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## Bilingual education teachers' perceptions of the educational climate and policies in the United States and Spain

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**Abstract.** Access to high-quality bilingual education is critical and has evolved in many different ways during the last decades. Given recent efforts to enhance bilingual education, it is important to examine the perceptions of the current education workforce who serve students in bilingual education programs. A hundred and sixty-four bilingual education professionals from Spain and the U.S. participated in the research. They completed a questionnaire about the effect of educational climate and policies in their own countries. Findings show that teachers from Spain rate bilingual education higher than teachers from the U.S. There are significant differences in their general perceptions and insights about resources, collaboration, students, parents and community. Being proficient in two languages seems to have a positive effect on two categories: general perceptions and perceptions about parents. Our findings also suggest that the years of teaching experience influence their responses and there is a need for more professional development in both countries.

**Keywords:** bilingual education; bilingual teachers; teacher perception; educational policy; English (Second Language)

### [es] Las percepciones de profesores bilingües sobre el clima y políticas educativas en Estados Unidos y España

**Resumen.** El acceso a una educación bilingüe de calidad es fundamental, y éste ha evolucionado de diferentes maneras en las últimas décadas. Dados los esfuerzos recientes para mejorar la educación bilingüe, es importante examinar las percepciones del personal educativo que trabaja con estudiantes en programas de educación bilingüe. Ciento sesenta y cuatro profesores bilingües de España y Estados Unidos participaron en esta investigación. Completaron un cuestionario sobre el efecto del clima educativo y las políticas en sus propios países. Los resultados muestran que los profesores de España tienen una mayor valoración de la educación bilingüe que los profesores de Estados Unidos. Hay diferencias significativas en sus percepciones y opiniones generales sobre los recursos, la colaboración con otros profesores, los estudiantes, los padres y la comunidad escolar en general. Ser competente en dos idiomas parece tener un efecto positivo en dos categorías: percepciones generales y percepciones sobre los padres. Los resultados también sugieren que los años de experiencia docente influyen en las respuestas y existe la necesidad de más formación continua en ambos países.

**Palabras clave:** educación bilingüe; profesores bilingües; percepción del profesorado; política educacional; inglés como segunda lengua

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## 1. Introduction

Bilingual education has been extensively researched and its importance in educational systems is well documented taking a secure position in the educational process (Baker, 2011; Crawford, 1989; García, 2009; Gómez, 1971; Nieto, 2016; Ortega-Martín, Hughes, & Madrid, 2018) in countries such as the United States or Spain. Although bilingual education has received critical attention in these countries, it has been a number one priority when educational policies were established throughout the years. However, issues relating to the effectiveness of bilingual education have been at the forefront of the educational and political debate (Barakos & Shelleck, 2019; Johnson & Fine, 2016; May, 2017).

The field of bilingual education has evolved in many different ways in the last decades both in Spain (Anghel, Cabrales, & Carro, 2016; Pérez, 2018; Vila, Lasagabaster, & Ramallo, 2016) and the United States (Driever & Bagheri, 2020; Gándara & Escamilla, 2016). New demographics, new legislations, and the implementation of new programs have been fundamental in the new direction of bilingual education, which has traditionally been associated with diversity and minorities from a linguistic point of view. This new scenario also presents pedagogical challenges to teachers, who have to be prepared to provide their students with the best education possible in a multicultural society (Parker, 2019). Therefore, teacher education programs also have the responsibility to train prospective bilingual teachers to meet these challenges (Paz-Albo, Herranz, & Gómez, 2018) and understand the principles and best practices of supporting bilingual students' needs.

While best practices indicate that teachers need to be fully prepared and ready to use different methodologies to work with students in bilingual education settings (González-Aller & Paz-Albo, 2016), that is not always the case (Durán, 2018; Durán-Martínez & Beltrán-Llavador, 2016; Esparza & Belmonte, 2020). It is often heard that teachers complain about programs being implemented without them receiving adequate support and training (Brochin, 2019; Molina, 2015; Palmer, Zuñiga, & Henderson, 2015; Romo & Durán, 2019), creating a situation of discomfort, frustration and anxiety. To understand how to better support prospective teachers, we need to gain insight into the perceptions of the current education workforce who serve students in bilingual education programs (Wheeler, 2020).

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Bilingual education

While bilingual education has come a long way throughout the decades in countries like the United States, mostly due to the effect of legislative policies and influential court cases (Fernández, Valenciano, & García, 2013), it is still taking a secure position in the formal educational process around the globe, particularly in Spain. As Ovando, Collier and Combs (2003) note, bilingual education is “an approach that encompasses a variety of program models, each of which may promote a variety of distinct goals” (p. 5) such as assimilating students into society, unifying a multilingual society or even deepen an understanding of language and culture (Baker, 2011).

