Finnish Class Teacher's Views on Multilingualism and Multilingual Children

Eric Matthew Stokes

Abstract

Author: Eric Stokes	Year: 2023
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In this thesis, Finnish class teachers were interviewed to learn more about their views on multilingualism and multilingual children. The following research questions were asked:

1. What are Finnish class teachers' attitudes towards and beliefs about multilingualism?

2. How do Finnish class teachers report on their practice regarding multilingual primary school students?

In six semi-structured interviews, the interviewed teachers could elaborate on their views, attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to multilingual students and multilingualism. To analyze the collected data, thematic analysis was used, and the theoretical lens of a monolingual habitus proposed by Gogolin was applied. Different expressions of multi- and monolingualism were observed in the interviewed Finnish class teachers. The two themes that were identified when analyzing the interview transcripts were:

- Function of Language in School

- Challenges of Teaching in Multilingual Schools.

Aspects of monolingual habitus were present in the interviewed teachers, even those who taught English and Bilingual classes. Language as a resource was a subtheme in which beliefs and practices were particularly opposed. However, this habitus does not dominate all facets of teaching. Other languages are mostly seen as unproblematic when used in a social context. When language is used as a teaching tool, the language of instruction is positioned above other languages. The gap between beliefs and practices and the different contexts of language use indicates a habitus in transition.

It would be interesting to investigate different contexts of Finnish primary education in future research, as this study was performed in a small area. This is especially relevant as equity and social justice are pillars of Finnish education. Therefore, it is also recommended that mixed-method research would be performed in this field in the future.

Keywords: multilingualism, education and training, class teachers, habitus

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1. Introduction

Language plays an integral role in all human societies. It is also one of the fundamental ways humans access and interact with the world around them. It is an essential requirement for social, economic, and political participation (Dirim & Mecheril, 2010). As our societies become more culturally and ethnically diverse, they are also becoming more linguistically diverse. Many of today's societies are multilingual, and many people grow up using more than one language (Montanari & Panagiotopoulou, 2019).

Societies that are already multilingual, like Finland, are becoming even more so through migration. The relevance of language and multilingualism to Finnish society and also Finnish teachers is evident in the prevalence of current news articles on the subject of second language learners in Finnish schools (Ekman, 2023; Mattsson, 2020; "Specialist Calls for Change in Schools' Attitude towards Multilingual Students," 2022). Both immigrant students who are learning Finnish or Swedish, Swedish speakers learning Finnish, and Finnish speakers learning Swedish are discussed in these media contributions.

Given the current media interest and the fact that languages are often acquired or learned in a school setting, it is valuable to research language use and its users in this context, especially those children that grow up multilingual. Language enables and facilitates communication and learning, and learning to communicate is one of the main goals that primary school educators strive for with their students. As such, multilingualism can be seen as an ever-present force in human and Finnish history. With both Finnish and Swedish as official languages, alongside several officially recognized minority languages, Finland has been a multilingual state since its inception in 1918. In recent years, migration has introduced even more languages to Finnish society. Hence, investigating multilingualism and multilingual children in the Finnish context is interesting.

The Finnish curriculum for basic education outlines the importance of primary education to Finnish society and bases itself on the following underlying values (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016):

- uniqueness of each pupil and right to a good education

- humanity, general knowledge and ability, equality, and democracy

- cultural diversity as a richness

- necessity of a sustainable way of living

Although the Finnish primary education curriculum gives much agency to the individual students and their learning processes, the teacher is still a valuable stakeholder and guides and supports students in their learning, development, and growth. The national goals of education are outlined as follows:

- growth as a human being and membership in society

- requisite knowledge and skills

- promotion of knowledge and ability, equality, and lifelong learning

In this sense, the curriculum gives primary school teachers significant responsibility, acknowledging their importance to students, schools, and society. In England, the EPPE project in England, a longitudinal study on the effects of preschool education and care, investigated how the individual characteristics of children are shaped by the environments in which they develop (Sylva, 2010). It showed that preschool educator's care's is an essential influence on students, so it is valuable to investigate teachers' views regarding language and its use and users.

This master's thesis will attempt to gain insight into Finnish teachers' perspectives on multilingualism. There are some quantitative studies, primarily by one group of researchers (Alisaari et al., 2019, 2021; Alisaari & Heikkola, 2020; Heikkola et al., 2022a) but only a few qualitative studies (Björklund, 2013; Repo, 2020) about Finnish teachers' views of multilingual students in their schools. This brings me to the aims and research questions of this thesis.

1.1. Aim and Research Questions

Many current studies on teachers' perspectives work with different terms, including beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, I will briefly outline the terminology used to understand the data collected in the present study. Pajares (1992) laid the groundwork for the use of belief in educational research by trying to separate it from the term knowledge and the implications that it brings with it. However, these concepts can be difficult to distinguish since they are understood differently by different people. A more recent study on teacher knowledge by Woods et al. (2011), specific to communicative language teaching, reiterates that the terms belief and attitude must be defined and discussed within educational research. They argue that understanding encompasses beliefs and knowledge but note that specific concepts and words we use for them do not always coincide. Thus, every use of a concept or term should be (re-)defined for the

paper at hand. Instead of defining one of these terms for this study, I chose to work with the terms views, attitude, and belief to broaden the scope and allow more open interaction with the data.

Researching what teachers' perspectives and thoughts are on the growing population of multilingual students and multilingualism is valuable. Previous studies have shown that supporting multilingual students in their learning is vital for effective instruction (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). The requirement to teach in a linguistically responsive way is written into the current Finnish curriculum for basic education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016). As such, some research has focused on the practical implementation of this requirement. Since it has been shown that Finnish language learners have lower academic outcomes than native Finnish students (Luukkainen et al., 2014; Vettenranta et al., 2016, as cited in Heikkola et al., 2022b), this requirement has not been met in practice. Heikkola et al. (2022b) conclude that although Finnish primary school teachers understand language learning processes and use scaffolding practices, over 50% also report needing more information about their students, including their skills and experiences. In their view, most Finnish primary school teachers would benefit from both theoretical and practical training in linguistically responsive pedagogy.

In addition to teacher-centered research, a recent study also showed that migrant-background students find it challenging to ask for help from teachers, especially during the first months after arriving in Finland (Kaukko et al., 2022). This may be due to language issues, but the researchers also suggest that it could stem from students feeling guilty for needing help and support to a level that could overwhelm teachers with questions.

In general, multilingualism as a concept is well regarded in the Finnish education-driven society and among its teachers, but views may differ depending on the situation the teachers are in and the children in Finnish classrooms that grow up with multiple languages (including, but not limited to the two national languages Finnish and Swedish). Therefore, it may be relevant to ask whether teachers see multilingualism as an asset for their learning and whether they think it can help the classroom's atmosphere. In addition, I am interested in taking a theoretical concept from German research, Gogolin's (1997, 2008) monolingual habitus, and using it as a lens for my research here in Finland. The theory proposes that although German schools are objectively multilingual institutions and many languages are spoken, the stakeholders show a monolingual habitus in systematically excluding these other languages.

Some questions that immediately arise are: How well does the monolingual habitus theory fit in the Finnish context, especially considering the co-official status of Finnish and Swedish in the country? Does this play a significant role in Finland since the education systems of Finnish-language and Swedish-language schools are distinct and do not interact to the degree that might be assumed? Do teachers in Finland, regardless of their native language and the school's language, exhibit the same conflict between the attitudes and beliefs present in their discourse and their practice? Taking these thoughts into consideration, the following research questions are of interest:

1. What are Finnish class teachers' attitudes towards and beliefs about multilingualism?

2. How do Finnish class teachers report on their practice regarding multilingual primary school students?

2. Literature Review

Since this thesis investigates Finnish teachers and their perspectives on multilingualism within their classrooms and on a societal scale, I will define key terms related to multilingualism in this section. I will further develop these terms by identifying relevant literature and theory. However, first, I will attempt to describe and differentiate several types of multilingualism in the following sections: individual, institutional, and societal (Montanari & Panagiotopoulou, 2019).

2.1. Types of Multilingualism

Individual humans and their multilingual abilities are at the center of individual multilingualism. Another facet of individual multilingualism is the situational use of language. For instance, speakers may speak a different language depending on the person they are addressing and where they are addressing them. (Montanari & Panagiotopoulou, 2019)

In this context, another interesting point is the influence of multilingualism on cognition and intelligence. The results of a meta-analysis of the effects of bilingualism on working memory capacity by Grundy et al. (2017) suggest that managing two languages that compete for selection results in greater working memory capacity over time. In addition, Leikin (2013) found that bilingualism and bilingual education seem to influence general and mathematical creativity in children. Another study indicated that the degree of an individual's bilingualism and creativity are positively correlated, regardless of gender or age (Lee & Kim, 2011). Whether

these potential benefits are perceived as such when referring to home languages that are not classic foreign (European) languages may be interesting to investigate. The concept of language hierarchies will be elaborated on in the following section.

