

**Title:****Promoting equitable literacy expectations in CLIL: Empowering student teachers' attitude shifts through Reading to Learn in Service-Learning<sup>1</sup>**

Running head:

Apprenticing R2L in Teacher Education for CLIL

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**Abstract**

This study explores the impact of two Service-Learning (SL) projects on student teachers' preparation and perceptions in relation to literacy teaching in English as a foreign language within CLIL programmes. The projects offered hands-on training in preparing and delivering lessons applying Rose and Martin's (2012) Reading to Learn (R2L) approach to support children at two Madrid primary schools implementing CLIL with high proportions of at-risk pupils and socioculturally diverse student bodies. One hundred and thirteen undergraduate student teachers specialising in English as a Foreign Language at the Complutense University School of Education participated in the SL projects. The projects' goals included developing the students' civic engagement and disposition to gain understanding of the potential of a systematic, evidence-based approach to literacy pedagogy for guiding all pupils to acquire the reading and writing abilities needed for educational success. Data from questionnaires, focus group interviews, and reflective journals were collected and analysed. Student teachers faced the challenges of apprehending and effectively applying the R2L strategies in classrooms characterised by pupils' widely ranging levels of preparation for reading and writing in English. Their reflections show evolution towards readiness and awareness of the possibilities of adopting proactive measures, such as systematic literacy instruction, in order to ensure the progress of pupils as they face the challenges of CLIL in the context of socioeconomic and educational inequity within classrooms and across schools.

Key words: CLIL, inequity, Reading to Learn, Service-Learning for literacy, initial teacher education

**1. Introduction**

Over the past decades, strategies to enable education to form part of the solutions to socio-economic, demographic, environmental and technological challenges of the continent set up by the Council of Europe have led to the development, evolution

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and spread of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Lorenzo, 2007, European Commission, 2012). CLIL is now firmly established in a high proportion of schools across Spain, the context of the present study, where the results of these strategies are now becoming evident. Based on the original motivations for creating and promoting this approach, CLIL is intended to be inclusive, contributing to overcoming inequities in education by providing greater access to “languages for all”, that is, to pupils from all kinds of backgrounds, regardless of their socio-economic situations or educational needs (Marsh, 2012, ch. 6).

Nonetheless, there are a range of forces and tendencies that affect educational outcomes and CLIL is not immune to them, so differing results of CLIL programmes are found in the diverging national and regional contexts where this approach is implemented. For example, in the Madrid bilingual programme, studies have shown how, after whole-school CLIL in primary education (an inclusive practice), when the pupils move on to secondary education they are assigned to high-exposure or low-exposure CLIL strands, depending on the English competence they have achieved during primary. This streaming into different strands leads to students learning more academically challenging subjects through English (high exposure) or limiting the CLIL subjects to the most practical ones, such as Physical Education or Technology (low exposure). Streaming at the start of secondary education has, thus, become a source of segregation: evidence has shown that it is a mechanism by which pupils’ families’ socioeconomic status ends up indirectly impacting on their opportunities to reap the full benefits of the academic and linguistic benefits of CLIL (Mediavilla, Mancebón, Gomez-Sancho & Pines, 2019; Hidalgo McCabe, 2020; Tompkins, 2022).

In parallel to the potential force of CLIL as a means for offering “multilingualism across state school networks in line with democratic, egalitarian and

inclusive continental language policies” (Lorenzo, Granados & Rico, 2021, p. 394), and, at the same time, the risks of inequity that may arise in the policy of segregation into strands in some bilingual programmes (as applied in Madrid secondary school bilingual programmes; see also Evnitskaya & Llinares, this issue), the socioeconomic factors that affect pupils’ lives form part of the educational reality in the context of this study. In recent years, an increase in inequality has been detected in the educational results achieved in Spanish schools, associated with policies framed as measures to ensure parents’ right to choose where their children are educated. One of the practical effects of such policies in the region of Madrid, the context of this study, is a high measure of inequity across schools, where some urban schools are especially disadvantaged. At certain schools, children considered vulnerable or at-risk due to socio-economic factors that affect their families, constitute the majority of the student body (Ferrer & Gortazar, 2021). In many cases, these most challenged public schools implement CLIL (around two-thirds of all Madrid’s public primary schools do so), though often lacking in adequate resources for ensuring full inclusion of the diverse pupils they serve.

