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PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PLURILINGUAL PEDAGOGIES

Summary. In light of the growing diversity in European and Slovenian schools, equity-centered plurilingual pedagogies have gained prominence across the political, educational, and scientific spectrum. This gives particular weight to this study, which aims to contribute to the understanding of the complexity of factors that promote the mainstreaming of plurilingual pedagogies. The concept of Linguistically Sensitive Teaching (LST) was used as a lens to study pre-service teachers' perceptions of plurilingual pedagogies in their educational context. More specifically, the study aims to examine pre-service teachers' perceptions of the relevance of plurilingual pedagogies for their future profession and their understanding of the teachers' competence in regard to the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies in Slovenian schools. Data from 27 pre-service primary education teachers from the University of Ljubljana of the Faculty of Education were examined. Reflection prompts were used to stimulate and guide the critical engagement of participants within the context of LST: a video, a document, and a SWOT analysis template. The findings illustrate pre-service teachers' awareness of the relevance and the benefits of plurilingual pedagogies for their profession and their understanding of the complexity of factors, specifically in relation to teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and skills that promote the mainstreaming of plurilingual pedagogies. The study highlights how the reflections of pre-service primary education teachers can support the development of future pre-service teacher training within initial teacher education. As such, it has positive implications for developing teacher education to better respond to the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse classes in today's schools.

Keywords: competence for plurilingual teaching; initial teacher education; plurilingual pedagogies; pre-service teachers; Slovenia.

Introduction

European education recognizes the importance of language as a vehicle for opportunity and success in social, educational, and professional domains (Council of Europe, 2001). Besides affirming one's individual identity, languages also facilitate the experience and recognition of the cultural and linguistic diversity of "the other". The past few decades have seen a paradigm shift in the perception of language(s) in European education. If language policies used to be essentially concerned with the equitable management of multilingualism, i.e., devising ways in which several linguistic varieties may

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coexist as official languages, today, the vision of strict juxtaposition of languages has been challenged (Beacco & Byram, 2007). In the wake of today's increasingly diverse societies, communication may take place across different languages and linguistic varieties, encouraging the speaker to make use of several linguistic and cultural resources. In other words, as a person's experience of languages expands, he or she does not keep these languages in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up an "uneven and changing" plurilingual competence to which all knowledge and experience of languages contribute and in which languages interrelate and interact (Council of Europe, 2001, p.133). Plurilingual competence refers to an individual's language competences, as well as the dynamic interconnectedness of languages within an individual's repertoire (Piccardo, 2013). The promotion of plurilingual competence is at the heart of plurilingual pedagogies, which have gained a foothold in European and Slovenian educational practices and policies (Krek & Metljak, 2011; Candelier et al., 2012; Beacco et al., 2016a; European Commission, 2019).

Plurilingual pedagogies refer to the manner of teaching which "capitalizes on the diverse language repertoires that students bring into the classroom" based on the principle of inclusion in order to foster the participation of each student and to address their needs individually (Le Pichon-Vorstman et al., 2020, p.36). On a practical level, plurilingual pedagogies involve valuing the learner's entire linguistic repertoire and using it as a pedagogical resource with which to access academic content. They focus on heightened language awareness within the school's teaching and learning processes by promoting methods that enable the comparison between languages and establish cross-linkages between the language of schooling and foreign languages as subjects, as well as other subjects whose linguistic dimensions must not be overlooked (Beacco et al., 2016a; European Commission, 2019). The understanding of the concept of plurilingual pedagogies may vary as several pluralistic concepts have gained prominence in the last three decades. Bergroth and Hansell (2020), for example, discuss the concept of language awareness, a collection of closely related concepts that form a coherent whole about the language dimension in education. Lucas and Villegas (2011) introduce the term linguistically

responsive teaching. This study, on the other hand, is using the concept of linguistically sensitive teaching (LST) as a lens to reflect on plurilingual pedagogies. LST aims to raise teachers' awareness of the role of languages for learning, identity growth, and well-being as well as the concrete pedagogical actions needed to promote them in classroom activities, whole-school activities, ITE, and educational policies and activities within the wider society (Bergroth et al., 2021a). All these approaches share the ideological background of plurilingualism. As such, they are not separated, but in many cases build upon each other, capturing various nuances of plurilingual pedagogies.

The following sections of the article will provide a brief description of the Slovenian context in which this study was conducted as well as illustrate the importance of and need for more research on teacher preparation for the use of plurilingual pedagogies. The aims of the study will be defined. Next, the methodology used to analyze the data in view of the two research questions will be described. Finally, the results will be analyzed and discussed before providing the closing remarks.

