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RECEIVED 06 July 2023

ACCEPTED 15 November 2023

PUBLISHED 05 December 2023

CITATION

Neokleous G and Karpava S (2023) Comparing pre-service teacher attitudes toward the use of students' home language(s) in linguistically diverse English as an additional language classrooms in Norway and Cyprus. *Front. Educ.* 8:1254025. doi: 10.3389/educ.2023.1254025

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Comparing pre-service teacher attitudes toward the use of students' home language(s) in linguistically diverse English as an additional language classrooms in Norway and Cyprus

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Background: Globalization, increased transnational mobility, and growing refugee populations have shifted the focus from traditionally monolingual to incrementally multilingual and multicultural classrooms and have put a significant mark on language teaching. Attention to multilingualism and multiculturalism in educational settings is important to raising awareness and recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity at the individual and societal levels.

Methods: This comparative study investigated the beliefs of 59 pre-service teachers in Norway and Cyprus regarding the use of students' home language(s) (HLs) in increasingly linguistically diverse English as an Additional Language (EAL) settings. The teachers were observed during their teaching practicum and were interviewed with respect to their views, beliefs, and self-reflections on the impact and role of HL for EAL teaching and learning purposes.

Results: The analysis of the data revealed that more than half of the participants in both countries were in favor of employing multilingual pedagogies. However, most of them acknowledged certain challenges in their practical implementation and the need for further training.

Conclusion: The study concludes with the authors stressing the catalyst role teacher educators could play in making EAL classrooms more inclusive for multilingual learners.

KEYWORDS

EAL classrooms, home language, linguistically diverse classrooms, majority language, multilingualism, pre-service teachers, teaching practicum

1 Introduction

Across Europe, school classrooms are more linguistically diverse than in the past with this situation necessitating pedagogical approaches that embrace the diversity of students and the increasing role of languages in the school curriculum (Aronin and Singleton, 2012; May, 2014; Cenoz and Gorter, 2015). As a result, the changing demographics and composition of students have also altered teachers' classroom settings from traditionally homogenous to those that are more diverse in nature (Rosnes and Rossland, 2018; Lorenz et al., 2021). However, some EAL

classrooms have not been adequately prepared to cater to the needs of multilingual students as their settings have essentially been defined as homogeneous by the educational systems in which they work. According to [Wernicke et al. \(2021\)](#), attention should be paid to multilingualism and multiculturalism in educational settings to increase awareness and recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity at individual and societal levels. Further, research articulated that historical, ideological, social, economic, and political factors need to be taken into consideration, as well as language policy and the diverse language practices of teachers and students ([Choi and Ollerhead, 2018](#)). Multilingual education presupposes not only the teachers' proficiency in several languages ([Nunan and Lam, 1998](#)) but also their knowledge and understanding of language acquisition processes, theoretical and pedagogical models, approaches focused on the development of multilingual competence ([Hammond, 2014](#)), teaching strategies, language and content integration ([Palincsar and Schleppegrell, 2014](#)), and language policies and ideologies related to language teaching and language use ([Flores and Rosa, 2015](#)).

Students' linguistic abilities have been valorized based on language policies, which view language knowledge in relation to the market, customization, and entrepreneurial skills ([Kubota, 2016](#)). It should be noted that not all educational approaches support immigrant and minority language students from diverse linguistic backgrounds as they consider their multilingualism and multiculturalism to be a barrier to teaching and learning. Thus, they implement policies and practices that are exclusionary and marginalizing ([Barakos and Selleck, 2019](#)). At the same time, elite bilingualism such as dual language immersion and/or foreign language teaching for prestigious languages (such as French and English), which are considered to be useful for higher education and career prospects, are promoted (see [Yoon et al., 2018](#), for reports on Canada, and [De Costa, 2019](#), for reports on the USA).

Recent research on multilingualism and language education has mainly been conducted with a focus on the learning and teaching of the English language, or in English-speaking contexts ([Levine et al., 2014](#); [Farrell, 2015](#); [Matsuda, 2017](#); [Burns and Siegel, 2018](#)). This study looks at two increasingly multilingual EAL settings, namely, Norway and Cyprus, whose recent reports ([Statistics Norway, 2022](#) for reports on Norway and Annual Report of the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, and Youth, 2021](#) and [CYSTAT, 2019](#) for reports on Cyprus) identified an increase in linguistic diversity and testified to the need for effective and efficient multilingual pedagogies that would assist in optimizing the student learning experiences. The researchers aimed to investigate pre-service EAL teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and reflections regarding the use of students' HLs in increasingly linguistically diverse EAL classrooms in Norway and Cyprus. The significance of this study is in its comparative nature and in its potential for providing further evidence in the exploration of linguistically and culturally responsive teaching and deeper insights into EAL teachers beliefs and cognitions ([Kart et al., 2022](#)).

From a linguistic and societal perspective, Norway and Cyprus share some similarities that identify the two as multilingual. These similarities further motivated us to pursue this comparative study. More specifically, Norway has two official languages: Norwegian and Sami (a group of indigenous languages spoken in northern Scandinavia). The Norwegian language has two written variants (bokmål and nynorsk) that all students must learn, and the rich diversity of dialects is appreciated and encouraged. People from different origins and cultures also live and work in the country. Similarly, Cyprus has two official

languages (Greek and Turkish). The Republic of Cyprus has a complex and unique (socio) linguistic situation. Greek Cypriots are bilingual because they use two varieties: Standard Modern Greek and Cypriot Greek, which differ in the domain of use (formal vs. informal) and status (high vs. low), as well as in terms of phonetics, morpho-phonology, morphosyntax, and the lexicon ([Grohmann et al., 2017](#); [Tsiplakou and Armostis, 2020](#)). In addition, minority groups live in Cyprus (such as Armenians, Latins, and Maronites), residents of British origin, immigrants from various countries in the European Union (EU), non-EU Eastern Europe, Asia and, particularly, from the former Soviet Union ([Hadjioannou et al., 2011](#); [Ioannidou, 2012](#); [Tsiplakou et al., 2018](#)). Further, in both countries, English is taught from grade 1 and when students start lower-secondary school they can elect another foreign language. English is treated as an individual subject in the curriculum in both countries as well. For both countries, English is a global language that is widely used for communication, education, and business purposes ([Buschfeld, 2013](#); [Karpava, 2022b](#)). Both countries also accept United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as asylum seekers.

