ARTICLE

Teaching Perceptions on a Linguistic Intervention for the Inclusion of Rural Migrant Students: The Case of Calanda (Teruel)

Raquel Casanovas López [1*] , *Ana Reyes Palos Cros* [2], *Merche Barberán Prades* [2]

[1] *Education Department, School of Human Sciences and Education, Universidad de Zaragoza, 22003 Huesca, Spain*

[2] *Virgen del Pilar Elementary School, 44570 Calanda, Spain*

ABSTRACT

The increasing migration phenomenon in rural areas presents significant challenges to the educational system, particularly regarding the linguistic inclusion of newly arrived students. The lack of material and human resources prevents the provision of an adequate transitional period for these children to learn Spanish before being fully integrated into the classroom, which hinders their initial participation and academic performance. RACODI (Shared Roots in Linguistic Diversity and Inclusion) is a micro-research project based on methodological innovation for foreign language learning in a rural setting. It stems from the main project AGORA (Technological and Methodological Innovation for Language Teaching and the Generation of Synergies in Rural Areas). Its main objective is to include students from immigrant families through language learning in a primary school in Calanda, Teruel, using custom-designed linguistic activities for 5th- and 6th-grade students. Although the project includes multiple lines of action, this article focuses specifically on teachers' perceptions following an educational intervention, highlighting their role as essential agents in decision-making and in validating the proposal. Preliminary results show that teachers are cautious when evaluating the project globally, although they do perceive improvements in social inclusion, linguistic skills, and academic performance. This cautiousness is attributed to the short time frame of the project so far. Furthermore, they emphasize the need for family involvement, which entails cooperative work between the school and other local and regional institutions.

Keywords: Children; Rural Area; Inclusion; Education; Teachers

1. Introduction

One of the biggest challenges in contemporary education is the integration of migrant students who have not mastered the language of the receiving country, which turns into a significant barrier affecting their academic performance and social integration[1]. Language proficiency not only facilitates communication but is also a key element in social and educational inclusion. In Spain, according to the figures published by the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports on its website, in the last four school years the number of migrant students enrolled in schools (public, private and subsidized) has increased from 907,544 in the 2020–2021 academic year to 2,036,464 in the 2023–2024 academic year. In the case of Aragon, the context under study, there was an overall increase of 17% in the four years (from 61,624 in the 2020–2021 academic year to 72,086 in the 2023–2024 academic year).

This linguistic diversity affects the Spanish education system in several ways, notably by requiring the adaptation of educational policies and programs to address the growing number of students of foreign nationalities who lack Spanish language proficiency. This shift has transformed the school landscape, making linguistic diversity a key element of the current education system that must be effectively managed. In response, some autonomous communities have implemented specific language support programs, such as the Aulas de Enlace in Madrid or the Aulas Temporales de Adaptación Lingüística (ATAL) in Andalusia, which aim to facilitate linguistic and academic integration for newly arrived immigrant students. These initiatives have shown positive outcomes when accompanied by trained staff and inclusive pedagogical approaches. However, their effectiveness often depends on regional commitment and resources, leading to disparities in implementation. In some cases, the lack of long-term integration strategies and limited teacher training in intercultural competence have rendered such policies less effective, resulting in linguistic segregation or the marginalization of these students within mainstream classrooms.

Additionally, education in rural areas faces a series of structural barriers that significantly hinder the linguistic and social inclusion of immigrant students. These challenges include linguistic difficulties that directly impact academic performance due to a limited understanding of the language of instruction; a lack of material resources and insufficient teacher training in intercultural education and second language acquisition; social integration issues related to cultural adaptation and the absence of support networks; as well as infrastructural deficiencies, such as limited access to technology and specialized educational materials. The incorporation of students from diverse national backgrounds, whose mother tongues differ from Spanish, has increased linguistic diversity in the classroom, thereby creating an urgent need to adapt educational policies and develop targeted support programs[2].

Newly arrived students face significant challenges, particularly when they have had limited or interrupted schooling. For instance, some may have never attended formal education due to conflict or displacement, while others might come from school systems with very different curricular standards. These circumstances make it more difficult for them to adapt to a new educational system, especially if they lack proficiency in the language of instruction. As a result, they often struggle to understand basic classroom instructions, participate in group activities, or complete assignments independently. This language barrier can also hinder their ability to build social relationships with peers, contributing to feelings of isolation. Such challenges can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety, which negatively affect their emotional well-being and learning process[3,4].

Teachers who receive these students also face a number of challenges to ensure that the teaching–learning process is appropriate for each of them. These challenges include managing intercultural and linguistic differences, as well as the need to implement strategies that facilitate a smooth understanding of school dynamics while promoting cultural enrichment for all participants[5]. In this context, educational inclusion projects, such as the RACODIL project, provide a valuable framework for addressing these difficulties by offering methodological tools, adapted resources, and collaborative spaces that enable teachers to respond more effectively to the needs of migrant students and foster truly inclusive education.

Existing regulations do not adequately address this problem, which affects many rural public schools in the province. In small towns in Teruel, for example, with between 200 and 500 inhabitants, it is common for almost 100% of pupils to be migrants or to come from migrant families.

Despite these challenges, several successful initiatives have emerged in Aragon to promote educational inclusion. The Vía Libre program by Cáritas Huesca, a pilot project in Caspe involving coordinated efforts among local schools, and the Communinclusion project developed in Calanda are some examples of context-sensitive initiatives that aim to foster integration through linguistic immersion, family involvement, and inclusive methodologies. These experiences highlight the potential of collaborative, localized strategies to transform rural schools into inclusive spaces that address both educational and social needs.

Within the framework of our educational inclusion project, we have adopted an integrative approach that combines social constructivism[6] and intercultural education[7,8] as key foundational pillars. Both approaches have been essential not only to ensure access, but also to promote active, meaningful, and equitable participation of all students in the learning process. From the perspective of social constructivism, we understand learning as a process that is built collectively through social interaction, dialogue, and collaboration. Therefore, all activities proposed in the project adopt a communicative approach, encouraging peer exchange, teamwork, and joint reflection as fundamental strategies for knowledge construction. At the same time, intercultural education has guided our pedagogical decisions by recognizing and valuing the cultural and linguistic diversity present in the classroom. We have promoted respect, visibility, and the active incorporation of different cultures and languages into school practices, which not only enriches learning but also strengthens students' sense of identity and self-esteem. In this way, our project aims to build an inclusive, equitable, and culturally relevant educational environment, where the dialogue of knowledge and student collaboration are the driving forces of learning.