Officially multilingual institutions practice institutional multilingualism. Examples on a school level include European Schools, private bilingual schools, and German International Schools. (Montanari & Panagiotopoulou, 2019) These schools all have stakeholders who speak multiple languages every day. The European Union is another example of a multilingual institution, but the difference here is that not all members use the same language or languages. Members may speak the national language of their countries of origin at the institution. On the other hand, some institutions actively choose to ignore their evident multilingualism, such as German schools (Gogolin, 1997, 2008).

Societal multilingualism is widely distributed worldwide: large parts of the global population speak more than one language daily. Reasons for this are diverse and include migration and colonialism. Some prominent examples of countries with official societal multilingualism are Switzerland, Luxembourg, South Africa, Singapore, and Finland. Multilingualism affects these societies in various ways. Multilingual situations are common, lingua francae may be established and used according to the situation, and languages may be switched more than once during a single conversation, called code-switching. (Montanari & Panagiotopoulou, 2019)

2.2. Discourses about Multilingualism

Many researchers have investigated multilingualism in recent years. In the following section, I will review and discuss current German, Nordic, international, and Finnish research on multilingualism, explicitly focusing on teachers and their views. Furthermore, a study on educational policy in Sweden and Finland will be presented, lending a different perspective on multilingualism. This broad approach to the topic will allow me to interact with the collected data more effectively.

2.2.1. Language Hierarchies

In general, it has been shown that speakers give some languages a much higher status than others. Speakers see classic foreign languages taught in schools, such as English, Spanish, French, or Italian, in a positive light. Children that grow up with one of these languages in addition to the native language of the country they are living in are often seen as being very fortunate in not having to study these as extensively to achieve fluency. Faulstich-Wieland

(2016) describes this difference in status between so-called migrant languages such as Turkish, Polish, Farsi, or Arabic, which are only taught externally or as extra-curricular activities, and classic foreign languages, which are taught in school. She also describes that multilingualism involving these migrant languages is often dismissed when learning other languages and is seen as more of a hindrance than a help.

Teachers' language hierarchies have been the subject of recent studies. The hierarchies are evident in head teachers in Alsace, France (Young, 2014), North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany (Putjata & Koster, 2021), and in Swiss early childhood education centers (Becker & Knoll, 2022). The studies show that educators give a hierarchical order to the languages of their students, as Faulstich-Wieland (2016) describes, with classic foreign languages being seen as assets, while other home languages are either actively excluded or given a lesser status.

2.2.2. International Research on Multilingualism

Internationally, many researchers have studied multilingualism from different perspectives and with different aims. For example, Lange et al. (2020) focused on German teachers' beliefs concerning how to deal with multilingual children using a questionnaire. The authors concluded that formal education of pre-and in-service teachers regarding multilingual students and how to deal with multilingualism in the classroom positively influenced teachers' beliefs about including students' L1 in class. This agrees with Alisaari et al. (2019), who emphasized the need for more multilingualism and linguistic diversity education. Additionally, they found that informal language contacts, like everyday communication or media usage in a foreign language, positively affected their teaching practices. Especially the last point may be of interest since the study participants live in a bilingual city in Finland. They are, thus, at least in theory, confronted with at least two different languages every day. However, this may not have a significant effect due to the separation of Finnish and Swedish language schools, universities, and social circles.

In Sweden, Lundberg (2019) employed Q method research to gain insight into Swedish teachers' beliefs about multilingualism. Q methodology is a method that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, and Lundberg used it by providing participants with items in two-component studies. These items were then sorted hierarchically from 'most disagree' to 'most agree;' participants also added their reasoning. The sample of this study included a large urban school with around 400 students, of which a large majority have a non-Swedish background, two smaller and more rural schools with fewer students without a Swedish background, and a school at which the 110 students, almost all have a Swedish background.

The author described three belief sets that emerged from the data:

- "Teachers' belief set 1 (TBS1) – let us help you exercise your right to be multilingual!" (Lundberg, 2019, p. 279)

- "Teachers' belief set 2 (TBS2) – you're tolerated. Now adapt!" (Lundberg, 2019, p. 275)

- "Teachers' belief set 3 (TBS3) – why make such a fuss? Everyone will be fine" (Lundberg, 2019, p. 277)

In agreement with Alisaari et al. (2019), Lundberg (2019) concluded that professional experience with multilingualism and multilingual students influenced how the teachers received those students in his sample. Moreover, Lundberg (2019) showed that monolingual ideologies exist in Sweden and in Swedish teachers. However, he also emphasized that further research is needed to explore different teachers' beliefs.

2.2.3. Nordic Educational Policy

Since educational policy documents such as curricula and guidelines may inform and influence teachers, it is of interest to investigate them. Paulsrud et al. (2020) investigated Finnish (and Swedish) education policy through the lens of multilingualism and provided a starting point to gain context on a policy level. They based their analysis of the curricula on the language orientations developed by Ruiz (1984): language as a problem, language as right, and language as a resource (see also Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 33). Using these orientations, they performed a word count on words related to multilingualism in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016). By analyzing the document, they concluded that it broadly recognizes language as a right and a resource for all students. However, they also mentioned that further investigation is needed to understand whether educators also hold this view or whether it is imposed upon them. (Paulsrud et al., 2020) Understanding this difference is complex and may come down to a chicken and egg problem since educational policy and practice constantly influence each other. However, it does add another dimension to my investigation. Since this recognition is present on a policy level, how does this translate to Finnish teachers in primary schools in Vaasa and the surrounding areas? How and when do policies reach, and are they changing, teachers' beliefs and attitudes and thus their daily teaching practices? Considering this, I believe this study can contribute some perspectives from Finnish teachers to understand how the education system and its actors deal with multilingualism and multilingual children.

2.2.4. Finnish Education and Multilingualism

A more recent study by Alisaari et al. (2019) studied monolingual ideologies and multilingual realities quantitatively using a questionnaire. Due to its large sample size, I gained a general overview of the current situation regarding multilingualism in Finnish schools. Alisaari et al. (2019) identified reflected monolingual ideologies in many of the surveyed teachers' responses and considered there to be three categories related to multilingualism: advocacy, allowance, and denial. They also found that the main factors influencing teachers' beliefs included previous experience teaching multilingual children, training in linguistically responsive teaching, and language awareness. Alisaari et al. (2019) concluded that professional development efforts for all teachers advocating for multilingualism are needed in Finland.

Björklund (2013) studied multilingualism and multiculturalism in Swedish-medium primary schools in Finland. She used interviews and focus groups to assess the situation at the studied schools. She also identified some challenges she categorizes into methods and evaluation; organization, resources, and priorities; relation to parents; and teaching materials and curriculum. Challenges that emerged from the interview data included finding the adequate language level for individual students, the legal requirement to teach minority religions over Swedish as a second language and mother tongue classes, and communicating to parents across perceived cultural barriers (Björklund, 2013). Following the challenges, she presented some teacher tools in the multilingual classroom mentioned by the interviewed teachers. The interviewees mentioned involving students in their learning processes, providing clear learning goals, and using the present multilingualism and -culturalism and teachers educating themselves regarding the different cultures in their classrooms as helpful methods to improve students' learning outcomes (Björklund, 2013). Since Björklund's study is already ten years old, I believe investigating similar issues in a similar context during this thesis can be of value.

2.2.5. Summary

Multilingualism is a topic that has been studied extensively throughout the past decades in many different contexts and countries. Educators reproduce language hierarchies, and monolingual ideologies are evident in Finnish educators. This leads into the following sections, in which I will outline the terms integration and inclusion, as well as habitus and monolingual habitus, and define them for this study.

2.3. Integration and Inclusion

A recurring theme in the literature on language and multilingualism is the function of language. A critical function of language is as a tool for integration and inclusion (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016; Leroy, 2017). Since language is helpful for new students to learn to navigate their relationships and learning, I will discuss integration and inclusion. These terms were also recurring in the interview material collected for this study. In the following section, I will briefly describe the discourse about these terms in a European context and connect them to the Finnish National Core Curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016).

The study of integration and inclusion is extensive, and I will only cut to the surface of it. Additionally, there is the issue of international comparability since the terms may have slightly different connotations in different countries and periods. For instance, the term integration is seen today as outdated by many German teachers and educational scientists who prefer inclusion (Schön, 2016). However, this is only one aspect of how these terms differ. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (*Integration and Inclusion*, 2023, sec. Factors that influence the integration and inclusion of immigrants) understands the two terms as interchangeable, as inclusion is only mentioned in a section heading and not in the text body:

> Integration is always a two-way process in which both the immigrant and local residents become adjusted to each other. Integration is promoted by a safe and non-discriminatory environment and a feeling that you can trust other people and the authorities. The feeling of security is undermined by experiences of discrimination and violence.

Schön (2016) details that inclusion is a diffuse and not very specific term with many meanings depending on the research, socio-economic, and cultural context. Even when defining inclusion in pedagogical terms, it is considered complex and multidimensional. In addition, the change in the meaning of the term integration over time has added to the diverse interpretations. In various other sources from other countries, the terms are defined differently, too. In the German context, the words are distinct, as shown in Table 1. In this table, inclusion is seen from a disability policy and pedagogical standpoint but is also used in the general educational context (Schön, 2016).

