



**Multilingual classrooms – Danish teachers’ practices, beliefs and attitudes**

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## MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS IN DENMARK

## Multilingual classrooms

## – Danish teachers' practices, beliefs and attitudes

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**ABSTRACT**

Multilingualism is a major feature of European schools. Using the Multilingual Classroom questionnaire devised by the European Literacy Network, the current study examines Danish data from a questionnaire concerning teachers' behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes with regard to multilingualism in a Danish school setting. Sixty-one participants contributed to the Danish sample (85% females). The teachers who completed the questionnaire had a positive attitude to multilingualism, the value of maintaining and supporting children's first language<sup>1</sup> (L1), and the importance of proficiency in L1 for developing language and literacy in children's second language (L2). Teachers' attitudes were influenced by their proficiency in a foreign language. Limitations and pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> First language or mother tongue refer to language acquired in early childhood before the age of 3 year

## INTRODUCTION

The population in Denmark is growing, reflecting an increased birth rate and immigration (Danmarks Statistik, 2018). As a result, there has been a change in Danish schools towards more cultural and linguistic diversity, resulting in teachers having to teach subjects to children for whom Danish is a second language and might be a struggle. Yet, little is known about multilingual classrooms in Denmark. In the present article, the Multilingual Classrooms group, working group 1 (WG1<sup>2</sup>) of the European Literacy Network<sup>3</sup> (COST Action IS1401) introduces Danish data from a questionnaire about teaching strategies and resources available in a Danish multilingual classroom, teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to multilingualism and whether teaching experience and proficiency in a foreign language (L2), influence those beliefs and attitudes.

As teachers' beliefs and attitudes influences their behaviours and practices (Richardson, 1996), these concepts are important to investigate. In the present article we differentiate between beliefs and attitudes. With reference to Lundberg (2019), *beliefs* include how teachers understand and think about multilingualism and the term covers both teachers' beliefs and knowledge. *Attitudes*<sup>4</sup> are different from beliefs; attitudes are affective, and beliefs are cognitive mental states (Richardson, 1996).

In order to gain full understanding of teachers' behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes the following section introduces Danish legislation and the context in which teachers work.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.is1401eln.eu/en/working-groups/working-group-1/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.is1401eln.eu/en/>

<sup>4</sup> In the questionnaire the term 'views' are also applied. However, in the present article we use only the term attitude to describe both views and attitudes.

### ***Contextual background***

In Denmark, bilingual<sup>5</sup> children who need language support will be taught Danish as a second language (Bekendtgørelse, 2016). As a compulsory part of teachers' education, they learn how to teach bilingual students (Læreruddannelsen, 2018). Danish municipalities must provide L1 teaching to bilingual children from the EU / EEA countries, as well as to students from the Faroe Islands and Greenland (Bekendtgørelse, 2014). In schools, English is mandatory from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade, German or French is mandatory from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and students can choose a third, optional foreign language from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Undervisningsministeriet, 2017b).

### ***Advantages and challenges of multilingualism***

Mastery of more than one language is valued on the global job market (Delbridge & Helman, 2016), and it is related to cognitive advantages and a higher degree of metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok, 2001, 2007). Previous language knowledge is important for learning new languages, and transfer of skills, important for reading and language development has been reported across languages: for instance, phonological awareness, grammatical abilities, letter-sound knowledge and rapid automatized naming, tested in L1, predict later reading abilities in L2 (Jared, Cormier, Levy & Wade-Woolley, 2011). Learning two languages at the same time, does not confuse children, and it is not necessary to keep the languages apart. However, learning more languages takes longer time than just learning one, so it is not unusual for bilingual children to lag behind monolingual children in each of the languages (Hoff & Core, 2015).

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<sup>5</sup> The term 'bilingual', and not 'multilingual', is applied in official Danish documents. A bilingual child is here defined as a child with a different mother tongue than Danish, who learns Danish when they get into contact with the Danish society (Undervisningsministeriet, 2017a). However, both terms are applied in this manuscript, as they appear in relevant articles and documents.

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3 Despite these advantages, students with an immigrant background are challenged in a  
4 Danish academic context compared to their monolingual peers (Greve & Krassel, 2017; Laursen,  
5 2013). 34.9% of 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants lack functional reading competence, as do 33.4% of  
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8 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants compared to 12.4 % of students without an immigrant background  
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12 (Greve & Krassel, 2017).  
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15 Many factors influence academic success in school, such as the student's wellbeing and  
16 their trust in their teachers (Leighton, Guo, Chu & Tang, 2018). In an international comparison,  
17 an average of 73% of OECD students felt that they belonged to their school (OECD, 2017). For  
18 the Danish sample, to take a specific instance, only 67% of Arabic-speaking students in Denmark  
19 felt that they belonged to their school. Every year, the Ministry of Education in Denmark  
20 measures students' wellbeing. Compared to Danish students, immigrant students in the 2015  
21 survey reported lower social well-being (e.g. sense of belonging) (Undervisningsministeriet,  
22 2015). In this context, teachers are very influential when it comes to language choice and use.  
23  
24 They can decide whether to integrate a child's L1 in the class room and have the power to  
25 determine what kinds of language knowledge are valued and what kinds are not (Hornberger &  
26 Johnson, 2007). Hence teachers play an essential role in wellbeing and academic development  
27 among multilingual children.  
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42 Parents' involvement in schools and the sharing of responsibility between teachers and  
43 parents are also important factors for multilingual children's academic success (Tang, Dearing &  
44 Weiss, 2012; Willson & Hughes, 2006). Schneider and Arnot (2018) studied parental knowledge  
45 about the English school system, along with engagement and barriers to engagement among  
46 parents of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in the United Kingdom, and  
47 found that migrant parents had a high level of engagement with their children at home and at  
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3 school. However, parents lacked knowledge about their children's school and the school system,  
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5 and low levels of English were an important contributor to these factors. On the other hand,  
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7 several teachers thought that parents had a good and sufficient understanding of school practice,  
8  
9 and were not always aware of parents' efforts and engagement in their children's school-related  
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11 activities (Schneider & Arnot, 2018).  
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### 14 15 *Teachers' practices and behaviours in the multilingual classroom*