Linguistic Diversity Across Slovenia and Europe

The linguistic and cultural diversity reflected in plurilingual pedagogies coincides with the increasing heterogeneity of European societies due to intra-European mobility, international migration, and globalization. Slovenia is no exception to these phenomena. In Slovenia, the official language, as well as the general language of instruction, is Slovenian, as stipulated by law. In border areas populated by the Italian and Hungarian national communities, the languages of the minorities are also used as languages of instruction. The constitution also protects the status and gives special rights to members of the Roma community who are geographically dispersed in Slovenia. Nevertheless, although the Romani language is protected by law, it is not a language of instruction in formal education. The rights enjoyed by Italian, Hungarian, and Romani speakers do not extend to the speakers of other minority languages, most of whom are immigrants or second-generation speakers from the former Yugoslav republics (Novak-Lukanovič & Limon, 2012). More attention has yet to be paid to these minorities, as well as to

the growing numbers of other immigrants coming from across and outside Europe (Novak-Lukanovič & Limon, 2012).

This shift in increased diversity in Europe and Slovenia is accompanied by a large discrepancy between learners in terms of literacy in the school language: an average of around one in ten 15-year-old learners speak a different language at home than the language of instruction across the EU member states (Eurydice, 2017). The language barrier, along with students' socioeconomic status and cultural capital, is one of the dominant causes of underachievement in schools (Beacco et al., 2016b). Although many education policies build on the necessity to ensure proficiency in the language of instruction, these initiatives bear the risk of ignoring the diversity of the linguistic backgrounds of plurilingual learners and failing to use diversity as a rich educational resource in classrooms (European Commission, 2017). Indeed, plurilingual learners (i.e., migrant or minority students as well as other students with diverse backgrounds) bring a wide variety of strengths, skills, and knowledge which can be regarded as an asset for the whole classroom. Studies (Bialystok, 2018; Cummins, 2020) indicate that learners exposed to more than one language tend to perform better academically than their monolingual peers, as plurilingual pedagogies provide linguistic benefits for bilingual literacy development and the increased academic engagement of students. For example, Little and Kirwan (2019) describe a highly successful approach to inclusive plurilingual pedagogies at Primary School Scoil Bhríde Cailíní in Ireland, which is based on the inclusion of more than 50 home languages of pupils in classroom communication. Since the implementation of this pedagogy, the overall academic results of the school have aligned with or even surpassed the average results for the country. Research (Bialystok, 2018; García, 2009) also highlights the intangible benefits of plurilingualism for learners beyond cognitive development and academic achievements, such as the potential to connect to extended family, and increased opportunity for employment in a global economy, facilitation of travel, etc.

Preparing Teachers for Plurilingual Pedagogies

The development and implementation of plurilingual pedagogies should cover

numerous activities on various levels of the education system. However, micro-level educational practices are not entirely dependent on the power emanating from policymakers at the supra- and macro-level (Bergroth et al., 2021b). Research (Beacco et al., 2016a; Le Pichon-Vorstman et al., 2020) recognizes the crucial role of teachers in the successful implementation of plurilingual pedagogies. Primary school teachers especially, who are chiefly focused on developing learners' literacy, can have a decisive role in learners' subsequent schooling (Beacco et al., 2016a). Furthermore, with the language being an essential component of every school subject, every teacher now has to become sensitive to the language dimension in class (de Jong, 2019; European Commission, 2019). Thus, insight into plurilingual pedagogies concerns all teachers: language teachers and content teachers, who may not have been previously trained to adopt a linguistically sensitive perspective in their subject teaching. It is therefore important that all teachers be well prepared for effective and resourceful teaching in the face of multilingual school realities. Yet too many teachers feel insufficiently prepared to teach linguistically and culturally diverse classes (OECD, 2019). The need for more training for teaching in a multilingual and multicultural setting is now the third-highest area of need for professional development, with data suggesting that teachers see this as a phenomenon likely to rise in importance in the future (OECD, 2019).

In practice, diversity education is regarded nearly everywhere as an isolated 'add-on' and is offered by initial teacher education (henceforth ITE) and providers of continuous professional development only as part of separate courses or extra modules, which tends to fragment the ITE curriculum and is unlikely to have a lasting impact throughout teachers' careers (European Commission, 2017). Thus, scientific studies and educational policies across Europe and Slovenia have called for renewed efforts to equip (future) teachers with relevant expertise and competences for plurilingual pedagogies more systematically (Peček & Ermenc, 2016; Rocafort, 2019; European Commission, 2019; Le Pichon-Vorstman et al., 2020). The teachers' expertise has been called in this study a "competence for plurilingual teaching". Competence is understood as "the ability to mobilize and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities that are presented

by a given type of context" (European Commission, 2017, p.14). Current research offers only a few frameworks of competence for plurilingual teaching. Lau & Van Viegen (2020) elaborate on 3 dimensions of competence for plurilingual teaching: philosophy (teachers' knowledge of the language), principle (teachers' attitudes and intentions and how they see their capabilities and role in the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity as well as social equity and care), and practice (teachers' skills for implementing strategies and approaches in education and instructional practice that support the development of plurilingual competence). While by no means exclusive or all-encompassing, these dimensions, supported by FREPA's list of resources of plurilingual competence (Candelier et al., 2012), can provide an entry point for educators to apply plurilingual pedagogies in their classrooms and can offer an analytic frame for the study of teachers' expertise in plurilingual pedagogies.

