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Shaping Future Teachers' Professional Identity: Student Teachers' Views on Bilingual Education Programs in Spain

Forjando la identidad profesional de los futuros maestros: Perspectivas estudiantiles sobre el bilingüismo en España

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Abstract

Student teachers are often excluded from discussions about educational programs that could significantly influence their professional development in the short or medium term. This study seeks to address this research gap by exploring the views of pre-primary and primary teacher trainees regarding bilingual education programs (BEPs) in Spain. More specifically, the study aims at uncovering the underlying reasons shaping their viewpoints. For this purpose, 200 student teachers at the University Autónoma of Madrid (UAM) were surveyed and interviewed in 2021 and 2022. Data were analysed drawing on Grounded Theory. Findings reveal four distinct types of arguments which explain student teachers' opinions regarding BEPs. Results also show how informants' ways of understanding themselves as teachers condition their views and their perceived role within BEPs. Many student teachers view their future pedagogical responsibilities rigidly within their discipline of

interest and criticise Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as an imposed methodology which will affect their teaching experience negatively. The results of this study suggest that the current initial teacher training programs offered by universities do not adequately address the professional requirements of the existing BEPs. Findings may have implications of different kinds for education authorities, university curriculum planners and teacher training programs.

Keywords: Bilingual education programs, prospective teachers' professional identity, CLIL, professional beliefs, English as language of instruction.

Resumen

Los maestros en formación rara vez son consultados sobre los programas educativos que pueden afectar su desarrollo profesional a corto o medio plazo. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es cubrir ese nicho en la investigación actual y revelar las principales razones que están detrás de las opiniones de los futuros maestros de educación infantil y primaria sobre los programas de educación bilingüe (PEBs) en España. Con este propósito, se realizó una encuesta y varios grupos focales con 200 estudiantes de magisterio en la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) en los años 2021 y 2022. Los datos obtenidos fueron analizados y clasificados utilizando la Teoría Fundamentada. Los resultados conducen a la identificación de cuatro tipos distintos de argumentos que explican las opiniones de los maestros en formación con respecto a los PEBs. Los datos muestran que existe una relación directa entre la manera en la que los encuestados se ven a sí mismos como futuros maestros y sus puntos de vista sobre la educación bilingüe. Muchos estudiantes en formación sitúan sus futuras responsabilidades pedagógicas exclusivamente en el marco de su disciplina de interés y critican el Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (CLIL) como una metodología impuesta que afectará negativamente su

experiencia docente. Los hallazgos de este estudio sugieren que los programas universitarios de formación inicial de maestros en España pueden no estar abordando adecuadamente las necesidades que demandan los PEBs y, por tanto, pueden tener diferentes implicaciones para autoridades educativas, diseñadores de currículos universitarios y formadores de maestros.

Palabras clave: Programas de educación bilingüe, identidad profesional de futuros maestros, CLIL, creencias profesionales, inglés como idioma de instrucción.

1. Introduction

This paper explores the reasons behind the opinions of 200 pre-primary and primary student teachers (henceforth, STs) about the effectiveness of Bilingual Education Programs (henceforth, BEPs) and their expected impact on their professional careers. More specifically, this study aims at identifying the most frequent themes and lines of argument used to explain prospective teachers' opinions regarding BEPSs and exploring their connection with their emerging professional identities (Beijaard et al., 2004; Alsup, 2006). The recollection of prospective teachers' opinions and the analysis of the reasons for such views is part of a larger project aiming at examining pre- and in-service teachers' mindset and related professional identity issues in different bilingual education contexts (Alonso-Belmonte & Fernández-Agüero, 2021; Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero, 2022; *inter alia*).

Teachers' beliefs are defined as "a form of thought, constructions of reality, ways of seeing and perceiving the world and its phenomena which are co-constructed within our experiences, and which result from an interactive process of interpretation and (re) signifying and of being in the world and doing things with others" (Barcelos, 2014, in Kalaja, Barcelos & Ruohotie-Lythy, 2016:123).

Teachers' beliefs are an interesting object of research since they strongly affect the teachers' attitudes, behaviour and pedagogical decisions in the classroom (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2001; Bustos, 2001; Kuzborska, 2011). Teachers' beliefs also affect the building of their professional identity, understood here as a dynamic construct developed by closing the gap between the current perception of one's self and a perceived professional ideal (Beijaard et al., 2004).

