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Multilingualism from the Perspective of Primary School Children: A Meta-Synthesis Study

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Abstract

With this meta-synthesis qualitative research findings on primary school children's perspectives on multilingualism are reanalyzed. To accomplish this, a comprehensive literature review was conducted using databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, DOAJ, APA PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. This review yielded 3.265 studies. Considering scientifically relevant inclusion and exclusion criteria, 16 of these studies were included in the meta-synthesis. The analysis revealed the importance of parental and teacher support in the students' multilingual identity development. It was also found that children attribute different statuses to languages, thereby, promoting existing social language hierarchies in both school and daily life. Finally, it was determined that children generally hold positive attitudes towards multilingualism, with significant contributions from teachers and parents in this regard.

Keywords

Multilingualism, primary school students, meta-synthesis, children's perspective, childhood research

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Multilingüismo desde la Perspectiva de los Niños de Primaria: Un Estudio de Meta-Síntesis

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Resumen

En este estudio de meta-síntesis cualitativa, se reanalizan los hallazgos de investigaciones cualitativas sobre las perspectivas de los niños de primaria respecto al multilingüismo. Para ello, se llevó a cabo una revisión bibliográfica exhaustiva utilizando bases de datos como Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, DOAJ, APA PsycINFO y Google Scholar. Esta revisión arrojó un total de 3.265 estudios. Considerando criterios de inclusión y exclusión científicamente relevantes, se incluyeron 16 estudios en la meta-síntesis. El análisis reveló la importancia del apoyo de los padres y los docentes en el desarrollo de la identidad multilingüe de los estudiantes. Asimismo, se encontró que los niños atribuyen diferentes estatus a las lenguas, promoviendo así las jerarquías lingüísticas sociales existentes tanto en la escuela como en la vida cotidiana. Finalmente, se determinó que los niños generalmente mantienen actitudes positivas hacia el multilingüismo, con contribuciones significativas de los docentes y los padres en este aspecto.

Palabras Clave

Multilingüismo, estudiantes de primaria, meta-síntesis, perspectiva de los niños, investigación sobre la infancia

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Multilingualism in primary education has become the focus of research interest in recent years, and this is related to two main contextual factors. The first factor is increasing globalisation and the other one is growing population mobility. Both factors lead to high language diversity among children in the classroom (Hélot, 2017; Siemund, 2023). As a result, multilingual approaches rather than monolingual ones are proposed and encouraged in many education systems (Putjata, 2018; Rogers, 2014).

If teachers hold positive beliefs about the benefits of multilingualism in primary schools, this can have direct and indirect effects on students' motivation to learn languages (Haukås et al., 2024), and provide children with cognitive and social benefits, both in education and everyday life (Rassool & Edwards, 2010; Rogers, 2014).

Using more than one language in general has many advantages such as cognitive flexibility (Mepham & Martinovic, 2018), working memory (Espí-Sanchis & Cockcroft, 2022), creativity (Kharkhurin, 2015), increased metalinguistic awareness (Jessner, 2008), the ability to learn another language better (Diamond, 2010), empathy, and open-mindedness (Dewaele & Botes, 2020). In the quantitative study by Tsimpli et al., (2020), it was found that bilingual children performed better than monolinguals in terms of cognitive performance in the task of matching numbers and completing the pattern.

In a social context, it is assumed that multilingualism and accompanying language competences can have positive effects on the students' communication skills Fandrych (2009), on their future economic conditions, and thereby can contribute to the economic development of the country in which they live (Guo & Madni, 2024). Positive effects may also be expected in terms of cultural understanding, tolerance, and human relations (Hélot, 2017). In a qualitative study conducted by Camenzuli et al., (2023), participants stated that multilingualism provided them with personal and social advantages, expanding the students' horizons and improving their verbal skills. Due to the benefits mentioned above, the chances for the development of multilingual identities among primary school children is important for both the children and the communities in which they live.

