

The construction of identity through language learning in bilingual and non-bilingual primary education in Spain

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Summary The current research delves into the construction of identity of 6th grade Primary Education students in Spain. Although studies on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Foreign Language Learning (FLL) underline the relevance identity plays in the cognitive and social process of learning a language, there is a paucity of research analyzing how the construct of identity is shaped through language learning in bilingual and non-bilingual modalities in Primary Education. The present study scrutinizes students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a bilingual section in Spain (studying under Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL), and pupils in non-bilingual classes, exposed to more traditional language learning methods. The main findings of the investigation reveal differences between each group's development of affective feelings and identity construction in relation to EFL and languages in general. Our results suggest students enrolled in bilingual education may possibly develop more favorable approaches towards multilingualism. The educational implications of the research will be addressed, together with prospective research lines to be followed in this area.

Keywords : identity, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Primary Education, Spain.

1. Introduction

The relevance of languages today, and the need to promote plurilingualism has encouraged researchers to investigate the effectiveness of language methods, the introduction of innovative strategies (e.g. the use of ICTs in language teaching, new modalities such as flipped classrooms), and the relevance of Project-Based Learning and cooperative work in the language classrooms, to quote just a few avenues of research. Likewise, within the field of bilingual education, the potential of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) –an approach to bilingual education where students learn non-linguistic areas or content-subjects through the medium of an additional language (i.e. any language other than the students' mother tongue)– has been extensively researched in Europe in terms of its effectiveness for the promotion of language gains (Dafouz and Guerrini, 2009; Fernández-Costales and Lahuerta, 2014; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Paran, 2013; Pérez-Cañado, 2016). While

acknowledging the academic and social relevance of further developing such methodologies, we feel that other pertinent issues have often been relegated to a second place: The construction of identity through the learning of foreign languages is one area that deserves further investigation, as it is closely related to other dimensions which have proven to be clearly influential in language learning, such as motivation (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009). Identity can have a clear impact on how we perceive multilingualism and languages in general. On the other hand, the way students perceive a given language is of paramount importance for the construction of their identity. This is even clearer in contexts where two languages are used as a tool for communication in the school setting (i.e. bilingual education).

Recent studies on the psychological aspects of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have provided significant insight into the role identity plays in the cognitive and social processes of learning another language. The great majority of this research has focused primarily on highlighting the relationships

between identity, autonomy and motivation in language learning contexts by demonstrating the emerging identities of specific case studies (Block, 2007; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009; Miyahara, 2015; Norton, 2013). However, scarce research has been dedicated to uncovering which specific pedagogical approaches facilitate a more positive identity construction, fundamental in the language learning process. The present study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on the topic by elucidating the potential role teaching approaches have in the construction of a positive second language identity. With this in mind, the objectives of the present study are as follows:

- 1) Analyze the self-reported affective feelings towards English in the narratives of students of 6th grade Primary Education in Spain.
- 2) Assess possible differences between students in bilingual education (under Content and Language Integrated Learning), and non-bilingual modalities in Spain.
- 3) Cater for possible differences and establish suitable pedagogical implications for teachers, educators, schools, and academics.

With the aim of establishing a connection between the use of CLIL –as a modality of bilingual education– and a heightened identity construction with respect to the language learning process, the present study examines the personal narratives of primary education students in a bilingual program and students in non-bilingual English classes. This comparative analysis hopes to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between language learning and identity, in particular, whether specific approaches facilitate to a greater or lesser extent positive concepts of the self in relation to the target language.

The construction of identity through language learning in Primary Education in Spain has virtually been unexplored so far, and we have yet to discover any comparative studies investigating identity construction of primary school students learning

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and students enrolled in bilingual settings. The overarching objective of the current research is reaching a better understanding of the role language(s) play(s) in the construction of the identity of the citizens of tomorrow and provide new insights on the relevance teaching approaches may have in the process of enhancing multicultural values. On the basis of these premises, we understand the current investigation may contribute to the field of language teaching in general and be of interest for practitioners and researchers working in different settings and educational contexts.