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17 Research in academic achievement among multilingual students indicate that bilingual schooling  
18  
19 is associated with a greater chance of academic success (Umansky & Reardon, 2014), and that  
20  
21 biliteracy is best supported by bilingual school programmes (Delbridge & Helman, 2016). But  
22  
23 despite benefits, practical challenges may arise in connection with bilingual teaching. Generally,  
24  
25 professionals lack teaching materials (Akello, Timmerman & Namusisi, 2017) and testing  
26  
27 materials (Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016) in the non-dominant language, and when these do exist, they  
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29 often are not of the same quality as those materials in the dominant language (Akello et al., 2017;  
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31 Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016). Consequently, multilingual children are often only tested in the  
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33 dominant language (Reyes, 2012). Including results from both languages would give teachers the  
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35 opportunity of seeing a child's total repertoire of skills and abilities (Ascenzi-Moreno, 2016).  
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41 Often bilingual teaching is provided by multilingual teachers who knows both the  
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43 students' mother tongue and the language of instruction. However, a further challenge for  
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45 teachers' support of bilingual development is the fact that they may not be familiar with all the  
46  
47 language and writing systems they encounter in the classroom. In this regard, teachers tend to  
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49 believe they can only use the languages in the classroom of which they have prior knowledge  
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51 (Haukås, 2016), and that supporting children's L1 is not their responsibility (Cunningham,  
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53 2019). In Austria 64.3 % of the teachers agreed with the statement that students should not be  
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3 allowed to speak their home language in class (De Angelis, 2011). However, Delbridge and  
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5 Helman (2016) argue, that inclusion of children's L1 in the classroom leads to the  
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7 acknowledgement of language resources and greater feelings of belonging. To overcome the  
8  
9 problem, that teachers do not know the children's L1, Delbridge and Helman (2016) suggest that  
10  
11 teachers use activities where the main language is translated into the child's L1 through the  
12  
13 parents at home.  
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17 A similar approach was applied in a Danish research project "Tegn på sprog – tosprogede  
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19 børn lærer at læse og skrive" [Sign of languages – bilingual children learn to read and write]  
20  
21 (Laursen, 2013). In this longitudinal project, 1<sup>st</sup> grade children studied "alphabets all over the  
22  
23 world". Teachers supplied ordinary teaching with parent supported expressions in other  
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25 languages and thereby contributed to the accumulated language knowledge across children in  
26  
27 that particular class (Laursen, 2013).  
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31 Recently, researchers have questioned the idea of languages as separate and bounded  
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33 systems and entities, and instead considered languages as practices, existing in a social and  
34  
35 cultural context (Palmer, Ramon, Mateus & Henderson, 2014). Within this approach, language is  
36  
37 considered "a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource that human  
38  
39 beings use for thinking and for communicating thought" (Wei, 2018, p. 26). The concept  
40  
41 'translanguaging' was originally developed in bilingual schools in Wales, and encompasses both  
42  
43 pedagogical strategies and interaction practices (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). Pedagogical  
44  
45 translanguaging is present when teachers include students' flexible language uses (Ganuza &  
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47 Hedman, 2017). Spontaneous combinations of and transitions between languages promote the  
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49 development and construction of a speaker's identity (Wei, 2018) and metalinguistic awareness  
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51 (Garcia-Mateus & Palmer, 2017). In a Swedish study, Ganuza and Hedman, (2017) observed  
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3 mother tongue teachers during their lessons (Somali and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian). The  
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5 researchers observed significant limitations in the students' use of Swedish, and concluded that  
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7 the teachers' ideas about languages as bounded entities that can be regulated in time and space,  
8  
9 also led to restrictions in the students' interaction, and prevented them from expressing their  
10  
11 interests and opinions. Despite research indicating the value of inclusion of students' L1 as a  
12  
13 resource in L2 learning (Garcia-Mateus & Palmer, 2017), many teachers still believe that the use  
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15 of children's L1 while learning L2 will negatively affect the learning process (Holdway &  
16  
17 Hitchcock, 2017).  
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22 At the same time, concerns have been raised, about whether translinguaging might be a  
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24 threat to the preservation of minority languages. Cenoz & Gorter (2017) consider that this might  
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26 be the case for regional minority languages with a minority status, as these languages can be  
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28 vulnerable, and may disappear, if they are mixed with other languages. However, the inclusion of  
29  
30 several languages in the classroom can promote linguistic and cultural knowledge and  
31  
32 awareness, when the curriculum also includes knowledge about different languages, language  
33  
34 systems and cultural contexts (Boeckmann et al., 2011). Boeckmann and colleagues (2011)  
35  
36 underline the importance of developing the teachers' skills to flexibly apply methods of teaching  
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38 the language of instruction as a first or second language.  
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### 43 ***Teachers' beliefs and attitudes***

