

# **Inclusive Teaching Practices in Primary School Bilingual Programmes: Student Perceptions and Associated Factors**

## **Prácticas Inclusivas en los Programas Bilingües de Educación Primaria: Percepción de los Estudiantes y Factores Asociados**

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### **Abstract**

The integration of inclusive practices in bilingual programmes encouraging language learning for all students is an essential 21st-century educational challenge. An initial

step in addressing this issue is to discover what students think about the extent to which teaching practices in the bilingual classroom cater to diversity. This study analyses the frequency with which students perceive the use of inclusive teaching practices in primary bilingual programmes and examines whether these perceptions vary according to student and school characteristics. A total of 2,714 primary school students (years 4, 5, and 6) in Castile and Leon (Spain) completed an anonymous paper-based questionnaire comprising sociodemographic questions and the Student Perception of Inclusion in Bilingual Education (SPI-BE) scale. Students rated the frequency with which teachers of subjects taught in English used 16 inclusive teaching practices. According to the analyses, students generally considered inclusive practices to be relatively frequent in primary schools. By dimensions, practices related to support and feedback were perceived as significantly more frequent than those related to methodology and resources. Also, perceptions differed according to sociodemographic characteristics. Female students, students in lower years, students without Special Educational Needs (SEN), students in semi-private schools, and students in state-run schools with a MEC-British Council (BC) programme perceived the use of inclusive practices as being more significantly frequent. The fact that students regard individual support and feedback as being more commonplace than personalised materials and tasks supports our conclusion that more work is needed regarding teacher training in active methodologies and on the design of educational resources that cater to diversity in the bilingual classroom. Likewise, it seems necessary to pay preferential attention to SEN students, students in higher years, and state-run schools without a MEC-BC programme.

*Keywords: inclusion, bilingual education, primary school, students, teaching practices*

### Resumen

La integración de prácticas inclusivas en programas bilingües que fomenten el aprendizaje de idiomas para todo el alumnado es un reto educativo esencial del siglo XXI. Un primer paso es conocer la opinión del alumnado sobre la medida en que las prácticas docentes en el aula bilingüe atienden a la diversidad. Este estudio analiza la frecuencia con la que el alumnado percibe el uso de prácticas docentes inclusivas en los programas bilingües de primaria y si estas percepciones varían en función de las características del alumno y del centro. En total, 2.714 escolares de Educación Primaria (4º, 5º, 6º curso) de Castilla y León (España) completaron un cuestionario anónimo en papel con preguntas sociodemográficas y la escala Student Perception of Inclusion in Bilingual Education (SPI-BE). El alumnado valoró la frecuencia con la que los maestros de asignaturas impartidas en inglés utilizaban 16 prácticas inclusivas. Según los análisis, el alumnado consideraba que estas prácticas eran relativamente frecuentes. Por dimensiones, las prácticas relacionadas con el apoyo y la retroalimentación se percibieron como más frecuentes que las relacionadas con la metodología y los recursos. Asimismo, las percepciones diferían en función de las características sociodemográficas. Las niñas, el alumnado de cursos inferiores, sin Necesidades Educativas Especiales (NEE), de

colegios concertados y en programas del MEC-British Council (BC) percibieron frecuencias significativamente más altas de prácticas inclusivas. El hecho de que el alumnado considere más habitual el apoyo individual y la retroalimentación que el uso de materiales y tareas personalizadas apoya nuestra conclusión de que resulta preciso profundizar en la formación del profesorado en metodologías activas y en el diseño de recursos educativos que atiendan a la diversidad en el aula bilingüe. También, resalta la necesidad de atender mejor al alumnado NEE, a los de cursos superiores y a los de centros públicos sin programa BC.

*Palabras clave: inclusión, educación bilingüe, primaria, alumnado, prácticas docentes*

## Introduction

Since the 1990s, the Council of the European Union has adopted various measures to support language proficiency in different countries and encourage bilingualism and multilingualism in populations from an early age (Jiménez-Martínez & Mateo, 2011). Among these actions, bilingual education programmes have been widely promoted across Europe (Eurydice, 2017), with Spain being one of the leading countries in implementing bilingual learning in compulsory education (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010).

