The orientation towards multilingualism of future Italian teachers: perceptions and attitudes in the Humanities and STEM fields

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Abstract

Friuli Venezia Giulia is a multilingual region in northeastern Italy, where recent migratory flows create phenomena of contact between Italian, historically present minority languages, and the languages and dialects spoken by *nuovi cittadini*, the 'new citizens'. School classes host significant percentages of minors with a migration background, and attention to multilingualism, its visibility, and its enhancement from a future European perspective is high. In this context, teacher training is a central theme, as the statements and positions of adults can directly affect the perceptions and attitudes of the minors entrusted to them. This study presents the results of a survey conducted through a sociolinguistic questionnaire as part of the initial training of future Italian teachers. The research, which complements previous works and studies in the literature, aims to assess the perceptions of new teachers regarding multilingualism, both in general and in relation to teaching in multilingual classrooms, and working with multilingual students. The information provided by the subjects engaged in humanistic disciplines is compared with the corresponding statements from colleagues in technical and scientific areas, with both a theoretical descriptive goal and an applied focus on possible future teachers' training on the job and professional development paths.

KEYWORDS: Multilingualism, Migration, Teachers' Training, Perceptions, Attitudes.

1. Introduction

1.1 Friuli Venezia Giulia: A Multilingual Region

As of December 2023, the percentage of foreign residents in Italy is approaching one in ten. Official data report over 5 million foreign residents living in the country, accounting for 9.0% of its population, with approximately one in five (19.8%) being minors (IDOS, 2024: p. 15). However, this distribution is not uniform across the entire national territory, with some areas, particularly the northern regions and larger urban centers, showing higher concentrations. In the Friuli Venezia Giulia, the region where this study is based, the foreign population incidence is more than one point higher, reaching 10.2% (121,523 residents), with variations across the four main provinces: the capital Trieste (11.2%), Udine (8.3%), Pordenone (11.2%), and Gorizia (13.2%) (Attanasio, 2024). However, the overall data is an underestimate of the presence of people with a migration background, as it does not account for citizenship acquisitions, a phenomenon that has been increasing in recent years (Gatti & Strozza, 2024).

In this general context, the presence of minors with a migration background in the regional educational system has become quite significant: in the 2022/2023 school year, there are 21,783 foreign-born children and adolescents enrolled in schools of all levels in Friuli Venezia Giulia (Attanasio, 2024, p. 391). The top five countries of origin are Romania (18.9% of non-native students), Albania (12.1%), Bangladesh (7.8%), Morocco (6.1%), and Ukraine (5.7%). This data aligns with local census reports and reflects the characteristic patchy distribution of immigrant populations, with some communities being particularly prominent, while also showing significant local variations. This presence has

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been growing over the years, with an evident trend toward stabilization and a steadily increasing incidence of the so-called *seconde generazioni*, 'second-generation' phenomenon (MIM, 2024: p. 20).

1.2 An Old and New Multilingualism

Even in its terminological imprecision (Rumbaut, 2004), the data on second generations is important in understanding the structural demographic nature of the non-native presence, which has now become a stable component of the population. In line with previous surveys (Chini & Andorno, 2018; Fusco, 2022), statistics from the Italian *Ministero dell'Istruzione e del Merito*, 'Ministry of Education and Merit', show that by the end of the 2022/2023 school year 64.5% of students with foreign citizenship are second-generation (MIM, 2024: p. 20). Therefore, Italian schools are directly involved in the evolution of the migration phenomenon, which daily presents new challenges and opportunities for teaching and administrative staff in schools at all levels.

In this context, initial teacher training and their subsequent professional development assume primary importance, given that teachers play a significant role and exercise considerable influence over the students entrusted to them, and consequently on future Italian and European citizens. In a border region with such a distinctive linguistic profile as Friuli Venezia Giulia, historically multilingual and a place of encounter and contact between languages and cultures that are not always typologically close (Fusco, 2017, pp. 33-62), the languages and dialects of migrants add an additional dimension and introduce a further level of complexity to the system. Vedovelli & Casini (2017) use the term *neoplurilinguimo*, 'neoplurilingualism', in order to describe this innovative aspect of Italian (super)diversity (Vertovec, 2007), which is inserted into the already complex and rich framework of national multilingualism.