Norwegian classrooms have become linguistically diverse with more than 200 languages represented and about 18.5% of the students using a language other than Norwegian at home ([Språkrådet, 2018](#); [Statistics Norway, 2022](#)). However, it is important to note that considering the geographical and cultural landscape of Norway, the range of this linguistic diversity is mostly present in the five largest urban settlements—Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger/Sandnes, Trondheim, and Fredrikstad/Sarpsborg—with Norwegian still being the majority language in most of the rural areas ([Statistics Norway, 2022](#)). Similarly, the Cypriot society is described as linguistically and culturally diverse. The number of foreign nationals amounts to 193,300 and corresponds to 21.1% of the total population ([CYSTAT, 2019](#)). Consequently, Cypriot classrooms have experienced an increase in the number of students with a migration background in Cyprus, with more than 17,000 children whose HL is not Greek in the state education system; of these children, 19% are in kindergarten, 16% are in primary school and 14% are in secondary school ([Cyprus Mail, 2021](#)).

The linguistically heterogeneous student population of classrooms in the two countries was also reflected in national curricula. The Norwegian national curriculum has included references to linguistic diversity for the very first time in its latest update in 2020 ([The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020](#)). As it states, “pupils should be given a basis for seeing their own and the identity of others in a multilingual and multicultural context” (p. 3). In addition, it highlights the key role of language learning in enhancing students' intercultural competence, identity building, and fostering multilingualism. Similarly, the Cypriot national curriculum aims to implement a “policy...for the smooth integration of students with different cultures and languages into the educational system and the broader society of Cyprus” ([UNHCR, 2022](#), p. 8). The Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus “aims at the creation of a democratically organized school system which will highlight the otherness and the multicultural nature of our society as an element for composition, celebration and creative production as well as an opportunity for mutual understanding and mutual respect” ([UNHCR, 2022](#), p. 8).

Traditionally, as even recent research indicated, Norwegian was the language that prevailed in Norwegian EAL classrooms and Greek in Cypriot EAL classrooms ([Neokleous and Ofte, 2020](#); [Armostis and](#)

Tsagari, 2022) as teachers worked in linguistically homogeneous classrooms (Lorenz et al., 2021). The teachers often resorted to using the majority language to exemplify and clarify queries, answer questions, and provide instructions. Recent studies conducted in both countries described that this no longer applies as classrooms cannot be considered homogeneous (Lorenz et al., 2021; Dockrell et al., 2022; Neokleous et al., 2022; Karpava, 2022a; Karpava et al., 2023). As a result, the increasingly heterogeneous classrooms prescribe the implementation of sustainable learning conditions where all learners have opportunities for equal and meaningful participation and where multilingual learners can profit from drawing on their previous linguistic knowledge as valuable resources for learning.

This study draws on classroom and interview data with pre-service teachers in Norway and Cyprus enrolled on a teacher-education program. The objective is to build on the work that other studies conducted both in Norway and Cyprus have done to identify the knowledge gap in multilingual pedagogies, how teachers understand and perceive those, but also how teacher training can efficiently and effectively prepare in- and pre-service teachers on enhancing learning in linguistically diverse settings.

2 Literature review

Despite the increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse classroom settings, Cummins (2017) postulated that the widespread beliefs among teachers and educational professionals regarding EAL education are deeply rooted in traditional forms of instruction. Some of these forms include a monolingual instructional bias, the exclusive use of the TL, no translation between the HL and the TL, and keeping both languages separate. However, such beliefs have recently been challenged as new, flexible pedagogies that focus on multilingualism, multilingual speakers, the entire linguistic repertoire, the social context, the use of cross-linguistic resources, and communicative competence have been introduced (Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Cenoz and Gorter, 2011, 2015).

2.1 The monolingual instructional bias

For a considerable number of years, EAL teachers aspired to create an all-English approach as it was perceived as the ideal classroom learning environment. Prompted by Krashen's (1985) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis that favored immersion into the TL along with the advent of teaching methodologies that promoted students' oral skills (e.g., Communicative Language Teaching), the role of the TL was cemented as quintessential. With emphasis placed on authentic interaction opportunities for students, teachers strived to adopt a setting that would not make any use of the students' HL(s). In such environments, students could practice and communicate in the TL and drift away from any reliance on the HL(s). The prominence on the exclusive integration of the TL in the classroom also constituted a form of response to the heavily criticized grammar-translation method that was primarily employed by EAL instructors prior to the emergence of these new approaches.

With the newly emerged approaches that postulated immersion in the TL to enhance learning being embraced by most instructors, the role of the students' HL(s) was marginalized, and its use was associated with a form of poor teaching (Singleton and Aronin, 2018; Shin et al.,

2020). Instead, because it was also believed that students encountered limited opportunities to engage in and practice the TL, it was assumed that an all-English approach would further assist in optimizing learning. These assumptions began to creep into national curricula in certain countries (e.g., Hong Kong and South Korea) instructing and expecting teachers to resort to the TL exclusively and avoid any references to their students' HL(s) (The Curriculum Development Council, 2004; Kim, 2008). Consequently, the role of the TL was further strengthened while the impact of the HL was relegated to the sidelines (Shin et al., 2020). Otwinowska (2017) argued that "imposing the English-only policy lends continuity to the imperialistic practices of English-speaking countries by presenting the economically and politically dominant groups as the only right and standard ones" (p. 2). On the other hand, Motha (2014) claimed that EAL professionals need to "honor, rather than denigrate, [students'] first languages and cultures" (p. xi).

2.2 The positive impact of students' HL(s) in the classroom

Previous research investigating the student perspective revealed their preference toward an environment that makes use of their HL(s) (Hall and Cook, 2012; Choi and Ollerhead, 2018; Shin et al., 2020; Wernicke et al., 2021). In fact, as research studies have demonstrated, students have been particularly adamant about the positive impact that HL use can bring to a lesson while they have also been able to pinpoint specific classroom strategies that could have benefited from HL integration. The greatest benefit that students attributed to the presence of their HL(s) in the classroom was the sense of security they provided. As students stressed, having the possibility of asking questions by employing their HL(s) and requesting exemplifications and clarifications for linguistically related or other general issues that might arise during the lesson was believed to enhance and deepen their understanding of a topic (Sad et al., 2015; Neokleous, 2017; Resmini, 2019). Furthermore, HL integration also enabled them to build connections and establish links between the TL and their own HL(s).

