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# 4 'I Am a Plurilingual Speaker, but Can I Teach Plurilingual Speakers?' Contradictions in Student Teacher Discourses on Plurilingualism in Spain, Slovenia and Finland

Júlia Llompart, Tjaša Dražnik and Mari Bergroth

This chapter investigates student teacher discourses on plurilingualism in four European initial teacher education (ITE) institutions located in Spain (Catalonia), Slovenia and Finland. As part of the European project called Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms, we collected student group thoughts using reflection instruments based on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. Data from 173 student teachers enrolled in ITE at four universities located in Barcelona, Ljubljana, Vaasa and Jyväskylä were explored using qualitative analysis. By analysing the SWOT characteristics expressed by student teachers, we identified certain contradictions regarding plurilingualism and the use of plurilingual pedagogies. These contradictions relate to the positioning as 'being a plurilingual speaker' and 'becoming a teacher dealing with plurilingualism'. We discuss the similarities and differences between student voices in the light of the wider linguistic landscapes in the three countries and four universities.

## Introduction

In Europe, over the last two decades, migration and mobility phenomena have added more diversification to the already existing regional linguistic diversity. Therefore, schools and high schools – especially in urban

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centres – are now multicultural and multilingual in terms of their composition. In fact, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the percentage of students of immigrant background in the countries included in the OECD report increased by 6% between 2003 and 2015 (OECD, 2019a). Second-generation migrant students represented the group that had increased the most. This reality has launched changes and initiatives at different levels to change monolingually framed educational policies, programmes and practices. In fact, according to Conteh and Meier (2014), a desired turn towards multilingualism in education and research has been promoted, especially with the appearance of several concepts, models and didactic proposals, such as plurilingual competence (Coste *et al*., 2009), language awareness (Cenoz *et al*., 2017) and pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures (Candelier, 2008) in European policies and discourses. According to Busch (2011), the challenge for education stakeholders in different European regions is to decide which model to follow according to their particular sociolinguistic situation and needs.

Bergroth *et al*. (2021a) state that linguistically sensitive teaching (LST) is 'about acknowledging and understanding the role of languages of schooling, foreign/regional/minority languages taught in school and languages brought to school by the students, staff and the surrounding linguistically diverse society for learning and identity' (2021a: 3). In line with the multilingual turn and considering that teachers are key in promoting and applying LST in classrooms, initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in Europe have included linguistic and cultural diversity as a component in their courses. Although this component remains insufficient and fragmented (European Commission, 2017), research shows that there is implementational space for improvement (Bergroth *et al*., 2021a). In fact, according to Alisaari *et al*. (2019), this multilingual turn in ITE is crucial to reach the desired change towards LST, which implies teachers' sensitivity towards the language dimension of education (Alisaari *et al*., 2019; Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

This study took two main challenges, pointed out in previous research (Birello *et al*., 2021), as points of departure:

(1) on the one hand, multi/plurilingual pedagogies are not fully integrated into teacher education practices (Bergroth *et al*., 2021a);
(2) on the other, student teachers perceive that they are not being sufficiently trained for the linguistic and cultural diversity of schools (Llompart & Moore, 2020).

Moreover, Birello *et al*. (2021) noted that, although the positive discourse of the 'goodness of plurilingualism' and the recognition that it has to be carried out in schools are generally established, when student teachers position themselves as teachers in practice, their attitude towards plurilingualism is transformed into negative feelings of being under-trained.

In this chapter we focus on the contradictions observed in student teachers' discourses in three European contexts regarding their existing 'being a plurilingual speaker' discourse, their perception of plurilingualism and their 'emerging becoming a professional' discourse as teachers engaged in and promoting multilingualism (at the level of society) and plurilingualism (at the level of individuals). Moreover, we examine and discuss similarities and differences regarding this matter in the four ITE institutions located in three countries where the data were collected. To do this, we analyse the discourse of student teachers on linguistic diversity as they participate in discussion activities. The research questions guiding the study were as follows.

(1) What are student teachers' beliefs about plurilingualism and LST?
(2) What are student teachers' beliefs/feelings when positioning themselves as teachers who have to manage their teaching practice in multilingual environments and with plurilingual students?
(3) What, if any, are the relevant similarities and/or differences among the three contexts?

In the next sections, we first present the three country contexts where the data for this study were collected. Second, we focus on the theoretical framework, including student teachers' discourse, beliefs and ideologies. Third, we present the methodology and the means of analysis followed in this study. Fourth, we then analyse and discuss the data and, finally, offer conclusions and a closing discussion.

## Linguistic Diversity in Schools in Spain (Catalonia), Slovenia and Finland

Catalonia is now multicultural and multilingual, with 16.2% of the population of migrant origin (Idescat, 2020). According to Grup de Llengües Amenaçades (2016), more than 300 languages are spoken in the region. As a first language, the population speaks Catalan (31.5% of the population), Spanish (52.7%), both Catalan and Spanish (2.8%), Arabic (2.2%), Romanian (1.1%) and other languages (3%). Several languages are spoken as first language by less than 1% of the population, namely Galician, French, Amazigh, Russian, Portuguese, Italian, Chinese, German and English (Idescat, 2018).

Catalan schools and high schools have been affected and are continuously challenged by the sociolinguistic reality. As a region within the Spanish state, Catalonia is regulated by the Spanish Law of Education (Ley Orgánica 3/2020, 2020), by which the general dispositions for education are established. There is freedom given to each region to create an educational curriculum, which can include the teaching and learning of a co-official language. In Catalonia, Catalan has been established as the vehicular language in education since the 1980s; it is taught with Spanish

and at least one other language, usually English or French (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017a). Historically, the region has managed plurilingualism – especially Catalan and Spanish – but the arrival of students from diverse countries, especially over the last three decades, has resulted in an extra challenge to adapt to increasing linguistic heterogeneity. Several phases of adaptation have been promoted by the Catalan Government (Llompart & Birello, 2020).

