

# TEACHING-LEARNING IN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: PERCEPTIONS OF MIDDLE LEVEL SCHOOLS TEACHERS OF DELHI

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## *Abstract*

*This study explores the perceptions of middle-level school teachers in Delhi regarding teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms. With a focus on India's linguistic diversity and educational context, the study examines the implications and nuances of multilingual education. The research involved 1,443 teachers and utilized a questionnaire as the primary research tool. The study's major findings highlight teachers' attitudes toward language learning, the use of home languages in classrooms, translation practices, and the impact of multilingualism on teaching and learning. The consensus among teachers on the benefits of multilingualism for cognitive skills and career success underscores the importance of promoting linguistic diversity in education.*

**Keywords:** *Multilingual Education, Teacher Perceptions, Language Diversity, Linguistic Landscape, Questionnaire.*

## **Introduction**

Multilingualism, an intricate hallmark of Indian society, has long been a subject of discourse. With over 1.3 billion individuals speaking more than 22 officially recognized languages and numerous dialects, India's linguistic diversity paints a captivating tapestry that mirrors its cultural fabric. This rich linguistic landscape carries profound implications, especially within the realm of education.

India's history reverberates with echoes of multilingualism dating back to ancient times, where diverse languages and dialects coexisted within its borders. The Mauryan Empire, spanning from 321 to 185 BCE, exemplifies this multicultural ethos, as evident in the Edicts of Ashoka inscribed in languages like Prakrit, Sanskrit, and Greek.

In the modern context, multilingualism remains pivotal in the Indian education system. Schools intertwine Hindi and English with regional languages, creating a pedagogical fabric that celebrates linguistic diversity. However, challenges arise from disparities between languages spoken at home and those used for instruction, impacting students' comprehension and academic performance.

Despite challenges, embracing multilingualism in Indian classrooms offers significant benefits. It equips students with proficiency in various languages, fostering effective communication and cultural understanding. Initiatives like bilingual education models and digital learning platforms further promote multilingualism's integration, bridging gaps between languages and enhancing comprehension.

This research delves into the perceptions of middle-level school teachers in Delhi's governmental schools, as they navigate the intricacies of multilingual classroom environments. Their insights are crucial to bridging the gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities. With a focus on the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and other initiatives like "Bhasha Sangam" and "Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat," this study aims to shed light on the complexities, challenges, and opportunities of multilingual education in Delhi. By amplifying teachers' voices, this research contributes to a more inclusive and effective multilingual educational landscape, aligning with India's rich linguistic heritage and progressive educational policies.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Cummins (2008) discusses BICS and CALP, while Vygotsky (1978) highlights language's role in cognitive development. Cummins' research on BICS and CALP, along with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, inform educators' multilingual teaching approaches and understanding of language development.

García (2009) emphasizes valuing linguistic repertoires. Schweisfurth and Shubert (2012) discuss plurilingual competence, impacting teachers' attitudes and classroom dynamics. Mohanty (2006) explores code-switching, Kagan (1994) discusses cooperative learning, both relevant in multilingual settings. Aggarwal (2017) emphasizes teacher attitudes towards linguistic diversity, while Gupta (2019) explores teacher professional development.

Gitschthaler et al. (2021) study inclusion of multilingual students and teachers' perceptions. Insights reveal preferences for inclusive learning environments and co-teaching models. Karlberg and Eriksson (2022) explore teachers' perceptions and use of translanguaging in English instruction. Schwab-Berger (2015) examines teachers' perceptions of a multilingual approach's implementation. Teachers adopt multilingual approach with guided instruction but need time and collaboration for effective implementation. Aydin & Dogan (2019) examine Turkish teachers' attitudes towards multilingual education. Turkish teachers support heritage-language-based multilingual education, recognizing its potential to address linguistic and cultural rights. Grace (2017) investigates UK primary teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical practices. UK primary teachers vary in attitudes toward home language and multilingual pedagogies, influenced by curriculum constraints and English dominance.

Macmillan Education India (2023) explores multilingualism's significance in Indian classrooms. Indian teachers recognize multilingualism's benefits for equity, accessibility, and inclusivity, with potential advantages in scaffolding learning and building vocabulary.

Anderson and Lightfoot (2018) study translingual practices within Indian English classrooms. Indian teachers exhibit varied perceptions and practices of multilingualism, often incorporating languages in English classrooms.