One approach to addressing the complex integration of migrant students with linguistic diversity is through the development and implementation of educational research projects. These initiatives can contribute to alleviating challenges related to language acquisition and inclusion in school contexts. This paper explores the perceptions of teachers involved in a micro-research project aimed at improving the educational experience of students with language-related learning difficulties. The project RACODIL, developed within the framework of AGORA, focuses on methodological innovation in foreign language learning and emphasizes inclusion in rural settings. The main objective is to evaluate the impact of providing specialized linguistic support and tailored resources on the academic performance and social integration of migrant students in primary education. Particular attention is given to the role of collaboration among all educational stakeholders, as joint efforts are essential to achieving successful inclusion, especially in rural communities. Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of valuing the local environment as a space that fosters emotional and identity-based connections, which are key to facilitating the inclusion process. Understanding the perspectives of teachers, as the primary agents in the learning environment, is therefore central to this study.

In view of this situation, the objectives to know the perceptions of teachers on the proposal and to evaluate the impact of providing specialized linguistic support and tailored resources on the academic performance and social integration of migrant students in primary education of the study were established, which were specified in various questions (Appendix A) that were posed to the teachers. The first was to evaluate the degree of attainment of the language acquisition objective, so questions 1, 4, 5 and 6 were designed; the second was to improve academic performance, so questions 7 and 9 were posed; and the third was to evaluate the improvement of student integration in the school and social environment, so questions 2, 3 and 8 were created.

2. Methodology

In order to evaluate the educational impact of the RACODIL project on migrant pupils with language difficulties, a mixed methodology was used. Classroom observation techniques were combined with qualitative and quantitative data analysis. These data were collected through teacher and family surveys, as well as through student achievement scores.

This article focuses on the qualitative results, specifically teachers' opinions on the feasibility of the project. To this end, a survey was designed with open-ended questions that allowed teachers to freely express their perceptions on key aspects such as the acquisition of Spanish and the social inclusion of migrant pupils.

This methodological approach responds directly to the

objective of the study: to assess the effectiveness of an educational intervention aimed at improving the language skills, academic performance and social inclusion of migrant students in a rural primary school in Calanda (Teruel), through the support of a specialised teaching team.

To contextualize the implementation of the sessions, this section is structured in two parts: the first outlines the methodology used in the design and execution of the educational activities, while the second focuses on the research methodology employed to evaluate their impact.

2.1. Methodology of the Implementation

2.1.1. Pedagogical Perspective

The implementation of the activities was grounded in both cognitive and social constructivist approaches, which emphasize learning as an active, contextualized process shaped by individual cognition and social interaction. These frameworks promote inclusive learning environments by involving all educational stakeholders in the co-construction of knowledge, particularly through the acquisition of the Spanish language as a vehicle for integration. To support these principles, the project incorporated Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Game-Based Learning (GBL) methodologies, aligned with the guidelines of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)[9,10], which advocate for flexible learning environments that accommodate individual learning differences. Although PBL has been present in language teaching since at least 1997, its adoption remains limited due to factors such as the predominance of grammar-based instruction, curriculum constraints, and the need for advanced planning, linguistic competence, and resource availability. Nonetheless, its benefits—such as fostering intercultural understanding, enhancing communication and critical thinking skills, and promoting learner autonomy—are well documented[11].

GBL, while not intended to be the sole methodology, complements PBL by introducing play and participation as central elements of the learning process, creating dynamic, interactive, and motivating environments[12]. However, its effective implementation in multicultural and multilingual classrooms entails overcoming significant challenges. These include language barriers that impede full participation, cultural mismatches in game content, and disparities in digital

literacy and prior knowledge. Additionally, educators often face difficulties related to classroom management, time constraints, and a lack of training to adapt games to diverse needs. A key aspect of ensuring the success of both PBL and GBL is the creation of a safe, inclusive learning environment. Drawing on Krashen's affective filter hypothesis[13], which emphasizes the role of emotional factors in second language acquisition, the project prioritizes students' emotional well-being. This involves building classrooms that are welcoming and culturally responsive, where students feel valued and supported. Promoting native language use alongside Spanish, celebrating intercultural diversity, involving families through accessible communication, and providing teacher training in intercultural competence are essential measures to foster integration and equitable learning outcomes.

2.1.2. Context

The school takes on this challenge directly. The town of Calanda, characterized by its climate favorable to the cultivation of fruit trees, has experienced over the last 25 years a significant increase in migration, mainly from Morocco, Romania and, in more recent times, from South America. Newly arrived students face enormous difficulties, especially if they come with little schooling or that schooling has been interrupted. This contributes to making their adaptation to a new educational system more difficult, especially if they do not master the language, which can generate stress and anxiety, affecting their learning[3,4].

2.1.3. Participants

The participants in the educational experience are 5th- and 6th-grade students from a public school in the town of Calanda, located in Teruel, Spain.

2.1.4. Planning Considerations

The activities prioritized both oral and written communication in an integrated, global, and cross-curricular manner, addressing a wide range of topics that allowed students to use the language in real, meaningful, and engaging contexts. Digital resources played a key role, with the integration of social media and information and communication technologies (ICT), alongside the use of teaching materials suited to the students' age and developmental level. Group work was actively encouraged, promoting collaborative interaction among peers as a core strategy for language practice.

The teaching-learning process was creatively organized to align with the didactic orientation of the project, ensuring the achievement of its pedagogical goals. Students were grouped heterogeneously to stimulate cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and experiences, thus reinforcing linguistic inclusion for all learners. While most activities were initially planned to be carried out in Spanish and French, the presence of a significant number of students of Arab origin and their spontaneous desire to share how glossary terms were expressed in their mother tongue led to the incorporation of Arabic as well. This multilingual participation enriched the learning experience and contributed to an inclusive classroom environment, where every student felt recognized and empowered to contribute something meaningful.

2.1.5. Development of the Sessions

Each session was designed to achieve the objectives of the RACODIL project: to favour the acquisition of Spanish as a second language, to improve academic performance and to promote the social inclusion of migrant students in a rural context. As can be observed in **Table 1**, the first 4 sessions were designed for the progressive acquisition of Spanish, working on specific vocabulary and developing basic linguistic competences (first and second objectives). The last session was oriented towards the link with the rural environment, through an outing to the natural environment and group activities, facilitating meaningful learning in connection with the territory and reinforcing the sense of belonging to the place (third objective).

Table 1. Structure of the sessions carried out in the RACODIL project.

Session	Structure
Session 1: Concept (oral input–output)	Working on pronunciation and vocabulary comprehension through visual and auditory support, using games like "memory" and oral co-evaluation among students.
Session 2: Speech (written input–output)	Associating images with short descriptive phrases, which students then act out in a mime game.
Session 3: Definition	Elaborating and structuring simple sentences based on learned vocabulary through the game "What's in my coconut?".
Session 4: Contextualization of the (written) word	Writing and dramatizing a version of "Little Red Riding Hood", incorporating vocabulary of local flora and fauna for both written and oral expression.
Session 5: Trip in their immediate surroundings	Going on an excursion with a forestry agent and participating in a gymkhana, where students write short sentences about the elements observed in the glossary.

