



# Plurilingual teaching and learning approaches in university language courses in Germany

Initial findings of a survey for teachers and learners

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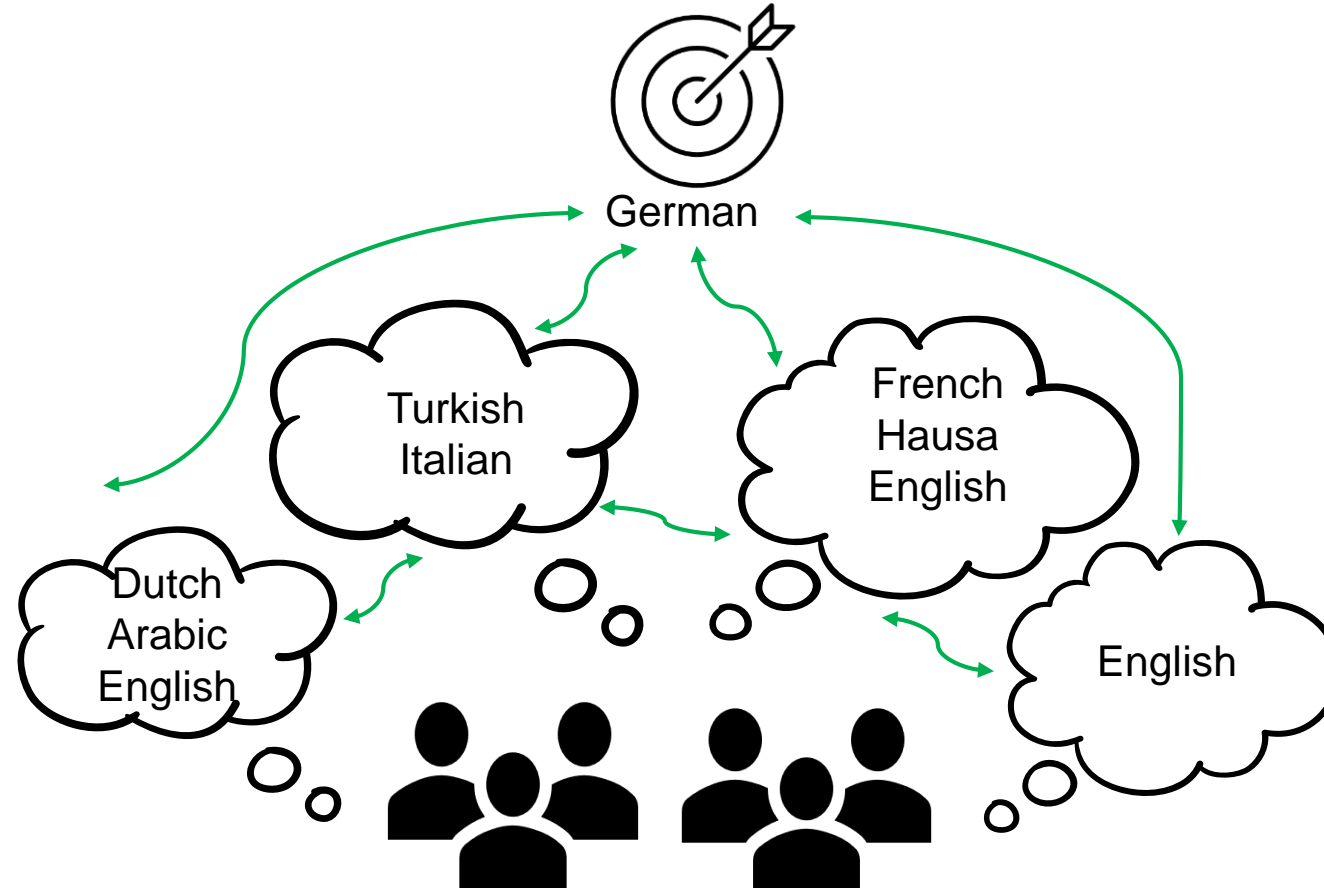
ResearchGate: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stephanie-Bergmann-2>