As the first phase in the continuum of teacher development, ITE has an important impact on the quality of teachers' teaching and the performance of their students. It aims to provide future teachers with competences supporting their capacity to lead and facilitate successful student learning (European Commission, 2017). In terms of qualification requirements, teachers at the primary level in Slovenia must have a master's degree, which takes a total of 5 years or 300 ECTS. Preparing pre-service teachers for the challenges and opportunities associated with diversity is a complex and multifaceted endeavor. Some of the studies have called for a stronger emphasis on the reflection of individual beliefs and attitudes regarding diversity-related issues in teacher training (Cho et al., 2012; Beacco et al., 2016a; Rocafort, 2019). Unpacking deep-seated beliefs and understandings about language, culture, and diversity can help teachers go beyond generic "just good teaching" and orient them towards more inclusive teaching practices, increasing their intercultural and linguistic sensitivity (Cho et al., 2012; de Jong, 2019; Peček & Ermenc, 2016). If pre-service teachers are not given opportunities to critically inspect their knowledge, attitudes, and skills in relation to linguistic sensitivity, they might pursue their conventional (monolingual) classroom practices and continue to face their classrooms insufficiently prepared.

Research Aims and Research Questions

The literature review demonstrated a considerable lack of comparable studies in the local Slovenian context. Most of the evidence on the effectiveness of specific ITE courses comes from non-European countries (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; de Jong, 2019; Bacon, 2020, among others). Due to the diverse political and administrative environments in which teachers work, adapting to the local context and needs is a crucial step in implementing initiatives in ITE for diversity (European Commission, 2017). Moreover, research on pre-service teachers' beliefs regarding linguistic diversity is very limited, with only a few studies explicitly addressing pre-service teachers' beliefs and understandings in non-language education (Wessels et al., 2017; Bacon, 2020). Literature sources propose no conclusive answer about how the development of pre-service teachers' competence for plurilingual teaching should be approached in ITE. However, it demonstrates that it is necessary to gain further understanding on this matter and calls for more local research addressing the issues described. The aims of this study are to hear and understand the perceptions of pre-service primary education teachers and to utilize these understandings in order to inform our efforts at revising the ITE curricula. Toward that end, a research initiative was designed to help assess what pre-service teachers understood about plurilingual pedagogies and the competence for plurilingual teaching. Hence, the study will highlight how the reflections of pre-service primary education teachers can be of use and support the development of future pre-service training within the ITE curriculum. The research questions in this article are as follows:

RQ 1: What are pre-service teachers' perceptions of the relevance of plurilingual pedagogies for their profession?

RQ2: What are pre-service teachers' understandings of the competence for plurilingual teaching?

Methodology

Participants

This article will analyze the data collected with students' written reflections, for which 27 (N=27) of the participating students gave their consent. Participants were students in the 4th year of the Primary Education Study Program from the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education in Slovenia. The sample included more female (90%) than male participants (10%). Only full-time domestic students were included in the analysis in order to allow for the consistency of the educational context. To minimize response bias, students were encouraged to be genuine in their reflections as there were no right or wrong answers. Since the language of instruction was English, the reflection task was also administrated in English. Nevertheless, the students who felt they could not express themselves properly in English could use their L1, Slovene.

Instrument

A reflection questionnaire was used as the instrument in this study. Students were provided with 3 reflection prompts accompanied by 9 open-ended questions to stimulate and guide their critical engagement. By using different reflection prompts and non-leading questions, the topic was approached from different angles, minimizing the potential research bias:

- A video illustrating the sink-or-swim approach from the perspective of a migrant student².
- A document consisting of good practice examples which promote language awareness through a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (European Commission, 2019).
- A SWOT analysis template drawing on students' observations of LST within their educational context. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and is a simple

² <http://www.immersionfilm.com/>

tool suitable for analyzing learning in the workplace and supporting change in strategies (Bergroth & Hansel, 2020).