Along with attributing great significance to the cognitive advantages that HL implementation would bring, students also placed emphasis on the affective benefits that could be gained. For instance, allowing the students' HL(s) in the classroom contributes to improving the classroom atmosphere and creating a congenial learning space (Neokleous, 2017). Research has shown that the maintenance of such a classroom environment could contribute to an increased number of interaction opportunities in the TL (e.g., Tsagari and Diakou, 2015). As a result, rapport building between and among students and between students and teachers could cement classroom and individual success (Syahabuddin et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2021).

Similarly, studies investigating the teacher perspectives revealed that integrating the students' HL(s) in multilingual classroom settings would not only sustain motivation but would also make the learning environment more welcoming and agreeable for linguistically and culturally diverse students (Hall and Cook, 2012; Shin et al., 2020; Karpava, 2022a; Karpava et al., 2023). In a sense, the presence of the HL(s) cultivated and affirmed a sense of identity that research has highlighted as positively correlating to student performance (Cummins et al., 2005; Forbes et al., 2021). While in-service teachers acknowledged the benefits associated with HL integration on the lowering of affective filter, they mostly underlined the advantages it

could foster on the cognitive level. In line with student attitudes on the topic, teachers articulated that HL integration ensured comprehension when tackling complex grammatical and linguistic concepts (Neokleous et al., 2022) in the TL. Relying exclusively on the TL, as they maintained, deprived students from adequately and sufficiently understanding EAL concepts that could not only be found in their own languages but also from establishing connections between different languages (Hall and Cook, 2012; Shin et al., 2020). As a result, the HL could serve as a useful supplement and tool that could familiarize students with complex TL grammar points, thus facilitating the learning process (Silvani, 2014; Kasim et al., 2019). Moreover, there has also been a penchant toward using the students' HL(s) to translate vocabulary items that might initially appear problematic for students to comprehend. In sum, teachers favored the integration of the students' HL(s) as it provided a way of assisting in the internalization of TL points that would have been otherwise difficult to explain or clarify (Welpy, 2022).

Previous research has also highlighted the impossibility of excluding HL use in the EAL classroom (Alshehri, 2017; Shin et al., 2020). However, despite acknowledging its positive impact, teachers still seem to idealize the all-English approach (Evans et al., 2020; Cushing and Snell, 2023; Neokleous et al., 2023). Interviews with in-service and also pre-service teachers after classroom observations revealed a pattern of underreporting their usage of the students' HL(s) and overreporting their TL integration in their lessons. As a result, the difficulty of maintaining an all-English approach and thus resorting to their students' HL(s) for exemplifications generated feelings of guilt (Copland and Neokleous, 2011; Neokleous and Ofte, 2020). In certain cases, the participating teachers tended to justify the practice of HL integration, attributing it to factors related to the choice of topic, student motivation, and student fluency level. The presence of feelings of guilt and the practice of justifying practices that make use of the students' HL(s) have been attributed to a lack of adequate teacher training that focus on the current attitudes toward HL use.

2.3 Current approaches toward HL use

While HL use was for several years discouraged and at times frowned upon, its impact on the learning process and student performance has been reexamined (Conteh and Meier, 2014; May, 2014). With classrooms across the globe becoming incrementally multilingual, research has corroborated that employing the students' HL(s) can optimize the learning process and increase the retention of information (Otheguy et al., 2015; Wei, 2018; Wang, 2019).

For this reason, EAL teachers have been encouraged to adopt multilingual pedagogies that cater to the needs of linguistically diverse students (Conteh and Meier, 2014). Translanguaging is the approach that is currently being favored in a plethora of linguistically diverse classrooms as it enables students to make recourse to their entire linguistic repertoire in written and oral usage (García and Wei, 2014; García and Kleyn, 2016; García et al., 2017). Implementing translanguaging in the EAL classroom has shifted away the limited TL proficiency belief that was often ascribed to students who did not abide by the all-English approach. Instead, translanguaging enables students to make use whichever language from their linguistic repertoire they want at any given point. It develops language and metalinguistic awareness while it also improves proficiency in all the languages the

students use. Further, it embraces the idea of emergent bilinguals, which is perceived as the objective of the pedagogy (García and Wei, 2014; García and Kleyn, 2016; García et al., 2017). Most significantly, however, adopting a translanguaging stance promotes the development of positive multilingual identities and educational equity in classroom environments—practices that are supportive of the students' linguistic backgrounds (Kleyn and García, 2019; García and Otheguy, 2020).

Despite the consensus among recent studies relative to the benefits that can be derived from making use of the HL, research has not concluded as to the amount but also the classroom purposes it should serve. While certain studies proceeded with recommending a percentage that is deemed acceptable (e.g., Macaro, 2005), the concept remains rather elusive because of the individuality that characterizes today's classrooms (Hall and Cook, 2012; Shin et al., 2020). Certain classrooms might require an increased use of the students' HL depending on the topic, the students' fluency but also grade level and in other cases resorting to the students' HL(s) might not be deemed that necessary. In fact, with increasingly linguistically diverse settings, research instructs teachers to conduct action research projects that would help them better understand their students' expectations as to the classroom purposes for which the HL should be used but also the ways in which it could assist in enhancing learning (Wedin and Wessman, 2017; Bergroth et al., 2023).

2.3.1 Multilingual pedagogies in Norway

In Norway, despite the latest version of the curriculum acknowledging the linguistic diversity, there is little evidence suggesting the implementation of multilingual pedagogies in the EAL classroom (Krulatz and Dahl, 2016). A baseline survey conducted by Krulatz and Dahl (2016) among 176 in-service teachers revealed that only 5% of the participants believed that they were able to teach in a multilingual setting.

