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Responsible, competent and with a sense of belonging: an explanation for the purported levelling effect of CLIL

Abstract

Whilst CLIL research has flourished and showed some gains for CLIL learners, for example in motivation, there is little consensus about how it affects students from different social strata. The British Council 'English Impact' study (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2017) has recently uncovered that CLIL contributes to levelling of SES (socio-economic status) differences between students and leading to high levels of motivation in all students. In this study, we aim to follow up on these findings by exploring how teachers from the region of Madrid perceive students and their parents in both bilingual and non-bilingual secondary schools. To this end, 138 teachers from bilingual and non-bilingual schools filled in the TALIS questionnaire (OECD, 2013) and 20 teachers were interviewed. Whereas questionnaire data reveals few perceived differences between students from the two types of schools, interviewees did point to differences in characteristics of students from bilingual and non-bilingual schools and the type of parental support they receive. The findings point towards the creation of a learning environment in CLIL programs that satisfies the need for autonomy, competence and relatedness as reasons behind increased levels of motivation and the reduced impact of students' SES on their performance.

Introduction

There has been a widespread rise of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programmes worldwide, and in some contexts, including Spain, CLIL can be considered a mainstream educational approach. In CLIL, students have the opportunity to learn a second language not only in language lessons but also in other classes, as these are delivered via the medium of a second language. Many studies have endorsed the spread of CLIL, with a particular focus on its impact on the development of foreign language proficiency and content subject learning or the development of students' L1 skills (see Morton, 2016; Pérez Cañado, 2012 and Rumlich, 2020 for an overview).

One such study, boasting very high reliability through careful sampling, is the British Council Impact study (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2017), carried out in the Comunidad de Madrid. While

initially aimed at assessing students' levels of English at the end of compulsory schooling, the study also included other measures such as those of students' language learning motivation and socio-economic status (SES). As study participants included 15-year-olds from both bilingual and non-bilingual schools in the region of Madrid, it was possible to compare the two groups of students. The results showed higher levels of motivation and proficiency among students in bilingual schools as compared to their peers in non-bilingual classes. When SES was brought into the analysis, it was revealed that in bilingual schools, differences in motivation and proficiency between students from different SES backgrounds were smaller than in non-bilingual schools, or, in the case of some motivational factors, not significant. This led to the conclusion that instruction in bilingual schools might lead to curbing the influence of students' SES on their language learning and motivation, thus creating a more inclusive learning context.

Yet the claim that CLIL should be more egalitarian runs counter to some of the criticism levelled against this kind of program by a number of researchers accusing it of being selective. Bruton (2011), for example argued that, unlike mainstream mother-tongue programs, CLIL is a selective program that tends to attract students who show higher levels of motivation before entering the program and "whose parents are generally in the higher socio-economic classes" (Bruton, 2011, p. 529). This selectiveness, the reasoning goes, would also explain the positive learning outcomes in CLIL found by research. These two opposing views of CLIL, then, raise the question: are students "creamed off" in CLIL programs as some researchers claim, or do CLIL programs have the potential of reducing the impact of students' SES on their motivation and performance, as the Impact study suggests? If the latter is the case, why is the gap in motivation and proficiency between students from lower and higher SES background narrower in bilingual than non-bilingual schools? Using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Hadley, 2019), this study will try to answer these questions from the perspective of teachers as one of the most important stakeholders in education who, through everyday observation and participation in school, have insights into the nature of teaching that are not available to outside observers.

Context: CLIL in Madrid

Among the 17 autonomous regions in Spain, the region of Madrid boasts one of the most developed and widespread bilingual programs (Ministero de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2019). Starting in the academic year 2004-05 with 25 primary schools (years 1 to 6), the program has slowly grown to incorporate around 50% of all primary and secondary schools in the Madrid region. Enrolment in the program is available for all students in primary schools, while at secondary schools (years 7 to 12) students must have achieved a B1 level of English to be admitted into the so-called “bilingual sections” (*sección*). For students who have not reached the required level in the foreign language, bilingual schools offer the “bilingual program” (*programa*) strands, where only one subject is taught in the foreign language and the foreign language is taught in five weekly sessions. In bilingual primary schools and bilingual sections at the secondary level, between 30 and 50% of the teaching time is in the foreign language, normally English. In primary education, social and natural sciences are taught in the foreign language, whereas in secondary education history and geography, biology and geology, and physics and chemistry are delivered via a foreign language. Students in both types of schools also attend five weekly foreign language lessons. Teachers teaching through English need to have reached a C1 level in the foreign language, and in secondary education are always content subject specialists with an added language certificate.

