Preparing Student Teachers of Languages to Promote Plurilingual Competence

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Abstract

Although the need to promote plurilingual competence has been discussed with increasing intensity from the perspective of language policy and language pedagogy, this desideratum has not yet found the necessary resonance in the regular curricula for schools and teacher education. Hence, this contribution presents the concept of an interdisciplinary course module for initial teacher education, developed and piloted at the University of Salzburg, which brings together aspects of plurilingualism from linguistic, language pedagogical and educational sciences perspectives. Specifically, it integrates practical phases in which student teachers work as mentors with language learners as mentees in a dyadic setting in order to relate this practical experience to fundamental aspects of support-oriented diagnostics and plurilingual approaches. Using longitudinal data from an accompanying study, the potential of this educational setting will be evaluated in an evidence-based manner.

Key terms: language teacher education; mentoring; plurilingual competence; pluralistic approaches; support-oriented diagnostics

Abstract

Obwohl die Notwendigkeit der Förderung mehrsprachiger Kompetenz aus sprachenpolitischer und sprachendidaktischer Sicht immer intensiver diskutiert wird, hat dieses Desiderat bisher weder in den Regelcurricula für Schulen noch für die Lehrer*innenbildung die notwendige Resonanz gefunden. Der vorliegende Beitrag stellt daher das Konzept eines an der Universität Salzburg entwickelten und pilotierten interdisziplinären Themenmoduls für die Lehrer*innenbildung vor, das Aspekte der Mehrsprachigkeit aus linguistischer, didaktischer und bildungswissenschaftlicher Sicht zusammenführt und Praxisphasen integriert, in denen Lehramtstudierende als Mentor*innen mit Sprachenlernenden als Mentees in einem dyadischen Setting arbeiten, um diese Praxiserfahrungen mit grundlegenden Aspekten förderorientierter Diagnostik und mehrsprachigkeitsdidaktischer Ansätze in Beziehung zu setzen. Anhand von Längsschnittdaten aus einer Begleitstudie wird das Potenzial dieses pädagogischen Settings evidenzbasiert evaluiert.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Sprachenlehrer*innenbildung; Mentoring; mehrsprachige Kompetenz; mehrsprachigkeitsdidaktische Ansätze; förderorientierte Diagnose

1. (Not Entirely) New Challenges for Student Teachers of Foreign Languages

Classrooms where all students share the same learning paths and dispositions never have been the norm. With the rise of migration, decades ago, the diversity of learners' profiles has increasingly referred both to cultural background and mother tongue (Cenoz et al., 2001). Hence, teachers must not only be able to consider different types and biographies of learners they are working with, but they must also be able to identify their heterogeneous cultural repertoires and different language combinations. As the languages of schooling intermingle with regional, minority or migration languages and modern or classical foreign languages, a holistic view on language, identity, and culture is needed. Moreover, competence should be understood as "highly individualized, and dependent on

life paths and personal biographies, and as such, subject to evolution and change, whether in or out of school" (Coste et al., 2009, p. v).

The concept of 'plurilingual competence', fundamentally defined as "the ability to use a plural repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources to meet communication needs or interact with people from other backgrounds and contexts, and enrich that repertoire while doing so" (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 20), reflects the expectation that the plural repertoire consists of languages individuals know or have learned, and relates to the cultures associated with those languages. Moreover, 'plurilingualism' explicitly refers "to languages not as objects but from the point of view of those who speak them" (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 8), which permits a more specific focus on learners than the umbrella term 'multilingualism', used in the field of Applied Linguistics for both individuals and societies (Kramsch, 2018, p. 21). Promoting plurilingual competence is, however, a major challenge even for experienced teachers (Haukas, 2016), and schools still do not seem to be open but rather resistant to pluralism as such (Coste et al., 2009, p. 23). Although plurilingualism is a fundamental principle of language education policies – not only in Europe, the tendency still seems to be towards homogenizing differentiation and perpetuating monolingual approaches to language teaching, which juxtapose "separate bodies of knowledge (language by language)" (Coste et al., 2009, p. 23). This also seems to apply to language teacher education – not only in Austria (Boeckmann, 2016, p. 53).

In order to help student teachers of languages understand and foster highly individualized learning processes of their future pupils, it is therefore of utmost importance to create learning opportunities in initial teacher education that allow for support-oriented diagnosis (Buholzer et al., 2014), as a basis for integrating plurilingual approaches in the classroom. Since developing teacher professionalism depends in part on making use of disciplinary knowledge in different learning contexts and situations, teacher educators also need to rethink the relationship between theory and practice (Hüttner et al., 2011, p. xiii). Whereas more established approaches view the building of situated teacher knowledge as the application of theoretical concepts in specific classroom contexts, social-constructivist approaches suggest specific teaching settings, in which student teachers, as members of a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), can relate their teaching experience to relevant theoretical concepts (Korthagen, 2010, p. 104).

The present contribution discusses the design of an interdisciplinary course module for student teachers of languages, developed and piloted at the University of Salzburg, which brings together aspects of plurilingualism from the perspectives of linguistics, language pedagogy and educational sciences. It integrates practical phases, in which student teachers work as mentors with language learners as mentees in a dyadic setting in order to relate this practical experience to fundamental aspects of support-oriented diagnostics and plurilingual approaches. The main concern is to evaluate in an evidence-based manner whether aspects of support-oriented diagnostic competence and features of personal, social, and professional competences, relevant to fostering plurilingual competence, can be enhanced in the proposed educational setting.

