



## Opinions of Primary School Teachers Providing Education to Bilingual Students

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### Abstract

In today's world, a structure where different languages coexist is prominent. In our country, many different languages are used in addition to Turkish. In an educational environment where different languages coexist, it is important to examine the views of teachers, who are one of the stakeholders in this process. This study aims to examine the views of primary school teachers who teach in bilingual classrooms, based on their own experiences, regarding teaching in such classrooms. The research was conducted using a qualitative research method, specifically the case study model. The study group consists of 48 primary school teachers working in primary schools affiliated with the Bitlis Provincial Directorate of National Education in the 2021-2022 academic year. These teachers were selected using the maximum variation sampling method, one of the purposive sampling techniques. Data for the research were collected through semi-structured interview forms, and the obtained data were analyzed using content analysis. According to the results of the research, the solution proposals provided by the primary school teachers regarding educating bilingual students indicate that they are mentally struggling with the process. However, it is also seen as a situation that every primary school teacher should experience.

### Keywords

Bilingual student  
Primary school teacher  
Multilingualism

### About the article

Date sent: 26.08.2024  
Date of acceptance: 22.11.2024  
E-publication date: 31.12.2024

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## Introduction

A person acquires the language spoken in the society they are born and raised in. This language is the person's mother tongue. The mother tongue is the language spoken by the community, with the family at its center. Aksan (2015) defines the mother tongue as the language first acquired from the mother and through integration with the society in which one lives, and as the language through which a person establishes the deepest connections with culture and society. In making this definition, Aksan places the strong bond with the mother at the center. Language grows and develops through interaction with the environment. If another language exists in this environment, the individual will begin to learn and use that language as well. In this process of interaction, people encounter languages and issues beyond their mother tongue. This leads to the emergence of the concepts of bilingualism and multilingualism (Özpolat, 2020). Bilingualism, or multilingualism in a broader sense, is one of the predominant realities in today's educational environments.

Within the borders of the Republic of Türkiye, languages other than Turkish, such as Kurdish, Laz, Arabic, Zaza, Circassian, and Greek, are actively used, despite not being official languages of the state. Individuals who actively use their mother tongue in their daily life and social environment, in addition to the official language of the state, are considered bilingual or multilingual. In today's world, the reality of bilingualism, which is accepted in many countries, is also recognized as a social reality in our country (Kalı, Özkaya and Çoşkun, 2021). Multilingualism is defined as the ability of an individual to use multiple languages or the coexistence of different languages in a particular geographical area (Vardar, 2002). However, it can be observed that researchers have not reached a consensus on a single definition of bilingualism in the literature (Akkaya and İşçi, 2015). İleri (2000) states that due to the complex and variable nature of the concept of bilingualism, theorists have been unable to provide a universally agreed-upon definition. The term "bilingualism" is of Latin origin, where "bi" means "two" and "lingua" means "language." The English term "bilingualism" and the French term "bilinguisme" used for this concept are also very similar. Conceptually, it is impossible to speak of a single definition of bilingualism, as there are various viewpoints associated with it. These viewpoints include factors such as the country where individuals were born and raised, the age at which they encountered these languages, how and under what conditions the relevant languages were learned, life circumstances, the use of these languages in the family, and sibling and peer relationships (Süverdem and Ertek, 2020). Although a definitive framework for bilingualism has not been established, today, individuals who regularly use more than one language in their daily lives are generally considered bilingual (Yılmaz, 2016).

In our country, individuals whose mother tongue is not Turkish and who acquire Turkish as a second language are considered bilingual (Pekgenç and Yılmaz, 2021). According to Özpolat (2020), bilingualism is the ability of an individual to communicate with others in two different languages. Özpolat (2020) states that for an individual to be considered bilingual, they must actively use both languages in their life and be able to express their feelings and thoughts in both languages. Aksan (2007) defines bilingualism as the situation where an individual learns and uses multiple languages in daily life for various reasons, or the ability to use a language other than their mother tongue at a level close to that of their mother tongue. Within the framework of these definitions, we can say that bilingualism, as a result of the cosmopolitan nature of today's world, exists in a circular manner.

In its simplest definition, communication, which refers to the transmission of ideas, feelings, information, desires, and dreams between individuals, is essential for a person who is part of a society to express themselves correctly, beautifully, and effectively (Temizyürek, 2007). The importance of language, which lies at the center of an individual's life, is immense. Language, which plays a central role in the main source of communication, is the most fundamental tool for an individual to express themselves. In a classroom environment where multiple languages are present, language will influence education, the students, and the teacher in many ways. In this context, it is undeniable that determining the views of teachers, who play a leading role in shaping the lives of students, regarding the educational process in bilingual classrooms is of great importance.

The importance of primary school teachers in the primary school level is an undeniable fact. It is especially important for teachers working in schools with students from different socio-demographic

backgrounds to be careful and attentive in their teaching and educational processes (Çiğerci and Tezcan, 2020). The multidisciplinary nature of primary school teaching provides an environment for teachers to experience the educational process in a multifaceted way. The changes and developments brought about by technology in our age place certain concepts at the core of our lives. These concepts affect our lives in many areas. Bilingualism can be interpreted as a concept that has become recognized and inevitable within this dimension (Yılmaz, 2016). Akıncı (2016) states that in the changing and evolving world, bilingualism and multilingualism "are a reality for more than half of the population, both at an individual and societal level." In order for the educational process to continue effectively and qualitatively in schools where this reality exists, it is important to determine teachers' thoughts on the current process and reality. Especially in the context of bilingualism, which is a reality in our country and many others, identifying the views of primary school teachers at the primary school level, the first stage of education, about the current situation will help prepare for subsequent educational stages and potential issues that may arise.

