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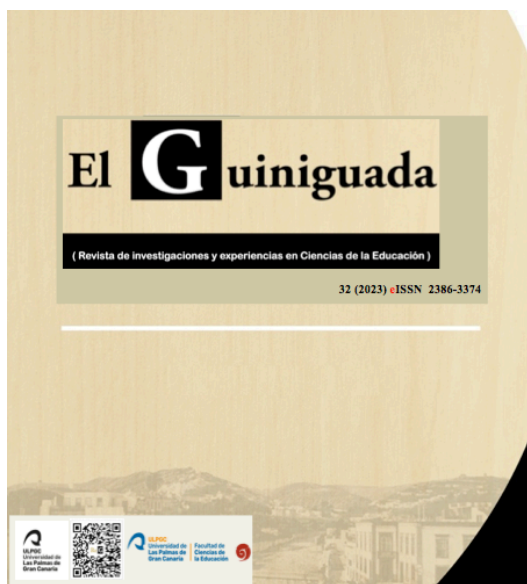
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Parents' opinion regarding the bilingual program in the Madrid region

La opinión de las familias sobre el programa bilingüe de la Comunidad de Madrid

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RESUMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es conocer la opinión y el nivel de satisfacción de las familias sobre el programa bilingüe de la Comunidad de Madrid. Para ello, en este estudio han participado 444 familias de estudiantes de educación primaria, que siguen enseñanzas bilingües (inglés-español) en cinco colegios públicos situados en Madrid. Los datos se han obtenido de manera anónima, mediante una encuesta que las familias han completado. Los principales resultados muestran que tanto las familias como sus hijos/as presentan un alto grado de satisfacción con el programa bilingüe, que el nivel de inglés de los alumnos mejora, que el docente, el alumno y las familias realizan un esfuerzo extra para que el programa funcione, que el nivel de inglés de los padres es crucial para poder ayudar a sus hijos/as y que el contenido de historia o ciencias naturales no se aprende al mismo nivel que en centros educativos monolingües.

PALABRAS CLAVE

OPINIÓN, FAMILIAS, PROGRAMA BILINGÜE, COMUNIDAD DE MADRID

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to understand the opinion and level of satisfaction of parents whose children participate in the bilingual program in the region of Madrid. Therefore, 444 families of primary school students, who follow bilingual programs (English/Spanish), in 5 public schools, located in Madrid, have participated in this study. The data has been collected in an anonymous way, through a survey which has been completed by the families. The main results reveal that: families and children are highly satisfied with the bilingual program, the students' English level improves, teachers, students and parents make an extra effort to make the bilingual program work, the English level of the parents is crucial to be able to help their children, and the content of History or Natural Sciences is not learned at the same level as in monolingual educational centers.

KEYWORDS

OPINION, FAMILIES, BILINGUAL PROGRAM, MADRID REGION

INTRODUCTION

One of the parents' main concerns when choosing a school for their children is whether or not the school has a bilingual program. This factor, in addition to the proximity of the home to the school and the school's reputation within the

community, are the most common reasons among parents for choosing a school (Murillo et al., 2020).

Bilingual education in Europe is developed with the CLIL (Content and Foreign Language Integrated Learning) approach founded by Mohan in 1986. This approach is very popular due to its positive results and functional implementation (Bolarín-Martínez et al., 2021, Nieto and Ruiz Cordero, 2018 and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2013). Therefore, many families consider that attending a bilingual school that follows this methodology offers many benefits. Among them can be highlighted the increase in the learning of the instructional language (Falcón and Lorenzo, 2015), the high motivation levels of students who follow this methodology (De Smet et al. 2018 and Geoghegan, 2018) and the fact that CLIL does not interfere with the learning or use of the mother tongue (Bolarín-Martínez et al., 2021 and Martín-Macho and Faya, 2020). However, although there are numerous studies in relation to the advantages of bilingual education, very few studies exist regarding the opinion of families whose children are immersed in this type of teaching. For this reason, this study has been carried out in order to better understand parental opinion and the degree of satisfaction regarding bilingual education in the region of Madrid. This study is structured as follows: first, the origin and distribution of bilingual programs in the Madrid region is shown; the methodology of the research work is presented below, detailing the selected schools, the familial educational and socioeconomic background of the parents that have participated and the survey that they have completed. In the third section of this work, the results obtained through the surveys are presented and analyzed. Finally, the conclusions reached in this research are indicated.