In addition, Spain also has one of the highest school dropout rates in the European Union: in 2020, the number of people of between 18 and 24 years of age who had not completed upper secondary education in Spain was double the EU average for both males and females, while the percentage of males that had abandoned education was the highest in all of the 27 EU countries (National Statistics Institute, 2022). In fact, this situation still represents an improvement over the percentages of previous years; but it continues to hold as an area in which, clearly, the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal number 4, quality education for all, remains a target that requires focussed attention and clearly coordinated strategies if it is to be attained.

One strategy that has been identified as crucial for progressing towards this goal, throughout compulsory education levels, is that of focussing on the integration of literacy across the school curriculum and languages of schooling in CLIL programmes (Lorenzo & Meyer, 2018). The relationship between, on the one hand, strong abilities in reading and writing, and on the other, high levels of success in learning across the school curriculum, has long been recognised (Rose, 2005; Rose & Martin, 2012). Thus, alongside the substantial percentage of school dropouts in Spain mentioned above, pupils' results in reading comprehension assessments are an additional area of concern, despite showing a tendency towards improvement in recent PIRLS and PISA results (Fundación Social La Caixa, 2020; Jerrim, Lopez-Agudo, & Marcenaro Gutierrez, 2020). In relation to the present study, as stated by the Council of Europe (n.d.), one of the main outcomes of their efforts in the spread of CLIL has been to achieve "recognition of the importance of taking into account the language dimension in the teaching and learning of all school subjects in order to ensure access to education for all" (section 2, bullet point 5).

Yet despite widespread implementation of CLIL, the challenge of teacher preparation has not yet been resolved satisfactorily (Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Custodio Espinar, 2019) at the nationwide scale, nor in the Madrid Region. Initial teacher education (hereon, ITE) focussing on CLIL for undergraduates in Education can scarcely be found at any public university in Spain. In contrast to this lack of CLIL in initial teacher education, the Degree in Education programmes do provide training for students to qualify as English language specialist primary school teachers (a 30-credit (ECTS) itinerary of four elective English teaching methodology plus curricular internships), known as the "English Mention". Yet candidates hoping to teach within the CLIL content areas (Art, Music, Science, Physical Education) are not

required to have the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching “Mention”. Instead, these candidates must pass the accreditation exam administered by regional educational authorities for primary school CLIL teaching for the Madrid bilingual programme, mainly designed to assess whether they have an advanced competence in English (CEFR C1), but not necessarily testing for knowledge of CLIL methodological principles nor preparation for literacy instruction in foreign languages. Thus, despite the priorities upheld for language education and CLIL across the different regions of Spain, a relatively low proportion of courses are devoted to specific training for literacy, or even for languages, in ITE.

In response to the contrasting trends of sharply increasing numbers of CLIL schools versus the scant offer of training for language and literacy teaching, several efforts like the ones reported in the present article have arisen, springing from the formation of research groups and the implementation of European and National projects on language and literacy pedagogy. By way of one of such projects, a group of professors, teachers and researchers were introduced to the Reading to Learn (R2L) approach (Rose & Martin, 2012) in Spain and five other European countries. This approach is based on a specific perspective on language and its use, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), in which language is understood as a social semiotic system for creating meaning in context. Thanks to the work of Professors Rose and Martin (2012), SFL has been further extended and applied, following pedagogical theories of the role of verbal interaction in teaching and learning (e.g. Vygotsky, 1934/1986), to develop R2L. A range of teaching innovation projects arose from the introduction of R2L in Spain, in both initial and in-service teacher training (Whittaker & Garcia Parejo, 2018). The current article reports on two of these projects, which shared the common feature of providing specific training in the R2L approach

integrated with hands-on experience in the use of this pedagogy for literacy instruction with pupils at two primary schools.

The article is organised as follows. In the next section some information about previous research on service-learning in ITE and its impact on trainee or student-teachers' attitudes and competencies is provided. The following section briefly reviews the relevance of literacy instruction as a fundamental component of CLIL, and some basic tenets of the R2L approach to literacy teaching and learning, showing why its implementation was a central pillar for the projects reported on herein. Then, we offer a description of the service-learning (SL) projects, to continue, by offering original, qualitative data and analysing insights from these data into the impacts of the participation in the projects. In particular, we explore how participation impacted upon the student teachers' dispositions towards the integration of literacy instruction in their own future teaching practice as a means to widen the scope of opportunities for the success of pupils in CLIL programmes, regardless of their sociolinguistic and socioeconomic circumstances. Finally, as a conclusion, we will review some of the challenges and possibilities of implementing practical projects such as those reported on to empower future teachers' efficacy in literacy teaching and learning in contexts of diverse learners and educational inequity.