2. Initial Teacher Education in Austria – Some Reflections on Building Professionally Relevant Competences

Austrian teacher education experienced a major reform about ten years ago, mainly to adopt existing programs to the Bologna Process. In this process, ECTS credits for subjects, subject pedagogy and practicum phases were expanded (Vorbereitungsgruppe PädagogInnenbildung NEU, 2011). In line with the recommendations of the National and European Qualification Frameworks for higher education

(NQF / EQF), in which learning outcomes do not only refer to knowledge but also include cognitive and practical skills as well as responsibility and autonomy, building up personal and social competences, in addition to subject matter competences, has gained more importance. 'Competence' is defined as "the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development" (Council of the European Union, 2017, p. 20). Thus, enabling students to assume responsibility and autonomy in professionally relevant situations is a major objective (Council of the European Union 2017, Annex II). This applies particularly well to language teacher education, where disciplinary knowledge, responsibility and autonomy have been identified as key elements for developing professionalism (Furlong et al., 2000, p. 4).

The perception of 'competence' as the interplay of individual dispositions with knowledge-based abilities and skills corresponds to educational sciences, language acquisition theories, and language pedagogical perspectives. According to Weinert's (2001, p. 27) definition, which is widely referred to in Austrian educational documents, cognitive abilities and skills as well as associated motivational, volitional, and social dispositions or abilities should be used to solve real-life problems successfully and responsibly. This educational perspective seems to be aligned with the action-based approach of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching* (CEFR), which aims at including "the cognitive, emotional and volitional resources and the full range of abilities specific to and applied by the individual as a social agent" in the language acquisition process in order to enable learners to cope with linguistic and communicative tasks (Council of the European Union, 2001, p. 9).

The characteristics of the concept of 'communicative competence' originally refer to sociolinguistic and pragmatic abilities as well as to knowledge and aptitudes of individuals whose heterogeneous competence is addressed. Their ability to call on previous resources is, however, not explicitly taken into account, moreover, they are implicitly assumed to be monolingual native speakers (Coste et al., 2009, p. 9). Yet, understanding 'communicative competence' as linguistic action and empowered participation in a globalized world could build a bridge to plurilingualism (Breidbach, 2019, p. 22): According to the CEFR

> [p]lurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 168)

This viewpoint has been emphasized in the recent *Companion Volume* to the CEFR, in which scales on pluricultural and plurilingual repertoires, as well as plurilingual comprehension have been added (Council of the European Union, 2018). The descriptors of the *Framework for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA) clearly specify the underlying areas of competence, which, as in educational science definitions, refer to 'knowledge', 'attitudes', and 'skills' (Candelier et al., 2012).

The aim to promote plurilingual competence in an integrated way at school has been an educational language policy desideratum since the introduction of the CEFR. For this purpose, the Austrian Ministry of Education commissioned the *Curriculum Mehrsprachigkeit,* a complimentary Plurilingualism Curriculum, which summarizes, expands and systematizes plurilingual learning objectives in Austrian regular subject curricula for all school types and levels valid until 2011 (Krumm & Reich, 2011). This document on the one hand shows many possibilities to further develop the communicative approach; on the other hand, it reveals the juxtaposition of foreign languages and the marginalization of heritage languages, which are generally subject to difficult sociolinguistic conditions (Krumm, 2014). A systematic anchoring of plurilingual approaches in school curricula is, however, not yet apparent,

neither in the specific subject descriptions nor in teaching tasks (Rückl, 2018). This is not only true for Austria. A recent report on the development of language competence and awareness shows that major curricular efforts are still needed across Europe to value and promote "learners' entire linguistic repertoire" as a "pedagogical resource for further learning" (Council of the European Union, 2019, p. 20). As the above definitions reveal, the building of competences in initial teacher education requires an application component, which can only be fostered in tightly interlinked theoretical and practical phases (see e.g. Braun, 2007). This holds for the building of personal and social competences, which requires autonomous and responsible performance, as well as for professional and subject matter competences, which have to be related to concrete practical settings.

In order to face the challenge of fostering plurilingual competence, student teachers of languages need learning opportunities, in which knowledge of individualized educational concepts, plurilingual acquisition theories and resource-oriented pedagogical procedures can be related to each other, practically explored, and reflected upon. Support-oriented diagnosis, which enables the identification of learners' resources, abilities, and individual needs, in this respect is a fundamental preparation for providing calibrated feedback on individual learning pre-requisites and development (Buholzer et al. 2014, p. 16). The expansion of practicum phases, introduced by the Austrian reform, is thus an important and appropriate measure (Vorbereitungsgruppe PadagogInnenbildung NEU, 2011). However, for organizational reasons, it is difficult to achieve close interlinking in the sense outlined above. Moreover, practicum phases in the first semesters and for optional fields such as plurilingual pedagogy are not scheduled. Dalton-Puffer et al. (2019, p. 207) also point out that aspects of plurilingualism "have not found as much resonance in the new curricula as many experts deem necessary". Additional educational offers are therefore urgently needed and not only in Austria. A study for the German context also reports an increasing number of educational policy documents for second and further foreign languages dealing with plurilingual topics. At the same time, the range of courses promoting plurilingualism still seems to be very limited and not sufficiently differentiated, particularly in teacher education (Pilypaityte, 2013, pp. 287f.).