As Spain is a highly decentralised country, legislation governing bilingual programmes changes among autonomous communities, giving rise to a variety of models with individual characteristics. Each region develops its own programme, in which a high percentage of students participate. In fact, in many of these bilingual sections, around half of the primary school students in each school are enrolled: Madrid 51.3%, Navarra 55.8%, Asturias 39.9%, and Castile and Leon 63.7% (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2022). Additionally, the national government has its own bilingual programme - the Spanish-British Primary Integrated Curriculum - which was established through an agreement between the Ministry of Education (MEC) and the British Council (BC) (Jover et al, 2024). This programme has been in operation since 1996; however, fewer schools participate in this initiative (10 in Madrid, 6 in Navarra, 2 in Asturias, and 19 in Castile and Leon).

In the case of both types of bilingual programme, in addition to learn-

ing a foreign language as a separate subject, other non-linguistic subjects (usually Natural and Social Sciences, Physical Education, Music, or Arts and Crafts) are taught in a foreign language following the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach (Coyle & Meyer, 2021). Teachers involved in these programmes are mostly Primary teachers with a specialisation in English language. All of them are required a B2 or C1 accreditation in English, in compliance with the criteria established by the regional authorities. They are provided with various options for specific CLIL training at a regional level, including voluntary summer courses abroad, specialised post-graduate programs, and mandatory three-month CLIL courses.

In recent years, the exponential growth of bilingual programmes in Spain has arisen to meet this social demand for students to learn a foreign language. Also, this reality converges with another 21<sup>st</sup>-century educational requirement, which is the need to cater to student diversity in the classroom, embracing students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), learning difficulties, as well as socially and culturally disadvantaged students and immigrants (Azorín & Sandoval, 2019; Durán-Martínez & Martín-Pastor, 2023; Reindal, 2016; UNESCO, 2017). Starting from the inception of bilingual programmes, it has been clear that it is essential to support all types of students, under European egalitarian, democratic, and inclusive language policies (Lorenzo et al., 2021).

Therefore, bilingual education and attention to diversity are two complex educational realities that make the integration of inclusive practices in bilingual programmes essential yet extremely challenging (López-Medina, 2024; Lova et al., 2013; Pérez-Cañado, 2023; Romo, 2016). Concerning this, Martín-Pastor and Durán-Martínez (2019) found that among the bilingual primary schools that mentioned attention to diversity in their official documents, the inclusive actions described were rather limited, generalized, and open to multiple interpretations. Consequently, it is not surprising that a subsequent study showed that SEN students tend to abandon bilingual programmes as they progress throughout their education. Also, when the reasons for exclusion are analysed, they are often related to the learning difficulties of students and ignore issues regarding school management or educational practices (Durán-Martínez et al., 2020).

There is a large number of studies addressing how teachers, parents and students generally perceive the bilingual programmes in which they participate (Broca, 2016; Madrid et al., 2018; Oxbrow, 2018; Pladevall-Ballster, 2015; Ruiz, 2021; Smith et al., 2022). However, not much research has been conducted assessing how students perceive the inclusive practices used in their classroom environments (Subban et al., 2022). Moreover, those studies that do exist on attention to diversity in bilingual programmes usually compare the perspectives of stakeholders (Barrios & Milla, 2020; Bauer-Marschallinger et al., 2023; Casas & Rascón, 2023; Nikula et al., 2023; Ramos, 2023; Pérez-Cañado, 2023; Siepmann et al., 2023). That is, they do not solely examine the views of students, which results in a less detailed analysis.

Similarly, although previous studies on attention to diversity in bilingual education have explored different European contexts like Austria, Finland or Germany (Bauer-Marschallinger et al., 2023; Nikula et al., 2023; Pérez-Cañado, 2023; Siepmann et al., 2023) and Spanish regions such as Andalucía, Murcia, Aragón, Madrid, Extremadura or Valencia (Barrios & Milla, 2020; Bolarín et al., 2019; Casas & Rascón, 2023; Pérez-Cañado, 2024; Ramos, 2023), there are many other issues that require further consideration. Firstly, as previously mentioned, the variety of bilingual education programmes existing in Spain makes it difficult to extrapolate findings from other learning contexts (Ruiz, 2021). Secondly, the studies that have been carried out tend to focus mainly on secondary education (Bauer-Marschallinger et al., 2023; Casas & Rascón, 2023; Gómez-Parra, 2020; Nikula et al., 2023; Pérez-Cañado, 2023; Siepmann et al., 2023), although some have been conducted on primary school students (Barrios & Milla, 2020; Pavón-Vázquez & Vinuesa, 2024; Ramos, 2023).

