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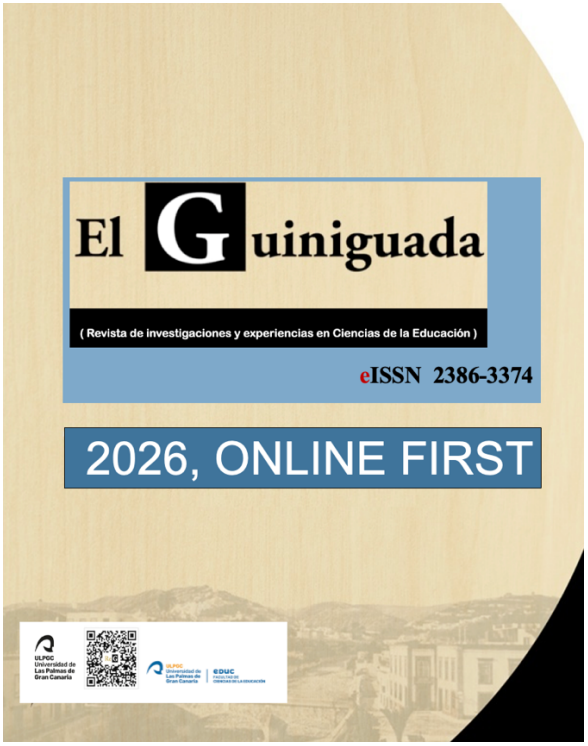

Disparities in Bilingual/Plurilingual Education: Teacher Perspectives across Andalusian Rural and Urban Schools

Disparidades en la educación bilingüe/multilingüe: Perspectivas del profesorado de centros rurales y urbanos de Andalucía

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ABSTRACT

This study explores teachers' perceptions of bilingual/plurilingual education in Andalusia (Spain), paying particular attention to the differences between schools located in urban settings and rural areas. An exploratory quantitative design was followed collecting data from a survey that was distributed to different schools. The analysis of the survey revealed some statistically significant differences regarding having previously worked in rural bilingual/plurilingual school, the type of center where they work and their professional experience. Overall, the findings show generally positive attitudes toward bilingual/plurilingual education while highlighting contextual disparities between rural and urban schools, particularly in relation to resources, training, and classroom heterogeneity.

KEYWORDS

CLIL, RURAL EDUCATION, BILINGUAL/PLURILINGUAL EDUCATION, TEACHER TRAINING, TEACHERS' PERCEPTION

RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza las percepciones docentes sobre la educación bilingüe/multilingüe en Andalucía (España), prestando especial atención a las diferencias entre los centros escolares ubicados en entornos urbanos y rurales. Se sigue un diseño cuantitativo exploratorio, recopilando datos a partir de una encuesta distribuía entre diferentes centros escolares. El análisis revela algunas diferencias estadísticamente significativas en cuanto a haber trabajado en un centro bilingüe/multilingüe rural, el tipo de centro en el que trabajan los docentes participantes y su experiencia profesional. En general, los resultados muestran actitudes generalmente positivas hacia la educación bilingüe/multilingüe, al tiempo que ponen de relieve las disparidades contextuales entre las escuelas rurales y las urbanas, en particular en lo que se refiere a los recursos, la formación y la heterogeneidad de las aulas.

PALABRAS CLAVE

AICLE, EDUCACIÓN RURAL, EDUCACIÓN BILINGÜE/MULTILINGÜE, FORMACIÓN DOCENTE, PERCEPCIONES DOCENTES

INTRODUCTION

Spain is a multilingual state with five co-official languages (i.e., Aranese, Basque, Catalan, Galician and Valencian), and several bilingual regions (i.e., Balearic Islands, Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, Navarre, and the Valencian Community). This reality has favored the introduction of bilingual–later plurilingual in some regions– programs, in which a foreign language such as English, French or German is integrated in addition to the co-official language(s) (Gutiérrez & del Campo, 2013). The origin of these programs dates to 1996, with the agreement between the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science and the British Council to implement an integrated curriculum in schools in Madrid, which allowed up to 40% of the curriculum to be taught in English (Dobson et al., 2011). More recently, the LOMCE educational law (BOE, 2013) promoted learning a foreign language as part of the curriculum, with the aim of promoting bilingual/plurilingual education at the national level, although decisions on its implementation were left to the autonomous regions, as established by previous educational laws, such as LOE (BOE, 2006). Currently, LOMLOE (BOE, 2020), which replaced LOMCE, maintains the interest in promoting foreign language learning and reinforces a competence-based approach of the curriculum, although without introducing significant changes to bilingual/plurilingual programs, whose management still remains under the responsibility of the autonomous regions (BOE, 2020).