First, in 2004, the so-called Linguistic and Social Cohesion Plan (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2004) was created. This plan had the objectives of

(1) promoting the teaching and learning of Catalan following a language immersion approach;
(2) integrating students of migrant origin;
(3) achieving social cohesion and equal opportunities for children and youth.

Second, in 2017, a decree on educational inclusion (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017b) was passed. This also indicated that the linguistic and cultural diversity of students had to be considered to attain full social cohesion and just and equitable education.

Third, in 2018, in line with the lower numbers of migrants arriving and the consolidation of European recommendations on plurilingual and pluricultural education, a new framework for linguistic diversity in schools was proposed, called the Language Model of the Catalan Education System: Language Learning and Use in a Multilingual and Multicultural Educational Environment (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018). This document proposes plurilingual and pluricultural education in line with the current diverse backgrounds, family languages and linguistic practices found in educational institutions, and aims to help students prepare for a globalised world. Both the new framework and the decree proposed by the Catalan Government align with the present linguistic and cultural reality of Catalonia.

In the last two decades, to align with the reality in schools and the new demands, there has been adaptation in ITE degree plans, and new subjects have been added in response to the curricula for early childhood, primary and secondary education, other framework documents and the sociolinguistic reality of schools. For instance, in adapting the former ITE programme to transform it into a bachelor's degree (following the Bologna Process), in 2009 the Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona added a subject on School Language Policy and Plurilingualism for all primary school student teachers; in addition, an elective subject on Linguistic Reception in Schools was opened for early childhood and primary student teachers. Despite the enormous diversity among students in schools and high schools, student teachers of migrant backgrounds are still not common in ITE institutions in Catalonia but, as noted by Llompart and Birello (2020),

student teachers of migrant backgrounds have begun to enrol in ITE programmes in recent years.

The next context, Slovenia, has always been a heterogeneous area. Its territory was always part of a larger, multinational entity, for example the Habsburg Monarchy and Yugoslavia in its various guises. Up to the 20th century, Slovene had the status of a minority language, used only in the private domain. However, over the last two centuries, the Slovene language was a crucial element in the process of creating the Slovene nation and its development into a nation state (Novak-Lukanovič & Limon, 2012) and, as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, it became the country's official language at the independence of Slovenia in 1991.

According to the last population census in 2002 (as quoted in Eurydice, 2021), Slovenian is the native language of 88% of the Slovenian population and 92% of the population uses the Slovenian language at home. In 2002, the total population of Slovenia was almost 2 million, of which 83% declared themselves to be Slovene. At that time, the constitutionally recognised minorities were Hungarians (0.3%), Italians (0.1%) and the Roma (0.2%). The other notable (self-declared) minorities were Serbs (2%), Croats (1.8%), Muslims (including Bosniacs) (1.6%), Albanians (0.1%), Macedonians (0.20%) and Montenegrins (0.1%). A total of 8.9% reported being of unknown ethnic group (Eurydice, 2021). Research in 2017 (Eurydice, 2017) also showed that 7.6% of 15-year-old learners in Slovenia speak a language different from Slovene at home.

The Slovenian language is the general language of instruction, as stipulated by Article 6 of the Basic School Act (1996). In border areas populated by Italian and Hungarian communities, the language of the minority has the status of an official language. Accordingly, members of Italian and Hungarian national communities in linguistically mixed areas have the right to education in their respective language, to radio and television programmes, and to communicate in their language with the authorities (Novak-Lukanovič & Limon, 2012). Two models of bilingual education have been implemented in linguistically mixed areas. In the first model, practised in the Slovene–Italian region, the educational process is conducted in the mother tongue and the second language is a compulsory subject. In the second model, used in the Slovene–Hungarian region, both languages are languages of instruction and school subjects. In the latter bilingual educational model, the concurrent method is applied during each lesson, with language switching (Novak-Lukanovič & Limon, 2012).

Increasingly, Slovenian education policies recognise multilingualism as one of the principles of a modern society and the foundation of tolerance between nations and linguistic communities (Krek & Metljak, 2011). The white paper on education in Slovenia (Krek & Metljak, 2011) recommends that schools offer a wide variety of languages: beyond languages that are part of the curriculum, schools should also suitably include languages that are not part of the curriculum but are present in the learning

environment (e.g. students' first languages). One of the goals of the Resolution on the National Programme for Language Policy (Republic of Slovenia, 2021) is the development of multilingual and intercultural awareness to consider linguistic diversity and promote functional multilingualism. To achieve these aims, this resolution on language policy proposes concrete measures, including the promotion of multilingualism and plurilingualism in schools, systematic training of preschool teachers and teachers for establishing a plurilingual educational environment, training of other education staff in the basics of plurilingualism and plurilingual didactics, and language-sensitive teaching for working with immigrant students.