The studies highlight diverse dimensions of multilingual education. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices play a significant role in shaping multilingual classroom dynamics. Multilingualism's benefits include enhancing learning outcomes and promoting inclusive education. Challenges persist but can be addressed through teacher training and collaborative efforts.

The review of related literature suggests the need for understanding the perceptions of middle level schools teachers of Delhi regarding Multilingual classrooms. Thus, this study was conducted with convenient sampling of middle level school teachers in Delhi.

### **Objectives of Study**

The objectives of a study provide a clear and structured framework for conducting research and serve as the intended outcomes or goals that the study aims to achieve. Objectives outline the specific areas of focus, the questions to be answered, and the purpose of the research. In the context of the current study on "Teaching-Learning in Multilingual Classroom Environment: Perceptions of Middle-Level School Teachers of Delhi," the objectives serve as the foundation for the research endeavors. They guide the investigation, analysis, and interpretation of data to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic.

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the perceptions of middle-level school teachers in Delhi regarding the role and impact of multilingualism on teaching and learning in the classroom.
2. To identify the challenges faced by teachers when instructing in multilingual classroom environments and explore the strategies they employ to address these challenges.
3. To assess the extent to which teachers believe that multilingualism enhances or hinders students' language acquisition and overall educational experience.
4. To explore the pedagogical approaches and practices utilized by teachers to optimize the benefits of a multilingual classroom environment.

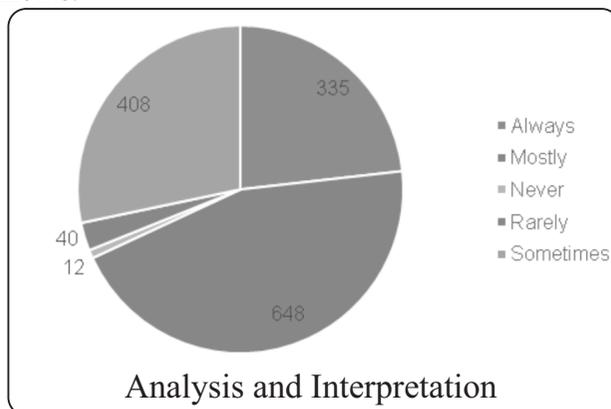
These objectives collectively drive the research process and guide the study's methodology, data collection, and analysis. They provide a roadmap for systematically exploring and understanding the complex dynamics of teaching and learning in multilingual classroom environments from the perspective of middle-level school teachers in Delhi.

## Methodology

The study's focus on middle-level school teachers in Delhi with the intent to capture a comprehensive spectrum of experiences within the specific educational context of the city. The study was conducted from March 2023-July 2023. Through convenient sampling, the participants who embody diverse linguistic backgrounds, teaching styles, and experiences were selected. 1,443 teachers responded to the questionnaire.

Data collection involved structured questionnaires designed to gauge teacher perceptions on various aspects of teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms, utilizing Likert-scale questions for responses. The questionnaire was thoughtfully designed to enable me to delve into nuanced aspects of teaching and learning that may otherwise remain unexplored. The process of data collection is characterized by flexibility and rapport-building, allowing participants to share their narratives candidly.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested for validity and reliability. Ethical considerations were paramount, with informed consent and confidentiality ensured for participants. The collected data underwent statistical analysis, utilizing descriptive and inferential statistics, to derive meaningful insights. The study's limitations and implications were discussed, offering valuable contributions to educational practice and policy. The results were presented comprehensively, drawing comparisons with existing literature and theories on multilingual classroom dynamics. The data obtained from this questionnaire served as a valuable foundation for analyzing teachers' perceptions and contributing to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by multilingual classroom environments.