A review of the literature reveals that many studies have been conducted on bilingualism (Kan and Hatay, 2017; Bican, 2017; Kızıldağ and Kozikoğlu, 2020; Çetinkaya Özdemir and Kızıldağ, 2021; Kızıldağ, 2021; Aktan-Erciyes, 2019; Şengül, 2021; Süverdem and Ertek, 2020; Yılmaz, 2016; Özpolat, 2020; Çiğerci and Tezcan, 2020), and these studies focus on various topics such as the definition of bilingualism, the issues faced by bilingual students, factors in the language acquisition process, problems faced by bilingual students living abroad, the views of their parents, the opinions of prospective primary school teachers about this process, teaching anxieties, and proposed solutions. It is seen that studies centered on primary school teachers actively working in the field have framed the issues and solutions. Since bilingualism in education is a reality that most primary school teachers encounter from the moment they begin their professional careers, starting the process with prior knowledge of potential issues is important. Teachers with experience in this reality can offer valuable suggestions that will benefit those just starting out. Therefore, research focusing on primary school teachers who actively teach bilingual students and studies that identify teachers' views on the educational process are significant. This study is important in supporting such research by providing insights into the views of primary school teachers regarding the educational process. The aim of this study is to explore the thoughts of primary school teachers on bilingual education and to identify how they manage the process.

In line with this general objective, the following sub-objectives were explored:

- What are the views of primary school teachers on the concept of bilingualism?
- What are the views of primary school teachers on the impact of bilingual children on the classroom climate?
- What types of practices do primary school teachers implement when teaching lessons to bilingual students?
- What are the thoughts of primary school teachers on the effects/reflections of bilingual students on other students?
- How does the process of teaching reading and writing in a classroom with bilingual students proceed for primary school teachers?
- What are the ideas of primary school teachers on how the educational process can be improved in classrooms with bilingual students?
- What are the personal and professional reflections of primary school teachers working in classrooms with bilingual students on their lives?

## **Method**

### ***Research model***

In this study, which aims to identify the views of primary school teachers who educate bilingual students, a case study from qualitative research methods was preferred. One of the most prominent features of qualitative research is its focus on phenomena, events, or behaviors occurring in natural settings, and conducting research based on these occurrences. Behaviors or the environments in which they take place cannot be directed by researchers, and no external intervention is made. Natural environments can be, for example, a classroom, a school, an office, or even a neighborhood. For this

reason, qualitative research is often described as field research. There are two main reasons for conducting qualitative research in the field. The first reason is that behaviors are best understood when they occur without external influence or control. The second reason is that the relationship between different situations is crucial in understanding behavior. Without considering the specific characteristics related to a situation, it is not possible to understand behaviors, phenomena, or events (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). Generalization of the results is not possible because situations are different from one another. However, findings obtained from a specific situation are expected to serve as examples and experiences for understanding similar situations (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

### *Study group*

The study group of this research comprises 48 primary school teachers (28 female and 20 male) selected through the maximum variation sampling method, a purposive sampling technique. These teachers are employed in primary schools affiliated with the Bitlis Provincial Directorate of National Education during the 2021-2022 academic year and work in different socio-demographic areas. Purposive sampling allows for in-depth investigation by selecting cases that are rich in information, based on the purpose of the study. It is used when working on one or more special situations that meet certain criteria or possess specific characteristics. Maximum variation sampling provides the opportunity to sample different situations where variations in the types and intensity of the issues are believed to exist. Since there is no concern for generalization in this type of sampling, it can provide valuable insights into the broader population. The main aim is to identify commonalities and differences among the various situations aligned with the study's objectives, thereby describing the issue within a broader framework (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). The selection of participating teachers was based on voluntary participation. The frequency distribution of the characteristics of the teachers who participated in the study is presented in the table below.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of teachers participating in the study

| Professional Seniority | Female | Male | Total | Languages Known | Female | Male | Total |
|------------------------|--------|------|-------|-----------------|--------|------|-------|
| 0-10 Years             | 20     | 14   | 34    | Turkish         | 28     | 20   | 48    |
| 11-15 Years            | 4      | 3    | 7     | Kurdish         | 5      | 4    | 9     |
| 16-20 Years            | 4      | 3    | 7     | Arabic          | -      | 2    | 2     |
| 21-25 Years            | -      | -    | -     | English         | 2      | 5    | 7     |
| 26-30 Years            | -      | -    | -     | Hungarian       | -      | 1    | 1     |
| 31 Years and above     | -      | -    | -     | Zaza            | 1      | -    | 1     |
| Total                  | 28     | 20   | 48    | Total           | 36     | 32   | 68    |

\* Since multiple teachers responded with more than one language, the total results may exceed the number of participants.

### *Data collection process, tool and analysis*

This study is qualitative in nature, and the data were collected using a semi-structured interview form. Semi-structured interviews combine the ability to delve deeply into both the responses to closed-ended questions and those to open-ended questions. They offer the researcher great freedom in asking items that may be relevant to the subject. In this method, the aim is to collect rich and sufficient information through open-ended questions, rather than forcing choices for the sake of comparison and ease of analysis (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). The data collection tool of the study consists of seven open-ended questions developed by the researchers. During the development of the data collection tool, the literature was reviewed, and a pool of 20 items was created. The prepared questions were reviewed, and seven were discarded as they were deemed unsuitable for the study's objectives. The remaining 13 questions were reviewed by two field experts, and seven questions that were considered to fully reflect the topic and serve the study's purpose were selected as the interview questions for the research. The researcher scheduled appointments with each of the participants and assisted them where necessary during the process of filling out the forms in writing. All teachers in the sample group were reached through the semi-structured interview questions, and all the obtained results were analyzed.

Content analysis, which is one of the qualitative data analysis techniques, was used to analyze the data obtained from the research. According to Büyüköztürk et al. (2016), content analysis is a

technique that allows researchers to indirectly study human behaviors and nature. Content analysis is a systematic and repeatable technique in which certain words of a text are summarized into smaller content categories through coding based on specific rules. In the examination of the data, codes, categories, and themes were created from the answers provided by the teachers. From the interview forms obtained from the research, two forms that did not comply with the guidelines were excluded, and 48 teacher forms were analyzed. Teachers' names were kept confidential in accordance with ethical guidelines, and codes were assigned to each teacher. For example, "T1-F" refers to a female teacher with the code number "T1." Teachers were coded as T1-F, T2-M, and so on. These codes were used in presenting the findings.