In French educational research, integration and inclusion are used interchangeably (Leroy, 2017). For example, a study about children of British migrants in French educational institutions details the use of language as a tool for integration into the school culture and society in general. One educational priority there is the active social inclusion of migrant

children. This is seen as a basis for further mainstream integration of migrant children into French society. Similarly, the Finnish National Core Curriculum (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016) regards language as a way for students to integrate into mainstream society.

The curriculum refers to integration in a few key places, most notably when referring to students' learning in the instruction in the mother tongue, complementing basic education in Appendix 3 (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016), and in section 9, Special questions of language and culture. "Under the Constitution of Finland, each person living in Finland has the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture." (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 896) Furthermore, students should be supported in their plurilingualism, identity development, and self-confidence. Learning plans may be formulated as part of a student's cultural integration plan. The first language studies should support integration into Finnish society, and students should be encouraged to use their language diversely in lessons on different subjects and other school activities.

Table 1 - Levels of Quality in Disability Policy and Pedagogics

Levels of Quality in Disability Policy and Pedagogics (adapted from Wocken, 2010, as cited in Schön, 2016)

Level	Rights	Form of recognition
4. Inclusion	Right to self-determination and equality	Legal recognition
3. Integration	Right to community and participation	Approval based on solidarity
2. Separation	Right to education	Educational support
1. Exclusion	Right to life	Emotional attention
0. Extinction	No rights	No recognition

2.4. Theoretical Framework – Monolingual Habitus of Schools

The term habitus, as used by Bourdieu, will be applied to the field of education throughout this thesis. The pre-eminent researcher on monolingual habitus is Gogolin, who developed a theory of monolingual habitus of the multilingual school in Germany. Her approach and elaborations will serve as a lens for my research. First, I will define habitus to examine the theory in more detail. Since Bourdieu's sociological theories have been highly influential and applied to various fields today, definitions can vary widely in depth and detail. For example, Setten (2020) outlines habitus as:

> …one of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1930–2002) key terms, describes a set of embodied dispositions that are constituted in practice and are always oriented toward practical rather than cognitive functions. Habitus functions as a theoretical viewpoint of looking at and interpreting the empirical world. Habitus is thus a theoretical attitude or belief system, which can be understood as the mediating link between objective structures and individual action. It refers to how systems of social norms, understandings, and patterns of behavior are embodied in individual actors. While not determining action, habitus predisposes individuals to act in some ways rather than in others. Habitus has provided geographers with a tool for analyzing complex relationships between embodied practices, space, and time. (Abstract section)

In this thesis, I will use Gogolin's (2008) understanding of the term from her work about teachers in Germany as the basis of the concept. In her view, she understands educational institutions as structurally inert, and schools understanding themselves as monolingual is part of this structural inertia. Since the reality in today's schools is multilingual, this must be overcome. She takes Bourdieu's notion of habitus as the instrument of (re-)production of social structures and applies it to how German schools deal with multilingualism.

Gogolin (1997) describes Bourdieu's habitus theory in an older article. She writes that it:

Attempts to describe the dynamic relationships between:

- The structural conditions of an individual existence on the one hand

- The individual's activities as a product of socialization under these conditions on the other hand

- And, as a third field of influence, the endless and at the same time strictly limited capacity of the individual to act. (p. 41)

Gogolin (1997) further elaborates on habitus and describes it as the precondition for a person to act routinely, with no need to reflect and decide consciously upon their normal daily activities. Bourdieu (1979, as cited in Gogolin, 1997, p. 42) says habitus functions as "structured structures, which are suitable to function and work as structuring structures." This implies a constant evolution of habitus throughout life but, at the same time, stability on a higher plane. Gogolin also emphasizes the circular nature of the relationship between structure, habitus, and practice in Bourdieu's theory.

Gogolin (2008) sees the possibility of understanding the teacher's habitus with the term "lifestyles," which are systematically distinguished. She claims that so many distinct structural characteristics and conditions can be defined in the teaching profession that a specific habitus can be assumed. Gogolin (1997) also relates this to the real-life experience of teachers recognizing other teachers, lawyers identifying other lawyers, etc., in social settings. The proposed monolingual orientation of teachers facilitates the understanding of practice, as the focus on individual aspects may be more contradictory.

The hypothesis Gogolin (1997) formulated is that the observed monolingual orientation is a part of the professional "habitus" of members of the German school system. Therefore, establishing monolingualism in the official national language German is essential to be a teacher in Germany. This monolingual habitus transcends the German school system, and in her work, she researches how the school system deals with the multilingual reality in Germany. She uses diverse methods to understand teachers' habitus, including historical research and a literature review, a quantitative questionnaire filled in by teachers, observations, and teacher interviews. In this study, to research the habitus of Finnish class teachers, I will be using one of the methods she did, the teacher interview.

She shows a large discrepancy between the languages spoken in schools and that the German language holds a disproportionally large amount of power in this context. However, she also concludes that multilingualism, how German schools treat it, and teachers' beliefs about it are in transition; practices and discourses are distinct. Hence, she advocates for educational policy grounded in multilingual ideas, administrative support for schools, and the establishment of model projects to conceptualize and put the multilingual school into practice.

Gogolin (1997) writes that the monolingual habitus she observed in German schools can also be seen in other European nation-states founded in the 18th and 19th centuries and others founded in the same tradition. The ideas essential to forming these nation-states still permeate the education systems and, thus, the educators in these countries. However, she also considers that the proposed monolingual habitus does not dominate all areas of the school. The habitus is in transition, and when school is seen as a place for living rather than a place for learning, teachers often give room to the other languages of the students. This reflection leads me to the present study and the methods used to collect its data.

3. Methods

In this chapter, I will present the methods used to gather the empirical data for this study. Furthermore, I will give an overview of the participants and their relation to multilingualism. I will elaborate on my considerations on analysis and the analytical method chosen, ethics, and confidentiality. I will also consider my position as a researcher. First, I will give an overview of the research data.

3.1. Research Data

In qualitative studies, interviews with select participants are a common way of collecting data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018). Interviews have long been used in social sciences to gain knowledge, and their various forms have become ubiquitous in educational research. For this study, data was collected in semi-structured interviews with teachers. I used my laptop and smartphone to record the interview sessions for in-person interviews. Since one of the interviews was conducted online, I used Zoom to record it.

The interview questions can be found in the appendix. They are adapted from my bachelor's thesis, in which I investigated multilingualism, students, and the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany. However, these questions only provided a starting structure, and more detailed questions about the situation in the various schools and classrooms were also elaborated on. As is clear from the design of the questions, they also gave different options depending on the teacher's background. This made it possible to compare the interview responses. In addition to the pre-determined questions, it was possible to reevaluate, ask for clarifications, or add more questions as the situation allowed. This gave me the flexibility to adapt the interview to the individual participants. In the following section, I will briefly overview the study's context and participants.

The study was conducted in Finland, mainly in bilingual schools and teachers of bilingual or English-medium classes. A particular focus was given to schools around Vaasa due to practical issues and the city's bilingual status. As one of Finland's officially bilingual municipalities, the context gave another level of relevance to a study related to multilingualism. Finnish teachers in primary schools were the target population. Participants were recruited through one Swedish/English-speaking line at a school in the center of Vaasa, other public schools with Bilingual and English lines, and through my network at Åbo Akademi University. The interviews ranged from 30 to 70 minutes. Due to the extended length of some discussions, it was possible to go into depth on the subjects and let the participants elaborate on the most relevant points.

Table 2

Participants in the Study

	Years of experience	Type of school	Relation to multilingualism and multilingual students	Languages (**First language**)
I1	30+	City, English line	Teaches in the English line, Swedish-speaking school	**Swedish**, Finnish, English
I2	5	City, English line	Teaches in the English line, Swedish-speaking school	**Swedish**, Finnish, English
I3	30+	Rural, Swedish speaking	Qualified language teacher; experience teaching Finnish in immersion classes	**Swedish**, Finnish, English
I4	4	City, Swedish speaking	Teaches multilingual students, experience in English line, Swedish-speaking school	**Swedish**, Finnish, English
I5	19	City, English/Bilingual line	Teaches in the English line, Finnish-speaking school	**Swedish,** Finnish, English
I6	6	City, English/Bilingual line	English subject teacher; Teaches in the English line, Finnish-speaking school	**Swedish,** Finnish, English

3.2. Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

Considering the ethics involved in research generally, and more specifically, qualitative educational research, I have followed the guidelines by Cohen et al. (2018). More specifically, I applied the approach of 'reasonably informed consent' used in the United States (US Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1971), as cited in Cohen et al., 2018). These include an explanation of the interview process, a description of possible risks, a description of the potential benefits, an offer to answer any questions concerning the procedure, and the instruction that interviewees were free to withdraw their consent and discontinue participation. One aspect was that participants signed an informed consent form before the interviews. In addition, before starting the analytical process, the transcripts were anonymized by removing the names of people, places, and any other information that could lead to identifying the interviewed teachers or their environment.