Multilingual Identity Development in Children

Language learning brings challenges as well as unique opportunities. Using more than one language in daily life can sometimes cause complexities (Wu & Forbes, 2023). For this reason, multilingual identity development of children should be supported as early as possible, because basic language skills and multilingual identity formation are easily shaped in this period. According to Norton (2013), the multilingual identity development of children depends on their being well-motivated. Duarte & Günther-van Der Meij, (2018) state that the identity development of multilingual children can be fostered, if schools adopt multilingual curricula. Karanfil and Demir, (2021) emphasize the importance of families, alongside education systems, taking responsibility for the development of multilingual identity and encouraging the use of family languages at home. Wu and Forbes, (2023) state that there are three different variables that affect the students' multilingual identity development: The first of these are experiences as the student's past and current exposure to and interaction with different languages. The second is evaluation as the children's beliefs about languages, about themselves

as language learners, and about the attitudes of people around them. The last are emotions, i.e. the students' openness to communication in their family language and motivation by both family and teachers.

The development of the children's multilingual identity is intertwined with their attitudes and emotions related to multilingualism such as attitudes and positive emotions towards languages (Dekker et al., 2021; Fürstenau, 2016).

Further relevant influencing factors can be the children's family, teachers, and environment (De Houwer, 1999; Kircher et al., 2022; Van Der Wildt et al., 2015). The fact that parents are multilingual and use these languages at home can contribute to children developing a positive attitude towards multilingualism. In a study conducted by Kircher et al. (2022), it was found that there was a significant relationship between parents' attitudes and childrens' multilingualism attitudes. Similarly, the teachers' behaviour regarding children with different languages in the classroom atmosphere may affect the students' multilingualism attitudes.

In a study conducted with teachers, Van Der Wildt et al., (2017, p. 170) found that the teachers' tolerance towards multilingualism was significantly related to the children's attitudes, and that higher linguistic diversity was associated with more positive emotions of teachers towards multilingual students, as well as positive effects on tolerant linguistic classroom practices. According to De Houwer, (1999), the development of multilingualism attitude development in young children deepens significantly depending on the language learning environment. This attitude can be favorable or unfavorable.

As Novara et al., (2021) discuss, the broader educational and social environment can significantly influence attitudes and emotions towards multilingualism. Specifically, when negative societal or school policies prevail regarding minority languages, this can hinder the children's multilingual identity development and foster negative attitudes toward multilingualism. Moreover, children's perception of the importance of languages plays a critical role in shaping both their multilingual identity and attitudes (Dekeyser, 2024).

Language Hierarchy Among Children

As mentioned above, school policies, parents, environment, and peer behaviours shape children's multilingual identity development – encompassing their emotions and beliefs on multilingualism. Becker & Knoll, (2022) state that teachers indirectly establish language hierarchies for children by determining which languages are permitted in the official institutional learning space. Gogolin, (2002) analysed the language situation in the context of language education policies. In explaining the situation, Gogolin, (2002) emphasized that the linguistic situation is categorized according to the level of legitimacy of languages, their social status, the number of users, and other elements of differences. Current research shows that these descriptions are still applicable. Fredricks & S. Warriner, (2016) examined how local language policies can influence the views of multilingual learners and how children can adopt a linguistic hierarchy in the classroom that places English at the top, followed by Spanish, and then the additional languages of other children in the classroom. Aboud and Sankar, (2007) examined how linguistic hierarchies affect friendship formation in a Canadian multilingual (French-English) school. They hypothesised that the language of instruction may have a higher

status than other languages; likewise, the linguistic group targeted in an educational system is likely to be ascribed a higher status. However, this linguistic hierarchy did not result in learners preferring friends from one language or the other. In this context, it can be argued that the status of languages influences childrens' tendency to form linguistic hierarchies and can play an important role in the childrens' multilingual identity development.

Both global mobility and the importance of learning different languages have contributed to the gradual increase in the number of multilingual children in (Polat & Lange, 2025; Özcan, 2022). Supporting and shaping an open-minded and positive awareness of children regarding their multilingual identity can have positive effects on their learning (Carbonara & Scibetta, 2022; Fashanu et al., 2020; Fredricks & S. Warriner, 2016; Griva et al., 2014; Schroedler et al., 2024)

The aim of this paper is the re-synthesising and re-interpreting of studies focusing on the perspective of children on multilingualism. This study presents a meta-synthesis of qualitative studies published in the last decade (2013-2024) on multilingualism from the perspective of primary school students. The study aims to re-synthesize the findings of qualitative research on the research question: What are the perspectives of primary school children on multilingualism?

