University Foreign Language Instructors' beliefs about Multilingualism and Multilingual Practices

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Abstract

Multilingualism is a common feature of globalized societies and a valuable resource among researchers, teachers, students and society. Knowledge of teachers' beliefs is central to understanding teachers' behaviors, decisions and practices in the classroom. The current study explores Greek university foreign language instructors' beliefs about multilingualism and the use of multilingual practices in educational settings. Data were collected via focus groups discussions with 15 foreign language instructors from various Greek universities. Teachers' discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Two main findings emerged from the analysis. Firstly, participants hold positive beliefs about multilingualism. Secondly, these beliefs are not reflected on teaching practices in the classroom because teachers tend to adhere to monolingual and more traditional teaching and assessment approaches posing challenges for the implementation of multilingual policies. Implications for altering or affecting foreign language instructors' beliefs about multilingual pedagogical practices are discussed.

Key Words: Multilingualism, multilingual education, multilingual practices, beliefs, university instructors

1. Introduction

Multilingualism refers to the routine use of two or more languages in a speech community (Romaine, 2013) and is deemed to be a natural, ubiquitous phenomenon worldwide (Aronin & Singleton, 2008; Blommaert, 2010). Liddicoat et al. (2014) claim that linguistic and cultural diversity is an inherent feature of most, if not all, modern societies, given that half of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual (Grosjean, 2010). Trudgill and Cheshire (1997) claim that monolingual speakers are the exception rather than the rule. Likewise, Aronin and Singleton (2008) conclude that multilingualism is now such an integral aspect of globalized societies that it has become necessary to the functioning of major components of the social structure (such as technology, education, culture and politics).

1.1 Advantages of multilingualism

As mentioned above, mastery of many languages is nowadays perceived as a valuable and positive resource for both individuals and societies (Haukås et al., 2022). Moreover, research has demonstrated that being able to communicate in two or more languages comes with certain benefits (Diamond, 2010). These advantages are associated with enhanced cognitive flexibility and increased working memory (Antoniou, 2019; Monnier et al., 2022), creativity (Fürst & Grin, 2021), protective effect against symptoms of cognitive decline (Alladi et al., 2017; Berkes & Bialystok, 2022), better metalinguistic awareness and learning skills, related to extensive use of language learning strategies (Cenoz, 2020), increased empathy and open-mindedness (Dewaele & Botes, 2020; Tiurikova et al., 2021), economic and better work-related prospects (Bel Habib, 2011; Delbridge & Helman, 2016) and higher academic performance (Rutgers et al., 2021).

1.2 Notions related to multilingual practices in education

The high prevalence of multilingualism around the world resulted in the rise of multilingual practices in educational contexts (Hasai, 2023). The notions of multi-competence (Cook, 1991), translanguaging (e.g., García &

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Lin, 2017) and plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001) are instances of paradigms that address the complexity of teaching contexts as a result of social mobility and linguistic and cultural diversity.

In particular, multi-competence refers to all languages in a single mind or speech community and their interdependence, constant interactions and inter-relationships. Moreover, it does not depend on monolingual norms, thus rejecting the native speaker ideal, and it is believed to affect both language and cognitive systems (Cook, 2016). Translanguaging is defined as a natural communication process within a hetero linguistic family or a speech community (García, 2012). Plurilingualism first started gaining visibility in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) is the major pillar of the Council of Europe language policy (Council of Europe, 2001). According to this paradigm, speakers are expected to use their multilingual, integrated repertoire for various tasks. Proficiency levels in these languages may vary and thus one language may be more or less dominant or speakers may exhibit full or partial mastery in them depending on factors, such as their experiences, communicative needs and motivation (Galante, 2022).

1.3 Multilingual turn and monolingual practices in the language classroom

The above-mentioned terms are valuable in that they highlight many aspects of multilingualism (Piccardo & Galante, 2018). In addition, these terms laid the ground for what is known as the multilingual turn in language education (π.χ. May, 2014; Meier, 2017; Ortega, 2014; Paquet-Gauthier & Beaulieu, 2016; Piccardo & Galante, 2018). The multilingual turn encompasses two basic premises. First, modern societies are characterized by a great deal of linguistic and cultural plurality both at the societal level and individual level. Second, the understanding of a speaker's repertoire cannot be limited to the study of the languages that make it up as separate, isolated entities, but it should take into consideration the dynamic, flexible, interconnected and fluid use of the multiple languages in the various communicative contexts (Piccardo & Galante, 2018).