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45 When it comes to teachers' beliefs and attitudes to multilingualism, Gogolin (1997) identified  
46  
47 what she calls "the monolingual habitus" in teaching practices. The concept refers to a common  
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49 understanding among teachers that monolingualism is the norm and multilingualism is a  
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51 deviation from it. Since Gogolin's (1997) article was published there has been changes towards  
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53 greater appreciation of multilingualism. For example, the European Commission (2004)  
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3 recommend that, at a minimum, three languages should be taught in schools. Despite these  
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5 changes, monolingualism as a norm or a strong “mother tongue” dominance is still evident  
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7 (Mehmedbegovic & Bak, 2017). This is also seen in a study by Blommaert, Creve, and Willaert  
8  
9 (2006) where a monolingual view on literacy led to disqualification of the student’s prior  
10  
11 language and literacy knowledge. Thus, teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards multilingualism  
12  
13 have a huge influence on multilingual development and teaching practices (Pajares, 1992).  
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17 Research conducted by De Angelis (2011) about teachers’ beliefs across three European  
18  
19 nations (Italy, Austria and the UK) has shown that the teachers were not fully informed about  
20  
21 recent research in multilingualism. They acknowledged the cognitive benefits of being  
22  
23 multilingual but believed that learning more than one language results in confusion and delayed  
24  
25 learning of the dominant language, and they valued learning the major languages more than a  
26  
27 child’s home languages. A large proportion of teachers did not allow their students to speak their  
28  
29 home language in the classroom, and they did not make reference to the children’s home  
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31 languages and cultures although they were willing to give families advice about multilingualism  
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33 (De Angelis, 2011).  
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37 In Sweden, Lundberg (2019) identified three belief sets occurring among Swedish primary  
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39 school teachers. One group of teachers was positive towards multilingualism and multilingual  
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41 education while a second group was critical towards multilingualism and took a monolingual  
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43 stance. A third group agreed with the second group that there is no reason to change professional  
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45 practice, but in contrast to the second group, this group of teachers were positive towards  
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47 multilingualism. Contrary to the above-mentioned studies in second language acquisition,  
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49 Haukås (2016) investigated Norwegian teachers teaching in third languages. These teachers  
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3 actively tried to make students aware of and to use previous linguistic knowledge, English and  
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5 Norwegian in the teaching context of L3.  
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8 Focusing on the teacher, their personal and professional backgrounds differ, and research  
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10 has indicated that these characteristics influence teachers' beliefs about and attitudes towards  
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12 language-minority students (Flores & Smith, 2009) Data from 564 American teachers suggest  
13  
14 that teachers' beliefs about linguistic and cultural diversity are strongly influenced by ethnicity,  
15  
16 linguistic proficiency, and the number of English language learners in the classroom. In the  
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18 study, place of birth and years of teaching experiences did not have a primary, main effect, but a  
19  
20 significant effect as an interaction between different demographic variables. Further, teachers  
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22 with diversity training seemed to hold more positive views towards language diversity (Flores &  
23  
24 Smith, 2009).  
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28 However, few studies have investigated how teacher demographics influences their  
29  
30 attitudes to multilingualism and most research has focused on teachers with a different L1. In this  
31  
32 regard, Mitits (2018) found that the teacher's subject influenced their view on multilingualism,  
33  
34 where language teachers were more open. Likewise, they found that the least experienced  
35  
36 teachers were more open to the importance of maintaining home languages. However, this  
37  
38 research is conducted in a Greek school context and as such may not generalize to other settings.  
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40 In the present study, we examine this in the context of Danish education, investigating teachers'  
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42 beliefs and attitudes towards multilingualism and whether teacher characteristics influenced their  
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44 beliefs and attitudes. Based on the existing findings, we hypothesized that demographic  
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46 characteristics such as teaching experience and proficiency in a foreign language would  
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48 influence teachers' survey responses. Therefore, in the current study we focus exclusively on the  
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50 Danish data, and the following research questions: 1) What teaching strategies are applied and  
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3 what resources are available in a Danish multilingual classroom? 2) What are teachers' beliefs  
4 and attitudes related to multilingualism in the multilingual classroom? 3) Does teacher  
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6 demography such as teaching experience and proficiency in a foreign language influence  
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8 teachers' beliefs and attitudes?  
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## 14 METHODS

### 15 *Design*

16  
17 The present questionnaire formed part of a wider European project to collect teachers'  
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19 "knowledge, attitudes and behaviors with regard to multilingualism" through the Multilingual  
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21 Classroom Questionnaire (MCQ) (Mifsud & Petrova, 2017). Participation in the study was  
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23 voluntary across all countries.  
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### 29 *Participants and procedure*

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31 Denmark has five geographical regions. The present questionnaire was distributed via email-link  
32  
33 to all regions in Denmark and aimed at teachers with experience in teaching multilingual  
34  
35 children. Respondents were anonymous and represented all regions in Denmark. The  
36  
37 questionnaire was opened by 74 participants who did not give any answers, 70 participants who  
38  
39 gave few answers, and 61 participants who continued and contributed to the final database. 57 of  
40  
41 these 61 participants completed all questions; four out of the 61 participants had missing items  
42  
43 but were included because they had completed eight out of nine sections. Among the  
44  
45 respondents, 85% were females. The distribution closely reflects the gender distribution among  
46  
47 Danish teachers, which in 2010 was 87% females and 13% males (Nørby, 2011). The majority  
48  
49 (69%) of the participating teachers were between 35 and 64 years of age, most of them (74%)  
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51 had been teachers in Denmark for six years or more, 97% had professional qualifications to teach  
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3 school-aged pupils, and 76 % reported that they had received specialist training in educating  
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5 children with different language backgrounds.  
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8 Teachers were asked to rate their abilities in foreign languages within the Common  
9  
10 European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), on a scale from 1: beginner to 6:  
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12 mastery level with respect to listening, speaking, reading and writing. The highest possible score  
13  
14 in each language was 24. Danish was the mother tongue for the majority of teachers (86 %). The  
15  
16 most frequent L2 was English (72 %), the most frequent L3 was German (61 %) and the most  
17  
18 frequent L4 was French (24 %, followed by Spanish and German). A composite score for  
19  
20 statistical analysis was computed to establish the average level (max score: 24): L2:  $M = 17.83$   
21  
22 (SD = 4.51), L3:  $M = 13.26$  (SD = 6.06), L4:  $M = 9.34$  (SD = 7.66).  
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26  
27 In total, teachers reported 51 different languages spoken by children in their classes. The  
28  
29 most frequent reported language was Arabic (80 %) followed by Kurdish (28 %), English (23  
30  
31 %), Turkish (18 %), Polish (18 %) and Tigrinya (16 %). On average each teacher encountered  
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33 four different L1s. The population taught were mostly school aged children aged 6 years and  
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35 above.  
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### 38 *Questionnaire*