Additionally, in terms of data measurement, most studies have used original or adapted versions of the questionnaires developed by the European project Attention to Diversity in Bilingual Education (ADiBE), which is also addressed towards secondary education (Barrios & Milla, 2020; Bauer-Marschallinger et al., 2023; Casas & Rascón; Nikula et al., 2023; Ramos, 2023; Pérez-Cañado, 2023; Siepmann et al., 2023). On a similar vein, there are other instruments available such as the Perceptions of Inclusion Questionnaire (Venetz et al., 2015) that analyses how 4<sup>th</sup>- to 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students (Year 1 to

Year 6 in the UK) feel about school or the Inclusion Climate Scale (Schwab et al., 2018) which measures the perceptions of secondary students regarding “their sense of being included in mainstreamed classrooms” (p. 37). However, these instruments do not specifically assess how students perceive the teaching practices implemented in their classrooms or they are designed for secondary school students. Thus, the present study, as addressed later, uses the Student Perception of Inclusion in Bilingual Education (SPI-BE) scale, which aims to measure how students perceive inclusive teaching practices implemented in bilingual primary schools in Spain.

Lastly, most previous studies tend not to consider the effects of individual and/or school-related factors. There are two exceptions, though: Ramos (2023), who examines the effects of student gender and socioeconomic status and Schwab et al. (2018), who examine how individual and school-related variables (gender, grade level, SEN, and school type) influence how German secondary school students feel about inclusion in their classrooms. These authors determined that the most significant predictor was the participants’ educational level since students in lower school years perceived their environment to be more inclusive (Schwab et al., 2018).

Pérez-Cañado’s (2023) study, which serves as a comprehensive summary of the studies conducted by the ADiBE Project, compares the perspectives of teachers, students and parents on attention to diversity in CLIL programmes in secondary schools across Europe. The research was conducted using a questionnaire divided into five dimensions—*linguistic aspects, methodology, assessment, materials and resources*, and *collaboration*—and includes several interviews and focus groups. According to the results obtained, students consider, in general, that their teachers provide them with language support and have their linguistic knowledge in high regard. Their more negative views towards methodology and groupings highlight the lack of variety in the methods and strategies used, which hampers peer support and personalised attention. In addition, the students state they are not fully satisfied with the materials and resources used. For example, they feel their textbooks are not adapted to different ability levels. In terms of assessment, the students’ perspectives are rather negative, as they feel exams are not designed to be inclusive, providing extra time, grading criteria, and activities adapted to

different ability levels. They also highlight the lack of collaboration among teachers and the need for more multi-professional teams.

It is in this context that the project Bilingual Education and Attention to Diversity (EBYAD, for its acronym in Spanish) was launched, which aims, among other objectives, to evaluate the frequency of the use of inclusive practices in bilingual programmes in primary education from the perspective of the agents involved: teachers, students and families. It should be noted that EBYAD assumes that diversity in bilingual education should not only include students with SEN but also those with differing learning styles, levels of linguistic competence, levels of knowledge attainment, degrees of motivation, forms of engagement, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, among other characteristics.

Specifically, this study aims to analyse a key aspect of the EBYAD project: how students perceive the inclusive practices used by Primary teachers in the classroom. Similar research on attention to diversity in bilingual programmes records significant findings but also shows a primary focus on the perceptions of teachers or, in other words, an underestimation of students' views (Pérez-Cañado, 2022, 2023; Subban et al., 2022). Hence, the objectives have been formulated as follows:

- To describe and compare the frequency of various inclusive teaching practices used in bilingual programmes based on student opinion.
- To examine whether the perceived frequency of inclusive teaching practices varies according to different student sociodemographic and school characteristics.

## Method

### Participants

A total of 2,714 primary school students enrolled in bilingual education programmes (76.2% Bilingual Sections and 23.8% MEC-British Council) in the



Spanish monolingual region of Castile and Leon participated in the study. Gender distribution was almost equally balanced, with 50.5% of the sample being male and 49.5% female. The age of the students ranged from 8 to 13, with a mean age of 10.2 years ( $SD = .92$ ). They were either in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 6<sup>th</sup> grade (30.1%, 35%, and 34.9%, respectively) of primary education at state-run schools (82.3%) or semi-private schools (17.7%). SEN students represented 3.3%, a percentage comparable to the latest data available from the Spanish administration for 2022-2023 (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, 2024).

## Instruments

All participants completed a survey that first presented sociodemographic questions regarding gender (male vs. female), age, and grade (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 6<sup>th</sup>). Additional sociodemographic information, not included in the survey but considered for analyses, was gathered by the research team: special educational needs (yes vs. no), type of school (state-run vs. semi-private), and type of bilingual programme (MEC-British Council vs. Bilingual Section).