3. Mentoring-Tandems as Educational Settings for Student Teachers of Languages from an Interdisciplinary Perspective

Mentoring is applied in various contexts, multiple forms, and with specific objectives. From a pedagogical stance, it implies advising and guiding learners to consciously promote specific skills and optimize practices of action. This implies the framing of reflective, situational, and cooperative learning processes. Shared responsibility in terms of teaching and learning, mutual support and mindful relationships between partners are further important features. Although modern mentoring concepts can take many forms, they have the common objective of sustainably promoting the individual potential of mentees in a climate of mindfulness and mutual respect. This ultimately corresponds to the ideal-type definition according to Ziegler (2009, p. 11), which contains essential and recurring aspects of the interdisciplinary discourse, such as a dyadic relationship between an experienced mentor and a less experienced mentee, stability over time, and mutual trust and benevolence. The shift of perspectives combined with the exchange of feedback can result in an emotionally coherent interaction between mentors and mentees (Sann & Preiser, 2008), which is likely to evoke positive learning emotions and provide mentors with insights into their mentees' ways of thinking and difficulties in understanding. This is consistent with Hattie's claim for "teachers seeing learning through the eyes of students" (2009, p. 22).

The objective is to promote mentees' learning, development, and progress. Mentors are described as "individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing support" (Ghosh & Reio, 2013, p. 107). This requires facets of social and personal competences that are highly relevant to the teaching profession, like motivational aptitude and a relational aptitude conducive to learning. In addition, mentors can prove their trustworthiness when they act as role models for an open attitude towards languages and cultures, and demonstrate which language learning strategies they themselves employ, when and how. However, it is not just about passing on personal experience and trying out different forms of learning. The goal is to identify learning needs and resources on the basis of support-oriented diagnosis in order to activate the mentees' prior knowledge through personalized plurilingual learning materials and to give them individualized feedback on their learning progress. The dyadic setting allows flexibility for relating teaching experience to specific theoretical concepts (Korthagen, 2010, p. 104).

Since student teachers as mentors can concentrate on the individual dispositions of a single mentee, they can keep track of learning progress and support learning processes more easily and, step by step, build up support-oriented diagnostic competence (Buholzer, 2010, pp. 5f.). This can help them to sustainably integrate resource-enhancing procedures into classroom activities. Not only does higher diagnostic competence among teachers correlate with better learning outcomes of their students (e.g., Hattie, 2009), it also lays the foundations for pluralistic pedagogical approaches. These approaches require adaptive, learner-centered practices that support students in drawing on their own resources and strengths in order to learn in a hypothesis-driven, self-reliant, and self-reflective manner. Since they are based on an inferential learning concept oriented towards mental selfactivity, they are well suited to enhance heterogeneous learner resources (Candelier, 2018). Integrative cross-linguistic and transcultural procedures are as characteristic as rich and stimulating input oriented to learners' biographies. The aim is to deepen processing through cognitively demanding activities such as noticing, discovering, comparing, analyzing, hypothesizing, and reflecting, which requires complex learning tasks (Meißner et al., 2011; Rückl, 2018). By initiating transfer, comparison, and reflection latently existing knowledge can be transformed into declarative and/or procedural knowledge, which should mainly accelerate language comprehension (Strathmann & Meißner, 2019, p. 391) and lead to faster acquisition of receptive sub-competences. Ultimately, the aim is to initiate sustainable language acquisition processes by linking them to transfer from already known languages, and to better understand culture-specific ways of thinking and acting by becoming aware of personal attitudes.

4. A Mentoring-Supported Course Module to Prepare Student Teachers of Languages for Promoting Core Features of Plurilingual Competence

In this section, a mentoring-supported course module developed and piloted at the University of Salzburg is presented in the context of a longitudinal evaluation study. The research questions, on the basis of which the results are outlined and discussed, refer to the previously introduced aspects of personal, social and professional competences, which are considered to be particularly relevant for the teaching profession, as well as to aspects of support-oriented diagnostics and procedures for promoting plurilingual competence:

RQ 1: Are aspects of social and personal competence relevant for building plurilingual competence promoted in mentoring-tandems?

RQ 2: Are aspects of professional competence relevant for building up plurilingual competence promoted in mentoring-tandems?

RQ 3: Which main categories do student teachers of languages address in their logbooks and how often?

RQ 4: Do student teachers of languages who work in mentoring-tandems consider aspects of support-oriented diagnostic competence?

RQ 5: (How) do student teachers of languages try to promote plurilingual competence in mentoring-tandems?