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# Starting point

- Language classrooms in higher education = highly plurilingual places because learners already know different languages

→ Resources to learn an additional language



# Presentation outline

1. The PhD project
2. Literature review
3. Methodology
4. Analysis
5. Findings
6. Implications & Outlook

# 1. PhD project

Topic: Plurilingual teaching and learning approaches in language classrooms in higher education institutions in Germany

Step 1: Overview of the current situation concerning plurilingual approaches

- **Understanding of the current situation** in language courses  
→ **Online survey**



Step 2: Development of an in-depth study

- Based and depending on the findings of step 1
- Further research will be carried out within the language center (SZHB) of Uni Bremen

# 1. PhD project

## 1.1 Plurilingual approaches =

**Inclusion and implementation of languages other than the target language in language teaching**

(e.g.: specific plurilingual tasks and methods, teacher using another language for explanations, ...)

## 1.2 Difference between plurilingualism and multilingualism

Plurilingualism	Multilingualism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Individual</b> level</li><li>• Languages are seen as <b>interrelated</b> and <b>interconnected</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Societal</b> level</li><li>• Languages are seen as <b>separate</b> or <b>co-existing</b></li></ul>

## 2. Literature review

### The notion of plurilingualism by the Council of Europe

- 1996: Plurilingualism was first mentioned in the 2. provisional version of the Common European Reference Framework (CEFR)
- 2001: CEFR presented curriculum examples and promoted plurilingualism in the classroom (Council of Europe, 2020).
- 2020: Companion Volume (CV) of the CEFR  
→ Language and cultural competence descriptors for the evaluation of language competence



- CEFR: **Plurilingualism** is **relevant** and has **potential** (cf. Council of Europe, 2020; Triulzi & Maahs, 2021)  
But: Theory is **not implemented in practice**, due to lack of teacher education in plurilingual instruction & because policies are not made for plurilingual teaching and learning (Galante, 2018)

## 2. Literature review

- **Lack of research ...**
  - ... on multilingualism/plurilingualism in the **adult and academic context** (Bredthauer, 2016)
  - ... on languages other than English (Piccardo et al., 2021)
  
- Former findings show that ...
  - ... plurilingual approaches in language classrooms have **benefits** (Han & Park, 2017; Piccardo et al., 2021)
  - ... teachers and learners prefer and have positive attitudes towards plurilingual approaches (Galante et al., 2020; Kursiša & Schlabach, 2020)

# Research questions

- Overall RQ:  
What is the **current situation** concerning plurilingual approaches in language classrooms in higher education in Germany?



- Sub-question 1:  
Do teachers **implement** plurilingual approaches in their teaching?
- Sub-question 2:  
What are the **attitudes** of teachers and learners towards plurilingual approaches in language teaching and learning?



# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Research design – Online survey

- Empirical mixed-methods study
  - Online survey with closed items (quantitative data) and open questions (qualitative data)
- Online tool: *SoSci Survey*
- Survey available in German and English
- Addressed language teachers and language learners of language courses of German universities

# 3. Methodology

## 3.2 Structure of the survey

- 3 parts:
  - 1. Background information of the participants (demographic information, language background)
  - 2. **Implementation** of plurilingual teaching and learning approaches
  - 3. **Attitudes** towards plurilingual teaching and learning approaches

Main constructs

# 4. Analysis

## 4.1 Participants

- **Language teachers** and **language learners** of university language centers in Germany
- Recruitment:
  - Invitation to participate in the survey via the AKS (= Arbeitskreis der Sprachenzentren) email distribution list + AKS intern online platform (AKS has around 155 institutional members)
  - Email invitation for 15 German university language centers that are not members of the AKS

