Teachers' beliefs about multilingual students and their language choice: Exploring the effect of language hierarchies

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Abstract This study investigated Dutch primary school teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism and whether their beliefs are influenced by the social prestige of the languages involved. Using an online questionnaire, we investigated to what extent teachers are concerned about Dutch language development of child L2 learners, what they would advise parents, how they respond to the use of home languages in the classroom and the schoolyard, and whether teachers' responses are influenced by language hierarchies (i.e., are there any differences between attitudes towards a French child called Emile speaking French, or a Pakistani child called Mohamed speaking Urdu?). Our results showed great individual variation in teachers' attitudes, but no effects of language status. Moreover, teachers with more multilingual students in their class and teachers who had received training on multilingualism were more likely to accept L1 use at school, while the proportion of multilingual students was negatively related to teachers' concerns about L2 development.

1 Introduction

Historical developments, such as the Dutch colonial past, the arrival of labor migrants from the 1960s onwards, the growing number of refugees and displaced persons in the 21st century, and migration due to globalization, have ensured that the Netherlands is home to a rich variety of cultures and languages (van Meeteren et al., 2013). While bilingual educational curricula were seen as a valid option during the 1980s and 1990s, political and economic considerations subsequently shifted the focus to a monolingual language ideology. As language policy was translated into educational policy, monolingualism became the norm in Dutch education, at the macro level (in national and regional policy), at the meso level (in school policy) and at the micro level (in the classroom). Aiming to improve the Dutch language skills of multilingual pupils and thereby their school success and subsequent integration into the labor market and society, during the last decades minority languages came to be banned from schools (Aarts et al., 2004; Bjornson, 2007; Kuiken & van der Linden, 2013).

At the same time, educators and policymakers typically agree on the importance of learning and using different languages. The European Union considers multilingualism to be a 'key competence' and it urges all citizens to learn at least two other European languages in addition to their native language (European Commission, 2006). Yet, this positive perspective on multilingualism does not appear to extend to all languages. Whereas certain prestigious (mostly European) languages are seen as an enrichment, the linguistic diversity that minority students introduce into the classroom is frequently perceived as a hurdle to be overcome (Putjata & Koster, 2021; Young, 2014). This implies a hierarchy of prestige, with some languages having a higher status than others (Kahane, 1986). Stereotypes about the socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of groups that speak a minority language may feed such hierarchies (Pulinx et al., 2017).

Despite abundant evidence for the benefits of taking a multilingual approach in education for children's learning outcomes as well as their general well-being (e.g., Collier & Thomas, 2004; Duarte, 2020; García & Wei, 2015), many teachers still adhere to a monolingual standard when teaching children who speak a minority language (Pulinx et al., 2017; Putjata & Koster, 2021). Apparently, it is not self-evident that scholarly insights end up where it counts: with teachers who propagate their language attitudes in interactions with multilingual pupils.

This study therefore focuses on the question of how Dutch primary school teachers deal with multilingualism at school and whether they distinguish between high-prestige and low-prestige languages. Using a scenario in which we manipulated the native language, name and country of origin of a child, we investigated whether teachers would be concerned about the Dutch language development of the pupil in question, what they would advise their parents to support language development, and how they would respond to the pupil using their home language in the classroom and in the schoolyard. Before turning to our study, we will first discuss previous research on teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism (section 1.1) and on the role of language hierarchies (section 1.2).

1.1 Teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism

A large number of studies conducted in various countries have shown that teachers in both primary and secondary education often have negative attitudes towards multilingual approaches and that they are reluctant to include students' native languages in the school environment (Flores & Smith, 2009; Pulinx et al., 2017; Putjata & Koster, 2021), even if they recognize the benefits of speaking more than one language (De Angelis, 2011; Mitits, 2018). Attitudes towards multilingualism have been found to be related to several factors, including the ethnic or linguistic composition of the student population (Bosch et al., 2024; Flores & Smith, 2009; Pulinx et al., 2017) and personal characteristics of the teacher such as language skills, ethnicity and gender (Flores & Smith, 2009; Pulinx et al., 2017; Rinker & Ekinci, under review). Another crucial factor appears to be teacher

education, with teachers who have received training on multilingualism, L2 pedagogy or cultural diversity being consistently more positive about multilingual approaches (Alisaari et al., 2019; Bosch et al., 2024; Dursun et al., 2023; Flores & Smith, 2009; Mitits, 2018; Pohlmann-Rother et al., 2023).