1.3 The Promotion of Multilingualism in Schools

On the regulatory level, the recommendations of the European Commission and the Council of Europe place the promotion of multilingualism at the center, no less than the protection of minority languages (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Candelier et al., 2012); this competency indeed finds a specific space and appropriate descriptors in the most recent edition of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as well (Council of Europe, 2018). In Italy, the reference to the multilingual dimension in education is found in several ministerial recommendations (MIS, 2022, is the most recent), but the issue of promoting Italo-Romance languages and dialects has deeper roots, which can be traced back to the work of linguist Tullio De Mauro (2018) and in the *Dieci Tesi per una educazione linguistica democratica*, 'Ten Theses for a Democratic Linguistic Education', of the *Gruppo di Intervento e Studio nel Campo dell'Educazione Linguistica*, 'Group

for Study and Intervention in the Field of Language Education' (GISCEL) (Loiero & Lugarini, 2019).

As for minors with a migration background and the school context, the idea of promoting the multilingualism of the classes (also described by Fiorentini et al., 2020) and of their students, as a potential resource for the benefit all the people involved, is a widespread and shared concept. Being aware and competent multilingual speakers indeed offers well-established benefits (Garraffa et al., 2020), while the risks of subtractive bilingualism, also on an individual level and within the family domain, are well known (Favaro, 2020). Moreover, the issue has been raised over the years and it is present in a wide number of recent Italian ministerial documents (MIUR, 2014; MIUR, 2015; MIS, 2022), even if, on the other hand, there is not always sufficient clarity among the teaching staff regarding feasible objectives and implementation methods. Consequently, research studies specifically aimed at investigating teachers' perceptions, behaviors, and strategies adopted in multilingual Italian classrooms are in fact numerous and show a not occasional interest by the academic world (Sordella, 2015; Amenta & Turrisi, 2017; Fusco, 2021; Salvaggio, 2022).

1.4 Framework of the Study

The actions of teachers can indeed have a significant impact on shaping the attitudes of students in their classrooms (Garrett, 2010, pp. 22-23); teachers actively contribute to developing multilingual awareness and to more favorable or to less positive attitudes toward multilingual behaviors and skills. However, academic research does not always have the opportunity to gather enough representative data, as sampling often investigates the perceptions and behaviors of subgroups of teachers, who are reached in schools and involved in the surveys on a voluntary basis. To cite some cases, Sordella (2014; 2015) distributed a questionnaire among teachers in service in 27 schools in Piedmont, which had already been surveyed as part of the broader research coordinated by Chini & Andorno (2018); Amenta & Turrisi (2017) reached 84 teachers in service in schools in Palermo, with several years of experience in multilingual classrooms; Fusco (2021) focused on around 200 teachers with experience working with students of non-Italian citizenship; finally, Salvaggio (2022) reports on a field study within the FAMI Impact FVG 2014-2020 project, involving the collection of data through a voluntary participation to a questionnaire, completed by 97 teachers from schools in Friuli Venezia Giulia.

In the international context, a number of studies shows a considerable level of interest in the academic community about teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards multilingualism, as well as towards the experience of working in a multilingual environment. Pulix et al. (2017), Alisaari et al. (2019), de la Maya Retamar et al. (2024), and Bosch et al. (2025) also employ anonymous online questionnaires, including

Likert scales and open-ended questions, in order to investigate the perspectives and beliefs of wide samples of teachers in service in various European countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Greece, and Spain. Their research shares therefore certain similarities with the study presented in this paper, even in terms of quantitative investigative tools and analysis methods. In contrast, a qualitative approach is adopted by Haukås (2016) in Norway and Paulsrud et al. (2023) in Sweden, who use focus groups and semi-structured interviews, respectively, while still pursuing similar research objectives.

However, research reaching a sample of future teachers with a still limited experience of working in classrooms, particularly multilingual ones, with high level of linguistic and socio-cultural complexity, does not seem to be so common. This study therefore aims to bring a contribution in this direction, as it intends to record the perceptions, more or less specific, and the attitudes of a group of prospective teachers before their qualification and hiring in primary and secondary schools in Friuli Venezia Giulia region. The opportunity is provided by the new teacher training program introduced in Italy by the DPCM of August 4, 2023, and active in many Italian universities, including the University of Udine, during the subsequent academic year. This program includes common area courses, such as linguistic education, side by side with more specific subject, closely related to the specialization of the future teachers, for a comprehensive total of 60 University Credits (hence, the 60 CFU program).

