

## Racism: A challenge for bilingual education in Madrid

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### Abstract

With the increasing prevalence of bilingual public and private schools, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages heavily influences how English is taught in Spain, emphasizing plurilingualism and communicative competence, underlining the importance of education to reduce inequality and discrimination, and improving intercultural understanding. Since bilingual education can greatly impact this scenario (whether positively or negatively), it is important to outline the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual education nowadays. Additionally, we should admit that English language classes both disprove and propagate stereotypes, providing opportunities due to the ubiquity of the language, although not to everyone. This study aims to evaluate the success of English in secondary education, if it effectively gives opportunities and opens students to new cultures and if it raises awareness about racism. A survey was conducted with 406 students of Compulsory Secondary Education 1st and 4th grades at three schools in the Community of Madrid. We hypothesized that bilingual education students would be more open to difference and to new opportunities and would be more likely to recognize and challenge discrimination. The study found no significant differences in the responses given at the three schools. We contend that formal education impeded truthful answers and that a more casual questionnaire would be more appropriate.

### Keywords

Bilingual education – Inequality – Discrimination – Compulsory Secondary Education – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

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## ***Racismo: um desafio para a educação bilíngue em Madrid***

### **Resumo**

*A forma como a língua inglesa é ensinada na Espanha, com a crescente oferta de escolas bilíngues, tanto públicas quanto privadas, é fortemente influenciada pelo Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para as Línguas. Este documento enfatiza os valores do plurilinguismo e da competência comunicativa, ao passo que sublinha a importância de reduzir a desigualdade e a discriminação e de melhorar a compreensão intercultural no âmbito da educação. Como se constata que a educação bilíngue tem impacto positivo e negativo neste aspecto, é importante destacar suas vantagens e desvantagens na atualidade. Por outro lado, deve-se admitir que as aulas de língua inglesa demonstram tanto refutar quanto propagar estereótipos, e que a onipresença do inglês oferece oportunidades, ainda que não para todos. Este trabalho teve como objetivos: avaliar o sucesso do ensino do inglês no ensino secundário; a efetiva oferta de oportunidades e abertura dos horizontes dos alunos a novas culturas; e o potencial aumento da sua consciência sobre o racismo. Foi realizada uma pesquisa entre 406 alunos do 1º e 4º anos do ensino secundário obrigatório de três escolas da Comunidade de Madrid. Levantou-se a hipótese de que os alunos da educação bilíngue estivessem mais abertos à diferença e a novas oportunidades e fossem mais propensos a reconhecer e desafiar a discriminação. O estudo não encontrou diferenças significativas nas respostas recebidas nas três escolas. Argumentou-se, por fim, que o contexto formal de estudo representou um empecilho à obtenção de respostas verdadeiras e que um questionário mais casual seria mais apropriado.*

### **Palavras-chave**

*Educação bilíngue – Desigualdade – Discriminação – Ensino secundário obrigatório – Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para as Línguas.*

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### **Introduction**

The way any foreign language is taught and learnt can open students to other cultures. Thus, Schumann (1986) has shown that a positive attitude toward a target language and its culture aids language acquisition. Similarly, Fantini (2000) argues that learning a foreign language directly enables intercultural competence. However, we also need to look at evidence of failures in the educational space, specifically in teaching English. Prejudice, especially racial, can be so deeply rooted in the classroom and society at large that its eradication may seem impossible.

To get a better understanding of prejudices held by young people, we must mention the first study in Spain to interview Spanish and immigrant children on their beliefs and awareness of stereotypes of different ethnic groups (ENESCO *et al.*, 2005). However, Spain

lacks clear information on ethnic and racial discrimination. It is one of only two countries in the 47-member European Council which lacks an independent organization tasked with preventing racism (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2018).

The main justification for our concern is, of course, the urgency of the issue at hand. Racial discrimination is a considerable, understudied, and underdiscussed issue in Spain. In an increasingly diverse classroom and an ever more interconnected world, it is essential to try and assess what teachers can do to effectively instill respect and understanding in their students.

## **Understanding on bilingual education**

Just as the literature disagrees on what exactly constitutes bilingualism, any examination of bilingual education also requires careful consideration.

Baker (2001) highlights how the ideology and priorities of different countries, governments, and educational bodies will necessarily shape and define *bilingualism* in the classroom, a phenomenon that may ignore a balanced use of two languages. He outlines 10 separate aims.

1. To assimilate individuals or groups into the mainstream of society [...].
2. To unify a multilingual society [...].
3. To enable people to communicate with the outside world.
4. To provide language skills which are marketable, aiding employment and status.
5. To preserve ethnic and religious identity.
6. To reconcile and mediate between different linguistic and political communities.
7. To spread the use of a colonial language [...]
8. To strengthen elite groups and preserve their position in society.
9. To give equal status in law to languages of unequal status in daily life.
10. To deepen understanding of language and culture. (BAKER, 2001, p. 208).

As the ten examples above show, conducting bilingual education school programs can serve diverse purposes, according to how decision makers in different cultures think.