### ***Ethical approval of the research***

In this study, all the rules specified under the "Regulations on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics in Higher Education Institutions" have been followed. None of the actions listed under the section "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics" in the second part of the regulation have been carried out.

### ***Ethics committee approval information:***

Name of the Ethics Committee that conducted the evaluation: Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University Social and Humanities Ethics Committee

Date of the ethics evaluation decision: 06.10.2022 / 46

Ethics evaluation document number: E.160191

## **Findings**

In this study, which aims to identify the views of primary school teachers who educate bilingual students, the themes and codes created based on the answers provided by the teachers to the semi-structured interview questions are presented in table format, and direct quotations are included.

**Table 2.** Teachers' opinions on the question: "What are your views on the concept of bilingualism?"

| Theme                | Category | Code  | f  |
|----------------------|----------|---|----|
| View on Bilingualism | Positive | Different languages are a capital for discovering new worlds.                         | 6  |
|                      |          | It is an advantageous, positive, beautiful, easy-to-adapt, and integrative richness.  | 15 |
|                      |          | It is an extra skill that facilitates communication and contributes to socialization. | 7  |
|                      | Negative | It positively affects verbal-linguistic intelligence.                                 | 5  |
|                      |          | It is something that is learned out of necessity for various reasons.                 | 3  |
|                      |          | It is difficult, disadvantageous, and a threat that causes confusion.                 | 7  |
|                      |          | It causes communication problems.   | 10 |

\* Since multiple teachers responded to some codes, the total results may exceed the number of participants.

When Table 2 is examined, the responses of the teachers to the question, "What are your views on the concept of bilingualism?" have been grouped under four positive and three negative codes. Among the positive codes, the one that received the most responses was "an advantageous, positive, beautiful, ease of adaptation, and integrative richness" (15/48), while the negative code that received the most responses was "causes communication problems" (10/48).

When examining the views of the teachers who gave positive responses, it is noted that some teachers (6/48) considered different languages as the capital for discovering new worlds, while others (15/48) emphasized that bilingualism is an advantageous, positive, beautiful, and integrative richness that facilitates adaptation. Some teachers (7/48) mentioned that bilingualism is an additional skill that facilitates communication and contributes to socialization, and others (5/48) stated that it positively influences verbal linguistic intelligence.

Some of the views of the teachers who evaluated the concept of bilingualism positively are as follows:

*"Each different language is the greatest capital for discovering new people and new countries...(T24-M)"*

*"...Although it is a challenging process during childhood, I believe that learning and speaking different languages will be very beneficial in the future. (T1-M)"*

*"It can provide social integration and cohesion. (T9-F)"*

*"Two different people, two different worlds, two different cultures, and enriched evaluation skills. (T25-M)"*

*"Generally, it is a great advantage. It enhances cognitive functions and communication skills. (T41-M)"*

*"I think it's nice for a person to know an extra language. They can communicate more easily in many regions in Türkiye. (T15-M)"*

*"...I think knowing two languages opens a door for the individual to learn new languages by using their ethnic language and the common language. (M12-F)"*

*"Knowing two languages helps the child communicate more easily with their friends and contributes to their socialization. (T14-F)"*

*"It makes it easier to be understood and helps in getting to know different cultures. (T39-M)"*

When the views of the teachers who gave negative responses are examined, some teachers (7/48) perceive bilingualism as a threat that causes confusion, is difficult, and disadvantageous, while others (3/48) state that it is a language learned out of necessity for various reasons. Some teachers (10/48) mentioned that bilingualism causes communication problems. Some of the views of the teachers who evaluated the concept of bilingualism negatively are as follows:

*"Having two different languages spoken in a classroom causes various difficulties in carrying out educational activities. (T5-F)"*

*"As the saying goes, 'one language, one person; two languages, two people.' But most of these students experience language confusion in Türkiye. When they think in Arabic and try to speak in Turkish, they struggle to make sense of it. (T34-M)"*

*"Understanding is difficult, and we often communicate with the children using gestures until they learn the language... (T37-F)"*

*"...In the current situation, no one understands each other; it causes complete confusion. (T43-F)"*

*"I think bilingualism can sometimes make understanding more difficult and sometimes even harder. (T2-M)"*

*"...Since communication would be very difficult, it would not be possible to provide the learning outcomes that the student needs to fully understand. (T4-F)"*

*"...It is quite challenging for both young students and us teachers who are not fluent in their languages. (T6-F)"*

When looking at the teachers' responses in general, it can be seen that there are more positive opinions regarding the concept of bilingualism. Among the positive opinions, "it is an advantageous, positive, beautiful, integrative richness that facilitates adaptation (15/48)" and "an additional skill that facilitates communication and contributes to socialization (7/48)" stand out, while among the negative opinions, the view that bilingualism "causes communication problems" (10/48) is the most prominent.

**Table 3.** Teachers' opinions on the question: "What are the effects of bilingual children on the classroom climate?"

| Theme  | Category | Code                                 | f  |
|--|----------|--------------------------------------|----|
| Effects of Bilingual Children on Classroom Climate | Positive | Peer Education Across Languages      | 5  |
|  |          | Positive Effects                     | 7  |
|  |          | Socio-Cultural Effects               | 7  |
|  |          | Facilitates Communication            | 6  |
|  | Negative | Creates Communication Difficulties   | 21 |
|  |          | Causes Grouping Within the Class     | 5  |
|  |          | Language Issues Hinder Socialization | 4  |

\* Since multiple teachers responded to some codes, the total results may exceed the number of participants.