Research Design

The study was conducted within the Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms project³ and the English Through Primary School Curriculum course. The course focuses primarily on the content and language integrated learning approach and other linguistically sensitive teaching approaches. Important concepts related to plurilingual and intercultural education were presented and discussed with students prior to the beginning of field trials. Students were asked to participate in an individual reflection task, which would allow them to critically inspect their understanding of plurilingual pedagogies. 27 anonymous written reflections (hereafter referred to as 'texts') were available for qualitative data analysis. The first stage of the analysis consisted of reading the texts in order to become thoroughly familiar with them and notice any interesting themes and emerging categories. In the second stage, detailed reading of texts was performed. The units of analysis were defined at the sentence level. Inductive open coding was then applied to generate categories and define their properties and dimensions in relation to the focus of the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Open coding was performed manually, as the use of the coding program CAQDA was not feasible due to some participants answering in Slovene. The individual descriptive codes were grouped up into broader categories, allowing for a thorough examination of the research questions and the formulation of theoretical conclusions. After the formulation of the theory, I selected the excerpts that were representative of the majority of answers in a selected category. The language used in the excerpts was not corrected for the purposes of this article. Due to the possibility of overlap or different interpretations of data by the researchers, any detailed quantification in the presentation of data was avoided unless it was considered particularly relevant. In the following section, the results are presented in regard to each research question.

³ <http://listiac.org/>

Results

What Are Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of the Relevance of Plurilingual Pedagogies for Their Profession?

The results of the study indicate that all participants consider plurilingual pedagogies relevant or very relevant to their future profession. Two participants emphasize their importance to the point of being *"crucial"* and *"vital"*. There are several reasons for which participants consider plurilingual pedagogies relevant to their profession among which five reasons are referred to more frequently and are elaborated in the text below. Table 1 illustrates the 5 reasons for the relevance of plurilingual pedagogies, as perceived by the participants, and includes the accompanying excerpts.

Almost all participants consider plurilingual pedagogies relevant to their future profession on account of the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in schools and in the everyday lives of their learners. Participants believe that plurilingual pedagogies can help learners acquire values such as tolerance, equality, and respect, as well as a general sensitivity to other languages and cultures. By demonstrating an equal value of all languages, plurilingual pedagogies may normalize the diversity in class, or better yet, turn it into an asset, as illustrated in the excerpt in Table 1 (see line 1). Furthermore, when it comes to linguistic and cultural diversity, more than half of the participants consider plurilingual pedagogies beneficial for the inclusion of second language learners, such as migrant students, by enhancing their learning in/of the language of schooling. Additionally, participants mention that plurilingualism encourages the maintenance of learners' home languages, which in turn, may increase learners' self-esteem and motivation for learning in class (line 2 in Table 1). The feelings of acceptance and safety among second language learners are referred to, as well as the increased cooperation of their parents through plurilingual activities, all of which further promote learners' inclusion. Thirdly, an important argument in favor of plurilingual pedagogies found in students' reflections is that they promote the development of language competences by enhancing the teaching and learning of languages for all learners. They can make language teaching and learning *"fun and entertaining"*, hence increasing the learners' motivation for learning languages

and contributing to their positive perception of other languages; language proficiency and communicative skills, such as listening, speaking, and reading, can be enhanced, because a student *"will want to do it"*. Participants say that learners might find more satisfaction in a class, where both language and subject content are taught at the same time; if they dislike the content, they might still be interested in the language and vice versa. Cognitive advantages for language learning, such as better memorization skills, are mentioned (line 3 in Table 1).

Table 1

Five reasons why participants consider plurilingual pedagogies relevant for their profession with accompanying excerpts from the data

Relevance	Excerpts illustrating the relevance of plurilingual pedagogies
1 Developing linguistic and cultural sensitivity	<i>"I think it is important because the pupils will be able to use plurilingual competences in everyday life in the future. I can imagine that the students feel more open for different languages and as a result also more open for different cultures. In the multicultural world, we are living in, the plurilingual competence can also be one of the best competences that an individual can have."</i>
2 Improved inclusion of second language learners	<i>They "enable them [foreign students] to express themselves, to participate and to integrate". "Learners who are not from our country and their first language is not our first language would certainly feel more accepted after that." They ".../ include parents of children, especially those who come from other countries".</i>
3 Developing language competences	<i>"The more languages, the better". "I think you remember words better, if you hear them in different languages". ".../ learning a language is very challenging and difficult to fully understand."</i>
4 Improved teachers' expertise	<i>"They give depth to our academic skills". "Teachers can develop and become better in their profession, they can gain language awareness and knowledge about language didactics and strategies."</i>
5 Improved teaching-learning process	<i>"There are going to be positive changes on the social side of the class – more empathy and mutual help, feelings such as equality, respect and friendship, less anxiety and fear. LISTiac [linguistically sensitive teaching] is making big changes not only in education, but also in the people's perception. All of that makes better class climate and therefore better working circumstances and outcomes."</i>

Moreover, participants find plurilingual pedagogies relevant because they enrich teachers' expertise by adding to the development of teachers' linguistic and pedagogical skills and knowledge (line 4 in Table 1). Lastly, plurilingual pedagogies can be beneficial for the general teaching-learning process, participants say. Based on students' answers, plurilingual pedagogies can have a positive effect on different elements of the teaching-learning process, such as the method of teaching, the learning content, the learning environment, and the learners themselves (line 5 in Table 1). The academic outcomes of learners can improve too, as being exposed to different languages and cultures can enhance their knowledge "*about countries, history, cultural differences, culinary and so on.*" Most importantly, plurilingual pedagogies can facilitate communication in class, which strengthens the relationships between learners and the rapport between learners and the teacher.