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION OF BILINGUAL PROGRAMS IN THE MADRID REGION

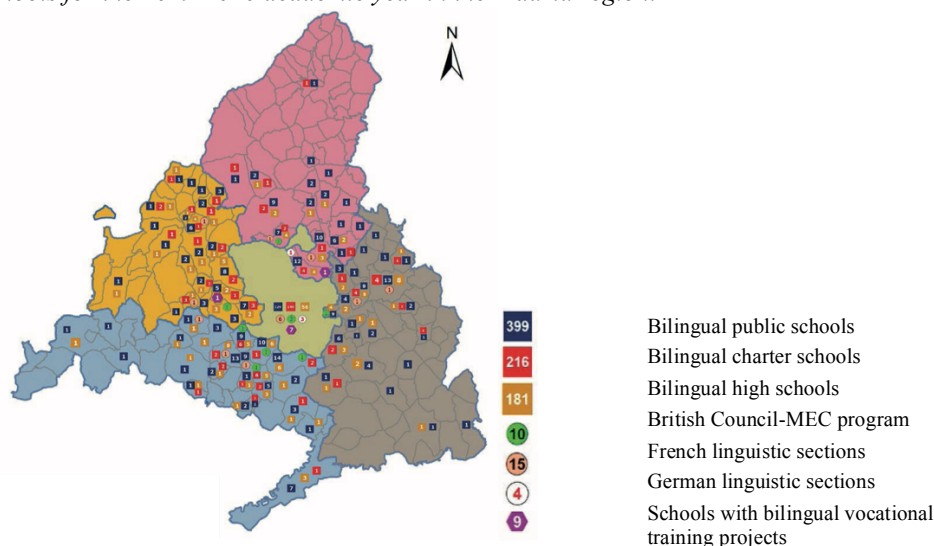
In 1996, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science and the British Council signed a collaboration agreement whose objective was to develop a bilingual program in Spanish public schools through an integrated Spanish-British curriculum. In the same year, the region of Madrid began a project called British Council-MEC, which developed ten bilingual programs in both primary and secondary education. Subsequently, in 2005, this figure rose considerably due to the implementation of regional language programs. Thus, in Madrid, 26 language programs called "Bilingual Program of the Community of Madrid" were created. From 2005 to the present, there has been a progressive increase in the number of bilingual programs incorporated in primary and secondary education. Within the academic year 2019/2020, the year in which this study was carried out, there has been a total of 796 bilingual schools: 399 public schools, 216 charter schools, 181 high-schools and 9 public schools for vocational training cycles. All of them are supported by public funds, with an implementation that reaches 50% of public schools, 59.2% of high-schools and 54.7% of charter schools. Likewise, the Bilingual Program extended to the second cycle of infant education throughout 99 infant and primary education schools.

Regarding the foreign language used in the bilingual programs, the one that predominates the rest of the languages is English. Of the 796 bilingual programs that are being developed, 580 primary education programs are in English. However, in secondary education, in addition to the 197 English programs, 15 French and 4 German bilingual programs are being carried out. Therefore, we can conclude that the principal language of choice is English.

The bilingual programs in the Madrid region are distributed into five zones known as Territorial Area Directions or TAD's. As we can see in Figure 1, the distribution of the 796 bilingual primary education centers in the different TAD's is very uneven. The area where we find the largest number of bilingual programs is the TAD located in the center of Madrid, which corresponds to the municipality of Madrid with all its districts. It is followed by the TAD located in the south of the region. A smaller number of bilingual programs can be seen in the other three TAD's located in the north, west and east of the Madrid region. At the municipal level, it is worth mentioning that Madrid, Alcalá de Henares, Getafe and Mostoles are the municipalities of the Madrid region with the largest number of bilingual public schools and the municipalities that contain the highest populations.

Figure 1

Distribution of bilingual schools for the 2019-2020 academic year in the Madrid region.



Source: General Directorate of Bilingualism and Quality of Teaching.

METHODOLOGY

After describing the origin and distribution of bilingual programs in the Madrid region, some methodological aspects of interest will be discussed. First, how the schools from which the students whose families participated in the study were selected will be explained. Secondly, the background information of the families who participated in this study will be shown. Next, the survey completed by the parents of students in the 6th grade of Primary Education in schools where bilingual education is provided through the CLIL approach will be described. In turn, with the information provided by the analysis of the results of the surveys, the opinion and degree of satisfaction of the families regarding the bilingual education carried out in the Madrid region will be revealed.

Schools

In order to select the schools that were to participate in this study, the management team of eight public pre-schools and primary schools in the region of Madrid that have a bilingual project with at least four years of experience in this teaching

approach were contacted. All of them agreed to participate in this research project and, for this purpose, a survey was provided to the parents of students in the 6th grade. Subsequently, within a week, the families had completed the survey, and the students had turned it in. Although, in the end, it was only possible to collect data from five schools due to COVID-19 restrictions, in March 2020. It is, therefore, an incidental sample in which the families of five public schools of Pre-school and Primary Education, with at least four years of bilingual experience, who use the CLIL approach, decided to collaborate on this study.