When Table 3 is examined, the responses given by the teachers to the question "What are the effects of bilingual children on the classroom climate?" have been categorized under four positive and three negative codes. Among the positive codes, the codes "they have positive effects (7/48)" and "they have socio-cultural effects (7/48)" received the most responses, while among the negative codes, "they cause communication difficulties (21/48)" received the most responses. When the views of teachers who gave positive responses are examined in detail, the majority of the teachers agree that bilingual children have "positive (7/48)" and "socio-cultural effects (7/48)." Some teachers (6/48) expressed that bilingualism facilitates communication. Additionally, some teachers (5/48) noted that "peer education between languages" occurs. Some of the views of the teachers who evaluated the impact of bilingual students on the classroom climate positively are as follows:

*"Instead of being foreign to other languages in the classroom, they get used to the existence of other languages by seeing the language that is present. Additionally, it helps them to be more tolerant." (T30-F)*

*"Since all the students in the place I work are bilingual, there is a positive effect on the classroom climate. It helps the children integrate very quickly." (T12-F)*

*"They learn new words from each other." (T24-M)*

*"Bilingual children have a positive impact on the classroom climate... a student who knows both languages can translate what another student is saying and facilitate communication." (T36-M)*

*"The positive effect is helping their friends who do not know the language. The negative effect is almost nonexistent, of course, as long as they can speak both languages in an understandable way." (T9-F)*

*"It makes it easier for them to communicate with their friends." (T13-M)*

When examining the views of teachers who gave negative responses, it was found that the majority of teachers expressed that bilingual students "create communication difficulties" (21/48). Some teachers emphasized that bilingualism causes "intra-class groupings" (5/48). Additionally, a few teachers mentioned that the "language problem hinders socialization" (4/48). Below are some of the views from teachers who negatively evaluate the effects of bilingual students on the classroom climate:

*"Since the language spoken at home and at school is different, sometimes communication breaks down in the classroom." (T16-M)*

*"It becomes difficult to complete the curriculum because the difference between the language spoken at home and the language spoken in the school environment negatively affects teacher-student communication." (T17-M)*

*"The negative aspect is when they speak Kurdish among themselves, I cannot understand them. (Sometimes, incidents like swearing happen)." (T21-F)*

*"It is a difficult situation for the children. Learning a new language and communicating seems hard for them. They are often silent." (T33-F)*

*"Since they don't fully understand each other, funny or sad situations can arise." (T34-M)*

*"In the classroom, they feel like guests. They communicate only among themselves." (T42-F)*

*"... I have three students who have learned Turkish. With them, lessons proceed with normal interaction, but those who don't know Turkish form their own group. Still, the children somehow manage to communicate among themselves." (T37-F)*

*"They struggle to adapt to the classroom environment. Because they were exposed to a different language at a young age, apart from their mother tongue, they become shy." (T1-M)*

When examining the teachers' responses, the impact of bilingual students on the classroom climate is predominantly highlighted in terms of communication and language-related challenges. It is evident that language and communication are central to classroom life. However, within the positive views, the teachers focused on the positive social and cultural impacts of bilingualism.

**Table 4.** Teachers' opinions on the question: "What types of practices do you use when teaching bilingual students? please explain"

| Theme   | Category         | Code  | f  |
|---|------------------|---|----|
| Practices Used When Teaching Bilingual Students | Teaching Methods | Teaching the Educational Language   | 9  |
|   |                  | No Alternative Practices Can Be Applied   | 6  |
|   |                  | We Do Not Experience Problems   | 1  |
|   |                  | Use of Materials that Appeal to Multiple Senses, One-on-One Attention, and Peer Education | 19 |
|   |                  | Applied Methods and Techniques  | 5  |

\* Since multiple teachers responded to some codes, the total results may exceed the number of participants.

"When Table 4 is examined, the responses given by the teachers who participated in the study to the question, 'What kind of practices do you use when teaching bilingual students? Please explain.' are as follows: 'teaching the language of instruction (9/48),' followed by the views: 'no different practice can be applied (6/48),' '(1/48) we do not face any problems,' '(19/48) use of materials that appeal to multiple senses,' 'individual attention and peer teaching (5/48),' 'applied methods and techniques,' and '(7/48) explaining in the child's own language.' The teachers provided some example opinions related to the practices they use when teaching bilingual students, as follows:"

*"I ensure they are exposed to the language by repeating simple and basic expressions more than necessary... (T27-M)"*

*"I focus on activities that develop their vocabulary. (T2-M)"*

*"We work on language learning. (T3-F)"*

*"We don't face any problems with reading and writing in Turkish. Therefore, we don't feel the need to translate the topic into different languages. What matters is the language of love. :) (T24-M)"*

*"... I provide support with visuals and conduct the lesson in a way that appeals to multiple senses, such as using a smartboard. (T30-F)"*

*"I give them private lessons. Their homework and responsibilities are different... (T8-F)"*

*"I try to visualize and concretize the learning outcomes during the lesson as needed. (T20-F)"*



*“Demonstrating and having them do, dramatization, games, and simulation. (T39-M)”*

*“I prefer communication in their own language. If I don't know the language, I ask another student who knows it for help. (T25-M)”*

It can be seen that the teachers made various suggestions regarding the practices used when teaching bilingual students. Most of the teachers suggested that the lesson should be concretized using audiovisual materials that appeal to multiple senses, applied methods and techniques, and, when necessary, the use of students' native languages to enhance the retention of the lesson content and concepts. These are some of the views proposed by the teachers.

**Table 5.** Teachers' opinions on the question: "What are the positive and negative effects/reflections of bilingualism on your students?"

| Theme                                   | Category | Code   | f  |
|---|----------|--|----|
| Reflections of Bilingualism on Students | Positive | Various Positive Effects   | 18 |
|   |          | I Do Not Experience Any Problems                                 | 1  |
|   | Negative | Academic Inadequacy  | 15 |
|   |          | Violence, Conflict, Bullying Resulting from Cultural Differences | 8  |
|   |          | Students Do Not Accept Each Other                                | 5  |
|   |          | Language Issues Negatively Affect Communication in Class         | 12 |

\* Since multiple teachers responded to some codes, the total results may exceed the number of participants.