1.5 Research Questions

Within the 60 CFU program, it was therefore possible to reach a significant number of prospective teachers, both in the humanities and languages (foreign or second) and in technical and/or scientific disciplines. The request to complete an anonymous online sociolinguistic questionnaire was positively received by the majority of the participants, and through subsequent analysis, it is possible to seek answers to some research questions. First, the study aims to investigate how future cohorts of teachers perceive multilingualism, keeping in mind that these positions might influence students, whether native or from a migration background, in their classrooms. Secondly, the study seeks to compare some of these perceptions with those expressed by minors with a migration background, using recent data collected from the same region (Baldo, 2022). Thirdly and finally, the aim is to determine whether and to what extent the perceptions and attitudes recorded vary depending on the humanities or technical-scientific orientation of the participants' training and their field of expertise.

Standing on the sources previously mentioned, it is known that, in most cases, teachers from linguistic or humanistic fields are more actively involved in surveys and are therefore more and better represented. The 60 CFU program, on the other hand, provides the rare opportunity to explore the viewpoint of colleagues from the technical-scientific sector, who are not always equipped with specific linguistic training and knowledge, and even less so in the teaching of Italian to non-native students. Therefore, this study intention is providing additional information, useful for describing the phenomenon and, from an applied perspective focused on action, for better addressing the issue of teachers' continuing professional development. A potential impact is therefore identified in the opportunity to adopt part of the information in these pages in order to guide and refine future interventions aimed at teachers, intended to suggest tools for promoting the visibility and enhancement of multilingualism in classrooms.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Structure of the Questionnaire

The tool adopted in this study is a sociolinguistic questionnaire, consisting of an authorization for the processing and storage of personal data; a brief initial section that collects some non-sensitive information and outlines a few possible factors of variation; finally, a larger section that includes a number of different sociolinguistic questions. This latter section is modeled by taking questions or groups of questions from bibliographic sources, that is, from similar research and previous experiences in the literature. The idea of investigating the general perception of multilingualism, asking future teachers to associate the idea with an adjective such as *normale*, 'normal', or *divertente*, 'fun', and then comparing the results with the perspective expressed by a control group of students (Fusco, 2022), is borrowed from Sordella's doctoral thesis (Sordella, 2014 & 2015). The idea of proposing two sets of statements, the first on the perception of students' multilingualism by their teachers and the second on the difficulties or opportunities offered by working in a multilingual classroom, comes from Amenta & Turrisi (2017). Finally, a limited number of questions concerning attitudes toward multilingualism, share a structure similar to the motivational questionnaire proposed by Li & Wei (2023) and based on the more detailed theoretical work by Garrett (2010). Adopting a tool with sections imported from well-known and accredited sources allowed avoiding the need for a more specific and in-depth statistical test of significance, which anyways it would not have been possible to carry out for the questionnaire version described in this paragraph.

2.2 Sample and Data Collection

The questionnaire administration was carried out anonymously, through a Google Form, and involved almost all the participants enrolled in the 2023/2024 qualification courses organized by the *Dipartimento di Lingue e letterature straniere, comunicazione, formazione e società*, 'Department of Foreign

Languages and Literatures, Communication, Education, and Society' (DILL) at the University of Udine, in Friuli Venezia Giulia. Both for future teachers in the humanities area and for those in the technical-scientific field, the course included an identical and brief general module on the fundamentals of language education, which made it possible to reach a large number of participants and invite them to take part in the study. Of the 232 valid responses recorded, 137 came from future humanities teachers (HUM, 81.0% female) and 95 from teachers in technical-scientific subjects (TEC, 67.4%). Most of the subjects are young, with the humanities group predominantly in the age range up to 30 years (40.1%), while the technical-scientific teachers are predominantly aged between 31 and 40 years (49.5%). Furthermore, the first group attends the 60 CFU course to obtain the qualification to teach in *scuola secondaria di primo grado*, 'lower secondary school' (55.6%), while the second is more oriented towards *scuola secondaria di secondo grado*, 'upper secondary school' (69.6%). The previous experience of all the future teachers reached is limited, with the most frequent response option being "two to four years" (45.8% of humanities teachers and 45.3% of the technical-scientific group).