While Norwegian classrooms are becoming increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse, The document analysis of Benediktsson (2022) revealed that multilingual education-related topics in three legal documents on teacher education are viewed as "supplementary" (p. 236). As he noted, the role of teacher education is mostly being directed toward "a simple introduction of cultures, placing them in a historical, and societal context" (p. 237). With more emphasis placed on internationalization via research, Benediktsson (2022) concludes that multilingual and multicultural pedagogies do not constitute priorities for the Directorate for Education and Training. Empirical data from Norwegian classrooms underlined the need for more concrete and practical multilingual training. Recent research (KC and Ohna, 2021; Lorenz et al., 2021; Neokleous et al., 2022, 2023; Tavares, 2023; Vikøy and Haukås, 2023) revealed that EAL teachers were reluctant to integrate multilingual pedagogies because of either insufficient teacher training on the topic or lack of knowledge and adequate teaching materials. The participants in the study of Tavares (2023) cast a critical eye on the emphasis that their teacher education training placed on the theoretical perspectives of the concept of diversity and multilingualism and the lack of focus on how to put these theories into practice. For these reasons, Tavares (2023) concludes by stressing the need for the development of a practical experience with a more concrete focus on diversity. The importance of establishing a strong link between theory and practice in teacher education programs was also mirrored in the study of KC and Ohna (2021). The participants pinpointed a discrepancy between their

pedagogical training and the implications this training would have for how they would be able to teach in schools. The studies of Neokleous et al. (2022, 2023) highlighted the need of adopting multilingual pedagogies with teacher and student participants stressing the benefits that can be derived from such practices not only in language learning but also in content classrooms. Despite the fact that EAL teachers willingly embrace the linguistic diversity of their classrooms and implement multilingual pedagogies, they run into roadblocks and describe the process as overwhelming (Neokleous et al., 2022).

2.3.2 Multilingual pedagogies in Cyprus

In Cyprus, the Ministry of Education promotes intercultural education both at the primary and secondary level. However, according to Nicolaou et al. (2016), more practical measures for the inclusion of children with migrant backgrounds are needed (e.g., adapted curricula with integrated intercultural elements, parental involvement, language support and teaching migrant languages). Recent studies by Karpava (2022a,b) showed that EAL teachers had a positive attitude toward multilingualism, multiculturalism, and inclusive education, and they believed that these aspects should be promoted. The study by Neokleous (2022) on learner and in-service teacher attitudes toward translanguaging in multilingual EAL classrooms in Cyprus suggests language policy, teacher training courses, and lesson planning perspectives in Cyprus need to be reconsidered in the light of the multilingual turn in education and the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity on the island. The study of Stavrou (2020) in a primary classroom in Cyprus found that the use of both dialectal varieties (CG and SMG) and implementation of translanguaging pedagogy were beneficial for students' knowledge development, better understanding of the material, and the creation of communicative spaces. While these findings are encouraging, more research is needed on EAL multilingual pedagogies at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and teacher training programs.

3 Methodology

The purpose of this article is to bring classroom and interview data together and shed light on the cognitions of pre-service teachers of two increasingly linguistically diverse countries that have predominantly been monolingual in nature. As already mentioned, both in Norway and Cyprus, teachers and students shared the same majority language and resorting to the students' HL relied exclusively on the use of Norwegian in Norway and the use of (Cypriot)-Greek in Cyprus. With the recent demographics information outlining the increasingly diverse nature of schools, the study attempts to explore whether the student teachers feel adequately prepared to tackle the ensuing challenges of multilingual classrooms. Consequently, the research questions the study sought to address are:

1. What do Norwegian and Cypriot pre-service EAL teachers think about the use of the students' HL(s) in the EAL classroom?
2. When do Norwegian and Cypriot pre-service EAL teachers think the students' HL(s) should be used? For what classroom purposes?
3. Do Norwegian and Cypriot pre-service EAL teachers share similar attitudes toward HL integration? Are there any differences between them?

3.1 Participants and data collection strategies

To answer the research questions, the researchers adopted a qualitative research design. The focus was on the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants. Teacher beliefs are closely related to their decisions, pedagogical practices, teaching approaches and strategies, and actions in the classroom (Arocena et al., 2015). Research that is focused on teachers' beliefs has certain methodological limitations because analyses are based on self-reported data (Arocena et al., 2015). Borg (2006, p. 86) proposed the concept of "teacher cognition," which depends on contextual factors, previous learning experience, and teaching experiences and practice. A convenience sampling method was implemented to recruit participants (Mathieson, 2014), who were all attending a pre-service EAL university course in one institution in Cyprus and one institution in Norway. Participants were at the same level in their English language teacher education program of study. A total of 30 undergraduate students in Cyprus and 29 undergraduate students in Norway, who self-identified as future EAL teachers, took part in the study. In Cyprus, 17 participants were male and 13 were female. Their ages ranged from 18 to 26 years old. In Norway, 19 were female and 10 were male. Their ages ranged from 18 to 23 years old. To comply with the ethical decisions raised to conduct the study, approval was granted from the Norwegian Centre for Research and Data and the Cyprus National Bioethics Committee. The study complied with the ethical guidelines of the two participating countries and institutions to ensure that the participants make a fully informed decision about whether to participate in the research.

In both countries, data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Notes taken during the observations were later written up as field notes constituted the third data collection strategy. The field notes enabled the researchers to reflect on the documented events and the behaviors observed in practice to produce meaning and understanding. In Norway, the observations were conducted with six pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum in six different public schools. Interviews were conducted with the six participants who were observed along with 23 additional pre-service teachers who attended the same course, thus amassing a total number of 29 students. The classrooms that were observed were single-grade EAL classes and were observed during the student teachers' practicum experience, which took place once for three consecutive weeks in the fall semester and once for three consecutive weeks in the spring semester. Four of the six participants were females and the remaining two were males. The classrooms were observed six times during two academic semesters. To enhance the validity of the research study, as the observations were not digitally recorded, an observational protocol was developed. The interview protocol was divided into three sections: the first section comprised demographic questions; the second part included open-ended questions revolving around the topic of the study whose objective was to allow researchers to elaborate on their practices and experiences; the third part included questions that were formulated after the observations and enabled the researchers to delve deeper into queries about specific practices and behaviors that the participants demonstrated and performed. In Cyprus, six pre-service teachers were also observed three times during their teaching practicum in one semester. Each student had to teach one English lesson with each session being video recorded for formal and feedback purposes.

For the interviews with the participants, an interview protocol was formulated. The interviews were semi-structured with questions that were common for all participants while also leaving the window open for probing and clarification questions. However, the fourth section contained questions that were specific for each of the participating classrooms based on the observations and the practices of the teachers. The interviews with the participants were conducted in English.

3.2 Data analysis

An interpretational approach was employed to address the three research questions. Gall et al. (1999) defined interpretational analysis as a process which “involves a systematic set of procedures to code and classify qualitative data to ensure that the important constructs, themes, and patterns emerge” (p. 315). Once transcribed, the interviews were thematically analyzed. The transcripts were attentively reviewed: repeating themes were identified, the data were coded, and based on the keywords and phrases, categories were created (Rolland et al., 2020).