Despite the prevalence of multilingualism and the current trends in multilingual education, pedagogical practices still rely on monolingual principles, as it seems that research findings regarding the benefits of multilingualism and the effectiveness of multilingual education practices have been only partly applied to foreign language classrooms (Mehmedbegovic & Bak, 2017; Portolés & Martí, 2020). In the words of Inbar-Lourie (2010) "language teaching pedagogy has tended to ignore or even suppress bilingual or multilingual options endorsing a predominantly monolingual policy […]" (ibid., 351). Gogolin (1997) refers to these teaching practices as monolingual habitus, whereas Blommaert et al. (2006) as monoglot ideologies. It is worth mentioning that Blommaert et al. (2006) found that teachers tended to disqualify the linguistic and literacy background of newly arrived immigrant children as not being relevant to the acquisition of the school dominant language. Thus, the actual linguistic diversity that immigrant students brought to school was largely ignored. Pajares (1992) suggests that teachers' beliefs and attitudes exert an influence on teaching practices.

2. Beliefs

Beliefs are central to every discipline that studies human behavior and learning and assist individuals in defining and understanding themselves and the contexts they are engaging in (White, 1999). In recent years, researchers have realized the important role of language beliefs that are held by language teachers (Borg, 2011; Ghobadi Mohebi & Khodadady, 2011). In short, researchers found that teachers' own beliefs influenced the way they behaved and taught (Pajares, 1992).

2.1 Teachers' beliefs

Teachers' beliefs refer to the description of mental constructs that are taken to be subjectively true, encompass both cognitive and affective aspects, are temporally stable, although they can change as a result of engagement in certain events and they are expected to influence the ways in which teachers deal with problems of practice (Skott, 2013, 2015). Teachers' beliefs are an important concept in understanding teachers' cognitive processes, classroom teaching practices, attitudes to educational change and learning to teach (Richardson, 1996). In particular, teachers' beliefs:

- may be influenced by teachers' personal experiences as learners and are well entrenched by the time teachers reach college.
- assist teachers in filtering and interpreting new information and experiences.
- may outweigh the effects of teacher education in influencing what teachers actually do in the classroom.

- can influence teachers' instructional decisions and practices.
- are, at the same time, not always reflected in classroom's teaching practices.
- interact constantly with experience and
- influence how teachers perceive educational changes

(Borg, 2015b).

Teachers' beliefs are a well-established aspect of teacher cognition (Borg, 2015a), which refers to "what teachers know, believe and think" (Borg, 2005: 190). Thus, the goal of teacher cognition research is to study the complex relationships between what teachers know, believe and think and how their cognition influences their decisions in the classroom (Krulatz et al. 2022).

Teachers hold many beliefs regarding knowledge, their students, their subject content, their instructional practices and moral, ethical and societal dilemmas and issues that affect their teaching (Levin, 2015) at varying levels of specificity (Buehl & Beck, 2015). In fact, there are many different types of beliefs, including beliefs about knowledge (epistemology), about the performance of instructors and their students (attributions, locus of control, motivation, anxiety), about self-perceptions (including one's self-worth, self-concept, self-esteem, and sense of agency), and about confidence in one's abilities and skills (self-efficacy) (Fairbanks et al., 2010).

2.2 Teachers' beliefs about multilingualism

In this section, we acknowledge teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual practices. Several studies examined teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and teaching in multilingual settings in different European countries, such as Italy, United Kingdom and Austria (De Angelis, 2011), Norway (Haukås, 2016), Poland (Otwinowska, 2014, 2017), Germany (Heyder & Schädlich, 2014), Sweden (Lundberg, 2019) and Greece (Griva & Chostelidou, 2012; Mitits, 2018). Even though the above mentioned studies were conducted in different educational settings, with various sets of languages taught in school and various instructional practices implemented, their findings are quite the same: although many participants hold positive beliefs about multilingualism and there is a consensus among them that multilingualism should be promoted, they do not foster use of previous linguistic knowledge and generally they tend to adhere to monolingual practices when they face the reality of the classroom (Krulatz et al., 2022). Moreover, they adopt outdated views on language instruction and learning, such as that languages should be learnt successively in order to avoid confusion (Burner & Carlsen, 2022) and they are influenced by their teaching subject, with language teachers being more open to multilingual practices compared to their colleagues of other subjects (Mitits, 2018). In other words, teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and the advantages that come with it often do not translate into altering teaching practices (Hasai, 2023).

