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Inclusion of multilingual students—teachers' perceptions on language support models

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ABSTRACT

Inclusion of multilingual students—teachers' perceptions on language support models Ensuring the best possible support for multilingual students is a challenge for educational systems the world over. In Austria, new language support models, the so-called German language support classes (GLSC) and pull-out courses (POC), have been installed in the school year 2018/19. The new models offer language support in separate classrooms and have been strongly criticised since their implementation due to their segregative and assimilative character. This study aims to examine teachers' perceptions of language support models for multilingual students in Austria. For this purpose, a large-scale quantitative survey including 1,267 in-service teachers (mean age = 43.40) from eight of nine states in Austria was conducted. Results indicate that teachers perceive a segregated language learning setting more negative for the academic, social and emotional development of students compared to an inclusive one. Furthermore, they also experience that more resources are needed to adequately implement an inclusive learning environment for multilingual students.

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Introduction

According to the recently published report 'Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe' (European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2019), the majority of European education systems regard the provision of high-quality language and learning support for students from immigrant backgrounds as a great challenge (ibid, 55). A recent OECD study (2018) supports these findings by indicating that students with migrant backgrounds display lower academic resilience than native students do. E.g. students with migrant backgrounds have a higher risk of developing schoolwork-related anxiety (1.13 more likely than native students) (OECD 2018, 19–20).

Regarding the situation of students who speak another first language than the language of instruction (LoI) at home in Austria, research continuously provides

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empirical evidence that they are disadvantaged compared to peers with German as a first language (e.g. Nusche, Shewbridge, and Lamhauge Rasmussen 2009; Crul et al. 2012; OECD 2018; Suchań, Höller, and Wallner-Paschon 2019). The recent results of PISA 2018 (Suchań, Höller, and Wallner-Paschon 2019) show that students from migration backgrounds, of both the first generation (immigrated after birth) and the second generation (born in Austria), have significantly lower reading skills than German native speakers. With regard to the reading literacy of first-generation immigrant students, Austria is one of 14 OECD/EU countries in the lower third (ibid, 77).

The majority of EU countries (24 of 27) regard separate language support classes as ‘the solution’ to the educational disadvantages newly arrived students from immigrant backgrounds, with no or beginning skills in the LoI, face (European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2019). Typically, these classes can be classified as ‘structured immersion’ programmes (Baker 2011, 209) in which these students need to learn the LoI without referring to skills they have already developed in their first language – in general also referred to as monolingual educational practice (Van Laere et al. 2017). Development of the first language is, however, typically not provided in school settings. Hence, these students are successively assimilated to the LoI (Baker 2011). Austria recently implemented such separate language support models (‘German language support classes and pull-out courses’) for ethnic minority students with beginning or emergent competences in the LoI. In the public discourse, these children are often referred to as ‘students with non-German colloquial language/first language’ – a term that suggests that they cannot speak German. However, many of these children have acquired German skills in the course of their socialisation in informal contexts and use German, among other languages, in their everyday lives. In fact, they constitute to a large extent a multilingual population (Cenoz 2013). Therefore, we will refer to these children as multilingual students recognising their language skills as a valuable resource. Drawing on Collier and Thomas (2017) we will also use the term ‘students with beginning or emerging skills in the language of instruction’ when it is more appropriate in a specific thematic context.

Since the school year 2018/29 students with beginner-level German language skills must spend up to 20 h a week in separate German language support classes (GLSC) while students with elementary German language skills spend most of their time in the mixed classroom but receive six hours of additional German language support per week in pull-out courses (POC). The implementation of these models has been strongly criticised by researchers from various disciplines, including education, migration, and linguistics (e.g. Müller and Schweiger 2018; Döll 2019). There is criticism that teaching multilingual students in separate educational settings bears the risk of further disadvantaging them, due to segregation and homogenisation within these settings. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the social integration and learning progress of these students in other academic subjects (Baker 2011; Bunar 2017; Herzog-Punzenberger, Le Pichon-Vorstman, and Siarova 2017) as well as their stigmatisation as being ‘remedial’ (Ovando, Combs, and Collier 2005, 73). Herzog-Punzenberger, Le Pichon-Vorstman, and Siarova (2017) critically point out that the classroom is usually the only place where multilingual students have to communicate in the majority language. A situation in which these children have to learn in a monolingual school system with the intention of assimilating to the dominant group can lead to linguistic insecurity in children, ‘poor

academic achievements, progressive loss of the home language, and low self-esteem' (ibid, 32). Proponents argue that this model allows students more time and space to learn the LoI compared to the situation in mixed classes. Furthermore, they argue that the accelerated acquisition of the LoI is especially necessary in secondary education, due to the increasing complexity of content (Koehler 2017).

