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Educating for multilingualism? Language teacher students visualising future language education

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In this study, we aimed to examine perspectives related to multilingualism as expressed by students in teacher education programmes for Swedish language teachers at three universities in Finland. Language teacher students' perspectives were studied through visual narratives (n = 62), which consisted of students' visualisations and accompanying descriptive texts in which they have imagined their professional futures (cf. Kalaja, 2016). Qualitative content analysis was used in the data analysis. The data was categorised according to the language teacher students' perspectives concerning multilingualism in education and



themselves as educators for multilingualism. The analysis revealed diverse learner-, teacher-, teaching-, and language-centred perspectives on multilingualism in language education. Differences were identified regarding, for example, whether the visual narratives explicitly stated that teachers educate their pupils for multilingualism, whether the focus was on the language(s) being taught, or whether other languages in the teacher's or pupils' language repertoires were considered. The findings are discussed in relation to current discourses and policies on bi/multilingualism in the Finnish context. By examining language teacher students' perspectives, we hope to shed light on how linguistic diversity could be addressed in teacher education to equip future teachers for working life.

Keywords: language education, language teacher student, multilingualism, teacher beliefs, teacher education

1 Introduction

Societal multilingualism and individual multilingualism (also called plurilingualism) are concepts that are gaining prominence in educational discussions across Europe. This is due to the growing pool of languages found in European classrooms linked to immigration and other types of international mobility. As stated in the Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms project (Listiac, n.d., n.p.), "All students in the EU need teachers who are linguistically sensitive and responsive." Although all countries have a need for multilingual education, each country is different in terms of conditions and specific needs. Finland has two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, and national policies on them significantly influence discussions on multilingualism. In particular, the official documents highlight linguistic equality: "The public authorities shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis" (Parliament of Finland, 2013, p. 17), and "Finland secures everyone living in Finland the right and the opportunity to learn the country's other national language, Finnish or Swedish" (Tallroth, 2012, p. 7; Finnish Government, 2021, p. 117). Accordingly, Finnish-speaking students study Swedish at school as a second national language, and Finnish university students need to show their proficiency in Swedish to obtain their university degrees, and vice versa.

An important point in the Finnish multilingualism discussion has been Finland's position at the outskirts of Europe and the necessity of international collaboration in different fields. To facilitate

such collaboration, national policies have traditionally highlighted the need to learn foreign languages in addition to national languages (Buchberger, 2002; Ennser-Kananen et al., 2023; Finnish Government, 2021). This traditional perspective on Finnish multilingualism has been recently broadened by the growing linguistic diversity in Finnish classrooms due to international mobility. To meet the multilingualism present in classrooms, Finnish schools have had to develop new teaching and learning practices. Therefore, Finland is now aiming for *education for multilingualism* (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016; Finnish National Agency for Education, n.d.), referring to a practice that encourages all pupils “to use their multilingual repertoire for a pedagogical purpose in different ways” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022, p. 21) and that aims to develop a “linguistic repertory [sic], in which all linguistic abilities have a place” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5). These goals are present in the Finnish curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016), which recognises multilingualism and the existence and use of several languages as a natural part of the everyday school life. These goals coexist with the traditional aims of promoting both national bilingualism and internationalisation.

Importantly, the discussions around multilingualism encompass various discourses on cultural heritage, integration of immigrants, economic benefits, and competitiveness – all of which provide multiple opportunities to approach the phenomenon but can also make the phenomenon difficult to grasp and operationalise in individual teachers’ practices. For instance, a recently published study focusing on practicing teachers of all subjects in the Finnish context pointed out that “supporting increasing linguistic diversity in schools is hindered by contradictory discourses emerging from the surrounding society” (Repo, 2023, p. 6).

At the moment, teacher education institutions in Finland face the challenge of educating language teachers who can support their pupils’ multilingual repertoires, taking into account the complex multilingual realities of the Finnish society (e.g., home languages, minority languages, national languages, and foreign languages). To support future language teachers in educating for multilingualism, Finnish teacher educators need to understand their starting points and the particular language discourses that frame their understanding of multilingual Finland and language teaching. Until now, only a few studies in Finland have explored (language) teachers’ and language teacher students’ perspectives on multilingualism and the ways different kinds of approaches to language education aid the development of multilingualism in education (see Kalaja & Mäntylä,

2025; Ruohotie-Lyhty et al., 2021; for international research, see Calafato, 2020; Portolés & Martí, 2018). In response to this research gap, we aimed to explore the following question: What perspectives on multilingualism are present in Swedish language teacher students' and Swedish immersion teacher students' visualisations and accompanying texts describing their future professional practice? These groups of students are particularly important to study since Swedish education in its different forms has traditionally served the goal of national bilingualism (which prioritises the Finnish and Swedish languages) and internationalisation but is in the latest national curriculum also perceived to serve education for multilingualism (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016), which represents a more extended idea of Finnish multilingualism. Although we focus on the Finnish context, we believe that our results can also raise important themes for wider discussion on developing education for multilingualism in diverse European contexts and on developing European teacher education that supports this aim.

The data used in this study came from a larger project on Swedish language as a personal experience, pedagogy and policy¹ (PoPUpp 2022–2023). Data were produced by 62 Swedish language teacher students enrolled in a Swedish language subject teacher education programme or a Swedish language immersion teacher education programme. The students were asked to create visual narratives about their future professional practice, comprising a visualisation and its descriptive text. What makes our study special compared to some previous studies on multilingualism (e.g. Alisaari et al., 2019) is that it pertains to the naturally occurring role of multilingualism in the participants' future work rather than responses to direct questions about their visions on multilingualism. In our study, we asked the participants to imagine what their future work will be like and how the language they were learning is part of this work, the work community, and their life. Hence, we approached multilingualism in the task description through the target language (in this case, Swedish). Consequently, this study does not provide an overall picture of what the participating students know about multilingualism or how they define, describe, or teach it. However, by gaining an understanding of language teacher students' perspectives on their future work and the naturally occurring role of the target language and multilingualism in it, and by discussing these perspectives in relation to official policy documents depicting multilingual Finland and multilingual education policies, we can better understand the students' initial understanding of

1 <https://www.jyu.fi/ji/bankkeet/ruotsin-kieli-kokemuksena-pedagogiikka-ja-politiikka-ruotsin-kielen-opettajaopiskelijoiden>

the phenomenon and the potential mismatches in the support teacher education provides to enable them to become educators for multilingualism. The study was framed by the following research question:

- What kinds of perspectives on multilingualism do language teacher students envision in their visual narratives?