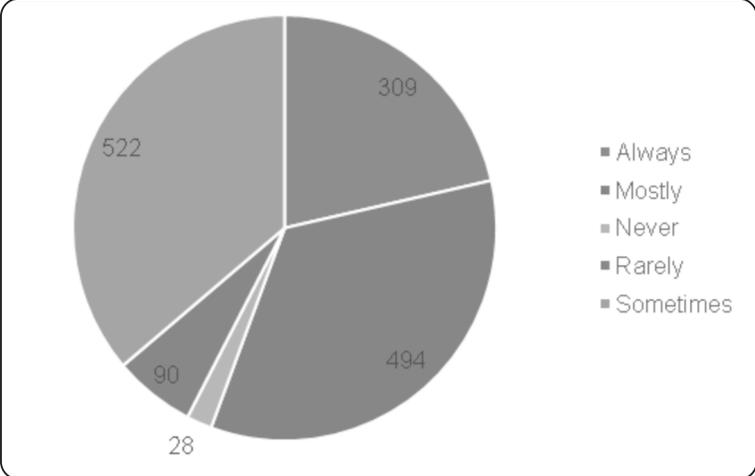


The data presented in the survey responses provides valuable insights into the perceived relationship between knowing multiple languages and the ease of learning new languages. A significant proportion of participants, consisting of 983 respondents who selected either "Always" or "Mostly," hold the belief that knowing more languages indeed makes it easier to learn new ones. This implies that these individuals view multilingualism as a valuable asset that positively influences their language learning abilities. The substantial number of respondents in this category suggests a prevailing sentiment that prior exposure to different languages can provide cognitive advantages and transferable skills that aid in acquiring new linguistic skills.

On the other hand, the responses from the "Rarely," "Never," and "Sometimes" categories (a total of 460 respondents) represent a more nuanced perspective. Among these participants, there is a range of opinions on whether multilingualism directly correlates with enhanced language learning ease. The responses in these categories might reflect varying personal experiences, learning contexts, and beliefs about the cognitive impact of multilingualism on language acquisition.

The distribution of responses indicates that there is no unanimous consensus on the relationship between knowing multiple languages and the ease of learning new languages. While a substantial number of participants perceive a positive connection, a significant minority either hold a different viewpoint or acknowledge that the relationship is not absolute and might depend on various factors.

In conclusion, the survey data highlights the complexity of opinions regarding the influence of multilingualism on the ease of learning new languages. It reflects a diversity of perspectives and underscores the need for further exploration to understand the nuances of this relationship, considering individual experiences, linguistic backgrounds, and learning contexts.



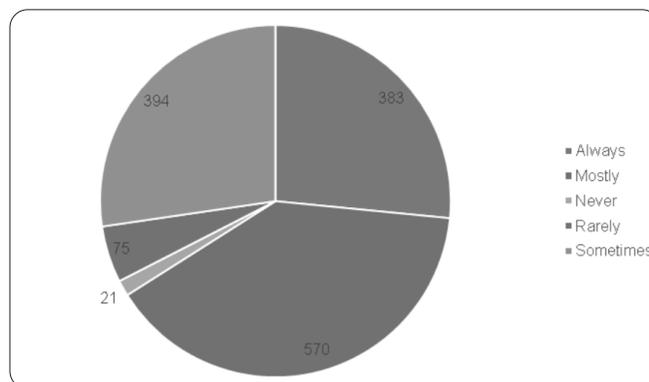
The provided data offers valuable insights into the extent to which students are allowed to interact in their home language within the classroom setting.

A considerable number of participants, comprising 803 respondents who selected either "Always" or "Mostly," indicate that they are allowed to interact in their home language during class. This suggests a prevalent practice of permitting students to use their native language for communication and interaction. Such an approach could be influenced by the belief that leveraging students' home language can enhance their comprehension, engagement, and overall learning experience. These teachers might consider the home language as a valuable tool for scaffolding learning and facilitating effective communication.

Conversely, the responses in the "Rarely," "Never," and "Sometimes" categories (a total of 640 respondents) suggest a range of attitudes toward allowing students to interact in their home language. Among these participants, there is a variation in the degree to which home language usage is encouraged or tolerated in the classroom. Factors influencing these responses might include institutional policies, teachers' beliefs about language use in education, and perceptions about maintaining a consistent medium of instruction.

The distribution of responses underscores the diversity of classroom practices regarding the use of students' home language. While a significant proportion of respondents report positive attitudes toward such interaction, a notable portion of participants either express reservations about its frequency or adhere to policies that limit its use.

In conclusion, the data reflects the varied practices and perspectives regarding the allowance of students to interact in their home language during classroom activities. The responses emphasize the importance of understanding the rationales behind these practices and considering how they align with broader educational goals, language policies, and the linguistic diversity of the student population.