2. Theoretical Framework

The acquisition of a foreign language and its inseparable relationship with the continual process of identity construction has received much attention by researchers exploring avenues to better understand the inner workings of language learning (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009; MacIntyre et al., 2009; Markus and Nurius, 1986). Today, language learning is no longer considered purely an individual cognitive activity, but rather a process of social interaction and participation where knowledge and meanings are co-constructed in social intercourse. Adhering to Vygotskian concepts of learning as appropriation and transformation through social interaction, the learning of a foreign language can be considered a redefinition of the self as a result of social participation. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that this participatory framework in which learning takes place is closely related to the individual identification to communities of practice, or groups which provide a sense of belonging and a purpose for participating. The desire for participation in target communities necessarily implies a reconfiguration of one's personal and public self-presentation with respect to the L2, or target language, forming, as a result, an important part of identity construction. As Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) explain, L2 learners' exploration with imagined ties to the future as an active participant in target communities of practice and its role in the formation of an ideal L2 self has profound implications on one's identity. The ability to internally generate future representations of the self impacts future behavior

and planning as well as facilitates a trajectory towards specific identity constructions. Pavlenko and Norton (2007: 670) confirm that “the learning of another language, perhaps more than any other educational activity, reflects the desire of learners to expand their range of identities and to reach out to wider worlds”. The future ideal self is an important motivational factor to realize imagined identities. The ideal L2 self provides mental stimulation that facilitates a process of goal-oriented learning within the framework of a desired identity. This concept of an imagined self in which learners project mental images of future language learning success is a core element of the present study, which explores future identity projections in the narratives of primary school students, in the hope of better understanding the way pupils develop their identity.

Now that the relationship between identity and foreign language learning has been established, it is pertinent to delineate the concept of identity within the context of the present study. Current trends in research on identity have almost unanimously subscribed to a concept of identity as a fluid, malleable social construct in constant evolution. Identity is not considered a fixed notion of the self, but a socially constructed concept that emerges in the everyday processes of social interaction, evolving continually through the discursive practices consciously or unconsciously employed in the social contexts presented throughout one’s life (Block, 2007; Burke and Stets, 2009; Norton, 2013). Norton (2013: 4) defines identity as “the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”. Although invariable elements, such as biological characteristics, may also play a role in determining the concept of the self, it is through dialogue, internal or external, that the emergence of identity becomes distinguishable. Andrews (2014) explains:

Giving accounts of ourselves is part of our everyday lives as we routinely order our experiences, memories, intentions, hopes, desires, fears, and concerns in an autobiographical perspective. However, the

lens from which we view our lives and the world around us is one which is not only situated, but dynamic, that is to say in a constant state of being created and recreated (8).

In this theoretical framework, we understand identity to be discursively constructed in narratives elaborated in the innumerable social situations of everyday life. These narratives bring to the surface the different voices that make up the self and provide a space where tensions from conflicting voices may be negotiated. Given that identity is situated in narratives, a study of accounts of students of English learning experiences should provide insight into how pupils view themselves in relation to this language. Pavlenko (2001) argues:

L2 learning stories (...) are unique and rich sources of information about the relationship between language and identity in second language learning and socialization. It is possible that only personal narratives provide a glimpse into areas so private, personal and intimate that they are rarely- if ever-breached in the study of SLA, and at the same time are at the heart and soul of the second language socialization process (167).

In conclusion, we have established the integral relationship between the construction of identity and the context of SLA. In addition, we have defined the parameters of our understanding of identity within the present study and have demonstrated how identity is located and distinguished in social intercourse. Finally, we have provided a framework within which we will analyze the narrative samples for the current research.

3. The Present Study

3.1 Context: The Principality of Asturias

The current research investigates the perceptions of students of Primary Education in a public school in the Principality of Asturias, a region in northern Spain with 1,028,244 inhabitants. Asturias is an autonomous community with very little contact with English in comparison with other

cities in Spain –i.e. Madrid or Barcelona– and bigger regions, such as Andalusia or the Valencian Community. The number of tourists visiting Asturias is clearly behind other locations in Spain, such as the Canary Islands, and the percentage of immigrants living in the region in 2019 is only 3.87%, whereas in other areas like Catalonia this figure accounts for 14.8%, according to the Spanish National Statistics Institute¹. Taking this information into account, it is not surprising that the exposure to foreign languages outside the school context is very limited. Perhaps due to this situation, efforts have been made by the educational authorities to promote the development of bilingual education in Asturias, which is today the region with the highest number of schools offering this schooling modality in Primary Education in Spain. The development of bilingual education in the region dates back to 1996, when the Spanish Ministry of Education signed an agreement with the British Council to establish 46 schools with an integrated curriculum (British-Spanish) in the country, with two schools located in Asturias. In 2004, the Regional Ministry of Education launched an experimental program for the development of the so-called “bilingual streams” (or *secciones bilingües*) in public schools of Primary Education. This program has spread throughout the region and has been supported by several regulations issued by the Asturian Government. Today in Asturias, 120 schools of Primary Education (more than 60% of the public system) offer bilingual streams, with 52.8% of the students in the region enrolled in this modality.