The Madrid CLIL program being a strong, well-established educational program, offers the ideal context for shedding some light on the question about the levelling or elitist nature of CLIL programs. The English Impact study (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2017) focused on this autonomous community and it is thus in the context of the autonomous community of Madrid that we can hope to find an explanation for the finding that the impact of students’ SES on their motivation to learn English and their level of attainment in the language is reduced in bilingual schools.

Literature review

The fact that CLIL is characterized by an authentic use of the foreign language, as well as an added challenge as a result of studying in a foreign language, suggests that this approach would have a positive effect on students' motivation (Coyle, 2013). However, motivation in CLIL has not been researched extensively (Lasagabaster, 2019; Sylvén, 2017), nor are findings conclusive.

CLIL research in Europe

While studies carried out by Lasagabaster and his colleagues in different regions of Spain point towards positive effects of CLIL on students' motivation (Doiz, Lagasabaster & Sierra, 2014; Lasagabaster, 2011; Lasagabaster & López Beloqui, 2015; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009; San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2020), the aspects of motivation found to benefit from CLIL instruction do not coincide in the different groups analysed. For example, Lasagabaster & López Beloqui (2015) found that CLIL students showed higher levels of motivation particularly in intrinsic and integrative motivation measures, and no significant difference in the other aspects measured (extrinsic and instrumental as well as interest in other cultures). On the other hand, in Doiz, Lagasabaster & Sierra (2014), the researchers found differences in favour of CLIL students in intrinsic and instrumental motivation, as well as interest in foreign languages and their cultures.

Yet not all the studies report a heightened level of motivation among CLIL learners. In a study conducted in the German context, Rumlich (2016) did not find any differences in motivation between students in CLIL and non-CLIL groups. Making matters even more complicated, Otwinowska and Foris (2017), in one of the few studies carried out in primary CLIL, found that learning through a foreign language can have positive effects on some students' motivation, but has the opposite effect on most students. They hypothesize that in the case of the latter group

of students the difficulty of communicating in a foreign language resulted in CLIL becoming a source of frustration.

Not only is there no consensus as to the aspects of motivation which CLIL purportedly influences positively, but there are also questions on how this motivation changes over time. Most of the studies just provide still pictures of students' motivation in the first place (Lasagabaster, 2019), thus not allowing insights into the long-term impact of CLIL. The small number of studies that do allow to draw conclusions about change over time found that the differences in motivation between CLIL and non-CLIL learners are seen to decrease as students progress through schooling (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2017; Navarro Pablo & García Jiménez, 2018 and San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2020). While this may simply be an effect of students' age, it was found that this decrease is more notable in CLIL than in non-CLIL groups.

A further complication of this issue resides in the fact that, as Lasagabaster (2019) points out, there is a distinct lack of baseline data that would ensure that CLIL and non-CLIL groups are matched in terms of motivation before the onset of CLIL instruction. Without these data, it is difficult to establish whether the differences in motivation are a result of CLIL or a characteristic of the students who opt for CLIL education.

These special traits of future CLIL learners have actually been confirmed by the few research studies that have analysed the cohorts of students before entering CLIL programs. One of them, Rumlich (2016), found that CLIL and non-CLIL students in German secondary schools show different profiles in terms of language proficiency, EFL self-concept and verbal cognitive abilities, thus giving strength to the argument that higher levels of motivation actually precede participation in CLIL programs, rather than being a consequence of it. Similarly, Thomson and Sylvén (2015) mention that CLIL students show a lower level of anxiety prior to starting a CLIL program, and "students opting for CLIL (in such contexts where the choice is optional) seem to have a clearer view of themselves as proficient TL users in the future" (Sylvén, 2017, p. 58).

Similar results have been reported in Dallinger, Jonkmann & Hollm (2018). Rumlich (2013) refers to this as “the creaming effect” of CLIL. These studies have been conducted in contexts where students enter CLIL programmes at a secondary level and are able to make, or at least contribute to, decisions about their education. In contrast, in Madrid children tend to start CLIL in primary school, when they do not have clearly formulated self-concepts, and almost none of them have had a significant exposure to English. In this context, their self-concept as learners is likely to be the result of the educational program they participate in.

The impact of students' SES in foreign language learning and CLIL

The above mentioned “creaming effect” of CLIL (Rumlich, 2013) that some authors pointed to when trying to explain the purportedly positive results of CLIL might be underlined by differences in students' SES. While SES is generally considered to be the one major factor in determining their academic success (OECD 2018), in the more specific field of foreign language learning, “SES has received relatively little attention among researchers [...] until recently.” (Butler & Le, 2017, p. 5). What studies there are point towards a relation between students' SES and their levels of language proficiency, motivation and anxiety towards language learning, as well as their self-efficacy. The effects of SES in the studies reviewed by Butler & Le (2017) seem to increase over time, with students in primary education showing fewer differences than those in secondary school.