Since multilingualism has been relatively high on the educational agenda in recent years, it is likely that an increasing number of teachers have obtained evidence-based knowledge and possibly developed more positive attitudes towards multilingualism. Some recent studies suggest that this is indeed the case. Focusing on Denmark, where multilingual education is a compulsory part of teacher training, Søndergaard Knudsen and colleagues (2021) found that teachers recognized the value of multilingualism and L1 maintenance, as well as their own responsibility for children's bilingual development. Similarly, teachers in Sweden (Lundberg, 2019) and Finland (Alisaari et al., 2019) displayed relatively positive beliefs about multilingualism and awareness of recent concepts such as translanguaging. Yet, even in these studies, some participants were reluctant to apply multilingual approaches in their teaching.

Related to the current study, and partially based on the same dataset, Bosch and colleagues (2024) investigated the attitudes of primary school teachers in the Netherlands, Italy and Greece, using an adaptation of a survey developed by Pulinx et al. (2017). This study showed great variation in teachers' attitudes in all three countries, although teachers in Greece were significantly more positive about multilingual approaches. For example, 26 % of the Dutch teachers believed that multilingual students should not be allowed to use their home language at school, compared to 18 % of the Italian teachers and 5 % of the Greek teachers. In contrast, 15 % of the Dutch teachers, 26 % of the Italian teachers and 69 % of the Greek teachers agreed that pupils should have the opportunity to study their home language at school. A substantial proportion of teachers expressed their concerns about the academic development of L2 learners, with 48 % of the Dutch teachers, 41 % of the Italian teachers and 38 % of the Greek teachers sustaining that the most important cause of academic failure is insufficient proficiency in the school language. In the Netherlands, but not in Italy and Greece, there was a positive correlation between teachers' attitudes and the proportion of multilingual students, suggesting that experience with multilingual students may support openness to multilingual approaches. Moreover, in all three countries, teachers who had received training on multilingualism expressed on average significantly more positive attitudes towards multilingualism in education than teachers who had not received such training.

Similar studies conducted in the Netherlands have focused on primary teacher education students (Robinson-Jones et al., 2022), foreign language teachers in secondary schools (van Beuningen & Polišenská, 2019), and English and Dutch teachers in vocational education (van Batenburg et al., 2022). The results show that many Dutch teachers still believe in common misconceptions about multilingualism and fail to make use of students' multilingual repertoires. In secondary and vocational education, a majority of language teachers prefer to take a monolingual approach and discourage the use of

students' home languages in class, while at the same time secondary school teachers indicated a need for guidance on language sensitization and functional multilingual language education (van Batenburg et al., 2022; van Beuningen & Polišenská, 2019). Primary education students showed slightly more positive attitudes towards multilingual approaches, but a large majority still believed that Dutch should be the only language used in class (Robinson-Jones et al., 2022).

In sum, teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism appear to be related to several variables, including the sociopolitical context of the country in which they teach, the type of school, the composition of the student population, and their professional training, gender and personal language background. In the next section, we will discuss how teachers' attitudes may also be influenced by the relative status of the specific languages involved, which may be determined by so-called 'language hierarchies'.

1.2 Language hierarchies

While there is a large body of research available on teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism, very little attention has been paid to how these might be influenced by language hierarchies and social prestige. The limited evidence that is available to date suggests that teachers' beliefs may indeed be influenced by their attitudes towards specific languages and their relative social status (Putjata & Koster, 2021; Young, 2014).

Taking a qualitative approach, Putjata and Koster (2021) used semi-structured interviews to investigate the language attitudes of teachers working in monolingual and German-Dutch bilingual kindergartens and primary and secondary schools in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Their results showed that teachers in both monolingual and bilingual schools tended to adhere to a rigid monolingual standard, even though all of them believed it was important to speak multiple languages. While teachers working in bilingual schools expressed extremely positive views on multilingualism when speaking about the school's bilingual curriculum, highlighting the benefits for language learning, they considered mostly negative aspects when discussing multilingualism involving minority languages. For example, some feared that children would use their L1 as a 'secret language' to exclude others. A similar double standard was reported by Portolés and Martí (2018), who focused on teachers working in Spanish-English bilingual schools in Spain.