Abiding by the interpretational approach guidelines, the interviews with the pre-service teachers were transcribed and coded using Saldaña's (2009) two coding cycle methods. The objective of this approach was to unearth participants' attitudes toward the use of the HL(s) in the classroom along with their beliefs about the purposes that HL(s) could serve in the EAL classroom. The observations assisted the researchers in identifying the purposes to which teachers decided to make use of the students' HL(s). They also helped researchers gain insight into how the participating teachers addressed the presence of several HLs in the classroom, which was the focus of the first research question. The interviews enabled the participants in both countries to inquire deeply into their general attitudes toward HL integration in the EAL classroom, which was the focus of the second research question. Comparing the findings and data sets from the two groups aided the two researchers in tackling the third research question.

The observational protocol along with the researchers' field notes were also coded to identify the ways in which in-service teacher participants tackled the presence of different HLs in the classroom during their practicum experience. Colored pens were used to highlight the codes that emerged from the data set. Every time a reference to one of the themes appeared in the transcriptions, it was color-coded because each individual color represented a theme. During the Second Cycle Coding, these codes were further refined. The participants' attitudes on the topic generated the codes for research question 1 while the participants' perceptions on the purposes the HL should fulfill in the classroom generated the codes for research question 2. The codes of the two data sets were then compared to unravel convergences and divergences between the two participating groups, which was the focus of research question 3.

4 Findings

The findings section is divided into three parts with each addressing one of the research questions. The first section focuses on the Norwegian and Cypriot pre-service EAL teacher attitudes toward the presence of the students' HLs in the classroom. The second section explores the classroom purposes the participants thought the HL(s)

should fulfill while the third part delves deeper into the convergences and divergences of the two participant groups in the two countries.

4.1 RQ1: Norwegian and Cypriot pre-service EAL teacher attitudes toward HL use in the classroom

4.1.1 The Norwegian perspective

Citing their own personal experiences as students growing up and learning English, the 29 Norwegian EAL pre-service teachers were positive about the integration of the students' HL(s) in the classroom. Twelve of the participants described such practice as “inescapable” (Participant 2), but which could bring a significant number of advantages and enhance the student learning experience. Essentially, the interviewees agreed that employing the HL deepens student understanding, particularly when dealing with grammatical and linguistic concepts that might not exist in the majority language and thus appear arduous. Participant 4 deemed the latter “particularly important” as one of the competence aims of the new curriculum is establishing connections between the TL and the students' HL. For this reason alone, 11 pre-service teachers articulated in their interviews that the HL should always be present in the classroom as it constitutes “a tool” (Participant 23) that the teachers could use to ensure understanding “when students have trouble grasping content” (Participant 7) they teach.

In their interviews, 26 participants acknowledged an increase in the numbers of students who did not share Norwegian as their majority language. As they underlined, their practicum experience in EAL classrooms in different parts of the country revealed “a surprisingly big number” (Participant 8) of students from different linguistic backgrounds. Because of this, 14 participants mentioned that they had to have “a back-up plan” (Participant 12) with increased additional references to the TL than they usually did make in each lesson. Not wanting to ask questions about the fluency level in the majority language and despite the teacher of the classroom reassuring them that these students were able to follow the class in Norwegian, three participants elaborated that they felt “unsure” (Participant 1) as to the amount they should use in their EAL lesson.

As 14 participants heightened, their uncertainty as to how these classrooms should be treated often resulted in increased usage of the TL “to ensure that all of the students in the classroom were able to follow” (Participant 13). Such practice was often interpreted as a “double-edged sword” (Participant 21). As Participant 21, one of the observed pre-service teachers, exemplified in his interview, he often resorted to Norwegian to introduce students to grammar. However, with three students sharing a different HL in his classroom, Participant 21 felt the need to employ the TL to ensure that “all of the students would understand.” Yet, he continued, because of the complexity of the grammar point in question, most students in the classroom requested additional explanations in Norwegian. Consequently, the language that dominated the lesson was Norwegian without recourse to the TL or any of the other languages that were shared by the students present. This practice was also evident during the observations when Participant 21 often proceeded to exemplify a grammar question that emerged in Norwegian and then repeated the answer he provided in the TL. When asked during the interview the rationale behind his decision, he articulated that this constituted his

own way of “ensuring that everybody understood.” Of course, he continued, the use of the TL alone might not necessarily contribute to ensuring understanding given how the students with Norwegian as their HL “often demanded” an explanation in that language and the students with a different linguistic background were not able to do that.

Six of the participants, including two of the pre-service-teachers observed (Participants 17 and 26), articulated that this tendency for one language to dominate the lesson could be ascribed to the traditionally monolingual nature of the classrooms. As they elaborated, Participants 17 and 26 identified “major differences” (Participant 17) between classrooms that they encountered during their first year of teacher training and those during their fourth year of studies. Today’s classrooms, they continued, are more diverse and require “careful training” (Participant 26) for a smooth learning experience. For these reasons, the six participants attributed the feeling of uncertainty as to how to conduct the lesson to the lack of adequate and up-to-date training. Similar feelings were also echoed by nine more participants who in their interviews stressed the “insufficient training” (Participant 6) they received during their teacher training program as they felt it did not adequately cover issues revolving around 21st century education, including multilingual pedagogies. Of note is that two of the participants stressed the detrimental effect the lack of sufficient and adequate multilingual pedagogy training could have on their confidence. They attributed great significance to their confidence levels and linked this to their efficacy in the classroom. As they elaborated, being aware of such weaknesses and not knowing how to tackle them could trigger levels of anxiety that could have a negative impact on their performance.

4.1.2 The Cypriot perspective

In Cyprus, data showed that the participants did not have a unanimous opinion regarding the use of HL(s) in EAL classrooms. As it was reported by 26 participants, HL implementation in the EAL classrooms mainly depends on such factors as students’ age and language proficiency. According to the respondents, the use of HL in classroom could enhance fluency and comprehension (10 participants), develop students’ cultural and linguistic identity (five participants) and enhance authentic and contextual learning experience (three participants). Seven participants believed that the HL could be used only as a last resort in EAL classrooms, whereas five participants supported a balanced approach to the TL and the HL for a better academic achievement, boosting students’ confidence, and creation of a student-friendly atmosphere in class.

Twenty-two participants agreed that HL use could be more beneficial for younger learners with lower TL proficiency in comparison to older students with more advanced levels. According to the participants, “at the early stages of learning the language, there are some situations when usage of HL might be truly helpful” (Participant 13). They considered that “HL should be used in moderation in the first years of language acquisition and gradually be replaced by the TL to ensure fluidity and understanding” (Participant 28). With the implementation of translanguaging in EAL classroom, one of the Participant 5 stressed that students could “develop an individual understanding and positioning in their identity and society”.