As far as the impact of students' SES on learning in CLIL is concerned, again research is scarce (Rascón Moreno & Bretones Callejas, 2018). In one of the few studies available, a case study carried out in Cameroon, Kuchah Kuchah (2018) concludes that for students coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds, and consequently having no access to English before the onset of schooling, “learning in the medium of English, a language that is not their familiar home or community language can be [...] a barrier to accessing curriculum content”, thus identifying

students' SES as a crucial factor in their academic success. This conclusion is in line with Graddol's (2006) warning that CLIL (or EMI in Kuchach Kuchah's article) can act as a gatekeeper, perpetuating the educational disadvantage of children from less privileged backgrounds.

Closer home, in a study carried out in Madrid with students from the first two cohorts in the bilingual program in this region, Anghel, et al. (2016) concluded that learning in English has a negative effect on students' performance in the content subject and that this negative effect is "concentrated on the children of less educated parents" (p. 1222). Similarly, in a study carried out in Asturias, an autonomous community in the North of Spain, Fernández Sanjurjo et al. (2018) found that the academic results of students studying in bilingual schools are lower than those of students in mainstream, Spanish-medium schools. While these results hold for students from all kinds of SES, their impact is stronger for students coming from more privileged backgrounds, thus running counter to the claim that CLIL actually favours students with higher SES.

In clear contrast to these studies carried out in primary schools in central and northern Spain, a study, this time carried out in Andalusia (Rascón Moreno & Bretones Callejas, 2018), points towards SES having an influence on students' performance in English, Spanish and Science in mother-tongue medium instruction both at primary and secondary level, with students from more privileged backgrounds clearly outperforming students from more disadvantaged contexts. In CLIL programs, however, students' SES was found to have no impact on their academic performance. Similar results were also found in a second study carried out in Andalusia, where the impact of students' SES on their performance in English, Spanish and Geography and History was reduced in the case of CLIL programs, in contrast with Spanish-medium schools, where it had a clear impact (Lorenzo, 2019).

Finally, the English Impact study, on which our research is based, carried out in 2017 by the British Council (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2017) and characterized by using a statistically

representative sample, thus making it the most reliable of all studies carried out to date, shows, among many other things, that in secondary schools in Madrid the distribution of students from different SES contexts is roughly equivalent. According to this study, 46.2% of students in bilingual schools were coming from lower socio-educational backgrounds and 53.8% coming from higher socio-educational backgrounds, vs. 51.6% in non-bilingual schools coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds and 48.4% coming from more favourable contexts, this difference not being statistically significant. Further, it was found that the impact of students' SES on their motivation to learn English and performance in the language was reduced in bilingual schools when compared to monolingual schools, so that rather than segregating students, bilingual education was shown to have a levelling effect (XXXX 2018). Being a purely quantitative study, English Impact did not offer any explanation of why bilingual education could have this effect. The present study is an attempt at shedding some light on the causes that may account for this unexpected outcome of bilingual education from the point of view of teachers, as the most directly involved and best-informed participants in education.

Methodology

Research questions and design

Taking the results of the English Impact study (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2017) as its starting point, the present study aims at finding out what the possible reasons for the reduced impact of students' SES on their academic performance and motivation in secondary CLIL schools is. As becomes visible from the literature review on the motivation and the impact of students' SES on learning in CLIL, the research so far, which is mostly quantitative in nature, has been descriptive rather than explanatory. This means that it offers few insights into the reasons for the often contradictory findings, making Rumlich (2020, p. 116) say that "it is still largely unclear how exactly the educational potential of CLIL and bilingual education materialises; for whom,

under what conditions, at what cost and what educational objectives can be attained.” Thus, if we want to find an explanation for the curbed impact of students’ SES in CLIL programs, we need to complement the usual quantitative approach to research, which is necessary for a description of student characteristics and learning results, with a more qualitative one that would allow to build an understanding of the particularities of CLIL that can explain the reduced effect of students’ SES in this kind of program. Moreover, the very lack of explanations observed by Rumlich (2020) makes it necessary to adopt an emic approach to research, where the starting point is formed by the data rather than by any preconceived categories, and where a theory – or an explanation – emerges from the insights of the participants, in this case the teachers. This combination of a mixed-method approach with an emic perspective is characteristic of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2001; Hadley, 2019), the approach that guides this study.