Focusing on teachers in the Alsace area of France, Young (2014) also found evidence of language hierarchies. Using critical discourse analysis on interview data, she observed that the majority of her participants exclusively associated multilingualism with German/French bilingualism of the Alsace region or with English L2 learning, while they generally did not consider minority languages as legitimate languages in the school context. Moreover, many participants sustained that certain languages should be limited to specific times and spaces, emphasizing a strict dichotomy between the classroom and the schoolyard. Even though many teachers argued that children should be free to choose

which language to use during play time, they typically believed that French should be the only language used in class, with 52 % mentioning implicit or explicit rules to discourage or prohibit the use of home languages.

Thus, teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism appear to be influenced by the social status that is assigned to the specific languages involved, with some languages being delegitimized in certain formal contexts. Differences in the social status of languages generally reflect existing political and economic power relations (Appel & Muysken, 2005). The high social and economic evaluation of European languages contrasts with those of immigrant populations, which are often associated with poverty and/or a history of colonial domination (Helot & Young, 2002). The use of minority languages may also be perceived as a barrier to educational and occupational success (Agirdag, 2010; Agirdag et al., 2014) or to the use and development of the majority language (Van Avermaet & Sierens, 2010; Leseman, 2000).

This dual perspective on languages is not without implications for the educational context. For example, Pulinx and colleagues (2017) found a negative correlation between the degree of monolingual thinking among Flemish teachers and the trust they place in students. Low trust is associated with low expectations, which in turn impact the behavior of teachers and students, leading to lower academic outcomes (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) – the so-called Pygmalion or Golem effect. Furthermore, comparing German-Dutch and Turkish-Dutch bilingual children in the Netherlands, Goriot and colleagues (2016) investigated children's perception of their teachers' appreciation of their home languages, and whether this perception was related to their executive functioning. Their results showed that German-Dutch bilinguals perceived more appreciation of their home language than Turkish-Dutch bilinguals. Moreover, the difference in perceived appreciation could partly explain group differences in the domain of working memory.

Teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism and their adherence to language hierarchies may thus indirectly affect the educational outcomes of students who speak a minority language at home. However, more research on the influence of the social status of languages and its effect on teachers' attitudes is needed, since so far only a few studies have investigated this issue, mostly taking a qualitative approach. By using a survey consisting of open and closed questions, we aim to contribute to our understanding of the role of language hierarchies in teachers' attitudes towards multilingual practices in education.

1.3 The current study

This study investigated Dutch primary school teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism and the use of other languages in the school environment, and whether such beliefs are influenced by the social prestige of the languages involved. Using an online questionnaire, participants were presented with a 'vignette', i.e. a hypothetical scenario about which they were asked some questions. The use of vignettes is a well-established method

in qualitative research (Duarte & Günther-van der Meij, 2022; Finch, 1987; Steiner et al., 2016), which has certain advantages compared to traditional survey questions. Crucially, vignette questions offer a more realistic and tangible approach, since they are grounded in concrete, real-life scenarios, providing multi-dimensional representations of specific situations (Steiner et al., 2016).

In our vignette questions, participants read a scenario about a child who migrated to the Netherlands three years ago, and who (despite having strong language skills in the L1) appears to have limited vocabulary knowledge in Dutch. To test the effect of language status, we manipulated the name, native language and country of origin of the child: around half of the participants read about Emile from France who spoke French (the high-prestige condition), while the other half read about Mohamed from Pakistan who spoke Urdu (the low-prestige condition). Comparing these two conditions, our aim was to investigate (1) teachers' concerns regarding the development of Dutch in child L2 learners, (2) what they would advise parents of bilingual children, and (3) to what extent teachers allow, encourage or prohibit the use of home languages in the classroom versus in the schoolyard. We also examined whether teachers' concerns about L2 development and attitudes towards home language use at school were related to their training on multilingualism and to the proportion of multilingual students in their class.

Hypothesizing that teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism are influenced by language hierarchies, we expected teachers in the low-prestige condition to be more concerned about the child's language development, more likely to advise the child's parents to speak Dutch with their child, and more likely to prohibit the use of the L1 in class and in the schoolyard, compared to teachers in the high-prestige condition. Finally, given previous research partially based on the same dataset (Bosch et al., 2024), we expected teachers who have received training on multilingualism and teachers with more multilingual pupils in their class to be less concerned about the situation described in the scenario and more likely to have positive attitudes towards the use of the L1 at school.