The bilingual program in Asturias is similar to the ones developed in other autonomous communities in Spain, where CLIL has been extensively adopted in Primary and Secondary Education (see Cenoz, 2015; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Pérez-Cañado, 2016). In bilingual streams in Primary Education in Spain students get more exposure to the foreign language, as they are taught 5 hours of English per week, instead of the 3 hours taught in regular, or non-bilingual groups. In addition, students take two or more content-subjects delivered through English. Schools normally offer

some of the following subjects through the L2: Natural Science, Social Science, Mathematics, Arts, Physical Education, and Music. Since all schools offering CLIL also provide regular or mainstream education –where all subjects are taught through Spanish except English Language–, this is a voluntary choice for families, who may opt to enroll their children in CLIL or non-CLIL sections.

3.2 Methodological Approach

This quasi-experimental study follows a mixed approach in which data will be analyzed under both a quantitative and a qualitative paradigm. Since one of the objectives of the study is to elucidate a potential distinction between bilingual and non-bilingual sample groups, a quantitative analysis was employed to quantify a differentiation in students’ perception with English language learning. Our hope is that these results will provide insight into potentially determining a general pattern related to identity construction and the use of CLIL in additional language teaching in the bilingual education sample scrutinized. On the other hand, given that the investigation intends to examine experiential accounts of learners and their views of past, present and future experiences as English users, a qualitative perspective is necessary to better interpret the inexplicit meanings that people bring to their narratives. Also, a qualitative approach allows for an analysis that focuses on the context of the experiential accounts, not just decontextualized data. As Maxwell (2005) substantiates, research cannot be separated from context, and qualitative approaches lend themselves to examining the sociocultural aspects that condition human experiences.

The present study utilizes a narrative approach in its evaluation of the experiential accounts with EFL. Narrative methodology is principally divided into two approaches of analysis: The study of identity constructed through social interaction in given contexts, and the analysis of oral or written accounts of a biographical nature. Since written narratives are the principal source of data,

¹ Spanish National Statistics Institute: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=2886>. Accessed on September 24th, 2019.

the present study is an example of the second type. This approach allows for a qualitative analysis of storied experiences, or narrative accounts, in which valuable insight into the intricate issues involved in the language learning process provide for a more comprehensive understanding of the social and affective factors related to identity construction. By configuring disconnected experiences into one's life as a whole, narrative accounts, anecdotes and storied experiences shed light on how individuals understand and ascribe meaning to these experiences (Casanave, 2005: 18). With this understanding of narratives as the site in which identity is discursively constructed, the present study intends to analyze written narratives of primary school students in order to elucidate how participants see themselves in relation to their experience with EFL.

3.3 Sample

The participating school is a public establishment offering Elementary and Primary Education in the capital city of Asturias, Oviedo. The school is placed in the center of the city, and the socio-economic status of the families is middle-high. The school offers mainstream education – where students have 3 hours of English per week and all content-subjects are delivered through Spanish– and bilingual streams following CLIL –with 5 hours of English and 2 content-subjects (Science and Social Science) taught through English–. The school was one of the first educational establishments joining the bilingual program launched by the Regional Government in 2004. The current research scrutinizes the perceptions of 38 students of 6th grade of Primary Education: 23 students attend the bilingual stream while 15 participants are enrolled in the mainstream group (non-bilingual). All students are aged 10 years old, and all of them were born in the region.

3.4 Research Instrument

The research instrument is a list of 4 questions related to the students' personal experience, perceptions and feelings towards English designed to elicit anecdotal narratives which divulge insight into the identity of the students. Participants

were asked to write free-style narratives on the following topics prompting their opinion and experiences with English:

- 1) What do you think about English?
- 2) How do you feel when you listen to people talking in English?
- 3) Do you think English is important? Why or why not?
- 4) Comment on negative or positive experiences related to English

Keeping in mind that power relations can largely influence participants' responses, special care was taken in elaborating questions that did not lead students to specific answers. Rather each question was designed to be open-ended allowing the students freedom to freely explore their individual experiences. Each question was assigned as a weekly homework task. Understanding the constraints that the social dynamics of the school classroom could impose, the intention of the instrument is to provide a format in which students could expound freely on their language experience. The analysis of these narratives intends to shed light on their sense of self with relation to English, so the same instrument (the narratives) was used with both groups, CLIL and non-CLIL students.