3. The study

3.1 Research questions

The literature review above discussed several documented advantages of multilingualism and the subsequent multilingual turn in language teaching. It went on to discuss the important role teachers' beliefs play in decisions and behaviors as regards language planning and language teaching. However, it has been shown that there is no direct correspondence between what teachers believe and what they actually do in classroom. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been carried out to explore Greek university instructors' beliefs towards multilingualism and multilingual practices.

In view of the above, this study aims at sheding light on Greek university instructors' beliefs about multilingualism and on their teaching practices. In particular, the research questions that guide the present study are the following:

- Research question 1 (RQ1): What are Greek university instructors' beliefs about multilingualism?
- Research question 2 (RQ2): To what extent do Greek university instructors collaborate with other language teachers to enhance their teaching practices?
- Research question 3 (RQ3): What teaching strategies are applied in the classroom?

3.2 Context

The study took place in 2021, during the acute phase of COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2023[2]). In this period, the in-person classes were suspended, and all Greek universities moved to remote instruction following government mandate.

3.3 Participants

The participants' selection strategy was in accordance with the method of qualitative data analysis we employed, namely thematic analysis (cf. 3.5). In this perspective, we used purposive sampling, which involves deliberate selection of subjects who are knowledgeable about the topic under investigation (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004), have a shared experience to draw on (Chestnutt & Robson, 2001) and thus are "information rich" cases (Patton, 2015).

In light of the above selection strategy, university instructors of foreign languages enrolled in various Greek universities were invited via email to participate in a study aimed at exploring university instructors' beliefs towards multilingualism and multilingual practices used in the classroom. From the beginning, it was made clear to all respondents that the study was planned to take place through a communications platform due to the restrictions in physical contacts.

The email was answered by 15 university instructors who made up the sample of this study. Their mean age was 29,5. Regarding their gender distribution, participants were not balanced with 12 females (80%) and 3 males (20%). Out of the 15 teachers, 46,6% taught English as a foreign language (FL) (n=7), 20% taught French as an FL (n=3), 20% taught German as an FL (n=3), 6,7% taught Spanish as an FL (n=1) and 6,7% taught Italian as an FL (n=1). Their mean total teaching experience was 11,6 years, whereas in a university setting 6,1 years. In terms of academic degree, a considerable percentage of the participants (53,3%) hold a master's degree (n=8), whereas 2 instructors (13,3%) were PhD holders. Table 1 demonstrates the background of the participants. Their identities have been anonymized, and thus they will be referred to as T1, T2 etc. (which are code names for "Teacher 1", "Teacher 2", and so on).

Table 1: Participants' background characteristics

Name	Gender	Age	Language taught	Years of experience (total)	Years of experience (in a university setting)	Degrees obtained	
						MA	PhD
T1	male	35	English	10	5	✓	✗
T2	female	40	English	15	3	✓	✗
T3	female	29	English	4	1	✗	✗
T4	female	31	English	6	2	✓	✗
T5	male	27	French	3	1	✗	✗
T6	female	43	German	15	10	✓	✗
T7	female	44	English	15	8	✓	✗
T8	female	38	English	12	7	✓	✗
T9	female	35	English	13	5	✗	✗
T10	female	49	German	24	18	✓	✓
T11	female	33	German	8	3	✗	✗
T12	male	32	Italian	5	2	✗	✗
T13	female	34	Spanish	9	6	✗	✗
T14	female	46	French	22	19	✗	✓
T15	female	31	French	5	2	✓	✗

[2] https://www.who.int/europe/emergencies/situations/covid-19.

3.4 Procedure

Given the small number of participants and keeping in mind that the goal of the study was to obtain in-depth insights of experienced teachers (Krueger & Casey, 2000) data collection was based on focus group discussion. In particular, focus group interviews or discussions are a versatile, qualitative research method which focuses on a single topic (be it a problem, experience, service or other phenomenon), allowing in-depth group interviews (Lederman, 1990). There are a number of advantages to the use of focus groups, that can be summarized in the following ways:

- focus groups are an economical way of exploring views (Krueger & Casey, 2000).
- focus groups provide insights into the dynamics of attitudes and behaviors that occur during interaction (Morgan, 1997).
- focus groups encourage greater spontaneity (Butler, 1996).
- focus groups provide a friendly setting for the articulation of views (Vaughn et al., 1996).
- focus groups may foster sense of membership and cohesiveness (Peters, 1993).