To understand the concept of bilingual education, it is important to look at the context of the schools and the roles played by the languages that are involved in the educational system. In countries like the United States, with a long tradition of immigration and the existence of multiple languages within the same community, it is difficult to define bilingual education under the same umbrella. Factors such as student population, resources, or support from administration influence the type of program school districts can implement to meet the needs of what are defined as English language learners (ELLs), due to the fact that English is the language that ultimately students will learn to successfully perform academically and in society.

On the other hand, in countries such as Spain the term bilingual education refers to the use of a second language (L2) in schools for teaching academic content (Hyland, 2006). However, as Vinuesa (2017) points out there is not yet the perfect bilingual method to use for the teaching of world languages. Furthermore, within the European scenario, there has been a great interest in promoting innovative approaches since the 1990s to the “teaching of classes in a foreign language for disciplines other than languages” (Eurydice, 2006, p. 8), currently known as *Content and Integrated Language Learning* (CLIL).

Moreover, as the European Commission (1995) envisaged, the acquisition of world language skills is essential, and plans such as the 2003 Action Plan on Education (see European Commission, 2003) were set up not only to promote language learning at all levels of education including the pre-and-early-school level but to improve the quality of language teaching as well. Although in Spain bilingual programs take on different forms depending on each Autonomous Community's regulations, guidelines and policies, these programs aim at attaining communicative competence and content acquisition in the world language across the curriculum (García, 2015; Paz-Albo, 2012). As Baetens-Beardsomer (2001) pointed out:

The variety of bilingual education programmes now available as models is striking, while constant monitoring by solid research is providing sophisticated insights into aspects of learning through a second and third language not known before. Authorities that never even considered implementing bilingual programmes have at times become the

most supportive of innovation [...] In Spain ever more schools are beginning early second language learning from the age of 3 onwards, leading on to some form of bilingual content-matter teaching in primary school. (p. 10)

## 2.2. Language policies in the United States and Spain

Regardless of the long history of bilingual education in the United States, its development since the nineteenth century has varied frequently throughout the years. Political decisions have shaped the role of bilingual education by supporting or rejecting the use of native language instruction in schools. Therefore, it cannot be overestimated the fact that “power changes within the political system had, and continues to have, a direct effect on the decisions made in regard to educational policy” (Fernández et al., 2013). Policies in some states advocate for bilingual education and support the implementation of programs aimed towards the reinforcement of English and the students’ native language. However, some other states have more restrictive policies that prohibit the use of a language other than English in schools (García & Wiese, 2002). Likewise, the range and extent of bilingual programs differ from one school to another. In their seminal work, Collier and Thomas (2009) present different program models in the United States and conduct a longitudinal study in which they compare their effectiveness. While there are decisive conclusions to determine that dual language programs seem to be more successful in terms of student achievement in both language development and content mastery (Ramirez & Ross, 2019), the adoption of one particular program depends on different variables, as not every program works well with every group of students.

In Spain, educational policies since 1996 aim to improve foreign language learning, mainly in English due to the implementation of the *Bilingual Education Project* (BEP) established by the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, MECD) and the British Council. This BEP aims to provide children ages 3 to 16 with a bilingual and bicultural education through a Spanish/English integrated curriculum with official recognition (MECD, 2015). In addition, the regional governments have implemented several policies and projects since 1996 to integrate CLIL from the early educational stages, such as in the Basque Country (namely the *Early Start to English* program in the second cycle of infant education, the *Ingelesa Educkein Bidez* program at the primary level or the Bigarren Hezkuntzan Ingelesa Edukien Bidez in secondary education) or in Catalonia where the plan for the promotion of third languages known as the *Pla d’impuls a les terceres llengües* was implemented in 2005. Moreover, as Coyle (2010) pointed out Spain “is rapidly becoming one of the European leaders in CLIL practice and research” (p. viii).

Furthermore, as Paz-Albo (2012) notes, the promotion of learning in English through an integrated curriculum in bilingual education programs has been a political priority in the Spanish educational system agenda since 2004 due to the Council of Europe’s standpoint on language education. In Spain, the instruction time allocated for foreign language teaching as a compulsory subject has increased over the years; it accounts for 10.8% in primary education and 11.4% in compulsory secondary education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017) and is provided by specialist teachers. In fact, in some Autonomous Communities of Spain teachers providing CLIL instruction need to have specific training on such methodology (Levy, 2015).