3.5 Procedure

Permission for the present study was granted by the head of the curriculum planning department of the participating primary school and the sixth-grade teacher for English classes in both the bilingual program and the regular English classes offered to cooperate. Students were informed that they would be participating in a research project designed to better understand the process of identity construction and its relationship with learning a foreign language. Participants were supplied with a notebook and, in order to maintain anonymity, were instructed not to write their name or any identifying signifier on it. In order to distinguish between bilingual and non-bilingual narratives, notebooks supplied for the bilingual class students were marked with a yellow sticker on the back and non-bilingual class notebook with a blue

sticker. From December 2018 through January 2019 the students were assigned one question a week as homework. The students were instructed to write one to two pages on each question. Being that the objective of the present study is the analysis of detailed accounts of experiences and manifestations of feeling and emotions, students were instructed to respond in their native language (Spanish), so we could better capture their perceptions and affective feelings towards English and languages in general.

4. Quantitative Analysis of Results

The analysis of the notebooks will present descriptive statistics summarizing the main findings from a quantitative point of view, aiming to identify possible tendencies in participants' responses and also similarities or differences between the two groups scrutinized in the investigation. Subsequently, the results of the qualitative analysis of the notebooks will be expounded, focusing on the key ideas induced from the students' narratives.

4.1 Descriptive Results

In total, 38 students of Primary Education completed the narratives on their experience towards English: 23 of them study contents through English, and the 15 remaining learn non-language subjects through their mother tongue (Spanish). Both groups have the compulsory subject "English Language", which is taught by the same teacher and follows the same methodological approach and contents.

4.1.1 Bilingual Group

Starting with the bilingual class, all participants in this group (23, or 100%) demonstrate a positive view towards English, and they appreciate and value the opportunity to learn the L2. There are no negative responses from this group regarding the relevance of English, its role as an international language, or the influence it may have on their daily lives. Among the positive perceptions towards English, students in the bilingual group identify the following: English allows you to communicate with people from all over the world (17 students, or 73% of the group reached this conclusion); if you speak English you can travel to other places (an argument

supported by 15 pupils, or 65% of this group); if you learn English you can watch more movies and videos on the Internet (with 10 participants, or 43% of the participants in this group formulating this idea). The analysis also reveals that many CLIL students consider English to be a fairly easy language to learn, with 12 out of 23 (52%) participants commenting directly on this in their writings.

4.1.2 Non-bilingual Group

As for the students in the non-bilingual group, 10 students out of the 15 (66%) acknowledge the importance and relevance of learning English due to its role as a tool for international communication. These students mostly identify English as an opportunity to communicate with people from all over the world and appreciate the chance to make friends from other countries and cultures. Having said that, it is worth mentioning that there are 5 students (33%) who are clearly reluctant towards learning English for several reasons: 4 of them mention that they have difficulties learning English and it is not an easy language to learn. All of them (the 5 students showing a negative view) report feeling somehow uneasy about the pervasiveness of English as a global language, expressing ideas such as the following: "I don't understand why everybody has to study English at school and no other languages instead, it could be Italian or French, for instance, why English?". Within the group of students expressing less favorable approaches towards English there seems to be a connection between the fact that they do not like English and their poor academic performance in this subject (our study does not establish causality, but it reveals there is a plausible relationship between these two elements).

An important finding that needs to be addressed here is the fact that almost all participants in the study (35 out of 38 students from both groups, or 92% of the total sample) acknowledge the relevance of English in the job market. The overwhelming majority of students make direct references in their narratives to the impact the command of English has on getting a job (or the quality of that job), or its importance in establishing

career opportunities and advancement. Some of the students mention ideas such as “if you speak English you have more opportunities because important companies require people to speak it”, or “if you know English you can work in many places, not only in Asturias or in Spain, but also in other countries”, or “if you do not learn English you will have a lot of problems finding a job, and you will probably earn less money than people who know English”. This fact has to be explained by the socio-demographic characteristics of the Principality of Asturias, a region which has undergone several industrial reconversions and where the unemployment rates are traditionally among the highest in Spain, leading many cohorts of young graduates to look for jobs in other regions or even other countries due to the situation in the local labor market. Hence, it was expected that students –even at young ages– recognize the importance of English in the professional sphere.