Families

444 families of students in the 6th grade of primary education who are studying bilingual education through the CLIL approach in public schools located in the Madrid region have participated in this study. Among the participants were 129 fathers and 315 mothers. The cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of the participants were similar and considered medium-high, as will be detailed later when examining the results of the first question asked in the survey. It is worth mentioning that all the families showed great interest in completing the survey provided to them and were eager to share their opinion on the type of bilingual education provided at their children's school.

Survey carried out by the families

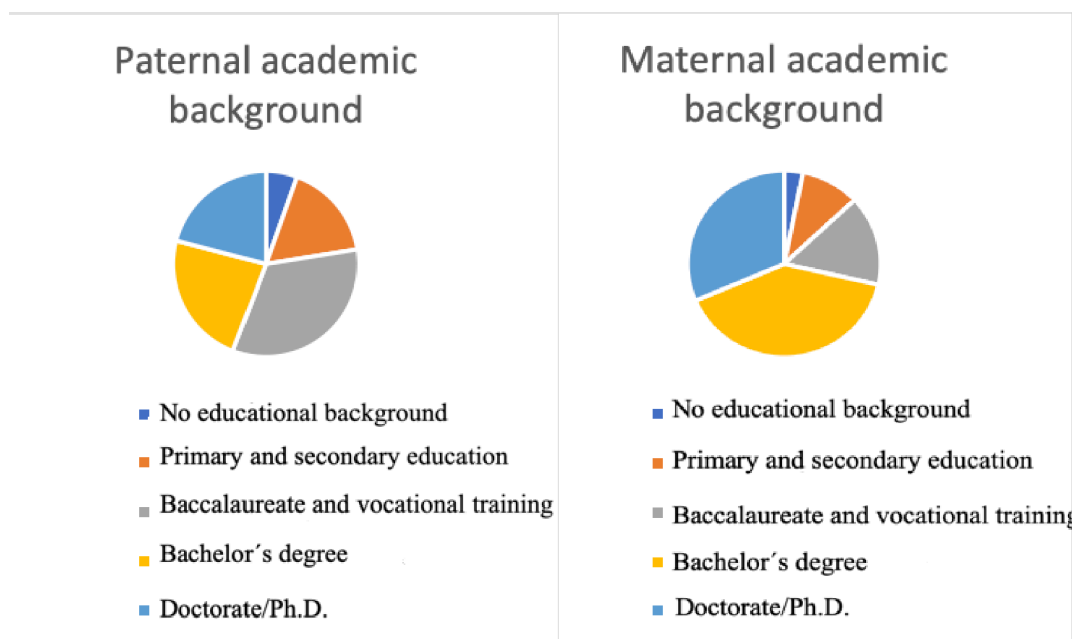
The survey, included in the appendix (Annex I), has been prepared by a group of expert professors from different areas of knowledge at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, to ensure that the questions were well oriented towards the purpose of our research. The survey is divided into three parts. In the first part, there is a question about the academic level of the parents who have carried out the survey. In the second part, there are 13 statements given regarding the parental opinion of the bilingual education taught at their child's school and parents had to select whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement. In the third part of the survey, there is a section in which the respondent can freely comment on successful or improvable aspects of the bilingual program. It should be noted that the management teams of the schools have conveyed a high degree of interest, on behalf of the parents, when completing this survey, as parents were able to present their point of view regarding the educational program their children follow.

RESULTS Y DISCUSSION

Once the responses to the 444 surveys have been compiled, the anonymously obtained results will be analyzed by examining each of the proposed questions individually.

The first part of the survey inquires about the academic level of the families (Figure 2). Of the 129 participating fathers, it was verified that 94.57% had completed basic academic formation and, of these, 44.18% have a bachelor's degree. As for the 315 mothers, 96.82% of those surveyed indicated having some sort of academic background (primary or secondary studies) and, of these, 71.42% have a bachelor's degree. It is noteworthy to mention that the percentage of people without any educational background is very low, with 5.42% in fathers and 3.17% in mothers. These figures conclude that the academic level of the families that take their children to public educational centers in the capital of Madrid is medium-high.

Figure 2
Academic level of the parents.



Source: my own.