Participants should share similar characteristics regarding their backgrounds, experiences, behaviors and practices (Morgan, 1992). Focus groups discussions are facilitated by a team consisting of a moderator (Chestnutt & Robson, 2001), who manages the discussion and creates a friendly environment and an assistant, who observes non-verbal interactions (Kitzinger, 1996) and takes notes (Krueger & Casey, 2000). As a result, moderator is able to focus on the procedure and the discussion (Sim, 1998). The distinctive feature of focus groups is its dynamics that allows combinations of interview, group interaction, participants' behavior observation and participants' thoughts, ideas, attitudes and experiences in relation to a given topic exploration (Plummer, 2017). Thus, data generated are deeper, richer and more complex (Thomas et al., 1995).

Taking into account the context of the study (i.e., the restrictions imposed on face-to-face gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic), the type of online focus group discussion (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005) was selected, bearing in mind that such platforms are prone to certain technical problems (e.g., poor connectivity and failure to capture non-verbal interactions) (Dubrovsky et al., 1991). Crueger and Casey (2000) suggest that the optimal size for focus groups is six to eight participants. Stewart and Shamdasani (2014), argue that there is no ideal number of focus groups. In view of the above, we conducted two focus groups:

- Focus group (FG) 1: 7 participants (T1, T2, T5, T7, T9, T10, T14).
- Focus group (FG) 2: 8 participants (T3, T4, T6, T8, T11, T12, T13, T15).

Given that almost half of the participants were English instructors, an effort has been made to ensure sufficient variation among the participants of each group regarding the language they taught in order to allow for various perspectives and opinions. Therefore, we mixed them in order to avoid over-representation of one group of teachers in each focus group.

The focus group discussions were conducted in October 2021 through an online communications platform. In particular, 1 session was held for each focus group (FG1 & FG2), with the average duration being 2 hours (O.Nyumba et al., 2018; Rabiee, 2004). The discussions were conducted in Greek and they were led by the researcher who served as the moderator (Plummer, 2017). In addition, an assistant (a PhD student) was present for taking notes and observing non-verbal behavior (e.g., silence and postures) (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The assistant went through a thorough training based on theoretical familiarization with thematic analysis and practical applications.

Discussions were audio and tape recorded along with the provision for note-taking by the assistant (Krueger & Casey, 2000). At the outset of the discussions, a series of activities was taking place. In particular:

- consent was sought by the use of a signed consent agreement which contained assurances of confidentiality (Chestnutt & Robson, 2001).
- participants were informed that transcripts and recordings would be saved (Plummer-D' Amato, 2008) for a period of six months after the publication of the study.
- participants were informed about the goals of the focus group discussion by the moderator.
- focus groups are not designed to reach consensus (Plummer, 2017). Thus, the teachers were told that every opinion was welcome, and they were encouraged to express their views regardless of any evaluative dimension.

- finally, teachers were told that the moderator would not participate in the discussion given that his role was to manage and facilitate the group processes (Sim & Snell, 1996).

After these warm-up activities, the discussions commenced with personal introductions including information about the teachers' language profile, their education background, experiences and reasons for choosing to become language teachers. These personal presentations were initiated by the moderator. The research questions informed the focus groups questioning. The broad opening question was based on RQ1 "What do you believe about multilingualism?" followed by a series of transition questions, such as RQ2 and RQ3 and open-ended questions, such as the role and content of textbooks in promoting multilingual practices, participation in workshops or professional development programs focusing on current trends in foreign language teaching and the potential use of students' previous linguistic knowledge. The discussion for both FG1 and FG2 ended with an ending question encouraging participants to bring up anything connected with beliefs about multilingualism that has not been discussed.

3.5 Analysis

As mentioned above, focus groups sessions were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Given that each session of both FG1 and FG2 lasted approximately 2 hours and that 1-hour interview takes usually 5-6 hours to transcribe in full (Rabiee, 2004), the central goal of data analysis was to reduce data (Robson, 1993). Therefore, parts of discussions that were unrelated to the given topics were not fully transcribed (Flick, 1998). In addition, transcripts included notes on non-verbal information, such as laughter, pauses and intonation (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996).