The survey then presented the SPI-BE scale comprising 16 items representing diverse teaching practices used to cater to diversity in CLIL contexts. This scale was designed *ad hoc* based on expert criteria and previously published literature regarding practices fostering student learning and participation in terms of inclusion as well as effective didactic strategies in bilingual programmes.

In terms of the psychometric properties of the SPI-BE scale, unrestricted factor analysis and Rasch modelling revealed the existence of an essentially unidimensional latent structure conformed by a general dimension compatible with two or more correlated dimensions. In a preliminary analysis, a first dimension called *Methodology and Resources* (9 items) is considered, which refers to the use of diverse resources and materials, the implementation of teamwork, and assessment strategies. A second dimension, *Support and Feedback* (7 items) is related to the provision of help, motivation, and feedback by the teacher. The statistics to assess the goodness-of-fit, the dimensionality of the competing factorial solutions, the construct replica-



bility, and the quality of the factor score estimates were adequate to justify the use of a total score and two subscale scores. In this sample, the SPI-BE scale provided measures with invariant properties across gender, year, type of school, and special educational needs.

Students were asked to respond how often their teachers of subjects taught in English used these teaching practices. Three response options were offered: never, sometimes, or always, and, for the analysis, these options were coded as 0, 1, and 2, respectively. A total score was obtained by averaging the scores for each item. Higher scores mean the students perceived the use of inclusive teaching practices to be more frequent.

## **Procedure**

Data collection took place during the 2022-2023 academic year. Prior permission was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of and the Department of Education of the Regional Government of Castile and Leon.

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling. The research team contacted via email and telephone every primary school in Castile and Leon with a bilingual programme to explain the purpose of the study to the corresponding management team. A total of 27 schools agreed to participate and provided access to their classrooms. The application of the survey was anonymous, paper-based, and taken in class during school hours, under the supervision of a member of the research team and/or the school, to address possible questions or difficulties and ensure that students had parental consent. Participation was voluntary and could be refused at any time. The estimated duration for completing the survey was 8-12 minutes. The teachers helped identify those students with special educational needs by discreetly marking their surveys.

## **Data analysis**

First, descriptive analyses were conducted on the perceived frequency of inclusive teaching practices, both overall (mean total score) and by item

and dimension, as well as on student characteristics. Repeated measures t-tests examined the presence of significant differences between the mean scores of the dimensions. Subsequently, Student's t-tests for independent samples and one-way ANOVAs were performed to check whether there were significant differences in the perceived frequency of inclusive teaching practices, both overall and by item and dimension, as a function of student characteristics. The final step was to perform two-way ANOVAs between groups to look for interactions between sociodemographic characteristics. Analyses were conducted using SPSS-28 and the level of significance was set at .01.

## Results

The SPI-BE total score averaged 1.36 ( $SD = .25$ ) and ranged from .19 to 2. Table I shows the percentage of students endorsing each of the three response options per item, as well as the mean item and dimension scores.

According to the repeated measures t-tests, there were significant differences between the mean scores obtained for the two dimensions of the scale [ $t_{(2713)} = -65.371, p < .001$ ]. On average, students perceived that inclusive practices related to support and feedback ( $M = 1.60, SD = .32$ ) were significantly more frequent than those related to methodology and resources ( $M = 1.17, SD = .29$ ).