4.1 Description of the Educational Setting

At the University of Salzburg, the first mentoring-supported introductory language pedagogy course was held in 2014, on an optional basis (4 ECTS credits). Given the encouraging results of the accompanying evaluation study, the teaching concept was expanded to an optional course on approaches fostering plurilingual competence (4 ECTS credits). In 2018, the possibility arose to curricularly anchor an interdisciplinary course module on plurilingualism, though only in the optional segment. It allows student teachers of philological subjects to deal in equal measure with linguistic and pedagogical aspects of plurilingualism. To this end, courses on psycho- and neurolinguistics, pluralistic approaches in the context of language pedagogy, and educational science are closely interlinked (PLUS, 2018). Supervised work in mentoring-tandems creates a hands-on educational setting for exploring manifold forms of teaching and learning that span the full spectrum of the learning triad (Ziegler, 2009) and for obtaining feedback from mentees. Mentors act as role models for plurilingual competence, promote language learning strategies, and design individualized tasks for their mentees that activate prior knowledge, transfer, and comparison. The relational work initiated in the mentoring-tandems is accompanied by supervision in order to support mentors in assuming autonomy and responsibility (Council of the European Union, 2017). Mentees provide immediate feedback on the effectiveness of their mentors' support and in turn benefit from the resource-based plurilingual approach. The interdisciplinary course module of 12 ECTS credits offered at the University of Salzburg can be chosen optionally and supplemented by an advanced module to the same extent. Credit points are obtained by means of exams and a portfolio containing the plurilingual learning materials elaborated, and logbooks, where students document the course of the 16 learning units in the mentoring-tandems and record feedback from their mentees. This provides insight into learning needs as well as goals and procedures derived from them, and shows whether and how pluralistic approaches have been applied. Moreover, teaching experiences are reflected on (for more detailed information cf. Rückl, 2020).

4.2 Design and Results of the Accompanying Longitudinal Evaluation Study

4.2.1 Preliminary Study on Aspects of Personal and Social Competences

A longitudinal quantitative study on the effectiveness of integrated mentoring-tandems in introductory courses on language pedagogy at the Department of Romance Studies of the University of Salzburg generated data on 'relational aptitude', 'motivational aptitude', and 'trustworthiness', features of personal and social competences that are relevant not only to teaching in general, but also to fostering plurilingual competence. In terms of subject and methodological competences, the quantitative questionnaire-based survey assessed how mentors and mentees rated the ability to promote learning strategies and design learning materials.[1] To increase validity (Larson-Hall, 2016, pp.

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[1]   For a detailed description of questionnaire-items and categories we refer to Rückl & Mackinger (2015).

166f.) these whole-sample surveys, based on very small samples, were replicated in four subsequent years (2014-2017) under the same conditions (experimental group, n = 38 mentors; n = 31 mentees). As an additional measure, beginning in the second year of the study, surveys were also conducted in introductory courses that had not integrated mentoring-tandems (control group 1, n = 45 student teachers). In order to find specific indications for plurilingual pedagogy courses, the selfassessment scores of the mentors from the introductory courses on language pedagogy were compared with those from a plurilingual pedagogy course with integrated mentoring-tandems in the third year of the survey (control group 2, n = 12 mentors). The following is a synopsis of data, reported in accordance with the research questions formulated above.

RQ 1: Are aspects of social and personal competence relevant for building plurilingual competence promoted in mentoring-tandems? It is hypothesized that student teachers' relational aptitude conducive to learning (H1a), motivational aptitude (H1b) and trustworthiness (H1c) are promoted more effectively in language pedagogy courses supported by mentoring-tandems.

In the introductory courses mentees rated their mentors' aptitude to establish a relationship conducive to learning very high on average (M = 4.59-4.88; SD = 0.18-0.43 on a five-point rating scale from 1 = very poor to 5 = very good).[2] This was equally true for motivational aptitude (M = 4.50-4.72; SD = 0.36-0.50) and trustworthiness (M = 4.44-4.80; SD = 0.31-0.48). Mentors rated their relational aptitude conducive to learning highest (M = 4.13-4.57; SD = 0.22-0.62), followed by trustworthiness (M = 4.08-4.44; SD = 0.31-0.48). They were, however, more critical in rating their aptitude to motivate (M = 3.93-4.21; SD = 0.45-0.70).

The comparison with the data drawn from control group 1 showed that student teachers with mentoring were more likely to feel confident in motivating students than those without mentoring. This was also true for building relationships conducive to learning. Overall, student teachers who worked in mentoring-tandems showed better scores in all areas studied, and even significantly better scores for motivational aptitude (*p <.10) and relational aptitude (***p <. 001). These results suggest that H1a, H1b and H1c can be accepted. The data for the plurilingual pedagogy course (control group 2) showed neither significant differences in aptitude to motivate (p = .206), nor in trustworthiness (p = .267). Significantly higher control group 2 scores were, however, found for relational aptitude (*p = .032), which could be attributed to the more advanced study duration and resulting higher baseline levels of participants (for more details see Rückl, 2020).

RQ 2: Are aspects of professional competence relevant for building plurilingual competence promoted in mentoring-tandems? It is hypothesized that student teachers' ability to adapt to and build on learning strategies (H 2a) and their ability to develop individualized learning materials (H2b) are promoted more effectively in language pedagogy courses supported by mentoring-tandems.