2 Methods

The data used in this study were collected within the scope of the MultiMind project, aiming to investigate teachers' beliefs and experiences regarding multilingualism in several countries (see also Bosch et al., 2024; Bosch et al., in press). In this paper we focus on a subset of the data that was collected in the Netherlands in 2021, using an online survey presented on Qualtrics. The research was approved by the ethics committee of the psychology department of the University of Milan-Bicocca (approval number: RM-2020-324), and all respondents gave their informed consent prior to participation.

2.1 Participants

A total of 104 Dutch primary school teachers were included in this study. Participants were recruited online through the networks of teacher education programs, through Facebook groups for teachers, and by approaching schools directly. The sample did not include teachers who worked in international schools.

The mean age of our participants was 44.6 (SD = 12, Range = 21-66) and they had on average 16.9 years of teaching experience (SD = 10.8, Range = 1-43). The large majority of them were women (90.4%). Most teachers worked in the province of South-Holland (45.2%), followed by North-Holland (21.2%), North-Brabant (11.5%) and Flevoland (9.6%). Teachers worked in both urban and rural areas (48.1% worked in a city with more than 100.000 inhabitants). A little over half of the participants (54.8%) had previously attended a course or workshop on multilingualism, either during formal teacher education or as a form of in-service training.

There was great variation in the number of multilingual students present in the classrooms of the teachers. On average, 39% of their students spoke another language at home (SD = 35.5%, range = 0-100%), and 80.8% of the teachers indicated that they had experience teaching students who were still learning Dutch. Note that nine teachers (8.7%) taught in reception classes for newly arrived migrant children (so-called 'eerste opvangonderwijs'). The most common native languages that were reportedly spoken by the students of our respondents were (Moroccan) Arabic, Turkish, Polish, English, Bulgarian, Spanish, Chinese, Romanian, Somali, Russian and Syrian.

Participants were randomly divided over the two conditions: approximately half of the participants were in the high-prestige condition (N = 53), while the other half were in the low-prestige condition (N = 51). The distribution of variables across the two conditions is shown in Table 1. As can be seen from this table, the two sub-samples were comparable with respect to the relevant background variables. Although there were slightly more participants who had received training on multilingualism in the low prestige-condition, this association was not significant, X^2(1, N = 104) = 1.009, p = .315.

2.2 Materials and procedure

Participants completed an online questionnaire on their beliefs about multilingualism and their experience teaching L2 learners, which was implemented in Qualtrics. Completing the full survey lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

In the part of the survey that is relevant to this study, participants were asked to read a scenario about a bilingual child, imagine being the child's teacher and answer some questions about how they would act in the presented situation. Participants were randomly assigned to either the high-prestige condition (in which the scenario was about a French boy called Emile who speaks French as his L1) or the low-prestige condition (in which the child in question was a Pakistani boy called Mohamed who speaks Urdu as his L1). The

Table 1 Distribution of teachers' background variables across the two conditions

	All participants (*N* = 104)	High-prestige condition: French (*N* = 53)	Low-prestige condition: Urdu (*N* = 51)
Gender: female	94 (90.4%)	49 (92.5%)	45 (88.2%)
Mean age in years	44.6 (*SD* = 12)	44 (*SD* = 12)	45.2 (*SD* = 11.9)
City over 100.000 inhabitants	50 (48.1%)	26 (49.1%)	24 (47.1%)
Received training on multilingualism	57 (54.8%)	26 (49.1%)	31 (60.8%)
Mean percentage of multilingual students in class	39% (*SD* = 35.5)	39.3% (*SD* = 35.1)	38.6% (*SD* = 36)

choice of these languages was based on their relative social status in the Netherlands: while Urdu is a non-European language that is likely to be associated with immigration and that may elicit negative attitudes in some participants, French is a prestigious, European foreign language taught in schools that is more likely to elicit positive attitudes. Yet, these languages are comparable in the sense that teachers in the Netherlands might realistically encounter them in class, even though neither of them are among the most common languages spoken by immigrant communities in the Netherlands.

Depending on the condition, participants were presented with the following scenario:

Part 1: '*Emile/Mohamed* is nine years old. Three years ago he arrived with his family in the Netherlands from *France/Pakistan*. According to his parents, who only speak a little Dutch themselves, he is fluent in *French/Urdu*, his first language. However, you notice that his language skills in Dutch, and especially his vocabulary knowledge, are lagging behind.'

Part 2: 'Another child in your class also speaks *French/Urdu*, but this child is much more proficient in Dutch than *Emile/Mohamed*. You notice that he often speaks *French/Urdu* with *Emile/Mohamed*, for example when *Emile/Mohamed* doesn't understand something that is being said in class. You also regularly hear them speak *French/Urdu* together in the schoolyard.'