When Table 5 is examined, the responses given by the teachers who participated in the study to the question, 'What are the positive and negative effects/impacts of bilingualism on your students?' have been grouped under two positive and four negative codes. Among the positive codes, the most common response was 'various positive effects (18/48)', while among the negative codes, the most common response was 'academic inadequacy (15/30)'. When examining the views of teachers who provided positive responses, some teachers pointed out that bilingualism has 'various positive effects (18/48)', while one teacher stated that they 'did not experience any problems (1/48)'. On the other hand, some teachers expressed concerns such as 'violence, conflict, and bullying arising from cultural differences (8/48)', others noted that 'students do not accept each other (8/48)', and some mentioned that 'language problems negatively affect communication in the classroom (12/48)'. Some of the views of teachers who evaluated the impact of bilingualism on students positively are as follows:

*“... there is no issue of misunderstanding.” (T20-F)*

*“Later on, their chances of finding a job are higher.” (T28-F)*

*“I think bilingualism has positive aspects both cognitively and in terms of analytical thinking...” (T35-F)*

*“Their efforts to understand each other enhance their understanding, tolerance, and helpfulness. The positive aspect is that they make an effort to understand each other and learn each other's language.” (T37-F)*

*“Students who speak two languages generally have better success in quantitative subjects, and it becomes easier for them to learn a third language.” (T14-F)*

When examining the views of the teachers who provided negative responses, some teachers reflected the impact of bilingualism as 'academic inadequacy (15/48)', 'violence, conflict, and bullying arising from cultural differences (8/48)', 'students do not accept each other (5/48)', and 'language problems negatively affect communication in the classroom (12/48)'. Some of the views of teachers who evaluated the impact of bilingualism on students negatively are as follows:

*"We put in twice the effort to overcome the negatives. We try to make things that can be explained easily understandable to them. Sometimes, however, we still don't get a response." (T6-F)*

*"Since the children don't fully understand what I say, they get very bored. It's a very difficult situation for them." (T8-F)*

*"As far as I've observed, our students are prejudiced against students who are Syrian citizens. Both sides have not accepted each other, and they never meet halfway. Since there is no interaction, speaking, or mutual understanding, I have not seen any positive impact on my students..." (T43-F)*

*"It causes students to fall behind in the topics. Since they don't know the expressions for some subjects, they can't understand the topics." (T29-M)*

When the responses given by the teachers are examined, it is evident that the negative impacts of bilingualism on students outweigh the positive ones. While teachers with positive views emphasized that they did not face any problems and pointed out various positive effects, teachers with negative views highlighted the idea of academic inadequacy. A consensus among the teachers has emerged that, whether positive or negative, the primary factor behind both the positive and negative impacts is language. While some teachers suggested that there are positive effects of language and that there is no problem, others argued the opposite, stating that they experienced many language-based challenges.

**Table 6.** Teachers' opinions on the question: "How would you describe the process of teaching initial reading and writing in a classroom with bilingual students?"

| Theme   | Category | Code  | f  |
|---|----------|---|----|
| Initial Reading and Writing Process in Classrooms with Bilingual Students | Positive | A Pleasant Process  | 1  |
|   |          | A Process That Progresses According to the Curriculum             | 4  |
|   | Negative | Difficult, Problematic, Troubling, Requires Patience, Slow-Paced  | 29 |
|   |          | A Process Where Teaching the Official Language Becomes Necessary  | 2  |
|   |          | A Process Requiring the Learning of the Student's Native Language | 1  |

\* Since multiple teachers responded to some codes, the total results may exceed the number of participants.

When Table 6 is examined, the responses given by the teachers who participated in the study to the question "How would you describe the process of teaching reading and writing to bilingual students for the first time?" have been grouped under two positive and three negative codes. Among the positive codes, the one most frequently mentioned is "a process that progresses in accordance with the curriculum (4/48)", while among the negative codes, the one most frequently mentioned is "a difficult, problematic, challenging, patience-demanding, slow process (29/48)". When examining the views of teachers who provided positive answers, one teacher described the first reading and writing process as "enjoyable (1/48)", while some teachers stated that the process progressed "in accordance with the curriculum (4/48)". Some of the views of teachers who evaluated the first reading and writing process positively in classrooms with bilingual students are as follows.

*"...Teaching reading is enjoyable..." (T24-M)*

*"I think normal reading and writing is like learning a new language for all children..." (Teacher 37-F)*

When examining the views of teachers who provided negative answers, some teachers described the first reading and writing process as a difficult, problematic, challenging, patience-demanding, slow process (29/48), a process in which they are forced to teach the official language (2/48), and a process that requires the student to learn their native language (1/48). Some of the views of teachers who evaluated the first reading and writing process negatively in classrooms with bilingual students are as follows.

"...Communicating is very difficult. In the classrooms, we ask for the help of students who know Arabic and Turkish. We learn the meanings of some basic words. I also make use of technology. I download reading and writing apps on phones and use translation. I teach by communicating this way." (T26-E)

"Before teaching reading and writing, we have to teach the language." (T3-F)

"I would define this process as 'trying to sail a ship on sand'..." (T21-F)

"Honestly, it's a difficult and extremely slow process. It's hard, stressful, and a dilemma that every primary school teacher has to face." (T22-M)

"It's a very difficult process because the student can't grasp the word, so they take a long time to understand the logic of reading and writing." (T1-M)

When examining the responses of the teachers, it is evident that the negative aspects of the first reading and writing process in classrooms with bilingual students are more dominant. Teachers with positive views emphasize that the process of teaching reading and writing progresses in a "curriculum-aligned" and "enjoyable" manner. In contrast, teachers with negative views describe it as a "difficult, problematic, challenging, patience-demanding, slow process" and express that they are required to engage in additional specialized training to support this process.

**Table 7.** Teachers' opinions on the question: "What are your suggestions/observations for improving education in classrooms with bilingual students and for your students?"

| Theme  | Category                                      | Code   | f  |
|--|---|--|----|
| Suggestions for Improving Education in Classrooms with Bilingual Students and for Students | Suggestions Related to Education and Students | Extra Lessons, Frequent Reviews, and Peer Education Should Be Used to Bridge the Gap                                   | 6  |
|  |   | Teachers Should Receive Training and Language Education to Prepare Them for This Process                               | 6  |
|  |   | The Focus Should Be on Teaching the Official Language  | 16 |
|  |   | Lessons Should Be Taught in the Student's Native Language  | 4  |
|  |   | Classes Should Be Distributed Proportionally, or Monolingual Classes Should Be Created                                 | 4  |
|  |   | Bilingual Teachers Should Be Assigned  | 2  |
|  |   | School-Family Cooperation, Teacher-Student Attitudes, Preschool Education, and Conditions at School Should Be Improved | 9  |

\* Since multiple teachers responded to some codes, the total results may exceed the number of participants.