2 Multilingualism and Education

Multilingualism is a complex global phenomenon. It can be defined as the presence, knowledge, or use of multiple languages by a society (societal multilingualism) or an individual (individual multilingualism, plurilingualism) (Aronin, 2019). In the context of education, this diversity of languages presents unique opportunities and challenges for both teachers and students. Understanding and addressing multilingualism in educational settings are essential for creating inclusive and effective learning environments. Scholars agree that in these settings, there are differences between bilingualism (the use of two languages) and multilingualism (the use of three or more languages); however, the two are often combined in the literature, such as Wright and Baker's (2025) state-of-the-art textbook on bilingual education. In this study, we use the term *multilingualism* to discuss the presence of two or more languages in a language classroom and the knowledge and use of two or more languages by the language teacher or the pupils.

As a result of global migration and other types of mobility (e.g. workforce mobility), children are increasingly growing up in multilingual settings; in this respect, multilingualism has become the norm (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019). In educational research, this shift to a multilingual viewpoint has been labelled *the multilingual turn*, meaning that the point of departure for theorisation is a multilingual learner (or society) rather than a monolingual learner (or society) (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2019). The multilingual turn is closely linked to the social turn in second language research, which entails a shift from a formalistic view of language as a structure or skill to a functional view of language as a resource or repertoire (Block, 2003; Firth & Wagner, 1997; May, 2019). This shift towards recognising multilingualism as the norm emphasises the importance of viewing learners and societies as inherently multilingual rather than monolingual (Conteh & Meier, 2014; see also Aronin, 2019).

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Classrooms in Finland exhibit significant heterogeneity due to several factors. First, the country's bilingual status, with Finnish and Swedish as official languages, naturally fosters a diverse linguistic environment. Additionally, increasing immigration (especially after 2015) and global workforce mobility contribute to this diversity. Finland's robust language education policies and active participation in international cultural exchange programmes further enhance the multilingual nature of its educational settings. These factors collectively create a rich and varied linguistic landscape within Finnish schools. However, some contexts lack explicit policies to educate pupils about multilingualism, especially pupils with migrant or minority language backgrounds (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019; Wright & Baker, 2025). Rather, they cater to the development of pupils' competence in the school's language of instruction (the society's majority language), either as a first language or as a second language. Although they might not support migrant or minority languages, these schools may teach foreign languages, including world languages, such as English, French, or Chinese. Hence, in these contexts, the responsibility for developing the pupils' full multilingual repertoire and competence in the different languages is typically placed on individual pupils and their families, not on the school.

Particularly in Europe, multilingualism is promoted as a necessary, positive, and desirable educational objective (Council of Europe, 2022). In the Common European Framework of Reference Companion volume (Council of Europe, 2020), which provides guidelines for language education in the European context in particular, the latest updates in the descriptors mainly concern multilingual goals and practices, including cross-linguistic mediation, plurilingual comprehension, and competences in building on plurilingual repertoire; this update acknowledges the value of multilingualism. Nurturing bilingualism and multilingualism has also been described as “an investment for all members of a society to be able to lead healthy and productive lives, and to strengthen the social and economic fabric of our societies” (Piller, 2016, p. 129), linking multilingualism with social justice. Many European countries have multilingual policies for schools to actively support the development of immigrant and minority languages, help all pupils gain access to the school's language of instruction, and teach foreign languages to everyone (for more details, see the overview in Wright & Baker, 2025). Finland, where this study was carried out, is one of the European nations with an explicit policy for multilingualism in education (see the section “Swedish education in Finland” below).

Although most people live in multilingual environments and the concept of the multilingual turn is gaining recognition in research, there are still significant challenges in implementing multilingual perspectives in educational practice. Despite some countries having explicit multilingual policies, implementing them is challenging due to deeply ingrained monolingual ideologies in the education system. Monolingual ideologies are based on the idea that the capacity to learn languages is restricted to learning one language at a time and that languages have a negative impact on each other (De Angelis, 2011). For example, in some contexts, teachers believe that lessons should be conducted only in one language (Alisaari et al., 2019; Birello et al., 2021), that languages should be taught separately (De Angelis, 2011), and that translation should be avoided in classrooms (Cummins, 2014). Despite these monolingual views, practices of dynamic language use are common in many classrooms today. One such practice is translanguaging, which Otheguy et al. (2015) define as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages” (p. 281). In classrooms that support spontaneous translanguaging, students are encouraged to use their entire multilingual repertoire for various educational purposes (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022, p. 21). Spontaneous translanguaging happens naturally when students use their full linguistic abilities in class. On the other hand, pedagogical translanguaging is the intentional and teacher-guided use of multiple languages to improve learning and teaching (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Garcia et al., 2017).

This study concerns the naturally occurring perspectives on multilingualism in language education among language teacher students in Finland. Previous research by Alisaari et al. (2019) identified three types of ideologies of multilingualism among class teachers and subject teachers when asked directly about their views: advocacy, allowance, and denial. The teachers advocating for multilingualism in their classrooms (25.1% of the 820 participants in the study) encouraged the use of pupils’ home languages and believed that “learning is improved when all linguistic resources are used, multilingualism is beneficial for the individual and the society, and the home language is an important part of identity and everyone’s right” (Alisaari et al., 2019, p. 54). Those who allowed the use of home languages in their classrooms (35.6%) thought that learning the school’s language of instruction (the majority language) was the primary goal, whereas the use of home languages was an exception that could be justified, for example, to clarify content. The largest group (39.2%) was that of participants with a denial ideology, that is, teachers who did not allow the use of home

languages in their classrooms. These teachers believed that it is important for the teacher to understand their students and that the use of home languages would hinder learning.