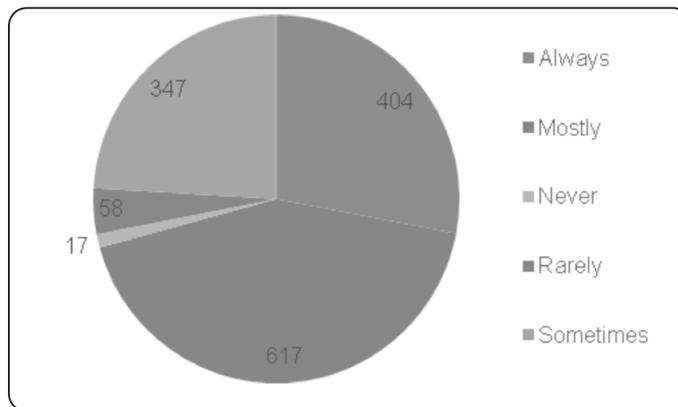
The provided data offers insights into teachers' preferences for translating lesson content into students' home language to enhance understanding.

A significant portion of the participants, totaling 953 respondents who selected either "Always" or "Mostly," express a preference for translating lesson content into the home language of their students. This indicates a prevalent practice among these teachers, reflecting a belief that providing translations can contribute to better comprehension and engagement. Such an approach aligns with the idea that utilizing students' home language as a bridge can facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and concepts, ultimately enhancing their learning experience.

On the other hand, the responses in the "Rarely," "Never," and "Sometimes" categories (a total of 490 respondents) suggest a range of attitudes toward translating lesson content. Among these participants, there is a diversity of practices and beliefs. Some teachers might be cautious about over-relying on translation, possibly due to concerns about hindering English language development or reinforcing linguistic dependence on the home language. Others might limit translation to specific cases or avoid it altogether based on their instructional philosophy or institutional guidelines.

The distribution of responses underscores the nuanced considerations that teachers weigh when deciding whether to translate lesson content into students' home language. While a significant proportion of respondents favor this practice, a substantial number of participants take a more selective or cautious approach, recognizing potential benefits while also acknowledging potential drawbacks.

In conclusion, the data highlights the range of practices and attitudes among teachers concerning the translation of lesson content into students' home language. The findings emphasize the importance of striking a balance between leveraging the home language for enhanced understanding and fostering English language development, all while considering the diverse needs of students and the broader educational context.



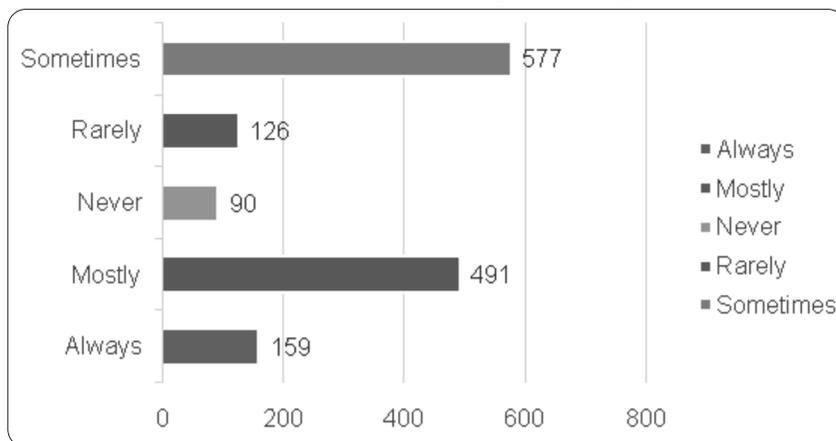
The provided data offers insights into teachers' perspectives regarding the impact of having multilingual classroom situations on their ability to teach content effectively.

A substantial number of participants, totaling 1021 respondents who selected either "Always" or "Mostly," believe that having multilingual classroom situations significantly aids their content delivery. This indicates that these teachers perceive a positive correlation between the presence of multiple languages and their teaching efficacy. The recognition of multilingualism as an asset suggests that diverse linguistic backgrounds can be leveraged to enhance students' comprehension, engagement, and overall learning experience.

In contrast, the responses in the "Rarely," "Never," and "Sometimes" categories (a total of 422 respondents) suggest varying attitudes toward the influence of multilingual classroom situations on teaching content. Some teachers might be more cautious about the potential challenges that can arise from linguistic diversity, such as language barriers or the need for effective classroom management strategies. Others might find that the presence of multiple languages can be distracting or pose difficulties in ensuring equitable participation.

The distribution of responses underscores the nuanced perspectives that teachers hold regarding the impact of multilingual classroom situations on content instruction. While a significant portion of respondents perceive this diversity as advantageous, a notable number of participants have reservations or perceive mixed outcomes.