Source: Own elaboration.

All activities included a playful component and were conducted in small heterogeneous groups, considering factors such as origin, gender, and academic level. They were carried out bilingually to encourage peer support, making the learning experience more enriching for everyone. This approach ensured that all participants felt valued and integral to the group, fostering a sense of belonging. As a result, it not only facilitated language acquisition but also promoted social inclusion, strengthening group cohesion.

2.2. Research Methodology

The study is situated within a qualitative research framework, focusing on the exploration of interpretations and meanings within a specific context[14]. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of whether a particular project, involving direct participation from individuals, such as in this case, achieves its intended objectives, as well as the underlying reasons for its success or limitations. In this way, the insights gained can be analyzed and tailored more accurately to the unique context in question.

2.2.1. Participants

The case study involved 15 teachers from a public school in a rural area of Aragon, with a population of 3678 and a 21.28% migrants from Romania, Morocco, Poland, Argentina and Venezuela. A total of 80% of respondents were women and 20% men, aged 21–30 years (6.67%), 30–40 years (20%), 41–50 years (33.33%) and over 50 (40%). The mother tongue of all respondents was Spanish and of the total, 13.33% were monolingual and 86.67% knew at least one other language (80% English, 33.33% French and 6.67% Catalan). A total of 16.67% indicated that their English was basic, 75% intermediate and 8.33% advanced. With regard to French, 40% had a

basic knowledge, another 40% had an intermediate level and 20% did not specify their level. These data give an insight into the profile of the school's teaching staff, which allows us to know both their level of teaching experience and their language skills and, therefore, their ability to cope with complex situations and their capacity to communicate in another language with non-Spanish-speaking pupils.

2.2.2. Instruments

Two online questionnaires were designed (one pre- and one post-test) using Google Forms, which included demographic questions (gender, age, specialized studies, mother tongue, knowledge of other languages, etc.) to find out the background of the teachers involved in the study, and 23 open-ended questions to find out their opinion on the RACODIL project (see Appendix A). Open-ended responses, by allowing respondents to express themselves in a free and unstructured format, are an effective tool for obtaining authentic feedback, capturing meaningful nuances, and understanding the "why" behind quantitative data [15].

The use of questionnaires with open-ended questions made it easier to identify the diversity of opinions in the population analyzed with respect to the subject studied [16].

In both questionnaires (pre- and post-test), free and voluntary participation in the research project was requested,

and in all cases the corresponding informed consent was obtained. The questionnaires were administered online and were addressed to the population selected as a sample to collect qualitative information. The instrument itself included a clear explanation of the purposes of the research being carried out, guaranteed anonymization of the data collected and requested express consent for the processing of this information for scientific purposes. In addition to consent, data protection measures such as restricted access to the research team and secure cloud storage were implemented. Data confidentiality was ensured through the use of encrypted identifiers.

2.2.3. Data Analysis

To interpret the responses to the questionnaires, the answers obtained were categorized following the criteria established by Rueda et al. (2023) [17] which has three phases: 1) data reduction, 2) descriptive analysis and 3) interpretation of the information. In addition, the different answers were coded to obtain a theory from the respondents' comments. In other words, the individual responses were grouped into categories by means of this coding [18]. Responses with similar content (textual) were organized by grouping common ideas together (**Table 2**), following a procedure similar to the one described by Calavia et al. (2022) [19].

Table 2. Example of categories assigned to the question "Have there ever been 'ghettos' in your classroom or school? Could you explain the reasons?".

Examples of Responses	Category Assigned
Sometimes they come together by nationality, especially at recess.	Sometimes
No, they are very considerate of new pupils who don't speak Spanish.	No
Yes, although they are encouraged not to have them, e.g., "Morocco vs. Spain" football is played at recess. Of course it isn't allowed.	Yes

Source: Own elaboration.

The categories were defined on the basis of the analysis carried out (emergent categories) during the research and not prior to the data collection process, which implies a priori approach. This distinction is linked to the differentiation proposed by Elliot (1990) [20] between "objectifying concepts" and "sensitizing concepts", where the categories established beforehand correspond to the former, while those that emerge from the study are associated with the latter [21]. A theory of the opinion of the teachers involved is derived from the responses.

During the categorization process, the lead author initially reviewed and coded the responses, identifying the most pertinent concepts in the first phase. In a second reading, certain data were reorganized, with some subcategories being reclassified into higher categories, as some concepts were initially not clearly defined. Finally, a collaborative review was conducted with the research team, which allowed for consensus and validation of the final categorization.

As an example, **Table 2** illustrates how the categorization process allowed for the identification of the degree

to which teachers perceived student segregation dynamics within the classroom or school. By assigning responses to the categories "Yes", "No" and "Sometimes," it was possible to detect nuances in the teachers' experiences. Following this initial categorization, the reasons behind their answers were analyzed and coded to identify the factors, based on the respondents' perspectives, that influenced their responses. This process was repeated for each question in the questionnaire.

3. Results and Discussion

The results obtained from the teachers' perceptions are presented below, showing the comparative situation before and after the RACODIL project took place described in their answers to the questionnaire as well as the corresponding discussion. The number of responses is indicated in each of the figures.