One of the few studies addressing student teachers' beliefs concerning multilingualism is that of Llompart et al. (2023), who studied student teachers' discourses on individual multilingualism in four European initial teacher education institutions located in Spain (Catalonia), Slovenia, and Finland. They found that when student teachers in the three contexts were asked explicitly about their views on multilingualism, they had positive views on their own experiences of being multilingual; however, they expressed more negative feelings and beliefs about linguistic diversity in their classrooms and faced challenges in teaching multilingual learners. A similar finding was made by Iversen (2020) in the Norwegian context, showing that pre-service teachers were able and willing to utilise their and their students' full linguistic repertoires, yet they were also hesitant to "engage with the multilingualism present in the classroom" (p. iv). One reason for the challenges and negative feelings in Llompart et al.'s (2023) study was that the student teachers believed "that they [were] not sufficiently trained to be linguistically sensitive in the classroom, especially to teach students of migrant origin" (p. 111). A recent study by Ennser-Kananen et al. (2023) has shown that teacher education programmes focusing on multilingualism have the potential to shed light on questions about multilingualism for future language educators. Given the scarcity of studies on student teachers' beliefs on the topic, more research is needed to provide insights into how teacher education can help future teachers to educate for multilingualism and address the existing multilingualism in the classrooms.

2.1 Researching language teacher students' beliefs

This study explores language teacher students' perspectives on multilingualism through visual narratives in which they envision their future work. By doing so, the study joins the extensive literature on teachers' beliefs – namely "the evaluative propositions that teachers hold un/consciously as true and that guide their thought and behaviour" (Borg, 2001, p. 186). These beliefs have been recognised as key elements in understanding teacher actions and practices in the classroom (Gao, 2014).

In this study, the concept of *belief* is explored from a sociocultural and contextual point of view. Beliefs are understood as being constructed through an experiential process that is deeply embedded in a specific environment. Beliefs are dynamic, complex, and even contradictory because

they are based on sets of different experiences that happen in multiple environments (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003). An important feature of language teacher students' beliefs is their future orientation. Since they only have a limited experiential understanding of teaching, they strongly invest in “who they desire to be” (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 4): they must form an attractive idea of the work of a language teacher to be able to continue studying. The formation of this idea happens in with the help of discourses, traditions, habits, and personal experiences. When they interpret new situations, different beliefs come into play. This understanding of beliefs and the role of teacher education informed the methods we chose and the claims we make based on our results. In our study, the participants relied on certain beliefs that were easily available to them at the time to envision their future work as language educators. We sought to identify the features of multilingualism present in these beliefs.

We carried out this study to comprehend the variety of beliefs regarding multilingualism that naturally occur among teacher students in Finland. We do not claim that this study captures the totality of such beliefs about multilingualism in education since the research task only evoked one response from each participant; neither do we claim that our study provides detailed information about individual participants' full understanding of the phenomenon. Rather, our study demonstrates the variety of perspectives (related to multilingualism) that the students naturally draw on and that are easily available to them when making sense of their future work. Eliciting these different perspectives and reflecting on them will help us identify the central factors that must be taken into consideration in teacher education to support teacher students on their path towards education for multilingualism. Since initial beliefs can affect what and how language teacher students are able and willing to learn, understanding their beliefs can provide important insights into developing pre-service teacher education (Breen et al., 2002).

3 Research Context, Materials, and Method

3.1 Swedish Education in Finland

Finland is an officially bilingual country. It has two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, and two parallel school systems: Finnish-medium schools and Swedish-medium schools. This study focuses on the Finnish-medium school system in which Finnish is the language of instruction and

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Swedish is taught as a subject labelled “the second national language” from Grade 6 at the latest. Swedish language education in Finnish-medium schools is intended to support the formation of pupils’ multilingual identities and their linguistic and cultural awareness (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016). Traditionally, Swedish education in Finland has been an important part of bilingual national policies that aim to safeguard equal access to services and mutual understanding between citizens. In the national core curriculum, learning Swedish is also intended to provide pupils with “opportunities for networking and communicating with people from different parts of the Nordic countries” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016). Hence, this aim serves the broader ideas of mobility of the workforce in the EU and collaboration among its member states. In recent years, the Swedish learner group has become increasingly heterogeneous due to the growing immigrant population in Finland and the increasing number of foreign first languages in classrooms. This has challenged the traditional assumptions and goals of Swedish education, and it requires Swedish teachers to take into account not only Finnish and Swedish but also pupils’ other languages. Language teachers are perceived as educators for multilingualism, whose “teaching support the plurilingualism of pupils by utilising all languages, including those used by pupils in their leisure time” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 324). According to the curriculum, an individual’s multilingual competence comprises “competencies of different levels of mother tongues, other tongues, and their dialects” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 103). At the same time, all individuals are seen as multilingual: “Each community and community member is multilingual” (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 28). This development and the multilingual curriculum goals have created a need to reform teaching methods.

In addition to providing Swedish as a second national language in all Finnish language schools, the Finnish national school system also includes schools that provide Swedish immersion for Finnish-speaking pupils, which is a strong form of bilingual education aimed at multilingualism (Björklund & Mård-Miettinen, 2011; Wright & Baker, 2025). Swedish immersion in Finnish-medium schools is an educational approach where students are taught in both Swedish and Finnish; it is a comprehensive bilingual education that meets specific quantitative and qualitative standards by following the national curriculum (Björklund, 2019; Björklund & Mård-Miettinen, 2011). To strengthen multilingualism, Swedish immersion includes the teaching of one to three foreign languages (e.g. English, French, and German) (Björklund & Mård-Miettinen, 2011). The multilingual policies in Swedish immersion largely focus on the languages taught in the programme

and not on the home language of the immigrant students, as the programme is regularly aimed at Finnish-speaking students (Mård-Miettinen et al., 2022).

3.2 Context of the Study and Participants

As Swedish is taught at different levels in the Finnish educational system, teachers with varied qualifications (e.g. class teachers at the primary level or subject teachers at the primary/secondary level) are needed and educated at universities across the country. This study involves students enrolled in two different teacher education programmes: Swedish immersion teacher education programme and Swedish language subject teacher education programme, each comprising 300 ECTS.

The Swedish immersion teacher education programme at the Vaasa campus of Åbo Akademi University (ÅAU) qualifies students to become class teachers, Swedish immersion teachers in basic education, and Swedish language teachers in basic education. Students study education as their major (130 ECTS), and they are given the opportunity to study Swedish as a minor subject (60 ECTS). ÅAU is a Swedish-speaking interdisciplinary university where immersion teacher training is offered in the bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) city of Vaasa.