After reading the first part of the scenario, participants were asked whether they would be concerned about this situation. Responses were given on a four point Likert scale (*not at all – not really – a bit – very much*), after which participants were asked to motivate their answers. Using an open question, we then asked teachers what they would advise the parents of the child in this scenario to support their child's language development. After reading the second part of the scenario, teachers were asked whether they would allow the children to translate to their L1 in class and whether they would allow them to use the L1 in the schoolyard. Again, responses were given on a four-point Likert scale (*yes, definitely – more yes than no – more no than yes – absolutely not*), followed by a question asking teachers to explain their answers.

Additionally, participants answered several questions regarding their personal background, teaching experience, training on multilingualism, and the characteristics of their school. These background questions were based on a questionnaire developed by Rinker and Ekinci (under review).

2.3 Analysis

The analysis consisted of three parts. First, to examine to what extent teachers would be concerned, and whether teachers would allow the use of the L1 in the classroom and in the schoolyard, we conducted a descriptive statistical analysis by calculating the proportions of responses to the closed questions.

Second, taking a qualitative approach, we analyzed the open questions to examine why teachers would be concerned or not, why they would allow or prohibit the use of the L1 in a certain situation, and what they would advise the parents of the child in question to support their language development. Aiming to detect the most important patterns, we carried out a thematic analysis using a bottom-up inductive approach. The data were coded by the second author, in close collaboration with the first author. We identified several themes, which will be discussed in the next section.

Third, we ran two logistic regression models to test which factors were related to teachers' concerns and their attitudes towards L1 use at school. For this analysis, 'teachers' concerns' and 'allowing L1 use' were dummy-coded as binary dependent variables, by merging the responses 'a bit'/'very much' and 'more yes than no'/'yes, definitely' into the category 'yes' (coded as 1) and by merging the responses 'not really'/'not at all' and 'more no than yes'/'absolutely not' into the category 'no' (coded as 0). The motivation for using a binary dependent variable in the analyses was based on the fact that even though participants answered the questions on an ordinal scale to decrease the threshold for giving responses that might be socially undesirable and to gain more insight into how confident participants are about their responses, the answers to these questions remain essentially binary (i.e., 'yes' or 'no').

The first model tested whether the likelihood that teachers are concerned could be predicted by the main and interaction effects of condition (low-prestige, coded as

+1/2, or high-prestige, coded as −1/2), training on multilingualism (yes, coded as +1/2, or no, coded as −1/2) and the proportion of multilingual students (number of multilingual students divided by total number of students, centered around the mean). The second model tested whether teachers' attitudes towards L1 use at school could be predicted by the main and interaction effects of condition (low-prestige, coded as +1/2, or high-prestige, coded as −1/2), setting (in class, coded as +1/2, or in the schoolyard, coded as −1/2), training on multilingualism (yes, coded as +1/2, or no, coded as −1/2) and the proportion of multilingual students (centered around the mean). We conducted a top-down stepwise model comparison based on the Akaike Information Criterion to select the models with the best fit. The statistical analysis was conducted in *R* (R Core Team, 2023). Two participants were excluded from this part of the analysis, because of missing data for the questions that were used to calculate the proportion of multilingual students. The regression analysis was therefore based on 102 participants (53 in the high-prestige condition and 49 in the low-prestige condition).

3 Results

3.1 Teachers' concerns

The responses to the question 'Would you be concerned?' are summarized in Table 2. As can be seen from this table, approximately 2/3 of the teachers in our study would be concerned at least to some degree about the child described in the scenario (62.3 % in the high-prestige condition and 66.7 % in the low-prestige condition).

However, the difference between the two conditions was not significant (odds ratio = 1.14, 95 % CI = .498-2.63, *p* = .755). Since 'training on multilingualism' did not contribute significantly to the model fit, the best model was obtained by only including 'proportion of multilingual students' as a predictor. This model showed that teachers who have more multilingual students in their class were less likely to be concerned about the child in the scenario (odds ratio = .664, 95 % CI = .438−.997, *p* = .0498).

When asked why they would be concerned or not, 47 teachers (45.2 %) mentioned that the child in the scenario has only been in the Netherlands for a few years and that children need more time to learn a language and develop their vocabulary knowledge. For 24 of them (23.1 %) this was a reason not to worry, while the others were nevertheless a bit concerned. At the same time, 17 teachers (16.3 %) emphasized that three years of language exposure is a long time already and that, according to them, the child should have achieved a higher level of Dutch by now (e.g., *"after three years he should speak Dutch fluently, in addition to Urdu"*).

