

## Pre-service EFL' Teachers' perception of multilingualism and multilingual education

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**Abstract:** The objective of the current study was to investigate the perception of pre-service teachers in Indonesia regarding multilingualism and multilingual in education, outlining the benefits of multilingualism in teaching. In this paper, the term of multilingualism was employed to reflect the ability to speak more than one language competently. To this end, a total of 250 pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers were invited to complete the study; however, only 203 responses were sufficient to be analysed using Rasch Modeling. These responses consisted of 159 female and 44 male pre-service teachers; and 164 pre-service teachers were from private universities and the rests were public university. The findings of this study indicate that a majority of pre-service teachers view multilingualism as beneficial to both their students and themselves. Most participants perceived that multilingualism could facilitate student learning of a new language, help develop their cognitive and communicative skills, and provide them with familiarity with additional languages for easier communication.

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, Pedagogical Practice, Multilingual Education, Indonesian Pre-Service EFL Teachers.

### Introduction

Generally, the English language has been used as a lingua franca in many parts of the world. However, current global trends enable people to travel, communicate, interact, and work collaboratively across borders with ease. The migration and interactions among various communities, cultures, and races, coupled with the shift in business and political interests, have encouraged people to use other languages than English. More people have

now acquired the ability to speak in more than two languages. In other words, there is an increasing global demand from people in diverse societies to improve their language proficiency in languages other than English (Merino & Lasagabaster, 2018). To address this demand, many countries have promoted multilingualism in their language education systems and activities (Lasagabaster, 2015). For example, in Norway, Norwegian is applied in their curricula. In their curriculum, the competence aims to enhance

learners' multilingualism by using L1 Norwegian as a first stepping stone in developing learners' multilingualism (Haukås, 2016).

The term "Multilingualism" is a general term used to describe communication in two or more languages (Bot, 2019). It is related to the ability of a community, in which its members possess the capacity to use more than two languages for communication. Therefore, multilingualism has a concept that encompasses language use, individual competencies, and language situations that move across countries or societies (Clyne, 2017). Cenoz (2003) further asserts that multilingualism may be defined as the acquisition of a non-native language by learners who already possess or are in the process of acquiring two other languages. The acquisition of this language yields 'L3' (third language) as multilingualism. As more and more learners begin acquiring more than two languages, multilingualism is not just being included as a general term but is also becoming a part of language education.

In the language education context, multilingual education can be seen as a component to develop strong, effective, and valuable multilingualism and multiliteracy, as well as providing immediate access for all students regardless of their English language proficiency to grade-level academic content (Johnson, 2005). Thompson (2014) suggests that multilingualism is an important component in the learning of language as a way to be exposed to more than one foreign language. In a multilingual classroom, awareness of multilingualism as a dimension in its own is of utmost importance. An example from Vikøy et al. (2021) was found in the

Norwegian curriculum, which includes competence aims related to viewing multilingualism and linguistic diversity as a resource and using language comparisons to enhance students' multilingual awareness, as the use of language comparison facilitates multilingual students in language learning. Another example from Calafato (2021) is that in the Russian curriculum, students are made aware of the value of having knowledge of several languages in school and society and multilingualism as an important basis to enhance language learning. This is corroborated by the federal standards in Russia, which highlight that students should be able to use their knowledge of foreign languages by placing emphasis on the use of multilingualism as a pedagogical resource.

Multilingual teaching methods are a method of using more than two languages to convey curriculum materials with the aim of strengthening students' competencies in language learning. It can be argued that diversifying the languages taught in the education system or motivating students to learn more than one foreign language can be achieved only by utilizing Multilingualism (Griva & Chostelidou, 2012). As stated by prior studies, multilingualism is a language teaching method that is effective in strengthening students' language skills. The results from Calafato's (2020) study indicate that with students who show agreement with language beliefs about language education, the benefits and potential of learning multiple languages can be felt and realized. If this can be achieved, language and multilingualism can advance the development of the educational world; therefore, learning a language offers tremendous benefits. Furthermore, focusing self-guidance on the vision of becoming multilingual could have an

important role in engendering motivation (Henry, 2017).