In the Swedish language subject teacher education programmes at the University of Jyväskylä (JYU) and at the Joensuu campus of the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), students study Swedish either as their major (130–150 ECTS) or as a minor subject (60 ECTS), and they complete Pedagogical Studies for Teachers (60 ECTS) to become Swedish language teachers.² The JYU and UEF are both located in Finnish-speaking cities (Jyväskylä and Joensuu), but their teacher education programmes are bilingual: language studies are offered in Swedish and pedagogical studies in Finnish.

²Two of the students from JYU study in a separate degree programme called Language Aware Multilingual Pedagogy (LAMP), which focuses on language awareness and multilingual pedagogy. LAMP students become both qualified class teachers and Swedish language teachers (or teachers of other languages) in the Finnish basic education system. Due to the small number of LAMP students in the data ($n = 2$), their data will be analysed together with the other language subject teacher students' data.

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At the end of both programmes, students become qualified Swedish language teachers; however, the two programmes represent different perspectives on being a language educator. In the ÅAU immersion teacher education programme, students study to become Swedish immersion teachers and class teachers. At the same time, they become qualified to teach Swedish as a second national language in basic education. The JYU and UEF subject teacher education programmes represent a more traditional approach to becoming future teachers of Swedish and other languages. In this case, students major in Swedish and study education as a minor subject, thus becoming qualified to teach Swedish at different levels of the education system.

The data were collected from 62 language teacher students studying at these two different language teacher education programmes (see Table 1). The students were at different stages of their degrees; some had just started studying, while others were already at the end of their studies.

3.3 Data Collection

For data collection, we used visual narratives (e.g. Ruohotie-Lyhty & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2022; Kalaja & Melo-Pfeifer, 2025). The students were asked to envision and create a visualisation of themselves as future language professionals,³ both in their dream jobs and in jobs that they did not desire. The participants could choose how they created their visualisations. Most of them drew the visualisations by hand, although some of them produced them digitally with a drawing software and used images downloaded from the internet. In this study, we focused on the dream job visualisations to examine how the students perceive their desirable future work contexts. In the creation of their visualisations, the students were supported by the following questions: “What role does the language you are learning play in your work and life? What role does the language you are learning play in the communities in which you work? Where do you work?” We did not ask about multilingualism directly, since our aim was to see the extent to which discourses of multilingualism are naturally present when students imagine themselves as teachers of the second national language (Swedish). The students were also asked to verbally describe their visualisations and indicate how likely they considered their visions to be. In these accompanying verbal descriptions, the students were asked to answer the following questions related to their visualisations: “What do your

³ In the task description, we used the word “professional” instead of “teacher” to allow the students to consider roles beyond the teaching profession. Teacher education gives skills for a wider scope of employment in the educational sector.

visualisations show? How likely do you think these two futures are? What might prevent your wishes from coming true and what would help this happen?” The amount of time that the participants spent on their assignments was not controlled, but the instructions stated that 10–20 minutes should be enough to complete the task.

The chosen approach combines narrative data collection (Kalaja, 2016) and empathy-based stories (Wallin et al., 2019). Narratives involving visions of future selves are a suitable methodology for this study because envisioning their future as professionals is central to teacher students' development as education professionals, and narratives are used to construct the ideal future self (Barkhuizen, 2017). Previously, visual narratives that involve envisioning future selves have been used to study, for example, future language teachers' beliefs about language teaching, shedding light not only on how they view teachers' and students' roles (Kalaja, 2016) but also on the role of multilingualism and multiculturalism in envisioned future language classes (Kalaja & Mäntylä, 2025). However, while the method can offer valuable insights into the different ways these phenomena can be conceptualised, it cannot capture the richness of individual thinking related to the phenomena. In our study, we recognise this limitation and take it into account when analysing and drawing conclusions from the data.

The data were collected during the 2022–2023 academic year and the autumn term of 2023 as part of courses taken by the target student groups. The courses took place at different stages of the education. Although students are expected to be more aware of different aspects of the teaching profession (e.g. multilingualism) toward the end of their education than they are at the beginning of it, we disregarded this perspective in the analysis; instead, we focused on identifying different perspectives on multilingualism regardless of the stage of studies or other factors. Most of the researchers also worked as teachers at the universities where the data were collected, but they were not teaching the courses where the data collection took place. In some courses, the data were collected by the course teachers as an obligatory course assignment aimed at supporting reflection on the students' future professional lives. In other courses, the call to participate in the study was just shared during the lessons. To reach as many participants as possible, the call was shared through emails to potential participants outside the courses, for example, to teachers' or researchers' former/current students. Prior to data collection, all students were informed about the possibility of taking part in the current research project, and they were asked for permission to use

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their assignments in the project. The students whose assignment was done as part of a course were informed that their consent to (or refusal of) the use of their assignment in the research project would not affect their course grade in any way. The same applied to students who were contacted outside of the specific courses but who might have been attending (or planning to attend) the researchers' courses. In most cases, the researchers received the assignments of the students who had given their consent from the course teachers. In some cases, students sent their tasks directly to the researchers. Therefore, the totality of the students who received the call but decided not to participate is not known to researchers. The number of participating students from the different programmes included in the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Study participants

Study programme	University	Visual narratives
Swedish immersion teacher	Åbo Akademi University (ÅAU)	28
Swedish language subject teacher	University of Jyväskylä (JYU)	17
	University of Eastern Finland (UEF)	17
		N = 62

According to the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK (2019), which is responsible for developing and implementing the Finnish guidelines for research ethics, studies need to obtain approval from the ethics committee under certain circumstances. Since these circumstances did not apply to our study, we did not need to obtain a formal approval. However, in the implementation of the study, we have followed the guidelines for good research practices as issued by TENK, including informed consent, responsible conduct of research, and participant anonymity protection.

3.4 Qualitative Content Analysis

In the data analysis, we focused on the visual narratives of the language teacher students' dream jobs and their accompanying descriptions ($n = 62$). The visualisations and the accompanying texts were analysed together as a whole, complementing each other. We used qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) to examine the manifestations of multilingualism, and we coded the data

inductively, based on the following criteria stemming from the data: the language(s) presented; the actor(s) presented as mono/bi/multilingual (teacher or pupils); the location of the language(s) in the visualisations (e.g. interaction or books/materials); and the object of learning (e.g. bilingualism/multilingualism, language skills/grammar, and language as a learning tool). We also separated the students' perspectives on bilingualism and multilingualism when relevant.