The majority of the participants claim to know at least two (25.5% HUM and 29.5% TEC) or three (27.7% HUM and 29.5% TEC) languages or dialects besides Italian. In the repertoire of the two groups, a total of 56 different codes emerges, however, the most represented options are English (82.5% HUM and 78.9% TEC) and Friulian (42.3% HUM and 41.1% TEC). It is not surprising that the most widespread foreign language in Italian schools, English, is prominent, alongside Friulian, an Italo-Romance language with wide distribution in Friuli Venezia Giulia (Fusco, 2017: pp. 33-62) and very visible in the linguistic landscape of the area, partly due to the existence of specific protection legislation (Law 482 of 15/12/1999). As for the perception of multilingualism in the classrooms, many codes (51) emerge as well, but there is already some discrepancy between the two groups of teachers. Both resort to some imprecise or generic glottonyms to describe the repertoire of their classrooms and of students with a migratory background, however, this happens more frequently among the future technical-scientific teachers (13 glottonyms, mentioned by 21.0% of TEC subjects) than among the humanities teachers (9 glottonyms, 10.9% HUM). At a more qualitative level, some indirect value judgments also seem to emerge in the statements of future technical-scientific teachers, which lead to the existence of implicit prestige hierarchies: "*friulano misto sloveno/slavo*" or "Friulian mixed with Slovene/Slavic"; "*lingue europee (inglese, francese, spagnolo), dialetti Est Europa, Africa, Sud America*" or "European languages (English, French, Spanish), Eastern European dialects, Africa, South America"; "*Non parlano altre lingue ma, eventualmente, l'italiano risulta stentato*" or "They don't speak other languages but, if anything, Italian is broken".

3. Results

3.1 General Perceptions of the Teachers

As mentioned earlier, some questions in the questionnaire aim to assess the perceptions and attitudes of future teachers regarding the multilingual practices of their students. Respondents are asked to express their views on the normalcy and usefulness of being multilingual, and whether it can be fun or a cause of problems. On the cognitive aspect of usefulness, the results show clearly positive opinions without much variation (77.4% HUM and 77.9% TEC). However, the multilingual condition is considered more normal by the humanistic group (46.0%) than by the technical-scientific one (35.8%). Subsequently, it was possible to compare this data with that collected in the 2018/2019 school year in a similar manner as part of a study in Friuli Venezia Giulia, within the FAMI Impact FVG 2014-2020 project (Fusco, 2022). In that case, as part of a larger study inspired by the work of Chini & Andorno (2018) in Piedmont and Lombardy, over a thousand students (1,082) from primary and lower secondary schools had answered the same questions, allowing for a comparison of results.

While there are no significant differences regarding the usefulness of the multilingual condition, the comparison reveals that students find multilingual practices much more *divertenti*, 'enjoyable' (55.0% of the sample) compared to future teachers (27.0% HUM and 23.2% TEC) (Baldo, 2022). Moreover, it is worth noting that the perception of knowing multiple languages or dialects as *causa problemi*, 'causing problems' is rare among future teachers (0.7% HUM and 4.2% TEC), but children and adolescents seem to experience this condition significantly more frequently (8.2%). Expressing problematic views, even anonymously, can be difficult, therefore this particular data may warrant more attention. While it is true that both tools investigate subjective perceptions, these can still be of interest to the observer: in other words, nearly one in ten students feels that their multilingual condition can be an obstacle, while teachers tend to have a quite different view. In this case, the largest gap is seen among the humanistic teachers, whereas those from technical-scientific disciplines seem to have a perspective closer to that of their potential future students.

3.2 The Multilingualism of Students

The perception of students' multilingualism by future teachers is investigated through ten statements, adapted from the questionnaire used by Amenta & Turrisi (2017) in Palermo and linked to Sordella's (2014) doctoral research. Respondents were asked to express their agreement with each statement using a four-point Likert scale, which excludes a neutral middle position: *per*

nulla or "not at all", *poco* or "a little", *molto* or "a lot", and *del tutto* or "completely" in agreement. This allowed the analysis phase to group favorable or unfavorable opinions and then to compare them with information from the rich existing theoretical literature on multilingualism (Cummins, 2000; Cognigni, 2020; Garraffa et al., 2020). Some general descriptive concepts seem well-established and shared: knowing and using multiple languages or dialects does not create confusion for speakers, multilingualism does not hinder the study of disciplinary subjects, and it can even make it easier to learn additional languages, including Italian. Similarly, both the humanistic group and the technical-scientific group seem to overlook a possible connection between the new multilingualism of emerging minorities and post-unification linguistic policies toward dialect-speakers (De Mauro, 2018; Loiero & Lugarini, 2019).