3.3. Analysis

The six interviews were transcribed, printed, and coded using pen and paper and NVIVO at later stages. The pen-and-paper process was beneficial to gain an overview of codes and the data collected in one glance. It also allowed me to quickly re-sort the codes as I worked. On the other hand, NVIVO was helpful in seamlessly integrating my codes and eventual themes into the working draft document since I could copy and paste the quotes relevant to each code and theme instead of having to retype each one.

The six interviews I conducted and transcribed were coded, gathered by theme, and analyzed constantly, and this process was cyclical and had no concrete endpoint. The following section is an overview of the themes that emerged from the dataset and that I have been able to identify. I worked with the principles outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022) and found their methodology, how they describe it, and the examples they give in their work helpful in my analytical process. As seen in Table 2, the analysis process is ongoing through every stage of thematic analysis, from the transcription of the interview data to the writing of the report, in this case, a thesis. This reinforces the idea that analysis is cyclical and does not have a clear endpoint. For my process, this meant that every pass of the data and the report implies more analytical thoughts. I remained open to new thoughts and ideas as the work progressed. As I was finalizing this thesis, many connections between the data collected and the literature became evident and were put into words. I attempted to follow Braun and Clarke's guidance (2022) and their definition of themes as more than just a summary of codes or the answers to the interview questions asked but as coherent and consistent patterns across the data set.

Table 3

Phases of Thematic Analysis (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collecting data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

3.4. Researcher Positionality

As Cohen et al. (2018) point out, it is essential to consider and reflect upon your role in the research process. As a multilingual student, I have personal experience with the subject matter. Due to this, I must acknowledge that I have a specific outlook on the topic. In addition, my interest in multilingual learners and my education in bilingual education in Germany afford me

a clear lens regarding the data gathered in this study. I considered this throughout all stages of the research process and attempted to reflect on my choices, interpretations, and conclusions.

4. Results

As the methods have been elaborated on, I will present the thematic analysis results in the following section. The results will be guided by the research questions that were formulated in the introduction:

1. What are Finnish class teachers' attitudes towards and beliefs about multilingualism?

2. How do Finnish class teachers report on their practice regarding multilingual primary school students?

The interview data were analyzed through the lens of monolingual habitus theory. Since Gogolin (2008) highlights the transitional nature of monolingual habitus in teachers and the contrast between theoretical ideas and practice, the results are structured into attitudes, beliefs, and reported practices. In this way, they can be opposed within each (sub-) theme. Finally, each theme will include some concluding remarks at the end.

4.1. Function of Language in School

The first central theme was the function of language in school. Teachers elaborated on the different ways languages are acquired and learned, how language is a resource in the primary school context, and how it can serve as a tool for integration. These subthemes all relate to how the interviewed teachers perceive the languages used in school. In this way, clues about the form of a monolingual habitus are given. Even though this more abstract section relates more clearly to the first research question and highlights attitudes and beliefs, the contrast between theory and reported practice becomes clearer.

4.1.1. Language Acquisition and Learning

The first subtheme is language acquisition and language learning. The interviewed teachers explained their views on code-switching, language interference, and the role of reading and repetition in these processes.

4.1.1.1. Attitudes and Beliefs. A wide variety of attitudes and beliefs were present in the interviewed sample. Whether this variety is due to lived experiences, differences in teacher education, or other factors cannot be ascertained based on the data collected, but specific trends

do emerge. For example, many older, more experienced teachers hold similar views about language acquisition and learning, and the same is true for younger teachers. Other factors may be formal education on the subject and personal research interests. For instance, I1 has a strong research background in language learning and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teaching. She described her understanding of language acquisition and learning as they happen in her bilingual Swedish-English classroom and the implications for her students:

> The difference [is] that we both acquire another language, as well as learn a new language. So, both … the formal aspects and the non-formal aspects. Because the non-formal aspects, in that sense, it helps those kids with reading or writing disabilities.

I1 viewed the fact that her students acquire and learn the English and Swedish languages as a benefit for children with learning disabilities. This is a topic that I will elaborate on below since many of the teachers mentioned the perceived rise of students with mental health issues and learning disabilities in their classrooms. She also contrasts how language is acquired and learned in her classroom with how her students learn Finnish since a different teacher teaches this. She maintains that focusing on grammar can be detrimental to progress and that actively using a language is the most effective way to increase your linguistic ability.

> I1: Earlier on, Finnish was more the super formal aspects of language where you need to learn the grammar, so you can use it correctly. But I think there's too much effort on that instead of trying to start using it from the very beginning.

However, it is also interesting to note that she did not have a current view of what her students were doing in Finnish classes. Furthermore, there seemed to be little communication between her and the language teacher. Whether this was due to personal reasons, an already high workload, or simply an oversight on her part was not elicited during the interview.

Another teacher, I3, suggests that for language learning to be successful, students must be willing to work. This focus on work is interesting, as it contrasts with the beliefs of some of the teachers. As mentioned above, I believe this could relate to this teacher's age and experience. However, I1, who views language acquisition as an almost natural process, is also one of the most experienced teachers in the data set. In this sense, other factors also seem to play a role here.

I3: If the parent understands that language doesn't just dawn on you; you just have to practice then it's much easier. And if the parents are bilingual too, they have a better chance of helping their children.

I3: So of course, you have to start from what the child knows, and you have to start from what they're interested in, and you have to catch their interest, but you have to you have to see: what do they know and where can I put the next thing. You can't just send them out and let them do it on their own. Most children want to play and they're lazy so that's normal and I like the English way of saying you have to apply yourself, and to do that you have to work, you have to sweat a little bit, it's not fun.

A phenomenon among multilingual children known to all teachers interviewed is code-switching, described as related to, but separate from, interference between languages. I1 differentiated: "Can I see that they are code-switching, or some other languages interfering, so it's kind of a mixture of languages, and then it's trickier for them if they don't have a good background in the language" In her view, a mixture of languages is to be avoided if students do not have a solid foundation in the language, something I will highlight in the importance of home language section. This strong foundation in both languages is seen as a pre-requisite to being able to code-switch successfully by I6, as well:

I6: it's funny to listen to them as well sometimes because they will code switch, like in a sentence, they'll switch back and forth between Finnish and English. And it's so funny to listen to. Yeah, especially I think with the very strong Finnish kids. Because, you know, that's when you know that they've learned something.

I6: Because they will speak in Finnish, and then they'll say a word in English that we've been talking about. And then they'll continue the rest of the sentence and finish the meaning that they know the word only in English. And it's I think it's sort of a nice way you see that, okay, now, because they're using the word correctly, but they don't know it in Finnish. They only know it in English. And that's how you okay, they got it. Now, they understand that.

The diverse views on language acquisition were surprising, given the relative homogeneity of the sample. However, this indicates that many factors must be considered, including prior and continued education, age, and life experiences. The following section will investigate whether this diversity can be seen in reported practices.

4.1.1.2. Reported Practice. Reported practices related to language acquisition varied between the different teachers, just as the attitudes and beliefs did. One example of this is I6, who mentioned the language diversity of her class. She reported that some students in her classes might not have what it takes in her eyes to be in an English-language classroom on top of potential learning disabilities or other challenges:

> I6: is this the right place for this child? Because obviously, they passed the language test, they have a place here; we believe that they could do this. But then, after a while, we see things that make us a bit concerned and to raise that concern in time.

> I6: But I think we come back to if it looks like it's too tricky, then we come back to the solution that we are that the thing that we discussed earlier, that is then the English line the place for that student, if they need a lot of help if they struggle with their learning, then we need to see in what language should the teaching be done.

In her classroom, she considered that some students might be unable to follow along with classes as they should. However, rather than questioning the support students receive or the teaching methods she employs, she described that some students have had to be excluded from the English-language classroom to focus on the Finnish language. This is interesting since most of her class were not Finnish native speakers and had other home languages. In contrast, I1 describes the influence theoretical knowledge about language acquisition and learning has on her teaching practice:

> It's an eye-opener to read scientific articles. Once you're the one in front of the kids … And then you kind of get a theoretical background. … I have to put more effort into this now, because now I have this kind of group this year. So, I think that we also need to keep up with what the researchers say.

Adapting her teaching practice to the group and attempting to include everyone is very important to her. The inclusive view of language acquisition that I1 has is directly opposed to how I6 perceives it in this sense. This is surprising since they work in similar schools in the same city where students learn in English or bilingual (Swedish/English or Finnish/English) classrooms. Whether language acquisition is only for a select few and slower learners should be excluded or whether it can even support struggling students is contested in the teachers' views.

4.1.2. Language as a Resource

In this subtheme, I have gathered data points and codes that relate to language as a resource. All interviewed teachers saw language as a resource in theory, but different aspects were emphasized. A recurring topic is that (language) teachers should work on modeling positive attitudes toward language learning to students and being positive role models in this respect.