As it transpired from the data, HL use in EAL classrooms could have a facilitating effect in the process of TL learning. Eight

participants stressed that HL could serve as a tool to support the learners in their effort to make progress with their TL. In addition, the participants emphasized the close connection between language and culture and that more advanced learners should have more TL input and culture by implementing authentic materials and activities. As Participant 16 noted:

It is the teachers’ choice whether to incorporate HL in EAL teaching in the early stages or not ... They should definitely consider the students’ level of language. If they are addressing students that were never exposed to English..., do not know how to read and write, they should be more flexible in speaking both English and their native language to be understood. Once students are well immersed in the language, they must start using only English and encourage students to do so as well. That way students will have no gaps during the process of learning the ... foreign language.

Although 22 of the pre-service teachers acknowledged a positive role of HL implementation in EAL classrooms, they did not “deviate from their focus” (Participant 3), which was teaching English. Thus, the maximum use of and exposure to English was deemed important for them to develop both perceptive and productive skills in the TL. As Participant 22 noted: “I think if HL is used ... then people who do not have much knowledge of English will still be able to ... express themselves. However, I think that ... English should be used the most to practice and allow the students to understand its use in context.”

Twenty participants preferred to employ an English-only approach in class to create an immersion environment and elicit all students’ answers in the TL. Thirteen participants considered HL use as the last resort as for these students it was “better to focus on speaking only in English” (Participant 30) particularly for “asking students questions in English, having discussions in English. But in case of questions or problems, it’s worth switching” (Participant 2) to the HL. Participant 17 mentioned the potential issues of cross-linguistic interference. Both teachers and students should be aware about similarities and differences between the languages and help students avoid negative transfer. As the participant elaborated, “HL can be used in TL teaching as long as the boundaries between the languages remain clear and one does not try to take features from their HL to use in TL.”

Furthermore, 20 participants assumed that there should be a balanced approach to the use of HL in EAL classrooms taking into consideration teaching context, aims and objectives of each lesson and individual student differences. The 20 participants cautioned about potential overuse of HLs, and that English would “suffer” (Participant 11). However, they continued, “HL should not and cannot be banned entirely, because the students would still use it ...for translation of unfamiliar/unknown words or to compare grammatical facts in their own language and English” (Participant 14). In addition, they articulated that by enabling the use of the students’ HLs students who “may not feel confident or ready enough to express themselves fully in English ... we encourage and help them feel more comfortable” (Participant 27). The knowledge and use of both languages should be viewed as advantage for their cognitive, social, and metalinguistic skills. The participants agreed that it is important that the students should be allowed to use their HL and that teachers should be flexible

in their teaching and communication with their students and create a student-friendly environment.

4.2 RQ2: classroom purposes for which Norwegian and Cypriot pre-service EAL teachers think the students' HL(s) should be used

4.2.1 The Norwegian perspective

Along with being positive about its integration in the EAL classroom, the 29 participants highlighted that the role of the HL was pivotal in ensuring student understanding and optimizing the learning experience. Twenty-two interviewees believed that teachers should integrate it in classroom situations “whenever they deemed it necessary” (Participant 18) and especially when “it further contributes to student comprehension” (Participant 12). Citing their own experience, 17 participants identified the necessity to make use of the students' HL(s) in lessons that focused on introducing and/or explaining grammar to exemplify but also teach linguistic and grammar concepts. As the 17 participants elaborated, introducing a new grammatical point in the TL requires learners' “careful understanding” (Participant 15) because of its “distinct” (Participant 15) and “unpredictable nature” (Participant 16). In fact, 12 interviewees argued that English is a “hard” (Participant 7) language for Norwegian speakers because grammatical concepts can be “different” (Participant 2) and “unique in one of the two languages” (Participant 28) so the teacher should use the HL to delve deeper into the focus of each lesson and “make students understand” (Participant 6). During one of the observations, Participant 20 argued that such practice enabled her to address one of the competence aims of the national curriculum that requires teachers to make comparison between languages. Eighteen participants stressed the importance of establishing links between the TL and the students' HL(s).

While 17 of the participants underlined the helpful role that usage of the HL could play in introducing and clarifying grammatical concepts, particularly for students in the beginning stages, 12 participants believed that teachers should increase their usage of the TL when working with advanced learners. As they exemplified in their interviews, making use of the HL during explicit grammar instruction could increase the possibilities of students depending on their teachers' explanations in the HL. A potential dependence on the usage of the HL would therefore limit possibilities of students enhancing their critical thinking skills and exposure to the TL.

With classrooms becoming increasingly linguistically diverse, 20 participants cautioned about “the impossibility” (Participant 3) of integrating HLs other than the majority language (i.e., Norwegian). As they elaborated, while for the first time the curriculum embraces the multilingual nature of today's classrooms and prompts teachers to make connections between the students' languages and the TL, such practice “still remains rather elusive” (Participant 16). The elusiveness, as she continued, lay in the inadequate teacher preparedness as to how to address linguistically diverse classrooms particularly since Norwegian might not be sufficient to ensure understanding for all students in a classroom. Echoing similar concerns, nine participants believed that while the HL contributes to student comprehension, using Norwegian only

caters to a significant percentage of the student body but neglects those who might not be proficient in the majority language.

4.2.2 The Cypriot perspective

In Cyprus, data revealed that the use of HL(s) in EAL classrooms could be implemented for various purposes, in particular for more effective teaching and successful learning process. Eighteen participants elaborated that they could provide a better explanation in HL, give relevant examples, for example in terms of correct pronunciation, and enhance students' productive and perceptive skills. Lexicon teaching was mentioned as one of the reasons for resorting to HL usage to translate unknown/newly introduced words or explain their meaning. Such practice, they believed, could be done for convenience purposes or to decrease the level of anxiety or due to pressure of time during the lesson as extensive material should be covered.

Furthermore, 11 Cypriot participants admitted that EAL teaching could be more successful if both students and teachers are allowed to use HL for comparison as well as development of literacy skills in TL. As Participant 18 exemplified, “the usage of HL is quite vital since it would make the process of understanding the foreign language much easier, through the use of translation and comparison.” Five teachers claimed that HL could assist teachers with time and classroom management and allow to lower the affective filter of their students and to decrease their stress and anxiety “when spoken at the beginning of class before the teaching begins” (Participant 10).