Beyond these policies, trends indicate that the number of students in bilingual education programs has increased throughout the years in the United States and Spain, and predictions suggest that they will continue to grow. Table 1 shows an increase of over a million ELLs from 2000 to 2017 nationwide in the United States (10.1% of total student enrolment in public schools). Those are students who receive some kind of support through bilingual education or English as Second Language (ESL) services.

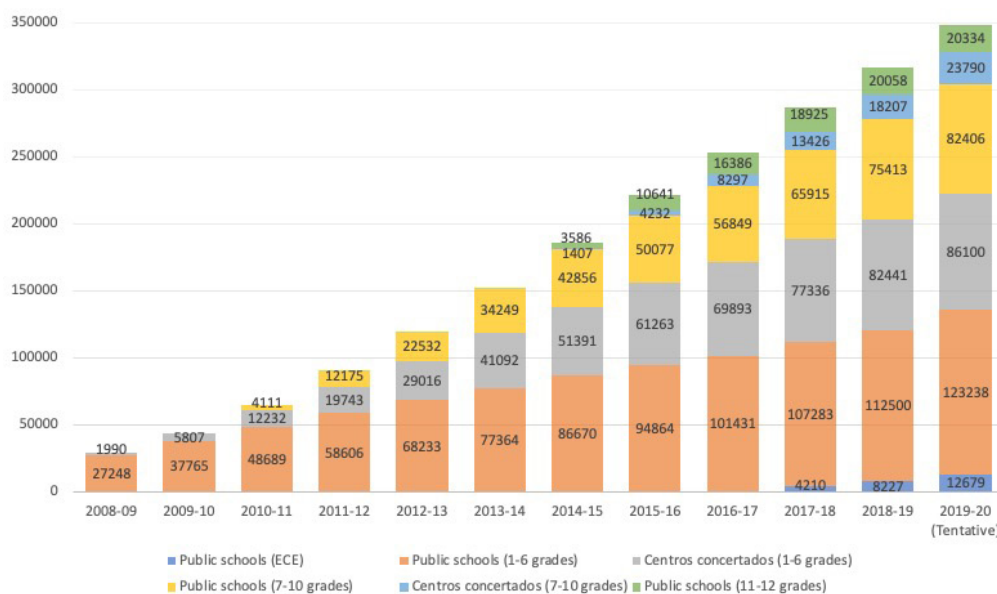
Table 1. Number of ELL students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States

Academic year	Number of ELL students	Number of ELL students as a percent of total enrolment
2000	3,793,764	8.1
2005	4,471,300	9.2
2010	4,455,860	9.0
2013	4,568,197	9.2
2014	4,670,356	9.3
2015	4,794,994	9.5
2016	4,858,377	9.6
2017	4,952,710	10.1

Note. Data for 2014 and earlier years include only ELLs who participated in ELL programs. Adapted from “Common Core of Data. Local Education Agency Universe Survey, 2000-01 through 2016-17” by U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2018).

In the case of Spain, in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, for instance, bilingual education student enrolment has increased since 2008 (Figure 1) as well as the number of bilingual educational institutions from 180 bilingual public educational institutions in the academic year 2008-2009 (Comunidad de Madrid, 2009) to a total of 580 bilingual public educational institutions and 298 state-funded private institutions (*centros concertados*) in the 2019-2020 academic year (Comunidad de Madrid, 2019).

Figure 1. Student enrolment in bilingual programs in the Autonomous Community of Madrid. Adapted from “Datos y cifras de la educación” by Comunidad de Madrid, 2019



### 2.3. Purpose of the study

Although research has been conducted on bilingual education benefits (Baker, 2011; Cummins, 2003; Hamers & Blanc, 2000), it is helpful to understand more about the perceptions of teachers currently working in the bilingual education arena (Pérez & Martínez-Aznar, 2020). This article examines educators' beliefs and attitudes with regard to bilingual education in a sample of Spanish and U.S. educators. This will help us to gain insight of what bilingual education teachers perceived to be other teachers, administrators, and the community's attitudes toward bilingual education in their respective countries. For this reason, an international research collaboration was created between teacher educators in the United States and Spain. Our research questions are the following:

1. What are the perceptions of bilingual education by in-service teachers in the United States and Spain?
2. Are there any significant differences between U.S. and Spanish teachers' perceptions? If so, how do they differ?
3. Is there any significant difference in bilingual teachers' perceptions based on other variables such as age, gender, years of experience or number of languages spoken?