According to these criteria, the participants' visual narratives were classified into different categories that described their perspectives on multilingualism in education and themselves as educators for multilingualism, each visual narrative receiving one category/perspective. The categorisation was done separately by the first and third authors. If the categories were not unanimous, they were discussed amongst the whole project team to reach a consensus. Some of the visualisations and accompanying descriptions included elements of several categories; however, in the analysis, we aimed to identify the most prominent category to describe each visual narrative.

4 Results

The analysis revealed different perspectives on multilingualism in language education as envisioned by the participants. There were learner-, teaching-, teacher-, and language-centred perspectives, which varied based on what the participants viewed as the most important aspects of their future work. These varied perspectives reveal a range of educator types that affect multilingualism/language learning of their pupils and their growth as multilingual individuals through different pedagogical orientations. Within these perspectives, there were also differences concerning whether the participants explicitly indicated that they were educating their pupils for bi/multilingualism and whether they were focusing solely on the language(s) being taught or also making use of other languages in their or their pupils' diverse linguistic repertoires. In the following sections, we will explore each of these perspectives in more detail and provide examples from the data (visualisations and quotes from the accompanying descriptions) to illustrate the participants' perceptions of multilingualism and multilingual teaching in the learning environment.

In addition to the learner-, teaching-, teacher-, and language-centred perspectives, there were several visual narratives without themes connected to multilingualism. These visualisations included pictures depicting dream jobs in other fields (e.g. football coach, mathematics teacher,

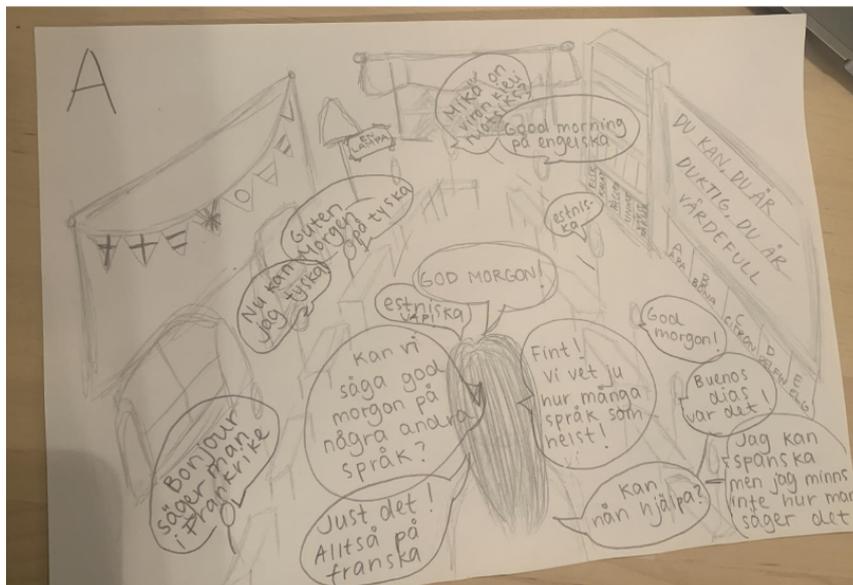
and copywriter). Furthermore, some of these visualisations depicted an empty classroom or a teacher teaching a class without explicit reference to language(s) in the classroom. Such data were disregarded in the categorisation and will not be discussed further.

4.1 Learner-centered Perspective on Multilingualism

The learner-centred perspective sees the pupils' multilingual backgrounds as a central starting point in language teaching. In response to the visualisations' guiding questions asking the participants to reflect on the role of language in their work, classrooms were depicted as multilingual and multicultural spaces. These depictions positioned teachers as utilisers of pupils' multilingualism. The visualised teachers consciously made use of and made room for pupils' multilingual backgrounds, acknowledging that they were multilingual already prior to the teaching. During instruction, the teachers encouraged pupils to use all the languages in their repertoires. They also made the different languages and cultural backgrounds visible in the classroom by showcasing several flags on the walls as well as tags with words and phrases in other languages to support learning. In some of the visualisations, posters on walls presented the phrase "good morning" in different languages or the names of animals in the target language (Swedish) and the pupils' first language (Finnish). In one visualisation, the participant added information on one of the classroom bookshelves to indicate that it was filled with books about different cultures so that the pupils could learn more about other peoples. Participant ÅAU15 (Image 1) depicted a teacher saying "good morning" to the class and asking them whether they knew the phrase in other languages. The pupils were shown replying in different languages, and the teacher encouraged them with positive feedback.

Image 1

A visualisation of the learner-centred perspective. A Swedish immersion teacher student (ÅAU15) envisioned a teacher asking their pupils how they say “good morning” in different languages.



In summary, the visualisations demonstrating the learner-centred perspective presented pupils’ multilingualism as a starting point for language education. Teaching and learning were not based only on the teacher’s experiences; the pupils’ backgrounds were also seen as important resources. This perspective is strongly related to the recent discussion on increased multilingualism and the existence of several languages in Finland, highlighting the need to consider all available linguistic resources.

4.2 Teaching-Centered Perspective on Multilingualism

The discourses on both national bilingualism (Finnish and Swedish) and multilingualism (pupils’ and teachers’ multilingual repertoires) were visible in the teaching-centred perspective. When depicting the role of language in their teaching, some of the participants’ visualised a dream of a classroom where the pupils actively use languages, with bi-/multilingualism being brought to them in various ways through teaching. Some visual narratives clearly described this as the teachers’ primary task, whereas others depicted teachers contributing to pupils’ multilingualism by encouraging the pupils to use different languages or by integrating the Swedish language into the teaching of subject content. First, three of the visual narratives brought up bilingualism as a goal (citation 1), whereas two narratives explicitly mentioned or brought up multilingualism beyond the