Mentees also rated mentors' ability to adapt to and build on their learning strategies high in all survey years (M = 4.10-4.50; SD = 0.54-0.65). The learning success achieved through the individualized learning materials was rated highest (M = 4.40-4.81; SD = 0.40-0.89). Mentors rated their ability to develop individualized learning materials similarly high (M = 4.06-4.25; SD = 0.450.76). They were, however, more critical in rating their ability to promote learning strategies (M = 3.56-4.05; SD = 0.60-0.71). This also applied to the plurilingual pedagogy course (control group 2), where the abilities to promote learning strategies (p = .141) and to develop individualized learning materials (p = .316) were

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[2] The range reported for means and standard deviations indicates the highest and the lowest values measured in the different years of the survey. Means and standard deviations were calculated with a confidence interval of 95% (Meindl, 2011, p. 138).

perceived as similarly easy, whereas ratings of control group 1 without mentoring were constantly lower, but not significantly lower (p = .114 for the ability to promote learning strategies; p = .306 for the ability to develop individualized learning materials). Again, the data tend to indicate that H2a and H2b can be accepted, which suggests a promising potential of mentoring-tandems for teacher education: Overall, mentees' ratings converged on the grade 'very good' and remained stable across the survey years. Mentors ratings cumulated around the grade 'good' and showed no significant differences across the survey years.

4.2.2 Follow-Up Study on Aspects of Support-Oriented Diagnostics and Pluralistic Approaches

In order to obtain more specific information on the impact of mentoring-tandems on the development of support-oriented diagnostic competence and the ability to apply pluralistic approaches, a qualitative follow-up study was conducted. It referred to a total of 21 logbooks written by students in courses on plurilingual pedagogy with integrated mentoring-tandems at the University of Salzburg. A content-structuring approach was adopted to systematically describe the material as a basis for a frequency-analytical evaluation (Mayring, 2015). In terms of a category-based evaluation (Kuckartz et al., 2009, pp. 72, 76), text passages were assigned to categories (henceforth K) based on the support-oriented diagnostics model as defined by Buholzer et al. (2014), namely 'ability to diagnose in a support-oriented way' (K1), 'ability to organize lessons in a differentiated way' (K2), 'ability to control learning processes' (K3), 'ability to cross-link resources' (K4), 'ability to understand and manage social behavior' (K5), and 'ability to recognize interdependencies between school and teaching' (K6). For a detailed description of categories, subcategories and anchor examples we refer to Buholzer et al. (2014, pp. 1, 16, 27, 39, 47, 57, 68). The aspects for personal, social and professional competences of the preliminary survey questionnaire and categories on learning strategies and learning materials (K7-K11) were included in order to find out more about their relevance in comparison to other categories.[3] The categories K12-13 refer to the promotion of plurilingual competence. Following Kuckartz (2016, pp. 64, 100), specific subcategories were inductively elaborated and defined on the material. They will be described in the course of the following report on results (cf. RQ 5). Due to the different course contexts, caused by the longer duration of mentoring phases and the accompanying courses on language acquisition theory and educational sciences in the interdisciplinary course module, the data material was not only evaluated globally, but also separately according to the groups 'optional course on plurilingual pedagogy' (henceforth OP, 7 logbooks) and 'course module on plurilingualism' (henceforth CP, 14 logbooks). Furthermore, individual profiles of student teachers involved in the study were elaborated. Below, the frequency-analytical evaluation results are briefly reported.

RQ 3: Which categories do student teachers of languages address in their logbooks and how often?

The overall evaluation results for both groups as shown in figure 1 revealed a clear ranking of the main categories where promoting plurilingual competence (K13) was by far the most frequently addressed category with 36% of the total. Trustworthiness (K11 9.6%), the ability to control learning processes (K3 9.3%), reflexivity to critical plurilingual awareness (K12 8.9%) and the ability to organize lessons in a differentiated way (K2 7.9%) were roughly on par with each other, each taking up about a quarter of the first-place category. It is noteworthy that the categories of this second block, whose frequency range was between 9.6% and 7.9%, showed a direct correlation with plurilingualism, differentiation

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3   Cf. section 4.2.1: motivational aptitude (K7), relational aptitude conducive to learning (K8), the ability to adapt to and build on learning strategies (K9), ability to develop individualized learning materials (K10), trustworthiness (K11).

and process orientation, with the exception of trustworthiness (K11). A further block with the range of approximately 6% to 3% included the ability to diagnose in a support-oriented way (K1 6.2%), the ability to cross-link resources (K4 5.5%), motivational aptitude (K7 4.9%), the ability to adapt to and build on learning strategies (K9 4.4%), relational aptitude conducive to learning (K8 4.0%) and the ability to develop individualized learning materials (K10 2.9%). Aspects of personal and social competences were addressed but not in focus, which was also true for the ability to diagnose in a support-oriented way and the ability to cross-link resources. The ability to understand and manage social behavior (K5 0.4%) and the ability to recognize interdependencies between school and teaching (K6 0.0%) were not addressed at all, which was a logical consequence of the dyadic setting in mentoring-tandems.
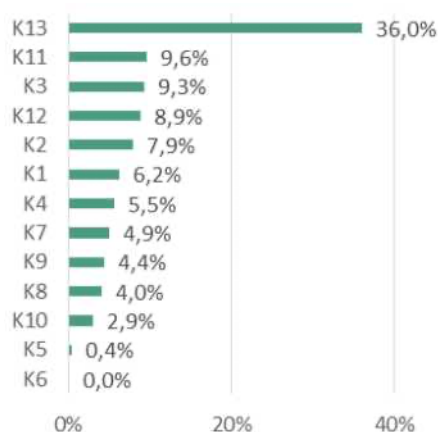

Figure 1: Overall ranking of relative weights (main categories in optional course on plurilingual pedagogy (OP) and course module on plurilingualism (CP)