In relation to Q1 (**Figure 1**), teachers present a diversity of opinions both in the pre-test and post-test, as well as between the two questionnaires. The diversity of responses led to the same response (multi-response) being coded and incorporated into different categories. Although the categories for the most part are replicated in both cases, e.g., 1) lack of knowledge of the language, 2) diversity of levels or curricular mismatch, 3) lack of motivation and involvement of the pupil, there were also aspects considered only in the pre-test, e.g., 4) lack of resources and/or support, and 5) attention deficits or intellectual deficiencies, and others expressed only in the post-test, e.g., 6) lack of family involvement and 7) curricular and academic difficulties.
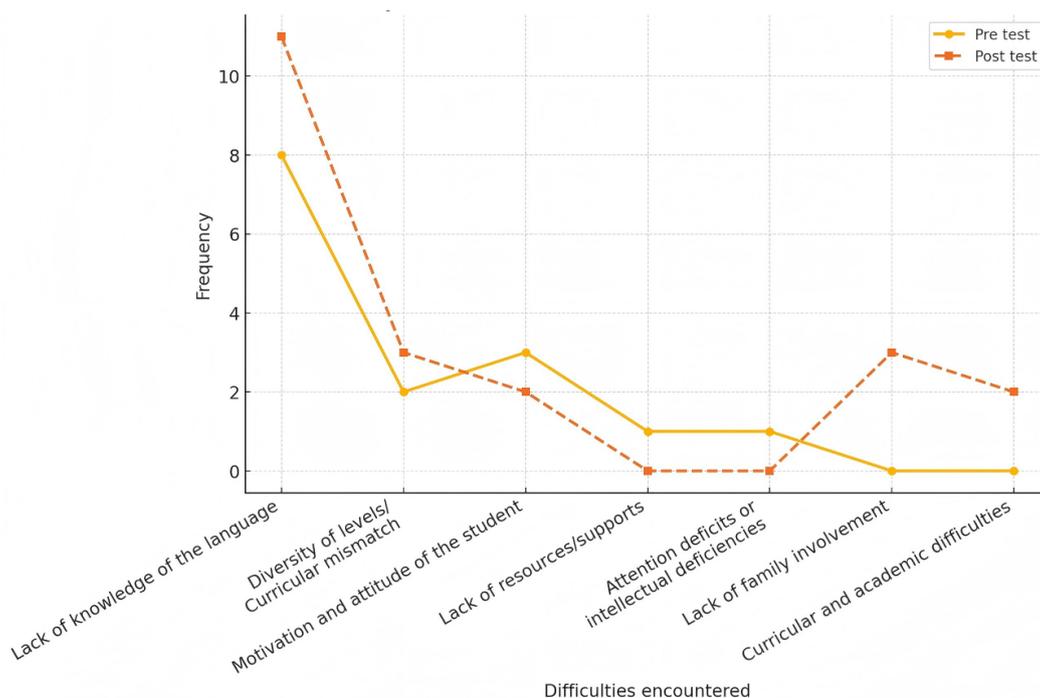

Figure 1. Summary of the difficulties encountered (pre-test vs post-test).

Although there seemed to be an increase in the post-test, this may be due to the incorporation of new students during the academic year. On the other hand, there was a certain decrease in terms of curricular mismatch, which could be due to language learning or to the fact that pupils who were at a lower level (which could be because they were not in school in their country of origin) have been acquiring knowledge as they enter the school system. The perception of a lack of resources and support decreased from pre- to post-test, which could be due to the implementation of the RACODIL project, which was intended to support with the inclusion of migrants and pedagogical resources. Concern about attention deficits and intellectual deficiencies also disappeared. On the other hand, although the pre-test did not consider the lack of family involvement, it may be due to linguistic obstacles, lack of time due to work commitments, lack of knowledge about representative bodies at schools, prejudice and mistrust or cultural and religious aspects, as indicated in the study by

Quintas et al. (2002)[22]. It could also be due to the incorporation of new pupils (possibly previously not at school in their country of origin), as mentioned above, during the school year and the fact that families were not accustomed to school dynamics. In the post-test, concern about curricular and academic difficulties was also considered, an aspect not indicated in the pre-test.

With regard to the question posed about the level of respect among pupils in the classroom or school (Q2) (**Figure 2**), and the reasons for it, the responses generated the following categorization: 1) good level, 2) adequate respect (with some exceptions), 3) lack of respect, 4) segregation due to culture or rejection of immigrant pupils, 5) decrease in respect at higher levels. The data are presented below.
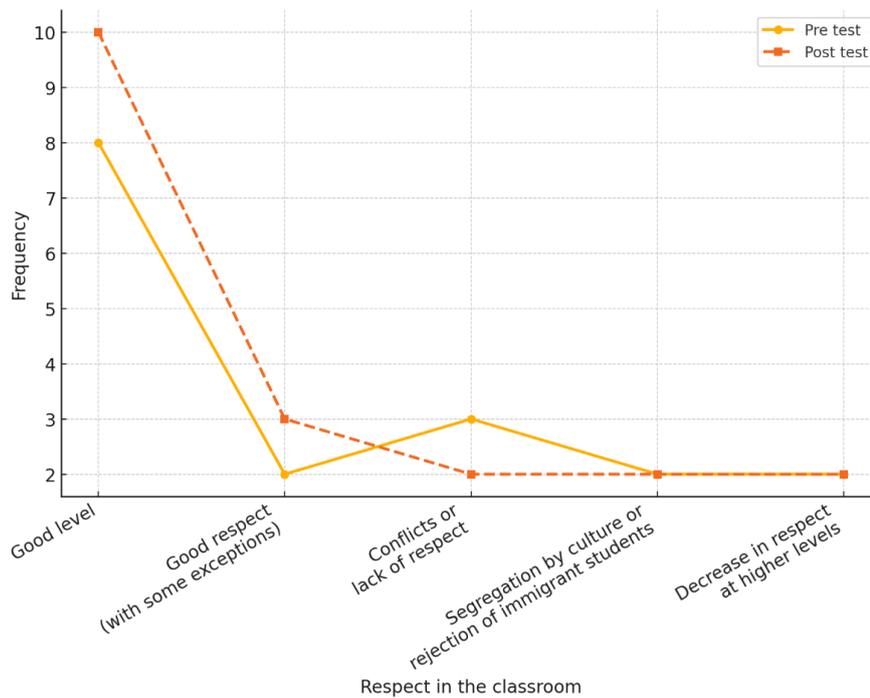

Figure 2. Summary analysis of mentions of respect in the classroom (pre-test vs post-test).

The comparison between the pre- and post-test indicates a moderate improvement in perceived levels of respect among students, as reflected in the increase in positive descriptors and the slight reduction in mentions of conflict or disrespect. While the change is not dramatic, it suggests a positive trend in school climate. Notably, perceptions of segregation by culture remained unchanged, which could point to persistent structural or social dynamics that are not easily influenced over a short period.

Although the responses generally lacked elaboration, the few comments provided offer insight into underlying perceptions. Many concerns seem to be attributed more to generational or behavioral issues such as individualism and lack of politeness rather than cultural diversity per se: "Students are becoming more and more individualistic. There is a lack of politeness and sense of themselves as a group,"

"There is less and less respect, they are overly confident in situations when they shouldn't be and they aren't aware of who they're saying things to" or "I notice some pupils from immigrant backgrounds are excluded, and I see that it coincides with the pupils who express themselves worse and especially those who don't participate in activities outside the classroom (they don't go to the park, don't attend extracurricular activities, don't go to birthdays or activities proposed by the majority of families...)."

However, some responses did highlight potential marginalization of certain immigrant students, especially those with limited language skills or social integration outside the classroom. This suggests that while overt disrespect may be declining, subtler forms of exclusion may persist and warrant further attention. It can be inferred that after RACODIL implementation, there is a modest positive shift in mutual respect,

but the need for continued efforts to foster inclusive social dynamics and address more subtle forms of exclusion persists.