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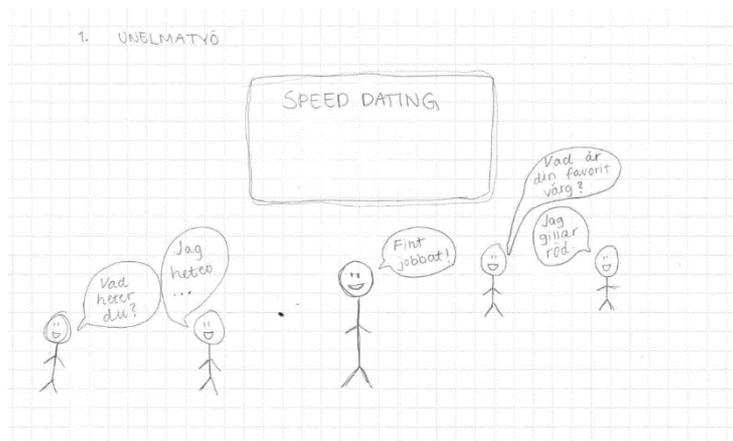
Swedish-Finnish bilingualism (citation 2). In contrast to the learner-centred perspective, the teaching-centred narratives presented pupils as monolingual at the beginning of the teaching process, which shows the persistence of views on Finnish society and population as originally monolingual despite the official bilingual aims. In the visualisations, pupils were also depicted as a seemingly homogeneous group, and no visual hints of multilingualism or multiculturalism were included. The goal of educating for bi/multilingualism was often expressed in the descriptive texts, whereas the visualisations depicted different situations, including children playing outside a school building, a person standing on top of a globe, and different types of collages with multiple pictures. Two participants who were Swedish immersion teacher students described their tasks as educators for bi/multilingualism as follows:

- 1) In my dream job, the child acquires Swedish as their second language alongside Finnish and sees the second language in a positive light. (ÅAU1)
- 2) In my home country, I want to give monolingual children the richness of bilingualism or multilingualism, as I feel that it will open many doors [for them] in the future. (ÅAU12)

Second, in the visual narratives depicting the teaching-centred perspective, the participants emphasised encouraging the pupils' use of the target language. In the visualisations, the teachers encouraged this use through different activities that allow pupils to practise their language skills in the classroom. In some of the visualisations, the pupils performed oral activities in small groups or pairs, and the teacher's main task was to listen and provide support if needed. For example, the visualisation shown in Image 2 depicted the pupils practising a speed dating exercise in Swedish while the teacher (standing in the middle of the classroom) listened to them and offered reassuring feedback. In other visualisations in this category, the teacher reminded the pupils to use Swedish when they spoke or asked questions to make them use the language.

Image 2

A visualisation of the teaching-centred perspective that depicts the teacher as someone who encourages pupils' language use. A Swedish language subject teacher student (UEF8) envisioned a teacher following their pupils as they conduct an oral discussion exercise in pairs and giving them heartening feedback.



Third, visual narratives based on the teaching-centred perspective included narratives of integrating language instruction into the teaching of a non-language subject, such as maths. These integrations of language and content were all visualised by Swedish immersion teacher students. In the visual narratives, the teachers added to the pupils' multilingualism through their pedagogical methods as the language of instruction was different from the pupils' first language. These teachers taught both language and content, and they viewed language as a tool for learning subject content. The visualisations showed Swedish immersion teachers who taught another subject and used Swedish as a tool for learning; one was a collage consisting of several pictures connected to the classroom and teaching. One of the participating Swedish immersion teacher students described this integration of language and content as follows: "The work community works together and plans thematic units that inspire the pupils to learn both language and subject content at the same time." (ÅA17)

In brief, participants with a teaching-centred perspective saw multilingualism as a product of school teaching, which took different forms in the participants' narratives. In this category, the visual narratives drew either on the more traditional idea of Swedish education as education for bilingual Finland or on the idea of multilingual education. However, the heterogeneous linguistic backgrounds of the pupils were not explicitly present.

4.3 Teacher-Centered Perspective on Multilingualism

The teacher-centred point of view focuses on the teacher’s own use of multiple languages. In the visualisations, the teachers’ multilingualism was visible in the classroom through the different languages they teach or speak, either during one lesson or as a part of their work. Some narratives emphasised the importance of language teachers being able to use different languages in their work, as the following extract shows: “I will be happy at work if I can use both Swedish and Finnish, but the Swedish language plays a major role.” (JYU27)

In Finland, it is common for language teachers to teach two or more subjects, often different language subjects. The participating future Swedish language subject teachers made these different languages visible in their visualisations. For example, in Image 3, different flags are present in the classroom.

Image 3

A visualisation of the teacher-centred perspective. A Swedish language subject teacher student (JYU34) envisioned working as an instructor of Swedish, English, and German.



The descriptive texts mention the teaching of several languages and the importance of languages. In some of the visualisations, the significance of certain languages was illustrated by placing the flags inside heart shapes. One of the participants explained this with the following words: “The

heart-shaped picture with the Finnish, Swedish, and British flags shows that I have very dear relationships with these three languages.” (JYU6)

Some Swedish immersion teacher students also depicted themselves as multilingual teachers who used multiple languages in the classroom; for example, they said “good morning” in three different languages (Finnish, Swedish, and English). In the written descriptions, these participants highlighted the importance of using/mastering several languages in their work.

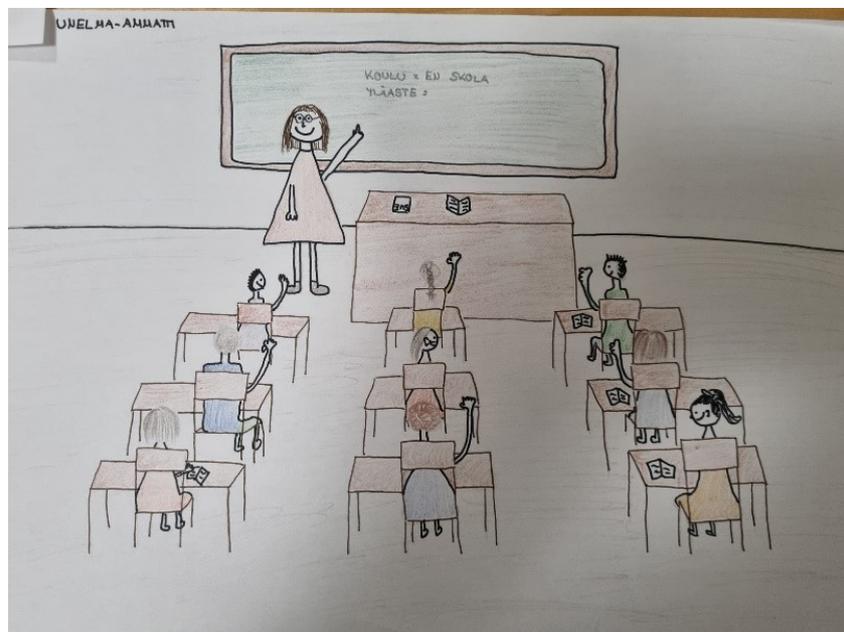
To summarise, the focus on teachers’ multilingualism was typical in visual narratives of the teacher-centred perspective. These visualisations depicted teachers as multilinguals but did not explicitly mention goals related to multilingualism in teaching. The visualisations and their accompanying texts did not concentrate on pupils or teaching multilingualism; they expressed the use of several languages as an integral part of teachers’ work.