There is a plethora of studies on teachers' beliefs about the Content and Language Integrated Learning (henceforth, CLIL) methodology and its effectiveness (Alcaráz-Mármol, 2018; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Durán-Martínez, 2018; Gierlinger, 2016; Hüttner et al., 2013; Lancaster, 2016; Lova-Mellado et al., 2013; Lorenzo & Granados, 2020; Massler, 2012; Pena-Díaz & Porto-Requejo, 2008; Pham & Unaldi, 2022, *inter alia*). However, pre-primary and primary STs' opinions about CLIL and, more specifically, about Spanish BEPs are largely underexplored in recent literature (with some noteworthy exceptions such as Amat et al., 2017; Durán-Martínez et al., 2016; Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero, 2022; and Segura, 2023). The scant research also applies to CLIL teachers' professional identity (exceptions are Bárcena, 2022; Gülşen & Dikilitaş, 2023; Moate, 2013; Pappa et al., 2017a and 2017b) and this scarcity becomes more evident in the context of Spanish STs' of primary and pre-primary education.

In Spain, primary public schools offering bilingual education programs are ubiquitous. For example, in the Madrid autonomous community, 52.05% of public primary schools and 64.8 % of state-subsidised private ones have participated in the "Programa Bilingüe de la Comunidad de Madrid," or Madrid's Bilingual Program[1], during the 2022-2023 academic year. As for pre-primary education, all public schools will have implemented the Spanish-English Bilingual

[1] Dirección General de Bilingüismo y Calidad de la Enseñanza, Gobierno de la Comunidad de Madrid (2022). *Datos y Cifras de la Educación 2022–2023*. Available online: https://gestiona3.madrid.org/bvirtual/BVCM050881.pdf (Accessed on 18th August 2023).

Program for children aged 3, 4 and 5 by 2024-25[2]. Thus, it is very likely that pre-primary and primary STs' professional career will be related to BEPs in the future. It is claimed here that deep understanding of ST's beliefs may cast light on their perceived future professional trajectories and, more specifically, on their willingness (or unwillingness) to be part of BEPs and contribute to their good functioning in the near future. Therefore, these are the research questions guiding this study: what are the main themes and lines of argument used by pre-primary and primary STs when taking a stance on BEPs? Do STs visualise themselves as part of the BEPs teaching community? Why (not)?

2. Bilingual education programs in Spain

BEPs are large education plans implemented in state schools whereby some content subjects are taught in a foreign language – mainly English– following CLIL. The literature describes CLIL as an effective methodology which promotes a balanced integration of content and language, inductive reasoning, scaffolding, cognitively challenging activities and thinking skills (Coyle et al., 2010; Jiménez-Catalán & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2009). The implementation of BEPs in the Madrid region entails that in addition to the 4 or 5 English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL) lessons per week, children (ages 6-12) receive up to 5 sessions of other content subjects in English, except for Mathematics and Spanish Language and Literature. Thus, children typically receive English instruction in Natural and Social Sciences and Arts & Crafts, and, to a much lesser extent, in Physical Education. In pre-primary education, children (ages 3-5) receive up from 4 to 6 hours of contents taught in English per week. Spanish

[2] Order 1120/2022, of May 6th, from the Ministry of Education, Universities and Science regulating the expansion of the Spanish-English Bilingual Program to the Second Stage of Early Childhood Education in all public bilingual schools for Early Childhood and Primary Education in the Region of Madrid.

regional authorities generally entrust pre-primary and primary CLIL teaching to foreign language specialists with at least a B2 ("Upper-Intermediate") or C1 ("Advanced") proficiency level on the CEFRL scale[3].

In Spain, pre-primary and primary STs complete a four-year bachelors' degree (240 ECTS) to be able to obtain the required qualifications to work in any Spanish school (either private, public, or state-subsidised). In the case of the University Autónoma of Madrid, prospective STs combine on-campus theoretical modules with different periods of school internship. In their third year, UAM STs start to consider different options of specialization (*menciones*), to be taken up in their final year. For example, UAM primary prospective teachers may choose to undertake specific training in: Arts and Craft, Speech and Hearing, Environmental Science, Music Education, Physical Education and Inclusive Education, EFL, and Information and Communication Technologies[4]. Only those STs wishing to obtain a certificate as foreign language specialists will take a semester module on CLIL and a 16-week period of school internship in a BEP.

