

**Multilingualism as a Resource, a Right and a Problem: Investigating Teachers' Knowledge,
Beliefs and Practices**

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Research, mainly in second language contexts (L2), suggests that immigrant students' performance in the host country is linked to a number of school-related factors, particularly the provision of academic, linguistic and social support. Among these factors, teachers' intercultural sensitivity, instructional and assessment practices have been found to be strongly related to immigrant students' academic success in the host country. Studies further highlight the influence of teachers' *beliefs and attitudes* on their practices and their ability to cater to the unique academic needs of immigrant students. Furthermore, teachers' lack of awareness of immigrant students' cultural and linguistic needs may perpetuate educational gaps. However, little research has been carried out in contexts, where immigrant students face the challenge of acquiring two additional languages – the language of instruction in the new country, acquired as a second language (L2) and English, acquired as a third language (L3).

The purpose of the current study was to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching English as a foreign language to immigrant students studying in Israeli schools where Hebrew is the medium of instruction and English is taught as the first foreign language throughout schooling. The sample included 100 EFL teachers in primary and secondary schools. Utilizing mixed methods methodology, data were collected via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Results indicate lack of sufficient professional knowledge regarding the unique language acquisition conditions and processes immigrant students undergo when acquiring a third language, special methodologies for teaching English as an L3, and the potential benefits inherent in their language repertoires. Furthermore, teachers' beliefs about immigrant students and the strategies they utilized were found to be related to their personal language biography. Results highlight a clear need for increased professional development for

EFL teachers in the area of teaching English as a third language to immigrant students.



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