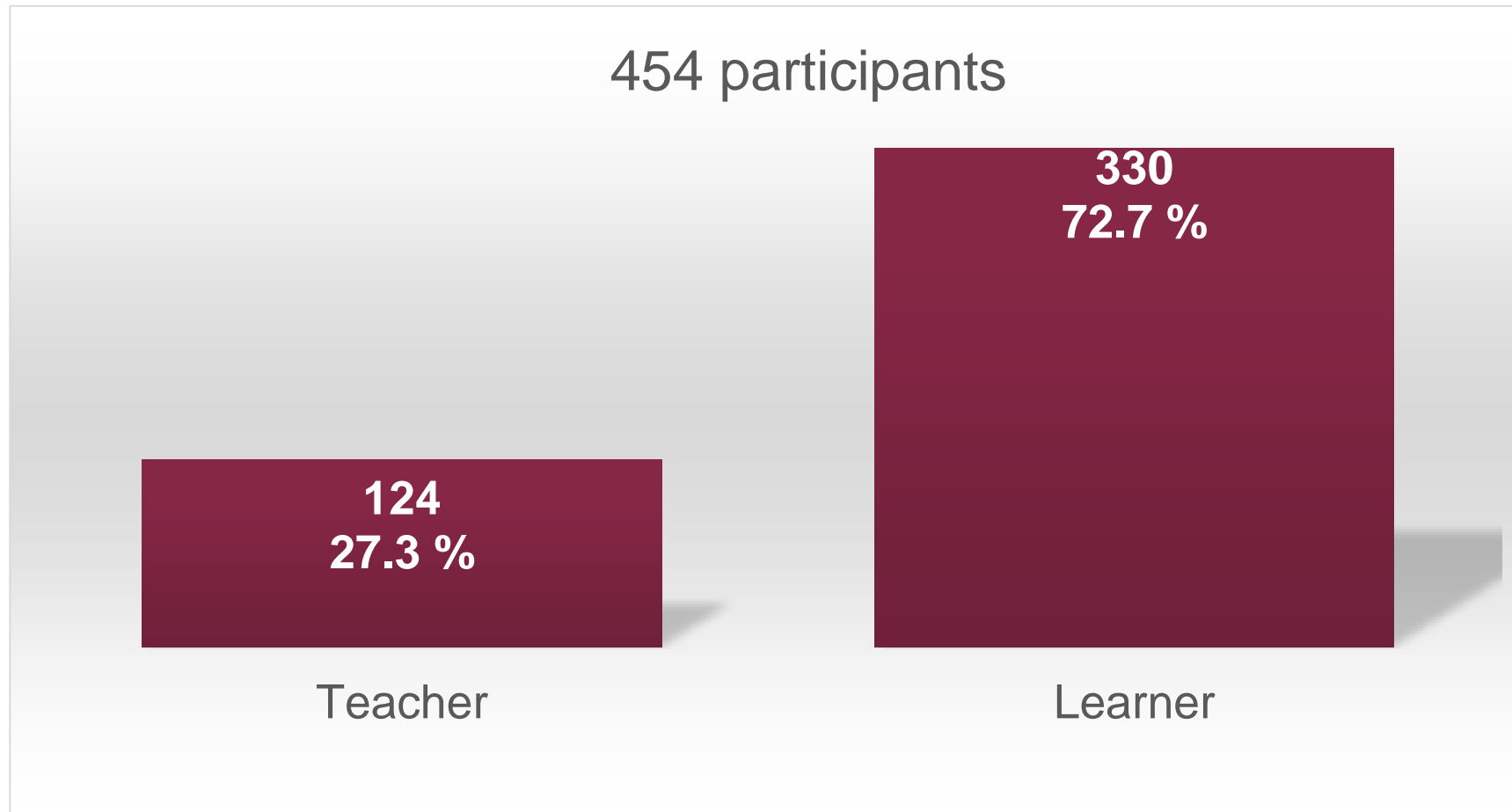
# 4. Analysis

## 4.2 SPSS

- Data cleaning
- Descriptive statistics

# 5. Findings

## 5.1 Sociodemographic



# 5. Findings

## 5.1 Sociodemographic



## 5. Findings:

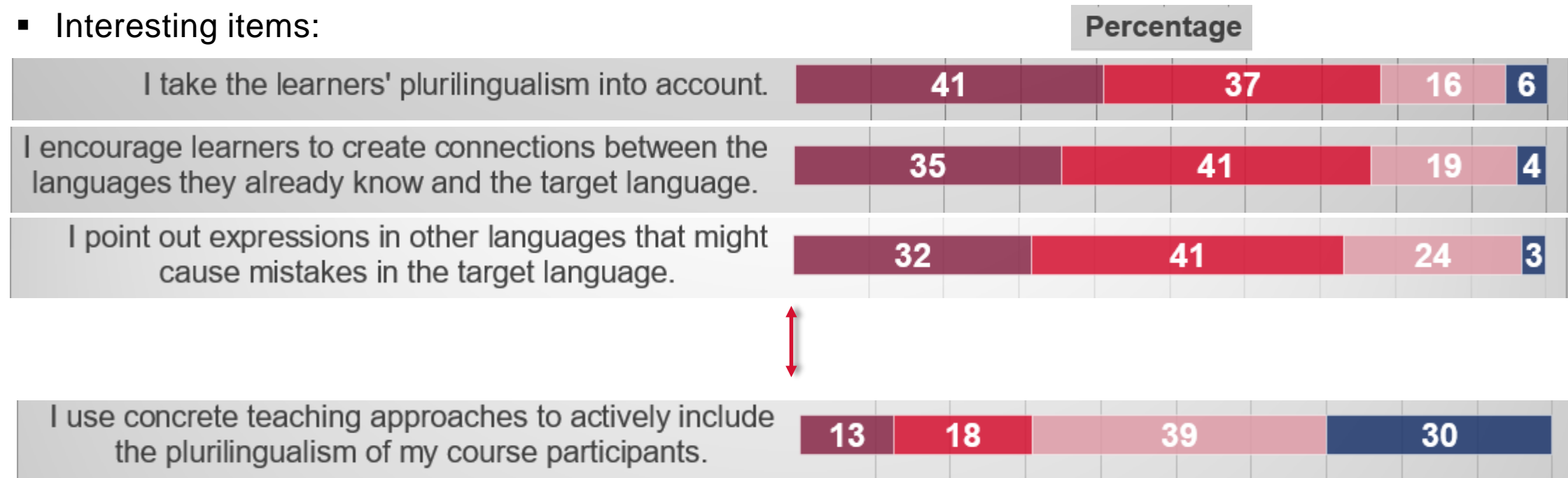