In conclusion, the data highlights the range of opinions among teachers concerning the influence of multilingual classroom situations on content teaching. The findings suggest that many educators recognize the potential benefits of linguistic diversity, while others acknowledge the need for strategic approaches to leverage this diversity effectively. The insights emphasize the importance of understanding and addressing the challenges and opportunities that arise from having multilingual classroom settings.



The provided data presents teachers' viewpoints regarding the perceived impact of a multilingual classroom environment on students' dependency on their home language.

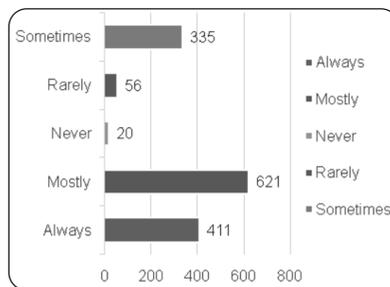
An interesting pattern emerges from the responses, indicating that the majority of participants (1068 respondents who chose "Always," "Mostly," or "Sometimes") do not necessarily view multilingual classrooms as fostering significant dependency on students' home language. This suggests that these teachers believe that multilingual environments can provide diverse learning opportunities without necessarily leading to an overreliance on students' native languages.

However, it is noteworthy that a substantial number of respondents (216 individuals who selected "Always" or "Mostly") express a concern that multilingual classrooms might lead to students becoming dependent on their home language. This perspective could stem from apprehensions about students favoring their native language over the target language of instruction, potentially hindering their language development and integration into the broader educational context.

The responses categorized as "Rarely" and "Never" (216 participants) suggest a more reserved stance on this matter. These teachers may believe that a multilingual classroom environment might sometimes contribute to dependency, but not to a significant extent.

The distribution of responses illustrates the diversity of opinions among teachers on the impact of multilingual classrooms on students' dependency on their home language. While a notable proportion of respondents perceive that such dependency may not be a substantial concern, a considerable number of participants hold reservations about the potential effects on students' language learning trajectories.

In conclusion, the data underscores the range of perspectives teachers hold regarding the relationship between multilingual classroom environments and students' dependency on their home language. The findings suggest that educators recognize both the benefits and potential challenges associated with linguistic diversity in classrooms, highlighting the importance of balanced approaches to effectively utilize multilingualism for positive educational outcomes.



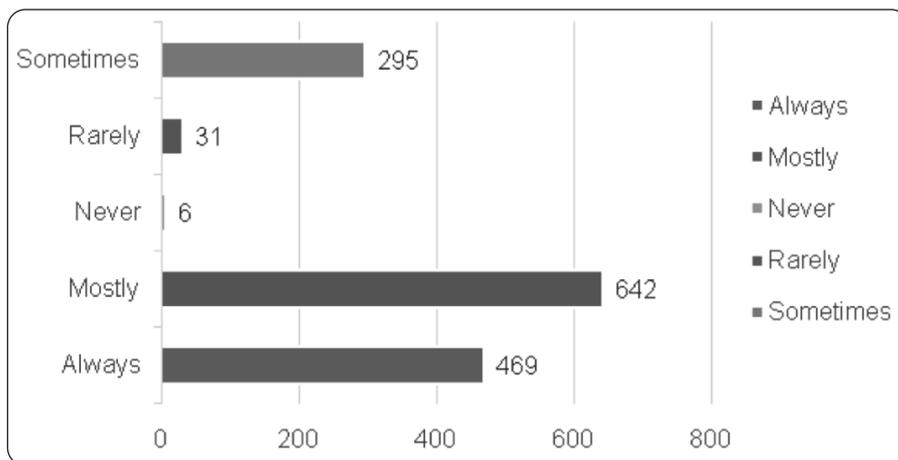
The provided data reflects teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of using students' home language on the enhancement of learning.

The responses indicate a consistent trend among the majority of participants (1033 respondents who selected "Always" or "Mostly"), who believe that learning is indeed enhanced through the use of students' home language. This perspective suggests that these teachers recognize the value of incorporating learners' native languages as a means to facilitate understanding, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. This viewpoint aligns with the idea that building on students' existing linguistic skills can contribute to a more effective learning process.

Conversely, a smaller proportion of participants (76 individuals who chose "Rarely" or "Never") appear to be less convinced of the positive impact of using the home language on learning enhancement. These respondents may hold reservations about potential challenges or believe that the use of the home language might not always lead to improved learning outcomes.

The responses categorized as "Sometimes" (335 participants) present a more moderate stance on the matter, suggesting that there could be specific contexts or subject areas where the use of the home language is more advantageous for enhancing learning, while in others, alternative approaches might be more suitable.