4.1.3 Bilingual vs. Non-bilingual Students: Differences and Similarities

The analysis of the results renders another interesting finding: Divergences between the bilingual and the non-bilingual group can be spotted in terms of their appreciation of English as a global language and their attitude towards learning English. Although the study does not seek to find statistically significant differences, it has to be noted that participants in the bilingual group show a more favorable attitude than their counterparts in the non-bilingual group (which also have good perceptions of English in general terms, with only a small group of 5 students reporting negative views). Our research does not establish a cause-consequence relationship between being enrolled in a bilingual section operating under a CLIL approach and maintaining a more receptive view towards English, although it is possible to identify a clear relationship between the two. Additional variables should be taken into account, for instance the fact that students in bilingual and non-bilingual groups may have slightly different family backgrounds when it comes to their parents’ support out of the school context, or the views parents may have on language learning and multilingualism. To illustrate this point,

we can refer to an interesting point derived from students’ narratives: 18 out of the 23 students (78%) in the bilingual group relate to experiences where they used English abroad (when visiting foreign countries), while only 5 of the 15 pupils (33%) in the mainstream group refer to having travelled to other countries. Also, several participants in the CLIL group comment on having used English in private lessons (8 participants, or 34%) while no students in the mainstream group mention attending private academies or receiving extra classes outside the school.

Although these figures may not provide a definitive picture, as some students could have omitted several details in their writings, this tendency outlined in the study is in line with prior research on CLIL methodologies that identify differences in the family background in bilingual and non-bilingual groups in the region (Fernández-Sanjurjo, Fernández-Costales and Arias Blanco, 2018). Prior investigations indicate that students who have travelled more often to foreign countries, attend private lessons outside their school, and whose family background is more supportive of language learning and multilingualism are the ones who are generally enrolled in the bilingual sections. We recognize the possibility that this fact may partially cater to the results of our analysis.

In spite of the differences found in the appreciation of English language and its learning in the school setting by students enrolled in bilingual and non-bilingual classes, similarities are also present when screening the sample. A good number of participants unveil in their writings they feel different when speaking English in class than when speaking it with their families or friends out of school: Half of our sample –19 students from both groups– mention they feel nervous and insecure when participating in the English class, while they feel much more comfortable and less anxious when using the L2 in non-educational contexts (travelling, ordering in a restaurant, speaking with friends, etc.). This has obvious connections with motivational and affective factors in the English class and can be linked to Krashen’s (1981) classic theory that established that anxiety and stress within the classroom hinder students’ performance, as it raises

a barrier (i.e. the affective filter) making it more difficult to acquire a second language. According to Krashen, a relaxed and appropriate atmosphere will better contribute to lower this filter and promote students' academic achievement and acquisition of a given language.

It is worth mentioning that there are no inter-group differences in CLIL and non-CLIL students as regards their anxiety levels when speaking in the classroom, which can be explained by the fact that this research has focused on the subject "English Language", which is common to both, bilingual and non-bilingual groups. The subject is taught by the same teacher and there are no differences in the approach or teaching methodology in the CLIL and non-CLIL streams. All in all, the findings suggest that, in spite of the progress made in language teaching practice in last decades in Spain, where communicative approaches have been broadly implemented, there is still room for improvement when it comes to promoting an appropriate classroom atmosphere, encouraging Willingness to Communicate (WTC), and adopting methodological tenets to foster students' oral production in the classroom.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

This qualitative analysis aims to center its exploration on the way in which future selves –or ideal selves, using Dörnyei's (2005) theoretical framework– are projected in the anecdotal narratives of experiences with the L2, bringing to the surface relevant aspects of the relationship of identity construction and additional language learning. Specifically, the examination of the written narratives of primary school sixth graders in both bilingual and non-bilingual streams of English education intends to demonstrate how the different groups promote their ideal self as future active participants in the imagined international community of speakers of English. The analysis hopes to establish a possible relationship between these two streams and the construction of identity in the specific context of the present sample.