### 5.2 Implementation of plurilingual approaches by teachers

#### → Frequency

- In total 10 items, rated on the following scale:

■ Always (75–100%) ■ Frequently (50–75%) ■ Sometimes (25–49%) ■ Barely (0–24%)

- Interesting items:



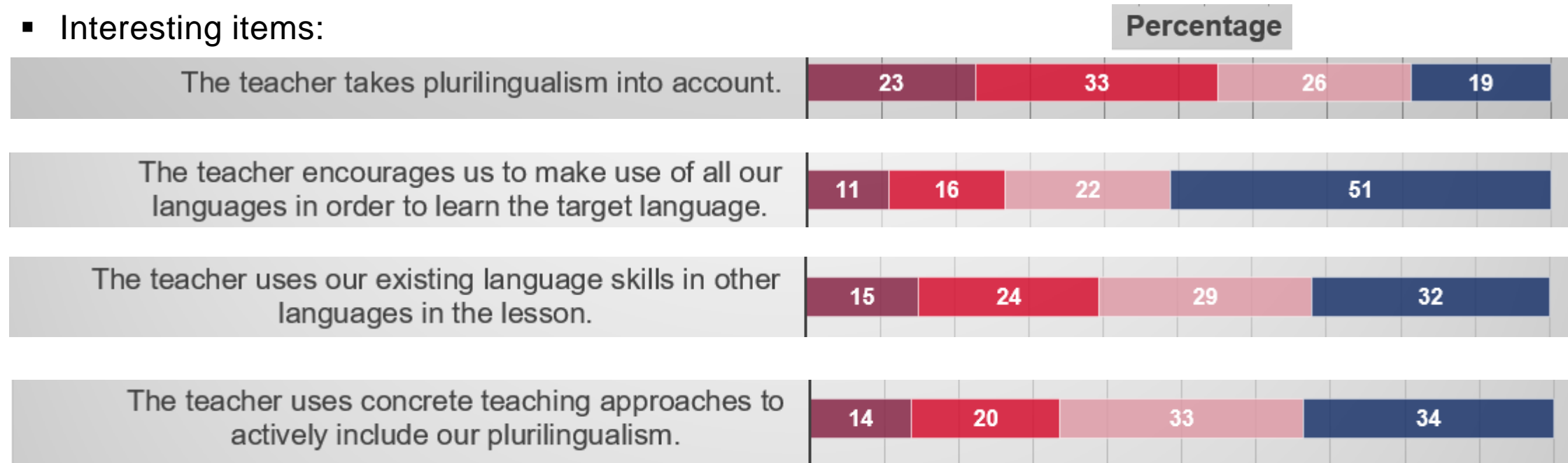
## 5. Findings:

### 5.2 Implementation of plurilingual approaches perceived by learners → Frequency

- In total 10 items, rated on the following scale:

■ Always (75–100%) ■ Frequently (50–75%) ■ Sometimes (25–49%) ■ Barely (0–24%)

- Interesting items:





## 5. Findings:

### 5.2 Implementation of plurilingual approaches → Frequency

Mean of all 10 frequency items (teachers): 2.82

Mean of all 10 frequency items (learners): 2.25

Scale:

1 = “Barely (0–24%)”

2 = “Sometimes (25–49%)”

3 = “Frequently (50–75%)”

4 = “Always (75–100%)”

→ Teachers indicated to be **close to a frequent implementation** of plurilingual teaching and learning approaches

→ Learners indicated that plurilingual approaches are **sometimes** implemented

## 5. Findings:

### 5.2 Implementation of plurilingual approaches

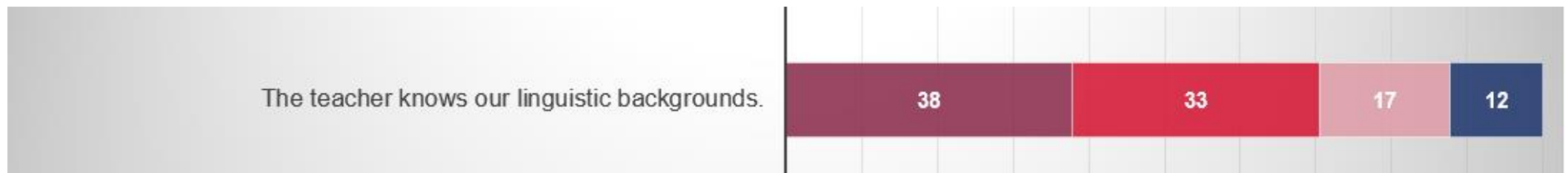
- The majority of teachers perceive to know the linguistic background of their learners

Teachers



- Over half of the learners perceive that their teachers knows their linguistic background