Multilingualism can advance the world's development, especially in relation to educational progress. Yet, this presents pre-service teachers with various perspectives on the employment of multilingualism in foreign language teaching. As Iversen (2021) elucidated, the language ideologies held by pre-service teachers in Norway continue to shape their experiences with multilingual classrooms, inevitably leading to doubts concerning the inclusion of languages other than the primary language of instruction. Nonetheless, their cognizance can be capacitated through the deployment of focus group sessions, with the aim of increasing pre-service teachers' recognition of linguistic diversity, and ultimately arriving at more viable solutions to the difficulties inherent to multilingual instruction.

Previous research has shown the pre-service teachers' perception of the use of multilingualism as a foreign language learning method. Limited, conclusive findings or research concerning perception in the use of multilingualism and multilingualism in education, particularly in Indonesia, which has a variety of languages, are available. Moreover, to gain an insight into the pre-service teachers' perception of multilingualism education in Indonesia, our study was conducted to ascertain the extent to which pre-service teachers believe in the advantages of being or becoming multilingual for teachers. Three research questions were addressed in this study as follows :

1. Are Indonesian pre-service teachers aware about multilingualism and multilingual education?

2. To what extent do pre-service teacher perceive about multilingualism and multilingualism education?

## Method

### *Participant and Context*

The participants in the current study were selected using a convenience sampling method. This method allowed the researchers to access the nearest individuals to serve as research participants or respondents (Cohen et al., 2018). A total of 250 pre-service EFL teachers were approached and an invitation link to participate in the study survey were sent to them through WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Prior to the study, the participants filled out the consent form section in the questionnaire and submitted their responses. Of 250 pre-service teachers, only 203 responses were sufficient to be analysed using Rasch Modelling. These responses consisted of 159 female and 44 male pre-service teachers; and 164 pre-service teachers were from private universities and the rests were public university.

### *Data Collecting Instrument*

The instrument of this study was adapted from Camenzuli et al. (2022). The instruments were 39 item close-ended questionnaire, developed using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). In addition to demographical information (N=5 questions), the questionnaire items were classified into two main constructs, including (1) Understanding Component (SFUC) that reflects understanding the use and ability to speak more than one language

(N=17 items) and (2) Pedagogy Component (SFPC) indicating multilingual pedagogy (N=17 items). The study instruments were assessed for its reliability, and found that it possessed a high level of reliability for the global scale (Cronbach alpha  $\alpha=0.92$ ).

### Data Analysis

The data for the current study were analyzed using Rasch WINSTEPS (version 5.2.5.1) to evaluate the quantitative data. The analysis included the following procedure: first, the data were downloaded from Google Forms and converted into an Excel file. Second, the data were tabulated and coded to facilitate the quantitative analysis of the data. Third, various assessments of item and person fit through Outfit statistic and mean square before Z-standardized were conducted to address outliers, dimensionality, item and person separation reliability, rating scale, item and person mapping, and item bias. The acceptable values of the Outfit statistic ranged from +0.5 to +2.0 for mean squares and from -2.0 to +3.0 for Z-standardized. Fourth, scrutinized data were analyzed using WINSTEPS Rasch to identify

the relationships among the variables to assess the suitability of unidimensionality.

### Data Tabulation and Screening Process

Data were collected using a Google Form from the site server, containing 34 questions, with 250 participants who had undertaken internship courses in school and/or microteaching. The collected data were then converted into an Excel file, and again from there into formatted text, which was input into the Winstep application for data conversion progress. The data were divided into two categories: valid questionnaire data and invalid data. Of the 250 samples, 11 were invalid data owing to the fact that those respondents had not undertaken internship courses in school or microteaching, with a further 36 outliers (participants who did not answer the questionnaire seriously) having been deleted using the Rasch model (Mulyono et al., 2020; Ningsih et al., 2021). The remaining 203 valid samples were then used for analysis in the second round. The Data analysis table was developed by adapting Lee et al. (2020) to describe the statistical analysis below.