Moreover, 17 teachers (16.3 %) pointed out that the child in the scenario has strong language skills in the L1. For 8 of them (7.7 %) this was a reason not to be concerned.

Table 2 Responses to the question 'Would you be concerned?', divided per condition

	Responses	High-prestige		Low-prestige	
Yes	Yes, definitely	3 (5.7%)	**33 (62.3%)**	6 (11.8%)	**34 (66.7%)**
	Yes, a bit	30 (56.6%)		28 (54.9%)	
No	Not really	19 (35.8%)	**20 (37.7%)**	15 (29.4%)	**17 (33.3%)**
	Absolutely not	1 (1.9%)		2 (3.9%)	

For example, one respondent mentioned that *"when the mother tongue is well developed, the second language usually follows automatically – this may just take a lot of time"*. In contrast, for 8 others (7.7%) the pupil's good L1 skills were all the more reason for concern. According to these teachers, the Dutch language knowledge of the child is expected to be at a good level after three years, *especially* considering his strong L1 skills.

3.2 Advice to parents

When asked what they would advise the parents in the scenario to support their child's language development, 22 respondents (21%) mentioned advice regarding language use at home. Half of these respondents would advise parents to speak more Dutch with their child (e.g., *"Try to speak Dutch at home, too"*), while the other half would explicitly advise parents to keep using the home language (e.g., *"Parents should above all continue to use the mother tongue with him"*). In the high-prestige condition, 6 respondents would recommend to use Dutch and 3 would recommend to use the L1, whereas in the low-prestige condition, 5 respondents would recommend to use Dutch and 8 respondents would recommend to keep using the L1.

Additionally, a majority of teachers would advise the parents to stimulate reading in Dutch (59%), and to have the child watch Dutch television or films (54.3%). Another common advice, provided by 38.1% of the teachers, was to increase the child's exposure to Dutch by engaging in extra-curricular activities in Dutch or by establishing contacts with Dutch-speaking children outside of school. These recommendations were more or less equally common in the two conditions.

Table 3 Responses to the question 'Would you allow this student to translate things to the L1 during class?', divided per condition

	Responses	High-prestige		Low-prestige	
Yes	Yes, definitely	19 (35.8%)	26 (49.1%)	14 (27.5%)	30 (58.8%)
	More yes than no	7 (13.2%)		16 (31.4%)	
No	More no than yes	24 (45.3%)	27 (50.9%)	19 (37.3%)	21 (41.2%)
	Absolutely not	3 (5.7%)		2 (3.9%)	

3.3 Attitudes towards L1 use at school

Table 3 and Table 4 summarize the responses to the questions regarding teachers' attitudes towards L1 use during class and in the schoolyard, respectively. These results show a lot of disagreement: both in class and in the schoolyard, approximately half of our respondents would allow the use of the L1, while the other half would not.

The likelihood of teachers allowing L1 use was not significantly influenced by condition (high-prestige versus low-prestige, odds ratio = 1.18, 95% CI = .641-2.16, p = .598), setting (classroom versus schoolyard, odds ratio = 1.32, 95% CI = .728-2.43, p = .358) or the interaction between them (odds ratio = 1.76, 95% CI = .530-5.88, p = .358). The best-fitting model included only the main effects of training on multilingualism and proportion of multilingual students. Teachers who had received training on multilingualism were estimated to be more than two times more likely to allow L1 use at school than teachers who had not received such training (odds ratio = 2.05, 95% CI = 1.07-3.91, p = .029). The likelihood of a teacher accepting L1 use was also positively related to the proportion of multilingual students in a class, with teachers in more linguistically diverse environments being more likely to allow L1 use (odds ratio = 1.95, 95% CI = 1.39-2.77, p = .0001).