### 3. Method

This quantitative study explored bilingual in-service teachers' perceptions in the United States and Spain. To achieve this, a co-constructed survey was designed, and a combination of non-probability sampling techniques were adopted including purposive, snowball and convenience sampling techniques. The procedures of this research were approved by the Chicago State University's IRB, as project # 050-11-16, and the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos institutional ethics committee, as project # 0206201710517 and ENM 105/171206201808718.

#### 3.1. Participants

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the researchers employed snowball and convenience sampling techniques. Two major procedures were adopted to select the study sample. In the first, a list of potential respondents was prepared

from among a U.S. bilingual/ESL professional organization and bilingual/ESL/CLIL educators from the United States and Spain. The second major method adopted for sample selection was contacting educational divisions across Spain to promote their collaboration in inviting all their schools to take part in the survey-based research study. The final sample comprised of 164 participants (82 from the United States and 82 from Spain), one hundred twenty-nine were female (78.7%) and 35 (21.3%) male teachers (see Table 2).

Table 2. Participants' ages.

Age groups	Frequency	Percent
Younger than 24	4	2.4
25-34	41	25.0
35-44	42	25.6
45-54	45	27.4
55-64	31	18.9
65 or older	1	.6
Total	164	100.0

More than half of the participants (52.4%) reported being proficient in two languages, being the majority of those languages English and Spanish. Twenty five percent of the teachers indicated having only one language. Out of those, 6.1% claimed being proficient only in Spanish and 15.2% in English. Other languages, such as Polish or French were reported. Smaller percentages of teachers indicated having three or more languages. In the case of Spain, combinations such as Spanish, English and French or Spanish, English and Euskera were noted.

### 3.2. Data collection

To examine the bilingual teachers' perceptions, a co-constructed online questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was pilot tested with a group of participants in the United States ( $n = 57$ ) and consisted of a few demographic questions and forty-five 5-point Likert scale questions ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". These questions addressed teachers' perceptions around nine areas: general perceptions, resources, professional development, collaboration, students, parents, school administration, community and school policy.

After conducting the pilot survey some of the questions were dropped as they were too specific for the U.S. context and they might not be of interest for the Spanish participants. Additionally, the survey questionnaire was translated by a translation expert and further reviewed by Spanish educators. The final questionnaire consisted of 43 items divided in two parts. The first part consisted of 10 biographical/demographical questions, and the second part of the questionnaire consisted of 33 questions (see Appendix 1) rated on a 5-point Likert scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Data were collected using the online questionnaire developed on Encuestafacil.com from 2017 to 2018.

### 3.3. Data analysis

A reliability analysis was carried out on the perceptions scale comprising the 33 scale items, and Cronbach's alpha indicated a high level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = .87$ ). Items were grouped under one of the nine above-mentioned categories. However, questions about school policy were not included in the analysis, as the final questionnaire had only one question addressing this area. Further, negatively keyed items were reverse coded. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistic methods, such as  $t$ -tests and one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) to compare teachers' perceptions in the United States and Spain. The values of skewness and kurtosis fall within the range of normal distribution (Bachman, 2004), and no assumption of normality is violated.

## 4. Results

### What are the general perceptions of bilingual education by in-service teachers in the United States and Spain?

Table 3 can help us partially answer the first research question, as mean scores for each category indicate teachers' perception level. Overall, there is a mean score of 3.31, which demonstrates a fairly neutral position. The two categories with a higher score are the ones related to students (3.79) and administrators (3.73). On the other hand, the two categories with a lower score are resources (2.83) and professional development (2.91), indicating some level of disagreement.



Table 3. Mean and standard deviation by subgroups.

	Total (N = 164)		U.S. (n = 82)		Spain (n = 82)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
General Perceptions	3.60	.79	3.33	.76	3.87	.73
Resources	2.83	.90	2.62	.90	3.04	.84
Professional Development	2.91	1.02	2.87	.93	2.95	1.12
Collaboration	3.20	.91	2.89	.90	3.50	.83
Students	3.79	.86	3.45	.86	4.13	.72
Parents	3.23	.71	3.10	.66	3.35	.73
Administrators	3.73	.81	3.76	.77	3.70	.86
Community	3.20	.81	3.09	.76	3.32	.85
Total	3.31	.70	3.12	.66	3.49	.68

In order to fully answer the question, we must look at the data for each subgroup to determine whether perceptions in general (and for each category) somehow differ between Spain and the United States (see Table 3). Data show that, in general, teachers from Spain demonstrate a higher perception level of bilingual education than teachers from the United States (3.49 vs. 3.12). The only category where they scored lower is in the section with questions about administrators (3.70 vs. 3.76), which is the category with a higher mean score by U.S. teachers. Spanish teachers presented the highest score with questions about students. The two lowest scores are resources (2.62) for U.S. teachers and professional development (2.95) for Spanish educators.