The third context of this study, Finland, is officially bilingual but also multilingual and multicultural, with a history of emigration (especially to the neighbouring country, Sweden) rather than immigration. However, today, immigration exceeds emigration and the only declining languages in Finland are the official national languages – Finnish and Swedish (Karlsson, 2017). According to the latest official statistics (Statistics Finland, 2021), at the end of 2020, 87% of the population resident in Finland had a Finnish-speaking background, 5.2% had a Swedish-speaking background and 7.8% had a foreign language background. When looking closer at foreign language speakers in Finland, the mobility from neighbouring countries is clear. The biggest groups of people with foreign backgrounds are from the neighbouring countries of Russia (or the former Soviet Union) and Estonia, and immigration has intensified since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Persons with former Soviet Union area backgrounds make up one-fifth of the total population of foreign background. Although Russia is a very large neighbouring country, it is not common for Finns to learn Russian as a foreign language in school. As noted by Mustajoki and Protassova (2015: 70) 'it is hard to find another country in the world where learning the language of a big neighbour is so rare'. However, Russian as a home language can be supported in Finland as there are around a dozen bilingual Finnish–Russian preschools and a bilingual state-owned school (Protassova *et al.*, 2022).

Like in Estonia – a country where the national language is closely related to the majority language of Finland (Finnish) –immigration to Finland has mainly been based on work and family relations (Jakobson *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, the largest proportion of the foreign population in Finland is found in the monolingual Swedish autonomous region Åland (16.7%) but, of this group, 41% come from Sweden and speak the majority language of the region (Statistics Finland, 2021). Therefore, Russian, Estonian and Sweden-Swedish (i.e. Swedish as spoken in Sweden) speakers are not necessarily the first linguistic groups one thinks of when talking about pupils with immigration backgrounds.

Looking more closely at the statistics, they show that, of second-generation people with foreign backgrounds (born in Finland), 22% have

African backgrounds, 28% have Asian backgrounds and 46% have European backgrounds (Statistics Finland, 2021). In 2016, languages such as Arabic, Persian and Vietnamese were the fastest growing languages in Finland in terms of the number of speakers (Karlsson, 2017); these languages are therefore often connected with newly arrived immigrants. According to Eurydice (2019), in general, Finnish (education) language policies are deemed to place a strong emphasis on diversity. Linguistic rights are stated in the Constitution of Finland. Other than the national languages of Finland (Finnish and Swedish), the constitution states that the Sami, as an indigenous people, as well as the Roma and other groups, have the right to maintain and develop their languages and cultures. The language of instruction in Finland is either Finnish or Swedish, as stated in the Basic Education Act (628/1998). According to the act, the language of instruction may also be Sami, Roma or sign language. However, the act also states that teaching may be given partially in another language if this does not risk the pupils' ability to follow teaching, giving teachers the freedom to use languages other than the official language(s) for instruction. However, in the core curriculum for basic education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016), in a way this freedom to use other languages turns into an obligation.

The view of linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset is identified as one of the core values guiding basic education and it is stated that, among other things, languages should be appreciated and the parallel use of various languages in school daily life should be seen as natural. Languages are identified to be of key importance for learning, interaction and cooperation. According to the curriculum, the role of languages in the building of identities and socialisation needs to be understood in schools. However, despite acknowledgement of linguistic and cultural diversity at policy level, there are still challenges in implementing the policies in practice.

On the one hand, the positive view of linguistic diversity is often related to globally valued languages such as English and French. In fact, English is often taught as a foreign language in schools and high schools, but it has also been implemented as a medium of instruction in ITE specialisations in Spain (Catalonia) and Finland, for instance. The spread of English as a medium of instruction but also as lingua franca has some implications for the study of student teachers' discourses regarding multilingualism and teaching plurilingual students (Dražnik et al., 2022). On the other hand, most ITE institutions include teaching related to diversity in their curriculum, but teacher educators have expressed a need for professional development courses regarding the theme of cultural diversity (Räsänen et al., 2018).

Despite the efforts made in each of the three contexts regarding both official documents and ITE, in 2017 the European Commission reported that student teachers feel unpreparedness to manage and teach students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (European Commission,

2017). More specifically, in Finland, it has been found that although most teacher education institutions include teaching related to diversity, student teachers struggle to see the connection between LST and teachers' relational competence during their practicums (Haagensen, 2020) and even teacher educators feel the need for continuing education on cultural diversity (Räsänen *et al.*, 2018). In Catalonia, student teachers have reported feeling insecure and lacking in training for managing diversity (Llompart & Moore, 2020). In Slovenia, teachers have stated that they are not well prepared to teach in a multicultural or multilingual setting, with 14% reporting a strong need for professional development in teaching in such settings (OECD, 2019b).

The aforementioned reports and studies were based on surveys and/or discourse analysis of student teachers, which were highly connected to their beliefs and ideologies – as in the present study. In the next section, we present the theoretical framework that allowed us to analyse student teachers' discourse on plurilingualism and their teaching practice in diverse environments.

## A Framework to Analyse Student Teachers' Beliefs on Being and Becoming a Linguistically Sensitive Teacher

As already noted, since the turn of the millennium, European promotion of multilingualism and plurilingualism as a necessary, positive and a desirable objective in education has been running in the form of official documents, frameworks and didactic proposals. Indeed, research has shown that the pro-multilingualism European discourse seems to have entered into theory teachers' mindsets (Erling & Moore, 2021; Haukås, 2016). In spite of this, in teaching practice, the monolingual habitus (Gogolin, 2013) still seems to have a significant presence in classrooms. In fact, several studies have pointed to the existing contrast between the positive discourses of teachers and student teachers on plurilingualism as a phenomenon and the negative discourses on their beliefs and feelings regarding teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms (see e.g. Bergroth & Hansell, 2020; Birello *et al.*, 2021; Bredthauer & Engfer, 2016; Llompart & Birello, 2020). This contradiction is emphasised in the title of this chapter – specifically, student teachers are willing to adjust their experience of being a plurilingual speaker in line with European plurilingual discourses (being a plurilingual speaker is a positive feature), but they face challenges in teaching for plurilingualism (becoming a teacher of plurilingual students is a challenge).