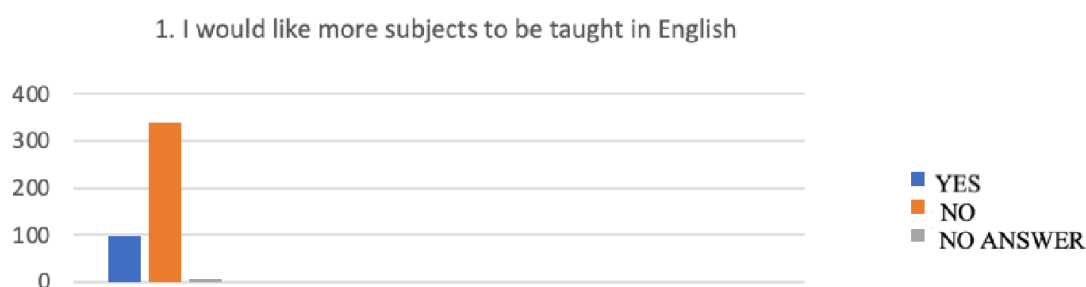
The high educational level of the families surveyed, as Cordero et al. (2013) indicate after having analyzed the PISA reports, is a crucial factor in the academic development of students. As has been demonstrated over the years (Mehan, 1991; Pérez Serrano, 1981 and Ruiz de Miguel, 2009), the higher the educational level of the families, the greater the involvement in their children's education, resulting in a higher academic performance by the students. In this regard, Coleman et al. (1966) proved that the sociocultural and economic status of families was a strong indicator of the academic development of the students, stating that the student's educational and socioeconomical circumstances within the home environment is more important than what happens in the classroom. Regarding the area of English, contradictory information has been found. On the one hand, the Madrid study (2010) concludes that the social context of the students is not related to their performance in English. However, on the other hand, and more recently, other research carried out concerning the bilingual home-school relationship postulates that if there is no educational background within the family, the level of primary studies is affected, including the learning of subjects in English (Brindusa et al., 2013). With this information, this study aims to verify if, in the Madrid region, the family academic level is relevant, or not, to the bilingual education of the students.

In the second part of the survey, 13 questions have been formulated (Annex I) through which the opinion of families about the bilingual education that their children receive in five public schools in Madrid will be explored.

The first question asks whether families would like more subjects to be taught in English than are currently taught. After analyzing the responses (Figure 3), it was found that 1.5% of those surveyed did not answer and that 22% supported this idea compared to 76% who did not want more subjects to be taught in a foreign language. This high percentage may be attributed to the fact that many students attend private

English classes outside school hours, as will be analyzed later, and for this reason, parents believe that their children are already sufficiently exposed to English (Ruiz Cordero, 2021, p.171). Likewise, as the research by Chaieberras and Rascón-Moreno (2018, p.157) indicates, as students see that they progress in the subjects taught in English, through the CLIL approach, they stop giving importance to linguistic aspects of English, and this is the feeling students share with their parents.

Figure 3
Question 1



Source: my own.

In the second and third questions, families were asked to consider whether more English is learned with the bilingual program and if they believe that the English language level of their children is increasing. As seen in figure 4, 90.31% of those surveyed believe that with bilingual education more English is learned because that is what their children express to them. However, a slightly lower percentage of families think that their children's language level is improving remarkably, reaching 82.88% (Figure 4). Both results, in which a high degree of satisfaction is appreciated, on the part of the families, with the increase in the linguistic level in English, coincide with several investigations carried out in this same region (Chaieberras, 2019 and Murillo et al., 2020). Additionally, there are other monolingual regions, such as Andalucía (Lancaster, 2016 and Ráez-Padilla, 2018) and the region of Murcia (Hernández et al., 2018), where similar studies have been carried out, with families of students enrolled in bilingual programs in primary and secondary education, and the conclusions reached coincide with the ones in this study.

Figure 4
Question 2



Source: my own.

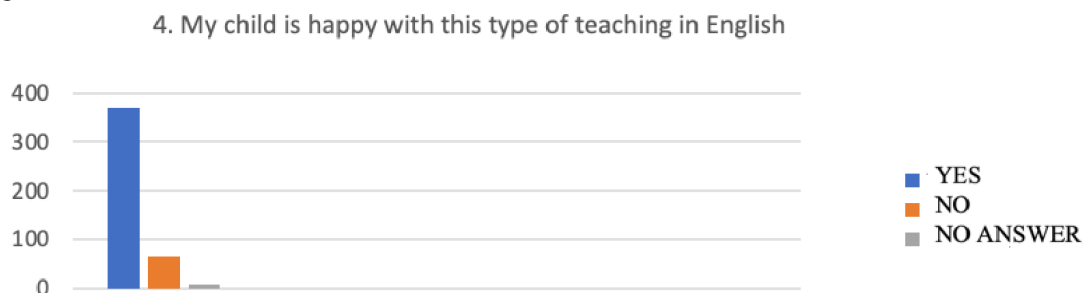
Figure 5
Question 3



Source: my own.