Due to the nationwide implementation of the GLSC and POC in Austria, it is not possible to compare students' development within different language support models. However, this study aims to find out how teachers from primary and secondary schools in Austria rate different language support models with regard to the linguistic, personal and social development of students with beginning or emergent German language skills. This is of particular interest, since teachers' perceptions on this topic have not been given much attention by research yet – to the best of our knowledge. Furthermore, the study aims to explore which resources teachers consider important in order to inclusively teach multilingual students within mixed classrooms. The next sections will provide an overview of current practices regarding language support for students with beginning or emergent skills in the LoI when they enter school in European education systems, followed by empirical findings on teachers' views on multilingualism in classroom. Drawing on Bourdieu's seminal work *Language and Symbolic Power* (Bourdieu 1991, 1977), both existing empirical evidence and original research findings will be reflected in the discussion.

Language support programmes in European education systems and Austria's model to support multilingual students

Most European Union member states (24 of 27 states) aim to overcome the educational disadvantages of students with beginning or emergent skills in the LoI by instructing them in separate language support classes. The overall aim of these 'preparatory,' 'reception,' or 'transition classes', respectively, is that students acquire the national LoI as quickly as possible in order to participate more successfully in mainstream education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 82). According to the Eurydice Report (ibid, p.83), the following four language support models are commonly used within EU countries:

Mainstream classes for all lessons

Mainstream classes for most lessons

1. Mainstream classes for all lessons
2. Mainstream classes for most lessons
3. Separate classes for all lessons
4. Separate classes for most lessons

Many of the EU countries have implemented all of the four models listed above and initially place students within the respective models depending on their knowledge of the LoI (European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2019, 82). In three EU countries (Czechia, Latvia and, Slovakia), all students regardless of their skills in the LoI are placed into mixed classes for all of their lessons, at all education levels (ibid).

Even though educational authorities in most countries recommend teaching a wide range of subjects in preparatory classes, in addition to Austria there are 12 other European education systems (e.g. Germany, Spain) that exclusively teach the LoI or combine it with intercultural or citizenship education (European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2019, 93). With regard to first-language teaching, UNESCO has been pointing out the positive effects of it on the social, cognitive, and linguistic development of students for almost 70 years (e.g. Benson 2004; Bühmann and Trudell 2008; UNESCO 2016). A closer look at educational systems in Europe reveals the following picture: First-language teaching is most commonly recommended by educational authorities in the countries of northern Europe, while it is much less recommended in eastern European countries. In southern and western European countries, the situation is more diverse (European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2019, 99). Regarding the situation in Austria, students have no right to be taught in their first language (*ibid.*).

Given this context, the recently introduced GLSC/POC are politically charged. Before the introduction of this new regulation, it was common practice to support students with beginning or emerging German skills on an individual basis or in flexible group settings. Since the school year 2018/19 these students now have to learn in separate classrooms for up to 20 h a week in order to learn the German language as quickly as possible. It requires that after an interview with newly enrolled students, head teachers decide whether they have to take a standardised assessment ('MIKA-D Test'). Based on the assessment results of their German language skills, one of the following three scenarios is possible:

- (1) Students with sufficient language skills (= 'ordentlicher Schüler*in') attend regular classes.
- (2) Students with elementary German language skills (= 'außerordentlicher Schüler*in') attend regular classes and receive additional language support for six hours per week in a pull-out course (POC).
- (3) Students with beginner-level German language skills (= 'außerordentlicher Schüler*in') attend separate German language support classes (GLSC) for 15 h a week in primary school or 20 h a week in lower-secondary school.

The language support measures are valid for one semester and can be extended, if necessary, for an additional three semesters. At the end of each semester, the students have to be tested again (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung 2019). The reliability, objectivity, and validity of the 'MIKA-D Test' quickly came under criticism (Gitschthaler et al. 2020).

The GLSC can be classified as a structured immersion programme. In these programmes students with beginning skills in the LoI are separated from the mainstream classroom to receive language support. Their first languages are usually not developed any further in school settings (García 2008; Baker 2011). Structured immersion is not to be confused with traditional immersion programmes, which started in Canada in the 1960s and have become an important feature in the preservation of Canada's bilingualism. In contrast to structured immersion, the attendance of such programmes is not compulsory and the aim is bilingualism in both national languages (French and English).

With regard to the POC, the model of submersion combined with pull-out classes applies. The idea behind submersion is that students with beginning skills in the LoI

would learn it just by attending the lessons held in the target language and by interacting socially with classmates, without receiving any specific support or adaptation of the lessons. Submersion can also be accompanied by additional pull-out classes, which provide compensatory lessons in the LoI. Regarding the national educational aim, both structured immersion and submersion with pull-out classes can be classified as assimilative models (Baker 2011, 209). In particular, the effectiveness of GLSC has been a topic of heated debate in Austria since its implementation (e.g. Müller and Schweiger 2018) because international empirical evidence shows that segregated language learning models are detrimental for students who begin to learn the LoI (Collier and Thomas 2017; Watzinger-Tharp, Swenson, and Mayne 2016).