However, some of the topics addressed by the questionnaire are more specific, and in these cases, the groups' preparation shows more variation. Among the potential benefits, being multilingual leads students to lexical enrichment (56.2% of humanists agree, compared to 45.7% of technical-scientific teachers) and positively stimulates metalinguistic reflection (69.9% HUM and 55.3% TEC). On the downside, expressed by relatively small percentages of respondents, future teachers sometimes believe that students' multilingualism might lead to inadequate support from parents in studying or doing homework (19.7% HUM and 31.9% TEC), or that students speak among themselves in their native languages with the deliberate intention of not being understood (24.1% HUM and 38.5% TEC). These beliefs reflect some less favorable views of multilingualism, which seem more deeply rooted in the subgroup of future teachers of technical-scientific subjects. In relation to these specific concepts, humanists exhibit greater preparation, even at a theoretical-descriptive level, and consequently are led to express less negative perspectives and beliefs.

3.3 Teaching in a Multilingual Classroom

An analogous sequence of statements, accompanied by an identical range of options on a four-point Likert scale and drawing from the same bibliographical sources (Amenta & Turrisi, 2017; Sordella, 2015), aims to investigate the beliefs and perceptions of teachers regarding the idea of teaching in a multilingual classroom. In this case as well, some widespread and commonly shared positions emerge, the most general ones being: students speaking the same language or dialect can use it to support each other, the languages spoken by both old and new linguistic minorities do not constitute a lexical impoverishment, and, as already stated before, no connection seems to be noted between the past Italian dialects and the new multilingualism of the recent immigrant communities. However, in the case of more specific themes related to strategies and approaches to multilingual education (Cognigni, 2020), the gap between the opinions of the humanistic group

and those in the technical-scientific one widens again, favoring the former: teaching in a multilingual class encourages interlinguistic comparison starting from the languages brought by the students (72.6% of humanists, but only 60.4% of the teachers in technical-scientific fields), and creates opportunities for reflection on errors (74.6% HUM and 56.5% TEC).

Regarding potential obstacles, not necessarily does a teacher in a multilingual classroom feel compelled to use simplified language to be understood (30.6% of humanist teachers think they should do so, compared to as many as 48.9% of the technical-scientific group), nor is it widely believed that not knowing the students' languages of origin is a problem (9.6% of humanists, but 24.7% of the technical-scientific group). Finally, regarding the remaining statements, a similar discrepancy emerges between the perceptions in the two subgroups, with a consistent orientation towards greater preparation expressed by prospective humanistic area teachers. The section of the questionnaire about perceptions and beliefs on teaching in a multilingual environment is completed with an open-ended question, asking respondents to report on any multilingual educational practices already adopted in their classrooms. The data is still consistent with the previous ones, with 49 humanistic course participants dedicating time to this response (35.7% of the subgroup), compared to 25 in the technical-scientific field (only 26.3%). The practices of the former also appear to be less occasional, not solely tied to the mere necessity of translating essential concepts or information (such uses account for 20.4% of the humanists' responses, but for 36.0% of the technical-scientific group). Teachers with a humanistic background state they adopt more languages or dialects in the classroom too, going beyond just English as a lingua franca, and propose a wider range of more targeted activities and strategies focused on a teaching that values all the multilingual practices in the classroom.