**TABLE I.** Descriptives of the SPI-BE scores grouped by dimension

Description	Never (%)	Some-times (%)	Al-ways (%)	M (SD)
<i>Methodology and Resources</i>				1.17 (.29)
3. We work in groups or pairs and help each other [...]	6.1	58.7	35.2	1.29 (.57)
4. The teacher suggests different tasks so that everyone can partici- pate	28.1	55.2	16.7	.89 (.66)
8. The teacher uses different materials to help us understand them (e.g. images, videos, diagrams, songs, etc.)	7.1	44.1	48.8	1.42 (.62)
9. When we do tasks, the teacher gives materials to help us (e.g. pictures, texts, diagrams, dictionaries, cards, word lists, etc.)	16.9	53.2	29.9	1.13 (.67)
10. When we work in groups or pairs, we change partners	23.3	46.8	29.9	1.07 (.73)
11. The teacher uses ICT applications in the classroom (Kahoot, Plickers, ClassDojo, etc.)	26.3	48.0	25.7	.99 (.72)
13. When assessing, the teacher gives some students more time or they do different tasks	34.5	51.8	13.7	.79 (.66)
14. When assessing, the teacher asks about the topics that have been covered in the classroom	9.9	25.0	65.1	1.55 (.67)
15. The teacher asks us to do different activities to give us a grade (e.g., a presentation in English, an outline, a test)	6.9	46.7	46.4	1.40 (.61)
<i>Support and Feedback</i>				1.60 (.32)
1. The teacher encourages me to participate in class	3.5	54.4	42.1	1.39 (.55)
2. If I don't know how to do an activity, the teacher helps me (e.g., clarifying how to do it, giving me examples, giving me more time, translating words, etc.)	2.7	27.2	70.1	1.67 (.52)
5. The teacher helps us to speak in English, giving us useful words and phrases	3.8	27.9	68.3	1.65 (.55)
6. When I don't understand something, they explain it to me again using easier words in English	6.8	31.6	61.6	1.55 (.62)
7. When I don't know how to say something, the teacher helps me say it in English	4.1	27.1	68.8	1.65 (.56)
12. The teacher explains what we've done wrong [...] and how to do it right	3.8	27.0	69.2	1.65 (.55)
16. The teacher congratulates us when we do the tasks correctly	4.2	26.1	69.7	1.65 (.59)

Source: Compiled by the authors

According to the t-test and the ANOVA analyses (see Table 2), there

were significant differences in the overall frequency of the use of inclusive teaching practices perceived by the students (SPI-BE total score) according to all sociodemographic characteristics studied. Specifically, female students, students in lower years, students without SEN, and students attending semi-private schools perceived the use of inclusive teaching practices to be significantly more frequent than boys, students in higher years, students with SEN, and students attending state-run schools, respectively. These significant differences were also observed by dimensions, except for the variable of gender. In addition, the students attending state-run schools enrolled in a British Council programme perceived the practices to be more inclusive than those in a non-BC programme.

**TABLE II.** Descriptives (*M*, *SD*) of SPI-BE total and dimension scores by sociodemographic characteristics. T-test and ANOVA results

	n	Methodology and Resources	Support and Feedback	SPI-BE Total Score
<i>Gender</i>		$t_{(2712)} = 2.25$	$t_{(2712)} = 1.93$	$t_{(2712)} = 2.55^{**}$
Male	1371	1.16 (.30)	1.59 (.32)	1.35 (.26)
Female	1343	1.18 (.29)	1.61 (.32)	1.37 (.25)
<i>Primary School Year</i>		$F_{(2,2711)} = 7.53^{***}$	$F_{(2,2711)} = 6.08^{**}$	$F_{(2,2711)} = 9.76^{***}$
4 <sup>th</sup>	817	1.20 (.26)	1.62 (.31)	1.38 (.23)
5 <sup>th</sup>	950	1.17 (.31)	1.61 (.31)	1.36 (.26)
6 <sup>th</sup>	947	1.14 (.29)	1.57 (.34)	1.33 (.26)
<i>Special Educational Needs</i>		$t_{(2709)} = 3.40^{**}$	$t_{(2709)} = 3.24^{**}$	$t_{(2709)} = 4.00^{**}$
Yes	90	1.07 (.36)	1.49 (.40)	1.25 (.33)
No	2621	1.17 (.29)	1.61 (.32)	1.36 (.25)
<i>Type of School</i>		$t_{(2712)} = -6.31^{***}$	$t_{(2712)} = -5.43^{***}$	$t_{(2712)} = -7.13^{***}$
Public	2234	1.15 (.30)	1.59 (.33)	1.34 (.26)
Charter	480	1.25 (.26)	1.67 (.26)	1.43 (.21)
<i>Type of Bilingual Programme<sup>1</sup></i>		$t_{(2232)} = -4.73^{***}$	$t_{(2232)} = -1.18$	$t_{(2232)} = -3.71^{***}$
Bilingual Section	1589	1.13 (.30)	1.58 (.34)	1.33 (.27)
MEC-British Council	645	1.20 (.29)	1.60 (.31)	1.37 (.24)
<sup>1</sup> Note: participants from state-run schools ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$				

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table III in the Supplementary Material shows comparisons of the item scores according to sociodemographic characteristics. It is worth noting that 13 inclusive teaching practices were reported by students in semi-private schools vs. state-run schools to be significantly more frequent.

Finally, the two-way ANOVA analysis between groups showed some significant interactions between SEN students and the type of school [ $F(1,2707) = 8.47, p = .004, \eta^2p = .003$ ], as well as between year and type of bilingual programme [ $F(1,2228) = 6.29, p = .002, \eta^2p = .006$ ]. In both cases, however, the effect size did not reach the cut-off for a small effect, according to Cohen (1992).