However, in certain situations, it can be advantageous for children to receive additional separate support in the LoI. This applies in particular to students who newly arrived in the host country (voluntary or forced) and face particular challenges, since their families often have no information about the new education system and may not speak the language(s) of the host country upon arrival. Persons seeking international protection are not always able to provide documentation on their children's educational history, or their children have never been able to attend school or could not attend school for a long period (European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2019). For these students short-term segregation in so-called 'welcome classes' can provide a protected environment for a limited period of time until they are ready to transition to mainstream classes. The prerequisite is that these language support units are implemented by persons who are highly qualified and that the separation is limited to a minimum of time (Crul 2017; Koehler and Schneider 2019).

Due to the recent and nationwide implementation of the GLSC/POC in Austria, there is currently insufficient data on their effectiveness. First data of official statistics, however, show that at the end of the school year 2018/19 (one year after the current GLSC were introduced), only around 32% of the students in such classes made the transition to mainstream classes. About half of the students (48%) were transferred to POC. Around 16% had to continue in the GLSC and 4% dropped out of the school system or moved abroad (Statistik Austria 2021).

Teachers' views on multilingualism

Hornberger and Cassels (2007) point out that teachers have political power in deciding whether or not to integrate students' languages into their teaching, thus either making their students' multilingualism a valuable resource for the whole class or not. Currently, pedagogical practice often still follows monolingual principles and it seems that international research results on multilingualism are hesitantly incorporated into the teaching behaviours of teachers (Otwinowska 2014, 2017; Daryai-Hansen et al. 2015; Portolés and Martí 2018). As a consequence, teaching methods are often characterised by a monolingual bias, languages are understood as separate units that should be taught separately (Portolés and Martí 2018), and emphasis is placed on multiculturalism rather than multilingualism (Bredthauer and Engfer 2016). Empirical evidence for Europe (de Angelis 2011; Heyder and Schädlich 2014; Bredthauer and Engfer 2016; Haukås 2016; Otwinowska 2017) indicates that most teachers rate multilingualism positively and recognise its advantages. However, when teachers work in multilingual classes, they often draw on

monolingual pedagogical practices (e.g. languages are learned in isolation from each other) (see also Portolés and Martí 2018).

In more detail, Bredthauer and Engfer (2016) found that many teachers do not allow the use of community languages in their classrooms, because they fear the exclusion of students who have German as a first language and a loss of personal authority. The study of de Angelis (2011) showed similar results for Austria, Great Britain, and Italy. In all three countries the teachers interviewed do encourage their students to use their first languages, but not within the classroom. Teachers are concerned that allowing their students to speak their first languages in the classroom may delay or impair their mastery of the LoI (de Angelis 2011).

With regard to teacher education and training, Bredthauer and Engfer (2016) discovered that many teachers do not feel trained to teach linguistically heterogeneous classes. Furthermore, they were also not prepared to integrate other languages than the LoI into the classroom. Besides being overwhelmed by the diversity of languages, teachers report the following barriers when teaching in multilingual classrooms: too large groups, lack of adequate teaching materials, lack of time (in class) and too time-consuming lesson planning. Therefore, many teachers think that language support is not a task for the mainstream, but is best provided in separate classes (Bredthauer and Engfer 2016).

These findings are supported by results from TALIS (= Teaching and Learning International Survey). In particular, the results on educational barriers due to a lack of both personnel and material resources show that a shortage of teachers qualified to support multilingual or socially disadvantaged students ranks at place 6 of the 8 most frequently perceived barriers to effective teaching in Austria (Wallner-Paschon, Suchań, and Oberwimmer 2019, 30). While on average in the EU comparison countries the ratio between pedagogical support teachers and general teachers is 1:8, this ratio is 1:19 in Austria (ibid, 30). The second most frequently perceived barrier is a lack of adequate classrooms. Furthermore, Gitschthaler et al. (2020) found that the number of multilingual students strongly predicts how teachers perceive available personnel, material, and spatial resources. Results indicate that the higher the number of these students, the stronger the perceived lack of resources. Regarding human resources, only 31% of teachers in Austria stated that teaching in a multicultural or multilingual environment was part of their initial teacher education and training (Höller, Itzlinger-Bruneforth, and Widauer 2019, 90). Moreover, 63% of respondents did not feel well prepared at all, 22% felt reasonably prepared, and only 15% felt well prepared (ibid). Furthermore, teachers showed the lowest self-efficacy in adapting their lessons to the cultural diversity of the children: About 40% of the respondents said that they hardly succeeded in doing so, another 6% said that they did not succeed at all (Höller, Itzlinger-Bruneforth, and Widauer 2019, 89). To the best of our knowledge, research on teachers' views on specific language support programmes (e.g. structured immersion) appears rather sparse. This study aims at closing this research gap.