Among the different Spanish regions, Andalusia is worth mentioning, as it implemented its own plurilingual plan, independent from that in agreement with the British Council, since the early 2000s (Palacios-Hidalgo et al., 2022b). Since then, the development of the Plurilingualism Promotion Plan (Junta de Andalucía, 2005) and later the Strategic Plan for the Development of Languages in Andalusia (Junta de Andalucía, 2017) have reflected the commitment of Andalusian schools to promoting foreign language learning in an increasingly globalized context.

The implementation of bilingual/plurilingual education in Andalusian classrooms has brought a variety of advantages, such as the learning of foreign languages and cultures, greater opportunities, and improved employability (Arnaiz et al., 2022; Gaish et al., 2017; Gómez-Parra, 2021; Palacios-Hidalgo et al., 2022a, 2022b; Yang, 2017). Such implementation in Andalusian schools is developed through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), the most widespread approach to bilingual/plurilingual education in Europe (Eurydice, 2006; Hurajová, 2015; Lopriore, 2020). CLIL allows students to learn non-linguistic content and a foreign language simultaneously (Junta de Andalucía, 2017; Mehisto et al., 2008). Indeed, Coyle et al. (2010) highlight that both content and language are equally important in this approach, which is associated with advantages such as the development of critical thinking (Huitt, 2011), the increase of knowledge of other cultures (Carrió-Pastor, 2009; Coyle, 2009; Griva et al., 2014), the reduction of inequalities between rural and urban schools (Alejo & Piquer-Píriz, 2016; Pavón Vázquez, 2018) and the participation in European initiatives such as Erasmus+ or eTwinning (Fernández & Halbach, 2011; Pavón Vázquez & Rubio, 2010).

However, several studies highlight certain limitations as the shortage of resources and specific teacher training (Lova et al., 2013), the limited connection between the foreign language and the students' real environment (Barrios & Milla, 2020), and the lack of networks for sharing best practices in rural environments (Villegas-Troya, 2023a). In this sense, teachers play a key role, as they face the challenge of adapting content to the

linguistic level of their students, applying specific methodologies, and coordinating with other teachers (Ball, 2018; Morton, 2013; Pavón Vázquez & Rubio, 2010; Villabona & Cenoz, 2022). Furthermore, their perception of bilingual/plurilingual education can directly influence how they implement it in the classroom (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009).

Another aspect requiring consideration is the difference between schools in rural areas and schools in urban settings. Rural schools tend to have fewer resources and less specialized teaching staff, and their students find difficulties in accessing higher education or participating in European projects (Du Plessis, 2024; Shikalepo, 2020; Villegas-Troya et al., 2023b). However, some advantages have also been identified, such as a closer environment and more personalized attention (Vanbuel, 2022; Villegas-Troya et al., 2023a; Volmer, 2023). In this same line, Santamaría-Cárdaba and Gallego (2020) state that rural schools are underestimated, even though they represent hope for many students and serve as a link between communities, children, and families. These authors argue that if conditions in these schools were improved without requiring them to meet the same standards as urban schools, they could become high-quality educational centers and overcome the barriers they face.

Nevertheless, research on bilingual/plurilingual education in rural settings remains very scarce, reflecting a worrisome trend: rural areas are often overlooked by academia in favor of urban ones (Azorín & Ainscow, 2020; Santamaría-Cárdaba & Gallego, 2020). Moreover, despite the broad implementation of bilingual/plurilingual programs in Spain, and the plethora of research on their linguistic and academic outcomes, there are still few studies that focus on the perceptions of teachers (Llinares & Morton, 2017; Pérez-Cañado, 2012) with regards to the implementation of these programs in urban areas vs. rural settings. Likewise, differences between urban and rural schools in relation to bilingual/plurilingual education have received limited attention in academic research, despite the inequalities identified in terms of resources, training and access to European programs (Duque Salazar et al., 2024; Villegas-Troya et al., 2023a, 2023b). Therefore, this research gap requires a specific analysis of the case of Andalusia, where bilingual/plurilingual education plans have been strongly implemented since 2005 and continue to shape the Andalusian teaching practice today. This situation raises an important question: how do teachers experience these differences and to what extent do they affect the way they perceive and implement bilingual/plurilingual education?