#### **Are there any significant differences between the perceptions displayed by teachers in the United States and Spain? If so, how do they differ?**

Descriptive statistics presented in Table 3 do not indicate whether there is any significant difference between the two groups. Therefore, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the perception scores for U.S. and Spanish teachers. In the analyses, the assumptions of equal variances were not violated. The results indicate that, with the exception of professional development and administrators, there is a significant difference in scores for the rest of the categories, as shown below:

- General perceptions: U.S. teachers [( $M=3.33$ ,  $SD=.76$ ) and Spanish teachers ( $M=3.87$ ,  $SD=.73$ );  $t(162)=-4.65$ ,  $p=.000$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means is considerably large (eta squared = .12).
- Resources: U.S. teachers [( $M=2.62$ ,  $SD=.90$ ) and Spanish teachers ( $M=3.04$ ,  $SD=.84$ );  $t(162)=-3.07$ ,  $p=.003$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means is moderate (eta squared = .05).
- Collaboration: U.S. teachers [( $M=2.89$ ,  $SD=.90$ ) and Spanish teachers ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=.83$ );  $t(162)=-4.47$ ,  $p=.000$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means is considerably large (eta squared = .11).
- Students: U.S. teachers [( $M=3.45$ ,  $SD=.86$ ) and Spanish teachers ( $M=4.13$ ,  $SD=.72$ );  $t(162)=-5.45$ ,  $p=.000$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means is very large (eta squared = .15).
- Parents: U.S. teachers [( $M=3.10$ ,  $SD=.66$ ) and Spanish teachers ( $M=3.36$ ,  $SD=.73$ );  $t(162)=-2.36$ ,  $p=.020$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means is small (eta squared = .03).
- Community: U.S. teachers [( $M=3.09$ ,  $SD=.76$ ) and Spanish teachers ( $M=3.32$ ,  $SD=.85$ );  $t(162)=-1.88$ ,  $p=.063$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means is small (eta squared = .02).
- Total: U.S. teachers [( $M=3.12$ ,  $SD=.66$ ) and Spanish teachers ( $M=3.49$ ,  $SD=.68$ );  $t(162)=-3.54$ ,  $p=.001$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means is moderate (eta squared = .07).

#### **Are there any significant differences in perceptions displayed by teachers based on other variables such as age, gender, years of experience or number of languages spoken?**

In order to gain a better understanding an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the perception scores for males ( $M=2.98$ ,  $SD=.69$ ) and females ( $M=3.29$ ,  $SD=.70$ ). The results indicate that there is a significant difference in scores for the questions about parents [ $t(162)=-.76$ ,  $p=.002$ ]. The magnitude of the differences in the means is fairly small (eta squared = .03).

Also, a one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the impact of age, years of experience and number of languages spoken on the teachers' perceptions. There was no statistically significant difference based on age. However, based on the number of languages they reported being proficient in, there was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in the following two categories:

- General perception [ $F(5, 155) = 2.7, p = .023$ ]. The difference in mean scores between the groups was large. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .10, which is considered to have a large effect (Cohen, 1988). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the group of teachers with only language ( $M = 3.25, SD = .70$ ) was significantly different from the group of teachers who reported to be proficient in two languages ( $M = 3.75, SD = .73$ ). There was no significant difference between other groups.
- Parents [ $F(5, 155) = 2.4, p = .038$ ]. The difference in mean scores between the groups was .07, considered to be moderate. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test also indicated that the mean score for the group of teachers with only language ( $M = 2.89, SD = .53$ ) was significantly different from the group of teachers who reported to be proficient in two languages ( $M = 3.31, SD = .72$ ). There was no significant difference between other groups.

Finally, there was also a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in perception scores for the number of years of experience [ $F(6, 155) = 3.78, p = .002$ ]. The difference in mean scores between the groups was large. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .2. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the group of teachers with 16-20 years of experience ( $M = 2.79, SD = .80$ ) was significantly different from the group of teachers with less of 5 years of experience ( $M = 3.99, SD = .73$ ) and the group of teachers with 6-10 years of experience ( $M = 3.83, SD = .87$ ).