Empirical study

The results presented in this article stem from the research project 'Teachers' attitudes towards the development of multilingual students in German language support classes and courses', which was carried out from October 2019 to January 2020 in eight (out of nine) different federal states of Austria.

Segregated language support models are common practice within EU countries as already outlined at the beginning of the article. The education reform that occurred in the realm of German language support for students with beginning or emergent German language skills in Austria has been strongly criticised in a position paper signed by many researchers and practitioners (e.g. Müller and Schweiger 2018; Döll 2019). Furthermore, the topic has been controversially discussed in the media. However, to the best of our knowledge, research has not yet given much attention to the perspectives of teachers on language support model. This study thus aims to explore how Austrian primary and secondary teachers rate the different language support models with regard to the linguistic, personal and social development of students with beginning or emergent German language skills. The development of the questionnaire was guided by the Eurydice Report (European Commission, EACEA, and Eurydice 2019) that lists the most frequently implemented language support models in the European Union (see section two) and by findings from TALIS 2018 (Wallner-Paschon, Suchań, and Oberwimmer 2019) on resources teachers perceive as most important to provide high-quality teaching. Since no study has been conducted for Austria on this topic thus far, a quantitative approach was chosen to gain a first overview on the teachers' perceptions based on a large-scale sample. Since questionnaires restrict respondents in their expression of subjective perspectives, future qualitative studies are needed and planned by the research team.

Research questions

The first research question focuses on how teachers perceive different language support models:

- (1) How do teachers rate different language support models ('fully included', 'partly included', and 'mainly segregated') with regard to the academic, social, and emotional development of multilingual students?

The next research questions aim to explore which resources teachers require to adequately teach multilingual students within mixed classes:

- (2) Which resources do teachers consider most important to adequately teach multilingual students within mixed classes?
- (3) What does an 'ideal class' look like for teachers (class size, proportion of students who have German as a first language to students who have another first language than German, and number of teachers), in order to adequately teach all students regardless of their command of the language of instruction in one mixed class?

Method and materials

Data collection

The process of data collection was greatly supported by the Boards of Education of the respective federal provinces in Austria (eight out of nine). A contact person in each Board of Education sent an email to the head teachers of all primary and secondary

schools which had implemented at least one GLSC/POC. Head teachers who expressed interest in participating in the study were contacted by the research team by email and received the link to the online questionnaire, which they forwarded to the teaching staff. However, the research team was not informed by the Boards of Education which schools refused to participate. Furthermore, no data could be provided on the number of potential participants at the involved schools. This means that the population and response rate cannot be determined. Hence, the results are limited in terms of representativeness. Regarding ethical aspects, the questionnaire was evaluated by the Ethics Committee of the University of Vienna. All participating teachers were informed about their voluntary participation and the anonymization of their data. Contact details of the researchers were given on the information letter to answer questions or clarify comments about the study in advance. Data protection was ensured through the use of a code system. The associated code list is kept locked at the University of Vienna. The printed questionnaires are properly stored in locked shelves at the University of Vienna; the virtual data are stored in password-protected folders and hard drives.

Measures

Teachers' perception of different language support models

To assess how teachers perceive different language learning models ('fully included,' 'partly included,' or 'mainly segregated') with regard to the academic, social, and emotional development of minority-language students, a scale with 3 items for each model was constructed. The 'fully included' model was defined as: 'All students learn in the same classroom. Language support takes place in the context of the mixed classroom'. The 'partly included' model was described as: 'All students learn in the same classroom, and students with beginning German language skills receive additional support for a few hours outside of the mixed classes by a second language teacher'. For the 'mainly segregated' model, the following item was constructed: 'Students with a low command of the German language receive additional language support in separate classes (outside of the mixed classes) most of the time'. Participants were asked to rate each language learning model on a 5-point Likert scale from negative (1) to positive (5).

Resources teachers consider most important to adequately teach multilingual students within mixed classrooms

To find out which resources are the most important ones for teachers to adequately teach multilingual students within a mixed classroom, questions referring to human, spatial, and material resources were developed. For example, teachers were asked how important they thought the number of teachers in the classroom or the class size were. Participants were asked to rate 7 different resources on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from not important (1) to very important (4).

Teachers' perceptions of an 'ideal class'

To explore what an ideal class for teachers would look like in order to adequately teach all students regardless of their command of the language of instruction in one mixed class,

the questionnaire included 3 items referring to the ideal number of students (= class size), the ideal proportion of students who have German as a first language to students with another first language, and the ideal number of teachers in the classroom. Participants were asked to give either a numeric indication or to tick that neither the proportion nor the number mattered to them.