According to Young (2014), crucial steps to successfully move towards LST in classrooms involve uncovering and analysing teachers' ideologies regarding language. Inspired by this, we draw on research on linguistic ideologies – which should help connect beliefs and real linguistic social conduct (Schieffelin *et al.*, 1998; Silverstein, 1979) – teacher cognition

and, specifically, teachers' beliefs and ideologies in our research. Linguistic ideologies, initially defined by Silverstein (1979) and Irvine (1989), are beliefs about languages related to perceived language structure and use; they thus involve moral and political interests. For Woolard (2020), the term 'linguistic ideology' refers to implicit knowledge about languages and practices, related to a 'repeated social experience' a habitus, as described by Bourdieu (1991) and Woolard (2020: 2), which can be deployed implicitly or explicitly through verbalisations and/or embodied practices. In expanding the work on linguistic ideologies, Kroskrity (2010) proposed analysing them in terms of how they shape professional discourses and thus construct professional competence, as well as determining how professionals in specific fields perform linguistically. In this sense, analysing linguistic ideologies might be key to understanding implications for teachers and teaching practices.

The study of teacher thinking has been ingrained in studies on teacher cognition. Borg's work on teacher cognition (Borg, 2003, 2006, 2019), which he defines as what teachers think, know, believe and do, has been fundamental for understanding the complexity of teachers' thinking. According to Borg, teacher cognition is a dynamic interaction of the triad of cognition, context (whether professional, cultural, social or historical) and personal experience regarding schooling, contextual factors, training and classroom teaching practice (Borg, 2019). What student teachers and teachers believe may influence their present and future pedagogical decisions (Johnson, 1994; Pajares, 1992; Phipps & Borg, 2009). Thus, in the classroom

> teachers produce, affirm and/or disconfirm language policies every day – when they allow or disallow the use of one language or variety rather than another, when they choose to use a particular variety of a language to communicate with their students, when they prefer a certain structure over another in the curriculum, when they show their lack of knowledge about certain languages or varieties, etc. (Farr & Song, 2011: 660)

Despite living in the era of post-monolingualism (Yildiz, 2012) and super-diversities, one of the recurring language ideologies for education and language policy is still that of monolingualism (Farr & Song, 2011; Pulinx et al., 2017). Recent research on teachers' beliefs regarding multilingual education points out a general tendency among teachers to perceive multilingualism as positive, valuable and something to be promoted (Bergroth & Hansell, 2020; Griva & Chostelidou, 2012; Haukås, 2016). In this sense, studies show, for instance, that teachers believe that language knowledge is important to promote intercultural communication (Arocena Egaña et al., 2015) and that students' diverse languages should be encouraged (De Angelis, 2011). However, as indicated by Gkaintartzi et al. (2015), teachers' positive understandings of multilingualism are not directly translated into teaching practice. In fact, research shows that

there might be a gap between positive beliefs about multilingualism and negative beliefs about linguistic diversity in classrooms and in teaching practice (Haukås, 2016). In this sense, teachers feel overwhelmed by students' multilingualism (Bredthauer & Engfer, 2016) and, as indicated by Birello *et al*. (2021), believe that instruction should be carried out only in one language and translation should be avoided (Cummins, 2014), that languages should be taught separately (Arocena Egaña *et al*., 2015) to avoid interference and misunderstanding (Fallas Escobar & Dillard-Paltrineri, 2015) and teachers should know a language to allow its use in the classroom (De Angelis, 2011).

Pajares (1992) noted that teachers' beliefs might contradict one another. As recent research on teachers' beliefs about multilingualism shows, there is a gap between general positive beliefs about multilingualism and negative beliefs in teaching in practice (Basturkmen, 2012; Bergroth & Hansell, 2020; Dockrell *et al*., 2022). As Bredthauer and Engfer indicate (2019: 112) 'The blatant discrepancy between the theoretical approval of multilingual didactics and lack of actual translations into teaching can be explained with regard to the teachers' insecurity and lack of knowledge how to integrate the concepts into their lessons'. Despite what Otwinowska (2014) indicated – that in-service teachers and plurilingual teachers are more aware of linguistic diversity than student teachers and non-plurilingual teachers – studies focusing on student teacher beliefs about multilingualism indicate that the results found regarding some teachers' beliefs can be greatly transferred into those of student teachers (Gkaintartzi *et al*., 2015). In a recent study conducted by Birello *et al*. (2021), the discourse of student teachers clearly showed the contradiction between general positive beliefs about multilingualism and negative beliefs when imagining themselves in classroom practice. Other studies have pointed out that, among student teachers, feelings of being unprepared to be teachers in diverse environments are common (Llompart & Moore, 2020; Stunell, 2021).

The current study will contribute to the field of future teachers' beliefs – a field that has not been extensively explored (Iversen, 2021) – by offering a multi-sided analysis of student teachers' beliefs about plurilingualism and teaching in linguistically diverse environments. Moreover, it will allow us to observe a general tendency related to ITE in some European contexts and to offer some recommendations.

## Methodology

The data for this study were collected within the framework of a European action research project called Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms (Listiac, 2021), which is an Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform). The aim of this three-year project (2019–2022) is to bring forth educational change at multiple levels by

developing and experimenting with a theoretically informed reflection tool aimed at making (future) teachers linguistically more sensitive in their beliefs, attitudes and actions in mainstream classrooms. It mainly targets teacher educators, student teachers and in-service teachers. Nine European universities (from Belgium, Finland, France, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain) and three public ministries (from Finland, Portugal and Slovenia) participated in the project. The data for this study were collected in four of the nine higher education institutions, located in Vaasa (Finland), Jyväskylä (Finland), Catalonia (Spain) and Ljubljana (Slovenia), specifically in some groups of their ITE programmes. Details on the number of participants and their courses of study are shown in Table 3.1.