In conclusion, the data underscores a general consensus among teachers that the use of students' home language can indeed enhance learning. The majority of respondents recognize the potential benefits of incorporating learners' native languages into the classroom as a strategy to improve comprehension, engagement, and overall educational outcomes. However, the presence of respondents with more reserved viewpoints suggests that there may be contextual factors or considerations that influence the extent to which the home language is utilized for learning enhancement.



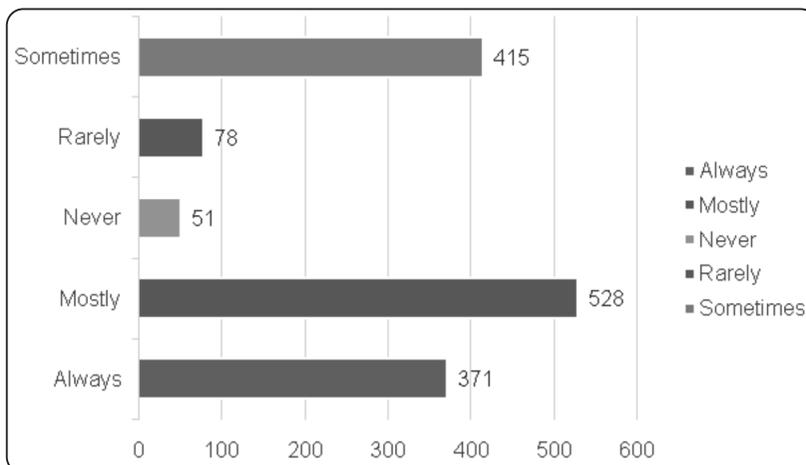
The provided data reflects teachers' perceptions regarding the role of students who are multilingual in serving as linguistic role models for other learners.

A substantial majority of participants (1111 respondents who selected "Always" or "Mostly") hold the viewpoint that students who speak multiple languages can effectively serve as linguistic role models for their peers. This perspective suggests that these teachers recognize the potential of multilingual students to inspire and positively influence other learners through their diverse language skills. Multilingual students are seen as examples of successful language acquisition and communication, fostering a supportive environment that encourages language learning.

On the contrary, a much smaller proportion of participants (37 individuals who chose "Rarely" or "Never") seem to be less convinced of the idea that multilingual students can serve as effective linguistic role models. These respondents may have reservations about the impact of multilingualism on peer interactions or perceive other challenges related to this role.

The responses categorized as "Sometimes" (295 participants) indicate a more moderate perspective, suggesting that while multilingual students can indeed serve as linguistic role models, there may be certain situations or contexts where their influence is not consistently observable.

In conclusion, the data underscores the prevailing belief among teachers that students who speak multiple languages can serve as effective linguistic role models for their peers. The majority of respondents recognize the potential positive impact of multilingual students in inspiring and guiding other learners in their language acquisition journey. However, the presence of respondents with more reserved viewpoints indicates that there may be specific instances or conditions where this influence might not be as pronounced.



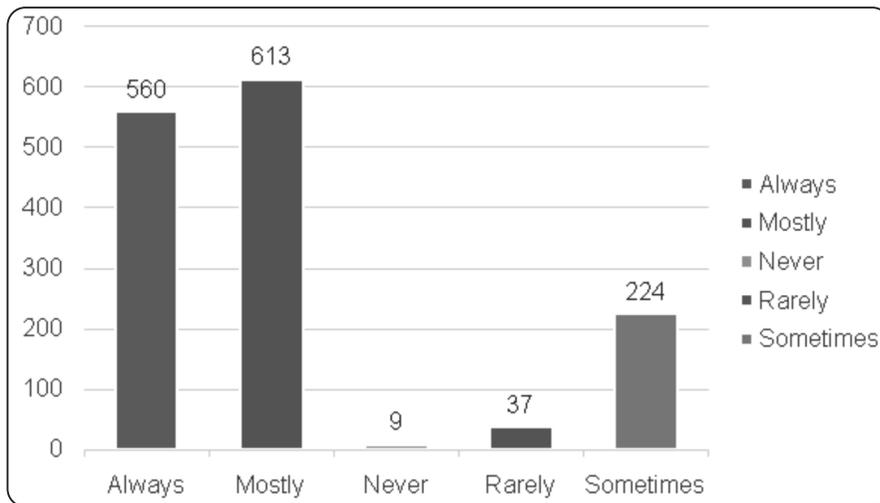
The data provided presents teachers' perspectives on the necessity of teacher training in the context of multilingualism.