Sample

The sample comprised 1,267 teachers (1,128 female and 126 male) between 21 and 65 years of age ($M=43.40$; $SD=11.86$). Furthermore, 859 (67.8%) participants worked in primary schools, 234 (18.5%) in middle schools, 26 (2.1%) in academic secondary schools, and 62 (4.9%) in other schools (for the purpose of these calculations, middle schools, academic secondary schools, and other schools have been grouped together as 'secondary schools').

With regard to the type of classes participating teachers taught, 588 (52.0%) teachers worked in mixed classes, 104 (9.2%) teachers worked in GLSC 58 (5.1%) teachers worked in POC and 306 (27.1%) teachers worked in several of these settings. Furthermore, 6.8% had another first language than German or were bilingual (i.e. having both German and another language as their first language).

Data analysis

To answer the research questions, descriptive statistics and univariate analyses of variance were used. Cohen's d and eta square (η^2) were used to interpret the effects. According to Cohen (1988), values around $d = .2$ or $\eta^2 = .01$ can be interpreted as weak effect. Values around $d = .5$ or $\eta^2 = .06$ can be interpreted as medium effect. If the Cohen's d is around .8 and η^2 is around .14 the effect size is high.

Results

Teachers' perceptions of different language support models

Table 1 shows the evaluation results of the different language support models ('fully included', 'partly included', or 'mainly segregated') for the total sample. Results indicate that almost 80% of the participants perceive the 'partly included' model as positive (39.7%) or rather positive (38.5%). Overall, the 'partly included' model has the highest rating, compared to the other language support models. With regard to the 'mainly segregated' model (= German language support classes), more than half of the participants perceive this model as negative (27.6%) or rather negative (26.7%).

Regarding the mean scores of the teachers' evaluation of the language support models for the total sample and the sub-groups gender and first language(s) spoken (see table 2), the t-test for dependent samples shows that teachers rated the programme 'partly included' significantly higher than either of the other programmes, 'fully included' ($t_{983} = -13.94, p < .01, d = -.44$) and 'mainly segregated' ($t_{984} = 19.69, p < .01, d = .63$). Furthermore, teachers perceived the 'fully included' programme as significantly more positive than the 'mainly segregated' setting ($t_{984} = 8.65, p < .01, d = .28$).

Table 1. Rating of different language support programmes for the total sample.

	negative	rather negative	neutral	rather positive	positive
All students learn in the same classroom. Language support takes place within the mixed class ('fully included').	10.1%	20.3%	14.1%	29.6%	25.9%
All students learn in the same classroom, and students with a low command of the German language receive additional support outside of the mixed classes by a second language teacher ('partly included').	3.1%	8.5%	10.1%	38.5%	39.7%
Students with a low command of the German language receive additional language support in separate classes most of the time ('mainly segregated').	27.6%	26.7%	9.5%	18.2%	18.0%

Table 2. Mean scores and standard deviations of the evaluation of the different language support models for the total sample and the sub-groups gender and first language(s) spoken.

support model	total sample	gender		first language(s) spoken	
		female	male	German	another than German or bilingual
fully included	3.41 (1.33)	3.43 (1.33)	3.15 (1.33)	3.40 (1.33)	3.51 (1.35)
partly included	4.03 (1.06)	4.05 (1.06)	3.87 (1.08)	4.04 (1.05)	3.92 (1.11)
mainly segregated	2.72 (1.48)	2.70 (1.48)	2.87 (1.52)	2.71 (1.48)	2.93 (1.55)

A further analysis (see table 3) for the sub-groups school level and type of class the participants worked in, shows an even higher mean score (4.26) for the 'partly included' programme among those participants who worked in POC. Additionally, univariate analyses of variance were calculated with the independent variables gender (female vs. male), first language(s) spoken (German as a first language vs. another first language than German/bilingual), school level (primary level vs. secondary level), and the type of class (mixed class vs. GLSC vs. POC). For the 'fully included' model, no group differences were found for gender ($F_1 = .984$, n.s.), first language(s) spoken ($F_2 = 2.049$, n.s.), school level ($F_1 = .560$, n.s.), or the type of class ($F_2 = 1.352$, n.s.). However, for the 'partly included' model, results confirmed a significant main effect for the type of class participants taught ($F_2 = 4.166$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .015$). Teachers who worked in a POC had higher ratings compared to participants in both mixed classes and GLSC. However, post-hoc analyses did not show any significant differences. Furthermore, no group differences were found for gender ($F_1 = .070$, n.s.), first language(s) spoken ($F_2 = .231$, n.s.), or school level ($F_1 = .166$, n.s.) for this model. The same applies to the 'mainly segregated' model: No group differences were found for gender ($F_1 = 1.376$, n.s.), first language(s) spoken ($F_2 = 1.547$, n.s.), school level ($F_1 = .382$, n.s.), or the type of class ($F_2 = .045$, n.s.).