While CLIL has gained popularity worldwide, its implementation in Spain has been controversial over the last few years (Bruton, 2011, 2013; Pérez-Cañado, 2012; Cenoz et al., 2014; Lorenzo & Granados, 2020). Although BEPs have been promoted to make public education equal and provide all students with access to English (Alonso-Belmonte & Fernández-Agüero, 2021), some researchers argue that primary teachers working in CLIL contexts do not have adequate language proficiency or enough pedagogical training to effectively deliver subject content in a foreign language (Cabezuelo & Fernández, 2014; Custodio-Espinar & García-Ramos, 2020). In fact, numerous parents fear that the expansion of BEPs may dilute subject content (Martínez-Garrido et al., 2022).

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[3] C1 level is required only in the autonomous communities of Madrid and Navarra.

[4] https://www.uam.es/uam/educacion-primaria

In the last few years, the controversy on the effectiveness of BEP has overstepped the education community and recently become the subject of ongoing debates in the Spanish national press. News questioning the BEPs stating that bilingual schools are eliminating BEPs across the country are reaching the media, shaping the beliefs, values and attitudes of citizens and affecting family schooling decisions. In this context, this paper aims at contributing to this ongoing social debate by shedding light onto the rationale behind future pre-primary and primary STs' opinions on BEPs, particularly about their effectiveness in the class and their expected impact on their professional careers.

3. Teachers' beliefs on CLIL

Teachers' beliefs are usually defined as personal constructs that can provide understandings, judgments, and evaluations of teachers' practices. According to Pajares (1992:309), beliefs are disguised in peoples' attitudes, values, judgments, opinions, perceptions, and conceptions, just to name a few. In Spain, numerous studies have been conducted to unveil teachers' opinions on the implementation of BEPs to analyse their strengths and weaknesses. Although the quality of BEPs can vary across different schools and regions, research shows that more resources, further training, and more coordination among stakeholders are demanded by primary CLIL teachers to improve the quality of education under this paradigm (Cabezuelo & Fernández, 2014; Fernández & Halbach, 2011; Pena-Díaz & Porto-Requejo, 2008; Szczesnia & Muñoz-Luna, 2022). In secondary education, small scale qualitative studies in different regions of the country also evidence teachers' concerns about the way the program is being implemented (Alonso-Belmonte & Fernández-Agüero, 2021; Codó, 2020; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Guillamón-Suesa & Renau-Renau, 2015; Hernando-Garijo et al., 2018; Lancaster, 2016; Moreno de Diezmas, 2019; Quero-Hermosilla &

González-Gijón, 2017, *inter alia*). For example, segregation in CLIL is problematic for educators, especially in regions such as Madrid. However, research about prospective teachers' beliefs regarding BEPs is lacking. Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero (2022) stands out among the exceptions.

Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero (2022) analysed the answers to a questionnaire by 170 prospective teachers of primary and pre-primary at the University Autónoma of Madrid. The questionnaire consisted of 17 close-ended items distributed into three blocks. In addition to the independent variables and sub-variables of the study (sex, age, degree, year, specialisation, and self-perceived level of English proficiency), items enquired about the trainees' opinions regarding the regional BEP, its effectiveness in class, and its impact on their future professional careers, as well as a set of open questions related to the STs' experiences and opinions on BEPs.

Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero (2022) concluded that the STs' self-perceived level of English proficiency, greatly determined by prior bilingual schooling, has a strong influence on their perceptions about BEPs. Specifically, the higher their proficiency in English, the stronger their criticism of BEPs. Furthermore, these scholars showed that although the majority of surveyed STs believed that BEPs offered them better professional opportunities, almost a quarter of them (23.5%) disagreed, even when their English competence was good enough. Consequently, to comprehensively understand STs' opinions, further insights into the reasons for such views are warranted.