## Discussion

In this study, significant differences were observed between the two dimensions of the SPI-BE scale. Students perceived that inclusive practices related to Support and Feedback were more frequently used than those related to Methodology and Resources. The overall more positive view of teachers' use of language support strategies (e.g., simpler explanations in English, translating into Spanish, etc.) to help students is consistent with reports from primary students in Valencia (Ramos, 2023) and secondary students in other Spanish monolingual communities (Casas & Rascón, 2023). Pérez-Cañado (2023) also reported that their sample of secondary school students across Europe believed their teachers in CLIL programmes provided them with linguistic support.

In contrast, students tend to have a less positive view of the frequency of inclusive practices related to methodology and resources, a result that is in line with previous findings (Casas & Rascón, 2023; Ramos, 2023). Also, in the work by Ramos (2023), the sample of primary students felt that the materials used did not cater to diversity by considering different learning abilities. This situation is even more pronounced in terms of assessment, as students considered that they were not offered the possibility of taking different versions of the same test. Similarly, secondary students in Pérez-Cañado (2023),

in addition to sharing a less positive view of methodology and groupings, reported dissatisfaction with materials and resources (e.g., they thought their textbooks did not cater to the diversity of ability levels) and assessment (e.g., they perceived a lack of different versions of tests according to ability level).

In relation to the influence of students' sociodemographic characteristics, a significant association with perceived inclusive teaching practices was observed. The association of perception and gender, although significant overall, was non-existent for each dimension and only observed for a few items (only 3 out of 16). Therefore, the non-significance of this association is in line with that reported by Ramos (2023) but is different from that observed by Schwab et al. (2018), who show that females perceive inclusion slightly more positively.

Concerning the relationship of primary school level (e.g., year) with perception, the fact that students in lower years perceive inclusive teaching practices to be more frequent in comparison with their older peers may be related to greater curricular pressure of the latter. This in turn may lead teachers to focus more on explaining content, leaving aside attention to diversity. In addition, students in higher years tend to be more aware of their own learning process, something that directly leads to a more critical view of the teaching system. This finding is consistent with the study by Schwab et al. (2018), who found that year was a significant negative predictor of students' sense of inclusion. This suggests that "as grade levels increase, the focus of teaching shifts more towards covering subject matter and the mechanics of completing the curricular content makes it difficult for teachers to include students with a range of diversities" (p. 37). This result is also in accordance with the significantly lower presence of SEN students observed in the later years of primary school (Durán-Martínez et al., 2020).

SEN students did not perceive that inclusive teaching practices were carried out as frequently as compared with non-SEN students. This may be because SEN students have more needs and/or difficulties and, therefore, are more sensitive to the presence and/or absence of support. In contrast, Schwab et al. (2018) did not report significant differences for students with and without SEN in different years and interpreted their results as a positive indicator of high-quality inclusive education catering to all students.

Among primary students in state-run schools, those enrolled in a BC programme perceived inclusive teaching practices to be more frequent than those students participating in a non-BC bilingual programme. This may be partly explained by the fact that the former is usually considered to be more demanding, where the use of English is more compulsory, there are more language assistants, and the students are provided with more scaffolding strategies and other learner-centred methods.

In terms of the type of school, primary school students attending semi-private schools rated most of the inclusive practices (13 out of 16) as being more common than their peers attending state-run schools. Two explanations may help to interpret these results. On the one hand, teachers at semi-private schools tend to be more explicit about their inclusive values and practices, as observed in the focus groups and interviews conducted within the EBYAD project. On the other hand, the profiles of students in semi-private versus state-run schools can be quite different. The vulnerable students (SEN, students with a lower level of linguistic competence, motivation, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, or different learning styles) tend to more frequently attend state-run schools (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, 2024). A more homogeneous group of pupils is likely to consider that the measures implemented by their teachers to cater to attention to diversity are suitable because they do not perceive that there are students who are clearly lagging behind the rest of the group.

## Conclusions

Today, teaching several languages from an early age as a response to an increasingly multilingual and multicultural society and including everyone in the learning process are two educational challenges that converge, particularly in primary school bilingual education. Thus, one measure to start to address this issue is to seek the opinions of the stakeholders involved. However, above all, obtaining the perspectives of the real protagonists, the students, is essential for discovering to what extent teaching practices are truly inclusive.



Firstly, this study aimed to explore how primary school students perceive the frequency of the use of inclusive teaching practices in their bilingual context. Based on the findings, it appears that, in general, primary school students consider inclusive teaching practices to be relatively frequent in the classroom.