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41 The Danish data is a part of a European questionnaire about teachers' understanding of  
42  
43 multilingualism. The questionnaire was developed by COST Action IS1401, WG1, revised and  
44  
45 refined, based on contributions from all participating countries. Previous research was reviewed  
46  
47 (e.g. Otwinowska, 2014; Haukås, 2016; Ellis, 2004; Ramos, 2009; De Angelis, 2011; Lee &  
48  
49 Oxelson, 2006) and adapted items from De Angelis (2011) were included. A bespoke  
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51 questionnaire was designed following European COST meetings, and the final questionnaire was  
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53 piloted in Malta and the UK. It was translated by the first author and back-translated by  
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3 [BLINDED] and typed into Survey Xact by the first and second author. WG1 was a part of a  
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5 European COST Action<sup>6</sup> project that brought together researchers who worked together on an  
6  
7 integrated and inclusive approach to foundational literacy across Europe. 2792 teachers from  
8  
9 eleven countries responded to the questionnaires. The countries were Austria, Bulgaria,  
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11 Catalonia, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, Turkey, and the United  
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13 Kingdom. A copy of the questionnaire may be obtained from the WG coordinators.  
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16  
17 The final questionnaire had 39 questions divided into nine sections. In this article, we  
18  
19 focus only on the Danish data from the questionnaire. The first four sections asked for  
20  
21 demographic information about the respondent and their pupils. The following sections  
22  
23 investigated 5) language learning opportunities for school children in Denmark, 6) teachers'  
24  
25 views in relation to multilingualism, 7) children's first language/s (L1), 8) children's acquisition  
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27 of their L2, and 9) literacy in the multilingual classroom. Items eliciting views of  
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29 multilingualism, learning and L2 were rated on a six-point Likert scale from strongly disagree  
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31 (Danish: 'meget uenig') to strongly agree (Danish: 'meget enig').  
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## 36 RESULTS

### 37 *Approach to analyses*

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39 The data were exported from Questionnaire Xact to Excel and to SPSS version 25 for further  
40  
41 analysis. Data from items with a nominal response format and responses to open ended questions  
42  
43 are presented descriptively. To allow robust comparisons across domains, a mean value for each  
44  
45 domain was computed which resulted in a composite scale value for that domain (Carifio &  
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47 Perla, 2007), also, Cronbach's alpha was also calculated for each domain-scale in order to  
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55 <sup>6</sup> <https://www.cost.eu/cost-actions/>

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3 evaluate reliability. Teachers' demographic data, such as teaching experience and level of  
4 proficiency in a foreign language (L2) were used as background variables and applied in multiple  
5 regression analysis.  
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### 10 ***Teachers' practices and behaviours in the multilingual classroom***

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12 To answer the first research question, 1) **What teaching strategies are applied and which**  
13 **resources are available in a Danish multilingual classroom?** teachers were asked, "What  
14 strategies do you use to teach in the multilingual classroom?" The options were: code-switching,  
15 translation between languages of the classroom and children's L1, learners translating for their  
16 peers, forming language groups, no particular strategies, and an opportunity to provide further  
17 information. Teachers could tick all options that applied. Results in frequencies (percent) are  
18 available in figure 1. Translation in the classroom (46%) or between peers (66%) was the most  
19 widely applied strategy. Further comments were: teaching concepts and vocabulary, Google  
20 Translate, body-language, gestures, modelling, pictures, photos, and teaching 'Danish as a  
21 second language'.  
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### 36 ***Insert figure 1***

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38 Additionally, teachers were asked about whether there are any strategic attempts, through  
39 education, to reduce language barriers for immigrant children, and 89% confirmed the presence  
40 of such strategic attempts. These teachers were further asked what attempts they were aware of.  
41 The options were: education of teachers; special classes; support to parents; development of  
42 specialist materials; teachers' responsibilities in schools and other (figure 2). Education of  
43 teachers (65%) and teachers' responsibility in school (59%) were the most widely chosen  
44 options.  
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### 54 ***Insert figure 2***

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3 Further, teachers were asked if there are any specific resources for teaching language/s in  
4 their school/class for pupils who do not speak the language of the classroom. Approximately half  
5 of the teachers (59%) confirmed the presence of available resources. In the questionnaire,  
6 participants could tick all options that applied and comment further (figure 3). Online resources,  
7 books and games were the most often mentioned resources (82%). Further comments were:  
8 smartboard, toys, entering specific classrooms e.g. the school kitchen to learn the name of  
9 specific items such as knife, fork, spoon, flour and sugar or the biology lab to learn names of  
10 birds etc. bilingual consultants, iPad, apps, own materials, Google Translate and 'CD'ord'.  
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22 *Insert figure 3*

### 23 24 25 *Teachers' beliefs and attitudes to practices in the classroom*

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27 For the second research question 2) **What are teachers' beliefs and attitudes related to**  
28 **multilingualism in the multilingual classroom?** the participants were asked about what practices  
29 they believed contributed the most to the educational achievement of migrant students. The  
30 options were: support for the home language (L1) in the classroom, support for the home  
31 language (L1) outside the classroom, parental involvement in school activities (social), parental  
32 involvement in school activities (learning-related) and other. The most often-chosen answers  
33 were related to parents' involvement in school activities (**social: 82%, leaning: 69%**) (see figure  
34 4). Further comments were: believe that students can do well, and let them know that we believe  
35 in them, show interest in their culture and their previous life, make a safe environment where  
36 they can learn at their own pace, support of parents' Danish learning, and talk about what  
37 happens in school, in relation to learning and social matters.  
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52 *Insert figure 4*

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55 Participants were asked whether teachers should only use the languages all children know  
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3 very well: 33% answered yes. Comments were: it is a Danish school, they have to hear the  
4 Danish language, children's L1 are diverse, and it is important that we have a common language,  
5 Danish, the teacher does not know children's L1, we are busy, and they will learn Danish faster,  
6 it is positive if teachers include other languages, then students see similarities, diversities and  
7 possibilities, languages are parts of students' identity, all need to learn linguistic awareness.  
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12 Finally, teachers were asked about the greatest challenges they face in a multicultural  
13 classroom. The question had four answer options: limited reading habits on the part of the  
14 students, the need to address the expectations of parents and society, the need for greater  
15 cooperation and coordination among teaching personnel, and other. The first three options were  
16 rated by the teachers almost equally often as most important (28%, 30%, 31%) (figure 5). Further  
17 comments were students' war-traumas, school and parent cooperation, parents' limited  
18 economical resources, cultural differences, and problems with motivation.  
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### 30 *Insert figure 5*

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33 To sum up, translation in the classroom and between peers seemed to be the most widely  
34 applied strategy in the Danish multilingual classroom. Online resources, books and games were  
35 often used and teaching can be challenging; however, teachers believe that social- and learning  
36 related parent involvement contribute the most to the educational achievement of migrant  
37 students.  
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### 45 *Teachers' beliefs and attitudes to children's L1, and to the acquisition of L2 and literacy*