METHODS

Research design

As aforementioned, CLIL improves students' linguistic and intercultural competence while learning at the same time linguistic and non-linguistic content, enhances students' motivation to learn and fosters greater participation and engagement in class (Coyle et al., 2010; Pérez-Cañado, 2016). In this context, the aim of this study is to understand the perceptions of teachers in bilingual/plurilingual schools in Andalusia (southern Spain), paying particular attention to the differences between schools located in urban settings and rural areas. With this purpose, this quantitative research uses an exploratory cross-sectional design, which makes it possible to examine a specific phenomenon within a population at a given moment in time (Adèr & Mellenbergh, 1999). It also applies an interpretative approach, aimed at understanding and clarifying the perspectives of the participants (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

Objectives and hypotheses

This study aims at analyzing the perceptions on bilingual/plurilingual education of teachers in schools in Andalusia (Spain) and discovering the main differences between rural and urban areas. Moreover, two secondary objectives are also posed: (1) to explore whether the type of school (rural/urban) is a determining factor for the implementation of bilingual/plurilingual programs; and (2) to analyze if any type of previous teaching experience has any impact on teachers' perceptions of these programs.

Three hypotheses are posed in this research based on previously scientific literature in the field of bilingual/plurilingual education and CLIL approach and on the researchers' assumptions (see Table 1):

Table 1
Hypotheses of the study and motivations

Hypotheses	Motivation
Hypothesis 1 (H1). There are significant differences in teachers' perceptions depending on whether they have previously worked in a rural bilingual/plurilingual school.	Based on the results of studies showing that teachers' perceptions are different depending on their previous teaching context, regarding rural and urban schools (e.g., Byun et al., 2012; Cerezo & García-Bellido, 2023; Mohan et al., 2017).
Hypothesis 2 (H2). There are significant differences in teachers' perceptions depending on the type of school where they work.	Based on the results of studies showing how teaching area and disciplinary background can shape teachers' beliefs and practices within bilingual/plurilingual programs (e.g., Pérez-Cañado, 2014, 2016)
Hypothesis 3 (H3). There are significant differences regarding the perceptions of teachers depending on their professional experience.	Based on previous research showing that professional experience often influences teachers' openness to innovation and their attitudes toward bilingual/plurilingual and intercultural education (e.g., Esparza & Belmonte, 2020).

Note. Authors' elaboration.

Participants

Eligibility criteria were based on having worked as a teacher in the autonomous region of Andalusia (Spain). To reach respondents, a school search was conducted using the Andalusian Regional Government website (Junta de Andalucía, 2024). A total of 120 teachers (n = 120) took part in the study. In terms of gender, 65.8% of the participants (n = 79) identified themselves as women, 31.7% as men (n = 38), 0.8% identified themselves as other (n = 1), and 1.7% preferred not to say it (n = 2). Moreover, 1.7% of participants (n = 2) were aged between 21 and 25, 22.5% (n = 27) between 26 and 35, 24.2% (n = 29) were between 36 and 45, 37.5% (n = 45) were between 46 and 55, and 14.2% (n = 17) were over 55.

In terms of province, 15% of participants (n = 18) worked in Cádiz, 16.7% (n = 20) in Málaga; 6.7% (n = 8) in Granada, 16.7% (n = 20) in Seville, 25% (n = 30) in Córdoba; 16.7% (n = 20) in Jaén, and 2.5% (n = 3) in Huelva. Regarding the type of school where

they worked, 78.3% of participants (n = 94) did so in a bilingual/plurilingual urban school, while 20% (n = 24) worked in a bilingual/plurilingual rural school, 0.8% (n = 1) in a non-bilingual/plurilingual urban school, and 0.8% (n = 1) in a non-bilingual/plurilingual rural school. When they were asked about having ever worked in a rural bilingual/plurilingual school, 35.8% of the respondents (n = 43) confirmed they had, whereas the remaining 64.2% (n = 77) had not.

In terms of educational stage, 35.8% of participants (n = 43) indicated they worked in Primary Education, 24.2% (n = 29) in Secondary Education (without including Baccalaureate), 31.7% (n = 37) in Secondary Education (including Baccalaureate); 5.8% (n = 7) in Early Childhood Education, 1.7% (n = 2) in Vocational Training, and 0.8% (n = 1) at University with experience compulsory education. Finally, regarding participants' teaching experience, 0.8% of participants (n = 1) had less than 1 year of experience, 13.3% (n = 16) had between 1 and 4 years, 23.3% (n = 28) had between 5 and 9 years, and 62.5% (n = 75) had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

Instrument

A survey was designed *ad hoc* for the purpose of this study. The instrument was designed following an exhaustive review of published studies in bilingual/plurilingual education and a careful examination of similar surveys. To bolster its validity, the initial design was subjected to a Delphi expert review process. Two specialists in language teaching and bilingual/plurilingual education independently revised the draft instrument, critiquing the pertinence and phrasing of each item, as well as the overall coherence of its dimensions. Their feedback was essential for optimizing the survey, guiding the refinement, removal, and reformulation of items to address issues of ambiguity and overlap.