Depending on one's beliefs, different points could be made as to if each of the above reasons applies to the Bilingual Programme in Spain and Madrid today. We can certainly consider motives 3 and 4 as the most obvious instrumental factors at play. We should also dwell on points 2 and 10. After all, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) justifies its existence not only by pointing to the need for greater mobility and international cooperation between member countries but by also explicitly insisting upon the cultural benefits of language learning within the EU (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2001).

We should also note that the CEFR not only refers to English and the other main European languages but also upholds the cultural value of minority languages. Finally, we should remind ourselves that the CEFR orients itself not toward multilingualism – which

may be defined as the coexistence or knowledge of more than one language in a particular setting, but toward plurilingualism (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2001).

It no longer emphasizes proficiency in one or more languages, in which students work toward aping an *ideal native speaker*, but aims at developing a *linguistic repertoire*. Speakers may switch from one language or dialect to another or use their knowledge of a particular language to understand a text in a new language, recognizing words in a new form from a common international storage. Even users with a very low command of a different language can communicate by paralinguistic means (gestures, expression, etc.), simplifying or experimenting with different ways of saying things in various languages or dialects.

McCarty (2012) also emphasizes how bilingual education carries implicit government policies and societal values. Building on Baker's aims and heavily referencing Hideo Oka, he categorizes the resulting educational realities as weak or strong forms of bilingual education. Interestingly, he notes that, in some cases, the weak forms of bilingual education may in fact be monolingual forms of education.

This discussion of the Bilingual Programme in Madrid finds most appropriate to consult forms of strong bilingualism, especially students which we might categorize as *mainstream bilingual* – as they meet the following criteria: those belonging to the L1 majority, i.e., speakers of Spanish; and those using both L1 and L2, English. The programme aims at educational and societal pluralism and enrichment and language bilingualism and biliteracy (MADRID, 2010). Once more we can see the tie-in between the Bilingual Programme and the CEFR vision of a plurilingual, diverse, and harmonious Europe.

The CEFR, although legally non-binding, significantly affects the teaching-learning educational laws of the member states of the European Union. Thus, looking at the most recent significant legislation in Spain, the *Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality* (LOMCE) (SPAIN, 2013) leads to the 2014 national Royal Decree for Compulsory Secondary Education and the subsequent regional decree adjusting the legislation for the social realities of Madrid, i.e., the *Decreto de Educación Secundaria* (Secondary Education Decree), Madrid (2015). All these documents clearly reflect a new perspective of the Common European Framework on language learning. Communication is clearly the educational goal of learning foreign languages in Spain.

We find not only that LOMCE shares the EU concern of creating a society in which equal opportunity is a reality (SPAIN, 2013), but also that EU language policies aim to promote “[...] mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication” (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2001, p. 3-4).

It also stresses that secondary school students should learn to reject discrimination, prejudice, and violence.

As we have seen, European and Spanish educational laws and policies recommend that intercultural tolerance and respect be taught in classrooms. Additionally, language learning should especially focus on communication between ever-expanding varieties of people. This may lead us to wonder if different methods of foreign language teaching and

learning can aid the process of intercultural understanding. However, before pursuing this line of thought, we must first examine the disadvantages of bilingual education.

## **Advantages and disadvantages of bilingual education**

Around 375 million people speak English as their first language. Moreover, its position as the lingua franca of the world is unshakable: 470 million people to over a billion speak English as a second language. Furthermore, English has official or special status in almost 70 countries (RAO, 2019).

We may consider useful to reflect upon some of the potentially important downsides of the proliferation of English in education, business, and government. English linguistic imperialism (or linguicism, as it is now known) may have reinforced Eurocentric ideologies and devalued other cultures and languages, impeding the social and economic progress of those unable to speak it (BROWN, 2007). We find much to discuss here but the stigmatization of various dialects and the greater socioeconomic effect of the primacy of English fall outside the remit of this study on students in the Spanish Bilingual Programme.

Hartman and Judd (1978) still stands as one of the most famous examinations of the dangers of badly led language teaching. By specifically looking at sexism in English as a second language (ESL) texts, they challenge assumptions that teachers fairly or objectively select their cultural material. Women are used as examples considerably less often than men and are frequently the butt of jokes. They found that the most prevalent sexism in ESL texts consists of stereotypical roles (especially referring household work and childcare) – which are still overwhelmingly relegated to women – and of occupations, with few prestigious jobs being associated with women.

Some of their criticisms pertain to the inherent sexism of the English language which teachers may fail to question – what is known as the *sex bias of language*. They also examine the “[...] needlessly stereotyped portrayals of men and women, whether through one-sided role allocation, overt put downs, or simple omissions” (HARTMAN; JUDD, 1978, p. 384) found in ESL texts. A more recent study found that, in the 30 years separating the two studies, sexist content persisted in such materials (ANSARY; BABAIL, 2003).

We might consider helpful to examine racial prejudices in more detail. Another useful term is non-conscious or aversive racism, as outlined in Dovidio *et al.*'s essay “Why Can't We All Just Get Along” (2002). They found that aversive racists will give jobs or university positions to clearly well-qualified candidates but will prefer white candidates in case of ambiguities.

It is difficult to disprove the potential danger of racism, then, whether *old-fashioned* or *avert* –but considering how complicated it is to get people to admit it, we must acknowledge the challenge of accurately measuring prejudice and openness toward new cultures.