46  
47 Teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism were further examined in four sections with six  
48 points Likert scale questionnaire questions, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.  
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50 To allow for robust comparisons across all three domains, a mean value for each domain was  
51 computed which resulted in a composite scale value for a domain. Some items were reverse  
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3 coded, meaning that higher scores indicated a positive attitude towards multilingualism. Finally,  
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5 Cronbach's Alpha was calculated, to evaluate internal consistency.  
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8 The first Likert scale section included fifteen items about teachers' attitude to  
9  
10 multilingualism (see Multilingual Classroom Questionnaire (MCQ) section VII. Your views  
11  
12 about multilingualism, Mifsud & Petrova, 2017). Items 1, 12, 14 and 15 were reverse coded.  
13  
14 Range 1 to 6,  $M = 4.8$  (SD 0.50, min 3.53, max 5.73). Cronbach's Alpha was 0.75, which is  
15  
16 acceptable (Field, 2009).  
17

18  
19 The second section "IX. The first language/s of migrant children" included sixteen items  
20  
21 about teachers' attitudes towards children's L1, the language/s that children speak at home with  
22  
23 their parents. Item 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 14 and 15 were reverse coded, range was 1 to 6,  $M = 4.2$  (SD  
24  
25 0.67, min 2.19, max 5.69). Cronbach's alpha was 0.79, which is acceptable (Field, 2009).  
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28  
29 The third section "X. Childrens learning of L2" included eight items about teachers' view  
30  
31 of children's acquisition of their L2. Item 2 was reverse coded, range was 1 to 6,  $M = 4.6$  (SD  
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33 0.68, min 2.75, max 6). Cronbach's alpha was 0.80, which is acceptable (Field, 2009).  
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36 The fourth and final Likert scale section "XI. Literacy" included 6 items about children's  
37  
38 development of literacy. No items were reverse coded, range was 1 to 6,  $M = 4.8$  (SD 0.74, min  
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40 3.17, max 6). Cronbach's alpha was 0.84, which is high (Field, 2009).  
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### 43 ***Influence of variables related to teacher demographics on questionnaire results***

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45 To answer the third research question 3) **Does teacher demography such as teaching experience**  
46  
47 **and proficiency in a foreign language (L2) influence teachers' beliefs and attitudes?** we  
48  
49 performed a series of multiple regression analyses examining teacher demographics: proficiency  
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51 in foreign languages (L2), and teacher experience.  
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55 In doing so, first, we computed a composite score for 'teachers' language proficiency' by  
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3 adding their scores for L2 skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). This calculation was  
4 possible given that the three variables had the same metric. Also, the variable coding teaching  
5 experience (0-10 years & 11 years or more) was a categorical variable, and was recoded into  
6 dummy variables (two groups).  
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12 We performed four sets of multiple regression analyses, focusing on the composite scales  
13 for questionnaire questions: 1) teachers' attitude towards multilingualism, 2) teachers' attitudes  
14 towards children's L1, 3) teachers' attitudes towards children's acquisition of their L2, and  
15 finally 4) teachers' attitudes towards children's development of literacy.  
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19 Correlation analysis showed that all variables were significantly interrelated. As can be seen in  
20 Table 1, teachers' attitudes with respect to all four factors correlated considerably (range: .47-  
21 73).  
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28 *Insert table 1*  
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31 In the first analysis, data on teachers' attitudes to multilingualism was entered as the  
32 dependent variable and teachers' experience at step 1 and level of L2 at step 2 as the independent  
33 variables. Results showed that only L2 level significantly predicted teachers' attitudes towards  
34 multilingualism, with an  $R^2$  of .119,  $p = .029$ .  
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40 In the second analysis, teachers' attitudes towards children's L1 was modelled as being  
41 predicted by teachers' experience at step 1 and level of L2 at step 2. No significant predictors  
42 were observed.  
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47 In the third multiple regression we applied the composite scale score of teachers' attitudes  
48 towards children's acquisition of their L2 as the dependent variable. As independent variables,  
49 teachers' experience was entered at step 1 and level of L2 at step 2. No significant predictors  
50 were observed.  
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3 In the fourth multiple regression we applied the composite scale score of teachers' attitudes  
4 towards children's development of literacy as the dependent variable. As independent variables,  
5 teachers' experience was entered at step 1 and level of L2 at step 2. No significant predictors  
6 were observed (Table 2).  
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12 *Insert Table 2*  
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## 14 **DISCUSSION**

15  
16 The present study aimed to investigate Danish teachers' behaviours, beliefs and attitudes in the  
17 multilingual classroom in Denmark. Translation in the classroom and between peers seemed to  
18 be the most widely applied strategy in the Danish multilingual classroom. Online resources,  
19 books and games were often used. Teachers acknowledged that teaching in the multilingual  
20 classroom can be challenging; however, they believed that social- and learning related parent  
21 involvement contribute the most to educational achievement of migrant students. In general, the  
22 teachers had a positive attitude to multilingualism, to the value of maintaining and supporting  
23 children's L1, and the importance of proficiency in L1 for developing language and literacy in  
24 children's L2. Teachers' beliefs and approaches were to some extent influenced by their own  
25 proficiency in a foreign language.  
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### 41 *Teachers' practices, behaviours and beliefs in the multilingual classroom*