4.1.2.1. Attitudes and Beliefs. As stated above, the interviewed teachers held various attitudes and beliefs about language being a resource for their students and people in general. They also elaborated on the language situation in Finland, particularly regarding the co-official status of Finnish and Swedish and the attitudes some Finns have towards the other language. This must be qualified, though, since all interviewed teachers were Swedish-speaking Finns. No Finnish speakers' perspectives on this topic are present. Thus, the discourses presented could be considered one-sided. On the topic of learning the other national language, and other foreign languages, I1 believes that: "knowing a language [is] not a burden, it just makes life easier." Similarly, I2 describes the language debate in Finland:

> Sometimes, here in Finland, you can read in the newspaper, that people can be very close minded about languages that they feel that we don't need two languages, then why would we need to learn two languages? I think it's always good to learn languages, I mean, even if you don't really use them, but it gives you a different kind of understanding of history, and how the languages have evolved. And also, just to teach the children to be more open-minded.

In her view, teachers are responsible for educating students toward understanding history and language evolution. She believes that language is a resource from a linguistic perspective and from the point of view of intercultural competence. She points out that language learning is not limited in its usefulness since learning something new always benefits the learners. In a more school-centered context, I3 described the utility of languages in the sense of them being fundamental to all other learning:

> I3: every subject is a language subject because you teach them new words all the time. And today's children who don't read books have a very small vocabulary. So, a lot of what I do in history in biology and geography is teaching words.

In this way, she emphasized that learning a language is not just a futile exercise but an essential requirement for all further learning. She also described a perceived lack of vocabulary

in today's students and the necessity to learn specific terms in all subjects. This seems to be a generational difference in her view since "today's children" were seen as lacking vocabulary.

One aspect the participants saw as positive about being multilingual was the awareness of languages and students' abilities. Several interviewed teachers mentioned this during the interviews.

I4: I feel that a lot of them are very … aware of their languages. And I find that really fascinating that they are so small, they're only eight years old. And they do have an awareness about this thing that they have.

Although many students have other home languages or grow up in bilingual homes in Finland, this teacher mentions that language awareness is not a given. However, her fascination for her students is an example of viewing the home language as beneficial. While she is not explicit in this, her choice of words does indicate that she considers her multilingual students as capable language users and learners. Whether this translates into her practice is an interesting question and will be addressed in the Reported Practice section of the theme.

Another aspect of language as a resource mentioned is its use as an enabler of greater openness towards other cultures and the world. In this way, the advantages of speaking multiple languages are not limited to exclusively linguistic or academic thoughts but include more abstract benefits.

I2: I think it's always good to learn languages, I mean, even if you don't really use them, but it gives you a different kind of understanding of history, and how the languages they have evolved. And just to teach the children to be more open minded and be like, okay, well, I can do this, and I can learn more languages.

Being open toward the world is a desirable positive trait and is one of the goals this teacher pursues in her daily practice. This could be because this teacher works in an English line and is thus integrated into a more international environment than other interview subjects. However, the same view is echoed by other teachers that work in Swedish-speaking schools as well:

I4: And that brought in a lot of the children's view on the world. And that is also a positive thing with having multicultural classrooms that these children, some of them, of course … living on an island, my kids in particular, get very isolated in their own

culture. So as a teacher … you need to give them the opportunities to learn about different places and other cultures. And that's on you to teach them.

In this teacher's view, the advantages of learning about other places and cultures seemed to be linked to learning languages. Creating an open atmosphere for her students to learn about the world around them, including other countries and languages, was valuable to her. While she mentioned that her student body might become isolated otherwise, she saw herself as responsible for their attitudes toward others.

Since all learning is related to language learning, your first language must be supported and strengthened at home by reading, writing, and storytelling to develop language skills. The value given to the students' home languages was high across all interviews. However, this was also a contradictory topic. Interviewed teachers emphasized that they believe support for home languages to be an essential point, as this teacher detailed:

> I2: I think it's very, very important for the students to also be able to read get the kind of education in their mother tongue in the language so that they can not only speak it at home but get that more the read written version and that they become fluent readers in that language, especially if it's with another writing system. I mean, it's very beneficial for them to be able to learn both.

I1 similarly spoke about the function of the home language as a base to build on when learning additional languages, such as the common language used at school, whether that be Finnish, Swedish, or English: "[it] is also depending on the language backgrounds, you know, how well they know their first language? Do we have a good base to build?" She repeated this assertion later, further giving weight to this point: "The challenges might be depending on, you know, how well they know their first language."

When asked about their multilingual students, the teachers often started by visualizing their classrooms and counting the number of students who speak another language at home. For example, I1 detailed her classroom in the following extract: "I have kids speaking Finnish or Swedish, or both Finnish and Swedish. English … Swahili, I had one more, but I don't remember it … Yeah, I have a few languages within my class this year." I4 explained the language constellation in her class similarly: "I think I counted six home languages in the classroom. And otherwise, the school is pretty Swedish. But we do also have children with other backgrounds … often it's one parent that speaks the other language." I5 also had a similar answer to the question about her class:

I5: Yeah, I have 15 students at the moment … I think four students have different home languages than English. Then I have a few students who come from a family where one of the parents speak English and the other one speaks Finnish. What else do I have … Marathi. … And an African language that I can't remember now what it was.

In all three extracts, the question asked was about the constellation of the class and the languages spoken by the children in it. However, none of the teachers elaborated in detail on the languages of their students beyond Finnish and Swedish, and they struggled to name more than one example of a home language other than Finnish, Swedish, or English. This points to the existence of language hierarchies in the interviewees. In addition, I believe the hesitance to name some of the more 'exotic' languages could also point towards the form of monolingual habitus these teachers have.

4.1.2.2. Reported Practice. The interviewed teachers believe that having established and sound knowledge of the home language, or home languages in both formal and informal aspects, is vital for further language learning. Some teachers even mention it as a prerequisite for learning. Considering this, it is surprising that when asked about the possibility of having formal instruction in the students' languages, I1 mentions that this would be "on the parents' initiative" and "not [her] … responsibility". The same sentiment is echoed by other interviewed teachers, as well, in this case, I4: "And I'm actually not sure I haven't looked into it. But I think … if the parents so would look into it, I would imagine that there would be an opportunity". Similar reasoning is seen here, as this is not the class teacher's responsibility. This dichotomy of giving importance to home language learning and little interest in the formal home language classes provided by the municipalities will be given more space in the discussion section of this thesis. I5 gave another example of this:

I must say I don't know where it's organized. … If the group is big enough, the city will organize teaching for them. So … it's the city of Vaasa. It's not organized here at our school, because obviously, they need to find a teacher who can teach as well. Yeah, and it's outside of the kid's schedule. So, it's … either in the morning before they come to school or in the afternoon. And I think it's one or two lessons a week.

I2 specifically mentioned the formal aspects of language, which she gave a high value to. However, just moments before, she admitted that she did not know whether any of her current class attended extra language lessons in their first language: "Here, I'm not sure involves that. I haven't really seen this yet that if there are any other like languages offered for

mother tongues, at least not in my class." This seems to contradict the level of importance that she gave to first language education in general. Perhaps this issue can lose some of its significance in the everyday routine of a teacher since it did not seem to be the norm to have students go to separate language classes in her current class. I1 also gave an example of a challenging experience she had relating to this:

> I1: The kids that might have a really bad start, for example, a kid that was faking bad English at home, because the parents were speaking two different languages. And the common one was English, but both parents didn't really know it well. So, the kid picked up really bad English, which meant that by the time the kid was in grade three the regular students knew more English than this kid.

Another reported practice was symbolic multilingualism, i.e., putting the multilingualism of the class on display for the parents and colleagues. Again, this relates to the concept of speaking about languages rather than speaking those languages:

> I4: And their parents drew these bubbles. And together, they made this, this artwork. So, it was really nice. And it was very important to the children because they knew that we made it together. But also, their parents were involved. And their language, their home language was up there on the wall. So, I really felt that that made an impact in the children.

> I4: And they all went by there and were like: "Oh, wow, so many languages!" And it was really nice, just to broaden the view of how many languages we do have, because many of them didn't know that we do have so many languages.

I4 viewed it as a good thing to display many languages in the classroom. However, whether just knowing that different students speak different languages is valuable for multilingual students is uncertain. Does knowing this imply a positive view of these languages, or is it more like a novelty that is "nice to have" and looks good for the parents? I6 reports a similar practice:

> And it's nice to sort of incorporate every now and then if we talk about something, and I know, we're talking about China, and then I go, hey, but you guys know Chinese, can you teach us something? And then sort of use it?

She saw the presence of multilingual students in her classroom as a strength but reports only using it now and then to include their languages. Whether this sporadic inclusion is

valuable to the students and whether they feel their languages are included cannot be ascertained in this study, but it would be interesting to investigate.

Another interesting aspect described was a sort of colorblindness regarding students' home languages. Even in schools that explicitly emphasized the multilingualism of their schooling, teachers showed that their thinking was still very much monolingual. In the case of I6, English was the dominant language in the classroom. Other languages were denied importance in the academic context of her classroom:

> I6: I can't even remember all of the languages and languages that my students speak and for us, I mean, it's nothing strange. It's just the way it is. And I think we're so used to it, that we don't even see it, at least for me … I don't even think about it anymore … But I think what's so great is also because we have this, we all have this English language in common. So, the students know that if there is a new student coming, that student knows English, and they can communicate without difficulties.