**Table 1.** Summary of Rasch measurement model

Parameter (with quality criteria)	Global Scale (34 items)	Statement For Understanding Component (SFUC)	Statement For Pedagogy Component (SFPC)
<i>Model fit: Summary of items</i>			
Item mean in logits (criteria: 0.0 logits)	.00, SD = .42	.00, SD = .46	.00, SD = .28
Item reliability	.92	.93	.80
Item separation reliability (criteria: good, 0.81-0.90; very good, 0.91-0.94; excellent, >0.94)	.92	.93	.80

Parameter (with quality criteria)	Global Scale (34 items)	Statement For Understanding Component (SFUC)	Statement For Pedagogy Component (SFPC)
Item model fit MNSQ range extremes (criteria: good, 0.5-1.5; very good, 0.71-1.4; excellent, 0.77-1.3)	Infit .69 – 1.36 Outfit .73 – 2.03	Infit .82 – 1.38 Outfit .76 – 1.67	Infit .79 – 1.27 Outfit .79 – 1.43
Item separation index (criteria > 3)	3.29	3.61	2.00
Separate item strata = [(4 x separation index) + 1]/3 (criteria: fair, 2-3; good, 3-4; very good, 4-5; excellent, >5)	4.72 ≈ 5 levels	5.14 ≈ 5 levels	3.00 ≈ 3 levels
<i>Model fit: Summary of persons</i>			
Person mean in logits (criteria: 0.0 logits)	1.96, SD = 1.74	2.08, SD = 1.75	2.34, SD = 1.93
Person reliability	.92	.88	.90
Person separation reliability (criteria: good, 0.81-0.90; very good, 0.91-0.94; excellent, >0.94)	.92	.88	.90
Person separation index (criteria > 2)	3.50	2.68	2.99
Separate Person strata = [(4 x separation index) + 1]/3 (criteria: fair, 2-3; good, 3-4; very good, 4-5; excellent, >5)	5.00 ≈ 5 levels	3.90 ≈ 4 levels	4.32 ≈ 4 levels
<i>Rating Scale Analysis</i>			
Responses per category (criteria: ≥ 10)	YES	NA	NA
Adjacent threshold distance (criteria: 1.4-5 logits)	(i) scale 0-1 was 0 to -1.09 = 1.09 logits; (ii) scale 1-2 was (-1.09) – (-2.00) = 3.09 logits; (iii) scale 2-3 was (-2.00) – (.06) = 2.06 logits; (iv) scale 3-4 was (.06) – (3.02) = 2.96 logits		
Outfit MNSQ (criteria: < 2 logits)	YES	NA	NA
Probability curve graph (criteria: distinct curve on each response category and each peak is higher than 0.5 logits)	YES	NA	NA
Average measure (criteria: increases monotonically across rating scale)	YES	NA	NA
<i>Dimensionality</i>			

Parameter (with quality criteria)	Global Scale (34 items)	Statement For Understanding Component (SFUC)	Statement For Pedagogy Component (SFPC)
Raw variance in data explained by measure (criteria: > 20%)	43.8%	42.0%	47.9%
PCA eigenvalue for first contrast (criteria: > 2.0 indicates presence of another dimension; ≤ 2 supports unidimensional scale)	3.2	2.5	2.2
Unexplained variance in 1 <sup>st</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> contrast of PCA of residuals (criteria: good, 5-10%; very good, 3-5%; excellent, <3%)	2.8% – 5.3%	4.5% – 8.6%	4.0% – 6.7%

SD: standard deviation; PCA: principal components analysis; DIF: differential item functioning; MNSQ: mean square; NA: not applicable.