Learners

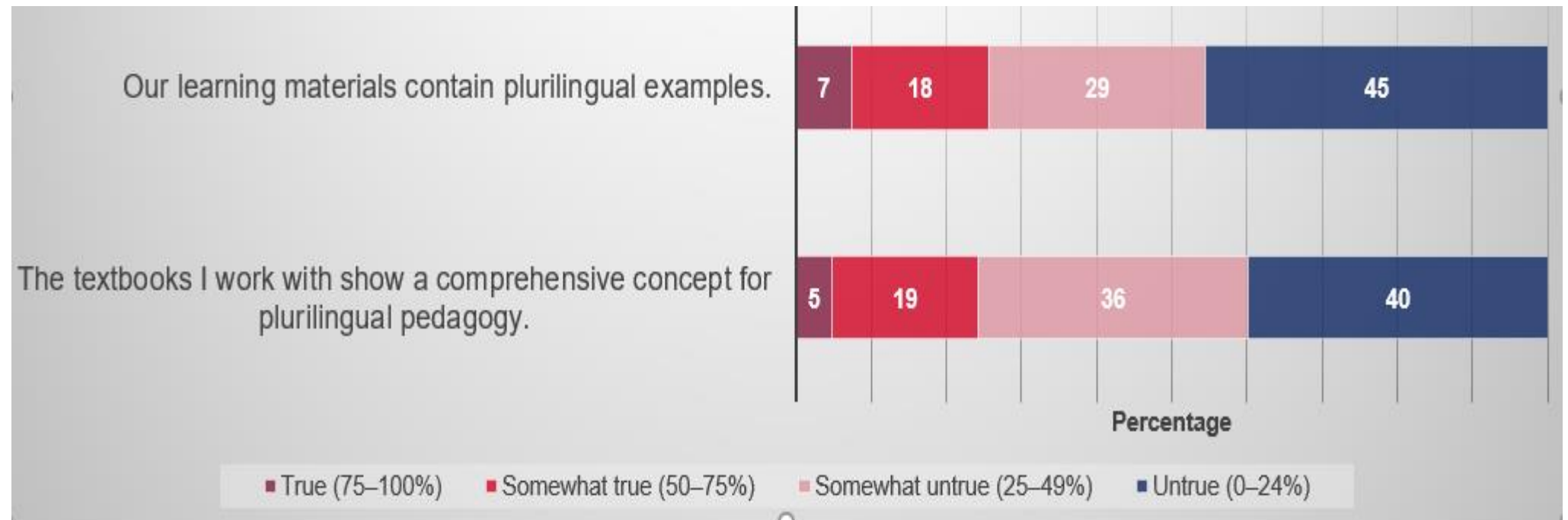


■ True (75–100%) ■ Somewhat true (50–75%) ■ Somewhat untrue (25–49%) ■ Untrue (0–24%)

## 5. Findings:

### 5.2 Implementation of plurilingual approaches (teachers)

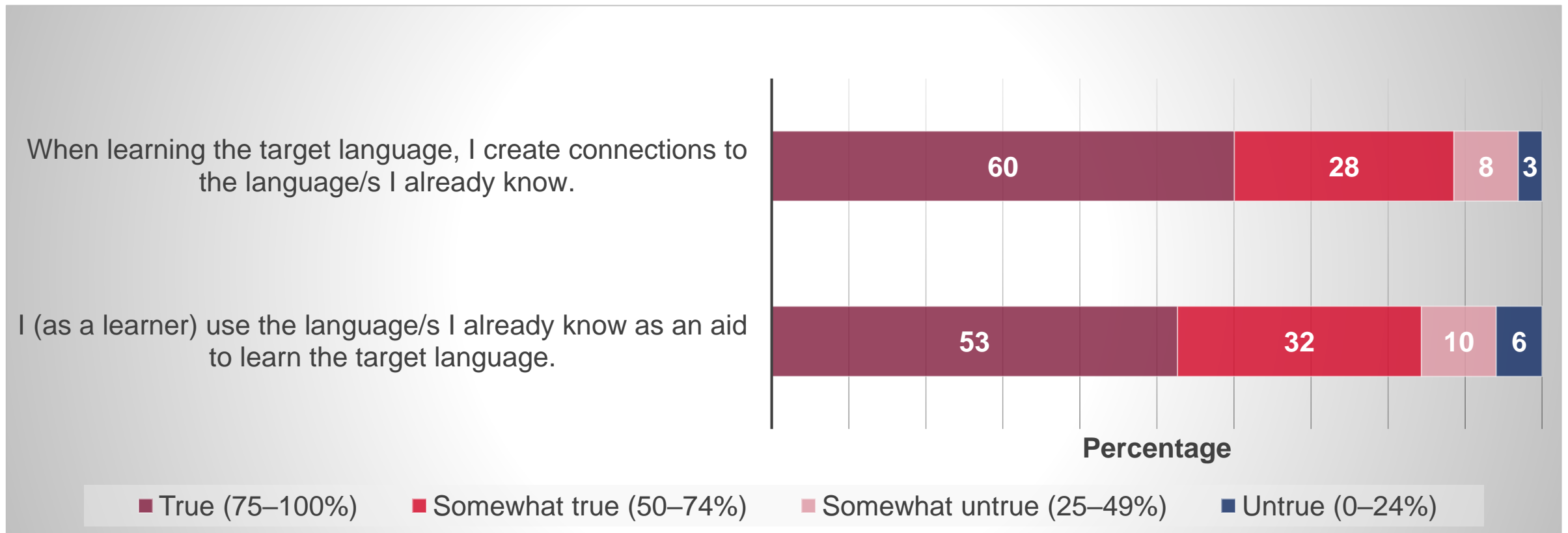
- Over half of the teachers do not think that learning materials and textbooks include plurilingual approaches