The final version of the survey consisted of an initial demographic data section and 26 items expressed in a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree). Before answering the survey, participants were informed about the objectives of the study, the anonymity of responses, and the exclusively research nature of the usage and storage of data, as well as the possibility of withdrawal at any time. The survey was distributed via Google Forms in Spanish to facilitate understanding. Data were gathered between October and November 2024.

The study is conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the Code of Responsible Practices and Integrity in Research at the University of Córdoba (Spain): Código de Prácticas Responsables e Integridad en la Investigación de la Universidad de Córdoba, published on December 12, 2015 (no. 2015/00559), Acuerdo de Consejo de Gobierno, en sesión ordinaria de 18/12/2015, por el que se modifica el Código de Prácticas Responsables e Integridad en la Investigación de la Universidad de Córdoba, aprobado en Consejo de Gobierno de 20/12/2013 (Available at: https://bit.ly/ucoethics).

Data analysis

The data collected through the survey were analyzed using SPSS V25.0 for MacOS. To check whether the sample followed a normal distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied, taking into account the sample size. Since the significance level was $p < 0.05$ in all cases, the sample was considered to follow a non-normal distribution (Koh & Ahad, 2020). Given the non-normal distribution and the limited number of participants,

non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis H) were used to examine statistically significant differences among respondents according to previous experience in rural bilingual, type of school (rural/urban bilingual/plurilingual school) and teaching experience.

Moreover, Cronbach's alpha was calculated (after recoding items Q07-Q11, Q14, Q16-Q18, Q23 and Q26) to assess the validity and internal consistency of the instrument, resulting in a value of 0.847, which confirms the reliability of the survey (Taber, 2018).

FINDINGS

Descriptive results

Table 2 below shows the percentage of participants' answers for each item, as well as the mean scores and standard deviations.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics per item

Item	%					M	SD
	SA	A	N	D	SD		
Q01	10.8	20.8	*45.8*	20.0	2.5	3.18	0.958
Q02	15.8	25.0	*37.5*	18.3	3.3	3.32	1.053
Q03	4.2	25.0	*33.3*	29.2	8.3	2.88	1.017
Q04	25.0	*26.7*	11.7	23.3	13.3	3.27	1.407
Q05	2.5	24.2	*37.5*	*30.0*	5.8	2.88	0.931
Q06	*51.7*	34.2	5.8	7.5	0.8	4.28	0.936
Q07	3.3	12.5	*59.2*	20.0	5.0	3.11	0.807
Q08	16.7	*53.3*	11.7	15.0	3.3	2.35	1.034
Q09	11.7	*51.7*	20.0	15.0	1.7	2.43	0.941
Q10	3.3	19.2	20.8	*40.0*	16.7	3.48	1.084
Q11	3.3	23.3	*55.0*	16.7	1.7	2.90	0.771
Q12	15.0	23.3	24.2	*30.0*	7.5	3.08	1.199
Q13	17.5	24.2	15.8	*34.2*	8.3	3.08	1.274
Q14	27.5	*40.0*	7.5	16.7	8.3	2.38	1.278
Q15	19.2	25.8	12.5	*33.3*	9.2	3.13	1.313
Q16	2.5	25.8	25.8	*35.8*	10.8	3.27	1.043
Q17	15.8	*47.5*	20.0	15.0	1.7	2.39	0.981
Q18	20.8	*54.2*	15.0	8.3	1.7	2.16	0.907
Q19	16.7	20.8	21.7	34.2	6.7	3.07	1.221
Q20	13.3	29.2	22.5	*31.7*	3.3	3.18	1.120
Q21	10.8	15.8	15.8	*44.2*	13.3	2.67	1.212
Q22	6.7	10	8.3	*49.2*	25.8	2.23	1.141
Q23	13.3	*31.7*	*29.2*	19.2	6.7	2.74	1.119
Q24	8.3	15.8	12.5	*40.8*	22.5	2.47	1.236
Q25	5.8	20	20.8	*35.8*	17.5	2.61	1.162

Q26	4.2	*47.5*	33.3	10.8	4.2	2.63	0.888

Note. SA = strongly agree, A = agree, N = neutral, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree, M = mean value, SD = standard deviation. Highest values in italics.
Authors' elaboration.