When Table 7 is examined, the responses given by the teachers who participated in the study to the question, "What are your other suggestions/observations for improving education in classrooms with bilingual students and supporting your students?" reveal several key points. Teachers expressed the need for "additional lessons, frequent repetitions, and peer training to bridge the gap (6/48)", as well as the importance of providing "training for teachers to prepare them for this process and language education (6/48)". These views are followed by other suggestions such as: "focus should be on teaching the official language (16/48)", "lessons should be conducted in the student's native language (5/30)", "students should be distributed proportionally in classes, or monolingual classes should be created (4/48)", "bilingual teachers should be guided (2/48)", and "school-family cooperation, teacher-student attitudes, preschool education, and improving conditions within the school should be prioritized (9/48)".

Some of the example views given by teachers on how education in bilingual classrooms can be improved and what can be done to better support students are as follows:

"Peer education will facilitate the process. Teachers assigned to bilingual environments can be prepared for the process through seminars or specific training programs at universities." (T17-F)

"The confusion with bilingual students should be eliminated through additional lessons." (T2-M)

"Teachers can be encouraged to learn the language. Lessons can be supported with visuals, photos, and pictures for children." (T14-F)

"This is something related to the family. Families should use Turkish more frequently in daily life. Teachers can also be given introductory-level training in Kurdish or Arabic." (T15-M)

"Children need to receive language education at the age of 4-5..." (T27-M)

"For children facing difficulties, lessons can be taught using the language they use in daily life." (T13-M)

"In order for interaction to occur, the number of students should be equal or close to equal in both groups." (T8-F)

"In order for children to read and understand better or for concepts to be better explained, guiding bilingual teachers may increase the effectiveness of education." (T19-F)

"The educational conditions within the school need to be improved..." (T6-F)

"Extending pre-school education (kindergarten-nursery) has positive effects." (T22-M)

"Teacher attitude is very important. If the teacher respects and accepts the foreign student as they are, the other students in the class will also respect and accept them." (T45-F)

"School-family cooperation should be increased." (T39-M)

It is evident that teachers have made various suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of education in classrooms with bilingual students. The majority of teachers primarily believe that the "teaching of the official language" is essential. To equip students with the desired skills, teachers have recommended several strategies, including: "Teaching the official language", "Providing teachers with introductory-level training in the students' native languages", "Ensuring that teachers receive the necessary pre-service and in-service training related to teaching bilingual students.". These are among the key recommendations put forward by teachers to improve the educational experience and support bilingual students effectively.

**Table 8.** Teachers' opinions on the question: "What are the personal and professional reflections of being a teacher in a classroom with bilingual students?"

| Theme  | Category | Code   | f  |
|--|----------|--|----|
| Personal and Professional Reflections of Being a Teacher in Classrooms with Bilingual Students | Positive | It Adds Positive Experience and Knowledge in Various Areas Professionally and Personally | 17 |
|  |          | It Adds Culture, Language, and Different Perspectives                                    | 8  |
|  |          | It Enhances Empathy Skills   | 5  |
|  | Negative | No Contribution  | 2  |
|  |          | It Has Negative Professional Impacts   | 13 |

\* Since multiple teachers responded to some codes, the total results may exceed the number of participants.

When Table 8 is examined, the responses provided by the teachers to the question "What are the personal and professional implications of being a teacher in a classroom with bilingual students?"

are grouped under three positive and two negative codes. Among the positive codes, the one that received the most responses is "It adds positive experiences and insights in various professional and personal areas (17/48)", while among the negative codes, the most frequent response is "It negatively affects professionally (13/48)".

In reviewing the views of teachers who provided positive answers, some described the experience as 'adding positive experiences and insights in various professional and personal areas' (17/48), while others emphasized that it "adds culture, language, and different perspectives" (8/48). Some also noted that it "develops the ability to empathize (5/48)".

Some of the views shared by teachers who evaluated the personal and professional implications of teaching in a bilingual classroom positively are as follows:

*"In a bilingual classroom, although it is personally challenging, professionally, trying to understand a bilingual child and working on educational activities for them contributes to my professional development." (T40-F)*

*"The positive reflections I had were related to the integration of students from different cultures and levels, and how they adapted to each other." (T31-F)*

*"When facing challenges, it helps me develop ways to find solutions. It requires using different methods and techniques professionally." (T18-F)*

*"It has increased my ability to relate and accept others. In terms of teaching, it taught me how to be there for a child who is struggling with language barriers." (T9-F)*

*"Although it has its challenging aspects, I believe it can provide significant professional experiences. I think it can seriously contribute to the communication skills that a teacher should have." (T4-F)*

*"I learn Kurdish from them or learn about things related to their culture. Professionally, I've expanded my imagination because I search for materials to help explain lessons better to the children." (T21-F)*

*"I am directly interacting with the people and culture of the region I am in. This brings new experiences, different thoughts, and perspectives." (T15-M)*

When examining the views of teachers who provided negative answers, some teachers expressed that teaching in a bilingual classroom "negatively affects them professionally (29/48)", while others stated that it "does not contribute (2/48)" in any significant way. Some of the views shared by teachers who evaluated the personal and professional implications of teaching in a bilingual classroom negatively are as follows:

*"It has not contributed anything to my personal or professional life." (T19-F)*

*"It sometimes leads us to feelings of hopelessness and exhaustion." (T6-F)*

*"During this process, teachers cannot develop much in terms of professional or personal growth." (T12-F)*

*"Personally, I must say that I struggle. I don't think there is any very positive aspect. It is mentally exhausting." (T20-F)*