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43 Results indicated that most teachers acknowledged that there are strategic attempts to overcome  
44 language barriers through education. This is supported by the fact that most teachers reported  
45 having received specialist training in educating children from different language backgrounds.  
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47 This might reflect the fact that teaching children from different language backgrounds is a  
48 compulsory part of the teacher education. Even though many teachers had received specialist  
49 training, only about half of the teachers indicated that they had specific resources for teaching  
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3 language/s in their school/class for pupils who do not speak the language of the classroom. At  
4  
5 the same time, many respondents acknowledged that it is the teachers' responsibility to  
6  
7 overcome language barriers in the multilingual classroom.  
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10 The present finding suggest that teachers feel responsible and know that it is important to  
11 support bilingual schooling, but may only have limited access to resources. The lack of resources  
12 to teach multilingual children is also highlighted by Delbridge and Helman (2016) as one of the  
13 challenges in bilingual teaching. Research suggests that having bilingual teachers in the  
14 classroom is an advantage for bringing about academic achievements among bilingual students  
15 (Tang et al., 2012). A bilingual teacher in the classroom knows both languages and can point to  
16 similarities and differences between languages; however, this requires that the bilingual students  
17 speak the same languages as each other, which is not the case in many multilingual Danish  
18 classrooms. In the Danish sample, teachers reported that the children spoke 51 different  
19 languages, with each teacher encountering on average four different languages, and the most  
20 frequent L1s for the children were not the languages that the teachers most frequently knew.  
21 Thus, teachers face a challenge in supporting multilingual development and helping the children  
22 that might not yet be fluent in the classroom languages.  
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40 To gain insight into what teachers do to overcome these challenges, teachers were asked  
41 which strategies they used. They reported applying peer translation, translation, code-switching,  
42 and other strategies (e.g. Google Translate, body-language and gesture modelling). Peer  
43 translation seems to be a pragmatic option for teachers who do not know students' L1, and when  
44 there are many different languages in the same classroom. Code-switching, on the other hand, is  
45 only relevant to teachers who know students' L1, at least to some degree. The use of peer  
46 translation, Google Translate, and the process of showing things and naming them seem to be  
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3 practical solutions to the problem of teaching children for whom the classroom language is a  
4 challenge. Likewise, it reflects the belief of many Danish teachers that it is their responsibility to  
5 overcome language barriers. Taken together with the fact that the majority of teachers (67%)  
6 answered that the teacher should not only use the languages that all children know well indicates  
7 that the teachers are open to integrating other languages into their teaching. In this regard they  
8 resemble teachers from the UK and Italy whereas teachers from Austria were less open to  
9 including other languages (De Angelis, 2011).  
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19 Arguments against using other languages were, for example, that it is important to have a  
20 common language, Danish, and that the teacher does not know children's L1. However, in the  
21 study by Haukås (2016), teachers used the *two* languages that all students had in common,  
22 Norwegian and English, which was considered to be a way to support the acquisition of further  
23 linguistic knowledge (Haukås, 2016).  
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31 In the questionnaire, the majority of teachers believed that parental involvement  
32 contributed the most to the educational achievement of migrant students, but at the same time  
33 they reported that parent collaboration was a challenge. However, including minority languages  
34 in teaching might provide identity opportunities that increase bilingual students' motivation, as  
35 was the case in the Danish study "Tegn på sprog" (Laursen, 2013) where multilingual knowledge  
36 from parents was considered a resource, contributing with specific knowledge and common  
37 linguistic understanding. In the questionnaire, teachers identified limited reading habits as a  
38 problem, but the inclusion of children's home language and culture might in general contribute  
39 to motivation and to identity construction that might be beneficial for the development of  
40 students' academic achievement and wellbeing. In this context, translanguaging may be a  
41 relevant option to facilitate the appreciation of more languages in the classroom, and the  
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3 inclusion of more languages, e.g. the use of English may facilitate language learning and  
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5 linguistic awareness for all students.  
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8 In Denmark, parental involvement is highly valued, but teachers may not always be aware  
9  
10 of the parents' ability to participate in school activities (Schneider & Arnot, 2018). In Denmark,  
11  
12 all schools have a school board, including elected parents (Undervisningsministeriet, 2017b);  
13  
14 there are teacher and parent meetings several times a year, along with social arrangements and an  
15  
16 online platform where teachers and parents communicate daily. As mentioned, parental  
17  
18 involvement and shared responsibility between teachers and parents for students' education are  
19  
20 important elements for academic achievement (Tang et al., 2012; Willson & Hughes, 2006), but  
21  
22 this may present a challenge if parents are unfamiliar with the language, culture and the school's  
23  
24 expectations. Seen in this context, more contact between multilingual parents and teachers may  
25  
26 be relevant to ensure that parents have access to this knowledge.  
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### 30 31 *Teacher attitudes*

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33 Teachers completing this questionnaire had a positive attitude towards multilingualism, the value  
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35 of maintaining and supporting children's L1, and the importance of proficiency in L1 for  
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37 developing language and literacy in children's L2. The very positive attitude towards learning  
38  
39 more than one language might be an expression of the fact that the Danish language is only  
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41 spoken by approximately 5.9 million people (principally in Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe  
42  
43 Islands) (Statistisk årbog, 2017), so it is important for Danes to learn foreign languages. Danish  
44  
45 legislation requires children to learn English and at least one additional (typically major)  
46  
47 language. Thus, the positive attitude towards multilingualism might reflect the need for Danes to  
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49 learn major languages in addition to their mother tongue. High esteem towards major languages  
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51 is also seen in De Angelis' (2011) studies where major languages were valued more than the  
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3 children's mother tongues. In contrast to De Angelis (2011), the Danish teachers also find it  
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5 important to support and maintain children's L1. Their willingness to support and wish to  
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7 maintain the students' L1 is also reflected in the teachers often allowing their students to speak  
8  
9 additional languages in the classroom. Thus, it seems that a large proportion of the Danish  
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11 teacher sample adheres to the beliefs exhibited by the first group in Lundberg's (2019) study,  
12  
13 who are very positive towards multilingualism and the inclusion of diverse languages in the  
14  
15 classroom setting. Despite this positive stance, 33% of the teachers seemed to believe that it is  
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17 only possible to integrate languages they are already familiar with – a result also seen in previous  
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19 research (Haukås, 2016).  
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### 24 ***Influence of teacher demographics on attitudes***