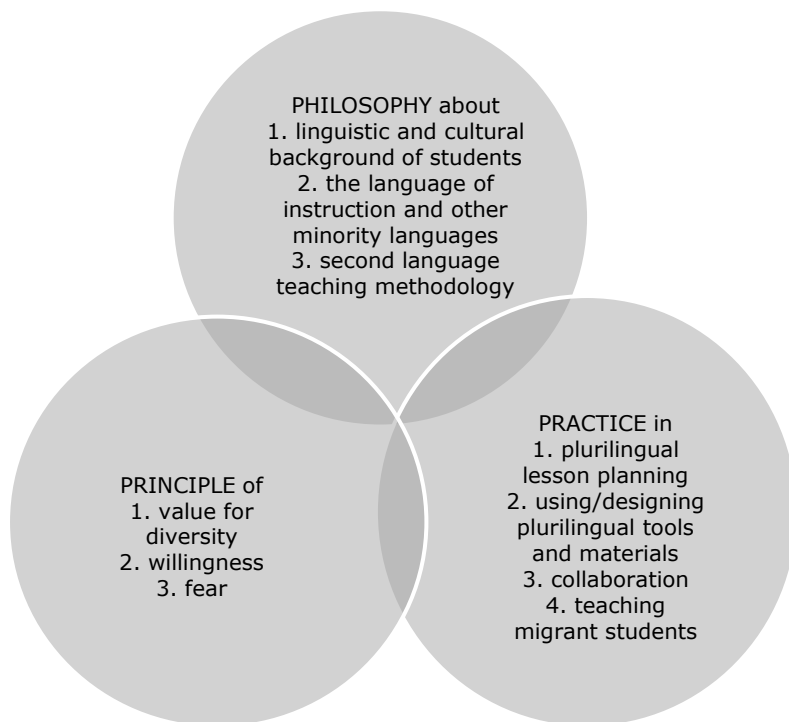
What Are Pre-Service Teachers' Understandings of the Competence for Plurilingual Teaching?

In regard to factors related to the teachers' competence for plurilingual teaching, participants often refer to the overall teacher expertise in using plurilingual teaching pedagogies. Participants say, the higher their expertise, the more confident teachers are, and the more likely it is they use plurilingual pedagogies in their teaching. As one participant explains, teacher expertise and confidence are important when dealing with persons who might have opposing views: "*Some parents might not agree with new methods. In this case, the teacher must take his time to explain why he uses a particular method and what are its benefits.*"

The findings below are presented in 3 parts (see *Figure 1*), based on the 3P framework of competence for plurilingual teaching, developed by Lau and Van Viegen (2020), and FREPA's descriptors of plurilingual competence: *philosophy* or knowledge, *principle* or attitudes, and *practice* or skills. It stands to reason that the three components are closely interrelated and interdependent, so a certain degree of overlap is expected.

Figure 1

Components of teachers' competence for plurilingual teaching according to participants



Philosophy or Knowledge. The linguistic and cultural knowledge of teachers is at the forefront of implementing plurilingual pedagogies, according to participants: *"The teacher needs to know students well to plan activities, materials and choose an appropriate approach of teaching. By knowing students, I want to say that we must know how well do students understand another language if they are capable of talking, speaking, listening and reading in different languages. When we know that we can plan activities, assignments for students/children."* Secondly, participants mention teachers' knowledge about the language of instruction and its structure as well as knowledge of and about other minority languages, especially *"Croatian, Bosnian or Serbian language because most pupils come from one of those countries"*. Thirdly, the knowledge of second language teaching methodology is mentioned, especially the need for it to be included in teacher education curriculum:

"Teachers do not have enough guidelines and also further education on what to use in teaching someone, whose language is not Slovene".

Principle or Attitudes. Positive attitudes towards cultural and linguistic diversity in the classroom, such as showing respect, interest, and tolerance can promote the use of plurilingual pedagogies, participants say. However, participants are wary of the fact that not every type of diversity may get the same reaction: *"I honestly think we should pay more attention to languages that are not so well known. We usually offer pupils to learn next to English, languages like Spanish, French, German, even though we might have at school kids that come from abroad but not from these countries. In Slovenia we have quite a lot of kids who come from ex-Yugoslavia, but we are rarely promoting these languages".*

Participants also refer to the teacher's willingness to reflect and act on their classroom practices. In several participants' reflections, teachers are seen as somewhat passive receivers of instructions emanating from policies at the macro-level, whose agency is limited by the curriculum rigidity, administrative burdens, and constraints of financial and logistic nature. Nevertheless, other participants underline the importance of teachers' initiative: *".../ biggest weakness is the lack of initiative to practice this kind of education. We don't need local and other policies to tell us how useful these strategies are."* Recognizing the need for inclusive approaches and assuming their responsibility by reacting accordingly can be crucial for a successful implementation of plurilingual activities, as illustrated in the following excerpt: *"An obstacle that we can have an impact on is our desire, our willpower to make a difference for the children – not only foreign, but all of them. Teachers have a lot of autonomy in choosing what they will talk about. The thing is a lot of obstacles exist only in teacher's heads."* More specifically, one participant mentions teachers' willingness to advocate for migrant students and *"go over this stigma and strive for a change and a community which is accepting to everyone"*.