*"Academically, it leads to low motivation and inefficiency." (T25-M)*

*"It feels like a burden." (T41-M)*

*"Teaching in such classrooms is very difficult. I feel like I'm teaching a combined-grade class. The progress of other students also slows down." (T8-F)*

When examining the responses from teachers, it is clear that the personal and professional implications of teaching in classrooms with bilingual students have both positive and negative aspects, with nearly equal numbers of teachers expressing both types of opinions. Notably, some teachers did not provide any feedback on this topic, which also draws attention. Teachers who expressed positive

views emphasized that teaching in bilingual classrooms helps develop "empathy skills," introduces "different languages, cultures, and perspectives," and has "various positive personal and professional effects." On the other hand, teachers who expressed negative views mainly highlighted that it "negatively affects them professionally." The fact that both positive and negative reflections are almost equally represented suggests that the challenges associated with teaching in bilingual classrooms—rooted in the complexities of navigating different languages and cultures—may also give rise to certain advantages. This indicates that while the process can be difficult, it also offers unique opportunities for growth and development in both personal and professional dimensions.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions**

In regions where the native language and the official language differ, children tend to develop language skills such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking in both languages. However, children who are monolingual in both languages do not reach the same levels of proficiency in listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Belet, 2009). The challenges faced by bilingual students due to not mastering one language at a sufficient level occur in the age range of 6-10 years, which corresponds to the elementary school age. It is indisputable that primary education plays a significant role in a child's life. The challenges faced during this period will have a profound impact on the child's life (Pekgenç and Yılmaz, 2021). Our country is a region where many different languages coexist. Since 2011, the increasing migration of Syrian citizens has deepened the existence of this situation. Given this context, it is clear that there could be classrooms where some students do not know the official language, or the entire class could consist of students speaking a different language. In this section of the study, the findings derived from the opinions of primary school teachers who educate bilingual students are presented alongside the results of previous studies and suggestions. In this framework, the views of primary school teachers about being a teacher in bilingual classrooms have been discussed from multiple perspectives under ten main topics:

The first sub-problem of the research is framed as, "What are your views on the concept of bilingualism?" In the study, primary school teachers defined bilingualism in two different categories: "an advantage, positive, beautiful, easy to adapt, integrative richness," and "a cause of communication problems." These definitions and views reveal that, according to the primary school teachers, the concept of bilingualism holds different meanings and is an inevitable part of their lives. The explanations obtained from the teachers' views indicate that the concept of bilingualism occupies an important place in the lives of primary school teachers. This aligns with Pekgenç's (2019) statement that "the concept of bilingualism should not be seen as a problem, but rather as a richness, although it must be acknowledged that this richness can bring with it some problems and burdens." The findings of this study confirm this perspective, highlighting the dual nature of bilingualism—it is both a valuable asset and a challenge in educational settings.

The second sub-problem of the research is framed as, "What are the effects of bilingual children on the classroom climate?" In the study, primary school teachers reported the effects of bilingual students on the classroom climate in two different categories: "they have socio-cultural effects and cause communication difficulties." Primary school teachers primarily expressed their views on the effects of bilingual students on the classroom climate in terms of language and communication, often highlighting negative impacts. While it is acknowledged that bilingual students can have some positive effects on the classroom climate, these positive effects are often overshadowed by the negative ones, which challenge the teachers in many ways. The explanations obtained from the teachers indicate that the classroom climate, which contains both material and emotional dimensions, is significantly negatively affected in terms of communication, understanding, and being understood. This finding suggests that the language and communication difficulties bilingual students face have a considerable impact on the teachers' ability to interact with and comprehend their students. In line with existing literature, studies have found that bilingual children, who have less exposure to the official language, tend to have weaker vocabulary, comprehension levels, and phonological awareness compared to monolingual children. This finding is consistent with the results of this study, which highlights the communication challenges bilingual students create in the classroom (Jalalipour et al., 2017).

The third sub-problem of the research is framed as, "What types of practices do you implement when teaching bilingual students? Please explain." According to the primary school teachers, the practices they implement during lessons predominantly include "using materials that appeal to multiple senses, one-on-one attention, peer education, and language instruction." These findings indicate that teachers are utilizing student-centered, hands-on methods and techniques to concretize lessons and enhance the retention of concepts. The idea that the child should express themselves in their own language is another suggestion made by the teachers, indicating that allowing students to use their native language can be an effective strategy. The studies by Uşaklı (2005), Aydın and Gün (2018) also emphasize the importance of incorporating student-centered, interactive activities in lessons. These activities are seen as key to developing the language skills of bilingual students, which aligns with the results of this study. The findings suggest that practical, participatory approaches are crucial for improving bilingual students' language abilities, which reinforces the value of using such methods in classrooms with bilingual children.

The fourth sub-problem of the research is framed as, "What are the positive and negative effects/implications of bilingualism on your students?" Primary school teachers reported that the effects of bilingualism fall into two main categories: "various positive effects and academic inadequacies." While the teachers highlighted the positive aspects, they mostly emphasized the negative effects, with a consensus that the primary source of these negative impacts is language. The findings suggest that the presence of a second language creates several challenges for students, particularly in academic settings. According to the teachers' views, the biggest barrier to academic success is language, which leads to various related problems. When reviewing the literature, a study by Kızıldağ (2021) draws attention to the fact that bilingual students face significant linguistic disadvantages that lead to academic inadequacy, particularly in the southern and eastern regions of Türkiye. This linguistic disadvantage refers to the inability to reach an adequate level of language skills. Kızıldağ argues that these language gaps need to be addressed, as they form the root cause of various challenges that bilingual students face in their academic development. This conclusion aligns with the findings of this study, where teachers consistently identified language as the key obstacle affecting students' academic performance and overall development.