Table 3. Mean scores and standard deviations of the evaluation of the different language support models with regard to the sub-groups school level and the type of class participants teach.

language support model	school level		type of class		
	primary level	secondary level	mixed class	GLSC	POC
fully included	3.58 (1.30)	3.00 (1.32)	3.53 (1.27)	3.37 (1.41)	3.44 (1.36)
partly included	4.06 (1.07)	4.01 (0.95)	4.06 (1.03)	3.99 (1.20)	4.26 (1.13)
mainly segregated	2.56 (1.45)	3.08 (1.48)	2.66 (1.45)	2.66 (1.48)	2.74 (1.65)

Resources teachers consider most important to adequately teach multilingual students within mixed classrooms

Mean scores indicate that all resources seem to be important to the participants in order to adequately instruct multilingual students within mixed classes (see [table 4](#)). For the total sample as well as all four sub-groups (see [tables 4 and 5](#)), it can be summarised that the presence of an additional teacher in the classroom is, however, the single most important resource. Interestingly, the proportion of students who speak German as a first language to students with another first language seems to be least important to the participants.

Teachers' perceptions of an 'ideal class' within which to adequately teach multilingual students

To find out, what an 'ideal class' for teachers would look like, participants were asked to indicate the ideal class size (= number of students), the ideal proportion of students who speak German as a first language to students with another first language, and the ideal number of teachers in the classroom—or if these aspects did not matter to them.

[Table 6](#) shows the percentage of participants who stated that these specific resources would matter and the mean scores of the indicated numbers for the total sample and both sub-groups: gender and first language(s) spoken. For the total sample, over 96% of the teachers stated that the number of students and the number of teachers in the classroom played a crucial role in being able to teach students with different language abilities adequately. In general, the participants indicated that at least two teachers should be present at the same time in an 'ideal classroom'. Furthermore, the classroom should be comprised of an average of about 16 students. It is worth noting that 80% of teachers think that it is important that the majority of these students (64%) have German as a first language. Interestingly, teachers with another or additional first language indicated a reduced need for students who speak German as a first language (58.9%). For the sub-groups school level (primary vs. secondary level) and type of class, no differences were found. ([Table 7](#)).

Regarding the subgroup type of class, teachers who work in GLSC consider fewer than 15 students in the classroom an ideal number. This result clearly differs from the ideal number of students indicated by teachers in mixed classes and POC.

Discussion

Both empirical findings from existing research and the present study indicate that most European countries adhere to a monolingual habitus: Separate language support classes, which can be classified as structured immersion programmes, are implemented in the education systems of the majority of European member states.

To better understand the dominance of the monolingual habitus of institutions (Gogolin 1997), it is necessary to consider that the official language is the result of complex historical processes, which are usually accompanied by considerable conflicts, the elimination of other languages and dialects, and thus the enforcement of power (Thompson 1991). It is undeniable that language and language policy play a crucial role in the development of unifying narratives of citizenship, cultural identity, and

Table 4. Ranking and mean scores of resources teachers indicated to be important to adequately teach multilingual students within mixed classrooms for the total sample and the sub-samples gender and first language(s) spoken.

resources	gender			first language(s) spoken						
	total sample			female		male				
additional teachers class size additional support staff (e.g. school psychologists, social workers, social pedagogues) additional group rooms additional teaching material additional training number of students with German as a first language	1	3.90 (0.32)	1	3.92 (0.29)	2	3.78 (0.49)	1	3.91 (0.31)	1	3.84 (0.41)
	2	3.84 (0.42)	2	3.84 (0.42)	1	3.81 (0.42)	2	3.84 (0.42)	2	3.81 (0.43)
	3	3.72 (0.56)	3	3.73 (0.56)	3	3.68 (0.61)	3	3.73 (0.56)	3	3.67 (0.58)
	4	3.61 (0.63)	4	3.62 (0.62)	4	3.53 (0.67)	4	3.62 (0.62)	6	3.42 (0.74)
	5	3.55 (0.68)	5	3.57 (0.67)	5	3.44 (0.77)	5	3.56 (0.68)	5	3.49 (0.75)
	6	3.47 (0.67)	6	3.48 (0.67)	6	3.36 (0.66)	6	3.47 (0.68)	4	3.53 (0.58)
	7	3.35 (0.78)	7	3.36 (0.78)	7	3.28 (0.79)	7	3.36 (0.78)	7	3.23 (0.80)

Table 5. Ranking and mean scores of resources teachers indicated to be important to adequately teach multilingual students within mixed classrooms for the sub-groups school level and the type of class participants teach.