Teachers' discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis was selected because it is a type of qualitative method for identifying, analyzing and discussing recurring patterns (=themes) in a data set that are important or interesting (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). Thus, thematic analysis is suitable for patterns' identification in relation to participants' experiences, behaviors and practices (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish two types of themes; semantic (=identification of themes at the semantic level) and latent (=identification of themes and subsequent examination of underlying ideas). Moreover, they identify two types of thematic analysis depending on whether the analysis is driven by a research question (top-down or theoretical analysis) or data (bottom-up or inductive analysis). Braun and Clarke (2022) developed a tripartite typology of thematic analysis, in terms of coding; coding reliability, codebook and reflexive. Coding reliability involves qualitative data but is based on quantitative research practices, codebook is about a more structured approach to coding, whereas reflexive thematic analysis involves both qualitative data and quantitative practices (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Reflexive thematic analysis exhibits two orientations, experiential and constructionist (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Experiential thematic analysis explores the truth or truths of participants' experiences, beliefs and behaviors, whereas constructionist approaches to thematic analysis focus on effects of particular meanings and linguistic practices (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis does not involve statistical analysis (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016) and the process proceeds in a particular set of six phases, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). These stages should not be viewed as a linear, fixed process but rather as a recursive one (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These stages are the following: (1) Data familiarization (the researcher becomes familiar with the data), (2) Initial code generation(codes' generation for important features of the data relevant to the research question guiding the discussion), (3) Searching for themes (codes' comparison and classification into themes), (4) Reviewing themes (themes' review for further elimination or combination into broader themes), (5) Defining and naming themes (themes' naming that captures their meaning) and (6) Reporting the analysis (data description in the form and in relation to literature)(Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In light of the above, we applied the six-stage guide provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). More particularly, we became familiar with the data by reading the interviews repeatedly. This process was conducted by the researcher and his assistant. Then the two researchers started organizing the data by generating initial codes separately. There was not pre-set codes and thus we used open coding. Given that our study was driven by a research question, the coding process we applied is referred to as theory-driven coding, as opposed to data-driven coding which is not based on pre-determined topic(s) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When we finished, we compared our codes, discussed them and modified them before moving on to searching for themes. Having a set of codes, we looked for broader themes separately again. When we finished, we compared again the themes we identified and were supported by quotes from the interviews. The combination yielded the following themes:

1. The importance of multilingualism for modern societies.
2. How multilingualism evolved.

3. Multilingualism across the globe.
4. Advantages of multilingualism for teachers.
5. Advantages of multilingualism for students.
6. Use of students' language background.
7. The need to collaborate with other language teachers.
8. The need to collaborate with other teachers.
9. The need to collaborate with school administration.
10. How multilingual practices are implemented in the classroom
11. The need for better teaching materials.
12. Training seminars are needed.
13. Strategies for enhancing multilingual practices.
14. Strategies used by teachers.
15. Strategies used by students.

The above major themes that emerged from the combination of the themes identified by the researcher and his assistant, were reviewed to fit the data closely. Therefore, we made a number of changes at this stage:

- We collapsed themes 1-3 into a new theme, Multilingualism with two subthemes, Origins of multilingualism and Multilingualism across the globe.
- We created a new theme, Benefits of Multilingualism with three subthemes: Benefits for societies, Benefits for teachers and Benefits for students.
- We eliminated theme 6.
- We collapsed themes 7-9 into a new theme, Language teachers' collaboration tactics.
- We collapsed themes 10-15 into a new theme, Multilingual pedagogy with two subthemes, Teaching and assessing practices and Suggestions.

These changes are shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Themes after review process

Theme: Multilingualism
Subtheme 1: Origins of multilingualism
Subtheme 2: Multilingualism across the globe
Theme: Benefits of Multilingualism
Subtheme 1: Benefits for societies
Subtheme 2: Benefits for teachers
Subtheme 3: Benefits for students
Theme: Language teachers' collaboration tactics
Theme: Multilingual pedagogy
Subtheme 1: Teaching and assessing practices
Subtheme 2: Suggestions

3.6 Results

The results of the focus groups transcriptions provided interesting insights regarding teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and their practices in the classroom. Due to space restrictions, only the results related to the themes and the research questions that guided the study will be presented here. The reporting of the results includes representative participants' quotes. Given that the focus groups were conducted in Greek, the English translation is the closest one to the Greek original text.