The majority of respondents (899 participants who selected "Always" or "Mostly") express a clear belief in the importance of teacher training in multilingualism. These teachers emphasize that proper training is crucial to effectively navigate the complexities of a multilingual classroom environment. They recognize that understanding diverse linguistic backgrounds, implementing inclusive pedagogical practices, and leveraging students' linguistic resources require specialized knowledge and skills that can be acquired through dedicated training.

On the other hand, a smaller subset of participants (129 respondents who chose "Rarely" or "Never") appear less convinced about the requirement for teacher training in multilingualism. Their viewpoint might stem from various reasons, such as already feeling adequately prepared or perceiving other priorities in teacher training.

The responses categorized as "Sometimes" (415 individuals) indicate a more moderate stance, suggesting that while teacher training in multilingualism is recognized as important, there might be instances where teachers feel adequately equipped without extensive training.

In conclusion, the data highlights a prevailing consensus among teachers that teacher training in multilingualism is necessary. The majority of respondents emphasize the need for educators to be well-prepared to address the unique challenges and opportunities posed by multilingual classroom environments. However, the presence of respondents with more reserved viewpoints suggests that there might be variations in teachers' perceptions of their readiness and the necessity of training.



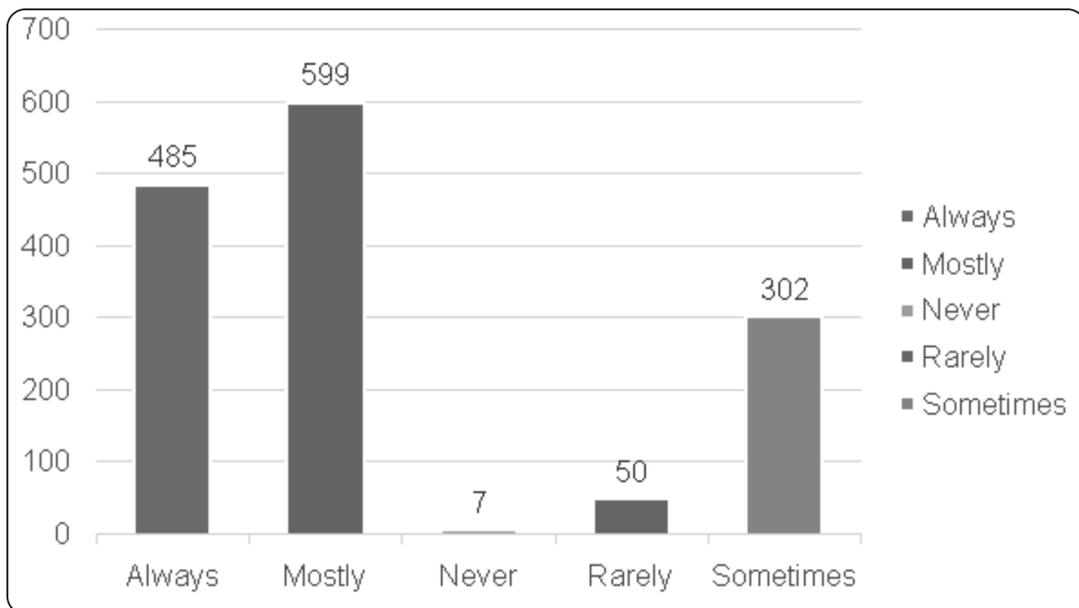
The provided data offers insights into teachers' beliefs regarding the cognitive benefits of learning multiple languages.

A substantial majority of participants (1173 respondents who selected "Always" or "Mostly") firmly hold the view that learning multiple languages contributes significantly to the enhancement of cognitive skills. These teachers acknowledge the cognitive advantages associated with multilingualism, such as improved problem-solving abilities, enhanced memory retention, and heightened analytical skills. They recognize that exposure to multiple languages stimulates the brain and fosters cognitive flexibility.

A smaller number of participants (46 individuals who chose "Rarely" or "Never") seem less convinced about the cognitive benefits of learning multiple languages. Their perspective might be influenced by factors such as limited awareness of relevant research or different educational philosophies.

The responses categorized as "Sometimes" (224 respondents) indicate a more nuanced stance, suggesting that while the cognitive benefits of multilingualism are recognized, teachers may believe that other factors also contribute to cognitive development.