The monolingual nature of her classroom was seen as a strength, and other home languages seem to be excluded from the practice. Since she even mentions that she had a hard time remembering all the different languages in her classroom, it can be assumed that the value she gave to these languages is not very high. Furthermore, I6 also mentioned, "Because your mother tongue is Finnish, and for most of us … then it's better to focus on that." Even though she knew that most of her students do not speak Finnish as their first language, she thought that Finnish was more important when trying to justify excluding students who struggle from the class. The actual home languages of the students were not seen as something essential to keep in mind while supporting them or providing alternative educational solutions.

4.1.3. Language as a Tool for Integration

An interesting point that many teachers made is that language can also function as a tool for integration. As discussed in the literature review, learning the primary language of the school and the country they are in enables students to integrate into the dominant culture. However, it is contested whether this view of language could lead to the erasure of certain aspects of their own cultures.

4.1.3.1. Attitudes and Beliefs. I4 especially emphasized how learning the language of the place you are in is essential for integration purposes.

I4: So now, for example, when we have gotten many children that speak the same mother tongue at the same time, I do think that the integration is slower, because they can speak this mother tongue with each other. Because the group is so big, that they don't need to integrate with any other … pupils in the school. So, but we have gotten one now, the last year to our second grade, and she's alone. So, her Swedish is just rich, it's getting so good. And she's integrated.

I4 believes that for integration to be successful, students benefit from socializing with speakers of the target language. Investigating how integration or inclusion is measured would also be interesting. How do the teachers conceive of integration, and when are students considered successfully integrated? For I4, integration was equal to assimilation into the mainstream culture. In her view, a large group of new arrivals speaking the same language could hinder this integration. This points towards a monolingual understanding of the classroom and school setting.

4.1.3.2. Reported Practice. Teachers' reported practice regarding language as a tool for integration is detailed in this section. I2 describes how newly arrived immigrant students are typically integrated into her class by going to preparatory courses and attending "normal" classes simultaneously:

I have now one student who began just before Christmas, and … their family moved to Finland. And he's now doing the kind of preparatory year where he just learned Swedish, ... So, they have concentrated the kind of the preparatory classes to one school where they have one teacher. But the thing is that they only learned Swedish at that time. So now he comes here then for two days a week being integrated with the class with his own age.

As I2 details, integration is related to language but also about belonging to a group, in this case, the class. However, since new arrivals are usually sent to preparatory courses to learn Swedish, this sense of belonging cannot be easily achieved. Therefore, although acquiring the language of instruction is essential in her view, there are other requirements for successful integration.

4.1.4. Summary

To summarize the first theme, the interviewed teachers exhibit facets of a monolingual habitus. Even though all interviewees viewed speaking multiple languages as an asset in theory, reported practices indicated the existence of at least remnants of a monolingual habitus. Regarding using

other languages as a resource in the classroom, the teachers showed that they believe the language of instruction to be more important than their students' home languages. In this way, the participants also showed their understanding of language hierarchies, with the language of instruction (Finnish, Swedish, or English) and classic foreign languages having a higher value than the languages associated with immigrants. In the following theme, I will detail the practical challenges of teaching in multilingual schools as perceived by the interviewed teachers.

4.2. Challenges of Teaching in Multilingual Schools

In this section, the challenges and possibilities of teachers are discussed. In this way, this section is more concrete and less abstract than the first theme, relating more strongly to the second research question, "How do Finnish class teachers report on their practice regarding multilingual primary school students?" Of course, aspects of the first question are also considered. The teachers were also given room to express their strategies for overcoming the mentioned challenges. These strategies informed my conception of the monolingual habitus in the data and gave me hints as to the expression of habitus in the interviewed teachers.

4.2.1. Cultural Differences

Perceived cultural differences between Finland and the countries of origin of the students in their classes were seen as relevant to most teachers. In most cases, the cultural differences were related to the parents, who are seen as important stakeholders and collaborators by the Finnish primary school teachers interviewed. This is contrasted with what many teachers believe to be a hands-off approach to education present in other cultures.

4.2.1.1. Attitudes and Beliefs. In the following example, I4 details that she has struggled to communicate appropriately with the parents of her multilingual students.

> I4: I think that the hardest things with the multilingual kids are the parents [and] parents communication, and sometimes how hard it is to communicate with these parents, because sometimes it feels that they don't want to communicate with me … And there's like things like that, that I know that's also a cultural thing … that in other countries, they separate family and school, really. It's the separation is another thing than in Finland.

> I6 also describes the differences from her perspective.

> Cultural differences play a big part in how you how they perceive school based on their experience from another country. And then they come here, and we do things completely

differently. The parents have their point of view of how teaching should be done. And then we do something completely different.

Similarly, I1 speaks of cultural differences in education and the necessity of explaining Finnish culture to parents and students recently arriving in Finland.

I1: When you're talking … cultural differences, if you come into a Finnish classroom, the first thing is how do you address the teacher? … All these sorts of things, but that is, I think, I have to be very aware of what this culture is all about. So, I can also explain it to the parents and the kids.

These challenges indicate frustration in dealing with immigrant parents of multilingual students.

4.2.1.2. Reported Practice. Reported practice on cultural differences. I4 goes into detail:

I4: But it took some time to explain to them why we do it. But then also, when we have ice skating, for example, this one child can come without her ice skates because nobody read her newsletter for that. And if she doesn't remember herself, nobody else will remember for her. So, when we did first grade, I did do a schedule with pictures as well, for this family, so mostly for the girl, but also for the parents to see.

She later qualified that she made this effort at the beginning of her teaching practice. However, today, she had stopped. Teachers have many things to consider in their daily teaching practice, which must be remembered in the routines. Notably, multilingual immigrant students are the ones who suffer because of these practices, though, especially considering the importance of equity and social justice in Finnish education.

4.2.2. Lack of Resources

Many interviewed teachers mentioned that they often felt like 'lone wolves' because they did not have much material for their multilingual classrooms and students. The teachers thought they were supported by the schools and the education system in other ways but mentioned that the support for teaching materials like books, workbooks and – sheets, etc., was not present.

4.2.2.1. Attitudes and Beliefs. This lack of useable material applied mainly to those teachers teaching in CLIL classrooms where English is the primary language of instruction since this is still a relatively new concept in Finnish public schools. In this instance, I2 mentioned that "there's not that many resources in Finland that are in English that would follow

the Finnish curriculum … We have resources in Swedish and Finnish, but the market is still very small still." This is seen to be a considerable challenge, especially for new teachers:

> I2: sometimes I translate from Swedish workbooks. Sometimes I find something in English from other books, and you know, just pick from different books, and make papers and worksheets for them. But that's something that takes time. And as this is my second year, I don't have the material ready yet. So that's something that for me, is a challenge.

At another English line school, I5 mentioned that she experienced similar challenges at the beginning of their teaching career:

> But I think the biggest challenge the challenge was bigger in the beginning … we do have a math book based on the Finnish curriculum. But that's it. All other materials, we have to find, or we have to produce ourselves. And we have to sort of adapt it to the curriculum. And this is a challenge when you start because I was used to using … printed books that I knew, and I could rely on. And when I came here, I didn't have that so then of course … your brain has to throw out hooks in all directions, as well, to find the material that you want to use.

I6 mentioned another aspect in this context, the lack of support for special needs children within the English line since the special needs teacher at their school only gives support in Finnish. This is not sufficient in her view, and she has tried to find other solutions to this issue, which might cause higher workloads and take up time that would be spent differently if there was adequate support in all teaching languages of the school.

> I6: I think another challenge might be as well that we don't have a special needs teacher in English. We are the special needs teachers; we offer them extra help, we support them. And I think sometimes I feel like if there is a very difficult case where there is a child who has a learning disability, but you can clearly see that they are struggling and they are trying and it's not working, then I feel quite helpless. Because I'm not a special needs teacher and I don't know how to help them. I can only do so much with my skills. So, I think that for me that's been and hard to pinpoint. It's all what why is there a problem? Yeah. Is it because of the language? Or would this problem exist, even though there would only be one language? So, it's so tricky.

The feeling of helplessness she experienced seemed to weigh on her. She has, however, found a workaround, which, while not ideal, is described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

4.2.2.2. Reported Practice. In practice, one of the issues with lacking support systems in the present languages is that the teachers feel like they have new responsibilities and must adapt their working methods and practice to this fact. I6 describes that as she effectively takes over the role of a special needs teacher for the children in her class that do not speak Finnish well enough to receive adequate support from the actual special needs teacher. She has developed strategies that should only be temporary solutions, such as asking for instructions on how to proceed with a struggling student:

> I6: Okay, I have a student who struggles with this. I've tried ABC, please give me more keys. What do I do, give me some ideas … Because the support needs to be given in English. So, it doesn't necessarily always help having the special needs teacher come in and see, even though especially these teachers, some of them do know how to speak English, but they're not English teachers, and they don't maybe see, the problem how we see it, how the students struggle from our point of view.