## 5. Discussion

Findings suggest that teachers in Spain have statistically significant higher perceptions than teachers in the United States, except for the professional development and administrators categories, where the responses tend to be similar between both groups. Although the results do not point to the reasons why these perceptions are higher, we need to consider the fact that Spanish-English bilingual education is fairly new in Spain, which can be a factor that explains their responses. When new programs are implemented, novelty and excitement are elements that affect the performance and attitudes displayed by teachers (García & Fernández, 2012), and this could be an explanation for their higher perceptions. On the other hand, when there is a long history and tradition of Spanish-English bilingual education, and when there are many different program models, such as the case of the United States, teachers are able to compare their program with others, which can give them a more objective view and cause them to have more negative perceptions (Durán-Martínez, Beltrán-Llavador, & Martínez-Abad, 2016).

The two categories where teachers from Spain scored much higher than American teachers were students and collaboration. Again, in order to understand the reasons for these responses, it is important to consider the context since the student population that participates in U.S. bilingual programs is different from the ones in any bilingual program in Spain, and henceforth their motivations are different. The questions in this category asked teachers whether they felt their students are valued and respected by different school stakeholders, such as other teachers, students or administrators. Their responses indicate that Spanish teachers feel their students are more valued and respected than American teachers do, demonstrating that bilingual education in Spain can be considered to have more prestige and a higher status, a view that is also present in the responses to questions about parents. According to the opinions expressed by the teachers, it seems that parents of children in bilingual programs in Spain seek the teachers out for help on ideas of how to support their children's biliteracy at home and display more positive attitudes about bilingual education (Madarova & García, 2020). In addition, the lower perceptions by American teachers support the ideas by Martínez and Hinojosa (2012) about parents still "rejecting bilingual services for their children in spite of all the supporting evidence offered by current inquiry" (p. 2).

The results also indicate that collaboration is the second aspect with a large magnitude of differences in the means between the two groups. One of the aspects to consider is the fact that the co-teaching model is implemented in Spanish schools through the British Council Language Assistants program and the North American Language and Culture Assistants program by the MECD (Valdés-Sánchez & Espinet, 2020). Although not all of them, in general, bilingual classrooms have the support of a language assistant from an English-speaking country who collaborates with the homeroom teacher and works with students to master proficiency in English, i.e. the L2 (Buckingham, 2016; López-Medina & Otto, 2020). This collaborative process is valued and reflected in the responses given in the survey.

In terms of resources, the difference in means, although significant, is not as large as in other categories. Spanish teachers' responses show a higher level of satisfaction with the resources they have than American teachers. This might be due to the fact that the Spanish version of the questionnaire focused on the use of materials related to CLIL methodology, while the English U.S. version asked about the use of materials in the native language of the students. CLIL is a popular methodology all through Spain, and there are many resources implemented and used by schools (Custodio, 2019; Merino & Lasagabaster, 2018). However, on the other hand, it is common to hear teachers who work in bilingual programs in the United States complain about the lack of resources in languages other than English or their quality (Cooley, 2014). It is also worth noting that Spanish classrooms do not tend to have as many resources as American classrooms, which probably means that Spanish teachers are generally satisfied with any materials they



are provided with, as Spanish education has a long tradition of textbooks and workbooks (Caraker, 2016). American teachers, on the other hand, being used to having an array of resources, display a lower level of satisfaction, as they are much more aware of the many resources available in the classroom (Caldas, Palmer, & Schwedhelm, 2019).

The present study also shows that the need for more professional development is a common area of concern in both countries, which mainly is in line with the results of the study by Paz-Albo (2018). He concluded there is a demand for more professional development opportunities in Spain. The fact that there is no statistically significant difference in the responses to these questions by the two groups demonstrate that, regardless of the context or the type of program, teachers feel they would benefit from more training and support in the field of bilingual education. Likewise, responses to questions about administrators are similar and do not show any significant difference. Moreover, these are the questions with the highest mean score by the two groups, indicating that, while there are deficiencies, teachers feel supported by the administration in their schools and school districts, a fact that reflects administrators' best practices towards bilingual education (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018).

We also found that variables such as the gender, the number of languages spoken by the teachers and the years of teaching experience have a positive influence on teachers' responses, as those are the ones where results showed statistically significant differences among subgroups. In the present study, our findings show that male teachers' perceptions of parents are lower than their female colleagues. We note that the number of female teachers who participated in the study exemplifies the reality of the teaching profession, where there are usually more female teachers (McGrath & Bergen, 2017). In addition, the responses confirm the general idea that parents usually feel more confident approaching female teachers.