That study also shows how deep-seated prejudice can be. Moreover, European and Spanish policies underline that tolerance and respect for others begin in the classroom. However, aside from teachers' professional responsibility to teach such values, they must also work hard to ensure that their own racial biases fail to come into play in the school and classroom. Thus, we find convenient to reflect on Amma's (1987) definition: “Prejudice

+ Power = Racism.” Since teachers are authority figures, they need to be aware that their prejudices might potentially impact their students throughout their lives.

Evidently, education can greatly impact students’ lives (both positively and negatively). Focusing on some of the positive aspects of how Spanish students learn English in bilingual education, we should draw particular attention to how they may grow to understand and respect people unlike themselves.

Historically placing globalization, Blanco Puentes (2007) holds a considerably more positive vision of the contemporary English-led global village than Brown (2007). Creating country blocks and uniting them on economic, political, religious or societal grounds is nothing new, with the EU appearing as a classic example. Bauer (2002) is a fantastic source for the various reasons English has grown to its current power.

English enables people to economically take part in the new world order but Blanco Puentes (2007) argues that more is at play since deeper communication may push for a new mutual understanding sharing existence and language.

As we observed, European language policies focus on peace and coexistence. Although the CEFR explicitly states that language learning should open people to different cultures and that language teaching should foster tolerance and respect, we must also note that being closed off to other cultures actually impairs individuals’ attempts to learn their languages.

According to Schumann’s hypothesis, the larger the social distance between learners and culture, the greater the difficulty learners will have in acquiring the second language. Conversely, the smaller the social distance (less prejudice and negative emotions and greater solidarity between the two cultures, among others), the more learners will advance in the language (SCHUMANN, 1986). Subsequent studies on social distance and on individuals’ self-perception of their own culture and language, along with the culture and language they are learning have reinforced this hypothesis (ZAKER, 2016; COSTA, 2010; ELLIS, 2008; BROWN, 2007). But how can society create an education environment that works to destroy rather than build upon negative emotions and stereotypes and enables understanding between cultures?

Fantini’s (2000) comprehensive study explores the idea of intercultural competence. It is unclear whether this ability can be developed or trained but learning a language is deemed as a significant advantage in this process. He emphasizes that is a gradual, lifelong process and that regression is possible.

Studies have also found that using a second language makes people less biased (KEYSAR; HAYAKAWA; AN, 2012; HAYAKAWA; KEYSAR, 2018), which may aid in dispelling sexist and cultural myths in language learning. Perhaps this makes L2 classrooms the perfect place to discuss social and cultural issues and hopes.

Suttmeier (2011) argues that bilingual education raises much-needed cultural awareness. Of course, we find key differences between this environment and the bilingual English education of Madrid secondary students. The author not only specially looks at native Spanish-speakers learning English, but also at individuals dealing with English as a second language rather than English as a foreign language. Assessed students have a clear motivation to learn the language, i.e., to live, work, study, socialize, etc, in the USA (SUTTMEIER, 2011).

Suttmeier's (2011) results are hopeful. She found that bilingual education reduces racism in three ways that this study can use to assess if the teaching of English reduces racism and increases intercultural understanding in Spain:

[...] (a) providing better educational opportunities for non-native English speakers can help reduce socioeconomic and educational gaps between minority and majority students, (b) exposing native English speakers to a new language and culture can instill a heightened appreciation for diversity, and (c) teaching students each other's languages can integrate two cultures and enhance tolerance for respective cultures. (SUTTMEIER, 2011, p. 6-7).

## **Examining ethnicity in a Spanish context**

We should note that Spain, like many European countries, refrains from asking about ethnicity in its census and may thus view this query as more of a taboo than English-speaking countries such as Ireland and the UK, in which such enquiries are commonplace. Survey planners must bear this in mind to avoid offending participants. It is also insightful to begin to ask questions about whether a culture that speaks less about ethnicity shapes the specific kind of racism that exists there (MADRID FERNÁNDEZ, 2011).

In fact, the Council of Europe (2018) has recently criticized Spain for failing to directly tackle racial discrimination. It and the microstate of San Marino are the only two countries in the 47-member council lacking an independent organization to prevent racism. Although the Spanish government set up the Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination in 2009, it was never independent and has been left effectively dormant and without proper leadership. Besides calling for the founding of an effective and independent organization to work toward equality, the Council criticized Spain for lacking measures to integrate migrants. The report specifically criticized the Spanish education system in this respect, noting that 44% of non-EU immigrants are school dropouts (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2018). For these reasons, the Migrant Integration Policy Index found education to be the greatest weakness in the integration policies in Spain (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2018).

We find to what extent these issues relate to an unwillingness to talk about ethnicity debatable, although it is clear evidence of the necessity of the type of study we decided to undertake.