Differences between the optional course on plurilingual pedagogy (OP) and the course module on plurilingualism (CP) are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. Promoting plurilingual competence (K13) was clearly the focus of interest in both groups, with 38.6% for OP and 35.5% for CP. The results for reflexivity to critical plurilingual awareness (K12 OP 10.1%, CP 8.6%) and the ability to organize lessons in a differentiated way (K2 OP 9.7%, CP 7.5%) differed only slightly. The difference in the weighting of the ability to manage learning processes (K3 OP 6.0%, CP 10.0%) was more pronounced. A major difference could be observed for trustworthiness, which seemed to be of much greater importance for the CP group (K11 11.1%) than for the OP group (2.6%). When comparing the categories of the third block (range of about 6% to 3%), the percentages for the ability to cross-link resources (K4) showed little difference (OP 3.7%, CP 5.9%). The same was true for motivational aptitude (K7 OP 3.7%, CP 5,2%), the relational aptitude conducive to learning (K8 OP 4.5%, CP 3.9%), the ability to build on learning strategies (K9 OP 3.4%, CP 4.6%), and the ability to elaborate individualized learning materials (K10 OP 3.4%, CP 2.8%). The ability to diagnose in a support-oriented way was, rather unexpectedly, three times more frequent in the OP group (K1 12.7%) than in the CP group with 4.8%. K5 and K6, relating to school and classroom settings, again played no role in either group.
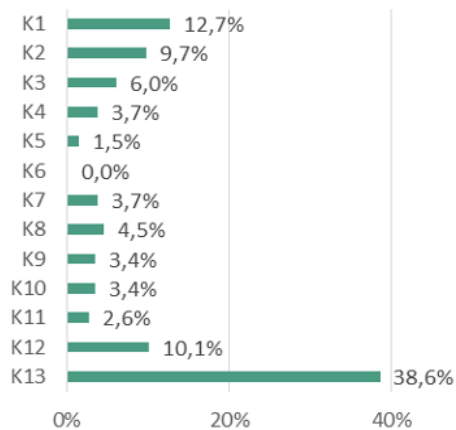
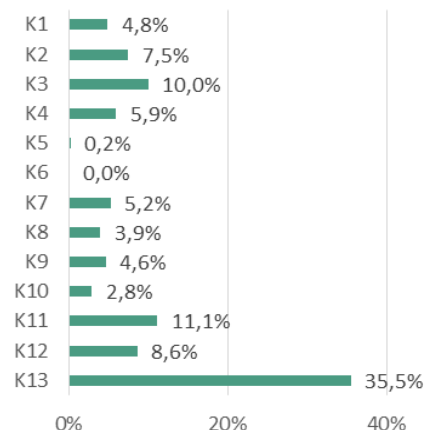Figure 2:   Relative weight of main categories in OP

Figure 3:   Relative weight of main categories in CP

The case-based evaluation for the 21 participating student teachers showed individual differences in the weighting of the categories. However, the dominant ranking of the categories, with regard to the promotion of plurilingual competence, clearly emerged in all profiles.

RQ 4: Do student teachers of languages who work in mentoring-tandems consider aspects of support-oriented diagnostic competence? As reported above, categories K2-K3 were the most common, with slight variations between groups. With regard to differentiating instruction (K2 OP 9.7%, CP 7.5%), the weighting of subcategories[4] revealed that student teachers primarily reported how they tried to individualize learning support (K2b OP 54.0%, CP 67.4%) and align requirements with mentees' developmental levels (K2a OP 23%, CP 28.3%). How individual resources and abilities of mentees were exploited for learning processes was addressed more frequently only in the OP group (K2c OP 23%, CP 4.3%). The design of community-building learning processes was not reflected which could again be attributed to the dyadic setting.

When the focus was on guidance of learning processes (K3 OP 6.0%, CP 10.0%), the student teachers of both groups demonstrated a very high level of confidence in the mentees' willingness to learn (K3a[5] OP 50%, CP 53%) and tried to support their self-guidance (K3b OP 37.5%, CP 28.0%). Only the mentors in the OP group made an effort to structure the learning process in a cooperative way (K3c 12.5%). Likewise, the promotion of metacognitive competence was only addressed in the CP group (K3d CP 20%). The ability to cross-link external resources was only marginally addressed (K4 OP 3.7%, CP 5.9%). In this regard, student teachers seemed to be primarily concerned with making optimal use of available resources (K4c[6] OP 50%, CP 47%). Interestingly, CP mentors recognized their own need for further qualification to a very high degree (K4d 53%), whereas OP mentors hardly at all (10%). The former also tried to some extent to assess own resources and limitations (K4a CP 5%, OP 0%), while the latter tried to meet requirements with their present know-how (K4b OP 40%, CP 0%). The largest difference between the groups related to the ability to diagnose in a supportive manner (K1 OP 12.7%, CP 4.8%).

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[4]   K2a Adapt tasks and requirements to the development of the learner, K2b Personalize guidance and support for learning, K2c Make individual resources and abilities available for learning processes (Buholzer et al., 2014, p. 27).

[5]   K3a Have confidence in readiness to learn, K3b Support self-direction, K3c Support cooperative learning process, K3d Foster metacognitive competence (Buholzer et al., 2014, p. 39).