Following an action research methodology (see Bergroth *et al.* (2021b) for more details), the researchers, teacher educators and student teachers worked together to reflect on LST, their training in LST and their preparedness to manage diverse classrooms in their future classes. A Listiac reflection tool based on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis was used to promote discussion. There was an initial discussion based on a video. Then, student teachers carried out an individual SWOT analysis. When this task was finished, the student teachers were divided into groups of five or six and asked to prepare a collective SWOT document, which was discussed by the whole group at the end. The discussions were video and/or audio recorded, transcribed for analysis and translated into English; for space reasons, only translations to English are used in the data analysis section. All of the participants gave informed consent.

The analysis applied followed two main lines. In the first line, the analysis invoked discourse in interaction (Heller, 2005), focusing on student teachers' discourse in the discussion to construct collective SWOT analyses in groups. Doing this allowed us to discover common themes related to student teachers' beliefs and ideologies; at the same time, using SWOT analysis as a methodological tool prompted the student teachers

**Table 3.1** Description of data

| Location of institution | Course (study year) | Number of participants |
|---|---|---|
| Vaasa, Finland | Didactics II (third year)<br>Intercultural education (third/fourth year) | 41 |
| Jyväskylä, Finland | Practicum seminar (first year)<br>Language awareness (optional summer course) | 45 |
| Catalonia, Spain | School language policy and plurilingual education (third year)<br>Practicum (third/fourth year) | 61 |
| Ljubljana, Slovenia | English through primary school curriculum (fourth year)<br>Linguistic and intercultural awareness (fifth year) | 26 |

to focus on strengths and opportunities versus weaknesses and threats. Thus, in the second line, when trying to identify emerging categories from the data, two main categories of beliefs and ideologies were identified:

(1) student teachers as plurilingual speakers: positively charged beliefs and ideologies;
(2) student teachers as future teachers for plurilingualism: negatively charged beliefs and ideologies.

The first category emerged mainly from analysing discourses regarding strengths and opportunities, whereas the second category emerged mainly from analysing discourses regarding weaknesses and threats. At the same time, each category was divided into more detailed sub-categories.

## Data Analysis

As already mentioned, the data revealed that student teachers from the three countries participating in the study hold both positive and negative beliefs regarding plurilingualism and teaching in multilingual classrooms. In this section, we analyse student teachers' beliefs and connect them to their identity construction as future teachers for plurilingualism.

### The appreciation of being a plurilingual speaker

The student teachers who participated in the study in the four ITE institutions are part of a generation of future teachers who have already been educated either bilingually or plurilingually and who grew up during the era of European promotion of multilingualism. It is thus not strange to observe in the data that these student teachers have a general pro-multilingualism and pro-multiculturalism discourse, as demonstrated in the following excerpts.

> **Excerpt 1.**
> As an opportunity, I also put the fact that there is so much cultural diversity in our society is an opportunity (Student teacher, Catalonia, Spain)

> **Excerpt 2.**
> What I would emphasise here is that you should portray it as something positive in the sense that you don't perceive it as annoying but as a challenge and a big plus for the others when you're discussing cultures and so on (Student teacher, Slovenia)

> **Excerpt 3.**
> In my opinion, language awareness doesn't take up space from the other languages, such as the languages that are usually taught in school – Finnish, English or Swedish – but it enriches every pupil's language use, way of thinking and development (Student teacher, Jyväskylä, Finland)

**Excerpt 4.**
OK for example, I said that I consider as my strength that I can speak three/four languages and knowing them can also help with including them in class – well, and if I understand them and also speak them, then maybe that helps with the work I've got to put into this (Student teacher 2, Catalonia, Spain)

yes, in fact, I said the same. Being plurilingual makes us know it first hand (Student teacher 1, Catalonia, Spain)

yes (Student teacher 3, Catalonia, Spain)

In these excerpts, both diversity and multilingualism are portrayed as positive: each concept is a 'chance', an 'opportunity', something 'positive', 'enriching', 'a plus' and even a 'strength' for the teaching profession. Our data show that this positiveness regarding multilingualism and diversity can be linked to the construction of a plurilingual speaker and teacher identity from a theoretical perspective. Our data reveal three main categories related to student teachers' positive beliefs, as detailed below.

### Plurilingualism related to globalisation, intercultural communication and movement

**Excerpt 5.**
but I do imagine that as a teacher, you can justify that through… A lot of work today, it's very global and the economy is… It's good to know different languages and to be able to get along with people who have different cultural backgrounds and so on. Well, then this thing that it's… Easier to move outside… Or easier to move about internationally and cooperate with others globally (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

**Excerpt 6.**
and… I also said that the world is now ruled by globalisation; ultimately, it is way easier to see different languages (Student teacher, Catalonia, Spain)

**Excerpt 7.**
maybe about the strengths – we have a lot of strengths – but maybe the most important is that we can, these students… is that if we can speak a lot of languages, that is a value, actually (Student teacher, Slovenia)

Student teachers construct an image of the clear need for plurilingualism in today's global, mobile and diverse world. Thus, student teachers' beliefs about plurilingualism are highly positive: being a plurilingual speaker is crucial for success. In spite of this, they seem to refer to an elite plurilingualism/multilingualism (Barakos & Selleck, 2019) – that is, those languages that are 'useful' for economic reasons, for work and to communicate on a global scale. This is related to the commodification of certain languages as capital that allows people to move and to participate in the economy (Heller *et al.*, 2014); this point has already been observed in

previous studies (Birello *et al*., 2021) and we return to it in the next section. Student teachers also consider that language knowledge – although only of certain languages – is a personal asset in terms of consciousness regarding people and cultures, as shown in the next excerpt.