The number of languages reported by teachers also influences their responses, especially for the groups of teachers proficient in only one and two languages. Although teachers proficient in two languages display higher general perceptions than teachers knowing only one language, there is no significant difference when they report being proficient in more than two languages. The same happens with the category of students. Teachers proficient in two languages have a higher perception of their students than teachers fluent in only one language, which may provide evidence for the link between speaking a second language (perhaps the native language of the students) to help build stronger relationships and linguistic and cultural connections among teachers and students (Calafato, 2019).

Finally, the most experienced teachers (especially those with 16-20 years of experience) have a significant lower perception of students than the ones showed by more novice teachers. While it is difficult to find conclusive reasons for these results, it makes sense to assume that the excitement displayed by junior teachers may be reflected on their perceptions of students. On the other hand, we may also infer that the new incoming teachers are the product of teacher preparation programs with a special focus on bilingual education, as opposed to teachers who obtained their certification some years ago (Alonso-Díaz, Delicado, & Ramos, 2019). Their trajectory in the field has been different, and in some cases, they became bilingual and ESL teachers by necessity due to an increase of English learners in their schools.

## 6. Conclusions

This study found that educators' perceptions related to bilingual education programs can help us to better understand how intersecting variables can affect bilingual educators' perceptions of their profession. These variables paired with the sociocultural and political realities that affect practitioners' attitudes about their power within their profession in everchanging and tumultuous political landscapes have undoubtedly affected the perceptions seen in the results of this study. The views on native language and ESL instruction as a basis for providing academic advancement of students have a potential impact on teaching, learning and the programming positions educators seek as the state attempts to meet the growing population of ELLs in the United States as well as the growing demands for bilingual education in Spain.

Notwithstanding these findings, the study also had some limitations. First, the number of participants in the study might not be considered significant as we were limited by the sampling method. Many more teachers were contacted to participate in the study, but a low percentage decided to answer the questionnaire. Therefore, we need to be cautious when looking at the data and their interpretation. Second, there are aspects that would have contributed to a more insightful view of the teachers' perceptions, such as the type of bilingual program where U.S. teachers worked (early exit, late exit, dual language, etc.). A response to this variable could help make inferences on perceptions based on program type. Likewise, getting to know the grade level of teachers would help us identify whether there is any correlation between the grade level taught and the level of respect teachers receive from parents, students and administrators. Despite the noted limitations, however, data from this study have value for bilingual teachers as they prepare to take on the bilingual profession in diverse contexts.

Given data from this study, as bilingual education becomes more customary in Spain, having more established bilingual programs could possibly lower teachers' perceptions, making them similar to the ones perceived by teachers in the United States, where there is a long history of bilingual education, and consequently, for better or worse, a more cynical and complex link with exterior factors that influence practice.

Additionally, the results of this study can be used as an eye opener for prospective bilingual teachers. Future research could focus more on experienced bilingual teachers in order to provide research-based evidence on the relationship between the experience in bilingual education and the level of perception of the field. Based on the limitations of the study, future studies could also address questions such as the representation of school districts in the teacher pool, student demographics, student placement criteria, and the identification of teachers as bilingual learners themselves. Also, a challenge for further research would be to take a closer look at the changing demographic shifts that have occurred in recent years due to rising migration in Spain and to elicit the possible relationships that exist between Spain and U.S. educators' perceptions.

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## Appendix 1. Survey items as presented to respondents in the second part