Thus, the study looks to understand the curbed effect of students’ SES in CLIL from the perspective of teachers as direct participants in, and observers of, education, and combines quantitative data collected through an online questionnaire with qualitative data coming from semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this combination is to be able to describe the characteristics of the students attracted into secondary CLIL programs in Madrid, and identify the factors that would explain why these programs seem to have a levelling effect on students.

The TALIS Questionnaire

The tool used for the survey was based on the TALIS 2013 questionnaire (Spanish version, OECD, 2013). It included closed questions on the following topics: background information about teachers’ job and experience, preparedness for teaching, professional development, teaching methodology, school climate and job satisfaction. More importantly for this study, the questionnaire also asked teachers about their perceptions of their student cohorts in terms of ability, special educational needs, socio-economic background and behaviour. In total, the

questionnaire included 47 questions. In this paper, teachers' answers to these last questions about perceived students' characteristics are analysed.

Interviews

Nine semi-structured interviews were organised. Teachers were interviewed in pairs or small groups, with the exception of one individual interview (see Table 1 for more details). Interviews lasted one hour approximately and were conducted in the teachers' schools. The teachers were asked about the atmosphere in their schools, their opinion of the bilingual program and bilingual students, as well as their own methodology, training needs and opportunities. Towards the end of the interview, they were also presented with the results of the English Impact study on the reduction of the gap between students from different social strata and asked to comment on them.

Sampling and participants

As in the English Impact study that triggered the investigation reported here, the research focuses on year 10 students in both bilingual and non-bilingual schools in the autonomous community of Madrid. Teachers in public and chartered¹ secondary schools, both bilingual and non-bilingual, in Madrid teaching at least one group of year 10 students were invited to participate in the survey through e-mails sent to the schools. In total, 138 teachers from secondary schools in the region of Madrid filled in the questionnaire. The teachers came from different schools, taught a variety of subjects, with some teachers teaching in English and others in Spanish. 87 were female and 51 were male. The teachers were of different ages (from 26 to 60+) and varied in the number of years of teaching experience ($M = 15.89$; $SD = 9.827$).

¹ In the Spanish educational system private, public and charter schools coexist. While the first are created by private initiative and funded by the parents, public schools are dependent on the state and charter schools are a mixture of the two: they are created through private initiative but funded by the state. Since the English Impact study focused on public and charter schools, it was decided to use these types of schools for this more exploratory study too.

20 volunteers from eight schools participated in interviews, four of them English teachers in *programa* or non-bilingual school, two English teachers in *sección*, six subject-specialists teaching in Spanish and another six teaching their subjects in English, and finally a headteacher from a bilingual school. More details of the participants are presented in Table 1. The number of interviewees varied from interview to interview, with six interviews with two participants, one interview with a single participant, one with three participants and one with four participants. This was determined by the number of teacher volunteers in a given school and their availability during the data collection.

Table 1. Profiles of teachers interviewed

Code	School status	CLIL program	Profile of the interviewees
1	Chartered	Up to year 8	T1: English T2: Biology and geography in Spanish
2	Public	Implemented	T3: Geography and history in English T4: Biology and geology in English T5: English in <i>sección</i> , head of studies T6: Headteacher
3	Chartered	No	T7: Geography and history T8: English, head of studies
4	Public	Implemented	T9: Biology and geology in English
5	Chartered	Up to year 8	T10: Biology and geology in English T11: Geography and history in Spanish (previously in English)

6	Public	Up to year 8	T12: English in <i>programa</i> T13: Philosophy/ethical values in Spanish
7	Public	No; specialization in ICT	T14: English T15: Geography and history T16: Biology and geology T17: Geography and history
8	Chartered	Implemented	T18: English T19: Geography and history in English T20: Geography and history in English
TOTAL NUMBER OF TEACHERS			20

Data analysis procedures

The questionnaire data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The analysis included counting frequencies, means and standard deviations, and Chi-square test for independence.

The interview participants were recruited via the same email as the questionnaire participants. They were encouraged to contact one of the researchers via email to arrange an interview. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and took place at the school where the teachers were working at a time chosen by them. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to code the data. To ensure reliability, parts of the data were coded separately by both members of the research team, after which the codes were compared.

Results

Students

Self-selection or segregation?