## **2. Service Learning for developing teacher literacy competencies**

### *2.1. Literacy and its place in education*

The 21st century has brought with it a host of changes affecting what the term *literacy* refers to, as the uses and the very nature of written language are evolving at increasing speeds. The forms of written communication that students use, in online contexts as well as in print materials, comprise different semiotic modes, including

print, charts, graphs, pictures, video and audio media: all central components of meaning-making (Kress et al., 2005; Lim, Towndrow, & Min Tan, 2021). Nevertheless, traditional elements of literacy, those that have been considered definitive in research and teaching practice over time, are the foundations for literacies required for today's multimodal means of communication. As stated by Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, and Cammack (2004, p. 16),

Foundational literacies [...] include skill sets such as phonemic awareness, word recognition, decoding knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, inferential reasoning, the writing process, spelling, response to literature, and others required for the literacies of the book and other printed material.

As these same authors acknowledge, foundational literacies can be expected to become increasingly important, albeit insufficient, for achieving full competence in the use of new information and communication technologies. Meanwhile, the integration of multimodal literacies into the education of learners of English as an additional language represents an essential step forward in facing current educational challenges with young learners, as shown by authors such as Royce (2007), Yi, Shin and Cimasko (2019) and Shin, Cimasko and Yi (2021 and authors therein).

## *2.2. Service Learning for enhancing teacher preparation*

The relevance of literacy in education entails the need for teachers who are responsible for literacy instruction in first or additional languages and competent in teaching both foundational literacies and multimodal literacies. This constitutes the fundamental motivation for the Service-Learning projects described herein. Meanwhile, formal training in literacy instruction is scant, given the low proportion of credits devoted to first and foreign language teaching methodology within the ITE training programmes (mentioned in the previous section) of the Undergraduate Degree in

Primary Education.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, it is widely acknowledged that the beliefs and self-efficacy of student teachers as literacy instructors are fundamental to their potential and success in their future profession (Clark & Newbury, 2019); and also, that ITE, even at an international level, tends to provide insufficient training in how to teach the components, such as those mentioned above, of foundational literacies (Binks-Canterell, Washburn, & Joshi, 2020).

In response to this situation, the proposal for integrating Service Learning into the courses involving language and literacy teaching methodology was brought up in the context of our research group. Service-learning has been defined as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed for student development; and reflection and reciprocity are the essential concepts of service learning” (Jacoby, 2014, pp. 1-2). Or, as stated by Kirkland (2014, p. 136) SL provides training in which,

[...] in conjunction with campus-based instruction, teacher learners are involved in some project in the community that simultaneously contributes to the quality of local people’s lives and provides unique, often transformative experiences for the students who provide the service.

In other words, the students that engage in SL carry out activities that are intended to offer different forms of assistance to community members to solve challenges or needs they may be facing, while developing these students’ own competences and leading them to reflect on their own learning process.

The implementation of SL in ITE has been explored in a number of studies, showing a range of positive outcomes (see, for example, the meta analyses on SL impacts in Novak, Markey & Allen, 2007; and in Celio, Durlak and Dymnicki, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> In the context of this study, students of the Degree in Primary Education who do not specialise in EFL only devote 4% of the total number of study credits to English; those who choose to specialise in EFL for Primary Education devote 16% of the total study credits to specific pedagogical training for this language.

In this regard, as explained by Davis and Moely (2007, p. 283) in reference to the United States on a national level, or by Álvarez Aguirre (2019, p. 234) on the Region of Madrid, Spain, graduates in Education tend to show a low degree of satisfaction with the preparation provided at their School of Education or University. A recurring demand for the provision of a range of hands-on, active and practical experiences has been voiced over recent decades as a crucial step towards improving the outcomes of ITE programmes. In response, there has been an increase in the provision of opportunities for SL to trainee teachers, with satisfactory results in different contexts (Murphy & Tan, 2014; Chiva-Bartoll & Gil-Gómez, 2018).