4.4 Language-Centered Perspective on Multilingualism

The language-centred perspective included visual narratives of teachers who focused on teaching the target language and described teachers first and foremost as language teachers. In response to the guiding questions about the role of language in their work, these participants often depicted in their visualisations a traditional classroom setting and themselves teaching the subject to a seemingly homogeneous group of pupils (e.g. pupils depicted as identical, with no explicit comments on diversity). In their visual narratives, teaching the target language was considered central to their future work. Instead of explicitly mentioning educating for multilingualism, these participants acknowledged that pupils learn a new language in addition to the one(s) they already know. Thus, when teaching the target language and different parts of it (e.g. grammar), teachers could be seen as mediators between the target language and the pupils. In this category, a typical visualisation depicted a teacher in front of the class with target-language learning objects written on the whiteboard, as shown in Image 4. Here, language can be seen as an object of study. In many similar cases, the object of learning seemed to be the target language’s grammar or some cultural aspect related to the target language. The pupils in the classrooms were depicted as monolingual, with no signs of multilingualism present.

Image 4

A visualisation of the language-centred perspective that depicts the instructor as a teacher of language skills. A Swedish language subject teacher student (JYU32) envisioned teaching vocabulary to their pupils.



To conclude, multilingualism was not explicitly mentioned in the visual narratives of the language-centred perspective, nor was the use of multiple languages in the classroom. Although learning a new language naturally serves the goal of becoming multilingual, this was not highlighted in the visualisations. Language was an object of study, and multilingualism was only a possible side effect of teaching.

4.5 Summary of the Findings

The analysis resulted in four different ways of perceiving the role of multilingualism in the participants' future work. These results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Perspectives on multilingualism.

Perspective	Depictions in the visual narrative	Number of visual narratives (n=62)	Number of visual narratives in the different programmes
Learner-centered perspective	Making use of pupils' diverse linguistic backgrounds	5	Immersion teacher programme 5
Teaching-centred perspective	Explicitly aiming to educate pupils to become bi/multilingual	17	Immersion teacher programme 5 Subject teacher programme 1
	Encouraging pupils to use the target language		Immersion teacher programme 5 Subject teacher programme 2
	Integrating language and subject content; target language used as a medium for learning		Immersion teacher programme 4
Teacher-centred perspective	Speaking and/or teaching several languages	12	Immersion teacher programme 6 Subject teacher programme 6
Language-centred perspective	Focusing on teaching language skills in the target language	17	Subject teacher programme 17
No views related to multilingualism		11	Immersion teacher programme 3 Subject teacher programme 8

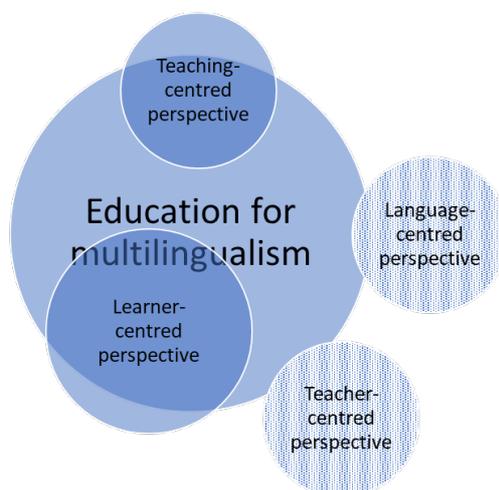
In the next section, we will discuss the significance of these findings and the conclusions that can be drawn from them.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Educating future language teachers to meet the challenges and possibilities of a multilingual world requires understanding how they perceive their future profession and what discourses of multilingualism are readily available to them when they imagine their future. In our study, we focused on Swedish language teacher students' visions of their future work in the form of visualisations and accompanying texts and analysed the perspectives on multilingualism present in them. Instead of explicitly asking the students about multilingualism in their future work, we explored the naturally occurring role of the target language and possible other languages in the data. Aiming to become qualified language teachers in Swedish, the students were studying at two different teacher education programmes: the Swedish immersion teacher education programme and the Swedish language subject teacher education programme. Specifically, we aimed to answer the following research question: What kinds of perspectives on multilingualism do language teacher students envision in their visual narratives? Based on this question, we sought to document the students' perspectives on the pupils' role in the visual narratives, on the pupils' linguistic repertoires, on the language(s) being taught, and on teachers as educators for multilingualism.

In our data-driven analysis, we identified learner-centred, teaching-centred, teacher-centred, and language-centred perspectives on multilingualism. In addition, our data included narratives with no views on multilingualism. Below, we discuss these perspectives in light of current theoretical and political approaches to multilingualism. To understand them in relation to the context, we also take into account the multiple, often contradictory discourses surrounding Finnish discussions on bilingualism and multilingualism when reflecting on their significance. In Figure 1, the four perspectives related to multilingualism are situated in relation to the understanding of education for multilingualism, referring to a practice that encourages all pupils "to use their multilingual repertoire for a pedagogical purpose in different ways" (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022, p. 21) and that represents the latest understanding of multilingualism in Finnish educational documents. The positioning of each perspective in the figure reflects our understanding of the degree to which that point of view frames language education in terms of education for multilingualism.