While many teachers prefer to avoid the use of the L1 in class for translation purposes, because it is considered to be detrimental to the development of the Dutch language, most of them do recognize the practical advantages of it. For example, they argue that in some cases it may help to improve the pupil's comprehension of the content of a lesson or to avoid misunderstandings. However, these considerations are often seen as a last resort. One teacher explains: "*The child should extract as much information from*

Table 4 Responses to the question 'Would you allow them to use the L1 together in the school-yard?', divided per condition

	Responses	High-prestige		Low-prestige	
Yes	Yes, definitely	14 (26.4%)	26 (49.1%)	12 (23.5%)	24 (47.1%)
	More yes than no	12 (22.6%)		12 (23.5%)	
No	More no than yes	21 (39.6%)	27 (50.9%)	22 (43.1%)	27 (52.9%)
	Absolutely not	6 (11.3%)		5 (9.8%)	

the [*Dutch*] *context as possible. If the assignment is not understood from this context, a classmate can translate the most important contents*". Another teacher proposes that L1 translations should always serve the purpose of Dutch language development: "*If L1 use is functional and contributes to the development of Dutch yes – otherwise no*". Moreover, 21.2% of the teachers mention that they would only allow L1 use after the student has tried using Dutch first, and they would always offer the Dutch translation together with the explanation in the L1.

With respect to teachers' opinions about the use of the L1 in the schoolyard, our respondents gave various motivations. An important reason for allowing or encouraging L1 use, provided by 25% of the teachers, was that it is beneficial for relaxation and well-being, or that it can give children a sense of safety, belonging and self-confidence. Although 11.5% of the teachers believe it is important that Dutch is spoken in the schoolyard in order to promote social contacts with Dutch-speaking children ("*It is desirable that he can use the language well enough to develop friendships with children from his class*"), 3 teachers (2.9%) argue that the use of the L1 is also conducive to social contact ("*For establishing contact with peers it is nice if he develops communicative skills both in Urdu and in Dutch*"). Both supporters and opponents of L1 use (20 teachers, 19.2%) claimed to ensure that students do not isolate themselves from the group, and that others are not excluded. For some, that risk is a reason not to allow L1 use, while for others, L1 use is not a problem, provided no one is excluded. One respondent states that they would allow L1 use in the schoolyard, "*depending on whether it helps to have contact with other children, or if it keeps them away from them*". In contrast, 12.5% of the teachers think that the use of the home language in the schoolyard is desirable only occasionally, for example if a child doesn't understand something

or if they need to be comforted. Finally, 4 respondents (3.8%) rely on an explicit or implicit school rule that prohibits the use of the L1 (e.g., *"At a Dutch school we speak Dutch"*).

4 Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Dutch primary school teachers towards L2 learners and the use of children's native languages within the school environment, and whether their beliefs are related to the social status of the specific languages involved. Language status was tested using an experimental manipulation with vignettes: in one condition participants read about a French student, Emile, whose native language was French, while in the other condition participants read about a Pakistani student, Mohamed, whose native language was Urdu. The teachers were asked (1) to what extent they would be concerned about the Dutch language development of the multilingual student described in the scenario, (2) what they would advise the parents to support their child's language development, and (3) whether they would allow the use of the home language in the classroom and in the schoolyard.

Regarding the first question, our results show that around two thirds of our participants would be concerned about the child's language development, even though the scenario described a rather typical situation of a child who had only been learning the school language for three years and who, according to the parents, did not demonstrate any language problems in the L1. This suggests that some teachers may have very high expectations of L2 learners. While previous research has shown that child L2 learners may need up to five years of exposure before they reach a proficient level in listening and speaking, and up to seven years before they are on par with monolingual peers in reading and writing (Hakuta et al., 2000), several teachers in our study believed that a child should be fluent in Dutch after three years in the Netherlands. We also found that teachers with more multilingual students are less likely to be concerned about the child's language development, suggesting that experience with L2 learners might lead to more realistic expectations about multilingual development.

As for the second research question, the results vary greatly with respect to the advice that teachers would give to parents. Approximately one fifth of our participants mentioned that they would talk to parents about language use at home; half of them would advise parents to speak more Dutch, while the other half would explicitly advise them to continue to use the L1 at home. This suggests that some teachers still adhere to a language hierarchy in which the majority language is considered to be more important than the home language, leading them to encourage parents to provide non-native input in Dutch rather than high-quality input in the L1. At the same time, other teachers are well aware of the importance of home language maintenance, perhaps through their education or

because of a more general ongoing shift from a monolingual to a multilingual norm (see also Alisaari et al., 2019; Bosch et al., 2024; Lundberg, 2019; Rinker & Ekinci, under review; Robinson-Jones et al., 2022).