Concerning *Support and Feedback*, the most frequent inclusive practices observed by the students involved teachers offering help to perform an activity by clarifying the task, providing examples, or translating words. This support was followed by other common practices such as teachers helping the student to communicate in English, providing feedback on how to improve, congratulating the students on their work, and providing easier explanations in English. Within this dimension, the practice that was observed the least was encouraging student participation in class. These results suggest that students perceive the effort made by their teachers to involve all students using the abovementioned support and feedback strategies. However, the findings also suggest that students perceive that teachers could better foster their participation, thus supporting the need for a more student-centred approach.

As to the dimension of *Methodology and Resources*, the three most frequent inclusive practices observed by students involved the teacher asking about topics covered in the lessons when assessing, using different materials (multimodality) to facilitate understanding, and asking students to do different activities as part of the assessment. In contrast, according to students, the least frequent classroom practices used by teachers were the use of ICT applications, using different tasks to foster the participation of all students, and providing some students with more time or different tests when assessing. As in the previous dimension, students perceive that teachers aim to engage all students through a multimodal approach and using different materials and activities. However, apart from a greater use of ICT, students lack more individualised attention during collaborative activities and assessment tests. In addition, high student/teacher ratios and resulting time constraints make it difficult for teachers to prepare communicative activities that are adapted to their specific context, and which facilitate the participation of all students (Nikula et al., 2023). Time constraints also have an impact on the ability to provide personalised assessment tests tailored to individual learner needs.

Secondly, this research examined whether the perceived frequency of inclusive teaching practices varied according to student sociodemographic characteristics and found that, overall, both individual and school-related factors were significantly associated with the inclusion perceived. In particular, female students, students in lower years, students without SEN, students in semi-private schools, and students in state-run schools with a BC programme perceived that inclusive practices occurred more frequently.

In conclusion, this analysis of the perspectives of primary students on inclusive teaching practices in their bilingual classes emphasises the need to improve, above all, the methodological strategies and resources that could favour attention to diversity. Also, the fact that primary students perceive individual support and feedback from their teachers to be more common than the use of personalised materials and tasks reinforces the need for additional work regarding both teacher training and the use of active methodologies (CLIL, collaborative learning, problem/project-based learning, flipped classroom, etc.) and on the design of open educational resources that provide teachers with a wide range of ready to go materials that cater for diversity in a bilingual classroom. This finding also provides evidence that there is still room for improvement in terms of a more personalised approach to education (Durán-Martínez & Martín-Pastor, 2023), particularly in the area of assessment. This would be greatly enhanced by the decisive support of the education authorities in aspects such as reducing student ratios, promoting coordination between teachers, implementing in-service training programmes, or organising inter-school workshops that allow teaching experiences in bilingual programmes to be shared.

This study also highlights the importance of considering the socio-demographic characteristics of students when addressing inclusion in bilingual programmes. Specifically, it seems necessary to pay preferential attention to students in higher years, students with SEN, students in state-run schools, and students in non-British Council bilingual programme since these are the students who perceive there is less attention to diversity on the part of their teachers.

Concerning the limitations of this study, the reader should bear in mind that only quantitative correlational findings are provided that do not allow for

causation to be inferred. In addition, the sample of students was recruited in a specific autonomous community and thus may not be representative of the Spanish population because of the different bilingual education regulations existing across regions, among other reasons. Therefore, mixed-method national studies are encouraged to enrich and deepen the understanding of students' perspectives. Future studies may apply the instrument in non-bilingual schools. If different results were observed, it would be evidenced that the factor "bilingual teaching" is relevant when examining the inclusive teaching practices developed in the classroom.