In general, results indicate that teachers have a positive perception of rural and bilingual/plurilingual education, although their opinions vary across some items. Respondents recognize that: working conditions in rural schools are different from those in urban centers (Q02), teaching in bilingual/plurilingual schools is more demanding than in non-bilingual/plurilingual schools (Q04), and there is both communication and collaboration among the different departments in the bilingual/plurilingual program of the schools (Q08 and Q09). Moreover, most of the participants agree that the heterogeneity of students in the classroom makes teaching in bilingual/plurilingual programs more difficult (Q06). In addition, they agree that rural schools have fewer resources (Q01) and that teachers of non-linguistic areas who teach in bilingual/plurilingual programs need more training (Q10).

Results also show that teachers tend to agree about their ability to create materials for bilingual teaching (Q18) but disagree about the idea that bilingual/plurilingual education makes it harder for students to learn/develop their mother tongue (Q22). Furthermore, teachers seem convinced about the benefits of bilingual/plurilingual education for the development of foreign language communicative competence (Q14) and how to adapt their teaching for students to learn content through a foreign language (Q17), while they completely disagree about the idea that learning content through a foreign language makes the learning of content in the mother tongue more difficult (Q21). Finally, respondents agree on the potential improvement of students' employability thanks to their participation in bilingual/plurilingual programs (Q23), the idea that not only students with higher grades should participate in bilingual/plurilingual programs (Q24) and that foreign language does not hinder students' academic performance in non-linguistic subjects (Q25).

Nevertheless, although most participants agree on the difficulties and inequalities present in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools, there are still diverse perspectives regarding how bilingual/plurilingual education affects both teaching and learning.

Differences regarding experience in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools

Mann-Whitney U test was applied to the survey items to examine differences according to whether teachers had worked in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools before (see Table 3).

Table 3

Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples (work in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools)

Item	Experience in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	*p**
Q01	Yes	43	57.34	1519.500	0.429
	No	77	62.27		
Q02	Yes	43	63.97	1506.500	0.396

	No	77	58.56		
Q03	Yes	43	54.69	1405.500	0.154
	No	77	63.75		
Q04	Yes	43	57.03	1506.500	0.402
	No	77	62.44		
Q05	Yes	43	52.98	1332.000	0.063
	No	77	64.70		
Q06	Yes	43	71.43	1185.500	*0.005*
	No	77	54.40		
Q07	Yes	43	63.31	1534.500	0.454
	No	77	58.93		
Q08	Yes	43	66.36	1403.500	0.132
	No	77	57.23		
Q09	Yes	43	70.57	1222.500	*0.010*
	No	77	54.88		
Q10	Yes	43	61.92	1594.500	0.727
	No	77	59.71		
Q11	Yes	43	68.69	1303.500	*0.033*
	No	77	55.93		
Q12	Yes	43	66.40	1402.000	0.153
	No	77	57.21		
Q13	Yes	43	66.35	1404.000	0.155
	No	77	57.23		
Q14	Yes	43	64.13	1499.500	0.371
	No	77	58.47		
Q15	Yes	43	62.51	1569.000	0.625
	No	77	59.38		
Q16	Yes	43	60.49	1655.000	0.998
	No	77	60.51		
Q17	Yes	43	56.07	1465.000	0.266
	No	77	62.97		
Q18	Yes	43	53.65	1361.000	0.077
	No	77	64.32		
Q19	Yes	43	59.79	1625.000	0.863
	No	77	60.90		
Q20	Yes	43	63.47	1528.000	0.469
	No	77	58.84		
Q21	Yes	43	59.12	1596.000	0.732
	No	77	61.27		

Q22	Yes	43	62.65	1563.000	0.586
	No	77	59.30		
Q23	Yes	43	61.50	1612.500	0.808
	No	77	59.94		
Q24	Yes	43	70.67	1218.000	*0.012*
	No	77	54.82		
Q25	Yes	43	59.59	1616.500	0.825
	No	77	61.01		
Q26	Yes	43	64.37	1489.000	0.324
	No	77	58.34		

Note. *$p < 0.05$ is recognized as statistically significant (in italics).
Authors' elaboration.

In general, teachers without experience in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools tended to obtain slightly higher scores in most items, which suggests a more positive overall perception. Nevertheless, statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were identified only in four items.

Teachers with experience in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools scored higher in items related to student heterogeneity (Q06), support from teacher training centers (Q11), and the idea that only students with better academic results should participate in bilingual/plurilingual programs (Q24). These results are connected to one of the main issues that can be found in rural education: heterogeneity. On the other hand, teachers without experience in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools had higher scores in the item referring to collaboration among different departments within the school's bilingual/plurilingual program (Q09), which may indicate a possible lack of collaboration in rural contexts.