## 5. Findings:

### 5.2 Learning behavior of learners

- The majority of learners uses their own languages to learn a new language



## 5. Findings:

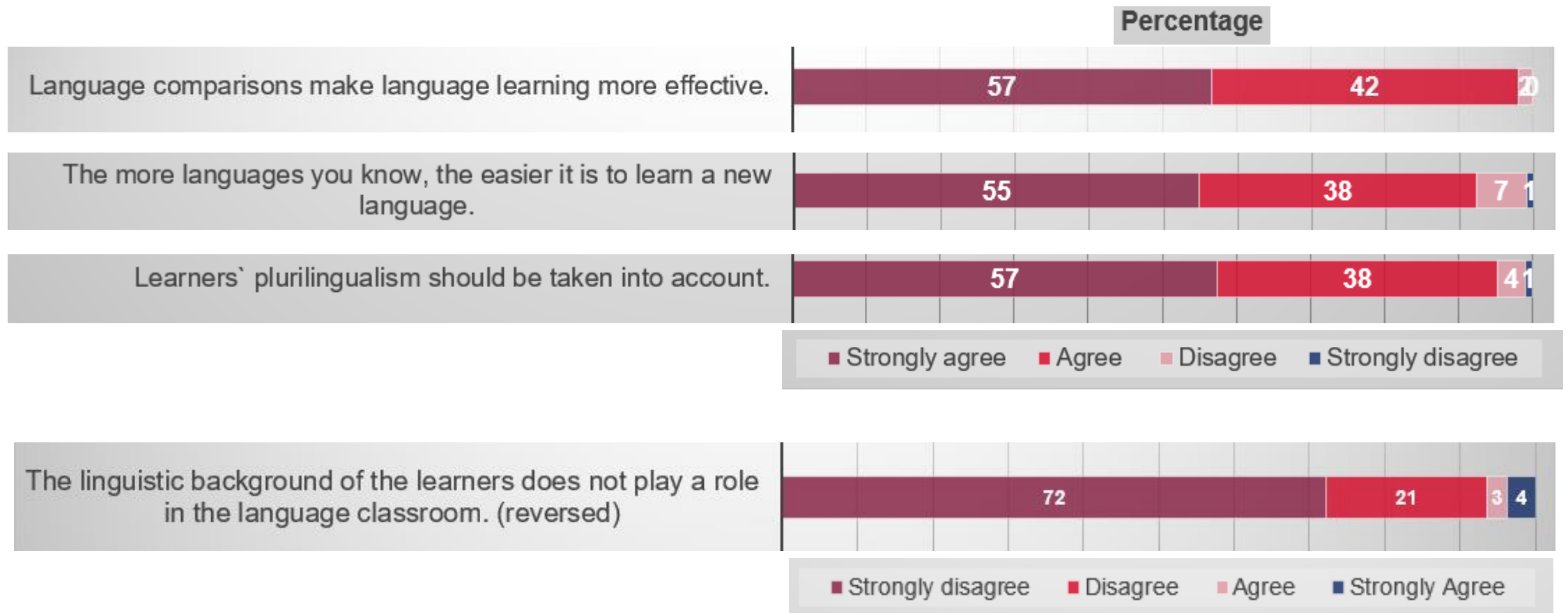
### 5.2 Summary: Implementation of plurilingual approaches