4. The study

4.1. Objectives and methodology

This study aims at uncovering the rationale behind UAM pre-primary and primary teacher trainees' opinions regarding BEPs in Spain, their effectiveness in the class, and their expected impact on

their professional careers. More specifically, the questions guiding the analysis are:

- RQ1: what are the most frequent themes and lines of argument in UAM prospective teachers' opinions regarding BEPs?
- RQ2: what insights can be gleaned from these lines of reasoning about the emerging professional identities of the surveyed STs?

To achieve this aim, a discourse analysis of 170 STs' answers to the open questions included in Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero's validated semi-structured questionnaire (2022) was carried out. The questionnaire's open questions are distributed in two different blocks. The first block gathers questions about the STs' learning trajectory (e.g. *How long have you studied English? Would you have liked to be a BEP student? Why (not)?*), about how they assess their own capacities and skills to work in BEPs (e.g. *How do you feel about your level of English? Is your English level good enough to be a BEP teacher? If your answer is negative, why [not]?*). The second block of questions examines the STs' opinions about the weight accorded to the English language in the Spanish education system (e.g. *Is it balanced? Justify your answer*), and their views of the professional perspectives offered by BEPs (e.g. *Does BEPs boost your professional perspectives? Would you like to work as a CLIL teacher? Why (not)?*). To shed more light on some of the answers, the same open questions were used to carry out five focus group interviews with 30 more pre-primary and primary STs in different moments of the 2021-2022 academic year. This approach to data triangulation enabled a more comprehensive and reliable analysis. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each and were led by different researchers, who noted down the STs' attitudes and comments, and probed for some additional insight as a follow-up to the questionnaire questions. Videos were securely stored in the University cloud. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Surveyed STs were informed of the aims of the research and

the storage and handling of the collected data. They were also reassured that the answers would remain anonymous and used for the research purposes only. All participants agreed to participate in the project voluntarily and provided their informed consent.

4.2. Informants

As in Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero (2022), all informants were mostly Spanish female students (85.5%) in their twenties (90.6%), and in the third year of their degree (62.4%). Surveyed STs were pursuing degrees in Primary Education, Nursery Education or the Double Degree in Pre-Primary and Primary Education at the UAM.

UAM STs in their second and third year of studies are provided with general pedagogical (non-specific CLIL) training and complete a school internship spanning several weeks. All surveyed STs acknowledged having observed how BEPs work during their third-year school internships in the Madrid region. They also acknowledged being aware of the controversy about BEPs and its real effectiveness. This awareness primarily stems from their school internship (100%) and, to a lesser extent, from social media (85%) and conversations with university classmates (35%).

As Table 1 shows, surveyed STs report a non-certified level of English communicative competence between B1 and B2, higher among Double Degree STs and lower among Nursery STs.

Table 1: ST's self-reported level of English.

		N	%
Reported level of English proficiency	Elementary (A1-A2)	30	17.6
	Intermediate (B1)	68	40.0
	Upper-intermediate (B2)	55	32.4
	Advanced (C1)	13	7.6
	Not sure	4	2.4

Finally, concerning future professional specialisation, becoming EFL specialists seemed an attractive option for all surveyed students, although given the informants' self-reported level of English, it may be more an aspirational desire than a real objective. Table 2 shows the results:

Table 2: STs' future professional specialisation

	First specialisation option	%	Second specialisation option	%
Nursery Education Degree	Arts & Crafts	32	EFL	16
Primary Education Degree	EFL	30	Social Sciences	20
Joint Degree in Nursery and Primary Education	EFL	30	Social Sciences	30

4.3. Procedure

All the STs' opinions about BEPs were collected, numbered, anonymised, and arranged in an Excel spreadsheet. In total, the analysis rendered 1914 instances of prospective teachers' opinions, distributed as follows:

Table 3: Instances of STs' stancetaking analysed, distributed by type of questions

Block of questions regarding:	Total number of instances analysed
STs' learning biography	573
STs' self- reported assessment of their own capacities and skills to work in BEPs	386
STs' professional expectations	502
The prevalence given to English in the Spanish education system	453
TOTAL	1914