Differences regarding participants' type of school

Mann-Whitney U test was also applied to the survey items to compare respondents working urban bilingual/plurilingual schools and those working in rural bilingual/plurilingual centers at the time of the survey administration (see Table 4).

Table 4
Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples (Type of school)

Item	Rural vs urban bilingual/plurilingual school	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	*p**
Q01	Urban	94	58.48	1032.000	0.494
	Rural	24	63.50		
Q02	Urban	94	60.27	1055.500	0.613
	Rural	24	56.48		
Q03	Urban	94	58.53	1036.500	0.524
	Rural	24	63.31		
Q04	Urban	94	58.48	1032.500	0.512
	Rural	24	63.48		

Q05	Urban	94	61.21	967.000	0.258
	Rural	24	52.79		
Q06	Urban	94	58.05	992.000	0.315
	Rural	24	65.17		
Q07	Urban	94	58.62	1045.000	0.530
	Rural	24	62.96		
Q08	Urban	94	59.47	1125.000	0.982
	Rural	24	59.63		
Q09	Urban	94	58.30	1015.500	0.412
	Rural	24	64.19		
Q10	Urban	94	58.33	1018.000	0.441
	Rural	24	64.08		
Q11	Urban	94	57.07	900.000	0.090
	Rural	24	69.00		
Q12	Urban	94	57.43	933.000	0.179
	Rural	24	67.63		
Q13	Urban	94	57.16	908.500	0.129
	Rural	24	68.65		
Q14	Urban	94	56.58	853.500	0.054
	Rural	24	70.94		
Q15	Urban	94	57.79	967.500	0.268
	Rural	24	66.19		
Q16	Urban	94	56.77	871.000	0.073
	Rural	24	70.21		
Q17	Urban	94	59.92	1088.500	0.778
	Rural	24	57.85		
Q18	Urban	94	60.64	1020.500	0.431
	Rural	24	55.02		
Q19	Urban	94	57.97	984.000	0.320
	Rural	24	65.50		
Q20	Urban	94	56.46	842.500	*0.048*
	Rural	24	71.40		
Q21	Urban	94	59.27	1106.500	0.880
	Rural	24	60.40		
Q22	Urban	94	59.68	1111.500	0.905
	Rural	24	58.81		
Q23	Urban	94	59.71	1108.500	0.893
	Rural	24	58.69		
Q24	Urban	94	57.35	926.000	0.157

Q25	Rural	24	67.92	1110.500	0.903
	Urban	94	59.31		
	Rural	24	60.23		
Q26	Urban	94	56.71	865.500	0.058
	Rural	24	70.44		

Note. *$p < 0.05$ is recognized as statistically significant (in italics).
Authors' elaboration.

In general, teachers working in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools showed more positive attitudes than their counterparts. However, statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were only found in one item (Q20). In this sense, teachers working in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools were more in favor with the idea that students mainly learn the subject by memorizing content in the foreign language by heart rather than actually developing their linguistic competence.

Differences regarding teaching experience

Regarding participants' teaching experience, Krustal-Wallis test was applied in order to analyze the effect to of this variable to respondents' attitudes (see Table 5).

Table 5

Krustal-Wallis test for independent samples (teaching experience)

Item	Teaching experience	N	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	*p**
Q01	< 1	1	55.00	0.368	0.947
	1-4	16	64.97		
	5-9	28	60.07		
	+10	75	59.78		
Q02	< 1	1	49.00	0.287	0.962
	1-4	16	57.50		
	5-9	28	61.57		
	+10	75	60.89		
Q03	< 1	1	65.50	1.603	0.659
	1-4	16	70.19		
	5-9	28	58.36		
	+10	75	59.17		
Q04	< 1	1	30.50	2.351	0.503
	1-4	16	69.56		
	5-9	28	62.43		
	+10	75	58.25		
Q05	< 1	1	103.00	3.768	0.288
	1-4	16	103.00		
	5-9	28	64.91		
	+10	75	52.39		

