative attitudes that teachers might have do not come from ill will, but rather from this ignorance or from good intentions, or a combination of both.

Secondly, the lack of a concrete schoolwide policies on multilingualism often means that this comes down to the individual teachers. This might not turn out positive for the students, as teachers are not always informed on the topic, due to lack of training or experience.

6.6. Limitations and Further Research

Even though some interesting results were found in this research, it was very limited. Some limitations might have influenced the reliability of the results. Firstly, as no statistical analysis was performed, there is no certainty that these results are significant. Furthermore, the sample size, with 41 teachers, was quite small to gain any significant or generalizable results.

This research was done via an online survey with both open and closed questions. This method was mostly chosen because of time-constrictions. Another method might have been better. Interviews could have been more in-depth, as the interviewer would be able to keep asking questions when something is unclear, which is impossible for an online survey.

Another method that might have been (more) useful would have been classroom observations. Unfortunately, this was not possible within the timeframe and with the current Covid19-restrictions. It would be very interesting to not only hear what teachers thought, but to also see what they actually did. For further research, this could be a good addition to the current research.

Finally, this research was restricted to one party in the school system, the teachers. An interesting addition would have been to also interview school management, or even students on their experiences and ideas. This would have made for a good comparison.

7. Conclusion

This research aimed at answering two questions: How do primary schools and their teachers in Utrecht manage the use of non-Western first languages in their classrooms and schools and what might the implications of the teacher attitudes found in the survey be for multilingual

children and multilingualism in the classroom given the current literature? The answers to these questions differed greatly between different schools and teachers. Certain patterns were found: there seems to be a positive influence of getting training on the topic of multilingualism and having practical experience with multilingual children, with regards to the openness of the teachers. This finding was in line with the literature and is something that can be built upon. More awareness of multilingualism in the classroom ensures more openness, which is positive for children, as positive attitudes of schools and teachers will influence their academic achievements and connection to the school, to learning and to their own identities positively. This is why more awareness of multilingualism, with for example training, or any of the good practices mentioned, should be strived for in primary schools in Utrecht.

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Appendix 1: Survey Questions

These questions will be asked in Dutch, as they will be targeted towards Dutch primary school teachers. Below are the questions in English. They are adapted from different studies that have looked into teacher attitudes on multilingualism before (Visser & van Gelder, 2005; Pulinx, 2017).

General information

1. Hoeveel jaar werkt u al in het basisonderwijs?

For how long have you been working in primary education?

- a. 0-5 jaar

0-5 years

- b. 5-10 jaar

5-10 years

- c. 10-15 jaar

10-15 years

- d. 15-20 jaar

15-20 years

- e. Meer dan 20 jaar

More than 20 years

2. Op welke school in Utrecht geeft u op dit moment les? (Niet verplicht)

At which school in Utrecht do you currently teach? (Not required)

3. Heeft u nu of eerder meertalige kinderen in de klas gehad?

Have you taught multilingual children?

4. Zo ja, hoeveel meertalige kinderen heeft u ongeveer in uw loopbaan lesgegeven?

If yes, how many multilingual children have you taught?

- a. In totaal minder dan 5 kinderen

Less than five children in total

- b. In totaal tussen de 5 en 10 kinderen

In total, between five and ten children

- c. Tussen de 10 en 20 kinderen

Between 10 and 20 children

- d. Meer dan 20 kinderen

More than 20 children

5. Welke nationaliteiten hadden deze kinderen, en welke talen spraken ze?
Which nationalities did these children have and which languages did these children speak?

Knowledge on multilingualism

6. Heeft u ooit training gehad of bent u ooit geïnformeerd over meertaligheid in de les?
Have you ever received information and/or training on multilingualism in the classroom?
- a. Ja
Yes
 - b. Nee
No
7. Zo ja, op welke manier(en) bent u geïnformeerd over meertaligheid in de les?
If yes, where have you received the training or information on multilingualism in the classroom?
- a. De lerarenopleiding
Teacher training
 - b. Nascholingscursussen
Refresher courses
 - c. Aangeboden literatuur over het onderwerp
Literature offered on the topic
 - d. Zelfstudie
Self study
 - e. Anders, namelijk:
Other, namely:
8. In hoeverre vindt u het van belang om (meer) geïnformeerd te worden over meertaligheid?
To what extent do you think it is important to be (more) informed on multilingualism?
- a. Van groot belang
Very important
 - b. Van belang
Important
 - c. Ik ben neutral

Neutral

- d. Niet echt van belang

Unimportant

- e. Helemaal niet van belang

Very unimportant

9. Voelt u zich voldoende toegerust om meertalige kinderen in uw klas te hebben?

Do you feel equipped to deal with the problems of multilingual children?

- a. Zeer goed

Very well equipped

- b. Goed

Well equipped

- c. Matig

Mediocre

- d. Slecht

Ill equipped

- e. Zeer slecht

Very ill equipped

School policies and language use at school

10. Wat is het beleid van de school waarop u lesgeeft omtrent meertaligheid?

What is your school's policy regarding multilingualism?

11. Wat voor invloed denkt u dat dit beleid heeft op meertalige kinderen op uw school?

What are the consequences of this policy for multilingual children in your opinion?