The fifth sub-problem of the research is framed as, "How do you define the process of teaching reading and writing to bilingual students?" A large majority of the primary school teachers defined the process of teaching reading and writing as "difficult, problematic, challenging, requiring patience, and slow-moving." The explanations obtained from the teachers' responses indicate that they are often required to engage in work that demands additional expertise beyond their regular duties. Furthermore, the task and the process are described as being highly exhausting for the teachers, with many noting that students' skills in reading and writing do not develop adequately during this period. These findings align with those of Onur Kan and Hatay (2017), whose study found that bilingual students' abilities in dictation and writing were not at the desired level. This study reached similar conclusions, underscoring that bilingual students face significant challenges in acquiring basic literacy skills, which, as noted by the teachers, results in a slower and more demanding learning process. This highlights the extra effort required by teachers to address the unique needs of bilingual students, and the considerable difficulties in achieving satisfactory progress in the early stages of reading and writing instruction.

The sixth sub-problem of the research is framed as, "What are your views/suggestions for improving the education of bilingual students in your classrooms, and other observations or insights regarding your students?" Primary school teachers predominantly emphasized the need to focus on "teaching the official language," along with several other suggestions. One of the key findings is that bilingual students, especially those whose first language is not Turkish, require additional support and training in acquiring proficiency in the country's official language, Turkish. The responses from the teachers highlight how the challenges posed by language barriers are expressed in different ways. The teachers' insights suggest that they are deeply affected by the obstacles created by language differences. To alleviate the negative impact on education and reduce the burden on teachers, a key suggestion made was to provide "training for teachers to prepare them for this process and language education." This recommendation aligns with findings from other studies, such as Aydın and Gün (2018), which also suggest offering language practice-oriented training for bilingual students. Similarly, Yılmaz and

Şekerci (2016), along with Aydın and Gün (2018), emphasize the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills regarding bilingualism to improve their effectiveness in teaching bilingual students. These studies propose that teacher education programs should focus on raising awareness about bilingualism and prepare teachers to work more effectively with bilingual learners. Additionally, Polat and Kılıç (2013) noted the absence of theoretical and practical courses on bilingualism, multilingualism, and multiculturalism in pre-service teacher education. Similarly, Yılmaz and Şekerci (2016) argued that such training should be incorporated into teachers' undergraduate education to better prepare them for the challenges of teaching bilingual and multilingual students. In summary, the findings suggest that addressing the linguistic challenges faced by bilingual students requires not only focused language education for the students themselves but also substantial professional development and training for teachers. Teachers need to be better equipped with the tools and knowledge to address these challenges, ensuring a more effective and supportive learning environment for bilingual students.

The final and seventh sub-problem of the research asked teachers, "What are the personal and professional reflections of being a teacher in a classroom with bilingual students?" The responses were categorized into two main perspectives: "it provides various positive experiences and contributes to personal and professional growth," and "it negatively affects them professionally." These findings suggest that being a teacher in a bilingual classroom is seen by teachers as a significant milestone in their professional lives. Teachers' reflections highlight that while the challenges of managing bilingual classrooms often create difficulties, they also offer valuable experiences. Teachers described the process as both enriching and demanding. The experience of dealing with different languages and cultures can lead to personal and professional growth, fostering a broader perspective and the development of key skills like empathy, adaptability, and communication. However, the professional drawbacks, often centered around language barriers, can lead to frustration, stress, and feeling overwhelmed, especially when students struggle to master the official language. Upon reviewing all the findings, it is evident that the main recurring issue across all sub-problems is "language difference" and "communication barriers". Teachers consistently pointed out that language-related difficulties and the challenges they create in communication were significant obstacles in teaching bilingual students. This communication gap leads to a cascade of other problems, such as slower academic progress and emotional stress for both teachers and students. Even though some teachers expressed positive reflections on the experience, most acknowledged the significant difficulties they face. This aligns with the observation that teachers, despite their positive outlooks, often highlighted the problems they encounter in these contexts. The teachers' suggestions for overcoming these difficulties indicate that they are mentally and emotionally challenged by their experiences with bilingual students. However, they also believe that working in such classrooms is an essential experience for every primary school teacher. This finding is consistent with a study by Çetinkaya Özdemir and Kızıldaş (2021), which concluded that pre-service teachers exhibit significant levels of teaching anxiety when it comes to educating bilingual students. This result is reflective of the current difficulties faced by in-service teachers as well. Overall, while bilingualism can be seen as a challenge for teachers, it also offers an opportunity for personal and professional growth. Teachers' ability to manage such classrooms, however, requires support in terms of training and resources. Without proper preparation and support, the linguistic and communication challenges may continue to weigh heavily on teachers, ultimately impacting their teaching effectiveness and their well-being. The findings suggest a need for further professional development to equip teachers with the necessary tools to better navigate the complexities of teaching bilingual students.

In this study, which evaluates the views of primary school teachers who provide education to bilingual students, the following recommendations can be considered: The communication breakdown between teacher-student, teacher-parent, and teacher-student-parent appears as a significant and persistent issue throughout the study. Practical and systematic language education efforts aimed at ensuring language unity are seen as essential. Language education can be provided to children gradually, starting from the preschool period. Families can be involved in language education and awareness-raising activities, and teachers can receive face-to-face in-service training at least at an introductory level regarding languages other than Turkish that are present in their classrooms. As the final stage of language education efforts, reciprocal language and speech practices can be carried out between teacher-student, teacher-parent, and teacher-student-parent.



In an educational environment where mutual interaction and communication are blocked, the presence of visual, auditory, and tactile materials and equipment is seen as a necessity. Activities can be carried out to address the Ministry's equipment deficiencies, such as the lack of smart boards, which are absent in many schools.

It is observed that the changes in environment, culture, and language deeply affect the students. It is believed that the psychosocial effects of being unable to express themselves, not understanding lessons, not being accepted, and struggling to adapt to a different culture have been overlooked. It is seen as a necessity to provide systematic psychological support starting from the preschool period. The number of guidance counselors in schools can be increased, and they can be more actively involved in the process. Additionally, considering the difficult and exhausting process faced by primary school teachers, working conditions at the primary school level can be improved, and psychological support can be provided in this regard.

Considering the problems that primary school teachers face during the initial reading and writing process, bilingual students can be enrolled in a preparatory program one year before formal education begins. It could be made a requirement for this preparatory education to be compulsory.

In pre-service training, primary school teachers can be provided with courses on bilingualism, multilingualism, and multiculturalism.

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