resources	school level			type of class				
	primary level		secondary level	mixed class		GLSC	POC	
additional teachers class size additional support staff (e.g. school psychologists, social workers, social pedagogues) additional group rooms additional teaching material additional training number of students with German as a first language	1	3.94 (0.24)	2	3.81 (0.44)	1	3.92 (0.27)	1	3.95 (0.21)
	2	3.85 (0.42)	1	3.83 (0.44)	2	3.85 (0.40)	2	3.86 (0.35)
	3	3.74 (0.55)	3	3.70 (0.59)	3	3.76 (0.55)	3	3.63 (0.70)
	4	3.61 (0.63)	5	3.60 (0.64)	4	3.60 (0.65)	4	3.67 (0.57)
	5	3.54 (0.70)	4	3.62 (0.63)	5	3.54 (0.71)	5	3.59 (0.71)
	6	3.44 (0.68)	6	3.59 (0.59)	6	3.41 (0.69)	6	3.48 (0.71)
	7	3.39 (0.76)	7	3.21 (0.85)	7	3.40 (0.76)	7	3.37 (0.70)

Table 6. Percentage of participants who consider specific resources important and corresponding mean scores for the total sample and the sub-groups gender and first language(s) spoken.

resources	gender			first language(s) spoken		
	total sample	female	male	German	another than German or bilingual	
number of students (class size)	97.3% 16.57 students (4.08)	97.1% 16.58 students (3.97)	98.8% 16.51 students (4.65)	97.3% 16.58 students (4.07)	97.0% 16.38 students (4.25)	
percentage of students with German as a first language	80.0% 64.25% (19.03)	79.8% 63.97% (18.68)	82.1% 65.57% (22.19)	80.4% 64.73% (18.89)	74.2% 58.09% (20.72)	
number of teachers in the classroom	96.4% 2.24 teachers (0.51)	97.7% 2.3 teachers (0.48)	84.0% 2.23 teachers (0.74)	96.9% 2.25 teachers (0.51)	91.1% 2.16 teachers (0.55)	

Table 7. Percentage of participants who consider specific resources important and corresponding mean scores for the sub-groups school level and type of class participants teach.

resources	school level			type of class		
	primary level	secondary level	regular class	GLSC	POC	
number of students (class size)	97.8% 16.72 students (3.90)	95.5% 16.26 students (4.49)	97.2% 16.86% students (3.66)	96.3% 14.87 students (4.96)	97.5% 16.64 students (2.62)	
percentage of students with German as a first language	80.9% 62.86% (18.47)	75.6% 66.57% (20.40)	81.0% 65.42% (17.41)	69.5% 60.70% (19.70)	72.7% 57.08% (20.59)	
number of teachers in the classroom	98.9% 2.21 teachers (0.47)	91.2% 2.34 teachers (0.64)	97.5% 2.24 teachers (0.49)	97.4% 2.19 teachers (0.39)	100% 2.33 teachers (0.49)	

linguistic affiliation of modern nation states (Thompson 1991; Gal 2010; From and Holm 2019). Since public institutions, such as schools, are traditionally organised within the nation-state framework, the official language is obligatory—a fact that consolidates a monolingual habitus (Bourdieu 1991, 1977). In other words, schools as public spaces translate the language ideologies of nation-states into pedagogical practice (Shohamy 2006).

The ability of students to build linguistic capital depends mostly on the education they receive; hence schools play a significant role in regulating linguistic capital and mediating access to it (Bourdieu 1991; García 2008). Thereby, the composition of school classes influences the academic success of individual students. In order to improve the disadvantaged situation of students with beginning or emerging skills in the language of instruction, Austria implemented the so-called German language support classes (GLSC) and pull-out courses (POC) in the school year 2018/19. Until then, each school had its own concept, comprising different models: fully and partly inclusive language support as well as separate German language support for a few and/or the majority of lessons within flexible small groups ('Sprachstartgruppen') or on an individual basis were in practice. Thus, schools were more autonomous in designing their language support programmes and were able to adapt them according to their students' needs as well as to their personnel and classroom resources. Since the GLSC/POC are now the only language support system in the country, there are no comparison studies available to evaluate their effectiveness.

The results of the study presented in this paper show that more than 50% of the teachers who participated in the survey perceive the 'mainly segregated' model as rather negative. One possible explanation for this might be that the implementation of these classes resulted in a significant loss of school autonomy. It can be assumed that teachers who previously applied inclusive language support models disagree with the recent rigid regulations for the GLSC. Insights from a qualitative study with teachers on the GLSC (Resch, Gitschthaler, and Schwab under review) shows criticism by teachers at the level of organisation, learning and social inclusion. Not only would it be a big challenge to coordinate the schedules of students from different classrooms, there is also a lack of adequate rooms to teach the students. Further, the teachers perceived the classes as having a negative impact on students' language development because they hardly have opportunities to learn from more proficient German speakers and they consider language learning in these classes as artificial ('learning in a lab'). Regarding social inclusion, teachers were concerned that GLSC foster segregation, exclusion, ghettoisation and othering processes (ibid). Nevertheless, more than one third of the participants (36.2%) in this study rated these classes as positive. Again, insights from qualitative research (Resch, Gitschthaler, and Schwab under review) can help to interpret this finding. In the cited study teachers reported that they consider the GLSC as an intensive training which facilitates a smoother transition into the mainstream class. Furthermore, the authors found that some teachers consider segregated classes as a safe learning environment ('shelter'), in which students have more time to develop and are protected from being stigmatised as so-called 'problem children' (ibid).