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26 Regarding the influence of teacher demographics on attitudes to multilingualism, children's L1,  
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28 learning of L2, and literacy, results showed that only teachers' L2 level significantly predicted  
29  
30 teachers' attitudes to multilingualism. The findings are to some extent in accordance with results  
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32 from Flores & Smith (2009), who concluded that the ability to use a minority language led to a  
33  
34 more positive attitude towards language-minority students. However, the lack of influence from  
35  
36 teaching experience is contrary to the findings of Mitits (2018), who discovered that teachers  
37  
38 with less experience were more positive towards the importance of maintaining the children's  
39  
40 home language. In the present study, results can possibly be explained by the fact that most  
41  
42 participants have been educated as "Danish as a second language" teachers, as 76% of the  
43  
44 responding teachers stated that they had received specialist training in educating children with  
45  
46 different language backgrounds. According to Flores and Smith (2009), preparation for diversity  
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48 leads to more positive attitudes towards language-minority students. The fact that teaching  
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50 bilingual students is a part of all teachers' basic education seems to support all students,  
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3 independent of language or ethnicity.  
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5 To conclude, the results of the Danish questionnaire indicate that Danish teachers working  
6 with multilingual children are positive towards multilingualism in the classroom. Likewise,  
7 teachers are positive towards supporting children's L1 development and acknowledge that the  
8 languages are mutually enhancing. Especially for minority groups, teacher expectations are  
9 important for academic achievement (Jussim & Harber, 2005). In this regard it is positive that  
10 some of the teachers, when asked which practices they think contribute to educational  
11 achievement, replied that they believe that the students can do well and that they tell this to the  
12 students.  
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#### 24 ***Methodological issues and limitations***

25 The present questionnaire was distributed to all municipalities in Denmark, and teachers who  
26 went through the long questionnaire might be those who take a special interest in and care for  
27 multilingual students. In that sense, it was a homogeneous, self-selected sample, which is a  
28 limitation of the study. Furthermore, the teachers might have answered the questions in  
29 accordance to what is socially desirable and not what they actually believe and think. For future  
30 studies a mixed methods design would allow participants to explore and explain professional  
31 experiences, e.g. when research design include triangulation with interviews. Interviews with  
32 focus-groups would have helped us to investigate in more detail precisely what teachers  
33 understood by the specific formulations in the questionnaire. However, the present design with  
34 anonymous email-links did not allow this kind of analysis, which of course is important to bear  
35 in mind when interpreting the results of the present study.  
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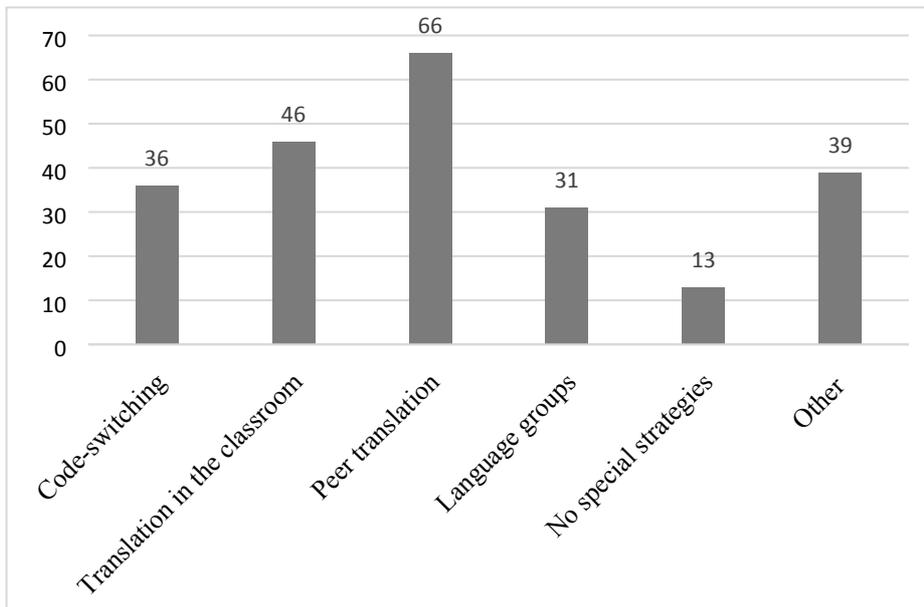
Figure 1. *Teaching strategies in the multilingual classroom (percent)*

Figure 2. Strategic attempts, through education, to reduce influence of language barriers (percent)