All teachers interviewed agreed that there is a certain degree of self-selection in the students that attend *sección*. However while for teachers in bilingual schools this is a question of choice and willingness to make an extra effort (T11), for teachers from non-bilingual schools, or who are not involved in bilingual education, it is a question of segregation: according to them, students from more disadvantaged backgrounds do not attend bilingual schools, and students with learning difficulties all opt out of bilingual education (“those who have greater difficulties, who cannot get used to a bilingual school or those whose parents specifically don’t want a bilingual education for their children” T13; T 16 and T 17 make similar comments). Neither of these two perceptions are shared by teachers in bilingual schools, as in their experience not many students change from *sección* to *programa*, and groups are heterogeneous even in *sección* (T3; T20). This is confirmed by the data from the questionnaire which is summarized below in Table 2. While it is true that there is a slightly greater proportion of students diagnosed with special educational needs in non-bilingual schools, the difference is not significant (Pearson chi square = 3.494, $p = .174$) and it is nowhere as large as to make it possible to talk about the ghettoization of non-bilingual schools (T13), or even worse about “the horror” of non-bilingual schools (T10). The reason for this slight difference may be found in the fact that sometimes, when students are struggling, teachers will recommend them to change to a non-bilingual school. However, as was pointed out by the headteacher interviewed (T6) this is no more than a recommendation, and never are students “expelled” from a *sección* (confirmed by T4 and T9).

Table 2. Numbers of diagnosed special educational needs (SEN) students per group

	Bilingual	Non-bilingual
Zero	52.9%	37.7%

One or two	42.4%	52.8%
Three or four	3.5%	5.7%
More than four	1.2%	1.9%

The same is true for the distribution of academically gifted students (see Table 3), which, while not equivalent, does not show the great difference between bilingual and non-bilingual schools often perceived by the public: “[...] the students who are in bilingual sections who, in a way, are almost ‘selected’ and who may be people with a greater interest [in their studies], or a greater ability, or more help at home” (T14). The Chi-square test for independence showed that this difference was not significant (Pearson chi square = 1.247, $p \leq .288$). Similarly, when asked to estimate the number of low-achievers in their classes, teachers’ answers pointed to no significant differences (Pearson chi square = 4.920, $p = .085$) between the numbers in bilingual and non-bilingual schools (Table 4). Thus, in the words of T4, “the students in bilingual program are not better [than in monolingual schools]”.

Table 3. Numbers of academically gifted students per group

	Bilingual	Non-bilingual
Zero	56.5%	66.0%
One or two	42.4%	32.1%
Three or four	1.2%	1.9%

Table 4: Proportion of low-achievers

	Bilingual	Non-bilingual
None	3.5%	3.8%
1-10%	56.5%	43.4%
11-30%	30.6%	30.2%
31-60%	7.1%	17.0%
More than 60%	2.4%	5.7%

As regards students' behaviour, again differences between schools are smaller than is generally thought (see Table 5), with more non-bilingual teachers reporting that they have no students with behavioural problems. However, the proportion of those who report having more than four misbehaving students is higher in non-bilingual schools, without this difference being significant (Pearson chi square = 2.918, $p = .232$). These inconclusive findings are further complicated by the fact that, as T9 points out, "in the classes that belong to *programa* generally there are more disruptive students or students with learning difficulties", thus pointing towards segregation inside bilingual schools rather than between bilingual and non-bilingual schools.

Table 5. Proportion of students who show behavioural problems in the group of 4th ESO analyzed

	Bilingual	Non-bilingual
None	23.5%	28.3%
1-10%	61.2%	47.2%
11-30%	14.1%	13.2%
31-60%	1.2%	9.4%
More than 60%	0	1.9%

Finally, as regards the socio-educational background of students (Table 6), again the difference is not significant (Pearson chi square = 6.919, $p < .140$), hence suggesting that teachers in different types of schools do not perceive their students as different in terms of SES. Interview data, however, points to some variation between individual schools, rather than along the bilingual/non-bilingual lines. For example, in one of the bilingual schools, teachers interviewed specifically classify their students as coming from a low socio-economic background (T3 and T4). This, again, contrasts with the general perception that bilingual schools are the privilege of

students coming from a high SES background. Yet, such perceptions are voiced by teachers from non-bilingual schools, who said said “a kid from an unfavourable background will rarely be part of [a bilingual section]” (T16) and “I mean, the parents who are worse in terms of educational level, I don’t think they will send them [their children] to a bilingual school.” (T15)

Table 6. Proportion of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds

	Bilingual	Non-bilingual
None	32.9%	23.8%
1-10%	52.9%	49.1%
11-30%	9.4%	11.3%
31-60%	4.7%	3.8%
More than 60%	0	7.5%

Whereas it is clear from the interviews that the perception of bilingual schools as elitists exists, the data coming from the questionnaire, where teachers were asked to analyse a specific group of students rather than to express their general impressions, show that this perception is rather inflated. T4 and T9 commented that this may be explained by the fact that, in the first years, the bilingual project indeed favoured students from more privileged backgrounds, but through the spread of the project groups are now becoming more heterogeneous, making T4 affirm that segregation is a “perception imposed by society”, which does not coincide with reality.