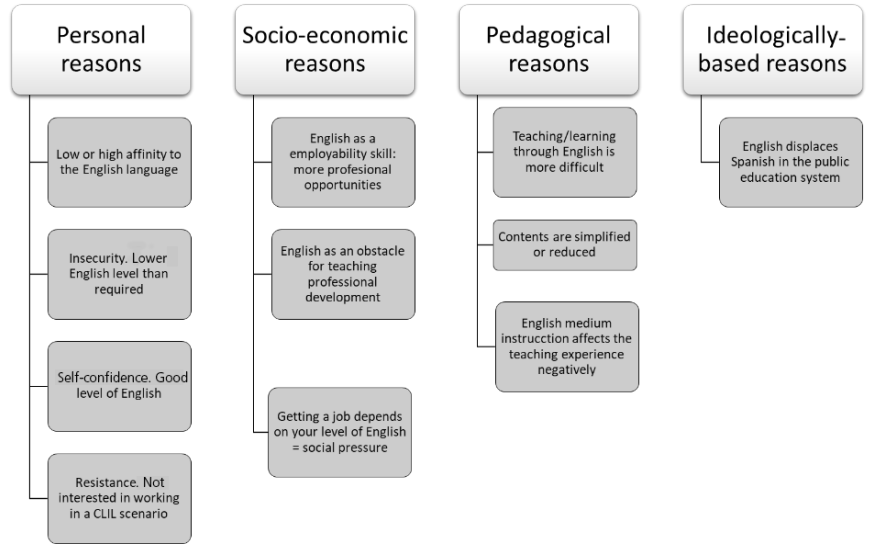
After having classified all the discourse instances, a theme analysis was carried out following the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify the main lines of argument behind

the classified stances. Thus, the first instance of opinion was analysed and assigned a descriptive label, aligning it as closely as possible with the participants' expressions. Next, the second occurrence of opinion underwent coding and a comparison with the first one to evaluate their congruence. In case of disparity, a distinct descriptive code was applied. Gradually, different discourse stances were assigned codes or labels; these codes were clustered into patterns or categories and finally, articulated hypothesis were launched to explain these patterns. Data was analysed until the point of "theoretical saturation" (Strauss & Corbin 1998) and no new or relevant data emerged regarding the categories. As interaction with surveyed STs were conducted in Spanish, raw data and codes had to be translated into English for the final report.

To ensure validity and counteract misinterpretations, coding errors and the loss of content or data (Flick 2004), the data analysis was supported by inter-coder agreements. Thus, the sample was divided into two overlapping sections and analysed separately by different researchers. Subsequently, in a joint meeting, findings were collated and the consistency of interpretations from the initial analyses was checked by recoding parts of the data set. Adjustments were made accordingly. Figure 1 portrays the eleven codes that emerged from the analysis, classified into four different categories: personal reasons, ideologically based reasons, socio-economic reasons and pedagogical reasons.

Most codes emerge in conjunction within the analysed instances. For example, it is common to find combined discourse patterns like *One's self-confidence + English as an employability skill* or *Low affinity to English + English medium instruction affects the teaching experience negatively*. Finally, all codes derive directly from the questions of the questionnaire or interviews, except for one that arose spontaneously: *English displaces Spanish in the public education system*.

Figure 1: Categories of reasons and codes



4. Results

The content analysis of the 1,914 discourse instances shows clear clusters of beliefs which complement and explain the quantitative findings in Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero (2022). The results will be organised into two subsections which tally with the categories that emerged from GT. These are the reasons for those opinions:

Socio-economic & personal reasons

The analysis of the 573 instances regarding STs' learning trajectory shows that most informants (70%) did primary and/or secondary education in a non-BEP context. However, most of them openly admit that they would have liked to be enrolled in bilingual education programs themselves. The reasons are clearly aspirational and rooted in socio-economic factors. Early foreign language

learning is seen by nearly all STs as an important motivator towards language proficiency and better job opportunities:

> (1) La experiencia bilingüe permite que desde muy pequeño profundices en el idioma, algo que es una ventaja que hay que tener en cuenta y que puede que haga que tengas más facilidad para conseguir la plaza. (*The bilingual experience offers the opportunity to immerse oneself in a foreign language from a very early age, which is an advantage worth considering. Additionally, it may enhance one's prospects of securing a teaching position.*)

In fact, as in Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero (2022), most STs interviewed (73.6% of the 502 instances analysed related to the STs professional expectations) believe that English opens new doors and enhance their professional perspectives in BEP contexts:

> (2) Es muy importante incluir en las más asignaturas posibles el inglés para tener un buen nivel en el futuro. Te abre muchas puertas y aumenta tus oportunidades de trabajo. (*It is very important to increase the number of school subjects taught in English to have a good proficiency level in the future. English opens many doors and increases your job opportunities.)*

This kind of statements are particularly frequent among STs of primary education, the sample subgroup more inclined to becoming EFL specialists in their near future, and, more specifically, among those with a self-reported good level of English:

> (3) Creo que me defiendo bastante bien con el inglés, y que me podría adaptar sin ninguna dificultad a impartir las clases en inglés, puesto que llevo desde pequeño estudiando inglés por mi cuenta, y mi nivel es más que suficiente para poder afrontar esa práctica. (*I think I can handle English quite well, and that I could adapt to teaching classes in English with no difficulty because I have been studying English since I was little, and my level is more than enough to be able to face this practicum.*)

Example 3 evidences a level of self-confidence which allows STs to envision themselves working in BEPs based on their previous

experiences (learning trajectory), their present capacities (level of English), and the circumstances in which they find themselves (BEPs expansion across the country).

Clearly, proficiency in English is a key factor influencing prospective pre-primary and primary teachers' professional image. However, it is also seen as a major concern among those prospective teachers who do not rate their proficiency in English as good or good enough. According to Mañoso-Pacheco & Sánchez-Cabrero (2022), 38.2% of STs do not see themselves prepared to meet the level required to work in a BEP context. The analysis of the 839 instances related to the weight given to English in the Spanish education system and to the STs' own capacities and skills to work in BEPs confirms this percentage. In our study, 40% of the informants see English as an unfair condition or even an obstacle for their professional development. Importantly, becoming English specialist is not an option for the majority of STs interviewed:

> (4) A día de hoy te piden el inglés en todas partes. Al ser bilingües la mayoría de colegios, si no sabes inglés lo tienes complicado, por el peso que tienen las asignaturas bilingües. (*Nowadays, English is a job requirement everywhere. Since most schools are bilingual, if you don't speak English, you will have a hard time finding a job because of the importance given to bilingual courses.*)

> (5) Aquí en España si no tienes un B2 o C1 no puedes trabajar en los colegios, independientemente de que no vayas a dar inglés. Considero que eso es injusto, ya que si mi asignatura no está en el programa bilingüe, no es necesario que tenga un nivel tan alto de inglés. (*Here in Spain, if you don't have a B2 or C1 level of English you cannot work in schools, even if you are not applying for an English position. I believe this is unfair because the subjects I am specialised in are not usually part of the bilingual program. To have such a high level of English should not be a job requirement.)*

A few prospective students (20%) even acknowledge social pressure (example 6) to improve their English for better employment opportunities. This pressure generates resignation (7) and resistance (8):

> (6) No me gusta el inglés, y aunque esté hoy en día en una academia, es por presión social, no porque quiera que mi futuro sea ser profesora en un centro bilingüe. (*I do not like English, and even though I am currently taking English lessons at a private language school, it is because of social pressure, not because I want my teaching future to be part of a bilingual centre.*)
>
> (7) No siento que se me dé bien el inglés y pueda dar clase adecuadamente en este idioma, pero supongo que deberé trabajar en ello. (*I do not feel like I am very good at English and can teach properly in this language, but I suppose I will have to work on it.*)
>
> (8) Independientemente del nivel de inglés que tenga, me parece más interesante impartir mi docencia en un colegio que no sea bilingüe. (*Regardless of my level of English, I find it more interesting to teach in a non-bilingual school.*)

As example 8 shows, having the required level of English to work in a BEP is not the problem. Recall that a 72.4% of informants reported to have an intermediate or upper intermediate level of English. To put it simply, while some STs wish to be part of the CLIL teaching community and invest in it, some others hold on to their pre-existing identity as subject teachers and do not envision themselves teaching in a bilingual program context, even when their level of English is enough.

