



The current situation of plurilingual approaches in language classrooms in higher education in Germany

Survey creation and initial findings of the piloting phase

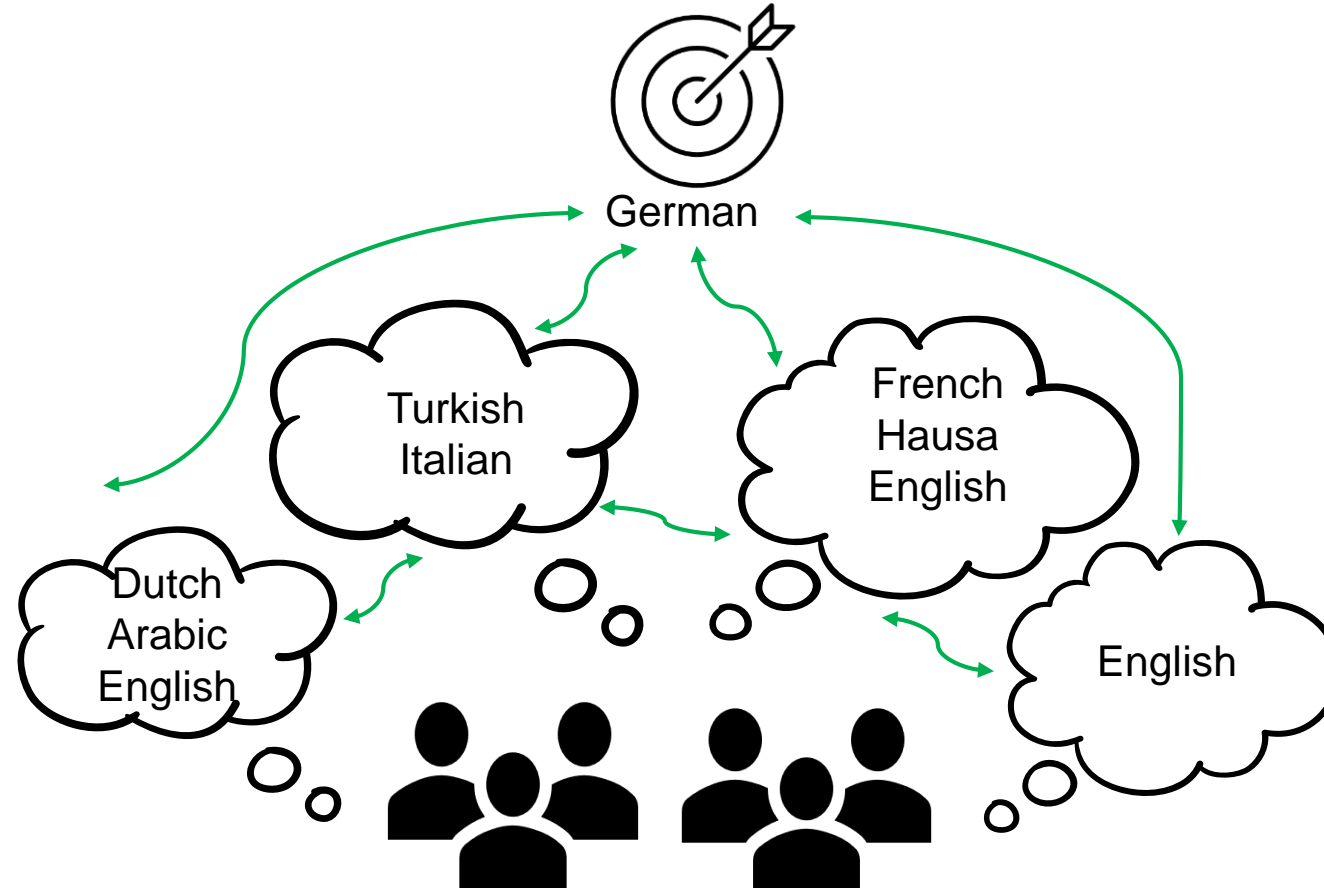
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Bremen, 13.09.2022

Starting point

- Language classrooms in higher education = highly plurilingual places because learners already know different languages

→ Resources to learn an additional language



Presentation outline

1. The PhD project
2. Literature review
3. Methodology
4. Piloting (= Current working phase)
5. Outlook

1. PhD project

Topic: Plurilingual teaching and learning approaches in language classrooms in higher education institutions in Germany

Step 1: Overview of the current situation concerning plurilingual approaches

- **Understanding of the current situation** in language courses
→ **Online survey**



Step 2: Development of an in-depth study

- Based and depending on the findings of step 1
- Further research will be carried out within the language center (SZHB) of Uni Bremen

1. PhD project

Plurilingual approaches =

Inclusion and implementation of languages other than the target language in language teaching

(e.g.: specific plurilingual tasks and methods, teacher using another language for explanations, ...)