Fear, insecurity, or anxiety are mentioned by approximately one-third of participants and are unanimously considered as factors that undermine the use of plurilingual pedagogies. Teachers might be afraid of a lot of things

when it comes to using plurilingual pedagogies in class. Participants enumerate fear of losing the support of the school staff, fear of violating policies, fear of parents' disapproval, fear of failing to obtain required results, or fear of losing authority in the classroom. One participant also says that teachers "*are scared to try new things*", which implies that teachers are still far from being familiar with plurilingual pedagogies. Lastly, participants mention the teachers' fear of losing national, cultural, and linguistic identity, of being endangered in some way: "*/.../ we should be taking better care of Slovenian language since it's "disappearing" and not focus so much on other languages.*" Or, for example: "*They think that it is not on us to try to help someone or learn his language, but rather it is on this individual who comes to the country to learn Slovene*".

Practice or Skills. Teachers' skills that affect the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies have been roughly organized into 4 categories, based on participants' reflections.

a) The skill of preparing plurilingual lessons, for example, lesson planning or making cross-curricular links: "*We have a lot of potential to expand this kind of teaching to new measures – we are aware that maths, arts, sports, dance can happen in any sort of language – language knowledge in these classes is not crucial, so any new words from different languages can be implemented, for example we can connect dancing to Spanish music, arts to Russian artists etc.*"

b) The skills of designing and using plurilingual (digital) tools and materials: "*One problem is that the majority of teachers is older and they can't keep up with technology like we can. Most of them do not know about online exercises and interesting activities for students available on the internet. Therefore they stick to a traditional methods of teaching.*"

c) The skill of collaborating with other teachers (from abroad), "*parents, entire school community, vocational education and training institutions*", such as language centers or libraries with the aim of creating opportunities for multilingual and intercultural exchange. Moreover, participants tend to be aware that a comprehensive, cross-

cutting approach is necessary: *"If we want the linguistically sensitive language learning to be as efficient as possible, the cooperation is crucial. For that, we need students, teachers, parents, entire school community, vocational education and training institutions, not only on local level, but internationally."*

d) The skill of teaching migrant learners, such as how to prepare learners for newly arrived students, how to include migrant learners' languages, cultures, and lifestyles, and *"how to help student to learn different words, phrases and using them in a sentence"*, is mentioned by the participants.

The selected categories and subcategories illustrate participants' understanding of the teacher's competence in plurilingual teaching. In relation to the development of teachers' overall competence for plurilingual teaching, participants highlight an important aspect; they seem to agree that opportunities for reflection, such as that in which they themselves participated, can promote the use of plurilingual pedagogies. For example, *"[It is] very good that we, as a future teachers, talk about this in faculty and that it is shown to us that different languages are all around and that we can also deal with that in classroom"*. In the following section, the results are summarized and discussed in light of other findings.

Discussion

The study shows that pre-service teachers perceive plurilingual pedagogies relevant to their profession. Furthermore, their answers indicate that they consider plurilingual pedagogies beneficial in several ways, namely in five areas.

First, participants underline the importance of plurilingual pedagogies for responding to the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in school. Pre-service teachers seem to be aware of the growing presence of plurilingual learners in school and acknowledge the high probability of having second language learners in their own (future) classes. They believe that plurilingual pedagogies can support the development of all learners' sensitivity to other

languages and cultures, promoting a positive attitude towards linguistic and cultural diversity. This result is in line with prior research indicating the relevance of plurilingual pedagogies for social cohesion and equity. For example, Vega (2018) argues that plurilingual pedagogies can show learners that all languages are equally valued and normalize the linguistic diversity that surrounds them at school, hence bridging the gap between the majority and minority groups. Another perception of pre-service teachers in this study is that, by valuing and encouraging the use of learners' home languages, plurilingual pedagogies may contribute to the inclusion of migrant students. In fact, several studies suggest that effective instruction for second language learners includes the use of their home language(s) (Cummins, 1981; García, 2009). Participants also indicate the relevance of plurilingual pedagogies for the improvement of the teaching-learning process and overall better language competences and enhanced knowledge gains of learners in both language and non-language subjects. Lastly, participants believe that plurilingual pedagogies are an important part of teacher expertise or competence. As de Jong (2019) emphasizes, there is a need for ongoing specialized expertise related to the role of language and culture in schools. All teachers need to take a multilingual stance in order to engage in practices that would equitably support their plurilingual learners.