3.4 A Note on Attitudes

The final section of the questionnaire uses as sources the more theoretical-descriptive framework by Garrett (2010) and a recent application of it in a motivational questionnaire, by Li & Wei (2023). Informants are asked to express their level of agreement on a four-point Likert scale regarding six statements that indirectly investigate the subjects' attitudes towards multilingualism, at cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels. Subsequently, the data is reprocessed to derive a numerical indicator, from 1 to 100, for the different aspects, together with a synthetic overall index of inclination towards multilingualism, which is the average of the former values. The results are consistent with the previous sections and show a good level of agreement within both subgroups at the cognitive level (66.1% HUM and 61.7% TEC), regarding therefore more general concepts and the advantages of being multilingual. At the emotional level, the attitudes are

mostly favorable too but show an already greater discrepancy in favor of the humanities group (77.4% HUM and 72.0% TEC). Understandably based on the disciplinary and professional orientation, the behavioral level shows even more significantly favorable inclinations from the humanities group (63.0% HUM and 50.0% TEC), who state to more often engage in multilingual behaviors in their daily lives and affirm to be more inclined to study the languages of their students. Finally, in synthesis, the attitudes of the humanities teachers seem to be more favorable towards multilingualism than those expressed by their colleagues in the technical-scientific group (68.8% HUM and 61.2% TEC).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Answering to the Research Questions

The first research question, which explores the perceptions of aspiring teachers in general terms, reveals a high degree of agreement and uniformity regarding the usefulness of multilingual competence. However, it is less clear that multilingualism is seen as a normal rather than exceptional condition in human societies (Piccardo, 2019). Additionally, any playful or fun uses, often practiced by children and adolescents, do not seem to be highly valued by teachers. Finally, the percentage of the sample that considers being multilingual as a possible source of problems is extremely low. The comparison with potential students, using data collected with a similar tool in recent years (Baldo, 2022), highlights both similarities and discrepancies: among children and adolescents in the Italian school system, the perception of the phenomenon's normality is not as clear (with a 10.2 percentage point gap compared to the average of teachers), while playful uses related to fun activities are more prevalent (with a 29.6-point gap, favoring minors). The problematic view of multilingualism, which is almost absent from the optimistic perspective of humanities teachers (0.7%), shoes to be more clearly present in the opinions of students (8.2%), but also in the views of colleagues in technical-scientific fields (4.2%).

Finally, the opportunity provided by the teacher training program for the 60 CFU (university credits) allowed for a comparison between two different disciplinary orientations of teachers, revealing both similarities and differences. The perception of multilingualism generally shows positive positions in terms of its potential cognitive benefits, as well as regarding some key concepts – such as the idea that being multilingual does not create confusion in speakers' minds (Garraffa et al., 2020) – seem widely shared. However, at a deeper level, the expertise of humanities teachers appears to offer them an advantage, and these subjects show more positive perceptions, associated with proactive attitudes and a general orientation toward action. Regarding the more specific strategies and techniques adopted for multilingual education, humanities teachers' repertoire

shows to be also richer, involving both a higher number of languages and a more targeted inventory of educational strategies. On the one hand, technical-scientific teachers admit to primarily use English as a lingua franca for mutual understanding, in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and in comparisons regarding the specific language of their disciplines. On the other hand, humanities colleagues introduce the students' native languages, Friulian, Latin, and the all the languages of instruction taught at school; they also invite to metalinguistic reflection activities, they use the students' native languages or dialects in order to engage and motivate them, they seek lexical or etymological comparisons, and in some cases propose more creative or autobiographical activities.

The findings of the present study, and the responses to the research questions, align with the primary bibliographic references (Sordella, 2015; Amenta & Turrisi, 2017; as well as Alisaari et al. 2019; de la Maya Retamar et al. 2024 in the international context) and highlight generally positive perceptions of both students' multilingualism and the teacher's work in a multilingual classroom. However, certain aspects seem to merit further reflection, especially in the perspective of possible future educational interventions and professional requalification, in implementation of Italian ministry recommendations (MIS, 2022) and European guidelines (Beacco & Byram, 2007; Candelier et al., 2012; Council of Europe, 2018). Here, it might be interesting to consider how the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of humanities teachers diverge on more specific topics and in classroom communication and educational practices from those expressed by their colleagues in technical-scientific fields. While this divergence might be partially reconnected and attributed to the nature of the subjects taught, future teacher training interventions should nevertheless take this diversity into account.