More particularly, during the group discussions, teachers were asked to comment on the prevalence of multilingualism. All teachers view multilingualism in a positive manner and believe that globalization, immigration and features particular to certain countries are the sources for the rise of multilingualism:

- «Η πολυγλωσσία είναι κάτι πολύ θετικό» (Τ3, FG2, line 45) "Multilingualism is very positive".
- «...θα ήθελα να προσθέσω ότι η πολυγλωσσία είναι σαν ένα περιουσιακό στοιχείο για μια κοινωνία» (Τ4, FG2, line 48) "…I would like to add that multilingualism is like an asset for a society".

- «Ανέκαθεν υπήρχε η πολυγλωσσία» (Τ10, FG1, line 65) "Multilingualism has been always here".
- «Αν δεν κάνω λάθος, η Ελβετία και το Βέλγιο είναι πολύγλωσσες χώρες…κι αυτό ίσχυε πάντα» (Τ6, FG2, line 220) "If I 'm not mistaken Switzerland and Belgium have always been multilingual countries".
- «Λόγω της μετανάστευσης πολλές χώρες έγιναν πολύγλωσσες, ενώ στην αρχή δεν ήταν» (Τ3, FG2, line 354) "Due to immigration many countries became multilingual, although they weren't in the first place".

As regards benefits of multilingualism, teachers view multilingualism as an asset and they relate it to learning additional languages easily, to increased employability and many opportunities for worldwide interaction. Moreover, multilingualism benefits societies, teachers and students in many interconnected ways. It is worth mentioning that while most statements reflect widely expected beliefs, the two teachers that hold PhDs are more sophisticated in their views connecting multilingualism to enhanced metacognitive abilities:

- «…εννοείται ότι το να μιλάς πολλές γλώσσες είναι κάτι καλό» (Τ11, FG2, line 773) "…of course, speaking many languages is something good".
- «είχα διαβάσει ένα άρθρο που έλεγε ότι η γνώση πολλών γλωσσών σε βοηθάει να μάθεις κι άλλες» (Τ14, FG1, line 650) "I have read an article reporting that knowledge of many languages helps you learn additional languages".
- «Οι πολλές γλώσσες σε βοηθάνε να βρεις πιο εύκολα δουλειά» (Τ7, FG1, line 669) "Knowing many languages helps you find a job easily".
- «Η πολυγλωσσία κάνει μια κοινωνία πολύ πιο ανταγωνιστική» (Τ15, FG2, line 701) "Knowledge of many languages makes a society more competitive".
- «Αν ξέρεις πολλές γλώσσες, μπορείς να συνεννοηθείς πολύ πιο εύκολα διεθνώς» (Τ13, FG2, line 750) "If you know many languages, you can interact worldwide".
- «Οι πολλές γλώσσες σε βοηθάνε να κάνεις συνδέσεις μεταξύ τους, ξέρεις…να βρίσκεις ομοιότητες και διαφορές» (Τ2, FG1, line 780) "Knowing many languages helps you connect them, you know…finding similarities and differences".
- «Οι πολύγλωσσοι μαθητές αναπτύσσουν καλύτερες μεταγνωστικές δεξιότητες» (Τ10, FG1, line 800) "Multilingual students develop better metacognitive abilities" & «Συμφωνώ ότι μεταγνωστικά οι πολύγλωσσοι μαθητές είναι σε καλύτερη μοίρα» (Τ14, FG1, line 802) "I agree that multilingual students are in a better position".

When asked whether there is collaboration among language teachers, five teachers (T1, T6, T7, T10, T13) stated that there is collaboration with other language teachers especially in the field of research projects proposals' submission. At the teaching level, all teachers reported that they do not collaborate with each other:

- «Έχω συνεργαστεί με άλλους εκπαιδευτικούς για να υποβάλουμε μια πρόταση για ερευνητικό πρόγραμμα, αλλά για θέματα διδασκαλίας, όχι σε καμία περίπτωση» (Τ13, FG2, line 904) "I have collaborated with other colleagues for research proposals, but not for teaching issues".
- «Συμφωνώ κι εγώ, ήμουν μέλος ερευνητικής ομάδας, αλλά στη διδασκαλία, όχι, ο καθένας μας έχει το δικό του στυλ διδασκαλίας, δεν χρειάζεται να ρωτήσει άλλον συνάδελφο» (Τ6, FG2, line 915) "I agree too, I have been a member of a research group, but in teaching no, each one of us has her/his own teaching style, there is no need to ask a colleague".