Liu and Lin (2017), for example, report on SL experiences implemented with student teachers in Taiwan. These authors analysed the SL project results applying Bennett's (2017) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, which establishes several stages that lead individuals to be able to show deep cultural adaptability and disposition to accept new cultures continually and completely. Through qualitative analysis of interview and reflection diary data, they identified the following themes: sense of anxiety and anticipation prior to the service encounter; barriers that the students faced during the service encounter; and the ability to question and observe, as well as the students' recognition of their own limitations and prejudice. These authors' recommendations include the essential requisite of structured reflection, which can be ensured if students keep diaries and by guaranteeing opportunities for in-class discussion. Students should be guided in challenging existing beliefs and offered support and encouragement in the face of adversity or confusion during the project implementation. Such reflection deepens students' understanding of social justice and cultural diversity, motivating them to generate new perspectives and intercultural sensitivity.

Similar observations and conclusions are proposed by Kirkland (2014), in his study on SL for literacy in ITE within urban contexts. This author also mentions several purposes that SL is well suited for, and among them includes that of illustrating specific teaching approaches, a central goal of the projects reported on in the present article. This author also highlights how SL provokes critical thinking, and can disrupt dominant discourses, “thus encouraging preservice teachers to interrogate the landscapes of learning that foster inequity”, as well as leading them to question approaches to education and learning based on deficit thinking (p. 135). In analysing interview data from the participating students, Kirkland identifies two competing frames through which they understood their SL experiences: those who considered the project as a way to “save” the youth whom they were serving; these students were positioned in a dominant role and detached from the learners’ communities. In contrast, other student teachers framed the SL work as a way to serve through enabling the students who they helped to feel engaged as members of their communities. These student teachers found themselves in a position of mutual solidarity and more attached to the communities where the SL experiences took place. In his conclusions, Kirkland (2014) highlights the need to ensure SL projects avoid reinforcing stereotypes or perpetuating oppressive teaching practices based on deficit models.

Taking into consideration previous research, presented in the studies just mentioned, it is clear that SL can make an impact on preservice teachers’ views and attitudes. In the present study, the projects that we focus on were designed with the goal that the participating student teachers grasp the fundamental principles of the Reading to Learn (Rose & Martin, 2012) approach to literacy teaching and learning, and begin to design and implement this approach in responding to a real-world purpose, serving the needs of local primary school pupils. In other words, these were the knowledge and

skills learning goals for the student teachers. Simultaneously, interwoven with that of developing an understanding of the R2L approach, the attitudinal goals of the projects were centred on developing the student teachers' civic engagement and commitment towards serving diverse learners and those at risk of educational disadvantages.

### **3. Reading to Learn: literacy pedagogy for successful school learning**

The initiative to design the SL projects arose several years after some of the professors in the research group team had participated in the Comenius Multilateral Project TeL4ELE (Teacher Learning for European Literacy Education, 2011-2013), led by Dr. Rachel Whittaker. By way of this project, a team of teacher educators was introduced to the R2L pedagogy, leading to their involvement in the design of materials and training courses. The research group members, professors at the Complutense University School of Education, encouraged by the interest and positive results of TeL4ELE (see Whittaker & Garcia Parejo, 2018) worked over successive years to integrate R2L into the primary school teacher education programmes within the courses on first (Spanish) and foreign language (English) teaching (García-Parejo & Whittaker, 2017). The relevance of the R2L approach within the context of our ITE programmes and of the schools in our region, characterised by the inequity in educational outcomes described above in section 1, became clear to the research group team based on the responses of pre- and in-service teachers who had participated in the training initiatives that had been implemented over the years.

*Reading to Learn*, as described in Rose (2005), was developed through long-term action research with teachers of all levels of education in Australia in response to “urgent needs, particularly of Indigenous and other marginalised learners, to rapidly improve reading and writing for educational access and success” (p. 41). R2L brings together a set of strategies, organised into a systematic sequence of reading and writing

activities, and has been independently evaluated in a wide range of cultural and linguistic contexts, applied to both first and additional language and literacy learning (Culican, 2006; Program Evaluation Unit, State of New South Wales, 2012; Becerra, Herazo, García, Sagre & Díaz, 2020; Bhila, Tawanda & Wallace Mataka, 2021). Results of these evaluations have repeatedly shown that the R2L approach is “four times as effective as other literacy approaches at accelerating reading and writing development, capable of improving learners’ reading ability from junior primary to secondary levels within one year” (Rose, 2005, p. 132).