In the fourth question, regarding the level of satisfaction of the students with this type of teaching (Figure 6), it was verified that 83.33% of the families consider that their children are happy with the bilingual program that is taught in their school. This shows how students express to their families their satisfaction and motivation towards the bilingual program, as has been shown in previous research (Cabezas Cabello, 2010; Doiz et al. 2014; Geoghegan, 2018; Lancaster, 2016; Lasagabaster, 2011; Lorenzo et al. 2009 and Pérez Vidal, 2013). Moreover, the increase in the possibility to communicate with a greater number of people (Esparza and Belmonte, 2020), in addition to the future economic benefits that the student will be able to acquire by mastering a greater number of languages (Baker et al. 2017), are added aspects that students are believed to take into account and which help increase their degree of satisfaction with the bilingual program.

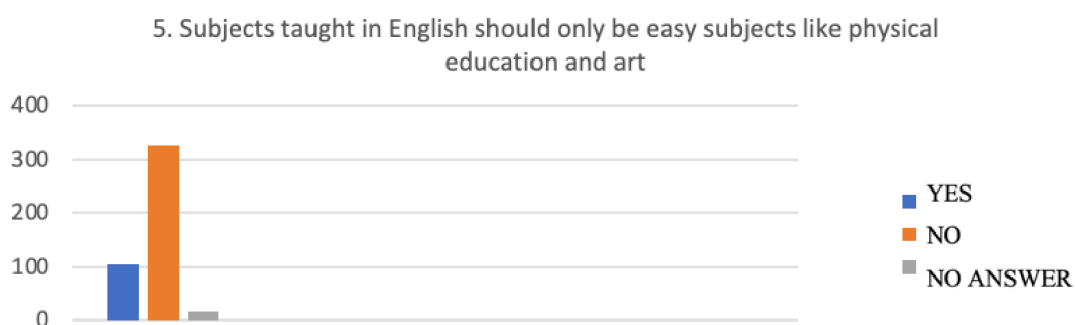
Figure 6
Question 4



Source: my own.

Analyzing the answers to question 5, about whether only the easiest subjects should be taught in English, it was verified, as seen in Figure 7, that 73.42% of those surveyed do not agree with this statement. The data indicates that most families would not want the easiest subjects taught in English. These results show that students convey to their families that they do not encounter great difficulties in science or history subjects taught in English and, in turn, confirms, as Dale and Tanner (2012) point out, that students are highly motivated by the attractiveness of learning content in a foreign language and the challenge and satisfaction that this entails. However, like Esparza and Belmonte (2020), the amount of knowledge that is acquired by studying a specific area in another language is somewhat uncertain and, therefore, answers to questions 6 and 7, which relate directly to this uncertainty, will be analyzed.

Figure 7
Question 5



Source: my own.

In question 6, regarding the reduction in the amount of content learned in English, in subjects other than the English language (Figure 8), the results indicate that 57% of families agree with this statement, considering that less content is learned, and 40% disagree, supporting the belief that the content is not reduced. If we compare this data with the data in the following question (number 7), about the academic level obtained in the bilingual program, Figure 9 shows that 67% of those surveyed believe that the level of content acquired is lower than in the non-bilingual program, because it is

taught in another language, compared to 26%, who state that it does not affect the academic level of their children. In this regard, the information found supports and contradicts these results.