This study aims to align the results it obtained with what the European Commission against racism and intolerance calls *equality data*: “[...] statistics broken down by citizenship, national/ethnic origin, language and religion” (FARKAS, 2017, p. 4). They consider the collection of such data to be the responsibility of all countries in Europe to inform their policies. We find the European Commission against racism and intolerance a recent positive development in the fight against racism in Spain. It is the first regional monitoring body to advocate for the coherent and comprehensive collection of ethnicity data. Another major development we observed is the establishment of the National Immigrant Survey, which consists of two surveys with immigrants on the discrimination they have experienced, one held in 2011 and a second which focused on workplace discrimination (MSSSI, 2012). It also found a unique challenge which we can consider the most convincing evidence that racism in Spain is linked, at least in part, to a lack of conversation on the subject. It is

certainly something to consider when creating a research survey: how can surveys assess racial discrimination if people do not know what racial discrimination is? It is, perhaps, an unanswerable dilemma but, at the very least, research must consider people's knowledge of this as a factor in whether their environment is tolerant and respectful.

Concluding this preliminary investigation of ethnicity and racial prejudice in Spain, we highlight an examination of stereotypes of different ethnic groups in Spanish and Latin American children living in Madrid (ENESCO *et al.*, 2005). It is the first Spanish study which has examined children's own beliefs and awareness of stereotypes of different ethnic groups. In line with the criticisms of the European Council, they emphasize the importance of gathering such information in a country like Spain, in which social policies addressing ethnic integration are ever more necessary, insisting on the need to work toward tolerance and strong intergroup relations.

Once more, we find it difficult to deny the need to closely examine the preponderance of racial stereotypes and discrimination and to ask whether education in general, and specifically in the most international of subjects, modern languages, can play an effective part in rooting out such prejudice.

## **Methodology**

### **Objectives**

This research aimed to assess if the Bilingual Programme in place in the Community of Madrid fosters respect and the peaceful coexistence between cultures and widens opportunities for diverse people from diverse backgrounds. After all, this is an express aim of bilingual education in Spanish and European educational legislation and policies. Is it a reality? Does the Bilingual Programme truly help bring about a society which values difference and intercultural understanding? Does it educate majority white students to respect minority groups? Does it effectively prepare students of all backgrounds to be workers, travelers, and citizens in this ever more interconnected world?

Borrowing from and rephrasing Suttmeier's (2011) study on bilingual education as a means to defeat racist discrimination, the specific objectives of this study are (i) to discover the instrumental value of learning English and to discern whether it improves educational and career opportunities for minority students in the Bilingual Programme; (ii) to analyze students' exposure to new English-speaking countries and cultures and the extent to which, if at all, it enables them to appreciate diversity; (iii) to study how English as a lingua franca exposes students to different world cultures and how this affects their understanding of diversity; and (iv) to ascertain whether English-Spanish cultural exchanges integrate both cultures and enhances tolerance.

### **Population and sample**

A survey was designed to gather information about our objectives. It was conducted in three secondary mixed-gender schools: a bilingual public school (School 1), a non-bilingual public school (School 2), and a bilingual private school (School 3).

To obtain a full perspective of students' evolving attitudes during secondary school, 1st and 4th ESO (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria*, Compulsory Secondary Education) students were chosen. Mixed schools were selected to act as a control. As all schools are mixed, this study can better focus on their outstanding differences: whether the school is bilingual, public or private, and finally, how diverse are its students.

In total, 406 students participated in this survey:

- School 1. 141 students (61 boys, 78 girls, two other);
- School 2. 91 students (52 boys, 39 girls);
- School 3. 174 students (93 boys, 81 girls).

All schools are within 2.5 kilometers of each other in East Madrid (municipality). School 1 and School 2 are especially close to each other (around one kilometer from each other) and show a similar socioeconomic background.

They are also very diverse schools. Ethnicity-related information is only available for School 2, in which foreign students make up 17.45% of ESO and Romani account for 5.16% of them. From casual observation and the proximity of the two schools, the racial and ethnic makeup of School 1 appeared to be very similar to that of School 2, as confirmed by the results of our survey.

## **Instrument and method**

To obtain the necessary information on the aforementioned general and specific objectives, an “ad hoc” questionnaire comprising 15 closed-ended questions was explicitly designed and directly offered to the involved students.

Google Forms was used to make an attractive, anonymous, and easy-to-use online questionnaire.

Overall, four different question categories were created to accurately gather information on our hypothesis that students learning English in a bilingual educational setting would better receive international opportunities and different cultures and people and show an increased awareness of racism and discrimination.

The 15 questions in the questionnaire were grouped into four main areas: (i) basic characteristics; (ii) English as a way toward opportunities; (iii) openness to new cultures; and (iv) awareness of racism.

## **Basic characteristics**

Before examining the three question categories previously informed and identified in our hypotheses, it is important to describe the relevant dependent variables. First, respondents were asked if they were 1st or 4th ESO and if they identified as male, female or other. The next question is ethnicity-related: do students identify as Black, white, Romani, Slavic, Latino, Asian, Arabic, Berber, Mixed Race or other. These ethnicities were selected as they are the most common among immigrants to Spain.

There are four questions in this section:

- Years of study;
- Gender;
- Ethnicity;
- Were you or one of your parents born outside Spain?

This information is a valuable starting point in a study of how open various groups are to people unlike them. For instance, a survey aiming to discover how minority students are thought of and treated should ascertain whether students belong to a minority.

The first ethnicity-related question simply says *Ethnicity* and provides Spaniard and immigrants' most common ethnicities. So students would feel included and to provide the most accurate information, the option *Other* was offered. The next question, *Were you or one of your parents born outside Spain?* serves to unequivocally account for non-Spanish responses.