The present study is particularly concerned with pre-service teachers' perceptions about how teachers' competence for plurilingual teaching can promote the mainstreaming of plurilingual pedagogies. The results point out the overall teachers' confidence in their competence for plurilingual teaching as a decisive factor for a successful implementation of plurilingual pedagogies. Participants believe that the increased sense of preparedness and pedagogical confidence will stimulate teachers to use plurilingual pedagogies. One might assume that the increase in teachers' knowledge and skills will lead to a shift in teachers' pedagogical confidence. However, studies indicate a more complex relationship between the two, as there is not always a direct correlation between the acquired skills and knowledge and teachers' level of confidence around working with plurilingual learners or preference toward teaching in linguistically diverse contexts (Wessels et al., 2017; Bacon, 2020). Furthermore, the participants in the present study point to the importance of

opportunities for reflection in ITE. With this finding, this study contributes to the pool of research that highlights the importance of critical reflection when it comes to preparing pre-service teachers for diversity (Peček & Skubic Ermenc, 2016; Rocafort, 2019; de Jong, 2019, among others).

Participants further describe their understanding of the competence for plurilingual teaching: teachers' philosophy, principles, and practices that can favor or inhibit the use of plurilingual pedagogies. In fact, the participants' perceptions resonate with elements of other teacher competence frameworks, such as the framework of linguistically responsive teachers of Lucas and Villegas (2011). Under the scope of philosophy, students pinpoint three knowledge domains: teachers' knowledge of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, of the language of instruction and of minority languages, and of second language teaching methodology. Similar results were found by Bergroth and Hansell (2020) who emphasize the importance of understanding the local circumstances, such as the understanding of learning processes in several languages as well as of the simultaneous need to protect the lesser spoken or minority languages from the majority languages. Secondly, teachers' principles are discussed. According to the participants, they consist of attitudes that are a critical factor for the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies, such as teachers' attitudes of openness toward linguistic and cultural diversity and of willingness to advocate for plurilingual learners by engaging in professional development to acquire the necessary competences. Participants in this study believe that not all linguistic diversity is met with the same attitudes, implying a perceived hierarchy of languages in school. Similarly, Le Pichon-Vorstman et al. (2020) warn of the "exclusiveness" of language education in Europe, as the majority or dominant languages are often attributed greater value than minority or non-dominant languages.

Lastly, pre-service teachers emphasize the importance of practice, enumerating sets of skills decisive for the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies, such as the skill of planning plurilingual lessons, designing and using plurilingual learning tools and materials, collaborating with teachers of other subjects, teachers from abroad, and the wider school community, and teaching migrant students. Participants see a lot of potential in digital tools since technology can largely facilitate their access to multilingual and

multicultural content and materials. As the study was conducted at the start of the 2020 lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this finding might not come as a surprise. Teachers were at the time left at the mercy of technological devices and had to find new inventive ways to continue with good teaching practices remotely. Nevertheless, the importance of digital plurilingual tools and materials had been acknowledged even before the pandemic, as Bergroth and Hansell (2020) consider them a good source for bringing multiple languages into class. The ideas discussed by participants in the present study are also echoed by the European Commission (2020), which promotes teacher training on effectively using innovative, inclusive, and multilingual pedagogies in the classroom, including digital technologies, and exploring of collaborative teaching at all stages of education and across all subjects of the curriculum.

If the above factors, such as knowledge, positive attitudes towards diversity, and acquisition of certain skills, are considered beneficial for the promotion of plurilingual pedagogies, teachers' attitudes of insecurity or fear can importantly inhibit their implementation, as found by this study. Although it is not altogether clear whether participants are referring to their own fears or are speaking about other teachers' fears in a more hypothetical manner, the sheer number of pre-service teachers' comments regarding fear is noteworthy and worrying. Studies that investigate pre-service teachers' fears about working with plurilingual learners are scarce, yet they give a general idea that a significant percentage of pre-service teachers express feelings of fear and anxiety when it comes to working in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms (Cho et al., 2012, Wessels et al., 2017, Dražnik et al., in preparation). The fear of violating policies, mentioned by the participants, could stem from the fact that the official language of instruction in Slovenia is Slovene as stipulated by law (with the exception of two linguistically mixed areas), which might dissuade teachers from using other languages in other than foreign language subjects. The fear of parents' disapproval resonates with the findings described by Krek and Metljak (2011), in which the majority of pupils' parents in Slovenia do not see the necessity to organize the teaching of home languages to children whose mother tongue is not Slovene. Consequently, pre-service teachers may assume that parents disapprove of teaching approaches that support pupils' first languages, such as plurilingual

pedagogies. The results of the present study also indicate that pre-service teachers might be afraid of the negative impact that plurilingual pedagogies could have on the learning of students. Beacco et al. (2016) call this fear "the fear of interference", a belief that one language will be to the detriment of another, or that language teaching will be to the detriment of other subjects. Such a compartmentalized view of learning languages is typical of the still very widespread monolingual approach that is also associated with fear of error, interference, or the mixing of languages. Yet, studies suggest that such beliefs can be modified if pre-service teachers are given appropriate opportunities during ITE, among others, international experience, experience in teaching plurilingual learners, and training in plurilingual teaching (Alisaari et al., 2019; Wessels et al., 2017; Rocafort, 2019).