Method

The meta-synthesis research method was used in this study, to evaluate and synthesize the findings of qualitative studies focusing on the perspective of primary school children on multilingualism. Meta-synthesis studies were introduced by Noblit in 1988. Meta-synthesis involves selecting and re-reading related studies and noting key concepts; these key concepts form the basic data of the synthesis. The aim of a meta-synthesis is to interpret qualitative research on similar topics instead of collecting raw data on a specific situation (McDermott et al., 2004; Polat & Ay, 2016). With a meta-synthesis, main themes are developed based on the studies selected for a specific research purpose and with the aim to reveal similarities and differences around these themes (Polat, 2015).

This paper adopted a purposive sampling approach (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024) because it allows for the examination of qualitative publications on the perspectives of primary school children on multilingualism. Since each country has a unique education system, the starting and finishing ages of the research sample vary. For example, the study conducted by Spernes & Ruto-Korir, (2021) in Kenya was carried out with 8th-grade students, who are the final year of primary school. Similarly, the research conducted by Welply, (2017) in France involves 5th grade students, who are the final year of primary school. The purposive sampling approach is intended to ensure that cases of a particular type are part of the final sample of the research rather than any random sampling method (Campbell et al., 2020).

Meta-Synthesis Process Steps

The following steps are taken in a meta-synthesis study (Noblit, 1988; Polat & Ay, 2016; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2006)

- Step 1: Determining the research questions.
- Step 2: Identifying keywords relevant to the subject of the study and conducting a literature review.
- Step 3: Determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria and selecting the studies to be evaluated.
- Step 4: Providing, reviewing, identifying, and evaluating the resources.
- Step 5: Analyzing the selected studies and creating common themes and sub-themes belonging to these themes, revealing their similar and different aspects.
- Step 6: Synthesizing the findings within the framework of the themes and making inferences.
- Step 7: Reporting the process and findings in a detailed way.

These steps provide transparency for the research process. This seven-step procedure is explained in detail below.

For the first step, a clear research question was formulated. The question we formed for this research was “What are the perspectives of primary school children on multilingualism?”

For the second step, the search keywords presented in Table 1 were used. The search string focused on the perspectives of primary school children on multilingualism using Boolean operators (Bramer et al., 2018).

Due to the large number of studies on the children’s perspectives on multilingualism in educational science, terms such as “secondary school students” and “high school students” were added as NOT items to the search string to further refine the results. To access studies related to the perspectives of children on multilingualism, the search was further refined using AND and OR operators.

Table 1

Search String

Search terms
“children belief about multilingualism” OR “pupil belief about multilingualism”, “children's attitudes on multilingualism” OR “pupils’ attitudes on multilingualism”
AND
“children's perspectives about multilingualism” AND “pupils’ perspectives about multilingualism”
“children's views about multilingualism” AND “pupils’ views about multilingualism”, “children ‘think’ on multilingualism” AND “pupils ‘think’ on multilingualism”
NOT
“primary school teachers”, “secondary school students”, high school students“

Using these key terms, the Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, DOAJ, APA PsycINFO, and Google Scholar databases were searched.

For the third step, the inclusion criteria listed in Table 2 were determined.

Table 2

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Peer-reviewed articles	Grey literature
Articles published in English	Studies not conducted in the English language
Published after 2013	Studies published before 2012
Full paper accessible (open access or through university licenses)	Articles with abstracts as the only available content
The studies include the beliefs, views, attitudes, and perspectives of primary school children regarding multilingualism	Multilingual studies whose participants are not primary school children.

These criteria were formulated to improve the quality of the research, develop in-depth interpretations, prioritize up-to-date information, ensure accessibility, and obtain data related to the research focus.

For the fourth step, the titles and abstracts of the studies, which were identified after the search, were checked and we determined 3265 studies that could be applicable to the subject and purpose of the study. According to the inclusion criteria, 34 studies that may be suitable to the subject and purpose of the study were downloaded. As a result of a detailed review, it was determined that 15 of the 34 studies were eligible for the purpose of the study, while the remaining three studies were conference abstracts and 16 studies were not included in the analysis because they were written on the basis of quantitative methodology. Descriptive characteristics of the included studies are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Characteristics of the Studies Included in the Meta-Synthesis

Study Code	Title	Author	Country	Data Collection	Data Analyses
S 1	Integrating translanguaging pedagogy into Italian primary schools: implications for language practices and children's empowerment	(Carbonara & Scibetta, 2022)	Italy	Focus group	Content Analysis
S 2	The effects of multilingual pedagogies on language awareness: A longitudinal	(Carbonara, 2023)	Italy	Drawing, Focus group, observation	Content Analysis