Her struggles show systemic issues in the school since the support guaranteed in the Finnish education system is not adequately provided to multilingual students. In this way, the school itself, though one of its distinguishing features is its multilingual nature, cannot cater to its student population. Individual efforts by teachers, while temporarily helpful, can only be temporary solutions to these issues.

4.2.3. Aftereffects of the Pandemic

All interviewed teachers also mentioned the challenges of the pandemic and ensuing school lockdown as still relevant now, even as things have returned to (relative) normal since then. Primarily behavioral, social, and emotional issues were highlighted, and although multilingual students were not explicitly singled out as having more topics related to the COVID lockdowns, implicit suggestions were seen.

4.2.3.1. Attitudes and Beliefs. An important topic was the significant difference in home situations and, by extension, home languages. I2 highlighted that depending on the situation at home, children were affected to different degrees. Since many multilingual students are also children of immigrants or immigrants themselves, the effects of the lockdown on them may have been more significant:

I2: Aftereffects of the pandemic and the time that they had to spend at home. Because it was my fifth graders, they were in grade three when they were at home. So, I mean if you have to stay at home, and depending on your home situation, how much help you can get? It does affect how much you learn and take in.

I4 mentioned the effects of kindergarten closures on her current class, so these issues still impacted the dynamics of her classroom over two years later.

I4: I can still sometimes see these glimpses of not getting those very important years in kindergarten with like social emotional things like you can't start screaming when you don't get your way because it doesn't work in a school but maybe at home it does, and I'm pretty sure it doesn't work in kindergarten as well and but I think that the most the things we lost we lost in COVID are mostly social emotional things and so that's been hard to like train back but now we're ok I think at least. So yeah.

She mentioned that even though the students she currently teaches did not go to school during the lockdown, they were affected by kindergarten closures. She believes these lost months in kindergarten can still be seen in her classroom today, especially regarding "social-emotional things." I6 recalls similar struggles with some of her students until today:

I6: But I do think that there are some kids who suffered immensely from that, though, especially those who have difficulties, maybe not really concentrating, but sort of motivation issues. And one thing that we have been seeing a lot more of is kids not wanting to come to school. And I do think that that's a direct consequence of parents working from home, mommy and daddy are home all the time. It's nice to be home with mom.

They also add that motivational issues might stem from this lockdown period. The problem of children not wanting to come to school is widespread. This was mentioned in several of the interviews, in more casual conversations with other teachers during my practice period, and during a discussion with the principal.

I2: there are those in both categories who are, are fighting a lack of motivation. And I think it's something that's becoming more and more of a problem here in Finland, I think, that we have students who are younger and younger, who refuse to come to school, who don't have any motivation to do for learning, for some reason, who just don't want to, to come to school, sometimes they don't want to learn.

I2 goes on: "Because I know that it's also in the Finnish schools because it's been talked about in the media. There's been some studies done that that it's a growing problem, and the pandemic certainly influenced that." So, this seems to be a significant issue in Finnish education in general. Whether multilingual students were more affected by this problem is unclear but could be inferred in some of the teachers' discourses.

4.2.3.2. Reported Practice. More immediately, I4 also had experience dealing with COVID-19 aftereffects in their first classroom teacher position.

> I4: And the last month when we came back from lockdown it was in May 2020 … I had some weeks with them before summer and those weeks were horrible. The workload I had to put down was so big and I didn't know the kids and some of them didn't do all the assignments that they should when they were in lockdown and it was a lot of work to get them to learn how to be among other people in a closed room, so that took a lot of social studies and a lot of time. Almost all the time just learning how to be in school.

The COVID-19-related school lockdowns significantly impacted schools in general and, more particularly, multilingual students. These students may have needed more support during the lockdowns. It would be interesting to investigate the issue with a focus on these lockdowns since they were a unique occurrence in recent history.

4.2.4. Changing Realities of the Teaching Profession

In this section, more general challenges of teaching multilingual students and the changing realities of teachers are elaborated on. Some issues addressed relate to working with more heterogeneous classes and challenging parents, while others focus on changing educational policies and the curriculum.

4.2.4.1. Attitudes and Beliefs. All interviewed teachers addressed the changing realities of the teaching profession. Especially I3, who is one of the most experienced teachers in the population, viewed the changes as mostly negative:

> And sometimes I find I'm an old teacher, sometimes I find that the old way of putting everybody on the same page, look at the blackboard or the whiteboard as it is nowadays. And do like this, put down this and this and this. And then I go around. And look, has everybody done exactly this? Sometimes that's the best approach, then they know what to do.

I3 went on to detail: "So at the same time that we are in school are more individualized, the kids also need more structure … Because they don't have that structure inside themselves." She also elaborated on the changes they have perceived in their students over their years of teaching. To her, students have become more individualized, and classes have become more heterogeneous (or at least that heterogeneity is more apparent), which is a source of worry and stress for her and has to be considered in lesson planning.

> I3: Yeah, I can't say this group is like this. I said, this person is like this this person, like, they are all very diverse. And I have to keep that in mind. One of them has some emotional growth problems. And when you have emotional problems, you don't learn. So, then I have to ask for help from the counselor.

Another aspect is class size. Again, this is seen as a relevant factor by I4:

> But I'm really happy that I have such just a small group of fourteen it's very ideal in one way when I have fourteen now and I see every single one of them every single lesson. I have the time to go through their work during the work time and I have time to talk with every single one of them and I have time to learn their interests and everything so I would say that fourteen it's good in … I had 22. And now that I have fourteen. I do see the differences in how you have the time for the children during the workday so yeah.

I5 details other challenges of today's teachers in Finland. Among these new challenges is that they must, beyond collaborating with parents, also be aware of the dangers people can pose to their safety. The safety and security that all interviewed teachers wish to transmit to their classrooms, and students is contrasted with the need to deal with security issues with threatening parents.

> I5: And we've been recommended, for example, if this would be in a reaction discussion, you're sitting where the teacher would be sitting. So, you're not blocked out? So really like security issues. It sounds awful. It's also something that's sort of reality now. Last week, we learned how to file reports against threatening parents … I haven't done it. We should have done one last year, but I then I was literally on bodyguard duty for a colleague. So that's also a new reality.

Whether this change is related to COVID, an increase in migration, and more visible cultural differences is an interesting reflection. However, threatening teachers is unlikely to be

encouraged behavior in any culture. These reflections were also addressed in the subtheme of cultural differences.

Another issue seen as relevant was the changing curriculum. I1 reported that as more and more things are added to the curriculum, funding is cut, which she saw as problematic:

The latest curriculum is kind of taking down hours on a lot of things … then there were so few kids choosing to take French or German, so it's kind of slipped away. And now in with the latest curriculum, we don't have any hours for any of that. So, it's strange. They want us to teach as many topics [as before], if not more, but we get less time and less funding, which is strange.

I3 went into detail about the openness and student-centered approach of the curriculum, which she largely disapproves of. This disapproval of new practices may also be because she was one of the most experienced teachers in the sample:

It has been more like it has always gone through this, don't tell them. They have to realize for themselves. And it doesn't work. They don't realize anything … One of my kids in third and fourth grade they started with cutout paper dolls, and they built houses, and played with those, they had no time for the English, it took so much time building the houses, half the semester, and I thought what was that teacher thinking? It had to be so much fun, and they never had homework, they never had to learn a vocabulary, so no it doesn't work … This last curriculum is not good, I know I'm old and I've spoken to other teachers my age and they feel the same way. I don't know how the young teachers feel about it but it's too, fussy. And too much is thinking that the child should do it themselves, give the child a free hand, and send them out in the corridor that helps.

Similarly, but to a lesser degree, I5 described the faults and problems with the current curriculum:

And overall, I think … when I started teaching, it was stricter, it was more sort of pointed out in the curriculum, and this is what you should do. This is what you should learn. Now, I think it's much more open and freer. And I think in some cases, also too free. But in language learning, I haven't noticed such a big difference … But of course, it has evolved and, and sort of, it's more student based, that the students are the ones that should produce should be part of the planning together with us taking a part in their own teaching, understanding their own learning. So, in that way, the curriculum and what we

expect from the students are not matching up. The curriculum expects the student to be self-led like that they would be able to take responsibility for their own teaching, be able to plan and produce, which is something that very few students do. Yeah, I would, I would rather go back to be more teacher led, because that's what they need.

She also mentioned the notion of work being more and more difficult for students as they become more engrossed in social media and the digital world:

I think every year I see more and more of that; I don't want to. Like learning how to read, it's not like just taking the next, you know, scrolling through my Instagram or my TikTok, if it's something that I don't want to see, I just went to the next one. Next one, next one next one that doesn't work with reading, we have to actually put some effort into what we do. And that can be very challenging.

In general, only the older, more experienced teachers commented extensively on the new curriculum, which is logical since most of the younger teachers have not experienced a change in their careers. However, the student-led approach proposed in the document has not been very well received by most experienced teachers. Whether this takes more of a toll on multilingual students, who may need more support, would be interesting.