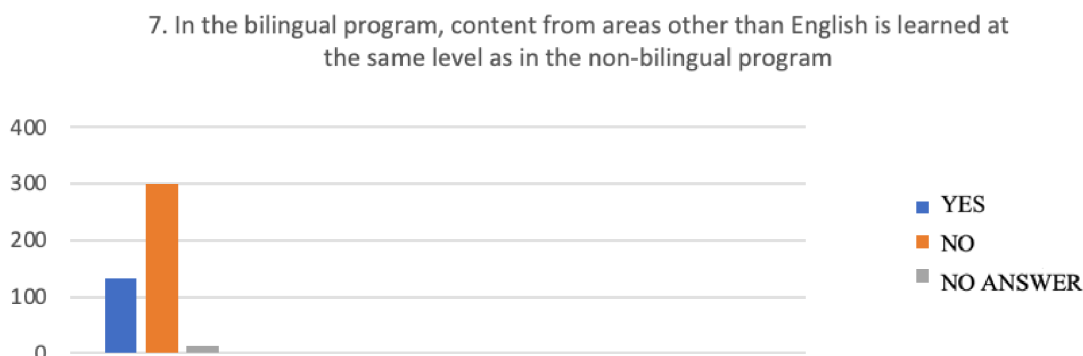
On the one hand, there are many studies that confirm that there is a negative effect on the knowledge of subjects taught in English, making it difficult to understand the contents (Alonso Somarriba, 2012 and Carro et al., 2016). Some authors question those students who recognize the skeletal system in English and not its equivalence in Spanish (Sanmartín 2013) and others, such as Dalton-Puffer (2007), Fernández-Sanjurjo et al. (2017), Hajer (2000), Nyholm (2002), Ruiz (2016), Ródenas (2016), Sotoca and Muñoz (2015) and Washburn (1997), support the information that families have provided through this survey (Annex I), which states that better results are obtained in students who are not enrolled in bilingual schools. On the other hand, and more recently, Chaieberras (2019) research carried out in the Madrid region with 77 families, states that the content taught in English improves. Along these lines, we find the study by Hernández et al. (2018), carried out with 150 families from Murcia, who perceive good academic performance and no delay in the acquisition of content in bilingual centers. Furthermore, in Andalucía and Madrid, Barrios (2018) confirmed the same test scores in content in students belonging to bilingual and non-bilingual schools in primary education.

Figure 8
Question 6



Source: my own.

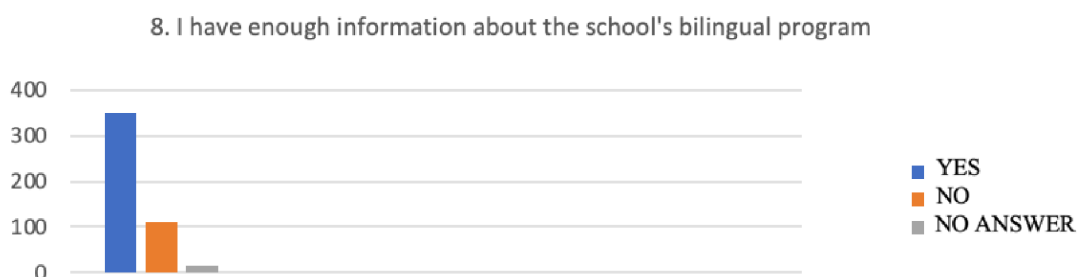
Figure 9
Question number 7



Source: my own.

Question 8, concerning whether or not parents receive enough information about the bilingual program, as seen in Figure 10, shows us that the majority of respondents (78,37%) indicate that they are informed enough, while 18,24% disagree and 3,37% did not answer the question. This data is highly significant because the more knowledge families have about the program, the greater their degree of involvement and participation will be, which, in turn, positively attributes to the academic success of students (Hosseinpour et al., 2015).

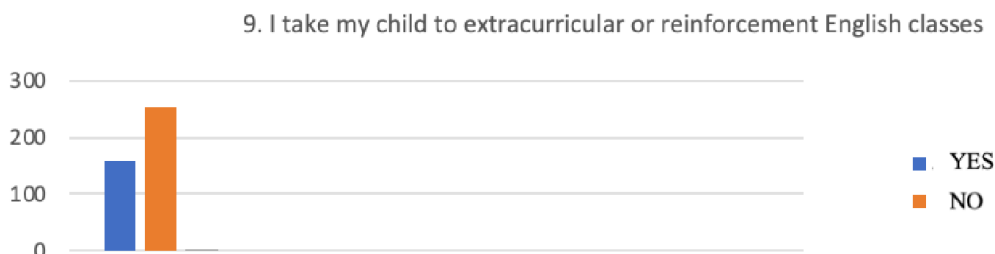
Figure 10
Question 8



Source: my own.

Question 9 reveals that more than half of the students do not attend extracurricular or reinforcement classes (Figure 11). This information may indicate, on the one hand, that their children do not present the need to reinforce the knowledge they acquire in the classroom, contrary to other research in which this type of activity is in high demand (Murillo et al., 2021 and Ruiz Cordero, 2021). On the other hand, there are many families who affirm that they invest a lot of time and effort helping their children with the school tasks that they have to do in English. For this reason, the families' knowledge of English is crucial.