Even the six participants who were not very positive toward the use of HL(s) in class admitted that their implementation could be accepted in exceptional circumstances to teach lexicon and explain unknown words “as this would make it easier for the student to draw a connection between that word and the mental image they have known their whole lives” (Participant 1).

Eleven participants emphasized the role of HL(s) in enhancing students' knowledge in all linguistic areas, specifically grammar, syntax, lexicon. Educators can explain the material better by using HL, thus making input comprehensible and the teaching process more effective. Seven participants reflected on their own learning experience and attested that HL usage could facilitate the learning process. One of the participants claimed that “when the teacher explained something ... I would always try to think of a HL equivalent to understand what was said better” (Participant 3). This practice, she continued, “is probably what the students are still doing and will always be doing.” For this reason, five participants believed that there should be a flexible approach to its use in class based on their age and level of proficiency. HL and TL can be used interchangeably, if needed, if such practice helps students to achieve better results and higher level of L2 attainment.

4.3 RQ3: Norwegian and Cypriot pre-service EAL teachers—a comparison of attitudes

The analysis of the interview data in both countries showed that the pre-service teacher participants were aware of the benefits of making use of the students' HL(s). In both countries, the interviewees acknowledged the increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse nature of their classrooms and they outlined different classroom

purposes performed in the HL that they thought could assist in not only optimizing the students' learning experience but also in deepening their understanding in the TL. However, while being familiar with some of the multilingual practices that could be used in the classroom, as already discussed, the Norwegian participants expressed hesitation and reluctance in introducing them because of insufficient and/or lack of training. The Cypriot participants voiced similar concerns about insufficient training in multilingual pedagogies and stressed the need for more support and guidance. As they continued, they felt that the ability to teach in a multilingual classroom is related to relevant experience, knowledge, skills, and personality traits.

The inadequate training rendered the Norwegian participants feeling "underprepared" (Participants 5, 6, 9, 12, and 15). Five of the interviewees mentioned that they were not "looking forward to teaching in multilingual classrooms ... using [teaching] strategies" (Participant 9) that they would have to explore themselves. As they elaborated, being a teacher should be characterized by a sense of responsibility to their group of students and being part of a multilingual classroom presupposes the understanding and knowledge of specific "theories and practices" (Participant 6) that would improve the classroom experience. Participant 26 whose lesson was also observed described his teaching experience as "the most challenging thus far" because of the number of students who shared different HLs. Similarly, the Cypriot participants underlined the importance of acquiring relevant teaching experience in such classrooms. Twenty-five student teachers stressed that they did not have sufficient (or any) teaching experience in such classrooms and hoped that gaining this would help them feel more pedagogically prepared. However, their generally positive attitudes toward multilingualism caused them to feel optimistic about teaching.

As the Cypriot participants articulated, it was crucial to have more experience of teaching students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which could lead to more confidence and more "successful" (Participant 4) learning. Moreover, a positive stance toward multilingualism and multiculturalism was key in this regard as "multilingualism enriches one's understanding of how languages function and the connections that languages have with society" (Participant 29).

On the other hand, for the Norwegian participants, it was deemed more important to undergo sufficient training before teaching a linguistically diverse classroom. Twelve of the interviewees underlined that they need to feel confident enough to teach and this could not be effectuated with "additional practicum" (Participant 12) experience. For this reason, rich knowledge and deep understanding of multilingual pedagogies was believed to be pivotal. Similarly, Participant 17 who was observed and whose classroom was linguistically diverse echoed these concerns as he felt that "the lesson was not good enough" as he was not well-prepared to teach such a classroom setting. Regarding the implementation of multilingual pedagogies, two thirds of the Cypriot participants were concerned about their practical implementation. Twenty pre-service teachers preferred to use translanguaging only with young students or in the initial stages of learning English. It also transpired that participants' beliefs concerning their future teaching also depended on their own learning experiences. Ten of Cypriot participants considered that exposure to various languages was important to be multilingual. For their future teaching practice, both groups stressed the importance of

providing authentic multilingual input to their students via different communicative activities.

Both groups seemed to share common beliefs and concerns but also have some divergences. The participants in both countries acknowledged the importance of training and its key role in enhancing the student learning experience. The Norwegian participants were more vocal about their unpreparedness and their lack of confidence in teaching a multilingual classroom while the Cypriot participants stressed the role that teaching experience in such settings could have. The following section delves into and interprets the main findings of the comparative study.

5 Discussion

The study ventured to unearth pre-service teacher attitudes toward the use of HL in two increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse settings. The participants in Norway and Cyprus acknowledged the surge in numbers of multilingual students. This increase was also for the first time endorsed in the latest version of the Norwegian curriculum ([The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2020](#)) as well as in the Cypriot curriculum ([UNHCR, 2022](#)). Although this tendency was reported globally with references to linguistic diversity being recently included in national curricula, research has underlined that there is a dearth of concrete guidelines for effective and efficient teacher training but also classroom applications ([Otwinowska, 2017](#)).

Both groups of participants seemed to understand and embrace the benefits of multilingualism, multiculturalism, and inclusive education. As the findings of the study report, most of the pre-service teachers displayed a positive stance toward the use of the HL in the EAL classroom. In their interviews, the participants in both settings articulated that the greatest advantage associated with its use is its capability to deepen understanding when introducing or explaining grammar concepts and new vocabulary. The catalyst role that HL integration could play in the current increasingly linguistically diverse classrooms is in line with current research that prompts teachers to make use of the students' entire linguistic repertoires as a means of fostering TL acquisition ([Shin et al., 2020](#); [Wernicke et al., 2021](#)).