12. Vindt u dat kinderen altijd Nederlands moeten praten op school?

Do you think children should always speak Dutch at school?

- a. Ja

Yes

- b. Nee

No

13. Kunt u uitleggen waarom u dat vindt?

Can you elaborate?

14. Vindt u dat kinderen met een migratieachtergrond hun thuistaal op school mogen spreken? Waarom wel of niet?

Do you think non-Dutch speaking pupils should be allowed to speak their home language at school? Why/Why not?

15. Denkt u dat als kinderen hun eerste taal (niet Nederlands) op school spreken, dat dit dan een negatieve invloed heeft op het leren van Nederlands van die kinderen?

Do you think that children speaking their first language at school influences their Dutch learning negatively?

- a. Ja
Yes
- b. Nee
No
- c. In specifieke situaties, namelijk:
In specific situations, namely:
- d. Weet ik niet
I don't know

16. Waarom denkt u dat?

Why do you think that?

Multilingualism in the lessons

17. Heeft u ooit andere talen (en culturen) dan het Nederlands of het Engels opgenomen in uw lessen?

Have you ever incorporated languages (and cultures) other than Dutch and English in your lessons?

- a. Ja
Yes
- b. Nee
No

18. Op welke manier heeft u deze talen opgenomen in uw lessen?

If yes, please elaborate how you incorporated them.

19. Zou u (meer dan nu) andere talen willen opnemen in uw lessen als u daar de juiste training en/of informatie voor zou krijgen?

Would you be willing to start doing this (more), if given the right training/information?

- a. Ja

Yes

- b. Nee

No

- c. Weet ik niet

I don't know

Language use at home

20. Welke taal zouden kinderen volgens u thuis moeten praten?

What language do you think children should speak at home with their parents?

- a. Nederlands

Dutch

- b. De taal/talen die hun ouders als eerste taal spreken

The first language(s) of their parents

- c. Een combinatie van het Nederlands en de eerste taal/talen van hun ouders

A combination of Dutch and their parents' first language(s)

21. Geeft u of heeft u wel eens het advies gegeven aan anderstalige ouders om met hun kinderen Nederlands te spreken thuis?

Do you ever advise or have you ever advised parents who are non-native speakers of Dutch to speak Dutch at home with their children?

- a. Ja, vaak

Yes, often

- b. Ja, soms

Yes, sometimes

- c. Ik heb het in het verleden gedaan, maar nu niet meer

I have done so in the past, but not anymore

- d. Alleen in specifieke situaties, namelijk:

Only in specific situations, namely:

- e. Nee, nooit

No, never

22. Wat denkt u dat de invloed van het thuis spreken van een andere taal dan het Nederlands is op het leren van het Nederlands van uw leerlingen?

How do you think that children speaking their first language at home influences their Dutch learning?

- a. Het heeft een negatieve invloed; hierdoor lukt het niet volledig om goed Nederlands te leren
It has a negative influence; it makes it impossible to fully learn Dutch well
- b. Het heeft een vertragende invloed; hierdoor duurt het langer voordat de leerling het Nederlands goed leert
It has a delaying influence; it takes longer for a child to learn Dutch well
- c. Het heeft geen invloed op elkaar
It does not influence each other
- d. Het heeft een positieve invloed; het leren van het Nederlands gaat beter wanneer er thuis een andere taal wordt gesproken
It has a positive influence; learning Dutch will go better when another language is spoken at home
- e. Anders, namelijk:
Other, namely:

Academic achievement and teacher attitudes

23. Wat denkt u dat de gevolgen van het spreken van een andere taal zijn op de academische prestaties van meertalige kinderen?
What do you think the consequences of speaking a different language are on the academic achievements of multilingual children?
24. Vindt u dat de schoolbibliotheek (online en offline) ook boeken of andere mediabronnen in andere eerste talen dan Nederlands en Engels moet kunnen aanbieden?
Do you think the school library (online and offline) should also include books or other media sources in different first languages, other than Dutch and English?
- a. Ja
Yes
 - b. Nee
No
 - c. Ja, maar wel beperkt, op deze manier:
Yes, but restricted in this way:
 - d. Anders, namelijk:
Other, namely:

25. Vindt u dat anderstalige leerlingen de kans moeten krijgen om op school ook hun eigen thuistaal te leren? Waarom wel of niet?

Do you think non-Dutch speaking pupils should be offered the opportunity to learn their home language at school? Why/Why not?

Appendix two: Primary Schools in Utrecht

This is a list of the different primary schools that the participating teachers taught at. Not all teachers gave the names of their primary schools, so more different schools could also be involved. Note that OBS stands for openbare basisschool (*public primary school*).

Public primary schools

- Dr. Bosschool (6 teachers)
- OBS Waterrijk (5 teachers)
- OBS de Klim (2 teachers)
- OBS Het Zand (2 teachers)
- Kohnstammschool (2 teachers)
- Anne Frankschool
- OBS Vleuterweide

Christian schools (either Catholic or Protestant)

- St. Dominicusschool (4 teachers)
- Hof ter Weide
- De Regenboog
- Stepping Stones (This school is bilingual Dutch/English)
- Gertrudisschool

Special education schools

- Luc Stevensschool (4 teachers)

Montessori schools

- Montessorischool Buiten Wittevrouwen