Figure 11
Question 9

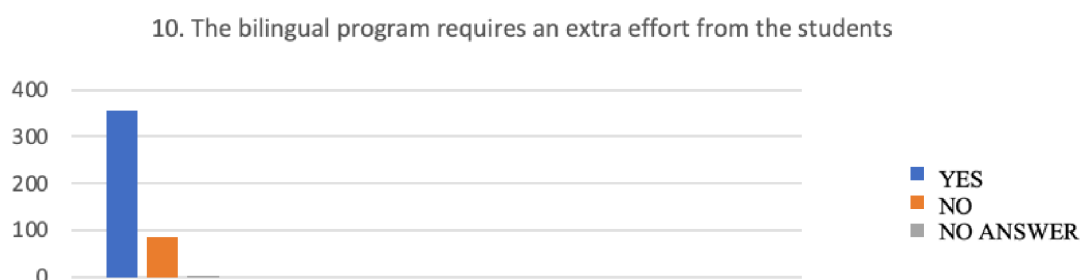


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Questions 9 and 10 refer to the extra effort that the bilingual program demands from students and teachers, respectively. In both cases, as can be seen in Figures 12 and 13, most families indicate that this program requires more effort from the students, given

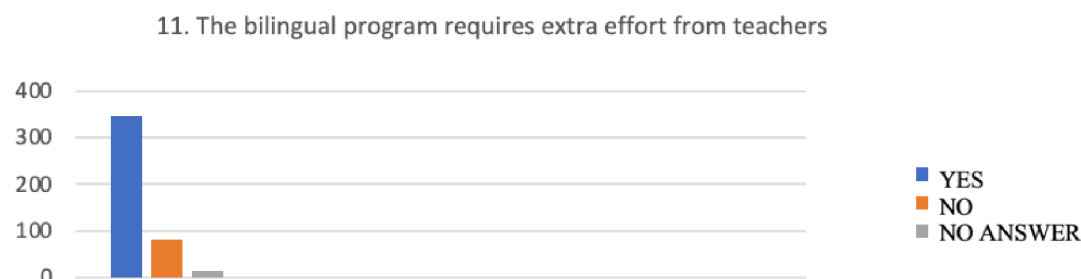
the fact that integrating the content and acquisition of a foreign language requires the students to make a double cognitive effort, making them be more active during the learning process (Bialystok, 2004; Berger, 2016; Chaieberras, 2019; Halbach, 2009; Nieto, 2016; Van de Craen et al. 2007, 2005), and requires additional effort from the teachers, who constantly demand further training (Esparza and Belmonte, 2020 and Milla and Casas, 2018).

Figure 12
Question 10



Source: my own.

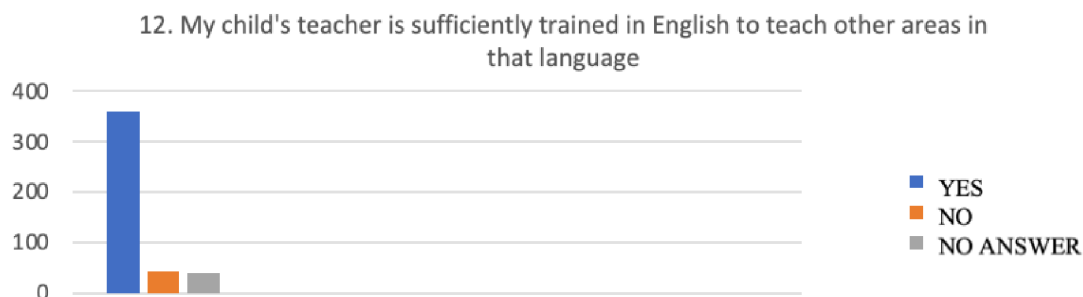
Figure 13
Question 11



Source: my own.

In question 12, regarding teacher training in English, most families, as shown in Figure 14, consider that teachers are sufficiently trained in English (it should be noted that in the Madrid region it is compulsory for all teachers of the bilingual program to have a certified C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference, in English). This opinion coincides with the families from Andalucía (Raez-Padilla, 2018) and students from the Canary Islands (Louise Oxbrow, 2018), who highly value the linguistic and sociocultural level of their teachers, although, as seen and stated previously, teachers continue to request and believe that they need additional teacher training.

Figure 14
Question 12



Source: my own.

In the last question of the interview, it was asked whether the families felt satisfied with the bilingual program. Figure 15 reveals that the majority (76.12%) are satisfied, compared to 19.14%, who are not, and 4.72%, who do not answer. This high percentage of satisfied families may be due to the fact that all of them verify that, as a result of the bilingual program, their children have improved their English level, feel more self-confident and have more confidence and motivation regarding the English language (Lancaster, 2016 and Ráez-Padilla, 2018). Likewise, it is important to mention that the higher the family's level of proficiency in the foreign language is, the higher the level of satisfaction is demonstrated by the parents of the students (Hernández et al., 2018).

Figure 15
Question 13



Source: my own.