## Findings and discussions

### 1. Descriptive Statistics

As Table 1 showed, the descriptive statistics for the measured person had a mean of 1.96 and a standard deviation of 1.74, and a mean of 0.00 and a standard deviation of 0.42 for the items. The Person/Item Separation Index ranged from 3.50 logits to 3.29 logits. The results showed that the values met the criteria and indicated a score ranging from good to very good, indicating that the instrument had the capability to effectively differentiate abilities of persons and items' difficulty.

### 2. Pre-service teachers' awareness of multilingualism and multilingual education

The quantitative data were evaluated using the Rasch model analysis and the WINSTEP application to answer the research question. A right map was developed to demonstrate the distribution of the person and item difficulty levels, illustrated such that the highest level depicted the most difficult item

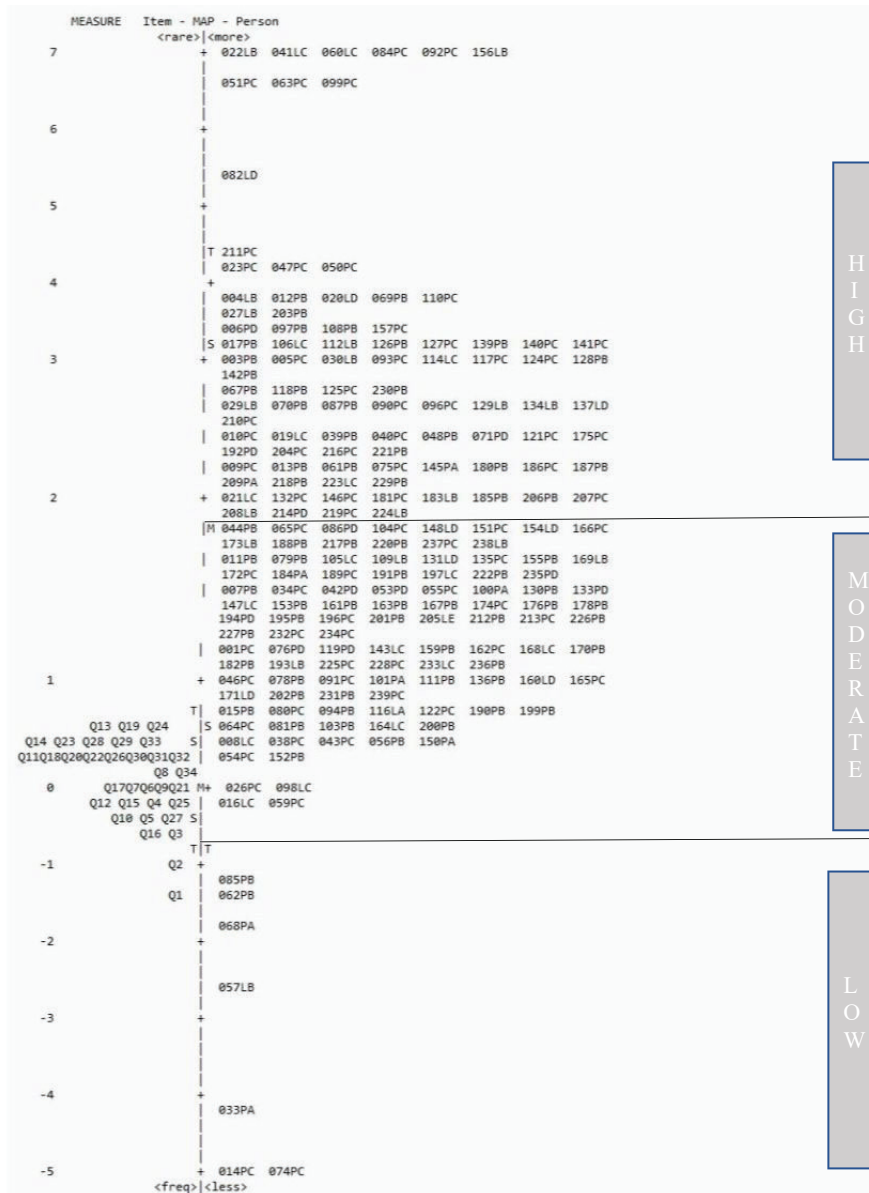
and the lowest level depicted the easiest item, as well as an item for which the respondent had very easy choosing between "Agree" or "Disagree" (see Figure 1). The right part of the right map (Figure 1) shows the level of each item, in order from most disagreed to most agreed.