To the question on the existence of ghettos (Q3) (**Figure 3**), the categorization of the data extracted from the teachers' answers was: 1) no ghettos exist, 2) in certain contexts, 3) occasionally, 4) other.
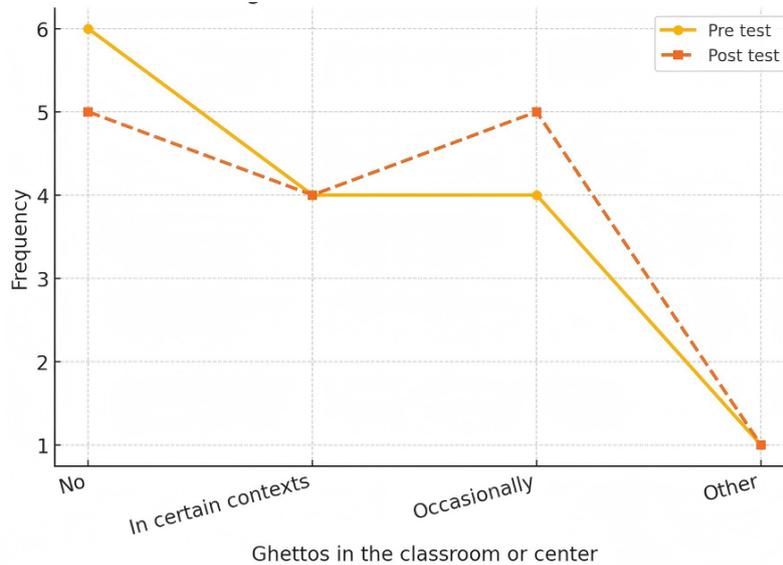

Figure 3. Summary of the existences of guettos in the classroom or center (pre-test vs post-test).

The results related to the perception of the existence of "ghettos" or groupings by nationality reflect a complex and partly contradictory reality. Although in the pre-test more teachers stated that there were no differentiated groupings (six responses), in the post-test this figure decreased (five responses), while the number of responses acknowledging their occasional existence increased slightly (from four to five mentions). Some nuances are also included, such as the fact that work has been done and continues to be done to avoid them. The opinions provided by teachers, as well as the efforts they make and which can be glimpsed in their responses, are in line with studies that deal with school co-existence, such as the one by García and Ferreira (2005)[23].

The reasons given in the preamble for each category vary. Some sample responses are included for each case (**Table 3** and **Table 4**):

Table 3. Examples of response categorization on the existence or not of ghettos in the classroom or centre (pre-test).

Examples of Responses (Pre-Test)	Category Assigned
"No, they are still small."	No
"Not in the classroom, in primary school it can happen."	In certain contexts
"Sometimes, at recess."/"Sometimes they get together by nationalities, especially at recess."	Occasionally
"Not too much, in the end they look for each other, but it's normal, natural and understandable."	Other

Own elaboration.

Table 4. Examples of response categorization on the existence or not of ghettos in the classroom or centre (post-test).

Examples of Responses (Post-Test)	Category Assigned
"No, they're very considerate with new students who don't speak the language."	No
"Sometimes with football at recess we've seen them, resolving the situation on the spot." "Sometimes there are ghettos, but they organize it themselves, because they're not organized in groups, haven't been here long…" "Yes, although we encourage them to avoid them, sometimes they play Morocco vs. Spain football at recess. Of course it wasn't allowed."	In certain contexts

Source: Own elaboration.

The responses included in the category "in certain contexts" are related to the arguments of authors such as Goenechea Permisán (2011)[3] and Rodríguez-Izquierdo (2018)[2] who explain that linguistic integration does not automatically guarantee the social inclusion of migrant students.

Responses such as those of some teachers indicating that these groupings are "normal" or "natural," noting that students "look for their peers" could show that there are identity-related aspects that could act as barriers to full inclusion. In this regard, Valero Errazu (2017)[4] explains that to prevent this situation, diverse groups (mixed groupings) could be promoted for activities so that students work with people from different backgrounds, which is what is being implemented with the RACODIL project. Guerrero (2013)[24] advocates for an "intercultural pedagogy" approach that seeks to promote knowledge and integration of different cultures within a culture of values, which is what is being done with this project.

The formation of ghettos in classrooms can be linked to various causes. One of the main reasons is the language barrier, as students who do not speak the local language often group together with peers who share their mother tongue as a way to feel safe. Additionally, the lack of inclusive strategies in the classroom—such as well-managed cooperative work or intercultural activities—can reinforce separation between groups. Many immigrant students also come from socially or geographically segregated environments, and this dynamic is often reproduced in school settings. Experiences of discrimination, prejudice, or lack of acceptance from peers can lead these students to isolate themselves or seek refuge among those with similar backgrounds. Furthermore, the limited visibility of their cultures in the curriculum or among school staff contributes to a sense of exclusion. Finally, the low level of family participation—often due to language barriers or unfamiliarity with the education system—makes broader integration more difficult for immigrant students.

With regard to teachers' perception of language competencies, the data analyzed indicate the following: the data collected on the Spanish language skills of migrant pupils from non-Spanish backgrounds (**Figure 4**) show a positive perception (of improvement) after the RACODIL project's implementation.
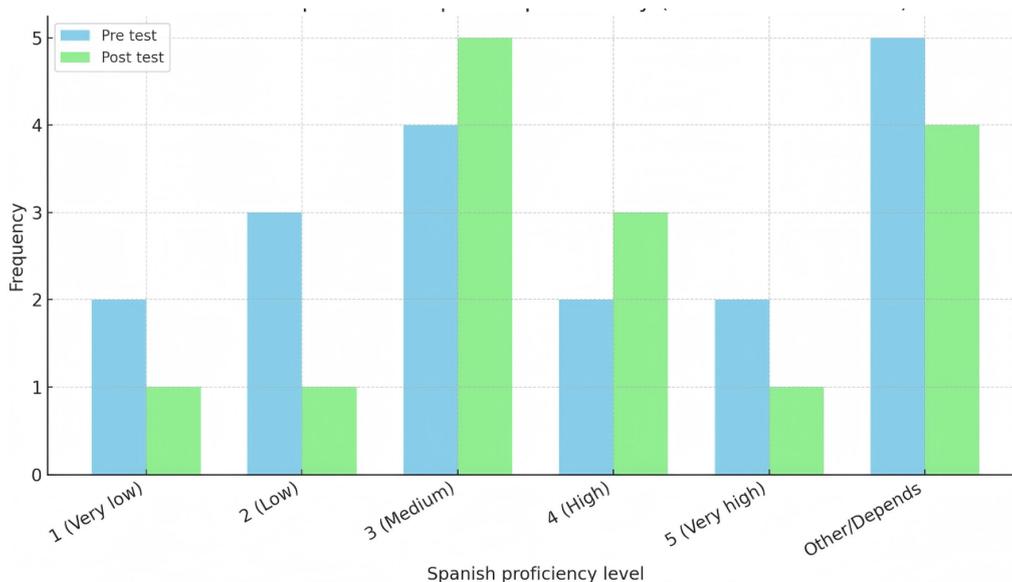

Figure 4. Comparison of Spanish language proficiency (pre-test vs post-test) of students of non-Spanish origin.