4.2.4.2. Reported Practice. All interviewees emphasized that having multilingual students necessitates adjustments on the teacher's side. However, it depends on the individual situation. It might not vary much from how you should and would adjust your classes to a heterogeneous group, even without adding the different languages. The changing and evolving curriculum, last updated in 2014, was also mentioned by many teachers. Many older and more experienced teachers saw similar problems with the new curriculum, mostly related to its openness. I5 reported that in her classroom, the curriculum was not an essential basis for her practice:

And if I then would sort of look at the curriculum and see what kind of sort of ideas and guidelines that are there, it would not match with what the student material that I have. So many would be left behind.

The idea of leaving students behind mentioned here is directly opposed to what the curriculum intends: student-led, individualized learning. To her, teaching her multilingual group seemed to be more about the whole group moving forward than the individual students receiving support for the subjects they are currently focusing on.

4.2.5. Summary

In the subthemes, it became clear that while multilingual students were often not singled out or explicitly addressed, they deserve special attention in most teachers' views. Most thoughts regarding multilingualism in this theme were hidden in discourse about culture and heterogeneity. However, I believe it is still clear that while the interviewees consider and value multilingual students, a monolingual system in Finnish schools was hinted at.

5. Discussion

Viewed through the theoretical lens of Gogolin's monolingual habitus, the results presented show that this habitus is present in Finnish class teachers. As mentioned, the teachers interviewed displayed monolingual habitus in their attitudes, beliefs, and reported practice. In many subthemes, in particular language as a resource, the disparity between the reported practices and attitudes was quite apparent and striking, while others were not as obvious. As detailed in the theoretical framework, when school is discussed as a place of living and socializing, the interviewed teachers mostly encourage and welcome multilingualism. However, as soon as it is understood as a place of learning, the language of instruction, whether English, Finnish, or Swedish, takes a dominant role. Even though Gogolin's research is not highly recent, very similar results can be seen in the data set.

Returning to the research questions, I would like to discuss each in more detail and relate it to the data. In the first question, "What are Finnish class teachers' attitudes towards and beliefs about multilingualism?" varied beliefs about and attitudes towards multilingualism were seen. In general, though, all interviewed teachers see language competence in multiple languages as a resource. However, monolingual habitus is present by giving specific languages more value than others and, in some instances, discouraging the use of languages other than the language of instruction in the classroom. They also use their multilingualism in symbolic ways by talking about language in various ways, such as art projects or cultural days, instead of using the language diversity in their classrooms more concretely by allowing them to be spoken. In this way, my second research question, "How do Finnish class teachers report on their practice regarding multilingual primary school students?" is of interest.

Regarding their reported practices, the interviewed teachers generally say that they include other languages in their classrooms. However, when their discourses are examined more closely, some particularities are evident. For instance, language hierarchies were evident in the teachers' responses, as they talked distinctly about English and the official languages of

Finland, Finnish, and Swedish. However, other minority languages seemed to be more of an afterthought in many of the teachers' descriptions of their class constellations and activities. Whether these other languages are valued less or are simply less visible to the teachers is uncertain.

An interesting particularity of this dataset is that the monolingual habitus is not only evident in classrooms where one of the official languages of Finland dominates but also in English-speaking classrooms. In this case, students' home languages are excluded in favor of English. Whether this trend is also visible in other English-language classrooms in Finland would be interesting to examine in further studies.

The concept of monolingual habitus, as defined by Gogolin (Gogolin, 1997, 2008), can be applied to the Finnish primary school context. This also connects to the established monolingual ideologies investigated by Alisaari et al. (2019) and Heikkola et al. (2022a). Advocacy, allowance, and denial were used to organize the subjects' views in Alisaari et al.'s (2019) study. These terms fit well with the data in this thesis, as well. Although the interviewed teachers advocated for multilingualism and support of first languages, they often merely allowed other languages in their teaching practices. In some ways, certain teachers also deny multilingualism, for instance, by excluding multilingual students from English line teaching.

Due to the consistent immigration to Finland and the diversification of Finnish society, the need for linguistically responsive teachers is clear. However, as described in the studies about monolingual ideologies (Alisaari et al., 2019; Heikkola et al., 2022b), the linguistic habitus of Finnish teachers is still, at least partly, monolingual. Although all interviewed teachers teach in diverse environments with multilingual students and generally express positive views of multilingualism, they still routinely exclude migrant languages and their speakers from their classrooms.

Similar to how Gogolin (2008) concluded that monolingual habitus is present in many ways in German teachers and the German education system, it is present in many ways in the Finnish class teachers interviewed. However, it is not a dominating feature in every situation and circumstance and seems to be in transition. Though the interviewees try to include other languages in their classroom practices, the languages of instruction have a clear edge over immigrant languages. In specific limited contexts, multilingual students are given room to express themselves in their home languages. Moreover, they can contribute to the practice with the knowledge of their home language, for instance, during cultural projects or events.

5.1. Conclusion

To conclude, I will elaborate on the study's implications for future research and its contributions to multilingual educational research. I will also draw some conclusions and give suggestions for future research. Furthermore, I will briefly reflect on the research process and the studied field.

This study contributes to educational research into multilingualism in a small, local context. However, this context is of particular interest, as the city of Vaasa and its surroundings are some of Finland's most visibly bilingual areas. However, the different language groups in the population mingle less than expected. Therefore, this thesis explores how teachers in this language-rich environment view other languages and multilingualism. In line with similar research in other European countries, the teachers still inhabit monolingual thinking even though they are surrounded by many different languages daily (Alisaari et al., 2019; Blackledge, 2000; Gogolin, 1997; Young, 2014).

A reflection that is not directly related to the data collected and analyzed but may be of interest nonetheless is related to the difficulty I had in finding interview partners. This could be another expression of monolingual habitus since many of my Swedish-speaking friends did not experience such problems during their research processes. Since the Swedish-speaking population of Finland is a small and homogenous group, breaking into this group as an outsider in another language can be difficult. These perceived barriers made it harder for me to complete my data collection at the beginning of the research process. However, these experiences may also be related to the simple fact that some teachers do not feel comfortable speaking in English about their work for a prolonged time. This is something that some of the interviewed teachers mentioned before the interviews, but I did not encounter any situations in which they struggled to express their views.

5.1.1. Further Research

In the future, it would be interesting to go back into the field to investigate different contexts of Finnish primary education since this study was performed in a small area. Although historically one of the pillars of education in Finland is its equality for all students, there is significant variation between schools. This is why further qualitative research in different regions of Finland would be beneficial. More and more parents are starting to shop around for schools using public data on the languages and ethnicities of varying student populations. Considering this, it leaves the question of what it might imply for schools with many multilingual and

multiethnic students. It is questionable whether these trends will reverse since Finland remains a popular destination for migrants from the rest of the world.

Future research could combine qualitative and quantitative methods to a mixed-method approach that could provide both depth and the possibility to generalize the findings to a broader population. As small-scale qualitative research is always limited in applicability to a wider sample, more mixed-methods research may contribute to learning more about monolingual ideologies and habitus in education.

The COVID-19-related school lockdowns significantly impacted schools in general and, more particularly, multilingual students. These students may have received a different amount of support than their peers. It would be interesting to investigate the issue with a focus on these lockdowns since they were a unique occurrence in recent history. Students' perspectives would be an interesting perspective to investigate in this context. They could add to the current teacher-centered research on multilingualism and give a more complete picture of the field.

I believe the study results are also relevant to future developments in education in Finland and the rest of Europe, as most European countries are very popular destinations for migrants, and these countries will invariably experience a growth in language diversity. Therefore, the gap between attitudes and practice must be bridged in the future to enable newcomers to thrive and receive support in their home languages and the languages used in schools.

Another consideration is the future application of the theoretical lens of monolingual habitus to other contexts. For example, it would be interesting to adapt the framework Gogolin (2008) established to fields like higher education, health care, and business. For example, there have been many discussions about migrant care workers and nurses, often from the Philippines, and how they are treated by the healthcare system and the people that employ them. I suppose the question that must be asked in this context is whether migrants are only considered providers of low-skill labor or whether they will be treated equally and justly.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your background and your studies/work up until this point.

2. Describe your school, the students, and the area. I would like to get a picture of what the day-to-day looks like at your school.

3. Are you a classroom teacher or a subject teacher?
   a. Classroom → how many students of yours speak a language other than Finnish/Swedish at home?
      i. Are you familiar with the language biographies of these students? How have they progressed so far?
   b. Subject → How many students in a given class are there that speak a language other than Finnish/Swedish at home?
      i. Are you familiar with the language biographies of these students? How have they progressed so far?

4. Describe a positive situation that you have had with multilingual students.

5. In that context, do you have any negative situations that come to mind?

6. Tell me about your experience in the classroom with multilingual children.
   a. Regarding motivation, success, and attitudes toward school

7. Have you noticed any changes in the curriculum regarding multilingual students and language learning?

8. Are there any aspects that you feel have stayed open?