Study Code	Title	Author	Country	Data Collection	Data Analyses
S 3	analysis of students' language portraits Multilingual communication under the radar: how multilingual children challenge the dominant monolingual discourse in a super-diverse, Early years educational setting in England	(Fashanu et al., 2020a)	England	Visual and observation	Content Analysis
S 4	'We speak English in here and English only!': Teacher and ELL youth perspectives on restrictive language education	(Fredricks & S. Warriner, 2016)	USA	Observation, field notes, focus group	Content Analysis
S 5	Enacting identities: children's narratives on person, place and experience in fixed and hybrid spaces	(Ibrahim, 2016)	France	Interviews	Content Analysis
S 6	Multilingual identity development in a trilingual setting: A case study of refugee identity and language use	(Karanfil & Demir, 2021)	Turkey	Semi-structured interviews	Content Analysis
S 7	'I think my parents like me being bilingual': Cantonese–English DLBE upper elementary students mediating parental ideologies about multilingualism	(Leung et al., 2022)	USA North California	Focus group	Content Analysis
S 8	Multilingual awareness and heritage language education: children's multimodal representations of their multilingualism	(Melo-Pfeifer, 2015)	Germany	Drawing	¹ Visual narratives
S 9	Including home languages in the classroom: A videographic study on challenges and possibilities of multilingual pedagogy	(Peyer et al., 2022)	Switzerland	Observation	Content Analysis
S 10	'Red is the colour of the heart': making young children's multilingualism	(Soares et al., 2021)	Netherlands	Semi-structured interviews	Content Analysis

Study Code	Title	Author	Country	Data Collection	Data Analyses
	visible through language portraits				
S 11	Multilingualism and curriculum: A study of how multilingual learners in rural Kenya use their languages to express emotions	(Spernes & Ruto-Korir, 2021)	Kenya	Focus group	Content Analysis
S 12	Shifting frames: Turkish immigrant children's rescaling practices in two school settings in Arizona	(Tarm, 2019)	USA	Interview	Descriptive Analysis
S 13	The learner's voice: exploring bilingual children's selective language use and perceptions of minority language competence	(Thomas et al., 2014)	Wales	Focus group	Descriptive Analysis
S 14	Do birds singing the same song flock together? A mixed-method study on language as a tool for changingsocial homophily in primary schools in Flanders (Belgium)	(Van Der Wildt et al., 2015)	Belgium	Focus group	Descriptive Analysis
S 15	Negotiating identities through multilingual writing: Local school policy that opens up spaces for students' diverse languages	(Wedin, 2020)	Sweden	Interviews, Drawing	Content Analysis
S 16	'My language ... I don't know how to talk about it': children's views on language diversity in primary schools in France and England	(Welply, 2017)	England, France	Focus group	Content Analysis

For the fifth step, the findings of 16 empirical studies on multilingualism from the perspective of primary school children were analyzed inductively. Based on this analysis, overarching themes and corresponding sub-themes were developed. To ensure the validity of the thematic structure, a second researcher reviewed the themes and sub-themes after their initial creation. In constructing the themes, the guidelines proposed by Merriam's, (2015) were followed. Specifically, it was considered that (a) themes could either originate from the researchers' own interpretations or align with existing concepts in the literature, and (b) the labeling of themes should reflect and remain consistent with the overall orientation of the study. The themes and explanations supporting the themes are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Coding System

Main Codes	Sub-codes	References
Multilingual identity development		S2, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S13, S15, S16
Relevance of multilingualism	Children's awareness of multilingualism	S1, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S10, S12, S14
	Life-world multilingualism	S5, S6, S13, S16
	Inner hierarchy	S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8
Language hierarchy	Monolingual teaching guidelines	S1, S2, S3, S4, S8, S11, S16
	Teacher approach in dealing with multilingual students	S2, S4, S5, S9, S12, S13, S15, S16
	Positive emotions	S1 S2, S5, S6, S9, S10 S11, S15
Attitudes and emotions of children towards multilingualism	Negative emotions	S2, S6, S7, S9, S10 S15, S16

For steps six and seven, the results obtained are reported comprehensively and implications are presented. These are explained in detail in the findings section.

Findings

In this meta-synthesis, the analysis of the corpus of the qualitative studies concerning primary school children's perspectives on multilingualism resulted in four main and seven sub-themes, following the aim of the research. The results obtained were supported by direct citations from the related studies.