The last theme involved multilingual teaching practices in the classroom. Most of the teachers (13 out of 15) stated that time restrictions and high teaching load do not allow them to experiment and employ multilingual practices. Therefore, the teaching medium is Greek. Moreover, they reported that translation from the target language to students' L1 (i.e., Greek) is the strategy they usually rely on. This strategy is used because it is timesaving, although they would like to have time to employ other strategies as well. However, 2 teachers employ various practices and strategies, such as translanguaging, code mixing, code switching and translation because, as they reported these strategies are quite motivating and help students feel comfortable. Regarding assessment issues, the majority of them (12 out of 15) apply traditional (/structural) methods, such as homework, cloze tests and gap-filling questions and only 3 stated that they combine structural and communicative assessment approaches. As regards suggestions for fostering multilingual practices in the classroom, most of the teachers (12 out of 15) responded that Universities' administrations should develop a principled language policy, loosen high teaching load by hiring more teaching personnel and organize training seminars to familiarize them with multilingualism and related pedagogical approaches. In addition, registration fees in master's programs in Applied Linguistics should be lower for in-service foreign

language instructors. Finally, all of them believe that inception of university courses or modules focusing on multilingual practices will foster them:

- «Έχω να διδάξω σε πολλά τμήματα, ξέρω για κάποιες από τις σύγχρονες μεθόδους, αλλά δεν έχω χρόνο, οπότε διδάσκω μέσω της ελληνικής» (T5, FG1, line 933) "I have to teach in many departments, I am familiar with some of the current methods, but I don't have time, thus I teach through Greek".
- «Συνήθως μεταφράζω από τα γαλλικά στα ελληνικά...γλυτώνω πολύ χρόνο έτσι» (T5, FG1, line 967) "I usually translate from French into Greek, this way I don't waste time".
- «Αυτό που κάνω είναι να λέω μια πρόταση στα αγγλικά και την αμέσως επόμενη στα ελληνικά» (T7, FG1, line 989) "What I do is say one sentence in English and the next one in Greek".
- «Το Πανεπιστήμιο πρέπει να διαμορφώσει μια επίσημη γλωσσική πολιτική, να θέσει στόχους...αυτή τη στιγμή κάτι τέτοιο απουσιάζει» (T6,FG2, line, 995)
  "The University should develop an official language policy, set goals, at the moment, this is missing".
- «θέλω να κάνω ένα μεταπτυχιακό στην πολυγλωσσία ή την Εφαρμοσμένη Γλωσσολογία, αλλά τα δίδακτρα είναι πολλά και ο χρόνος λίγος» (T3, FG2, line 999)
  "I want to pursue a master's degree in multilingualism or Applied Linguistics, but the registration fees are high and the time little".
- «συμφωνώ ότι τα δίδακτρα είναι πολλά, ίσως θα πρέπει για τους μάχιμους εκπαιδευτικούς να έχουν άλλες τιμές, αλλά κυρίως το πρόβλημα είναι ο χρόνος. Το πανεπιστήμιο θα πρέπει να πάρει κι άλλο προσωπικό γιατί τώρα διδάσκουμε και πολλές ώρες και σε πολλά τμήματα» (T14, FG1, line, 1004) "I agree that the registration fees are high, may be for in-service teachers should charge lower fees, but the major issue is time. The university must hire more foreign language teachers because right now we teach many hours in many departments".
- «Αξιολογώ τους φοιτητές κυρίως με ασκήσεις συμπλήρωσης κενών» (T15, FG2, line 1100)
  "I mainly evaluate my students using gap-filling exercises".
- «Κάνουμε δομικές ασκήσεις, αλλά ασχολούμαστε και με κείμενα και με εικόνες» T14, FG1, line 1134) "I use structural exercises, but we work with texts and pictures as well".

4. Discussion

This study investigated Greek university foreign language instructors' beliefs about multilingualism and the practices they choose to implement in the classroom. Knowledge of teachers' beliefs is central to education as it has been proven that they influence behaviors, decisions and practices in the language classroom (Borg, 2011). Fifteen university foreign language instructors shared and discussed their beliefs and experiences in 2 focus groups. The transcribed data were subjected to thematic analysis.