In order to better interpret the relationship of

the participants' identity with the L2 it is necessary to explore their past experiences. Since it is generally considered that past experiences have an influential impact on present and future learning (Dewey, 1933), anecdotal narratives of past experiences with English provide key insight into the development of possible, future selves connected with exposure to the L2. In addition, the affective aspect, emotions and emotional responses related to memories of individual experience demonstrate a profound effect on contributing to the formation of an ideal future self. One example of how the projection of a future ideal self can be found embedded in accounts of past experiences is clearly portrayed in the narrative by one student belonging to the bilingual stream of the sample:

Participant 1: When I was 9 years old I went to America, it was a fantastic experience, with my parents I spoke Spanish, but I had American friends so I had to speak English with them, at times I asked for water in the cafeteria and I have to admit that I was pretty embarrassed, it's true that I spoke a lot of Spanish but I had to speak some English because we went out for dinner with all my dad's American friends and they spoke a lot to me, sometimes I didn't understand but most of the time I did. I would really like to go back to America again.²

In this excerpt the student promoted himself/herself as someone capable of using English as a means of communication. Although he/she expresses some inhibition and embarrassment for his/her limited ability, the student clearly projects an image of an English speaker able to socialize and make friends through meaningful dialogue in English, identifying himself/herself as user of L2. His/her apparent confidence in comprehending the majority of the conversations he/she participated in is indicative of an attempt for the student to form an image of himself/herself as a successful language learner. In addition, the student's emphatic desire to return to the United States is suggestive of a vision of a future

² All excerpts have been translated from the original Spanish by the authors of the paper.

self participating as a competent L2 user in an international context. The student's self-consciousness towards past/present inadequacies in English demonstrate a strong desire to return to the United States more competent linguistically, projecting an image of a future ideal self that has further developed as an English speaker. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) explain that the distinction made between present and future capabilities is an internal representation of the desire to diminish this difference as one is realizing the imagined ideal self. In another narrative from the bilingual stream class, one student explained: "One time I dreamed in English, and I dreamed that I was communicating perfectly". This pupil's internalized desire to negotiate membership and participation in the English-speaking community manifested itself in a dream in which he/she is given a glimpse of an imagined future self. This is a clear example of a student's projection of an ideal self as perceived in relation to the L2 and the affective emotions attached to the desire to realize this future ideal self.

One prominent characteristic in the sample was the prevalence of affective emotions towards experiences in which the students' participation in conversations in English contributed to their developing a sense of themselves as a user of English. Positive feelings and emotions attached to experiences in which they were exposed to English facilitated the formation of an identity construction related to the L2. These perceived positive experiences with English help to set a trajectory towards future experiences in which the student sees himself/herself interacting as a member of the English-speaking community. In another example from the bilingual class, one student explained his/her experience travelling abroad:

Participant 2: My experience in London: last year I went to London and I had my first experience with English: London is a precious city filled with monuments, museums, gigantic parks like High park [sic], large department stores like Harrods and many more things, and of course the palace of Isabel II [sic] of the United Kingdom, but to get to the point, the thing is I went to a store to buy a stuffed

animal and I asked the man: how much is it? He told me how much it cost, and I told my parents and they gave me the money and I bought it. I know that a lot of people would not say that it was an interesting experience, but I like it and I feel proud of myself and happy about the stuffed animal.

The feelings of accomplishment and pride from having successfully negotiated a social transaction in English demonstrate a clear affective orientation towards his/her self-image in relation to English. Accounts such as this, in which students interpret the past and ascribe meaning to experiences influence and set a direction for future learning with the L2.

Developments in technology have created virtual spaces in which the construction of identity has surpassed the boundaries of traditional social intercourse. In his article "Dialogicality and the Internet", Hevern (2012) explains how the dissemination of the Internet has given individuals a broad range of tools, such as autobiographical writing, pictures and Internet links to valued topics, allowing individuals to engage in dialogue from varying positions and use available resources to reinforce desired identities. The anonymous nature of this virtual social interaction allows for greater freedom in identity disclosure and construction. One student from the bilingual stream exemplifies the way in which L2 identities are constructed and maintained through the Internet:

Participant 3: I really believe that English is important because, before you know it, it can open up job opportunities that you would not have without it. In addition, I can socialize with others through English. I have more than 10 English and Chinese friends that I communicate with when I play on-line games. And it is one of the most spoken languages in the world, even Chinese people can understand you if you speak with them in English.