Figure 1



Two of the participants' perspectives – learner-centred and teaching-centred – saw language teachers as explicitly responsible for their pupils' multilingual education. In Figure 1, these perspectives are situated closest to the core of the concept of education for multilingualism. The most extensive understanding of multilingualism was provided by the learner-centred perspective on multilingualism. Visualisations and accompanying texts in this category depicted Finnish classrooms as multicultural, multilingual spaces. The pupils were perceived as active participants in the multilingual environment, and teachers drew on their language resources in teaching. Swedish teaching was not only aimed at teaching the linguistic skills of one specific language, but it included other languages and general language awareness as educational goals. This perspective is closely related to the multilingual language education presented in EU policy documents, which speak of developing a “linguistic repertory [sic] [for learners], in which all linguistic abilities have a place” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5), and it also matches the advocacy approach to multilingualism by Alisaari et al. (2019). Accordingly, the learner-centred perspective on multilingualism creates a good starting point for education for multilingualism. In this case, the role of teacher education can be seen as supporting language teacher students with the needed resources for putting these ideas into practice.

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Another perspective that explicitly aimed to develop pupils' multilingual repertoire was the teaching-centred one. The visual narratives in this category also focused on the practical use of multiple languages in different contexts. However, rather than building on the pupils' existing multilingualism, it considers multilingualism as something that could be acquired with the help of language teaching activities in which pupils actively use the target language in the classroom. Accordingly, this perspective closely relates to a functional view of language as a resource or repertoire (Block, 2003; Firth & Wagner, 1997; May, 2019). In the visual narratives depicting this perspective, the focus was often on the language(s) taught in school, whereas other languages (e.g. pupils' home languages) were not present in the visualised learning environments. Thus, this perspective matches the allowance and denial approaches to multilingualism discussed in Alisaari et al.'s (2019) study and seems to partially draw on some older discourse about multilingualism, namely viewing pupils as linguistically homogenous and disregarding languages other than school languages. The idea of the school providing skills in the second national language (Swedish) to originally monolingual pupils can be related to Finnish bilingual policies and the idea of equipping pupils for future international encounters (cf. Buchberger, 2002). It could also be seen as reflecting the participants' own experiences of the goals and practices of Swedish education at school. Since this perspective ignores the increasingly linguistically heterogeneous Finnish classrooms, the role of teacher education is to explicitly draw attention to these realities in schools and encourage reflection on the meaning of pupils' multilingualism for language education practices.

In Figure 1, the teacher- and language-centred perspectives to multilingualism are shown in lighter colours and positioned further away from the core of education for multilingualism. When reflecting on the results in light of official policy documents, we see less resemblance between these two perspectives and the most recent official goals concerning language education as education for multilingualism. In visual narratives of the language-centred perspective, the educator focused primarily on teaching the target language and worked so that students could learn a new language (see Image 4). The role of language in these narratives was that of a school subject. Often, the learning object was a grammatical element in the target language. Consequently, the target language was seen as the central focus and medium of instruction, and multilingual resources were not taken into account (cf. Alisaari et al., 2019). Similarly, the visual narratives depicting the teacher-centred perspective recognised the teacher as a multilingual actor but ignored the pupils' multilingualism. Although our participants were not directly asked if they would be willing to invest in the operationalisation of multilingual policies and teaching multilingual pupils in their classrooms, the

fact that many of their visions of teaching Swedish did not include any traces of discourses about Finland as a multilingual society and language teaching as education for multilingualism can be considered problematic. Based on the data, we cannot draw conclusions about whether the participants were ignorant of multilingualism in education or whether they took multilingualism in the future classrooms for granted and therefore did not address it more explicitly in the narratives. In any case, language teacher education needs to draw more attention to these realities and raise awareness on the role of teachers as educators for multilingualism.

Overall, the language teacher students who participated in this study brought to the fore perspectives that were often not in accordance with the Finnish policies highlighting the need for multilingual educational practices; rather, they foregrounded some of the elements of monolingual education detected in previous research (e.g. Alisaari et al., 2021; Birello et al., 2021; De Angelis, 2011). This can become an obstacle to the establishment of multilingual educational practices. Despite the presence of official documents, new policies and practices will only enter the classroom if teachers are aware of them and find them central to their professional practice.

Future teachers' developmental needs concerning the recognition and use of the growing linguistic diversity in education are also a challenge for initial teacher education. Alisaari et al. (2019) and Llompart et al. (2023) have called for a multilingual turn in initial teacher training to help student teachers implement more language-sensitive teaching in their future classrooms. The Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms project (Listiac, n.d.) aims to give all pupils in Europe an equal opportunity to achieve educational success and well-being by adopting a multilingual pedagogy based on the redesigning of the curriculum for initial teacher education and in-service teacher training. Our study also highlights the need for such initiatives by providing glimpses of language teacher students' future visualisations in which the role of language is only that of a learning object. To support language teacher students' growth as educators for multilingualism, we believe the role of pupils and their linguistic repertoires as well as the role of language(s) and the teacher must be considered in language education.

Drawing on our results, we suggest three possible approaches to addressing multilingualism in language teacher education. First, we believe that making language teacher students' implicit beliefs about their professional future more explicit can offer a useful starting point for discussing different

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perspectives and agendas in language education. This can happen, as in this study, by using visualisations and narratives as a tool, discussing them with the students, and analysing the perspectives and beliefs behind these perspectives. Further, learning to recognise and analyse the different perspectives present within their community can help teacher students to reflect on their own beliefs. Second, offering language teacher students periods of practical training in communities known for their work in fostering multilingualism (in Finland or abroad) could create valuable learning opportunities for them (cf. Iversen, 2020). Imagining multilingual language education is difficult without having seen models of how this takes place in practice. Third, we believe that addressing the question of multilingual practices in the teacher education community is of great significance, as it is an important venue for providing teacher students with concrete examples of good practices for responding to multilingualism. Teacher educators should reflect on the extent to which they recognise the increasing multilingualism also among their own students and consider it in teaching practices. They should also reflect on the perspectives their students express regarding multilingual education at a practical level.

Our findings also call for further research on language teacher students' beliefs about multilingualism. Although our study provides an understanding of the ways in which students are able to think about multilingualism at the beginning of their studies, our methodological limitations did not allow us to explore the reasons behind their perspectives. Adding interviews to visual narratives could offer this kind of understanding. In addition, a longitudinal study could also be conducted to evaluate the significance of teacher education in the development of language teacher students' multilingual awareness and beliefs. Despite its limitations, our study offers an interesting perspective on the beliefs of students who are at the beginning of their teacher journeys. Understanding their starting points, teacher education faces the challenge of extending their knowledge. Our study lays the groundwork for teacher educators to reflect on the approaches needed to achieve the best possible outcomes in educating for multilingualism.

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