> **Excerpt 8.**
> I like to think that I am a very language aware being. I notice different languages, their forms and cultures in the people and things around me. Also, I have always been eager to learn different languages, which certainly partly affects my language awareness and how it is revealed to others (Student teacher, Jyväskylä, Finland)

### Plurilingualism and diversity as a compulsory component

Our data show that the student teachers participating in the study connect plurilingualism and diversity as a component in the policy documents, the laws and/or the curriculum.

> **Excerpt 9.**
> We have that which [name] said – we have the linguistical sensitivity in our policy documents so everyone like knows that it is something they should work towards (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

> **Excerpt 10.**
> Yes, I put the inclusion decree… I wrote that most of the schools go for inclusive education, and so it is part of their educational project (Student teacher, Catalonia, Spain)

The student teachers thus believe that considering LST is not an option but a compulsory task in their profession – whether it comes from the core curriculum, as in the case of Finland, or the decree of inclusion, as in the case of Catalonia. Slovenia differs from the other cases because the data show that student teachers in this context do not seem to be aware of the existing official dispositions in Slovenia regarding how to be a linguistically sensitive teacher.

> **Excerpt 11.**
> I also wrote that the school curriculum or at least the Slovene one is not adapted to pupils who do not speak the official language. I mean, it's not mentioned anywhere [unclear] like coordinated xx so how are you supposed to work with such a student? (Student teacher, Slovenia)

In the three cases, student teachers are aware that LST is either in the policy/official documents (in Finland and Catalonia) or should be (Slovenia). This seems to result in their awareness of what can or cannot be done in classroom practice regarding LST. In this sense, they constructed the idea of a good teacher as the one who knows and follows the rules. We consider their discourse about LST and classroom practice in the next section.

### Plurilingualism and classroom practice

Student teachers from the three country contexts analysed seem to have clear beliefs about what is required and what is not required to be a linguistically sensitive teacher in the classroom. We found several beliefs in our data regarding plurilingualism and classroom practice. On the one hand, student teachers believe that it is their duty to adapt to new situations and new ideas in schools (Excerpt 12).

**Excerpt 12.**
But if you work in a school setting, you need to adapt to new [concepts] (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

On the other, they believe they have to fight common monolingual ideas to value pupils' plurilingualism, as demonstrated in the following excerpts.

**Excerpt 13.**
I also think I remember that in that course, at least in my group, we discussed this quite a bit, when you have another language than the language of schooling as [your] mother tongue, it's quite common that teachers get this attitude that 'in our school, we speak Swedish'. Because you don't want to, you don't quite understand what the pupils are saying to each other in their mother tongue, and you don't want there to be any bullying or something that you can't notice. But what you're basically saying then is that 'your mother tongue isn't as valuable and you can't speak it here'. That's so wrong (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

**Excerpt 14.**
And since everyone should have the right to equal education then you have to, it doesn't matter what language. So, that is like our obligation then (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

**Excerpt 15.**
I think that, uh, this is important because that way people who come from other countries feel less excluded, they have better chances to develop, and if we are open to new cultures, our students will be too as we are their models so that way there would be less stigma – less stereotypes – and therefore, new students would feel more accepted and welcomed (Student teacher, Slovenia)

**Excerpt 16.**
Under 'opportunities', I wrote that… there is a chance to value cultural identity… to work from the other point of view, to give more visibility to other cultures and to keep on fighting for inclusion (Student teacher, Catalonia, Spain)

As can be observed from these excerpts, the student teachers seem aware that there are still monolingual ideologies that circulate in the school context – such as 'one school, one language' – and the traditional conception that the teacher needs to understand and know everything. They believe that this should be avoided and that they need to value students' home

languages. Moreover, this is not only something that *could* be done, but something that s*hould* be done. Student teachers construct the idea of a good teacher for plurilingualism and diversity as someone who must avoid monolingual ideologies and fight against exclusion and stereotypes and for an equal education regarding languages. For them, a good linguistically sensitive teacher should be a welcoming and accepting role model. In addition, student teachers pointed out the whole-school approach that they believe a linguistically sensitive teacher should take (Excerpt 17).

> **Excerpt 17.**
> I think the best is doing it in every subject, or not subject – like, take every opportunity – because that way is like language, it is part of communication and communication is present in every moment or educational opportunity, so if you only do it while teaching languages – well, it is like if here we only spoke about mm… linguistic sensitivity in the plurilingualism subject we are limiting it… to a certain amount of hours (Student teacher, Catalonia, Spain)

Thus, for student teachers, being a linguistically sensitive teacher is a global task that should be done without time and subject limitations.

Overall, analysis of the data from the four ITE institutions in the three contexts displays the construction of the student teachers as plurilingual speakers and linguistically sensitive teachers in a similar fashion. We observed that student teachers accommodate their own identification, on the one hand, as plurilingual speakers for living in today's world – which permeabilises neoliberal ideologies about certain elite languages (Barakos & Selleck, 2019) – and, on the other, as linguistically sensitive teachers. In the second case, the student teachers categorise a good teacher as a professional who knows the rules – or the absence but necessity of them (and thus who knows what the policy documents, laws and/or curriculum indicate regarding LST) – and who is respectful, inclusive and adaptive towards the diversity of languages in the classroom and aware of the need to avoid certain monolingual ideologies and practices that circulate in society. Thus, in the three contexts, when they situated themselves as speakers and as teachers in theory, student teachers' beliefs regarding multilingualism and multiculturalism in the classroom were positive, which is in line with previous studies focusing on in-service teachers (Arocena Egaña *et al.*, 2015; De Angelis, 2011; Griva & Chostelidou, 2012; Haukås, 2016).