- **Teachers** indicated to be **close to a frequent implementation** of plurilingual teaching and learning approaches, however: **learners perceive** that plurilingual approaches are only **sometimes implemented**
- Most teachers perceived to be **aware of the linguistic background** of their learners
- **Learning materials and textbooks** do not contain many plurilingual approaches
- **Learning behavior:** The majority of learners uses their own languages to learn a new language

## 5. Findings:

### 5.3 Attitudes of teachers toward plurilingual approaches

- In total 14 items, **level of agreement** had to be rated
- The majority of teachers has **positive attitudes** towards plurilingual approaches

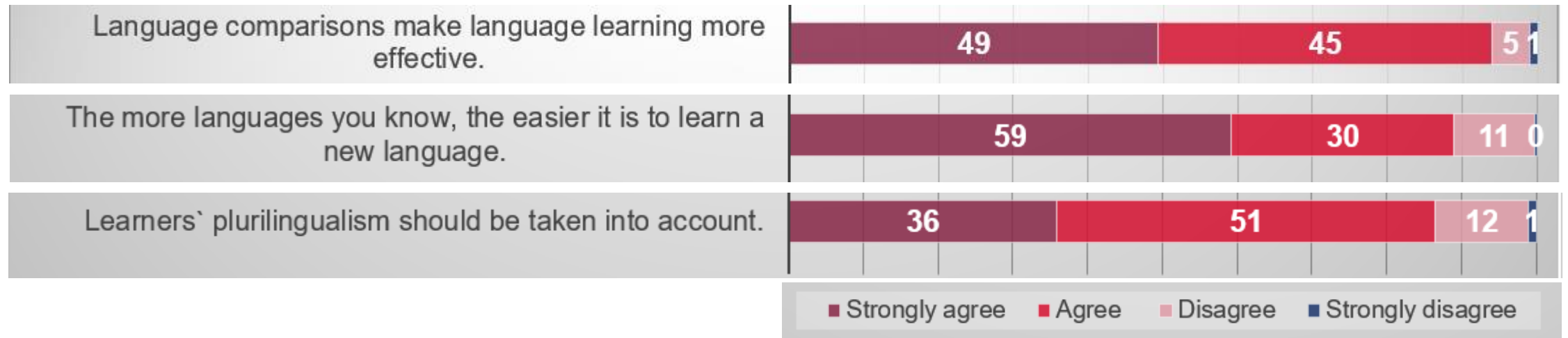


## 5. Findings:

### 5.3 Attitudes of learners toward plurilingual approaches

- In total 12 items, **level of agreement** had to be rated
- The majority of learners has **positive attitudes** towards plurilingual approaches

Percentage



## 5. Initial findings:

### 5.4 Summary

#### ▪ Sub-question 1:

Do teachers **implement** plurilingual approaches in their teaching?

- Teachers perceive to be aware of the learners' languages and include them in their classes
- However: No specific and systematic implementation of plurilingual approaches  
→ See Galante 2018, pp. 35–38: “Disconnect between theory and practice”

#### ▪ Sub-question 2:

What are the **attitudes** of teachers and learners towards plurilingual approaches in language teaching and learning?

- Teachers and learners have positive attitudes towards plurilingual teaching and learning approaches  
→ See Galante et al., 2020; Kursiša & Schlabach, 2020



## 6. Implications & Outlook

- First insights of the **current situation** regarding plurilingualism in university language classrooms in Germany
- Findings will be used to develop an **in-depth study** in the classrooms of the language center Bremen (SZHB)
  
- **Promote plurilingual approaches** in the language classroom
  - Promote **diversity**
  - **Include** and **value** all learners' languages
  - **Improve** language learning and teaching

Thank you very much for your attention!

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