[6]   K4a Assess own resources and limitations, K4b Meet (conflicting) demands, K4c Use external resources, K4d Improve one's qualifications (Buholzer et al., 2014, p. 47).

The weighting of the respective subcategories was,[7] however, similar: Student teachers were mainly concerned about identifying individual learning needs and resources (K1b OP 47%, CP 64%), providing feedback on learning status and progress (K1c OP 41%, CP 22%), and to a lesser extent, identifying learner resources (K1a OP 12%, CP 14%).

RQ 5: (How) do student teachers of languages try to promote plurilingual competence in mentoring-tandems? Promoting plurilingual competence was clearly the focus of interest in both groups (K13 OP 38.6%, CP 35.5%). The inductively elaborated 7 subcategories[8] pointed to a high proportion of learner-centered orientation of teaching in the mentoring-tandems, which is based on the valorization of prior linguistic knowledge (K13d OP 30.1%, CP 25%). In quite a number of cases, student teachers justified their decision to apply certain cross-linguistic procedures in a subject-based manner and with reference to appropriate sources (K13b OP 20.4%, CP 18%). This was also true for the design of plurilingual learning materials (K13f OP 14.6%, CP 17%). Mentors also tended to foster learner autonomy (K13e OP 11.7%, CP 18%). To a lesser extent, expertise in foreign language learning processes was referenced (K13a OP 8.7%, CP 8.0%). Expertise on language comparison at the system level was, however, almost exclusively referred to by the CP group (K13g CP 8%, OP 1.0%). Language biographical work as a method for dealing with plurilingualism was, on the contrary, mainly used by the OP group (K13c 9.7%, 5% in CP).

The results on reflexivity related to critical plurilingual awareness (K12 OP 10.1%, CP 8.6%) only reached the second ranking-block. The 5 content-analytically-determined subcategories[9] referred to the reflection of attitudes towards ethno-cultural affiliation (K12c), which was clearly more pronounced in the CP group (44%) than in the OP group (18.5%). Reflection on attitudes towards plurilingualism (K12b) also seemed important and again more prominent in the CP group (40%) than in the OP group (29.6%). Reflection on attitudes towards languages as such (K12a) was more often an issue in the OP group (22.2%, 12.0% in the CP group). This was also true for reports on learning experiences in cross-language settings (OP 11.1%, CP 4%). The large difference in the weighting of the subcategory on reflecting attitudes with regard to migration (K12d), which only occurred in the OP group with a relatively large share of 18.5%, could be explained by the selection of mentees who often had a migration background in this group.

5. Discussion

The results of the present longitudinal study tend to suggest a promising potential of mentoring-tandems for teacher education. It must be conceded, however, that the data relate to a small sample and a narrow educational context, which limits their validity. Nevertheless, the replicated results of the mentoring-supported group that emerge from the preliminary study support the assumption that the features of personal, social, and professional competences explored can be strengthened in the

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[7] K1a Identify resources, K1b Identify individual learning needs and resources, K1c Provide feedback on individual learning levels and learning development (Buholzer et al., 2014, p. 16).

[8] K13a Apply knowledge on foreign language learning processes, K13b Apply knowledge on cross-language approaches, K13c Apply techniques to address plurilingualism, K13d Apply learner-oriented instruction, K13e Foster learner autonomy, K13f Create plurilingual learning materials, K13g Apply specialized knowledge on language comparison at the system level.

[9] K12a Reflect on own attitudes towards language(s), K12b Reflect on own attitudes and positions towards plurilingualism (positive appreciation of plurilingual repertoires), K12c Reflect on own attitudes towards ethnocultural affiliation, K12d Reflect on own attitudes towards migration, K12e Report on learning experiences in cross-linguistic settings.

proposed educational setting. It seems to facilitate addressing and fostering relational aptitude conducive to learning, motivational aptitude and trustworthiness, as features of personal and social competences relevant for successfully implementing pluralistic approaches (RQ 1). In addition, the mentoring-supported setting is likely to promote adaptation to and building on learners' individual strategies; individualized learning materials can be tried out with mentees. Moreover, mentees seem to appreciate working in mentoring-tandems: In all categories their ratings are higher than those of the mentors and even reach the highest rating of 'very good'. This result at least suggests that it is not only possible, but quite reasonable, to entrust student teachers with teaching situations that are to be conducted independently early in their studies. It also suggests that they are willing to assume responsibility, in the sense of the concept of competence previously discussed, when given the opportunity. The potential benefits they derive from this learning opportunity are reflected in better self-assessments of the competence features explored (RQ 2).

From the content-analytic follow-up study based on logbooks written by student teachers in mentoring-supported courses on plurilingual pedagogy that they attended either as a single optional course (OP) or as part of the interdisciplinary course module (CP) described above, it appears that personal and social competences are hardly referred to, while the promotion of the mentees' plurilingual competence (K13 OP 38.6%, CP 35.5%) is by far the most frequently discussed topic. This holds also true for categories closely related to plurilingualism and differentiation, such as reflexivity to critical plurilingual awareness (K12 OP 10.1%, CP 8.6%), the ability to organize lessons in a differentiated way (K2 OP 9.7%, CP 7.5%), and the ability to manage learning processes (K3 OP 6.0%, CP 10.0%). Trustworthiness is the only feature of personal competence that student teachers frequently reflect on. The more salient role in the CP group (K11 CP 11.1%, OP 2.6%) suggests a possible relevance of the duration of mentoring-phases. Since other categories do not seem to be dependent on duration and opposite trends can also be observed, the influence of duration cannot be assessed from the available data. For example, the ability to diagnose supportively is addressed more frequently in the OP group (K1 OP 12.7%, CP 4.8%). The results show, however, that core topics of the plurilingual pedagogy courses are clearly in the focus. This finding is reflected in the case-based evaluation of the 21 participating student teachers (RQ 3).