Multilingual Identity Development of Children

In the articles analyzed, the issue of multilingual identity development is found in nine different studies (S2, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S13, S15 and S16) focused on children. Accordingly, the

multilingual identity development of children is closely related to the environments in which they communicate in their family languages. The active use of the languages in their family, especially with parents who speak different languages, plays a crucial role in the multilingual identity development of children. For example, according to S6, children expressed their views as follows: “Saira, reflected upon her experiences in learning languages emphasising that television or video channels are sources of input particularly for Turkish (Karanfil & Demir, 2021, p. 872).”

However, peer relations and the use of social media are also influential on children's multilingual identity development. Some excerpts from S6 interview and observation notes are as follows: “My entire favourite YouTubers are Turkish, and I can talk about them in Turkish (Karanfil & Demir, 2021, p. 872).”

In the process of multilingual identity development of children, teachers' positive beliefs on multilingualism can contribute significantly to the creation of an atmosphere that supports language diversity in the classroom. These beliefs enable children to engage with and share their experiences of different languages and cultures, fostering mutual understanding and respect. Moreover, in this environment, students' self-expression skills are strengthened and they gain a better understanding of their own identities. The passage regarding the effect of the teacher's activity on children in S15 is as follows: “Jirka told the teacher well in advance that he only wanted to read the Finnish version because he did not want the classmates to understand the meaning of the text. After he had read out his text, children applauded (Wedin, 2020, p. 4).”

Relevance of Multilingualism for Children

The main theme can be divided into two sub-categories: The childrens' awareness of multilingualism (S1, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S10, S12, S14) and life-world multilingualism (S2, S3, S5, S6, S8, S16). The category ‘children's awareness of multilingualism’ refers to the students' understanding of the importance of multilingualism in daily life, at school, and when traveling, as well as their awareness of the advantages of having different language skills. The results reveal the childrens’ understanding and sensitivity to the significance of being able to speak more than one language. “Children were clearly aware of the importance of Welsh language use in school and at home, and the majority of the children demonstrated a strong desire to increase such as (Thomas et al., 2014, p. 354)”. “because it is like when we go to China or to another country, they can understand us a bit. Because if we only speak Italian they can’t understand (Carbonara, 2023, p.1062).” “I need to speak French because I live in France, Persian because my parents are Iranian ... I think it’s important to speak the language of the parents... English because it’s the most important language of the world (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 79).”

Another sub-theme was identified as 'Life-world multilingualism'. The concept of lifeworld multilingualism describes the language abilities of individuals who grow up and live with more than one language (Gogolin, 2005). The analysis reveals how children actively use a variety of languages in both informal (e.g. family and friends) and formal (e.g. school and workplace) contexts. “Taku identified Japanese as the family language: For me it’s normal ... I speak at

home Japanese with my sister, my mother, my dad ... Japanese with all my family ... even with my dog (Ibrahim, 2016, p. 79).”

“It is a combination of all. Genetically: both parents are language teachers. Both children were exposed to 3 languages since birth (Turkish started at the age of 3 with Saira), and they both have incessant daily opportunities to reinforce them (Turkish at school, English with mother, Arabic with grandparents. ”Saira prefers Turkish most in communication because her friends do not know much English (Karanfil & Demir, 2021, p. 872).”

In S8, students were asked to create various drawings related to multilingualism. The analysis conducted by the author of the study revealed that students associated multilingualism with national symbols. These findings, within the framework of 'Life-world multilingualism,' illustrate how individuals conceptualize multilingualism in their daily lives and link it to elements of national identity. “Drawing 4, however, illustrates a complete separation of languages and of selves. Indeed, the child depicts three different selves, speaking three different languages, in three well-framed situations, essentialised through national flags (the separation being represented through vertical lines) (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015, p.209).”

Language Hierarchy

The main theme can be divided into three subcategories: Inner hierarchy (S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8), monolingual teaching guidelines (S1, S2, S3, S4, S8, S11, S16), and teacher approach in dealing with multilingual students (S2, S4, S5, S9, S12, S13, S14, S16). This category concerns the coding of outcomes related to the hierarchies of languages that children develop consciously or unconsciously in relation to multilingualism. The hierarchies of different languages (that surround them) shape students' internal hierarchies, which are often influenced by monolingual language policies at the school/national level. The situation regarding the inner hierarchy was addressed by S4 as follows. “Felipe has internalized deficit language orientations about the language that he and his family speak (Fredricks & S. Warriner, 2016, p.319).”