What emerges with sufficient clarity, even from the relatively few responses to the open-ended question about multilingual activities introduced in the classroom, is a difficulty in translating descriptive concepts or beliefs into concrete educational actions. In other words, despite generally positive perceptions and attitudes regarding the benefits of multilingualism, there seems to be a lack of resources or perhaps just of the right ideas to translate these feelings into action (Sordella, 2015). As a concluding remark, the reviewed literature and the field data examined in these pages can provide some valuable suggestions for policymakers, trainers and future teachers' educators. First, the findings highlight the importance of a training that is more firmly rooted in everyday practice and that takes into account the reality of classroom work, therefore with a more authentic and situated approach (Amenta & Turrisi, 2017). However, the effort should not end with teachers' entry into the national education system, but it should instead be considered as an ongoing, rather than occasional, commitment (Pulix et al. 2017; Bosch et al., 2025). The most immediate objectives could include, on the one hand, fostering a wider recognition of

multilingualism as a resource available to both teachers and their students (Amenta & Turrisi, 2017; Alisaari et al., 2019), and on the other, investing part of the resources in developing a greater awareness and, consequently, more favorable attitudes toward the opportunities offered by multilingual the contemporary and future school environments, particularly for the individuals who still struggle to leave behind their monolingual ideology (Piccardo, 2019; de la Maya Retamar et al., 2024). Finally, as research and data are in line showing how the awareness of multilingualism, together with attitudes and beliefs, may differ from one group of teachers or school to another (Pulix et al., 2017), the professional training should consider these differences, in order to be able to address the specific needs of such a heterogeneous social group.

4.2 Limitations of the Study and Future Perspectives

The study described in these pages explores the perception of multilingualism in the initial teacher training from a point of view not so often addressed in the literature, which generally focuses more on reaching teachers already in service and with experience in multilingual classrooms. Even if the tool adopted, while using questions and structure borrowed from solid sources in the literature (Sordella, 2015; Amenta & Turrisi, 2017; Li & Wei, 2023), has not undergone statistical testing and might therefore have collected information that is not always precise, the results seem to be consistent with existing external sources. Additionally, the analysis of both general perceptions towards multilingualism and more specific attitudes highlights a quite uniform orientation, especially when comparing the two subgroups of aspiring teachers from the humanities and technical-scientific fields.

The analysis of individual perceptions and attitudes can reveal beliefs and perspectives that are not easily noticed through direct observation (Garrett, 2010), and these aspects are nevertheless significant from the observer's point of view. Therefore, a possible future development of the investigation could involve a more thorough reworking of the data, with greater attention to statistical variation and significant correlations, as well as an extension of the data collection, possibly reaching teachers enrolled in the teacher training programs for the 60 CFU of the 2024/2025 academic year, this way enriching the database with new and directly comparable information. Furthermore, considering the orientation of some of the open responses provided to questions aimed at describing the individual and classroom linguistic repertoires, as well as those intended at exploring multilingual strategies already implemented by the aspiring teachers, it could be useful to turn to qualitative sociolinguistic research methods, such as semi-structured interviews or focus groups (Hennink, 2014; Corrao, 2020).

In conclusion, this study reveals that future teachers share sufficiently positive perceptions and attitudes towards the multilingualism of their students and towards working in a multilingual environment. In line with many Italian ministerial recommendations and European guidelines, being multilingual and possessing a multilingual competence are considered enriching, offering advantages rather than posing obstacles, and can therefore become a valuable resource in order to promote diversity in educational contexts with high degree of social and cultural complexity. However, in comparison to the perspectives expressed by the students, some differences emerge, and in particular, there is a somewhat concerning discrepancy between the optimistic view of teachers and the fact that, on the contrary, some children and adolescents seem to have a more problematic view of their multilingual condition.

Regarding the comparison between the humanities and technical-scientific cohorts, while there is some general agreement, the different disciplinary focus and the training received seem to exert a greater influence when dealing with more specific linguistic concepts or when moving from the theoretical-descriptive level to the practical application in the classroom. These results, which invite further exploration due to the potential limitations of the study, could nonetheless suggest the need for more tailored professional training paths, focusing on specific aspects of multilingual competence and education. For example, it might be useful to invest energy and resources in targeted on the job programs, in order to offer the opportunity of bridging gaps and helping teachers who lack specific formation to contribute more effectively to the linguistic education of the children and adolescents in their classes, aiming for greater alignment not only with academic scientific literature but also, and especially, between colleagues from different and sometimes not enough communicating disciplinary fields.

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