Pedagogical & ideologically based reasons

There are several pedagogical and ideologically inspired reasons for this lack of motivation to working in BEPs. Many of the surveyed STs believe that BEPs have a marked negative effect on the teaching/learning process of subject contents. This is a frequent argument among STs, regardless their affinity to BEPs, their level of

English, or the academic degree that they are pursuing. For instance, the informants in the following examples claim that English as the medium of instruction will affect their teaching experience negatively:

> (9) Aunque tengo nivel B2 de inglés de Cambridge y tengo intención de sacarme el C1 cuanto antes, no quiero dedicarme a esto, es decir, no quiero dar clases de inglés o en inglés puesto que no me siento cómoda. (*Even though I have a certified B2 level and I intend to obtain my C1 certificate as soon as possible, I do not want to pursue this career, that is, I do not want to work as an English teacher or a CLIL one since I do not feel comfortable.*)

> (10) Explicar sociales a los niños es complicado por el vocabulario que se necesita (…) la manera de explicar tiene que ser muy básica. (*Explaining social sciences to children is complicated due to the specialised vocabulary they need to know to follow the class.[...] The methodology for explaining the topic has to be very basic.*)

> (11) La verdad, no creo que a mí como profesor me vaya a aportar nada interesante tener que amoldarme a una enseñanza bilingüe y a todas las desventajas que puedan acarrear. (*To be honest, I do not think it would be beneficial for me as a teacher to adapt to a CLIL methodology and all the disadvantages that it may bring.)*

Some others put forward well-known arguments against BEPs such as that subject contents are reduced and simplified to meet the students' level of English, and that the learning becomes more complicated for certain groups of students. More examples illustrate these views:

> (12) El contenido que se imparte se reduce, ya que aumenta la dificultad. (*The content taught is reduced as the difficulty in understanding English increases.)*

> (13) Los contenidos de los libros bilingües son mucho más pobres que los de los libros en español. (*The contents of BEP books are much poorer than those of their equivalents in Spanish.*)

> (14) Aquellos que tienen dificultades en la lengua inglesa no adquieren de igual manera los contenidos. Al final no aprenden ni inglés ni castellano. (*Those students who have difficulties learning English do not learn the contents in the same way. In the end, they learn neither English nor Spanish.*)

Examples 12, 13 and 14 seem to suggest that the expansion of BEPs in Spain has displaced Castilian Spanish from its central position in the education system, and that this displacement may affect students' mastery of their first language. Some STs (15%) severely criticize this political decision:

> (15) Se están centrado en el inglés y están abandonando el castellano. (*English is becoming the focus now, leaving Spanish behind.*)

> (16) Le dan gran importancia al inglés más que a la lengua nativa. (*English is being prioritised over the native language.*)

5. Discussion

The analysis of 1914 discourse instances has led to the classification of the reasons behind STs' opinions into four different groups: personal, socio-linguistic, pedagogical and ideological reasons. These four clusters of reasons are shaped by two key factors, which constrain STs' views about BEPs and condition their imagined future teaching role: the informants' self-reported foreign language proficiency, already noted by Mañoso and Sánchez (2022), and their perceptions of themselves as future educators, that is, their emergent professional identity. Thus, while some STs invest in building a self-confident professional identity as CLIL teachers grounded on their linguistic mastery of English and/or on their previous successful learning trajectory, others express their low affinity to the English language, to the CLIL methodology and to the BEPs in general, even though they speak good English and acknowledge the importance

of the English language in the world. A few of them even reject CLIL teaching practices strongly. These STs question the weight given to English in the Spanish curriculum and consequently, do not want to be part of the CLIL teaching community. Finally, a third group believe that the CLIL teaching experience may not be as fulfilling when conducted in a language other than their native tongue.

Several plausible explanations for this reported resistance to CLIL can be advanced. First, the UAM training program for pre-primary and primary educators itself lacks a CLIL training module for all undergraduate teacher trainees. This is a common situation in Spain: CLIL courses are frequently provided to pre-service teachers preparing to specialize as FL educators, rather than to generalist teachers (Galán-Rodríguez et al., 2024). This trend persists due to the predominant presence of CLIL specialists among foreign language teacher educators in Spain. This formative deficit at the undergraduate level may enhance a subject-focused mindset among STs. Thus, as pre-teachers feel discrepancies between what is expected from them in a BEP and their already-existing identities as content subject specialists, they decide not to invest in the CLIL community's practices, even if their English proficiency is good enough (Moate, 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013).