The teaching-learning cycle of R2L strategies (Rose & Martin, 2012) articulates an activity sequence that situates explicit teaching of reading and writing in social contexts. To prepare to apply these strategies, teachers firstly select and analyse a text that fits with the curriculum goals their pupils must reach; they require well-written examples of the genres that learners need to read and write in the school curricular areas. These texts serve as models for pupils’ writing; by analysing the text they will use, teachers identify the most relevant, specific language resources that authors utilise to achieve their communicative purpose: resources that become specific objectives the learners will be guided to understand and eventually use in their own writing. The key characteristic of the R2L approach is that every task is contextualised within the text as a whole and within the text’s main communicative purpose. Thus, for a procedural genre (like a recipe or a protocol), for instance, teachers can establish as objectives “understand and use imperative verb forms and sequence terms to express steps in a procedure”.

Depending on the learners’ needs and the complexity of the model text, teachers will prioritise work on the appropriate linguistic level / unit of language, as depicted in diagram (1): the whole text (outer circle), a fragment of several paragraphs or just one

(middle circle), a sentence, phrase or individual words, their morphology and spelling (inner circle, also known as the *intensive strategies*). Thus, even if the lesson is devoted to the inner circle strategies, they are contextualised and linked to the whole text and its purpose: if it is, as we have just exemplified for procedural genres, to communicate instructions, learners are guided to identify the author’s grammatical choices – imperatives and sequencing devices - as those necessary to efficiently fulfil this kind of purpose.

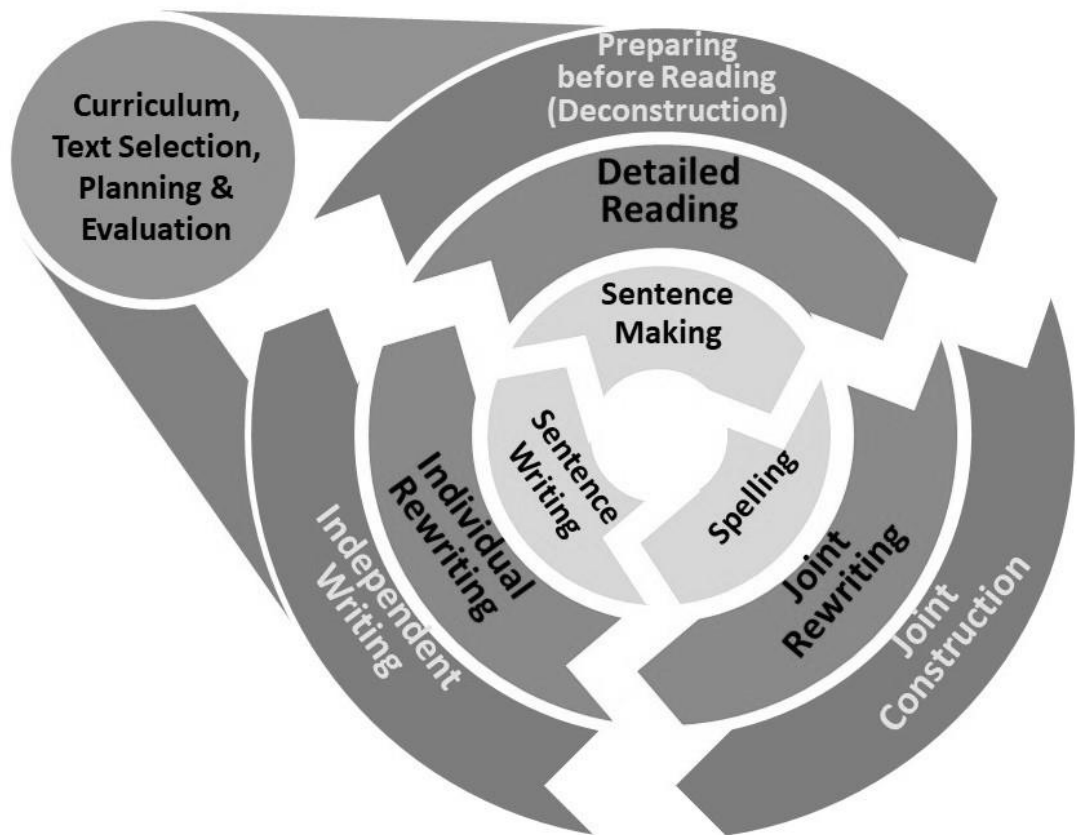


Figure 1. The Reading to Learn pedagogical cycle. Three levels of scaffolded support. Source: Rose (2010, p. 95)