Student characteristics

Asked about the special characteristics of bilingual students that would account for their increased motivation as well as their better results independently of their SES background as

found in the English Impact study, many of the bilingual teachers say that the students are aware that they will have to work harder than their peers in monolingual schools, as they have an extra hour in their timetable and they are learning in a foreign language: “They need to make an extra effort and will think: ‘This is harder than if it was in Spanish’” (T10; confirmed by T2 and T20). The added difficulty of the language (T9 speaks of “added value”) attracts students with a better ability for language learning (T14), but also those who are willing to make an extra effort (T1; T9). Other teachers expressed this perceived advantage as students being more responsible (T12), having a better attitude (“working habit” T12) or a stronger wish to better themselves (T11; T12), with T11 actually mentioning that this desire to better themselves is more determining than students’ SES background: “This is what I mean when I talk about natural selection, not your [immigrant] origin or the fact that your prior education has been discontinued, but your attitude towards life”. On the downside, this may lead to students being very competitive: “many students are very competitive, extremely competitive” (T4, confirmed by T3).

The positive view of students is also related to students level of English, which is sometimes admired by teachers: “It’s amazing, their pronunciation, their fluency, using the linkers they have to use... [...] I was thinking yesterday, we have to encourage them to apply to an Amancio Ortega grant or something like that because I was listening to them, and I was freaking out” (T3). The pride and admiration that this teacher expresses is accompanied by high expectations about students’ academic possibilities – applying for a grant – and possibly about their future.

Students in bilingual schools are also perceived as being more autonomous and responsible for their learning. According to the teachers, this has to do with the fact that often parents are not able to help with their homework, since they do not speak English: “their parents don’t speak English. Thinking about it now, this may make them more autonomous in their work” (T9; confirmed by T2). Thus, from an early age, responsibility for learning lies with the students who cannot expect a great deal of help from their parents. If anything, parents’ role will be limited to

making sure their children are keeping up with their work (see section on parents' profiles below).

According to teachers' perceptions, having a better level of English is also motivating in itself. Thus, students value the possibility of learning more English: "OK, so I have something extra here that other students don't have and that my parents never had, I have to try to stay here" (T9). Also, students "think of themselves as bilingual and want to stay there [in the bilingual program] – and they have this personal challenge" (T9). Students' proficiency is sufficiently high to be able to translate for their parents when travelling abroad (T1; T11), and having a higher level of English makes it possible for students to participate more in social networks or access youth culture directly (T1; T20). This would mean that learning English has a direct impact on life, and therefore constitutes "real" learning for students. This relation to real life is reinforced by the range of schemes students in bilingual schools have access to, from exchanges to international competitions (e.g. Global Scholars), language assistants or twinned schools, which enrich their program of study and allow them to perceive the relevance of their language skills (T13; T9) as well as, of course, put their skills into practice.

Hence, it appears that the bilingual environment is conducive to developing certain characteristics that enable students from all backgrounds to succeed. The added difficulty of studying via the medium of English requires students to invest extra effort in learning right from the beginning. The limited support that they can receive at home stimulates the development of learning autonomy. Additionally, for children from less privileged families, CLIL programs offer them the possibility to enter education at the same footing as their peers from more fortunate backgrounds, as all learners struggle with English (T2; T10) and receive limited support at home.

Parents' profiles

The second point of difference between bilingual and non-bilingual schools as perceived by teachers were parents, their interest in their children's studies, expectations, reasons for

enrolling their children in bilingual schools, and, finally, the way they support their children in their learning. This difference could help explain the reduced impact of SES in bilingual schools.

Some teachers believed that parents who enrol their children in bilingual schools exhibit greater interest in their children learning than the parents of children in non-bilingual schools. This was clearly expressed by T5, who claimed that the interest in language learning was the feature of parents of children enrolled in bilingual schools: “Of course, but there is a difference between those who are in *sección*, where you find that the families take an interest in students learning a foreign language. You don’t find this in the students in the groups at basic level.” (also mentioned by T11). In a broader sense, this was also mentioned by T6, who admitted that “there was a certain higher interest in education. Yes, that may be the case. A greater interest on the parents’ side to choose a bilingual school. Yes, that is true.”