Considering the third research question, which addressed whether teachers would allow the use of the home language in the classroom and in the schoolyard, we also found great variation. Approximately half of our respondents indicated that they would tend to allow L1 use in the school environment, both in class and in the schoolyard, while the other half would not. The main reasons for allowing home language use were to enhance understanding of the subject content, to solve problems or misunderstandings, and to provide a sense of security, recognition, belonging and self-confidence. On the other hand, the most important reason for prohibiting L1 use was the belief that speaking other languages would hinder Dutch language development and contact with Dutch-speaking peers. We found that teachers' acceptance of L1 use at school was related to the proportion of multilingual pupils in a teachers' class, suggesting that exposure to linguistic diversity makes teachers more open to multilingual practices. Furthermore, teachers who had received training on multilingualism were more likely to accept L1 use than teachers who had not received such training. Similar effects of teacher training have been found in several other studies (Alisaari et al., 2019; Dursun et al., 2023; Flores & Smith, 2009; Pohlmann-Rother et al., 2023), highlighting the importance of educating teachers on multilingual development and translanguaging practices.

These results are consistent with the findings of a related study by Bosch et al. (2024), which explicitly addressed teachers' attitudes towards multilingual approaches, focusing on primary school teachers in the Netherlands, Italy and Greece. In that study, teachers in the Netherlands also showed great individual variation that was influenced by the linguistic diversity of the student population and by teachers' training on multilingualism. Since the Dutch teachers in Bosch et al. (2024) were largely the same participants as those in the current study, it is thus very likely that teachers' responses to the vignettes reflect their general attitudes towards multilingualism.

The current findings differ from those of Young (2014), who found that French teachers were much more likely to allow L1 use in the schoolyard than in class. A reason for this difference could be that we specifically asked teachers if they would allow students to translate the content of a lesson to their peers, whereas Young addressed attitudes towards L1 use more generally. Since some teachers may be more likely to allow other languages if it serves a functional rather than a social purpose, this may have increased the acceptance of L1 use in class in our study.

Moreover, unlike Young (2014) and Putjata and Koster (2021), we did not find an effect of language status on teachers' concerns and their acceptance of L1 use. There were no significant differences between the high-prestige condition (the scenario with Emile from France speaking French) and the low-prestige condition (the scenario with Mohamed from Pakistan speaking Urdu). This suggests that the attitudes of Dutch primary school

teachers are not necessarily related to the social status of certain languages and stereo-types about their speakers, but rather to monolingual versus multilingual mindsets and the acceptance of other languages in general.

Note, however, that our sample size was relatively small, so future research is required to investigate this further. Moreover, whilst using a hypothetical scenario has many advantages compared to traditional survey questions about participants' beliefs (Steiner et al., 2016), our findings do not necessarily reflect teachers' actual behavior. Future studies might therefore want to include questions about teachers' past experiences, or even classroom observations. In addition, future studies would benefit from in-depth interviews or focus groups to obtain a more profound understanding of the motivations and beliefs that underlie teachers' behavior. Finally, it would be interesting to investigate whether a scenario describing a child who belongs to a larger minority group, such as Turkish or Moroccan in the Dutch context, elicits different responses. It is conceivable that some teachers might be less likely to support L1 use when large minority languages are involved, due to more prevalent negative stereotypes about the speakers of these languages (Bouabid, 2018).

Together with other recent findings (Alisaari et al., 2019; Lundberg, 2019; Rinker & Ekinci, under review), the results of our study seem to illustrate the multilingual turn that is currently taking place in education: monolingual ideologies are no longer convincingly dominant, even though multilingual ideologies are still far from being the norm. This suggests a gradual but steady shift towards a more multilingual mindset (see also Meier, 2017). To support this development, and to ensure that the home languages of multi-lingual students are acknowledged, appreciated and utilized, we argue that all teachers should receive in-depth, evidence-based training on multilingualism, multiculturalism and multilingual pedagogy. This training should encompass both pre-service courses within teacher education programs and ongoing professional development opportunities for in-service teachers (Pohlmann-Rother et al., 2023). It is important that such training opportunities are offered to all teachers, including those who work in schools in which multilingual children are a minority. Previous findings showing that teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism are related to their level of trust in multilingual pupils (Pulinx et al., 2017), and that children's perception of their teachers' appreciation of their home languages also affects cognitive development (Goriot et al., 2016), further emphasize the importance of adequate teacher training. Thus, increasing teachers' awareness of the benefits of multilingualism, regardless of the social status of certain languages, and giving them practical tools to take advantage of linguistic diversity in the classroom, are crucial steps to create equal opportunities for all children.

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