Each step in the R2L cycle begins with teachers *preparing* learners by providing them with information, then asking a *task* of the learners and finally *elaborating* upon the learners’ response. Thus, the teacher tells learners about the text they will read before they begin reading. Then, during reading in class, pupils are guided to

comprehend the text in depth. The teacher, following carefully designed student-teacher interactional strategies, guides learners to notice how meaning unfolds throughout the stages and phases of the whole text or fragment. The cycle ends when learners write new texts in the same genre, first with the teacher's guidance, then in small groups and finally, independently. In sum, as explained by Martin and Rose (2005), this approach provides consistent scaffolding, at the level of the sequence of teaching-learning activities that lead learners from understanding model texts to writing their own texts in the same genre, to the interaction cycle designed to ensure the success of all learners thanks to the teachers' preparation for every task they ask of learners and to the elaborations teachers add that reinforce and extend pupils' learning to ensure they all meet the learning objectives.

Learning to teach with this approach requires hard work of teachers because they must find and analyse texts, then organise and plan in detail how they can enable all their pupils to comprehend and use the language resources, found in the model text, in their own writing. The efforts, however, have been demonstrated to pay off and to be especially valuable for learners who are behind in their literacy skills. The SL projects described in the next section exemplify our student teachers' experience of apprehending and applying R2L.

## **4. Methodology**

### *4.1. Research questions*

The present study aims to answer the following questions through an exploration of data compiled throughout the two SL projects described:

(1) What kind of impact did participating in the SL projects, including training and hands-on implementation of R2L, make on the student teachers' attitudes and views about literacy instruction?

(2) How, and to what extent, did the student teachers come to value the teaching-learning cycle of R2L strategies as a means to ensure the attainment of successful learning within CLIL?

(3) To what extent will learning about culturally and linguistically diverse CLIL pupils' literacy learning needs motivate student teachers to strengthen their own competencies for instruction using R2L?

#### *4.2 The Service-Learning projects*

This study analyses data collected in relation to two SL projects, implemented during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years. In this section, we provide information on the research and pedagogical context of this study. Both SL projects were affected by the circumstances that arose from the COVID-19 global pandemic, including complete closure of schools from March to June, 2020, and the measures for reducing contagion in classrooms applied during the 2020-21 academic year, such as dividing classes into smaller groups at primary schools and, at universities, providing online or hybrid (combined face-to-face for smaller groups with the rest of the students online) classes.

The first project, known as ALFAPS- an acronym from the Spanish *Alfabetización por Aprendizaje-Servicio* (Literacy through Service-Learning) – was selected among the SL proposals in response to the University's first call, after an agreement between the Madrid city council and the eight public universities of the region for the implementation of SL in public institutions. ALFAPS provided the framework for the team of 10 professors of Spanish and English language at the School of Education to design and implement an intensive training seminar on R2L for

volunteer students of the Degree in Primary Education as part of the courses Spanish Language, Spanish Language Teaching, English, EFL teaching, and the elective Teaching Literacy in EFL, from the specialisation in English. A total of 58 students volunteered for the SL project and attended the seminar, of which 27 were specialising in English teaching.

The two public schools in the city of Madrid that were involved in both projects had large proportions of children with vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds: very high percentages (mean of 94%) of the pupils were included in the lunch grant initiatives for the lowest-income families of pupils at state schools. The two participating schools tend to have fewer (an average of 18) than the maximum number of pupils (25) per class, as they are located in areas of the city where, given the choice, parents tend to prefer to enrol their children in charter schools. Therefore, many pupils newly arrived from abroad are sent to these less-often selected schools. In addition, both schools were implementing CLIL, teaching Social or Natural Science (varying for each grade), Physical Education and Art through English. This resulted in an added complexity in the process of including the newcomer pupils who, before their arrival may not have learnt English at all or learnt insufficient English to enable them to successfully learn without extra support, alongside peers already experienced in CLIL.

The student teacher training was delivered over four sessions, each fortnight through October and November, of four hours each. It included the following components:

- Introduction to the Systemic Functional Linguistic perspective of language as a resource for meaning-making.
- Common genres of schooling in our context, in Spanish and in English, and practise in analysing these for teaching purposes.