This comparison suggests that perceptions regarding migrant students' academic levels remain complex and influenced by a range of contextual factors. In the pre-test, responses were evenly distributed across low, medium, and good levels, with many pointing to variables such as country of origin, time of residence, language proficiency, and family involvement. These findings reflect the inherent heterogeneity of the migrant student population and indicate that generalizations may be both inaccurate and potentially biased. Some of the arguments supporting this view were:

"if they migrate from their country of origin, the level is zero, except for students arriving from South American countries," "some of them have very low skills, so we have to work to integrate them into society and the school, in this case. Other migrant pupils have no difficulties" or "they usually come without speaking the language, some with French literacy and others without any literacy at all." In the four cases categorized as depending, the arguments are varied: "it depends on the family: the Arabs have a low level, the Romanians have an average level" or "it depends: in some it's good, and in others it's not, with the same opportunities as others, but their involvement changes a lot."

What emerges from the comparison is less about a clear upward or downward trend, and more about the persistence of highly individualized and nuanced assessments. This diversity of opinion highlights the difficulty in reaching a consensus about the academic performance of such a varied group. It also underlines the importance of avoiding interpretations based on stereotypes, cultural assumptions, particularly those that associate academic capacity with nationality or ethnicity, or broad categorizations.

The data collected on the Spanish linguistic skill of migrant pupils of non-Spanish origin show a positive perception (of improvement) after the implementation of the RACODIL project.

In the case of the post-test, some of the arguments referring to the skill level were "RACODIL is only for the third educational cycle. The rest of the pupils were assisted by volunteers from Comuninclusión, special needs, ordinary support..." (level 2); "it has improved thanks to the involvement of the school, although families need to be more involved" and that "I can't assess or evaluate the past year very much" (level 3). The teachers who argued that the level of competency improvement is 4 explain that it is "because they have an easier time speaking" and that "yes, but with a limited vocabulary." The argument "because of their dedication to language learning" was given by one of the teachers to indicate the level of proficiency acquired was.

In any case, although improvement was not specified in all cases, in general (80%) they felt that there was an improvement (rating between 3 and 5).

In relation to the language skills of migrants of Spanish origin, after the implementation of the RACODIL project, the data obtained (**Figure 5**) show that, in the teachers' opinion, the level of Spanish proficiency of Spanish pupils is at an intermediate level, with five mentions at level 3 and three responses at level 4, which indicates a perceived improvement in the ability to understand and express themselves in Spanish.
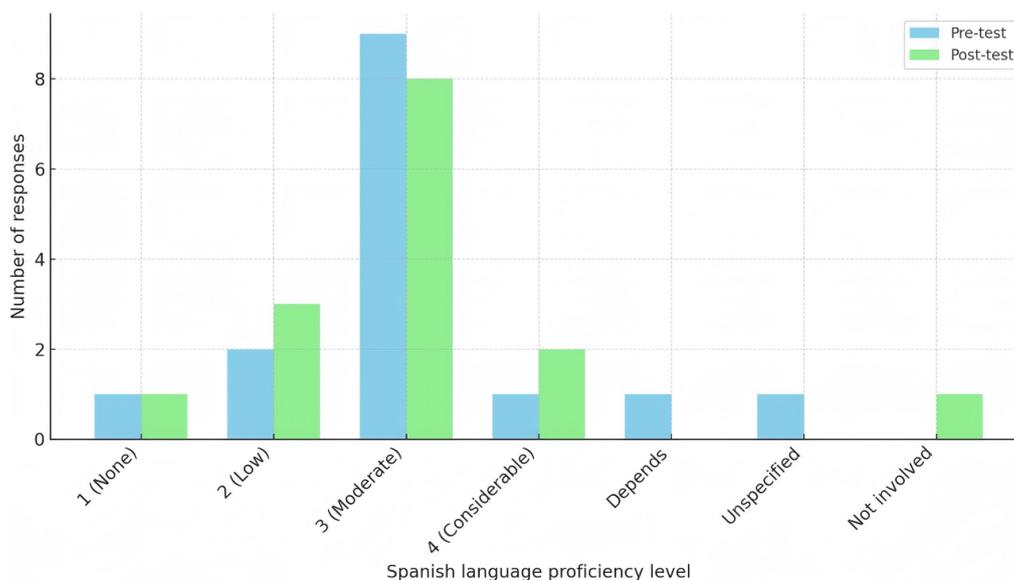

Figure 5. Comparation of the level of Spanish language proficiency (pre-test vs post-test) of students of Spanish origin.

The comparison suggests that, while most teachers did not explicitly state the reasons behind their assessments in the pre-test, the few did offer varied and individualized explanations. These included age-appropriate development,

vocabulary acquisition, differences in study habits, and student involvement. This points to a recognition of diversity within the student body, rather than a uniform assessment of language competence; some excerpts of the answers were: "The level is right for pupils their age," "In general it's better, they use more vocabulary, although I also have cases with poor language skills due to a lack of reading and study habits," "It depends. There are different levels. It depends on their involvement, but it's less than a few years ago" or "Due to their individual characteristics."

The range of responses also suggests that teachers perceive language development as influenced by multiple, intersecting factors—including personal characteristics and educational engagement—rather than solely by migrant status. Notably, some teachers indicate that the situation has improved compared to previous years, which may imply a gradual adaptation process or the impact of support measures.

As previously explained, most of the teachers did not explain their response either, however, we can refer to the response provided by a teacher who indicated that "RACODIL is only for the third educational cycle. For the immigrants, it must have helped somewhat, since the mixed groups were required to speak in Spanish. For the Spaniards, they improved their vocabulary somewhat," which, once again, is in line with the mixed groupings proposed by Banks (2006)[7] and the implementation of intercultural pedagogy proposed by Guerrero (2013)[24].

In relation to the question about the implementation of the RACODIL project (Q6), and the improvement of migrant students' performance through language learning, "Can it positively influence the acquisition of the Spanish language? To what extent?," the data show (**Figure 6**) that teachers initially considered that this type of project could influence different aspects such as helping pupils to understand explanations better, increasing their motivation to learn new things, or helping to improve pupils' education. More skeptical opinions were also expressed, however, referring to the project's timeframe, the human resources available or the fulfilment of all the requirements to carry it out. There were also allusions to language improvement and therefore to their academic results.