Q06	< 1	1	38.00	1.356	0.716
	1-4	16	57.03		
	5-9	28	57.34		
	+10	75	62.72		
Q07	< 1	1	55.00	2.606	0.456
	1-4	16	64.19		
	5-9	28	52.43		
	+10	75	62.80		
Q08	< 1	1	10.50	3.121	0.373
	1-4	16	55.75		
	5-9	28	63.71		
	+10	75	60.98		
Q09	< 1	1	45.50	1.803	0.614
	1-4	16	56.00		
	5-9	28	67.00		
	+10	75	59.23		
Q10	< 1	1	16.00	15.398	*0.002*
	1-4	16	68.63		
	5-9	28	78.71		
	+10	75	52.56		
Q11	< 1	1	65.50	1.237	0.744
	1-4	16	63.75		
	5-9	28	65.04		
	+10	75	58.05		
Q12	< 1	1	27.50	2.538	0.468
	1-4	16	70.53		
	5-9	28	60.25		
	+10	75	58.89		
Q13	< 1	1	31.00	2.294	0.514
	1-4	16	69.44		
	5-9	28	62.30		
	+10	75	58.31		
Q14	< 1	1	17.00	1.839	0.606
	1-4	16	61.91		
	5-9	28	62.29		
	+10	75	60.11		
Q15	< 1	1	31.50	1.324	0.723

	1-4	16	63.53		
	5-9	28	63.95		
	+10	75	58.95		
Q16	< 1	1	19.00	2.263	0.520
	1-4	16	63.09		
	5-9	28	64.73		
	+10	75	58.92		
Q17	< 1	1	48.00	4.730	0.193
	1-4	16	63.00		
	5-9	28	71.36		
	+10	75	56.08		
Q18	< 1	1	58.00	2.379	0.497
	1-4	16	61.19		
	5-9	28	68.27		
	+10	75	57.49		
Q19	< 1	1	110.50	4.386	0.223
	1-4	16	63.97		
	5-9	28	66.98		
	+10	75	56.67		
Q20	< 1	1	87.00	1.645	0.649
	1-4	16	61.53		
	5-9	28	65.46		
	+10	75	58.07		
Q21	< 1	1	43.00	1.021	0.796
	1-4	16	54.50		
	5-9	28	59.93		
	+10	75	62.23		
Q22	< 1	1	16.00	3.603	0.308
	1-4	16	56.06		
	5-9	28	55.73		
	+10	75	63.82		
Q23	< 1	1	35.50	0.634	0.889
	1-4	16	59.56		
	5-9	28	59.63		
	+10	75	61.36		
Q24	< 1	1	84.00	1.173	0.760
	1-4	16	62.72		
	5-9	28	63.98		
	+10	75	58.41		

Q25	< 1	1	43.00	1.680	0.641
	1-4	16	61.94		
	5-9	28	54.09		
	+10	75	62.82		
Q26	< 1	1	34.00	1.603	0.659
	1-4	16	53.56		
	5-9	28	62.04		
	+10	75	61.76		

Note. *$p < 0.05$ is recognized as statistically significant (in italics).
Authors' elaboration.

Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were only found in one item. In this regard, teachers with between 5 and 9 years of experience scored higher in the item related to the availability of training for non-linguistic subject teachers participating in bilingual/plurilingual programs (Q10), indicating greater agreement with the existence of sufficient training opportunities.

Discussion and conclusion

As previously mentioned, bilingual/plurilingual education has become an important element of the Andalusian educational system, offering students opportunities to develop linguistic, intercultural, and cognitive competences simultaneously (Coyle et al., 2010; Pérez-Cañado, 2012). Within this framework, the present study has aimed to analyze the perceptions of teachers working in bilingual and plurilingual programs in Andalusia, paying particular attention to the differences between rural and urban schools. The analyses conducted have allowed achieving this goal by identifying both teachers' opinion towards bilingual/plurilingual education and the main disparities observed between these two teaching contexts.

In general, the results illustrate that teachers have a positive perception of bilingual/plurilingual education, affirming its benefits for students' linguistic competence, intercultural awareness, and employability (see Q14 and Q23 on Table 2; Gaish et al., 2017; Pérez-Cañado, 2012; Yang, 2017). Moreover, they have also revealed that teachers feel confident about their ability to create materials and adapting their teaching for content learning through a foreign language (see Q18 and Q17 on Table 2), not influencing this into their acquisition of the mother tongue nor the content in the mother tongue (see Q22 and Q21 on Table 2) and highlighting communication and collaboration among different departments (see Q08 and Q09 on Table 2; Méndez García & Pavón Vázquez, 2012). It was also pointed that not only students with higher grades should participate in bilingual/plurilingual programs (see Q24 on Table 2), that the implementation of bilingual/plurilingual education does not hinder students' academic performance in non-linguistic subjects–due to being taught in a foreign language–(see Q25 on Table 2; Pérez Cañado, 2020), and that families support the implementation of this education model in schools (see Q26 on Table 2; San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2022).

