

EVALUATING L3 TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS: RESULTS FROM A PILOT STUDY

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Nowadays many students are already bilingual or even multilingual to different degrees when they start learning a third or additional language (L3). However, programmes to train language teachers do not commonly include any specialised training in Third Language Acquisition (TLA) or multilingualism, even if these languages are actually taught as third languages and the students are all bilingual or multilingual. The study presented is a part of a larger quantitative pilot study, and this section focused on building a questionnaire to measure teachers' beliefs about multilingual learners. The research questions for this section of the pilot study were: (1) To what degree are teachers aware of the specific learning characteristics of their multilingual learners? (2) Is there a significant difference in these results between native and non-native teachers of the language? (3) Is there a significant difference in these results depending on the level of multilingualism of the teachers? The participants for this pilot study were 61 teachers of Spanish as an L3 working in six different countries in the east, centre and south of Europe. The instrument was an online questionnaire built on the basis of existing literature and previous studies about multilingual learners. A number of items were designed to measure each selected construct (learner autonomy, language learning strategies, aptitude, students' expectations of the teacher, interlinguistic comparisons, etc.). The results of this section of the study will be presented and a number of preliminary conclusions will be introduced, such as the need to raise L3 teachers' awareness of the specific learning characteristics of the multilingual learners and the implications of these results for prospective L3 language teacher training courses.