In the post-test, however, the responses were more moderate. This may be mainly due to how recent the project

is and, therefore, to the lack of conclusive data on its implementation. Moreover, it should be noted that these are teachers' perceptions and that at the time the survey was carried out they did not yet have objective data on actual academic performance from the post-test evaluations.

The skepticism expressed by some teachers is entirely understandable. Not only was the project driven by just a portion of the teaching staff, but initiatives focused on language acquisition typically require time and continuity to yield visible results. Language learning is a complex, long-term process, and its impact may not be immediately apparent in the short term. Therefore, it's natural for doubts to arise, especially when the effort invested does not produce quick or measurable outcomes. Building trust in such projects often depends on sustained collaboration, clear communication, gradually demonstrating their benefits over time.

The comparison between the pre- and post-test responses reveals a generally positive and consistent evaluation of the RACODIL project, with a shift from initial expectations to observed outcomes. Initially, teachers expressed optimism about the project's potential to enhance academic performance through improved language acquisition and increased motivation. These expectations were largely confirmed in the post-test, where teachers emphasized improvements in motivation, participation, oral expression, and the integration of immigrant pupils. However, the post-test responses also reflect a more nuanced and critical perspective, highlighting structural challenges such as limited family involvement, the need for sustained teacher engagement, and concerns about continuity. Some opinions stated: "maybe, improving language acquisition and, with it, improving their grades and making them aware of the importance of working hard to have a better future," "I think it can contribute to improving the pupils' educational outcomes", "yes, increasing their motivation to learn new things," "yes, positively, better marks, better grades," "yes, more motivation to learn new things," or "yes, positively, better grades as they understand the explanations better". These limitations suggest that while the project was effective in creating a supportive and motivating environment—aligning with Krashen's theory on the importance of lowering the affective filter for language learning—long-term impact will depend on addressing broader systemic factors.
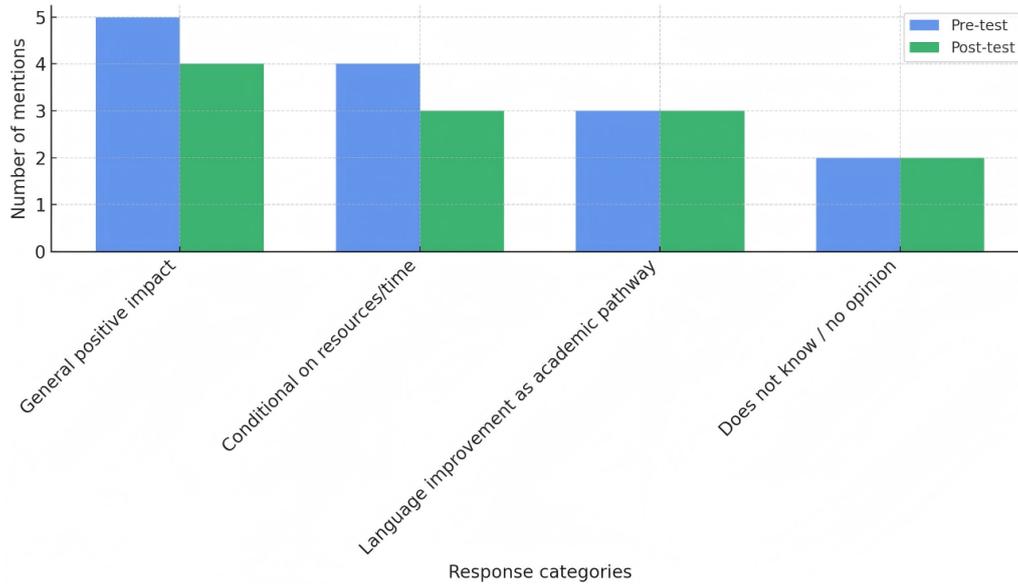
Figure 6. Perceived academic impact of the RACODIL project (pre-test vs post-test).

However, it is important to note that, due to the limitations of the sample in this study, the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts. Therefore, expanding the sample size to include other similar settings would be necessary to facilitate comparisons of opinions and results.

4. Conclusions

The inclusion of migrant students in educational systems where the language of instruction differs from their native tongue poses unique challenges, particularly in rural environments, which often face resource constraints and cultural barriers. However, these same contexts can offer valuable opportunities for innovation, as exemplified by the implementation of the RACODIL project. This case study, based on teacher perceptions, highlights several positive impacts of the RACODIL project. Specifically, the use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Game-Based Learning (GBL) methodologies was found to enhance both linguistic and social skills among students. These approaches fostered active and personalized learning, increased motivation, and improved communication, self-esteem, and peer interaction. Importantly, migrant students without prior knowledge of Spanish were more effectively integrated, while the educational experience for native students was also enriched. Teachers noted a slight improvement in language proficiency among non-Spanish-speaking migrant pupils, with more noticeable gains among those from Spanish-speaking backgrounds. Vocabulary acquisition—one of the project's primary objectives—was identified as a key area of progress. In addition to academic benefits, the project contributed to improved social cohesion within the school. Teachers observed better participation, greater tolerance, and stronger community integration, consistent with Krashen's (1982) theory that a motivating, emotionally secure environment reduces the "affective filter" and supports second language acquisition. Initiatives like Intercultural Days and the Family School encouraged the participation of families, helping them feel more welcome and integrated into the school community. Teachers also emphasized the vital role families play in reinforcing learning and supporting students' educational journeys.

This study demonstrates that PBL and GBL methodologies, implemented through a community-supported initiative like RACODIL, can serve as effective tools for enhancing migrant inclusion in rural educational contexts. The project not only addressed language barriers but also contributed to social cohesion by promoting respect, inclusion, and cooperation. Moreover, RACODIL offers a replicable model of collaborative action involving local stakeholders and academic institutions. It underscores the importance of holistic approaches—where education, family, and community intersect—to address the multifaceted challenges faced by migrant students. Despite promising results, the study is subject to several limitations such as: 1) small sample size: The study was conducted in a single

rural school, limiting the generalizability of the findings; 2) subjective data: The data relies primarily on teacher perceptions, without direct correlation to academic outcomes (which are being explored in a separate study; 3) limited duration: The project is still in its early stages (Phase 1), with only one year of implementation, which restricts conclusions about its long-term impact; and 4) lack of detailed justifications: Many teacher responses lacked depth or explanation, making it difficult to fully understand the rationale behind their evaluations.