In this excerpt it is clear how the student has negotiated friendships across time and space by

positioning himself/herself through English in dialogue with peers in other countries and cultures. The student's apparent pride in the number and cultural diversity of his/her gaming friends with whom English is the medium of communication is indicative of a self-presentation as a competent member of the international English-speaking community. The pupil also projects this image into the future by relating his/her promising future to English ability.

4.3 General Observations

A few general tendencies can be extrapolated from the current sample which may shed light on possible future conclusions related to the link between identity construction and the fact that students are enrolled in bilingual or non-bilingual education. A comparison of the narratives provided by the bilingual stream and the non-bilingual group reveals that students in both cases acknowledge the pervasiveness of English as an international language, with a large majority of the comments referring to the importance of learning English for better future employment opportunities or to facilitate intercultural communication. However, there were significant discrepancies in attitudes towards English between the two study groups. In the bilingual class all comments and narratives displayed a positive tone towards experiences with English outside the classroom and perceived the study of English as a valuable social and material resource. On the other hand, in the non-bilingual class there were several comments of a negative nature that questioned the role of English as global language and underlined experiences with English outside the classroom that were unfavorable. These derogatory narratives towards English also included comments which emphasized the difficulty in learning the language, and that English represented a betrayal to his/her mother tongue (Spanish). This difference in attitude towards the study of English is significant in that it shows a direct linkage between the amount of exposure to English in a formal educational environment and the development of affective positioning in relation to the learning of an additional language. Although further studies are needed to establish a conclusive relationship

between pedagogical methodologies and the positive positioning of the students' self-concept in relation to the foreign language, the difference in attitude expressed between the two sample groups suggests there is an association between the educational environment and construction of L2 identity.

5. Conclusions

The present research has addressed the construction of identity of students of Primary Education by scrutinizing two groups of 6th grade pupils enrolled in bilingual and non-bilingual modalities in a public school in Spain. The aim of the study was to analyze possible differences and similarities between students learning contents through an additional language under CLIL and pupils studying through their mother tongue. The overarching objective of the investigation was to contribute to the field of identity construction by examining whether or not being enrolled in CLIL influenced student's self-development and attitudes towards the foreign language.

The main findings of this paper suggest that there are differences between CLIL and non-CLIL groups (bilingual and non-bilingual), with participants enrolled in bilingual education showing more favorable attitudes towards English as an international language, the learning of English, and multilingualism in general, compared with pupils in the non-bilingual group having a more reluctant view of the role of English as a global language, its pervasiveness, and the fact that they have to learn it at school. Having said that, a number of considerations have to be mentioned. First, there is an overwhelming majority of participants –taking into account students in the CLIL and non-CLIL group– reporting positive attitudes towards English, foreign languages, and multilingualism in general. Second, the differences can be explained on the basis of the educational approach being analyzed (CLIL vs. mainstream education), but there are a number of variables that need to be investigated in depth. For instance, the socio-economic status of students, family support and parental views on multilingualism and language learning, as well as the fact that students in the bilingual group tend to have a more

international dimension having travelled more extensively than their counterparts in the non-bilingual class. Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulty in establishing a definitive causality here, there does seem to be a link between bilingual education and a particular development of the self and identity in relation to the foreign language.

As in any research, the current study has to acknowledge the potential limitations of its findings. In this paper a relatively small sample of two groups within the same school are examined and compared. Larger research samples may confirm some of the tendencies identified in the current study, which was not intended to render results which may be extrapolated or generalized, but rather to contribute to better understand the relationship between English learning and self-reported affective feelings of students of Primary Education in CLIL and non-CLIL in Spain. The results of the current study might be complemented by further investigations which could include longitudinal studies to verify the possible development and fluctuations of affective feelings of students in bilingual and non-bilingual groups throughout an academic year (or an entire educational stage). Also, the qualitative and ethnographic approach followed in the current paper may be supported by additional quantitative research tools –such as questionnaires– which may contribute to render results which can be replicable in other contexts and extrapolated to a large population.

The results of our paper have educational implications in terms of the possible benefits bilingual education, and more specifically CLIL, might have on students' development of the self, their affective feelings, and motivation towards foreign language learning, which has a direct connection with the way in which students develop and mature. Our study underlines the need to continue exploring a line of enquiry which clearly deserves further investigation, since contributing to a better understanding of students' feelings towards languages and identity construction will lead to an optimization of the teaching process and can facilitate the construction of a more open, welcoming, and multilingual society.

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