Yet, they have also expressed their concerns about future challenges regarding teaching in heterogeneous classrooms. Both groups acknowledged the difficulty of resorting to a majority language as in certain cases and more possibly soon, as they articulated, there would not be one shared among students and the instructor. They, however, did not see the separation of languages as a necessity or the implementation of an all-English approach as inevitable as emerged from recent studies (e.g., [Nukuto, 2017](#); [Karpava, 2022a,b](#); [Kart et al., 2022](#); [Neokleous et al., 2022](#); [Welply, 2022](#)). Instead, they embraced the potential of making use of their students' HLs as a learning pedagogy that could enhance TL acquisition. For this reason, the participants stressed the importance of adequately preparing prospective teachers to meet the current needs and demands of today's classrooms through formal training, guidance, and support. While they also appreciated the knowledge they had gained throughout their studies, they believed that emphasis had not been placed on more recent pedagogical trends that would have made "their teaching career a bit easier" (Participant 7-NO). The ensuing result of this unpreparedness is the feeling of uncertainty and "always questioning"

(Participant 23-NO) whether they are “on the right track” (Participant 9-CY) and whether “they are doing the best for the [linguistically diverse] students” as Participants 1, 9, and 14 (NO) identified. The lack of EAL teacher preparedness to work with multilingual students in Norwegian classrooms was mirrored in studies in the Norwegian context conducted by [Tavares \(2023\)](#) and [Neokleous et al. \(2023\)](#) while its importance in teacher education is stressed in recent studies conducted internationally ([Fang and Liu, 2020](#); [Portolés and Martí, 2020](#)). The Cypriot participants also identified that the fact they did not have sufficient (or any) teaching experience, particularly in multilingual, culturally, and linguistically diverse classes as having an impact on their preparedness in teaching in similar settings. The same concerns were raised by the teachers in the studies conducted by [De Angelis \(2011\)](#), [García and Kleyn \(2016\)](#), and [Lundberg \(2019\)](#).

Although some to little and others to greater extent, the participants identified in their interviews that they had acquired relevant theoretical knowledge during their university experiences and could evaluate different teaching methods and approaches. Adopting multilingual pedagogies can be quite demanding for teachers, as they need extensive preparation in terms of innovative teaching techniques, knowledge about language(s) and culture(s), and classroom management. As they outlined, the participants want to be involved in continuous professional development and to obtain more knowledge in terms of multilingual pedagogical approaches, such as translanguaging ([Cenoz and Gorter, 2020](#)), as well as linguistically and culturally responsive teaching ([Lucas and Villegas, 2011, 2013](#)). Regarding the former, the Cypriot participants also cautioned about the possibility of the presence and use of multiple languages confusing the students. In addition, they considered that translanguaging could mainly be used with younger learners or students with low levels of English proficiency. For this reason, the Cypriot participants considered the students’ needs analysis to be the most important aspect, as well as flexibility in terms of lesson planning and delivery. As Participant 23-CY identified, “heterogeneous classes must be closely monitored because of the wide range of student identities.” As a result, the participant continued, “the teacher must have a customized, flexible lesson plan tailored according to the student’s needs.”

As it readily transpired, the participants expressed their beliefs and perceptions through the perspective of both students and future EAL teachers. Their positive stance toward multilingualism is correlated with their motivation and interest in teaching in heterogeneous classrooms, which corroborates the previous findings by [Vogl \(2018\)](#), [Bellinzona and Carbonara \(2021\)](#), and [Wei et al. \(2021\)](#). Regarding their future teaching careers, they were willing to go beyond their comfort zones to identify the best ways of teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students, which is in line with current literature (e.g., [Alisaari et al., 2019](#)). Further, they supported the idea of inclusive education based on continuous professional development and innovative teaching approaches while paying attention to the students’ individual differences, including their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their social, emotional, and cognitive needs, without sacrificing the quality of the teaching practice ([Lorenz et al., 2021](#); [Jury et al., 2023](#)). [Dack \(2019\)](#) articulated that preparing pre-service teachers for increasingly diverse classrooms should include enhancing their knowledge, skills, and attitudes through relevant course work and field placement. Without the necessary experience, knowledge, and skills, current and future teachers will remain underprepared to support the socio-academic success of their students.

Yet, although the current paradigm shift moved away from monolingual ideologies and embraced and encouraged multilingual approaches to teaching, teachers are still pressured to expose their students to as much as TL input as possible, which in certain cases it is identified as HL prohibition ([Aronin and Singleton, 2012](#); [Shin et al., 2020](#)). Thus, teacher-education courses should offer pedagogical training for future teachers that is in line with the current needs of today’s classrooms. Consequently, our objective as teacher educators should be to optimize learning with the required skills, teaching approaches, and knowledge that would adequately prepare prospective teachers to work with linguistically diverse students.

6 Conclusion

Even in classroom settings that have traditionally been described as monolingual with students and teachers sharing a majority language, because of rapid increases in mobility and migration, increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms have become the norm. As a result, EAL classrooms both in Norway and Cyprus now represent a range of different HLs. Current pedagogical approaches embraced the multilingual turn in education that prompted teachers to make use of the students’ entire linguistic repertoires to perform and negotiate TL functions ([Aronin and Singleton, 2012](#); [Shin et al., 2020](#)). The purpose of this study was to unearth pre-service teacher attitudes toward the integration of HLs and the purposes they should serve in the classroom but also to identify differences and similarities between two traditionally monolingual but incrementally multilingual settings.

As it emerged from the results of this comparative study, the pre-service teacher participants were aware of the current classroom reality and the ensuing challenges that the linguistic diversity might bring in their teaching. As the participants elaborated, the challenges stemmed from a lack of adequate training and relevant teaching experience that would equip them with the required skills and knowledge to face the diverse needs of the student body in multilingual settings. Because of this unpreparedness, the participants were hesitant and in certain cases reluctant to immerse themselves in a classroom without feeling confident about the pedagogical practices and approaches they would employ. The results cement the significance of ensuring coherence between theory and practice in teacher education programs regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers for their work with diverse pupils.

Undisputedly, the researchers acknowledge the limitations of the present study including the number of participants with results that cannot be generalized to the entire pre-service-teacher population of Norway and Cyprus. However, they do indicate a common thread that weaves the teachers in the two different countries together as they shared similar concerns and anguishes about their classroom practices. Because of the capacity of teachers to serve as agents of change that can optimize students’ learning experience in linguistically diverse classrooms ([Yazan and Lindahl, 2020](#)), it is crucial to delve deeper into teacher attitudes and their understanding of multilingual approaches that are currently employed. A next step would be to conduct more longitudinal but also action research studies that would uncover the development and learning processes of multilingual students in becoming more competent and confident EAL users. Most significantly, however,

exploring teacher but also student attitudes would help shape a clearer picture and gain a more representative portrayal of multilingual approaches that are preferred but also that could work in each classroom. The findings of such studies could be used in teacher training programs to assist prospective teachers in better understanding the natural linguistic behavior of multilingual students but also how to effectively use the students' entire linguistic repertoires as a resource. The objective would be to contribute to professional teacher growth purposefully and constructively in line with current needs and make all necessary pedagogical choices to meet and achieve those needs.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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