The main finding indicates that multilingualism is well-accepted among teachers as an intrinsic feature of modern societies. In particular, our participants coincide in reporting that multilingualism is positive, and they acknowledge the benefits of knowing additional languages for all agents as well (i.e., teachers, students, societies) (De Angelis, 2011). However, it has been shown that when language instructors face the real classroom, they adhere to monolingual practices mainly. This finding is in line with previous research data (e.g., Calafato, 2020; Escobar & Dillard-Paltrineri, 2015; Flognfeldt et al., 2020) which demonstrates a gap between beliefs and actual classroom practices. At this point it is worth mentioning that teachers are not always aware that their articulated beliefs contradict what occurs in the classroom (Lee, 2009). Likewise, factors, such as economics, the curriculum and time pressure may force teachers not to behave and act according to their own beliefs (Johnson, 1996).

On the other hand, our data showed that the more educated the foreign language instructors are, the more multilingual practices they implement (cf. responses given by the 2 teachers who hold a PhD degree regarding the teaching practices they apply in the classroom (i.e., use of translanguaging practices)). Teacher education can change teacher beliefs (Borg, 2011). Krulatz et al. (2022) suggest that participation in professional development program with a focus on multilingualism can empower teachers to modify their beliefs and practices. Likewise, Gorter and Arocena (2020) report that in-service teachers who took a professional development training course in multilingualism and translanguaging changed their beliefs as regards implementation of multilingual teaching practices in the classroom.

These findings underly the important role teacher education and professional development programs have in developing teachers' multilingual awareness and practical tools (Ortega, 2019; Schmid & Schmidt, 2017; Vallente,

2020). Language teachers' education in new approaches is a necessary prerequisite for multilingual practices' implementation (Haukås, 2016), although there are studies (e.g., Karavas & Drossou, 2010) reporting that pre-service teachers' beliefs did not change after completion of their studies. However, when given specific guidelines, teachers can be motivated to apply multilingual practices, such as translanguaging (Cenoz & Santos, 2020). Furthermore, teachers will be more reluctant to apply new approaches and potentially modify their beliefs if they receive sufficient training and they are convinced that there is a real shift in teaching paradigm (Neuner, 2004). However, current education for language teachers devotes little time for familiarization with multilingual instructional practices (Otwinowska, 2014).

Collaborations among language teachers and even teachers of other subjects may provide a fruitful basis for the development of multilingual practices through interventions or launch of research projects and/or workshops aiming at enhancing teachers' collaborations in educational environments (Galante, 2020; Schnissel et al., 2021). However, the responses of our participants pointed at the lack of collaboration among them stressing the need to reinforce collaboration among foreign language instructors.

All in all, and given that Greek university foreign language teachers hold positive beliefs about multilingualism, the adoption and implementation of multilingual teaching practices in order to help Greek university students become successful language users is connected to:

- pre-service teacher education and professional development programs that will address actual teachers' needs and promote sensitivity to linguistic and cultural diversity.
- new learning material reflecting major paradigmatic shifts in foreign language education, such as the multilingual turn, is required.
- the adoption of a monitored and principled multilingual policy by the Greek universities' language policy bodies.
- the intensified collaboration between universities' language policy makers and language instructors and finally
- appropriate assessment methods that will build on multilingual pedagogies.

5. Limitations

The current study has certain limitations. First, our data come from a relatively small sample of participants. Thus, the results of the current study cannot be generalized and count as representative for all Greek university foreign language instructors. Second, university students' beliefs should also be examined. Third, it is essential to set up classroom interventions and explore in-class interactions as they tend to provide in-depth insights into how instructional approaches can be developed in educational settings. Fourth, our study did not explore the origins and the course of development of the participants' beliefs. Finally, it also might be useful to examine beliefs and practices after participation in workshops or training programs focusing on multilingualism and multilingual pedagogical approaches.

6. Conclusions

This study shows that despite multilingualism and its advantages are well-accepted among Greek foreign language instructors, they don't practice multilingualism with their students. It appears that in-service university foreign language teachers still hold beliefs rooted in monolingual approach as regards teaching and assessment practices. Several reasons account for this contradicting finding, such as limited familiarization with paradigmatic shifts, the curriculum or limited time to engage in activities requiring sophisticated and highly interactive forms of learning, limited learning resources (e.g., textbooks), high teaching load and lack of collaboration among language teachers. Given that teachers' beliefs influence decisions, behaviors and instructional practices, it is important to gain a better understanding of how Greek university foreign language instructors think, decide and work to modify beliefs and practices though the adoption and implementation of an effective and principled multilingual language policy.

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