In S3, the researcher asked the children to draw a picture of the languages they use at home and school. According to this, children whose family tongue is spoken intensively at home prioritise their own language at school. In particular, family languages that are not used at home lead children to speak and prioritise the language of the curriculum.

The second subcode is “monolingual teaching guidelines” that support monolingualism (S1, S2, S3, S4, S8, S11, and S16). Here, especially peer behavior and language policy in schools affect children's language hierarchy formation. “This is substantiated by similar situations that occurred throughout the data collection phase when children spoke in a language other than English and their peers reprimanded them for doing so (Fashanu et al., 2020, p. 105).”

“Despite negative comments and practices that seemed to position students as low performing, many youth still supported the restrictive language policies in place—though many youth said that they wanted to be able to use their native language at school without

the risk of being reprimanded by the teacher (or by their classmates) (Fredricks & S. Warriner, 2016, p. 319).”

The third subcode related to the formation of a language hierarchy is the multilingualism approach of teachers (S2, S4, S5, S9, S12, S13, S14, S16). In this case, as a result of the reflection of the teacher’s approach in the classroom, the children may value his/her language or relegate it to the background. For example, in S14, the effect of teacher beliefs on the subject was found as follows.

“A general trend seen in both focus groups was the very strong emphasis on the importance of Dutch. None of the pupils questioned the dominant place of Dutch in the classroom and a small minority even did not see a place for other languages on the playground” (Van Der Wildt et al., 2015, p. 178).

However, S16 analysed the views of children on multilingualism in English and French schools. While reporting his observations in both schools, the author stated that the teachers in the English school behaved more moderately and this eliminated the hierarchy. “In the English school, the hierarchy of languages was declined in a different way to the French case (Welply, 2017, p. 449).”

Attitudes and Emotions of Children towards Multilingualism

When analyzing the articles on the attitudes and emotions of primary school children towards multilingualism (S1, S2, S6, S7, S9, S10, S11, S13, S15, S16), it was found that the relevant studies evaluated the issue in terms of the childrens’ ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ emotions related to multilingualism. As a matter of fact, in the interviews and activities conducted with the children, it was observed that the children often identified their attitudes towards language with the traditions, flag colors, and symbols of that country. In addition, it was observed that the children matched their multilingualism skills with their body organs and represented the languages they could not speak very well with their feet and the languages they spoke best with their heads (S8). Some excerpts compiled from S5 and S10 on the subject are as follows. “The children’s chosen objects represented their specific linguistic-national spaces (Ibrahim, 2016, p.80).” “Interviewer: Why did you choose blue for Dari? Pupil 4: Blue is my favourite colour. And I love my language Dari (Soares et al., 2021, p.33).”

In the related studies, children generally expressed positive emotions towards multilingualism, particularly demonstrating a desire and curiosity to learn languages beyond the foreign language taught at school. For instance, children described feelings of happiness, pride, or sadness regarding their family language or other languages they could speak, and in some cases, they provided deeply emotional reasons for their language choices. “He also displays his multilingualism through Swedish and Finnish, where he claims to be more proficient in Swedish but shows pride in his Finnish (Wedin, 2020, p.5).”

“Blue is my favourite colour. And I love my language Dari, that’s why I chose blue. And then for Dutch I chose yellow because yellow is a happy colour and I am very happy that I can be in the Netherlands” (Soares et al., 2021, p.33).

“At one point, the Hungarian speaking girl is visibly proud of having written down a Serbian word correctly by ear (Peyer et al., 2022, p.168).” It was found that when children feel compelled to complete homework or write in a different language, they express negative emotions towards multilingualism or exhibit behaviors in line with these feelings (S7 and S9).

“This theme of anxiety, for both heritage and non-heritage learners, over and constant monitoring of the need to ‘understand everything’ and receive on-demand assistance for a potential question about assignments seemed to be a pivotal factor in students’ perceptions of the value of, and emotional connection to, DLBE education (Leung et al., 2022, p.527).”

“...does not feel comfortable with the task of having spontaneously to write an expression in her home language (Peyer et al., 2022, p.171).”