### English as a way toward opportunities

This survey section evaluates how useful and important students find English and how likely it is that they will use English significantly in their future work and travels. As global citizens, does their knowledge of English level the playing field in terms of future opportunity? The questions were classified as follows:

#### 1. Perceived importance of English

- *Do you think it is important to know/speak/learn foreign languages?*
- *Do you think it is important to know/speak/learn English?*

#### 2. English as a tool for future opportunities

- *Do you think travelling is important?*
- *Have you ever been outside of Spain?*
- *Would you like to work abroad in the future?*

An attempt to link current and past experiences – whether students have already been outside the country, their enjoyment (or lack thereof) of English at school – and students' future meaningful use of the language was made.

### Openness to new cultures

This survey section evaluates how open students are to those from different backgrounds, countries, and ethnicities, according to the following questions:

- *Do you have a friend who was born in a different country than you were?*
- *Do you have a friend of a different ethnicity?*

Although such questions may seem to reductively analyze how truly non-racist and tolerant students are, they at least provide some kind of small concrete evidence (i.e., whether respondents spend their free time with someone from a different culture), which, coupled with more nuanced questions in the following section, provides a fuller picture.

### Awareness of racism

The design of the third category of questions caused us the greatest challenge. As highlighted by the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (MSSSI) (2012), we had to consider that many people fail to understand what discrimination actually is. Thus, questions always contained *Do not know* or *Unsure* answer options. This lack of information will also be considered in a discussion of whether or not students receive education on intercultural understanding.

Moreover, considering Dovidio *et al.*'s (2002) definition of aversive or *unconscious* racism (compared to old-fashioned direct racism), indirect questions, such as hypothetical situations, were included to try and invoke honest responses.

- *Would you raise your voice if someone was humiliating, insulting or mocking another person?*
- *Do you refuse to take part in jokes that are insulting to another group, culture, gender, etc.?*
- *Do you understand what racism and prejudice are?*
- *In your opinion, does racism exist in schools?*

In sum, this category of questions aimed to assess students' respect for people who are different from them, the preponderance of racism and prejudice in their schools, and their awareness of racism and prejudice.

## Results

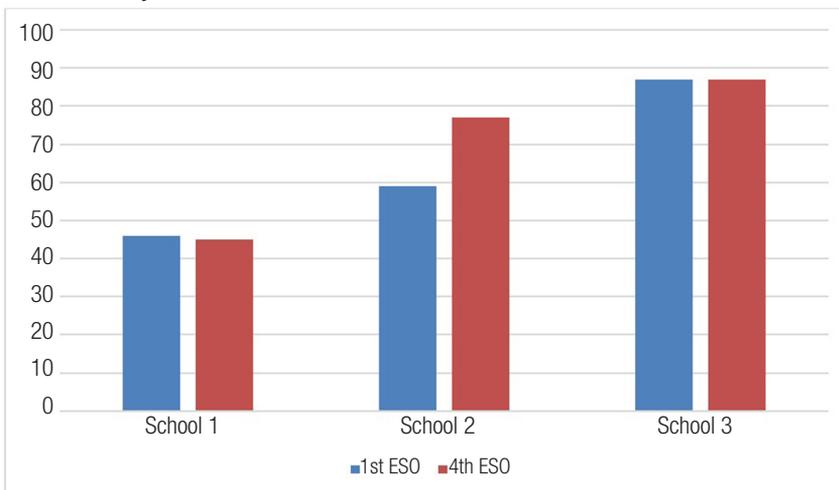
The careful selection of our study population (similar group sizes, classes, and gender makeup) enabled the accurate appraisal of the obtained results.

As explained, we conducted our survey with 406 Compulsory Secondary Education 1st and 4th grade students at three schools: a non-bilingual public one, a bilingual public one, and a bilingual private one.

In line with the aforementioned objectives, we will categorize their responses according to basic dependent variables and four other areas to measure how effectively English stops discrimination and creates global citizens who are open to new cultures and opportunities (basic characteristics, English as a way toward opportunities, openness to new cultures, and awareness of racism).

### Basic characteristics

**Graphic 1 – Years of study**

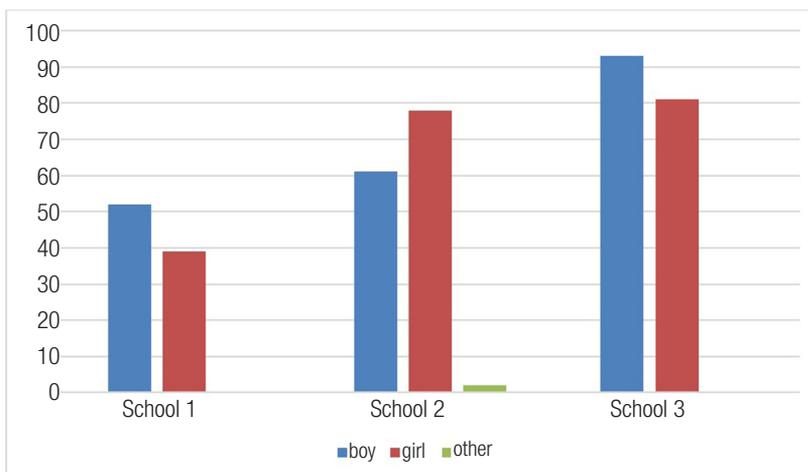


Source: Elaborated by the authors for this study.