In Figure 1, items that were difficult or easy for respondents to strongly disagree with were in items Q13, Q19, and Q24. In Q13, the highest level with the choice being "Multilingual students are often successful in their study" at a .65 logit, consisting of a statement for the understanding component subscales, and in Q19, the item "Multilingualism is a right that should be taught in schools" at a .55 logit, consisting of a statement for the pedagogy component subscales, and in Q24, the item "Multilingualism has increased in society, therefore schools should change their way of teaching" at a .54 logit, consisting of a statement for the pedagogy component subscales. Then, in Q1, which was an item that was easy for respondents to strongly agree with, as the highest level with the choice being "Multilingualism is a resource for learning a new language" at a -1.47

logit, and Q2, the item “Multilingualism expands verbal skills” at a -.91 logit. Both of them consisted

of a statement for the understanding component subscales and were displayed as the easiest items or easy for respondents to choose strongly agree with.

Figure 1. Wright person-item map (N = 203)



“#” represents four persons; “.” Represents one to three persons.  $M_p$ : person mean;  $S_p$ : one standard deviation of person mean;  $T_p$ : two standard deviation of person mean;  $M_i$ : item mean;  $S_i$ : one standard deviation of item mean;  $T_i$ : two standard deviation of item mean; Statement for understanding component (SFUC) Q1-Q17; Statement for pedagogy component (SFPC) Q18-34

Additionally, Table 2 summarises the classification of each person's items according to demographic level.

**Table 2.** Summary of the classification

Level	N	Gender		Age					Type of the university	
		F	M	A	B	C	D	E	S	N
Low	7	6	1	2	3	2	-	-	6	1
Moderate	105	84	21	5	45	41	14	1	87	18
High	91	69	22	2	39	43	7	-	71	20
Total	203	159	44	9	87	86	21	1	164	39

Gender ( F= Female, M= Male); Age ( A=20 y.o., B=21 y.o, C=22 y.o, D=23 y.o, E=24 y.o); Type of university (S=Private University, N=Public University)

As shown in Table 2, 91 of the pre-service teachers believed in and were aware of the use of multilingualism, and showed a level of confidence in the benefits of being and using multilingualism for teachers. A total of 105 pre-service teachers were at a moderate level, and the remaining 7 pre-service teachers were at a low level.

**Table 3.** DIF analysis

Item	Type of University	DIF measure	DIF contrast	t	Probability
	N	.01			
Q9	S	.79	.78	1.10	.01
	N	-.34			
Q10	S	.42	.75	1.20	.01
Item	Gender	DIF measure	DIF contrast	t	Probability
	L	-.48			
Q21	P	.30	.78	2.36	.02

Analysis of Person Differential Item Functioning (DIF) (Table 3) was examined if the pre-service teachers' responses differed in reference to their demographic background. DIF analysis was examined using DIF contrast criteria higher than 0.5 and the probability value of the item lower than 0.05. The analysis found two items identified to present DIF: in the Statement for understanding component influenced by



Type of university, and one in the Statement for pedagogy component influenced by Gender. Item Q9 “Multilingualism provides a better employment opportunities for multilingual students” revealed that pre-service teachers from public and private universities thought that multilingualism provides better opportunities for employment. Similarly, Item Q10 “Multilingualism expands a bigger vocabulary for multilingual students” demonstrated that pre-service teachers from public and private universities thought that multilingualism increases their vocabulary. Finally, Item Q21 “competence in more than two languages are necessary” showed that male and female pre-service teachers believed that competence in more than two languages was necessary. From the three results, it was found that the two pre-service teachers did not differ in the probability of certain responses to the items.