The teachers also often referred to the parental support that bilingual students were more likely to have at home (T3; T5; T11; T12). An example of how this parental support manifested itself on a more practical level was provided by T3, who pointed out that the interested parents kept track of what was required of their children and motivated them to study on a daily basis. In contrast, a number of teachers pointed out that parents of children enrolled in bilingual schools are often unable to help their children with studying in English, due to their limited proficiency in this language (T2; T3). However, as was mentioned above, some teachers perceived this as advantageous as it clearly shifts the responsibility for learning to the students.

The teachers also thought that parents’ choices with regards to bilingual education for children were often very strategic, since they wanted to choose the best learning context for their children by avoiding environments that they perceived in a negative way. As T3 said, “[...] what many parents do is send their children to a bilingual school to make sure their environment in class, mind you in class, is not what they don’t want it to be.” T3 also clarified that some parents did indeed believe that the CLIL program attracts students from higher social strata; hence, they

decide to send their children there to avoid the potential negative influences of students from lower social strata on their own offspring.

It was evident from the interviews that the teachers felt that parents were aware that bilingual education was a certain premium, as it allowed students to reach a higher proficiency in English. Hence, they made decisions to enrol their children in bilingual schools so that their children do not “get behind” (T3). From this perspective, non-bilingual schooling was considered disadvantageous. To mitigate this, parents of children in non-bilingual schools tended to enrol their offspring in extra-curricular English classes (T1; T2; T4; T16). T4 was one of the teachers who talked about this: “As I said, my children don’t go to school in English, but I spend a fortune on the best language schools”. However, as evident from this quote, this solution came with a heavy price tag, which means that not all families can afford it, and many families whose children do not attend bilingual schools feel under heavy pressure to make sure their children do not get behind in English language proficiency (T3; T4). At the same time, this points to a levelling effect of bilingual schools that offer access to higher levels of proficiency in English to all students at no additional cost.

Discussion

CLIL has been accused of being selective (Bruton, 2011) and favouring students from higher SES backgrounds (Anghel, et al., 2016; Kuchah Kuchah, 2018). However, our data, coinciding with those in the Impact study, reveal that the distribution of students from different SES is roughly equivalent in bilingual and non-bilingual schools. The same is true for the distribution of special needs students, low achievers and high achievers. All these variables show a slightly better situation in bilingual schools, but in none of them is the difference between bilingual and non-bilingual schools significant, and teachers talk about “bilingual groups becom[ing] more and more heterogeneous, fortunately” (T3). Nevertheless, bilingual teachers talk about there being some kind of self-selection in bilingual schools.

Teachers in the study point out that CLIL programs at secondary level in Madrid attract those students who are willing to make the extra effort required by the fact that they have an additional hour in their timetables as well as by having to learn in a language that is not their mother tongue. Taking into account that almost all the students who study in CLIL programs in our context come from a CLIL program in primary school, this willingness may be a result of several factors. On the one hand, the methodological innovation brought about by CLIL (Pérez Cañado, 2018; San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2020) in a context that is traditionally characterized by a very academic and memoristic approach to learning may result in students opting for bilingual education. This would also account for the higher levels of motivation found in the Impact study (Shepherd & Ainsworth, 2017), and is further analysed in a second publication on the results of the study (X & Y, forthcoming).

On the other hand, students' heightened willingness to invest in their learning could also be related to an awareness of the importance of English for their personal and professional development. This would be reinforced by the fact that learning in English is clearly relevant to their lives, making it possible for students to participate more fully in social media and youth culture. The fact that English is also the language used for communication in such educational programs as student exchanges, Global Classrooms, etc. all make this learning and use of the language "identity affirming" (Cummins, 2019). This relation to real life will, again, have a positive effect on students' motivation (Lamb & Arisandy, 2020), thus creating some kind of virtuous circle of motivation and real-life relevance of the learning, both of which can be related to what Ryan and Deci (2017) termed the "need of competence".

This dynamics of relevant learning and real-life relevance may be reinforced by the fact that teachers have higher expectations for these students who they see as willing to make an extra effort and thus be more hard-working and motivated. This perception is valid for all students, independently of their SES, and could be one of the reasons why this factor has a reduced impact on students in CLIL programs: the lowered expectations that teachers normally have of students

from less privileged backgrounds (Speybroeck et al., 2012; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; van den Bergh et al. 2010;) seem to be overruled by their perception of these students as especially willing to walk the extra mile and invest in their learning.