A second factor contributing to STs' reluctance to be part of the CLIL teaching community may be their insecurities. As shown by previous examples, these prospective teachers' beliefs are imbued with a gamut of emotions (e.g. *I am unsure I can effectively teach in English; I do not feel comfortable teaching in English,* etc.), especially, fear and insecurity. This finding aligns with previous research among Spanish future primary education teachers (Amat et al., 2017), and may stem from the anxiety of trying to meet bilingual teaching demands (Pappa et al., 2017c; Breeze & Azparren, 2021). Undergraduate training programs should address the possible causes of this anxiety and the attendant negative emotions, particularly before to the practicum phase of the training.

The absence of enough research based CLIL training in undergraduate teacher education programs leaves room for the influence of the polarised social debate on BEPs on STs' mindset. For example, regarding the purported decrease in the complexity of subject-specific materials, research evidence remains inconclusive, as pointed out by Hüttner et al. (2013). Concerning the role of Spanish and its alleged marginalization in the curriculum, no research supports the idea that Spanish learning is in any way affected by the implementation of BEPs. This idea is part of a growing opinion movement critiquing English as an instrument of cultural colonisation in Spanish public education. This viewpoint enjoys popularity on social media platforms and may have had some influence in STs' mindset (Alonso-Belmonte, in preparation). Although further research is needed to gauge the prevalence of these arguments among STs and their potential impact on the effective implementation of BEPs, research based CLIL training could help future educators transcend the polarised binomial English *versus* Spanish in public discourse. Recognizing CLIL as a method tailored to enhancing plurilingualism (Otto et al., 2024) could lead to significant transformations in undergraduate teacher training programs.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies that reveal pre-primary and primary STs' resistance to CLIL in Spain. However, the issue is not new in other CLIL teaching contexts. In secondary education, research shows that many in-service content teachers find it difficult to come to terms with their dual role in CLIL and that consequently struggle promoting the integration of contents and language in the class (Mehisto et al., 2008; Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016; Alonso-Belmonte & Fernández-Aguero, 2021). The novelty here is this also happens among pre-primary and primary prospective teachers, whose perceived identities derive from the unlimited recreation of practices they see and the limited experiences they encounter, not from the real engagement in the practices where practiced identity is formed. Public opinion, media coverage, and community attitudes

regarding BEPs may carry considerable weight in shaping STs views. In any case, the results presented in this paper should be re-evaluated in a near future as the beliefs of these prospective teachers may evolve as they progress in their professional careers. Indeed, further research including a wider spectrum of pre-teachers from different universities and from different areas of Spain should be carried out to assess the generalizability of the results presented here. Finally, future research could also include observations during school internships to examine how the beliefs under analysis are enacted in the immediate work environment.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that the current initial teacher training programs do not adequately address the professional requirements of the existing BEPs. To enhance the effectiveness of teacher education programs for undergraduates, it is imperative to incorporate more comprehensive, research-based training in CLIL for all STs at an earlier stage, and to address some of their concerns, such as how to integrate content and language learning effectively (Villabona & Cenoz, 2021), or how to manage classroom diversity in a CLIL context (Durán-Martínez & Martín-Pastor, 2023), among other relevant topics. For example, materials such as the ones developed within the framework of research projects like ADiBE or EBYAD[5] have proven to be very useful in making CLIL accessible to all types of achievers. In sum, as shown by Alcaráz-Mármol (2018), increasing methodological training at the undergraduate level can have a substantial impact on novice teachers' views on CLIL. Besides, it is important to foster a supportive social and cultural environment

[5] ADIBE is an acronym of "CLIL for All: Attention to Diversity in Bilingual Education" (Erasmus + 2018-1-ES01-KA201-050356): https://adibeproject.com/. Information about EBYAD (Bilingual Education & Attention to Diversity) project can be found at: https://ebyad.usal.es/

among STs that promotes the goals and benefits of bilingual education. Addressing the concerns and perceptions that arise from the ongoing debate surrounding BEPs can be crucial in ensuring the success of teacher education programs. Failing to do so runs the risk of allowing an uninformed public discussion to shape the perspectives of STs.

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Declaration of interest statement

The author declares that there are no competing interests.

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