In the next section we present data where the student teachers position themselves in the roles of in-service teachers and in teaching practice to observe the continuity or discontinuity of this positiveness.

## Moving into practice: What now?

When picturing themselves in diverse/multilingual and multicultural classrooms, the student teachers' current novice teacher status and

negatively charged ideas emerged in the discourse. In general, these ideas relate to what the participants describe as weaknesses that they have as future teachers, contributing to a collaborative construction of their identification as teachers for LST.

One finding from the data is that student teachers at the four ITE institutions in the three contexts believe that they are not sufficiently trained to be linguistically sensitive in the classroom, especially to teach students of migrant origin, as demonstrated in the following excerpts.

> **Excerpt 18.**
> I think that since we're students, we might not have had the opportunity to practice how to face these kinds of situations with several different… with students who have different backgrounds in the field. In theory, we might know how to handle it, but we don't know how to handle it when we're in that situation (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

> **Excerpt 19.**
> I don't actually have any experience in linguistically sensitive teaching, but I hope to get it during my studies or after graduation (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

> **Excerpt 20.**
> also, we don't have a lot of experience with such pupils – at least during our studies, we didn't have unless you happened to meet some during practice. So basically, we don't have any experience to be able to say that we've worked for one week with non-native pupils (Student teacher, Slovenia)

> **Excerpt 21.**
> I mean, at university, they give us some ideas and some things, but once we start working as teachers, we will have very little experience, and we will be very young and maybe eh… We try this thing, which is really well done, but when we actually try it, we see that there are several mistakes or that we really cannot do it because… apart from other difficulties… (Student teacher, Catalonia, Spain)

As can be observed in these excerpts, the student teachers believe that they are theoretically trained professionals but lack practical hands-on experience regarding LST and, consequently, do not have enough practice, resources and strategies to act in the field. Thus, when positioning themselves as teachers in the classroom, the positive ideas on linguistic and cultural diversity and education shift to emphasising their novice status, and negatively charged beliefs appear as they categorise themselves as young, unexperienced, fearful (see Dražnik *et al.*, 2022, for more detail) and doubtful professionals who are not ready for LST. Moreover, this lack of experience and resources is related to the insufficient and/or inadequate training they have received during their ITE so far, as previously observed by Llompart and Moore (2020).

The data also reveal that there is a big shift towards plurilingualism in the classroom being viewed as a problematic aspect that student teachers express as not knowing how to manage.

**Excerpt 22.**
Yeah, I think that maybe that teachers maybe find it tough to like use their energy to… maybe if there are students with a different mother tongue than they are used to that it takes like a lot of time, surely, and some things might need to be explained like more thoroughly and gone through. And if the teacher isn't, for example, so good at let's say English and has to speak like partly in English with someone, then maybe they find it tough and start avoiding the situation in a sense (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

**Excerpt 23.**
… and ehm it was quite hard. Then when you realised that there is not really a shared language, that she/he could not speak English at all, or like very badly, and then like how you explain for example in history [class] what a sailing boat is. When you can't say it in English. And I can't speak Turkish, so how do you kind of find that shared language? Then to teach these things so will it then be enjoyable (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

**Excerpt 24.**
I put down how to even work with such children – that we're scared, then how to find help. I don't know, maybe how to even tackle the problem of not understanding their language. I mean, it's a big burden for us as well, or I mean, it's hard for us [to be in the position of] not [being able] to understand (Student teacher, Slovenia)

**Excerpt 25.**
… but then once they get back to the class, how do you incorporate someone whose language roots are so different? (Student teacher, Catalonia, Spain)

Notably, student teachers' beliefs towards managing plurilingualism in the classroom are negatively charged and strongly connected to being scared and anxious. Thus, when positioning themselves as teachers in classrooms, the diversity of languages becomes challenging – it is something that requires energy and something a teacher might want to avoid. For them, non-elite plurilingualism – especially when it does not include English – is problematic for communication and for teaching success. As teachers in a diverse classroom, they categorise themselves as professionals who lack strategies to communicate with students with whom they do not share the same language. This reinforces the previous idea that student teachers' positive beliefs regarding multilingualism are connected to their identity as speakers and to some kind of elite multilingualism. However, this could also be connected to a fear that is echoed from society, which is the idea of the need to master all languages in a multilingual

classroom to be a competent teacher in a diverse environment. In this sense, a clear need to address these ideas in ITE appears. Moreover, regarding the previously expressed linguistic awareness, once student teachers imagine being faced with diverse languages in class, bringing languages into play and comparing them becomes problematic, as expressed in the following excerpt.

> Excerpt 26.
> I think that the difficulty is finding the balance between learning a language and also another one, making them comparable and giving them the same importance – because nowadays, there are a lot of kids who speak Amazigh and we don't give them the space we might have to give them. But then of course, we aren't trained in this aspect, so I think here is the dilemma of it all (Student teacher, Catalonia, Spain)

We thus observed a shift from an accepted and promoted theoretical linguistic and cultural diversity to a problematic one, as imagined in the real teaching practice. Furthermore, the student teachers do not seem to recognise their plurilingualism as a resource for either managing the classroom or having the necessary relational competence with both students and their families.