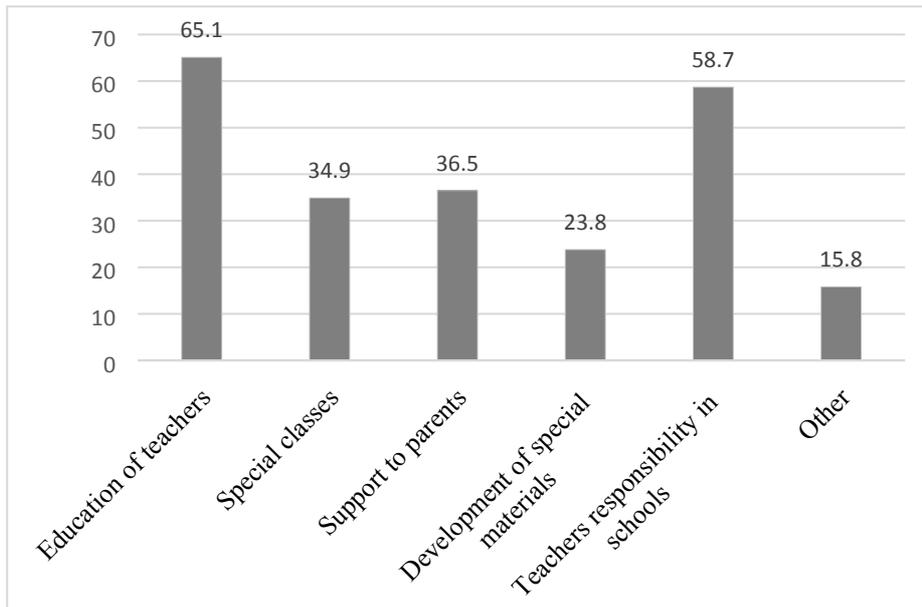
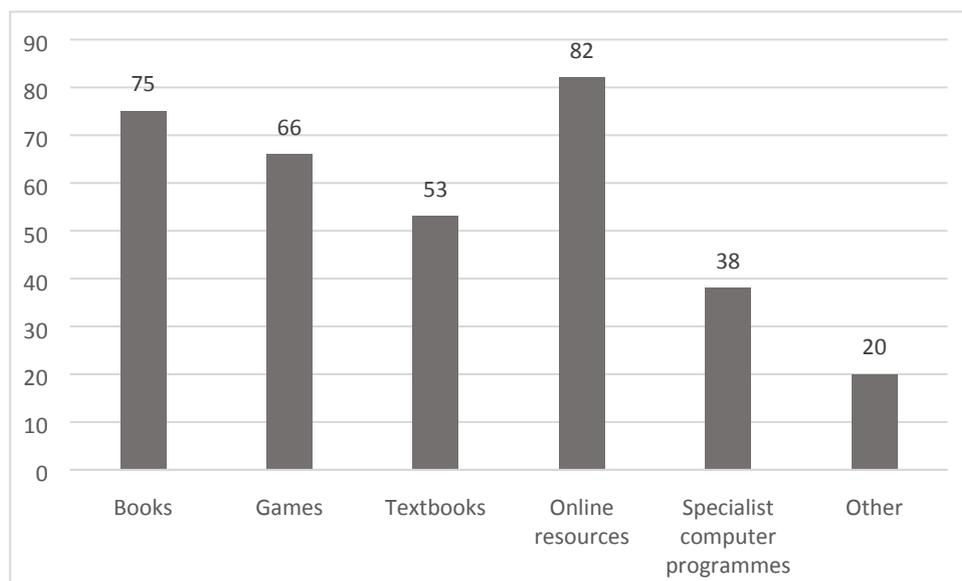
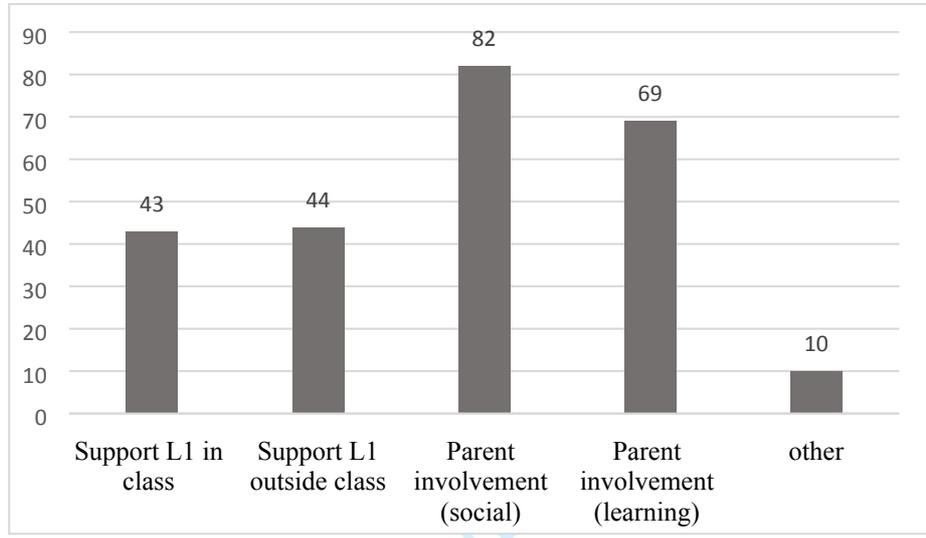


Figure 3. *Resources in the classroom (percent)*

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Figure 4. Practices that contribute to educational achievement (percent)



Peer Review Only

Figure 5. *Greatest challenges in the multicultural classroom (percent)*

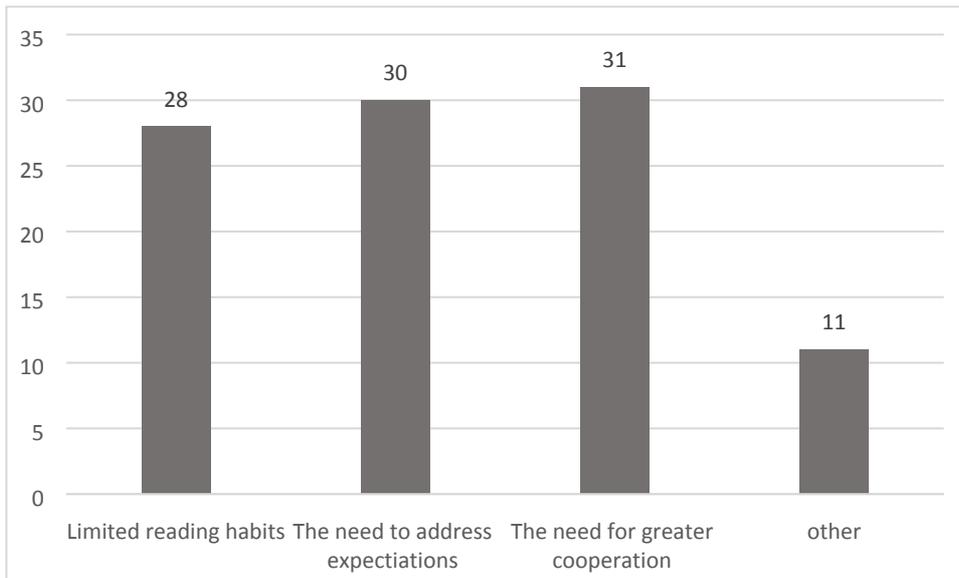


Table 1 Correlation analysis for composite scale variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
Attitude to Multilingualism	-			
View of children’s L1	.55***	-		
View of acquisition of L2	.62***	.73***	-	
View of development of literacy	.47***	.62***	.66***	-

Note: \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

Table 2 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting teachers’ attitude to multilingualism, View of children’s L1, their acquisition of L2 and development of Literacy

Model		Attitude to Multilingualism			View of children’s L1			View of children’s acquisition of L2			View of children’s development of literacy		
		r	β	R <sup>2</sup>	r	β	R <sup>2</sup>	r	β	R <sup>2</sup>	r	β	R <sup>2</sup>
1	Teaching experience >10	.135	.135	.018	.087	.087	.008	.087	.087	.008	.098	.098	.010
2	Teaching experience >10	.135	.156	.119	.087	.079	.016	.087	.094	.015	.098	.108	.030
	L2 level	.308*	.318*		-.101	-.094		.080	.088		.136	.143	

Note: \*p < .05.