Subcategories point to a high proportion of learner-centered teaching based on valorizing prior linguistic knowledge (K13d OP 30.1%, CP 25%) and fostering learner autonomy (K13e OP 11.7%, CP 18%). Student teachers' reports of the procedures used and the learning materials developed are theory-based in both groups and refer to learner-centered and cross-linguistic approaches (K13b OP 20.4%, CP 18%). Accordingly, the learning tasks are plurilingual in design (K13f OP 14.6%, CP 17%) and require cognitively demanding activities such as noticing, formulating hypotheses, and reflecting on similarities and differences of language-specific phenomena. However, explanations of comparative language procedures related to language as a system are almost exclusively found in the CP group (K13g OP 1.0%, CP 8%) that attended the interdisciplinary course module, which may indicate that the transfer of knowledge from the parallel course on linguistics has taken hold. Subcategories for reflexivity related to critical plurilingualism awareness are also more prevalent in the CP group, particularly reflection on attitudes towards ethno-cultural affiliation (K12c CP 44%, OP 18.5%) and plurilingualism (K12b CP 40%, OP 29.6%) (RQ 5).

These findings are coherent with the high scores for individualized learning support (K2b OP 54.0%, CP 67.4%). In this regard, the logbook comments show that student teachers take concrete measures to shape the working climate in such a way that difficulties can be discussed openly. The descriptions of both groups make it clear that a variety of tools are used to identify the learning needs of the

mentees (K1b OP 47%, CP 64%). However, the focus seems to be more on learning difficulties and individual needs, while learning potential and resources take up less space (K1a OP 12%, CP 14%). Also, matching requirements to mentees' developmental level seems to be more about providing feedback on learning levels and progress (K1c OP 41%, CP 22%) and identifying individual learning needs (K1b OP 47%, CP 64%) than on exploiting learners' resources (K1a OP 12%, CP 14%). This means that preparing student teachers to implement pluralistic approaches requires strong exposure to and reflection on the underlying resource orientation. The close link with courses in educational science is highly relevant in this respect. The promotion of metacognitive competence, which is only addressed in the CP group (K3d CP 20%), could in turn be attributed to the close interconnection with the linguistics course in the interdisciplinary course module. Common to all student teachers is the high confidence in the mentees' willingness to learn (K3a OP 50%, CP 53%) and the high value placed on self-guidance (K3b OP 37.5%, CP 28.0%), which is a very good starting point for implementing plurilingual approaches (RQ 4).

6. Conclusion and Outlook

From a theoretical point of view, pluralistic approaches have evolved from a pedagogical fringe area to a key concept to extend and sharpen the action-based approach introduced by the CEFR (Reimann, 2016). For classroom practice, this means accepting learners in their uniqueness and preparing them to operate in a linguistically and culturally diverse world by expanding and promoting their full language repertoire in school and for further learning (Council of the European Union, 2019, p. 20), an ambitious goal that cannot yet be considered achieved. Preparing student teachers to promote plurilingual competence requires an interdisciplinary perspective and learning opportunities that relate experiences in practice to fundamental aspects of support-oriented diagnostics and plurilingual approaches. Introducing student teachers to concepts of plurilingualism is only a first but essential step.

In a mixed-methods analysis of student teachers' perspectives conducted at the University of Innsbruck, Hirzinger-Unterrainer (2013) finds that they show little interest in plurilingual pedagogy at the beginning of an introductory cross-language course, while final interviews show that more student teachers recognize the potential of plurilingual pedagogy. Vetter (2012, p. 207) goes one step further and suggests, based on a study also conducted in Austria, linking subject knowledge with pedagogical application and personal attitudes as well as integrating plurilingual topics as core principles in the initial phase of teacher education. In addition, differentiation and learner autonomy ought to be more strongly linked to plurilingualism and positive learning experiences, which is supposed to be facilitated by cross-linguistic course settings (Vetter, 2012, p. 207). The author of a recent study with German student teachers, which shows a connection of reflexivity and positive appreciation of plurilingual repertoire with individual dispositions, also recommends theoretical and practical engagement in initial teacher education, which is expected to be achieved by creating plurilingual learning materials and fostering language biographical work (Melo-Pfeifer, 2018, pp. 335f.).

The present results on mentoring-supported plurilingual pedagogy courses point to promising potential for this educational setting, in which theory and practice phases can be closely related to each other in order to foster features of personal, social, and professional competences as well as aspects of support-oriented diagnostic competence, as a precondition for an efficient implementation of pluralistic approaches. Disseminating the course design would allow further surveys in similar educational contexts and with larger samples in order to validate the findings of the present study. Furthermore, follow-up studies with novice teachers would be highly informative. They could shed

light on whether and how student teachers who have worked with mentees in a dyadic setting implement plurilingual pedagogical approaches in classroom practice.

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