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## Annex

**TABLE III.** Descriptives (*M*, *SD*) of SPI-BE item scores, by sociodemographics. Significance of t-test and ANOVA

Item description	Gender		Primary School Year			SEN		Type of School		Type Bilingual Programme	
	Male	Female	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	No	Public	Charter	MEC-BC	Bilingual Section
<i>Methodology and Resources</i>											
3. We work in groups or pairs and help each other [...]	1.26 (.58)	1.32** (.56)	1.31 (.55)	1.28 (.57)	1.28 (.59)	1.11 (.63)	1.30** (.57)	1.31 (.57)	1.20*** (.57)	1.45 (.55)	1.25*** (.57)
4. The teacher suggests different tasks so that everyone participate	0.89 (.66)	0.88 (.66)	0.88 (.64)	0.90 (.67)	0.88 (.66)	0.94 (.71)	0.88 (.66)	0.86 (.65)	1.00*** (.68)	0.83 (.63)	0.87 (.66)
8. The teacher uses different materials to help us understand them	1.38 (.63)	1.45** (.61)	1.45 (.61)	1.39 (.62)	1.41 (.63)	1.24 (.68)	1.42** (.62)	1.40 (.63)	1.50*** (.57)	1.40 (.60)	1.40 (.64)
9. When we do tasks, the teacher gives materials to help us	1.10 (.67)	1.16 (.67)	1.16 (.66)	1.14 (.70)	1.10 (.65)	1.04 (.66)	1.13 (.67)	1.09 (.70)	1.34*** (.64)	1.13 (.64)	1.07 (.68)
10. When we work in groups or pairs, we change partners	1.04 (.73)	1.10 (.72)	1.06 (.69)	1.10 (.76)	1.03 (.72)	.84 (.75)	1.07** (.72)	1.06 (.73)	1.11 (.70)	1.33 (.69)	.95*** (.72)
11. The teacher uses ICT applications in the classroom	.99 (.71)	1.00 (.73)	1.11 (.74)	.99 (.70)	.90*** (.71)	.93 (.72)	1.00 (.72)	.97 (.73)	1.10*** (.65)	.98 (.71)	.97 (.74)
13. When assessing, the teacher gives some students more time or they take different tests	.80 (.67)	.79 (.66)	.82 (.66)	.76 (.67)	.80 (.66)	.83 (.62)	.79 (.66)	.77 (.67)	.88** (.63)	.60 (.62)	.84*** (.67)
14. When assessing, the teacher asks about the topics covered in the classroom	1.55 (.68)	1.55 (.66)	1.61 (.65)	1.55 (.67)	1.51** (.68)	1.38 (.74)	1.56* (.66)	1.53 (.67)	1.64*** (.63)	1.58 (.63)	1.52 (.69)
15. The teacher asks us to do different activities to give us a grade	1.39 (.62)	1.40 (.61)	1.38 (.60)	1.41 (.63)	1.39 (.61)	1.27 (.67)	1.40* (.61)	1.39 (.62)	1.44 (.56)	1.50 (.56)	1.34*** (.64)
<i>Support and Feedback</i>											
1. The teacher encourages me to participate in class	1.38 (.57)	1.39 (.54)	1.41 (.56)	1.36 (.56)	1.39 (.54)	1.28 (.64)	1.39 (.55)	1.37 (.56)	1.45** (.54)	1.40 (.53)	1.36 (.57)
2. If I don't know how to do an activity, the teacher helps me	1.64 (.55)	1.71*** (.49)	1.66 (.51)	1.68 (.53)	1.68 (.52)	1.59 (.58)	1.68 (.52)	1.66 (.53)	1.74*** (.46)	1.61 (.57)	1.68** (.51)
5. The teacher helps us to speak in English, giving us useful words and phrases	1.64 (.55)	1.65 (.55)	1.70 (.52)	1.66 (.53)	1.58*** (.59)	1.56 (.67)	1.65 (.55)	1.63 (.57)	1.73*** (.47)	1.63 (.55)	1.63 (.57)
6. When I don't understand something, they explain it to me again using easier words in English	1.54 (.62)	1.55 (.62)	1.54 (.64)	1.56 (.60)	1.54 (.62)	1.48 (.64)	1.55 (.62)	1.53 (.63)	1.64*** (.58)	1.55 (.61)	1.52 (.63)
7. When I don't know how to say something, the teacher helps me say it in English	1.62 (.57)	1.67 (.54)	1.64 (.55)	1.68 (.54)	1.61 (.58)	1.49 (.62)	1.65 (.55)	1.64 (.56)	1.68 (.53)	1.67 (.52)	1.63 (.58)
12. The teacher explains what we've done wrong [...] and how to do it right	1.66 (.56)	1.65 (.54)	1.68 (.53)	1.65 (.56)	1.64 (.56)	1.53 (.60)	1.66 (.55)	1.64 (.56)	1.73*** (.50)	1.66 (.52)	1.63 (.57)
16. The teacher congratulates us when we do the tasks correctly	1.64 (.57)	1.67 (.54)	1.74 (.49)	1.67 (.55)	1.57*** (.61)	1.53 (.69)	1.66 (.55)	1.63 (.57)	1.76*** (.47)	1.69 (.51)	1.61** (.59)

Source: Compiled by the authors