Due to the above commented limitations, future practice and research could consider to track the academic and social development of students over longer periods to assess the sustained impact of the project, to combine qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the project, and to replicate project in similar rural linguistically diverse areas for comparative analysis. Also, efforts are needed to plan effective strategies for increasing family involvement within migrant communities and to prepare teachers in intercultural and inclusive pedagogies. Finally, public administrations integration should be desirable to ensure continuity, funding and accessibility. Although still in its early stages, the RACODIL micro-project represents a foundational step toward building a more inclusive and equitable education system in rural, multilingual contexts. The observed improvements in student motivation, family engagement, and social integration signal a path forward not only for the school involved, but also for other communities seeking to embrace diversity and inclusion in meaningful, systemic ways.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, research, data curation, software, visualization and writing (preparation of the original draft, writing, revising and editing), R.C.L.; research, writing (preparation of the original draft, writing, revising and editing), A.R.P.C. and M.B.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Acknowledgments

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Questions asked in the pre- and post-tests.

– Q1. Can you specify what kind of difficulties you encounter in your classroom or school?
– Q2. What is the level of respect among students in your classroom or school? Could you explain why? Curriculum mismatch
– Q3. Are there "ghettos" within your classroom or school, and could you explain why?
– Q4. What is the level of language proficiency in Spanish of your migrant pupils or pupils from non-Spanish backgrounds?
– Q5. What is the level of Spanish language proficiency

of your Spanish pupils or pupils of Spanish origin?

– Q6. Do you think that a project like RACODIL, which aims to include and improve the performance of migrant learners through language learning, can positively influence the acquisition of the Spanish language? To what extent?

– Q7. Do you think that a project like RACODIL will really influence the academic performance of your students? How? To what extent?

– Q8. Do you think that the activities implemented in the RACODIL project on the natural environment around them can facilitate a better understanding of the environment and, therefore, facilitate the integration of immigrant students?

– Q9. Do you think that a project like RACODIL has influenced the academic performance of your students? How? To what extent

References

[1] Figueroa, T., Pineda, R., Suarez Meza, N.J., 2024. The role of the teacher in inclusive education with migrant students. Dialectics. 1(23). DOI: https://doi.org/10.56219/dialctica.v1i23.3070 (in Spanish)

[2] Rodríguez Izquierdo, R.M., 2018. Inclusive linguistic policy in Spain for newly arrived migrant students: Dilemmas and tensions in times of crisis. Education Policy Analysis Archives. 26(154). DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.26.3461 (in Spanish)

[3] Goenechea Permisán, C., 2011. The dilemmas of educational care for newly arrived immigrant students: Comparative study of the Andalusian (ATAL) and Madrid (Aulas de Enlace) models. Teaching Staff: Journal of Curriculum and Teacher Education. 15(3), 263–278. (in Spanish)

[4] Valero Errazu, D., Plaja Viñas, T., 2017. Inclusive education for immigrant students: Lessons from the United States, Canada, and Australia. Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research. 7(3), 316–338. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17583/remie.2017.2946 (in Spanish)

[5] Rodríguez Acevedo, A., Felicetti, V.L., 2022. Configuration of pedagogical practices among rural elementary school teachers. Contrapontos. 22(2). (in Spanish)

[6] Vygotsky, L., 2006. Thought and Language (Cognition and Development), 1st ed. Paidós: Barcelona, Spain. (in Spanish)

[7] Banks, J.A., 2019. Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching, 6th ed. Routledge: New York, NY, USA; London, UK. (in Spanish)

[8] Cummins, J., 2002. Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire. Ediciones Morata: Madrid, Spain. (in Spanish)

[9] González Pérez, A., Álvarez Serrano, A., 2022. Game-based learning for second language learning in higher education. Innoeduca. International Journal of Technology and Educational Innovation. 8(2), 114–128. (in Spanish)

[10] Elizondo Carmona, C., 2018. Project-based learning and universal design for learning (UDL): A guide for their integration in the classroom. Available from: https://www.coralelizondo.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/aprendizaje-basado-proyectos-diseno-universal-aprendizaje.pdf (cited 25 January 2025). (in Spanish)

[11] López Pena, Z., 2018. The project based learning (PBL) as methodology of work as university classroom of spanish language with italian students. Aula de Encuentro: Journal of Research and Communication of Educational Experiences. 20(2), 171–196. Available from: https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6777854 (in Spanish)

[12] Cantero Cortinas, S., Reyes Torres, A., 2024. Literacy development through game-based learning and gamification in EFL in primary education: A comparative study. DIGILEC: International Journal of Languages and Cultures. 11, 240–268. (in Spanish)

[13] Krashen, S.D., 1982. Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition, 1st ed. Pergamon Press: Oxford, UK; New York, NY, USA. (in Spanish)

[14] Bryman, A., 2004. Social Research Methods, 5th ed. Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK.

[15] Rouder, J., Saucier, O., Kinder, R., et al., 2021. What to do with all those open-ended responses? Data visualization techniques for survey researchers. Survey Practice. DOI: https://doi.org/10.29115/SP-2021-0008

[16] Jansen, H., 2012. The logic of qualitative survey research and its position in the field of social research methods. Paradigmas. 4, 39–72. (in Spanish)

[17] Rueda Sánchez, M.P., Sigala-Paparella, S.-P., Armas, W.J., 2023. Qualitative analysis by priori categories: Data reduction for managerial studies. Science and Society: Dominican Republic. 48(2), 83–96. (in Spanish)

[18] Rincón Gómez, W.A., 2014. Open questions in surveys. How to perform the analysis? Communication in Statistics. 7(2), 139–156. (in Spanish)

[19] Calavia Lombardo, S., Mazas Gil, B., Bravo Bravo, B., 2022. What bioethics contents are addressed in 11th grade Scientific Culture books? How and what do teachers work in their classrooms? Eureka Journal on Teaching and Dissemination of Science. 19(2), 2103. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25267/rev_eureka_ensen_divulg_cienc.2022.v19.i2.2103 (in Spanish)

[20] Elliot, J., 1990. Action Research in Education, 1st ed. Ediciones Morata: Madrid, Spain. (in Spanish)

[21] Cisterna Cabrera, F., 2005. Categorization and Triangulation as Processes of Validation of Knowledge in Qual-

itative Investigations. 14(1), 61–71. Available from: https://www.ubiobio.cl/theoria/v/v14/a6.pdf (in Spanish)

[22] Quintas Quintas, M., Arratibel Insausti, N., Barquín López, A., 2022. Family involvement in schools with a high presence of immigrant and socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Ibero-American Journal on Quality, Effectiveness and Change in Education (REICE). 20(4), 89–105. (in Spanish)

[23] García Correa, A., Ferreira Cristofolini, G.M., 2005. School coexistence in the classrooms. International Journal of Developmental and Educational Psychology. 2(1), 163–183. (in Spanish)

[24] Guerrero Valdebenito, R.M., 2013. Sociocultural integration and teaching of Spanish in Andalucia: Application of the program Temporary Classrooms of Linguistic Adaptation (ATAL). Perfiles Educativos. 35(142), 42–53. (in Spanish)