Discussion

This study examines the current state of research on primary school children's perspectives on multilingualism. The first conclusion is that family and social contexts are important in shaping children's multilingual identity development. In this context, parents' communication with their children through the family language(s) plays an active role in their development as multilingual individuals. Therefore, it is important for parents to be aware of the affective and cognitive advantages of children growing up multilingual, as this awareness is a critical factor for the development of the childrens’ identities (Protassova, 2018)

Another significant finding of the research is the existence of language hierarchies. Children's internalized beliefs, institutional policies, teacher practices, and parents' lack of use of the family language stand out as the most common factors in the formation of language hierarchy. Children prioritize languages based on their perceived language proficiency and the social status of the language. Additionally, institutional policies that prioritize monolingualism also (indirectly) influence the formation of language hierarchies among children. Particularly, in the primary school context, teachers play a critical role in either reinforcing or challenging language hierarchies through their pedagogical practices and language attitudes (Lange et al., 2024). By recognizing and valuing the children's diverse linguistic backgrounds, teachers can create inclusive learning environments that enable children to embrace their multilingual identities and language repertoires. They can also raise awareness among parents and encourage them to use their family languages. The formation of a language hierarchy among children and the relegation of certain languages to secondary or tertiary positions represent significant barriers to language learning. Considering the importance of multilingualism for the future of society and individuals, the role and responsibility of teachers and parents in this regard is crucial. Carbonara & Scibetta, (2022) argue that children perceive languages and

dialects as a potential source of wealth, disregarding linguistic and social hierarchies. Along these lines, it is important to make minority languages visible in schools in order to eliminate linguistic inequalities.

Another result is that primary school children have positive emotions towards multilingualism, which demonstrates their curiosity and willingness to learn multiple languages. In particular, attributing different meanings to languages found in their repertoires and symbolizing these languages with relevant values through visual metaphors highlights the relationship between language and cultural identity. In this regard, parents speaking their own languages and not forgetting their cultures positively influence children's attitudes toward language learning (Getie, 2020). A study conducted by Zhang, (2020) has shown that children's attitudes toward multilingualism and language learning are in line with those of their parents. However, it is also important to acknowledge the potential difficulties and complexities related to multilingualism, including linguistic discrimination and identity negotiation. This is where educators have a great responsibility. (Wijayanti, 2024) suggests that if a supportive and inclusive learning environment is encouraged, it can empower children to cope with these challenges and embrace the linguistic diversity in their communities. Indeed, a study conducted by Wedin, (2020) has shown that creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom regarding students' family languages is gaining importance as an affirmation of valuing diversity.

Conclusions and Future Research

In this study, the perspectives on multilingualism among primary school children were examined by re-analyzing findings from international qualitative articles. A comprehensive online search identified 16 relevant articles on the topic. An analysis of the data collection methods used in these articles revealed that in 12 studies interviews, in three studies, drawing activities were used to elicit participants' perspectives, and in four studies observations were utilized.

Given that primary school children are still in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development, it is reasonable to argue that studies using observational and drawing-based data collection methods can be of high value as they open up more creative and multiperspective ways for data collection. In childhood studies, research methods which enable children to express their thoughts and feelings through direct observation and visual representations rather than abstract verbal explanations offer advantages when it comes to children's attitudes and emotions towards multilingualism, providing more specific insights into the children's experiences and perceptions. Especially with young children the mosaic approach as a multilevel and polyvocal approach can be useful (Clark, 2017; Lyndon et al., 2019; Kanik, 2023). Thereby, qualitative approaches such as small group interviews and observations are combined with more participative approaches such as digital process portfolios and digital language portraits (Lange, 2024).

Researchers have primarily focused on language hierarchies and children's attitudes towards multilingualism. In addition to these themes, future studies could explore children's awareness of multilingualism. Furthermore, research on children's multilingual attitudes should examine

school cultures, including the monolingual habitus and the historically entrenched monolingual routines of the country where the research is conducted.

According to Lange & Polat, (2024, p.3), internal multilingualism refers to different language varieties such as dialects or language registers used by an individual within one language. External multilingualism, on the other hand, refers to the variety of individual languages – i.e., different first languages and foreign languages spoken by a person. While the study by Spernes & Ruto-Korir, (2021) examines internal (minor) multilingualism, other studies have focused on external (major) multilingualism. In examines internal (minor) multilingualism, other studies have focused on external (major) multilingualism. In this context, there is a need to explore topics related to internal multilingualism in future research. Additionally, a detailed examination of how primary school children's perceptions of multilingualism develop and contribute to the educational process would be valuable.

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