The provision of inclusive language support ('fully included' model) for multilingual students within mixed classes was perceived as (rather) positive by 55.5% of the participants. However, highest mean scores were found for the 'partly included' model, in

which language support is additionally provided by a second language teacher outside the mixed class. Almost 80% of participants rated this model as (rather) positive. This result might be explained by a lack of resources: Only 31% of teachers in Austria stated in TALIS 2018 that teaching in a multilingual environment was part of their initial teacher education and training. In particular, 63% of respondents did not feel well prepared at all, 22% felt reasonably prepared, and only 15% felt well prepared (Höller, Itzlinger-Bruneforth, and Widauer 2019, 90). Therefore, it is understandable that teachers prefer second language teachers to provide language support for multilingual students. However, as documented in research on special education, this model bears the risk that general teachers delegate the responsibility for supporting these children to teachers with special competences (Schwab et al. 2015).

Regarding personnel resources, the new regulations have led to changes: Until German language support classes and courses were introduced, teachers were allotted 0.86 h per student and week to support German language learners. Currently, there are 15 h of teacher support for one German language support class. Since there is no upper limit regarding the number of students in these classes, the number of support hours for one student can vary considerably. The most critical change, however, is that the new regulations allow for no additional resources to further support students after they have left the GLSC/POC (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Forschung und Wissenschaft 2020). This regulation contradicts findings from language development research, which suggest that language support should be continuous, preferably from pre-school to upper secondary level (Collier and Thomas 2017; Crul 2017).

Our findings on resource requirements indicate that additional teachers and additional support staff (e.g. second language teachers, school psychologists, social workers) rank amongst the three resources perceived as most important, followed by additional classrooms. This result is in line with findings from TALIS 2018, which show that a shortage of support staff and teachers who are qualified to support students with beginning German language skills as well as a lack of classrooms are among the six most significant barriers for effective teaching (Wallner-Paschon, Suchań, and Oberwimmer 2019, 30).

Regarding the teachers' perceptions of an 'ideal class,' it is noteworthy that more than 96% stated that at least two teachers needed to be in the classroom. This result can be interpreted in two ways: Firstly, as an expression of the need to introduce co-teaching, as a service model in which a 'special' and a general teacher work closely together to provide access to the general curriculum while supporting students with additional educational needs. Co-teaching is already established for more than 50 years in the field of special education and has become an important feature in the provision of inclusive education (Scruggs, and M, and Mastropieri 2017). As an alternative explanation, teachers may wish to merely delegate the responsibility for the inclusion of multilingual students to a second teacher with special qualification.

Furthermore, an 'ideal class' should comprise a maximum of 16 students. Currently, classes at both primary and lower-secondary schools usually comprise around 22 students. The results of this study indicate that participants of this study perceive the common class size as too large. Moreover, 80% of the participants indicated that it was important that the majority (64%) of these students speak German as a first language.

Recent data for Austria show that the percentage of students who have another first language than German has greatly increased over the last decade. This applies especially to the city of Vienna, where 55% of students have (an)other first language(s) than German. This percentage is even higher in certain school types, whereby highest levels can be observed in primary schools (77.7%) and in non-academic lower-secondary schools (= middle schools) (80.1%) (Statistik Austria 2019).

Regarding resources, it is worth noting that due to the Corona crisis adaptive and contemporary digital tools that provide support for both teachers and multilingual students have been given much attention (see Ferlazzo 2020). In particular, computer-based learning environments (CBLEs) are a promising resource in this regard. CBLEs can compensate for the often perceived lack of personnel resources and opportunities for co-teaching. They are not only an effective means of acquiring complex knowledge and skills, but also provide authentic language support in first language development (e.g. Van Laere et al. 2017).

To sum up, the results of the present study indicate that participants of this study prefer to include multilingual students in mixed classes, provided that adequate provision of resources is ensured.

Both GLSC and POC aim to assimilate multilingual children to the dominant language. In ‘The economics of linguistic exchanges’ Bourdieu (1977) refers to the importance of considering the laws which determine ‘who (de facto and de jure) may speak, to whom, and how’ (Bourdieu 1977, 648). A quick look at the Austrian Schools Act reveals that the ‘language of instruction is the German language’ (Schulunterrichtsgesetz § 16 (1)). This equation of language and German and the associated exclusion of other first languages make it clear that Austria adheres to the traditional model of monolingual school instruction, even though social pluralism and multilingualism exist. In the future, it would be desirable for policy makers to take the voices of key actors in the field of education, especially those of teachers and parents, into account to increase both the acceptance and efficiency of implemented measures (Kast and Schwab 2020).

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