Conclusion

Pre-service teachers perceive plurilingual pedagogies as relevant to their profession. They indicate and elaborate on the variety of reasons for which they consider plurilingual pedagogies relevant. As such, pre-service teachers seem to have primarily positive perceptions of plurilingual pedagogies, advocating for their mainstreaming in schools. However, the data collected suggest that pre-service teachers do not think of themselves as the only agents responsible for the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies, since they claim that influential factors emanate from all levels within and beyond the education system. The findings also illustrate pre-service teachers' understanding of the complexity of teachers' competence for plurilingual teaching. Not only do they show an understanding of some factors that encourage the use of plurilingual pedagogies, but they also identify some deterrents, such as fear and possible lack of confidence of teachers. The latter calls for more research on teachers' preparedness within the educational community at large and exposes the need to address pre-service teachers' feelings of insecurity within plurilingual teacher training.

The author acknowledges the possible bias in the study, although measures were taken to minimize it. The study was conducted within the course's unit of plurilingualism, therefore the students had been acquainted

with the concept of plurilingual pedagogies before taking part in the reflection. Had the author conducted the reflection before discussing the topic in class, participants' perceptions might have been different. Furthermore, the present study focuses primarily on teachers' competence for plurilingual teaching, examining factors at the micro-level of the education system. However, factors that encourage the mainstreaming of plurilingual pedagogies can emerge at different levels of the education system. Further analysis of the data collected could yield a more comprehensive overview of all relevant factors, which would serve as a starting point for the planning of a plurilingual curriculum within the teacher education system in Slovenia and in Europe. Given the recent global trends toward a more inclusive, pluralistic, and eclectic approach to teaching, such changes would be timely and in the right direction.

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BŪSIMŲ MOKYTOJŲ SUVOKIMAS APIE DAUGIAKALBĘ PEDAGOGIKĄ

Santrauka. Didėjančios Europos ir Slovėnijos mokyklų įvairovės kontekste į lygybę orientuoti daugiakalbės pedagogikos metodai tapo svarūs politinėje, švietimo ir mokslo perspektyvose. Todėl šis tyrimas yra itin svarbus, nes jo tikslas – padėti suprasti sudėtingus veiksnius, kurie skatina daugiakalbės pedagogikos integravimą į mokytojų rengimą. Sąvoka *kalbai jautrus mokymas* (angl. *Linguistically Sensitive Teaching*, LST) buvo vartojama kaip objektyvas, kuriuo tirtas būsimų mokytojų suvokimas apie daugiakalbę pedagogiką jų švietimo kontekste. Taigi tyrimo tikslas – išnagrinėti, kaip būsimi mokytojai suvokia daugiakalbės pedagogikos svarbą savo būsimei profesijai ir kaip supranta mokytojų kompetenciją įgyvendinant daugiakalbę pedagogiką Slovėnijos mokyklose. Duomenys, gauti iš 27 būsimų mokytojų, studijuojančių Liublianos universiteto švietimo fakultete, buvo išanalizuoti taikant refleksijos įrankius, skatinančius kritinį tyrimo dalyvių mąstymą ir jų tikslingą LST konteksto suvokimą: t. y. vaizdo įrašą, dokumentą ir SSGG analizės šabloną. Tyrimo rezultatai iliustruoja būsimų mokytojų suvokimą apie daugiakalbės pedagogikos svarbą ir naudą savo profesijai bei supratimą apie šių veiksnių sudėtingumą, ypač susijusį su mokytojų žiniomis, požiūriu ir įgūdžiais, skatinančiais daugiakalbės pedagogikos integravimą. Tyrime pabrėžiama, kaip būsimų mokytojų refleksijos gali padėti plėtoti mokytojų rengimą pirminiame proceso etape. Toks daugiakalbės pedagogikos integravimas daro teigiamą poveikį mokytojų rengimo plėtrai ir parengia būsimums mokytojus tinkamai reaguoti į lingvistiškai ir kultūriškai skirtingų šiandienos mokyklų moksleivių poreikius.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: daugiakalbio mokymo kompetencija; pirminis mokytojų rengimas; daugiakalbės pedagogikos metodai; būsimi mokytojai; Slovėnija.

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