However, the findings also illustrate contextual inequalities that influence the implementation of bilingual/plurilingual programs. It was found alignment in affirming that there are limited resources for non-linguistic teachers in bilingual/plurilingual programs, that working in a bilingual/plurilingual school is more difficult than working

in a non-bilingual one, or that teachers from non-linguistic areas need more training when working in bilingual/plurilingual programs. Respondents also tended to also affirm that there are disparities regarding working conditions in rural and urban schools (see Q01, Q02, Q10 and Q04 on Table 2), which confirms that rural contexts continue to face challenges related to infrastructure, material availability, and training opportunities. This supports previous research showing that rural schools often encounter difficulties in having different resources in class, which could affect teachers' motivation and classroom practices (Byun et al., 2012; Cerezo & García-Bellido, 2023; Mohan et al., 2017).

At this stage, it is necessary to revisit the hypotheses of the study (see Table 1). H1 *(There are significant differences in teachers' perceptions depending on whether they have previously worked in a rural bilingual/plurilingual school)* is corroborated. As aforementioned, they also agreed that there are disparities between these two contexts. Moreover, it is algo affirmed that the heterogeneity of students in the classroom makes teaching in bilingual/plurilingual programs more difficult (Q06), a characteristic mainly found in rural school contexts (Alejo & Piquer-Píriz, 2016; Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

Also, it is interesting to mention that there was a significant difference between teachers that had worked in rural schools and teachers that had not regarding receiving support from the teacher training centers (Q11) and collaboration among different departments within the school's bilingual/plurilingual program (Q09), indicating more support for rural schools rather than for urban ones and also a lack of collaboration among different departments in rural schools (Barrios & Milla, 2020; Pavón Vazquez & Rubio, 2010; Villegas-Troya et al., 2023b).

H2 *(There are significant differences in teachers' perceptions depending on the type of school where they work)* is partially corroborated. Only significant differences were found one item in rural bilingual/plurilingual schools related to learning content by heart instead of developing linguistic competences (Q20). This result indicates that teachers in rural contexts may perceive bilingual/plurilingual instruction as promoting more mechanical, rote learning, with comparatively less focus on authentic communicative language use (performance) (Santos Maíllo, 2024).

Moreover, *H3 (There are significant differences regarding the perceptions of teachers depending on their professional experience)* is partially corroborated too. Only significant differences were found in one item in teachers with between 5 and 9 years of experience related to the availability of training for non-linguistic teachers in bilingual/plurilingual programs. This may suggest that teachers with an intermediate level of experience, having already acquired some years of practice feel more supported and confident regarding the training opportunities available in bilingual/plurilingual education.

Despite the positive perceptions identified, the study also reveals areas of improvement for the effective implementation of bilingual/plurilingual education in Andalusia. The lack of specific teacher training for non-linguistic areas (together with the fact that not all teachers from non-linguistic areas feel confident teaching in a foreign language), few resources in rural areas, heterogeneity in class or the scarcity of help from teacher training centers to rural schools was pointed. Addressing these limitations would help reduce the existing gap between urban and rural schools and promote more equitable access to quality bilingual/plurilingual education.

This study has also faced some limitations. First, the sample size was limited and may not fully represent the diversity of Andalusian schools. Prospective research should consider contacting more schools and teachers so as to collect data on their opinion. Second, the quantitative nature of the study limits the collection of teachers' experiences. In this sense, future research could complement these results with some interviews. Third, and although the instrument shows overall reliability, its internal structure and potential multidimensionality (resources, training, beliefs, practices) were not examined, which limits interpretation to individual items rather than a comprehensive view of teachers' perceptions. Fourth, some of the sample groups were not representative enough for establishing additional comparisons (e.g., university teachers, teachers with less than one year of teaching experience, and teachers aged between 22 and 55), so more representation would be necessary for future analyses.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into how Andalusian teachers perceive bilingual/plurilingual education and the factors that may influence their views. It also shows a positive attitude towards CLIL and bilingual/plurilingual programs, while also pointing out some inequalities between rural and urban settings. Finally, it is important to mention that this research shows the need of strengthening teacher training, interdepartmental collaboration, and the availability of teaching resources, specifically in rural schools, as a key priority for the future of bilingual/plurilingual education in Andalusia.

CONTRIBUTION OF EACH AUTHOR

Cristina Villegas-Troya: Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Writing – original draft.
Francisco Javier Palacios-Hidalgo: Conceptualization; Methodology; Supervision; Validation; Writing – review and editing.
Cristina A. Huertas-Abril: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing – review and editing.

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