To conclude the analysis of the survey, the comments that the families have freely written in the third part of the survey will be discussed. Among them, it should be noted that 28 people have pointed out the extra effort that parents of students who follow bilingual education must make when it comes to helping their children do their schoolwork in English. This idea cannot be generalized since, depending on the school, additional or less involvement from the families is required to carry out homework. However, it is evident that families who participate in a bilingual

education program must put forth additional effort. Additionally, it may generate or increase confusion and insecurity if the English language is not mastered or known by the parents (López Peinado, 2018). Moreover, it was found that 23 families indicate that they are concerned their children do not learn the content, which is taught in English, in Spanish (their mother tongue), and are therefore, unable to express the content in their own native language; a topic which has already been discussed when previously analyzing the responses to question 6. The rest of the comments (13 about the high level of English that the students acquire and 12 regarding the satisfaction with the teacher's English level) have already been dealt with previously in the analysis of the survey questions.

CONCLUSION

After having analyzed the answers provided by the 444 families of students in the 6th grade of primary education, who are studying bilingual education in public schools located in the capital city of the Madrid region, several conclusions have been reached.

In the first place, it has been verified that the academic level of the families is medium-high which results in a higher performance on the part of the students (Brindusa et al., 2013), whose qualifications, in English, have increased notably, due to bilingual programs, as indicated by 90.31% of those surveyed. Regarding their opinion about teaching more subjects in English, only 22% support this statement. In this way, families from Madrid, like those from Castilla- La Mancha (Ruiz Cordero, 2021), agree that they are already sufficiently exposed to the English language and do not need to take additional subjects in a foreign language. Furthermore, it has been revealed that students convey to their families that they do not encounter difficulties in science or history subjects that are taught in English.

Secondly, regarding the perception that families have about the amount of history and natural sciences content that is taught in a foreign language, it is observed that half of the fathers and mothers believe that less history and natural sciences content is learned than in non-bilingual schools, while the other half of those surveyed believe that the same amount of content is learned. This answer leads to the conclusion that, although half of the families perceive that the contents are simplified, the majority (67%) are aware that the academic level of their children is lower than the academic level of the students who follow non-bilingual programs. Nevertheless, many families (76.12%) show that they are satisfied with the bilingual program. With this data, it is clear that the high level of English that students acquire, alongside the benefits that this entails and the satisfaction, interest and motivation with which students approach the bilingual program, are elements that compensate for this loss of content.

Thirdly, it is noteworthy to point out that the number of students who attend extracurricular or reinforcement classes is small, hence it can be deduced that the training they receive at their school is sufficient. Regarding teaching professionalism, it has been found that families highly value the academic preparation and the linguistic and sociocultural level of their teachers, although, as has been shown, teachers request a lot of teacher training.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the additional effort made on behalf of the students, teachers and families in the bilingual program, whose involvement in

bilingual programs, as Tabatadze (2015) indicates, is a very effective mechanism to ensure the effectiveness and quality of their education.

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Annex I

SURVEY COMPLETED BY THE PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

At the University of Castilla-La Mancha we are carrying out a study for a research project and we would like your help to complete this survey. This is an anonymous and voluntary survey that serves to measure the opinion of mothers and fathers of students (their children) who attend educational centers with bilingual education. Your children should turn it in to their English teacher as soon as possible. Thank you so much.

PART I: Please mark with an X the answer with which you most agree.

PATERNAL ACADEMIC BACKGROUND	No educational background	Primary and Secondary Education	Baccalaureate and Professional Training.	Bachelor's Degree	Doctorate/Ph.D.
MATERNAL ACADEMIC BACKGROUND	No educational background	Primary and Secondary Education	Baccalaureate and Professional Training.	Bachelor's Degree	Doctorate/Ph.D.

PART II:

	QUESTION	YES	NO
1	I would like them to teach more subjects in English.		
2	A greater amount of English is learned in the bilingual program.		
3	My child's English language level is increasing remarkably.		
4	My child is happy with this type of teaching in English.		
5	Subjects learned in English should only be easy subjects, such as physical education and art.		
6	With the bilingual program, less content knowledge is learned in areas other than English.		
7	In the bilingual program, content from areas other than English is learned at the same level as in the non-bilingual program.		
8	I have enough information about the bilingual program.		
9	I take my child to extracurricular or reinforcement English classes.		
10	The bilingual program demands extra effort from the students.		
11	The bilingual program requires extra effort from teachers.		
12	My child's teacher is sufficiently trained in English to teach other areas in that language.		
13	I am satisfied with the bilingual program that is taught at my child's school.		

PART III:
 COMMENTS