2. Literature review

- **Lack of research ...**
 - ... on multilingualism/plurilingualism in the **adult and academic context** (Bredthauer, 2016)
 - ... on languages other than English (Piccardo et al., 2021)

- Former findings show that ...
 - ... plurilingual approaches in language classrooms have **benefits** (Han & Park, 2017; Piccardo et al., 2021)
 - ... teachers and learners prefer and have positive attitudes towards plurilingual approaches (Galante et al., 2020; Kursiša & Schlabach, 2020)

Research questions

- Overall RQ:
What is the **current situation** concerning plurilingual approaches in language classrooms in higher education in Germany?



- Sub-question 1:
Do instructors **implement** plurilingual approaches in their teaching?
- Sub-question 2:
What are the **attitudes** of teachers and learners towards plurilingual approaches in language teaching and learning?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design – Online survey

- Cross-sectional study
- Empirical mixed-methods study
 - Online survey with closed items (quantitative data) and open questions (qualitative data)
- Online tool: *SoSci Survey*
- Survey available in German and English
- Addresses language teachers and language learners

3. Methodology

3.2 Structure of the survey

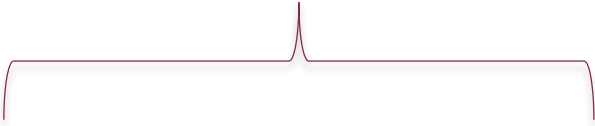
- 3 parts:
 - 1. Background information of the participants (demographic information, language background)
 - 2. **Implementation** of plurilingual teaching and learning approaches
 - 3. **Attitudes** towards plurilingual teaching and learning approaches

Main constructs

3. Methodology

3.3 Creation of items and questions

1. Creation of item
pool
based on existing
research



Triulzi & Maahs 2021
Bredthauer & Engfer 2018
Heyder & Schädlich 2014
Aho 2014

3. Methodology

3.3 Creation of items and questions

1. Creation of item
pool
based on existing
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2. Control if these
items are covered in
the “features of
plurilingual
education”

Triulzi & Maahs 2021
Bredthauer & Engfer 2018
Heyder & Schädlich 2014
Aho 2014

Galante et al. 2022 (p. 5):
“**Plurilingual guide**”

Attitude items:

- Language comparisons make language learning more effective.
- There are more positive than negative influences from other languages on the target language.

Implementation items:

- I give examples from other languages in the lesson.
- I point out expressions in other languages that might cause mistakes in the target language.

Features of Plurilingual Education

While there is no single definition for plurilingual education, there is consensus in the literature of its main features. Plurilingual education:

- Is learner-centered
- Is embedded in principles of social justice such as equity, diversity, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and inclusion
- Considers languages as interrelated and interdependent
- Encourages students to reflect on similarities and differences among languages and cultures in their repertoire and in the repertoire of their peers
- Provides opportunities for instructors to learn from their own students
- Encourages students to create links between what they already know (funds of knowledge) to what they are learning
- Engages students in making use of their plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire
- Provides opportunities for students' languages and cultures to be validated and enhanced while learning a new language
- Creates spaces for students to use their languages in class, in assignments, and in real-life tasks
- Creates spaces for students to discuss different worldviews and ways of knowing and being
- Considers students as plurilingual and pluricultural citizens
- Includes critical discussions on language and provides opportunities for students to develop agency and be empowered to use their linguistic and cultural repertoire
- Provides opportunities for students to continue to develop their identities in relation to their aspirations and in different contexts: educational, professional, familial, digital, etc.
- Includes educational practices that are linguistically and culturally relevant
- Considers languages and cultures as interconnected and part of the classroom environment

3. Methodology

3.3 Creation of items and questions

1. Creation of item
pool
based on existing
research



2. Control if these
items cover the
“features of
plurilingual
education”



3. Development of
new items

Triulzi & Maahs 2021
Bredthauer & Engfer 2018
Heyder & Schädlich 2014
Aho 2017

Galante et al. 2022 (p. 5):
“**Plurilingual guide**”

Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010 (pp. 40–44):
“**Rules about writing items**”

4. Piloting of the online survey

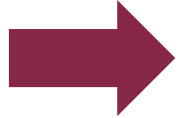
4.1 Current working phase

Piloting with one
language center in
Lower Saxony

4. Piloting

4.2 Observations

- In total: 10 participants → 3 completed cases
- Only (more experienced) teachers participated
- Duration to complete survey: 11.5 min, 18 min, 15.9 min



Challenges:

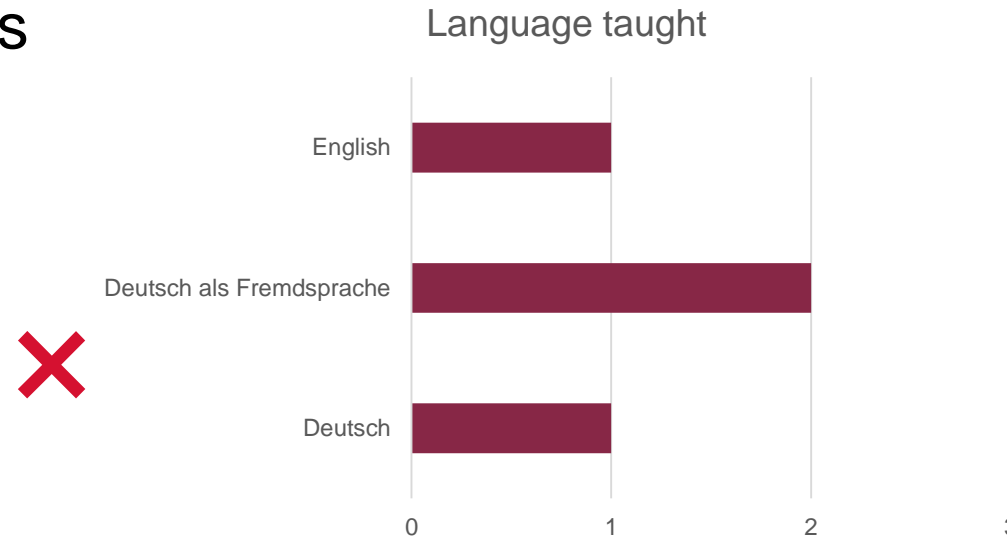
- Willingness of language centers to cooperate & distribute the survey link
- Willingness of teachers and learners to participate in the survey



→ Possible solution: Incentives to increase participation

4. Piloting

4.2 Observations




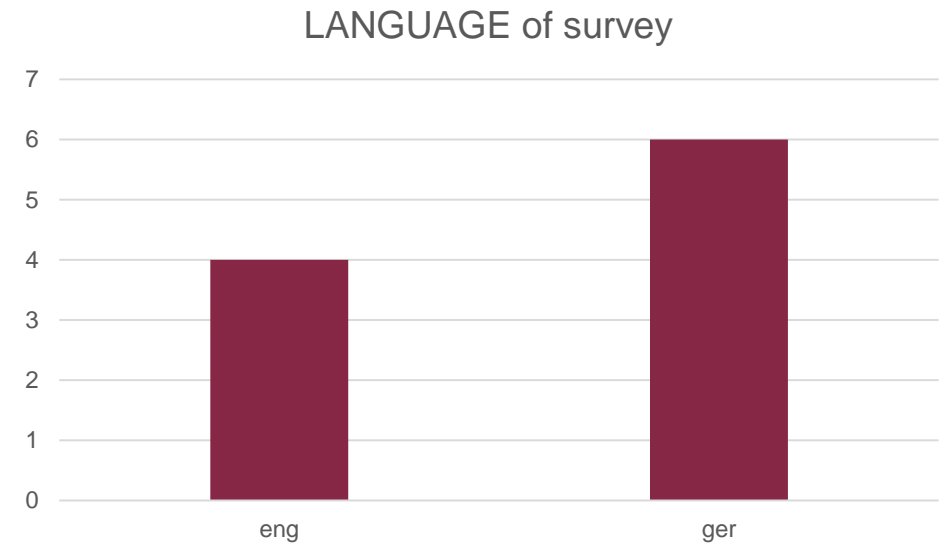
- Language questions: Name / list languages so the participants only have to choose the specific language

→ Easier and fast for the participants & for the analysis

4. Piloting

4.2 Observations

- Two different language choices of the survey
increase participation 




4. Piloting

4.2 Qualitative observations → Implementation of plurilingual approaches

- **n = 3**
- Open question 1
 - The implementation and inclusion of languages other than the target language in the classroom
- Translations (words, phrases, but NOT entire sentences or more)
- Cognates
- Organizational matters
- (Complex) explanations
- Comparison of grammatical structures / grammar
- Explanations of words

4. Piloting

4.2 Qualitative observations → Implementation of plurilingual approaches

- Open question 2 (contains two questions): 
 - The levels plurilingual approaches are used (**n = 3**)
 - All levels
 - A levels
 - B1

 - The topics plurilingual approaches are used (**n = 1**)
 - Vocabulary and register lessons
 - Some grammar topics
 - Writing composition
 - Typical interference examples

But: Only 1 participant answered the question on “topics”



→ Better: have 2 separate questions

4. Piloting

4.2 Qualitative observations → Attitudes towards plurilingual approaches

- Open question 1: General attitudes towards plurilingual approaches
 - No Benefits of 'too much' use of plurilingualism
 - Aiming at established norms
 - Comparisons of similar languages are helpful
 - Learners often do not have structural or grammatical knowledge → They cannot explain how a specific construct work in their L1
 - Insisting on explanations in the target language is unnecessary

4. Piloting

4.2 Qualitative observation → Attitudes towards plurilingual approaches

- Open question 2 (contains 2 questions):
 - Positive influences from other languages when learning additional languages (**n = 2**)
 - Comparing cognates
 - General language learning aptitude
 - Eagerness and confidence to learn
 - If there are structural similarities, the other language can facilitate the access and the understanding

 - Negative influences from other languages when learning additional languages (**n = 2**)
 - Language interference
 - Fossilization
 - False friends
 - Pseudo-English (Der Smoking, Handy, Public Viewing, Home Office, Old timer)

5. Outlook

Piloting observations

- Improve the online survey accordingly
- Initial qualitative observations

Survey administration

- Reach as many language centers in the higher education context as possible
- Offer incentives

Thank you very much for your attention!

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