The current study also revealed the difficulty level of the items on the left side of the Wright Maps (see Figure 1) for examining the perception of multilingualism. As the perception of a pre-service teacher regarding multilingualism is that it is a resource for learning a new language and expanding verbal skills (LV Q1 = -1.47; LV Q2 = -.91), they also feel that it expands their personal outlook as teachers (LV Q16 = -.55), and that it results in an increased ability to use effective reading strategies (LV Q3 = -.54). This finding can be explained by the fact that the pre-service teacher has a positive belief that multilingualism is a source for learning a new language and is able to improve verbal skills. It can be stated that multilingualism can help students learn a new language, in addition to the fact that pre-service teachers also feel that multilingualism expands

their personal outlook of students. The use of multilingualism to support learning a new language has a positive impact on continuing to learn about multilingualism. In addition, pre-service teachers also support that, besides learning a new language, multilingualism can also produce cognitive skills, and pre-service teachers believe that students who have multilingual skills have a broader vocabulary (LV Q10 = -.41; LV Q5 = -.41). This is in line with what was recognized in the previous study that multilingualism provides benefits in reflecting cognitive and communicative skills (French, 2016).

In addition, pre-service teachers also demonstrate that possessing multilingualism skills provides an effective key in communicating, and can think more readily due to having a wide range of languages (LV Q4 = -.28; LV Q8 = .26). This is correlated to cognitive abilities arising from multilingualism. These results accord with Fan (2015), who argued that multilingual exposure enhances the development of effective interpersonal communication, and it can also diminish miscommunication through active exposure to young children in diverse linguistic environments. Pre-service teacher also expressed disapproval of changes in teaching approaches that may be necessitated by increased multilingualism in the current environment (LV Q24 = .54). Furthermore, the pre-service teacher felt that multilingualism is not a right that ought to be taught in school (LV Q19 = .55). The current study also showed that multilingual students are not always successful in their studies (LV Q13 = .65). This suggests that, despite the developments in contemporary society, pre-service teachers are not ready to adapt their methods of instruction to

account for multilingualism, nor is it a requirement that must be taught in schools.

## **Conclusion**

The current study aimed to investigate pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions regarding multilingualism and multilingual education. Findings show that pre-service teachers expressed positive agreement that multilingualism is a resource for learning a new language and enhances their verbal skills. They indicated a belief in the benefits of being or becoming a multilingual teacher, as it not only expands verbal skills, but also expands one's outlook. These results are in line with inquiries related to the benefits of multilingualism for teachers. The questions in this study also addressed pre-service teachers' awareness of multilingualism, and the findings suggested that cognitive skills and communication skills can be developed through multilingualism, as it contributes to one's familiarity with additional languages, making it easier to communicate. Moreover, while pre-service teachers perceived multilingualism positively, they indicated that they are not yet prepared to alter their approach to teaching in light of the increased presence of multilingualism in the current environment, as they do not view it as a mandatory component of schooling. Additional measures are needed to support pre-service teachers in multilingual education.

The findings of this study add several points which suggest that multilingualism has a positive impact in supporting language and communication skills. Furthermore, it has been designed to facilitate learning new languages and simplifying communication in everyday life. Consequently, pre-service teachers and students ought to have a better understanding of multilingualism. Additionally, multilingualism makes it possible to interact with diverse individuals, and as such, pre-service teachers should create opportunities to present multilingual worlds to their learners, thus sustaining the idea of multilingualism in current society.

The current study still has some limitations, especially in terms of participants who are not widely accessible throughout Indonesia. The results obtained from this study cannot fully represent the perceptions of other pre-service teachers in Indonesia. Further research is needed to address the problem of pre-service teachers' readiness in multilingual education. Moreover, this study was largely dominated by female participants and very few male ones. Ultimately, the findings of this study cannot represent the view of the population as a whole. It is suggested that further research should cover a wider population with reference to similar aspects and gender.

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