In conclusion, the data underscores a prevailing consensus among teachers that learning multiple languages positively impacts cognitive skills. The majority of participants firmly believe in the cognitive advantages associated with multilingualism, while a minority hold more skeptical views. This diversity of opinions reflects the complexity of the topic and the need for further discussions on the cognitive effects of multilingual education.



The data provides insights into teachers' perceptions regarding the role of multilingualism in contributing to an individual's success in their career and life.

A significant majority of participants (1084 respondents who selected "Always" or "Mostly") firmly believe that multilingualism serves as a pathway to success in both one's career and life. These teachers recognize that being proficient in multiple languages can provide individuals with a competitive edge in an increasingly interconnected world, where cross-cultural communication skills are highly valued. They acknowledge that multilingualism opens doors to diverse opportunities and enhances an individual's ability to interact with a broader range of people and contexts.

A relatively smaller group of participants (57 individuals who chose "Rarely" or "Never") hold a more skeptical view about the direct impact of multilingualism on success. Their perspective might be influenced by various factors, such as regional or cultural contexts, or a different emphasis on skills and attributes that contribute to success.

The responses categorized as "Sometimes" (302 respondents) suggest a more balanced stance, implying that while multilingualism is recognized as a valuable asset for success, teachers also acknowledge that other factors, such as skills, expertise, and personal qualities, play significant roles.

In conclusion, the data highlights a prevalent belief among teachers that multilingualism can substantially contribute to an individual's success in both their career and life. The majority of participants firmly hold this perspective, while a smaller group holds more reserved views. This diversity of opinions underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of success and the role of multilingualism within it.

### **Major Findings of the Study**

The major findings of the study are:

1. **Perceived Relationship between Multilingualism and Learning New Languages:** A significant proportion of teachers (983 respondents) who selected "Always" or "Mostly" believe that knowing more languages makes it easier to learn new ones. This suggests that these teachers view multilingualism as a valuable asset that positively influences language learning abilities.
2. **Use of Home Language in the Classroom:** Many teachers (803 respondents) indicated that they allow students to interact in their home language during class. This suggests a prevalent practice of leveraging the home language for communication and interaction, potentially enhancing comprehension and engagement.

3. Translation of Lesson Content into Home Language: A substantial portion of teachers (953 respondents) express a preference for translating lesson content into the home language of their students. This aligns with the belief that translations can contribute to better comprehension and engagement, potentially enhancing learning experiences.
4. Impact of Multilingual Classroom Situations on Teaching Content: A significant number of teachers (1021 respondents) believe that having multilingual classroom situations significantly aids their content delivery. This reflects a positive correlation between linguistic diversity and teaching efficacy.
5. Dependency on Home Language in Multilingual Classrooms: The majority of teachers (1068 respondents) do not necessarily view multilingual classrooms as fostering significant dependency on students' home language. This suggests that many teachers believe that multilingual environments can provide diverse learning opportunities without leading to over reliance on the native language.
6. Enhancement of Learning through Home Language: A consistent trend among a majority of teachers (1033 respondents) is the belief that learning is enhanced through the use of students' home language. This implies that incorporating the native language can facilitate understanding and engagement, enhancing overall learning outcomes.
7. Multilingual Students as Linguistic Role Models: A substantial majority of teachers (1111 respondents) believe that students who speak multiple languages can serve as effective linguistic role models for their peers. This recognizes the potential of multilingual students to inspire and positively influence other learners.
8. Necessity of Teacher Training in Multilingualism: The majority of teachers (899 respondents) express a clear belief in the importance of teacher training in multilingualism. This underscores the recognition that proper training is crucial for effectively navigating the complexities of a multilingual classroom environment.
9. Cognitive Benefits of Learning Multiple Languages: A substantial majority of teachers (1173 respondents) firmly hold the view that learning multiple languages contributes significantly to the enhancement of cognitive skills. This reflects a recognition of the cognitive advantages associated with multilingualism.
10. Multilingualism and Success in Career and Life: A significant majority of teachers (1084 respondents) firmly believe that multilingualism serves as a pathway to success in both one's career and life. This underscores the recognition of multilingualism as a valuable asset for success.

11. In conclusion, the study findings highlight diverse perspectives among teachers regarding the impact of multilingualism on various aspects of education. While there are consistent beliefs in the benefits of multilingualism, there are also nuanced opinions that reflect the complex nature of these relationships.

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