As we can see, the surveyed population is pretty evenly split between 1st and 4th ESO boys and girls. Along with the proximity of all three schools, this was another way to keep results fair: by asking students entering and completing ESO education, we could obtain an all-encompassing view of student attitude and record any evolution of opinions over time.

Although all questions were obligatory, we somehow failed to receive five answers to this first question from School 2. This may explain why it is less balanced than School 1 and School 3.

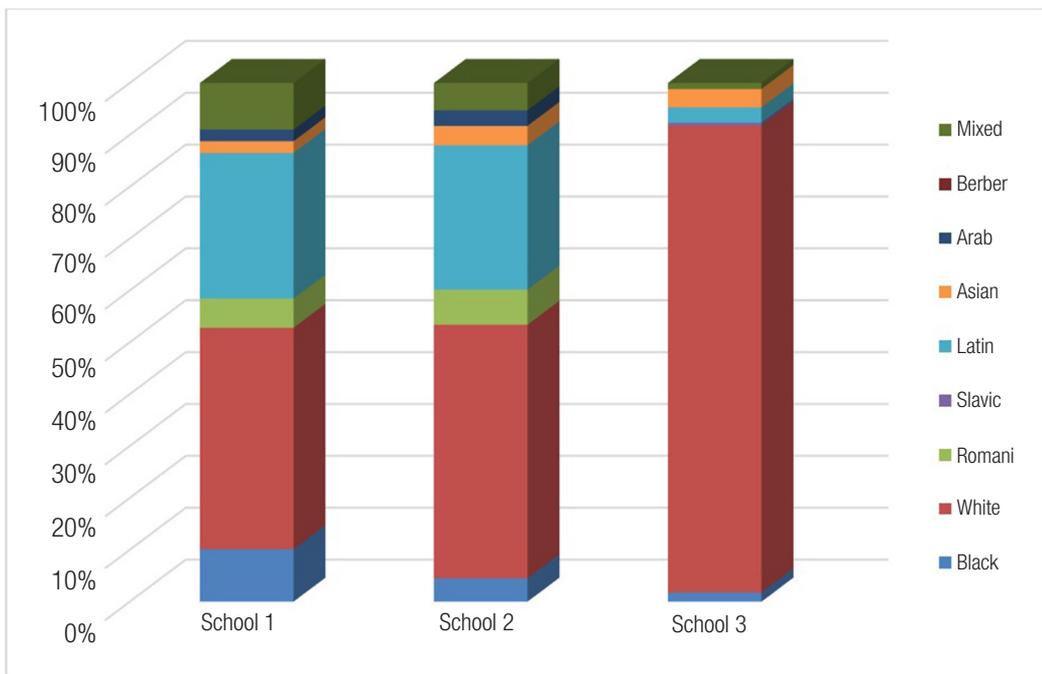
**Graphic 2 – Gender**



Source: Elaborated by the authors for this study.

Choosing mixed schools was another way to keep surveys fairer; by removing the gender factor, schools are more or less evenly divided between boys and girls. In total, two students from School 2 chose the *Other* option; one, to make a joke (identifying themselves as a *pato*, “duck”) and another, to share their *non-binary trans* identity. It is interesting that in a Spanish-language survey, they chose to use English. Is this because they knew that one of the researchers was an English speaker or is it because, in some ways, English is a language of tolerance, especially regarding gender nonconforming people?

**Graphic 3 – Ethnicity**



Source: Elaborated by the authors for this study.

According to Graphic 3, although School 2 and School 1 show very similar ethnic makeups, School 3 has a much less diverse student body. We may conjecture several explanations: though all schools are in close proximity, School 1 and School 2 are public schools especially near each other and have a diverse and working-class neighborhood with significant immigrant and Romani communities.

The ethnic makeup of School 1 and School 2 is strikingly similar: 41.8% of students in School 1 and 46.1% of students in School 2 are white; School 3, by contrast, has an 87.9% white majority. Latino is the second largest ethnic group in both public schools by a considerable margin, making up 27.5% and 26.2% of the student population in School 1 and School 2, respectively.

We must highlight the various reactions by respondents who chose *Other*. We categorized them as confusion (as to the difference between nationality and race or as to what race

they belonged to), indignation or perhaps even offence; and humor/flippancy. Certainly, the heterogeneity of answers negatively affects the accuracy of responses as a whole.

Although some fourth-year students in all schools reacted with shock to the questions about ethnicity and challenged our motives (which we explained once they had completed the questionnaires), only white-majority School 3 students failed to share their ethnic information. While one answer was spoiled, three students chose instead to object to the ethnicity question by saying: *I do not agree; Ethnicity is not needed to carry out this questionnaire;* and *Ethnicity does not exist.*

It is fascinating that the most heated reactions to the appropriateness of ethnicity-related questions came from the whitest school, School 3. Unfortunately, we are unable to determine these students' racial identity but we can confirm that all four students responded that neither they nor their parents had been born outside of Spain, which makes it rather likely.