In a similar vein, the very fact of being part of an educational program with distinctive features may in itself be motivating, as it creates a sense of being special, also in the eyes of students not in the program (T9), as well as a sense of belonging. In the words of one of the teachers “[it is] that happiness or that feeling of belonging to something special. It’s as when they are in a good class. They are happy because they are convinced that their class is good. [A positive dynamics] is created.” (T15) From this perspective, being in a bilingual school satisfies the inherent need of relatedness in students by giving them the opportunity to belong to, and identify with, a specific group (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Further, the very fact that students learn through a foreign language starting at the level of primary education seems to foster students’ sense of responsibility for learning, as they cannot rely on their parents’ help when doing homework or revising for their exams, allowing students to develop autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Inability to help their children is a worry many parents who do not speak English express, and one that in the minds of many shows that CLIL favours students from more privileged backgrounds whose parents are able to help with their studies in English or to look for extra-curricular support in English. However, Butler & Le (2017) talk about autonomous parenting style, normally found in parents from higher SES, as leading to higher motivation and better self-efficacy in students. In our study, lower SES parents, who are likely to have a more authoritative parenting style, are not able to help their children with their English homework, thus being forced to favour students’ autonomy and therefore inadvertently following Butler and Le’s recommendation: “in order to minimize achievement gaps by SES, it is advisable to promote autonomous parenting styles and to encourage all parents to maintain high expectations for their children” (Butler & Le 2017, 13). Therefore, what could have been a handicap for students from less privileged backgrounds may actually turn into a

positive factor precisely for the students who cannot count on extra support, as it is likely to make them more responsible for their own studies.

A similar levelling effect could be the fact that all students in CLIL programs face the same difficulty of having to study in a language that is not their own. While noticeable differences in the development of the mother tongue in students from more and less privileged backgrounds by the time they start primary education have been found in many studies (Uccelli et al., 2018), when it comes to English and to the subjects taught in English, students' starting point may be virtually the same. Even if there was a difference, teachers are aware of the limited language levels of their students and thus adapt their teaching to them. This would explain why in studies such as Lorenzo's (2019), students from higher SES actually seem to benefit least from CLIL, whereas their peers in monolingual schools show better learning results: where no attention is paid to language and it is seen as a given, as may be the case in monolingual teaching, students from higher SES backgrounds can cope while those from less privileged backgrounds struggle. By contrast, in contexts where language is taken into account and modified to make it accessible for all students, those students whose level in the mother tongue is negatively affected by their SES background are benefitted, becoming able to reach similar levels as their more privileged peers. This more language-sensitive teaching (Leisen, 2016) would be one of the reasons why the effect of students' SES on their learning is reduced in CLIL.

Of course, these results need to be taken with some caution, as the sample used cannot be taken as representative since it is rather small and is composed of teachers who seem to have been particularly motivated to participate in the study. Similar reservations can be raised with regards to the interviews, as it was easier to recruit teachers from bilingual than non-bilingual schools. The teachers recruited were highly interested in the topic; hence there is a risk that less enthusiastic teachers may not be represented in the sample. Nevertheless, the study does offer some insights into the differential characteristics of students opting for CLIL in Madrid, and may open doors to further investigations in the field.

Conclusion

The factors identified in the preceding discussion as possibly being responsible for the reduced effect of students' SES in CLIL programs can be related to the three basic needs identified in Self-Determination Theory as “nutrients that are essential for growth” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 10): autonomy, related to doing what one thinks is right and assuming responsibility for it; competence, understood as mastery of a skill; and relatedness or belonging to a specific social group.

As far as autonomy is concerned, students in CLIL choose to be part of the bilingual program when they start secondary school, and have developed a higher sense of responsibility for their learning due to the fact that parents' support is limited by their lack of foreign language skills. On the other hand, students perceive themselves – and are perceived by others, among them teachers – as being willing to put extra effort into their learning, but also reaching an impressive level of English, a language that is both meaningful and useful to students. This has a positive impact on both students' need of competence and their need of relatedness, making them part of a group that is admired for its skills and is special and distinct from other groups of students. The fact that the CLIL program caters for these needs in this way makes it a program that “will enhance [...] high-quality motivation” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 12), as the Impact study showed.

There surely are other elements that can also be accountable for the levelling effect of CLIL, such as the fact that starting obligatory education in a bilingual program poses a challenge to all students independently of their background, as all start with a very limited command of the language of instruction. This would lead teachers to adapt their teaching to making it more language-sensitive and student-centred, two other factors that could work towards greater equity in education. These, however, require further research, but for the time being we can affirm that CLIL creates learning environment that foster students' growth independently of

their SES background, by catering for their basic needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

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