> Excerpt 27.
> 'write things that we are afraid of and need help to tackle' – that is like just that we like get uncomfortable when something differs from what we are used to when there are other cultures that behave [in different ways], that have other norms, etc. We feel uncomfortable, so we get maybe a little scared of the situation (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

> Excerpt 28.
> The same for contact with parents, as well, that we might have read about it a bit, but at least in my case, it still feels quite scary. (Student teacher, Vaasa, Finland)

Regarding relational competence, our data show that student teachers assume that their (perceived) ignorance of other cultures and norms might affect their communication with some students and their families. They categorise themselves as teachers who would be uncomfortable and scared of not knowing how to deal with the unknown.

All in all, this section has allowed us to analyse the shift in the student teachers' discourse from categorising themselves as aware and accommodating of modern views of plurilingualism and teachers for LST in theory to insecure, resourceless and unprepared future teachers in classrooms. Although these results are in line with those of previous studies (e.g. Birello *et al.*, 2021; Haukås, 2016), they offer us a multi-contextual observation on what is still to be improved regarding ITE and teacher preparedness for classrooms that are linguistically and culturally diverse.

## Discussion

In this chapter, focusing on four ITE institutions in three contexts – Finland, Spain (Catalonia) and Slovenia – and analysing student teachers' SWOT identification regarding plurilingualism and conducting LST, we have been able to answer our three initial research questions.

(1) What are student teachers' beliefs about plurilingualism and LST?
(2) What are student teachers' beliefs/feelings when positioning themselves as teachers who have to manage their teaching practice in multilingual environments and with plurilingual students?
(3) What, if any, are the relevant similarities and/or differences among the three contexts?

Regarding the first question, we observed a positive construction of student teachers as plurilingual speakers and as teachers for plurilingualism – in theory.

In seeking an answer to the second question, we noted a negative construction of their imagined future teacher identification for plurilingualism, which they relate to not having enough practical training, experience or language knowledge, and not being able to rely on their relational competence in linguistically diverse situations. We have thus identified an existing gap between positive beliefs and negatively charged ones. This shift from a positive discourse to a negatively charged one and the reasons for it that teachers and student teachers display regarding plurilingualism have been noted in previous works (Birello *et al*., 2021; Bredthauer & Engfer, 2019; Haukås, 2016). Our study contributes to this field of enquiry in the sense that we have focused on student teachers and we have offered a multi-context analysis that points to rather similar situations in several ITE institutions in Europe. In fact, a similar pattern was observed in the four ITE institutions in the three contexts, which answers the third initial research question. The general tendency observed might be crucial for the rethinking of some aspects regarding ITE.

We acknowledge that, by using the SWOT tool for later analysis of the student teachers' discourse, we specifically prompted weaknesses and fears as part of the data collection. At the same time, this explicit prompting might be necessary to surpass the surface of matters and help student teachers to go beyond the 'right answers' (as we have observed previously, Bergroth & Hansell, 2020), relating to European, national and regional discourses regarding multilingualism – especially if only scrutinised through the lens of 'elite' languages. Moreover, using the SWOT tool as a means of data collection allowed the student teachers to express anxieties and fears regarding their future teaching practice in diverse environments. We suggest that further research on these fears and anxieties might give clues to better plan courses that support diversity by lowering these anxieties, which might impair future LST in all classrooms (Dražnik *et al*., 2022).

The results of this research are in line with Young's (2014) postulate regarding the need to listen to student teachers. In this sense, it seems clear that reflection has proven to be a very important tool to face fears regarding LST in ITE training. Our data show that student teachers relate their fears to a lack of practical training, knowledge and experience. We suggest that, to overcome these fears, practical elements should be incorporated in various ITE courses. Based on the data, some of these elements could involve looking up basic terminology in different languages (e.g. the word 'addition' in the most common foreign languages in the country), learning alphabets in different writing systems, using Google Translate to translate authentic messages from teachers in languages not familiar to students and looking at official resources for information about education systems in different languages. These types of 'survival skills' in diverse languages may be useful reminders that teachers do not need to master 'other' languages as experts.

We also conclude that, apart from the need for more practical training, it might also be necessary to include training in critical sociolinguistics within ITE. Self-reflection on beliefs about language and language learning and use, linguistic ideologies, linguistic norms, elite and non-elite languages, and understanding neoliberal discourses will also be important in ITE because student teachers' beliefs and ideologies will be translated into their future teaching practice and actions. Substantial attention has been paid to training regarding how people learn languages – going from a monolingual view to a plurilingual view, competences, constructivism and so on – but we might still need to focus on other societal discourses that circulate and engage in self-reflection. Other scholars have proposed including a critical linguistic awareness component in ITE, in in-service continuing professional training (Taylor *et al.*, 2018; Young, 2014) and in schools (Martín-Rojo, 2019).

Our data show that student teachers expect to rely heavily on the use of English in cases where there is no shared language between the pupil and the (student) teacher. The use of English often helps the teacher but, for the pupil, it may add to the number of languages they need to handle in practical situations because it may replace instructions in one majority language (school language) with yet another majority language (English). Although English-medium instruction is gaining a foothold even in ITE programmes (Dafouz, 2018) and it is often thematically connected with supporting multilingualism (Bergroth *et al.*, 2021a), based on our analysis, we recommend that ITE institutions do not place too much emphasis on the role of English as the only way to prepare teachers to reduce social and linguistic inequities in education. Indeed, our data strongly suggest that, during their studies, student teachers need to meet, react and act in languages that are not in a majority position or taught in schools as national/regional/foreign languages to prepare for their future profession. Providing a 'safe space' for testing out different interactional solutions during teacher training will not necessarily give all the right answers for

all the situations/languages that teachers encounter in schools, but it may give teachers much-needed self-confidence and trust in their own capacity to be both plurilingual speakers and to teach plurilingual speakers.

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