**Table 1 – Were you or your parents born outside Spain?**

School	Yes (No. Students)	No (No. Students)
School 1	52	39
School 2	76	65
School 3	28	146

Source: Elaborated by the authors for this study.

The percentage of students and parents in School 3 who were born in Spain is 83.9%, compared to 42.9% and 46.1% of students in School 1 and School 2, respectively.

Considering the previously identified lack of race and ethnic information, all race-related information is of interest. Moreover, in a survey of openness to other cultures and awareness of racism, belonging to a minority group is going to be a factor of interest.

### English as a way toward opportunities

#### Perceived importance of English

It is clear that students in all three schools strongly agree as to the importance of learning foreign languages and English especially. In total, 95.6% of students in School 1 and 92.2% of students in School 2 deem important to know, speak or learn foreign languages; 92.3% of students in School 1 and 92.8% of students in School 2 claim it is important to know, speak or learn English; and, in School 3, this belief is even more strongly held: 98.3% of those surveyed said that it was important to know, speak, and learn foreign languages, 97.1% of them relating it to English.

#### English as a tool for future opportunities

We may consider the real exposure students have had to the world outside Spain as an additional factor in assessing if students are open to other cultures.

As stated, 74.7% of students in School 1 and 74.5% of students in School 2 have been outside of Spain before, compared to 93.1% of students in School 3. Overall, 82.4% of students in School 1 considered travelling to be important, as does 87.2% of students in School 2 and 92.5% of School 3 students.

However, answers to the question *Would you like to work abroad in the future?* failed to show significant differences between the schools.

**Table 2** – Would you like to work abroad in the future?

School	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)
School 1	50.5	9.9	39.6
School 2	53.9	10.6	35.5
School 3	48.9	14.4	36.8

Source: Elaborated by the authors for this study.

Perhaps surprisingly, the best-travelled private School 3 students are the most reluctant to travel in the future. Nevertheless, the schools failed to show remarkable differences. We found that the lack of certainty about this particular aspect may indicate it is a common feature between adolescents attending lessons in bilingual or non-bilingual schools.

### Openness to other cultures

Relationships with people from different ethnicities and countries must be an indicator of openness to different cultures. Anticipating the confusion on how students understood ethnicity, respondents were asked both about ethnicity and nationality. As we expected, most students belonging to the highly diverse student bodies of School 1 and School 2 have friends from different countries and ethnicities: 92.3% of respondents in School 1 have a friend who was born in a different country than they were, whereas 96.7% have a friend of a different ethnicity; in School 2, the percentage is 95 and 97.2%, respectively. However, the affirmative responses are also high in School 3: 85.6% of students have a friend from a different country, whereas 86.8% have a friend of a different ethnicity.

### Awareness of racism

A key element in this study is if students are aware of the existence of racism in teenagers' society. In total, four questions aimed to shed light on the matter.

**Table 3** – Would you raise your voice if someone was humiliating, insulting or mocking another person?

School	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)
School 1	67.0	11.0	22.0
School 2	67.4	2.8	29.8
School 3	79.9	2.9	17.2

Source: Elaborated by the authors for this study.

All three schools show that students would, in general, raise their voice before insults or attacks but, surprisingly, the percentage is not as high as we would expect nowadays – given that 21st – century societies tend to seek equality and uphold human rights. An important percentage of students would only react sometimes. It would be very telling to know the reasons for such acts. The data reflect that more teenagers in School 3 (private school) would assertively react before unfair situations than those in School 1 and School 2 (public schools). Could we conclude that students in School 3 follow and share the same moral values according to the code of ethics of the institution they attend?

We obtained similar results from answers to *Do you refuse to take part in jokes that are insulting to another group, culture, gender...?* Again, School 3 responses indicate that its students would strongly refuse to take part in pejorative jokes (75.9%), compared to School 1 and School 2 students (62.6% and 58.2%, respectively). We also find a coincidence concerning the “Sometimes” option. School 2 shows a higher percentage (30.5) than School 1 (17.6%) and School 3 (13.8%). The only aspects we could associate to these results are the greater presence of girls (78) than boys (62) in the survey in School 1 (in School 2, the number of boys, 52, is higher than the girls’, 39); and that, once again, moral values of School 3 are very strong. Could we claim that girls’ sensitivity and morals may influence that result?

According to the results obtained in these two questions, it is essential to know if adolescents can differentiate between racism and prejudices.

**Table 4** – Do you understand what racism and prejudice are?

School	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)
School 1	89.0	2.2	8.8
School 2	95.0	0.7	4.3
School 3	92.5	2.3	5.2

Source: Elaborated by the authors for this study.

Results in Table 4 show that the surveyed students, who are between 12 and 16 years old (i.e., in the 1st and 4th grades of Compulsory Secondary Education), can really differentiate the two terms. Fortunately, the percentage of students who acknowledge otherwise is very low. Answers can relate to both the youngest students in the sample and those who admit uncertainty. This means that, in general, when they insult somebody, they know what they say and with what purpose.

Insults, humiliations, and mockery can happen in any context. The following question tries to find out if racism exists in schools.