English Version	Spanish Version
My school offers professional development about English Learners (ELs) to mainstream teachers.	Mi centro educativo ofrece formación a los profesores sobre el aprendizaje de contenidos a través del inglés.
My students' parents have negative attitudes about bilingual education.	Los padres de mis estudiantes tienen actitudes negativas sobre la educación bilingüe.
The larger school community has negative attitudes and makes me feel that they view bilingual education as a burden on the school community.	La comunidad educativa tiene actitudes negativas y ve la educación bilingüe como una carga para la comunidad escolar.
My school's administration displays negative attitudes about bilingual education.	El equipo directivo de mi centro educativo tiene actitudes negativas sobre la educación bilingüe.
Bilingual and ESL teachers' input is valued and taken into consideration in school initiatives.	La opinión de los profesores de inglés y educación bilingüe es valorada y se tiene en consideración en la propuesta de iniciativas educativas.
Administrators in my school participate in professional development related to English Learners (ELs).	El equipo directivo de mi centro educativo participa en la formación relacionada con el aprendizaje de contenidos a través del inglés.
My school district provides a wide range of materials to use with English Learners (ELs).	Mi distrito escolar pone a disposición un amplio material para usar con alumnos que están aprendiendo contenidos a través del inglés.
I feel valued as a bilingual education teacher by the other teachers in my school.	Me siento valorado como profesor de inglés o educación bilingüe por otros profesores de mi centro educativo.
My school supports participation in conferences and workshops related to English Learners (ELs).	Mi centro fomenta la participación de la comunidad educativa en conferencias y talleres sobre el aprendizaje de contenidos a través del inglés.
English Learners (ELs) are valued and respected by administrators in my school.	Los estudiantes del programa bilingüe son valorados y respetados por el equipo directivo del centro educativo.
I feel respected in the school community through their efforts to seek me out for my expertise in bilingual education as an asset for the community's success.	Me siento respetado en la comunidad educativa porque se ponen en contacto conmigo por mi experiencia y conocimiento en educación bilingüe.
Bilingual and ESL teachers in my school have opportunities to collaborate with other Bilingual and ESL teachers in the school district.	A los profesores de inglés y educación bilingüe de mi centro educativo se les ofrece oportunidades de colaborar con otros profesores de inglés y educación bilingüe.
My school policies reflect an additive attitude and help to support bilingual students' biliteracy development.	Las políticas educativas del centro apoyan el desarrollo de la bialfabetización de los estudiantes bilingües.
I feel valued as a bilingual education teacher by my school's administrators.	Me siento valorado como profesor de inglés o educación bilingüe por el equipo directivo del centro educativo.
My school brings outside expert speakers in Bilingual/ESL education.	Mi centro educativo invita a expertos para hablar sobre la enseñanza del inglés y la educación bilingüe.
I feel valued as a bilingual education teacher by my students' parents.	Me siento valorado como profesor de inglés o educación bilingüe por los padres de mis estudiantes.
English Learners (ELs) are valued and respected by mainstream students in my school.	Los estudiantes de educación bilingüe son valorados y respetados por los demás estudiantes del centro educativo.
English Learners (ELs) are valued and respected by mainstream teachers in my school.	Los estudiantes de educación bilingüe son valorados y respetados por los demás profesores del centro educativo.
Co-teaching is valued and supported in my school.	Se valora y fomenta la co-enseñanza en mi centro educativo.
My school's administration makes efforts to support the bilingual education program.	El equipo directivo hace esfuerzos para apoyar el programa bilingüe.
I feel valued as a bilingual education teacher by my students.	Me siento valorado como profesor de inglés o educación bilingüe por mis estudiantes.
My only support as a bilingual or ESL teacher is through my bilingual director/coordinator.	Mi único apoyo como profesor de inglés o educación bilingüe es a través del coordinador bilingüe de mi centro educativo.
I feel valued as a bilingual education teacher in my school community.	Me siento valorado como profesor de inglés o educación bilingüe en la comunidad educativa.
Most of my school's administration has no idea what we do in a bilingual education classroom.	La mayoría del equipo directivo del centro no tiene la información suficiente sobre cómo se desarrolla una clase de educación bilingüe.
My school provides time to collaborate with other teachers to address the needs of English Learners (ELs).	El centro educativo tiene previsto un tiempo determinado para colaborar con otros profesores y así poder atender las necesidades de los estudiantes del programa bilingüe.



English Version	Spanish Version
My school community values bilingualism.	La comunidad educativa valora el bilingüismo.
English Learners (ELs) in my school feel discriminated.	Los estudiantes del programa bilingüe de mi centro educativo se sienten discriminados.
My students' parents seek me out for help on ideas of how to support their children's biliteracy at home.	Los padres de mis estudiantes se ponen en contacto conmigo para orientarles en la bialfabetización de sus hijos en casa.
Most of my students' parents have no idea what we do in a bilingual education classroom.	La mayoría de los padres de mis estudiantes no tienen la información suficiente sobre cómo se desarrolla una clase de educación bilingüe.
Most of the school community has no idea what we do in a bilingual education classroom.	La mayoría de la comunidad educativa no tiene la información suficiente sobre cómo se desarrolla una clase de educación bilingüe.
I have a wide range of materials in my classroom to use with English Learners (ELs).	Tengo una gran variedad de materiales en el aula para usar con los estudiantes del programa bilingüe.
English Learners (ELs) in my school have access to materials in their native language.	Los estudiantes del programa bilingüe de mi centro tienen un mayor acceso a materiales que utilizan como soporte la lengua materna.
My school offers specific professional development to ESL and bilingual teachers.	Mi centro educativo ofrece formación específica para profesores de inglés o educación bilingüe.