**Table 5** – In your opinion, does racism exist in schools?

School	Yes (%)	No (%)	Unsure (%)
School 1	81.3	5.5	13.2
School 2	78.6	7.8	15.6
School 3	66.1	7.5	26.4

Source: Elaborated by the authors for this study.

Surprisingly, most students admit that racism exists in their schools whether they were private or public (MADRID FERNÁNDEZ; BARRIOS, 2018). School 3 (private) seems to show less racism. Note that more than 10% of students in each school recognizes being unsure of the existence of racism in their schools. Can students fail to know whether racism exists at their schools? In the previous question, the percentage of uncertainty toward racism and prejudice was lower than in this one. If students can identify racism, their uncertainty of recognizing racism at a familiar context is illogical.

We structured these questions to try and identify explicit and unconscious racism in secondary schools. At first glance, results all seem very similar. However, in line with the resistance toward ethnicity-related questions seen at School 3, we found that its students responded most strongly to questions about joking and mocking at the expense of others.

It is difficult and indeed counterproductive to examine these results apart from the information collected on the racial makeup of each school. In particular, we should consider if racism is least reported in School 3 due to its much smaller amount of minority students. Could this be a factor in students in more diverse schools being less likely to intervene in instances of joking and teasing; i.e., given their daily reality, they have a more realistic idea of their most likely behavior?

It is hard to get a certain answer. Undoubtedly, all schools have a highly reported understanding of racism and prejudice. It is possible that School 3 students' skepticism toward ethnicity-related surveys and commitment to intervening in instances of joking and teasing is simply due to their high level of engaged awareness of racism and discrimination.

On the whole, we must admit that conclusions are hard to come by due to the number of independent variables. For example, ethos, socioeconomic status, mood of students, teacher supervision could all have been expanded upon.

Furthermore, respondents' answers to the important questions in this survey section have failed to show significant differences between the schools.

## Discussion

We divided our survey questions into three main areas to assess the impact of English in making tolerant, global citizens: English as a way toward opportunities, openness to new cultures, and awareness of racism.

We found no significant evidence that Madrid bilingual education students were more open to international opportunities, receptive to new cultures or aware of racism and discrimination than their non-bilingual counterparts.

However, results positively depict students' relationship with English and their understanding of its importance. Furthermore, most students have friends from different backgrounds, which at least indicates a certain openness to different cultures.

As mentioned, we have failed to account for many variables and the formal educational context of this research may have been a factor in impeding honesty. Additionally, considering the type of racial discrimination young people exhibit toward minority ethnic groups as recently as in Enesco *et al.* (2005), we may be right to doubt this overwhelmingly positive depiction of ethnic relations in contemporary Madrid classrooms.

## **Conclusions**

This study aimed to determine to what extent learning English as a second language such as in the Madrid public bilingual programme resulted in “unifying a multicultural society,” “deepening understanding of culture” (BAKER, 2001), and dismantling racism.

We hypothesized that such education would positively help to develop students who were open to different cultures and the new possibilities of an increasingly interconnected world and that they would have an increased awareness of racism and discrimination. However, the data collected failed to provide enough information to satisfactorily answer these questions.

Generally speaking, we found that students’ responses failed to show meaningful differences in areas regarding how students learn English, whether bilingual or otherwise.

We also hypothesized that belonging to a minority and attending a school with a diverse student body would be an important factor to how open/non-racist respondents were. We found this to be true but to an unremarkable degree.

To expand these conclusions, we would need to look at the specific objectives outlined above and compare them with our current findings.

### **English as a way toward opportunities**

Most students in the surveyed schools agree with the importance of learning English. However, only around half of them want to work abroad in the future. We failed to find notable divergences in answers between different types of schools, though, perhaps surprisingly, School 3 students were the most reluctant to work abroad in the future. Is this perhaps because privileged students in private education have the resources to obtain a successful career in Spain, whereas less privileged students might need to emigrate? This would confirm the importance of learning English (at least in a practical sense) to seek more equal opportunities but we are unable to be certain of this without carrying out further enquiries.

### **Openness to new cultures**

As we might expect, almost every student at highly diverse schools (School 1 and School 2) has friends from different countries and races. However, so does most respondents in School 3, especially considering its racially homogenous student population. Thus, bilingual education failed to make students more open.

### **Openness to other cultures**

We found no notable distinction between different schools and their awareness of racism, though students at School 3 are somewhat more cautious in this area.

Note that those students show the strongest responses to questions about joking and mocking at the expense of others. School 3 is also the school with the fewest respondents reporting racism in their school, though it may be the case.

## Awareness of racism

Actually, the question section related to basic characteristics contained the most interesting results. In our sample, as we might expect, we could observe that public schools are more diverse.

Spanish native people are more sensitive about race – is this a sign that the reluctance or taboo Spanish natives feel are the reason behind their lack of information and awareness or simply a sign that School 3 students have appropriately been made aware of racism and wanted to be vigilant?

Considering all the above, this study serves more as a useful starting point than as any conclusive investigation into how different forms of learning English as a foreign language in several educational contexts contribute to their openness to new cultures, awareness of racism, and antiracist efforts. According to the results obtained, a parallel qualitative study would contribute to uncover adolescents' deeply held unconscious biases and get more detailed information.

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