- Disciplinary literacy: how school subjects prioritise particular discursive practices, and the consequential need for pupils to develop by way of explicit teaching of the language features characterising these school genres,
- The teaching-learning cycle of R2L strategies (see Fig. 1).

Guided by the professors, the student teachers worked in small groups to develop literacy lesson plans using a purpose-made template (see García Parejo, 2016; García-Parejo & Ahern, 2019) covering the sequence of strategies from the R2L teaching-learning cycle (for a more detailed description, see Whittaker, García-Parejo & Ahern, in press; Ahern & López-Medina, 2021).

The student teachers created the materials to use in the lessons, such as sentence strips to use in the R2L “intensive strategies”, and taught lessons in English or (CLIL) Social Science to children at the two collaborating schools. Groups of 3 to 4 students went to each class and worked with small groups of 4 to 8 pupils.

The 2019-2020 project, including the student teachers working on Spanish, led to the delivery of 85 literacy lessons in total, with 10 primary class groups and a total of about 200 children between the ages of 5 and 11. In general, the student teachers implemented a sequence of weekly lessons, which included (with some variation), firstly, student teachers reading aloud whole texts with the children; subsequently focussing on specific excerpts for modelling writing with the Detailed Reading strategy, and then on the Intensive Strategies (Sentence Making, Spelling, Sentence Writing), Joint Construction, Joint Rewriting, and – generally only with pupils in the final year of primary (6<sup>th</sup>) – on Individual Rewriting (see Figure 1 above). The student teachers were invited to attend tutorial sessions with their university professors, which were arranged on demand, while professors also responded to specific questions or requests for guidance by email. Reflection diaries were submitted as a course assessment instrument.

Through the information collected based on the number of lessons students had taught and their diaries, professors took their dedication and effort in the project tasks into consideration and reflected it in the participating students' grades.

The second SL project was implemented over the two semesters of the 2020-21 academic year. This project was intended to build on the ALFAPS project, although due to difficulties related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities did not include any related to the Spanish language. The two schools that had collaborated in ALFAPS continued to receive the student teachers in this second project, specifically, 55 third-year student teachers specialising in EFL (18 of these students had participated in ALFAPS, the previous year). Within the itinerary of electives that make up this specialisation, the students participated in the SL over two consecutive semesters. They received initial training on R2L simultaneously to the planning and delivery of lessons for the children. The student teachers read illustrated narrative texts in picture books with the pupils and helped them create infographics about the themes of the books, employing language features they had learnt through the readings. In the second semester, the focus shifted to applying R2L to learning to understand and write in informative genres (procedures, arguments and descriptive reports), related to topics the children were working on in their ordinary English lessons, such as sports and places in the city.

Because of scheduling complexities (fitting together student teachers' availability with school lesson times), sessions were only once a week for 45 minutes. This led to different limitations: it was challenging for young children to become familiar with their student teacher helpers, it was hard for these children to remember what they were working on from one session to the next, and above all, there was a limited number of sessions with each school class (between 5 and 8 sessions in total).

### *4.3 The Participants and Study Design*

Participants for both projects were undergraduate students of the Undergraduate Degree in Primary Education at the Complutense School of Education. In project 1 (ALFAPS), developed in 2019-2020, 58 volunteer student teachers participated, 27 of whom were specialising in EFL. In Project 2 (Multimodal literacy in bilingual education), developed in 2020-2021, a total of 55 third-year student teachers participated, all specialising in EFL.

The study design was a mixed-methods one: questionnaires completed by the participants included both items using Likert scales and open-response items, and reflection diaries and focus group discussions were also used for collecting data. The data collection instruments were applied with informed consent from the student teachers and the participating schoolteachers; children's data (writing samples) were accessed based on informed consent signed by their parents or guardians. The instruments employed are listed below:

- 1) Pre- and post-project questionnaires- School leader (1) and teachers (3); participating student teachers (58 in project (1), 55 in project (2));
- 2) Reflection diaries- Reporting ethnographic data about each session with children at the schools. Student teachers.
- 3) Focus group interviews (project (1)). Four groups of 12 student teachers, two held the discussions in English (those specialising in EFL) and two groups in Spanish.

The analysis procedure followed consisted in an initial agreement between the authors on the approach to coding; both authors read all the data separately, and after a second

reading, each established the principal themes identifiable throughout. As a measure for intercoder reliability, after the individual coding process, the authors discussed and calibrated their work, establishing a consensus on the themes and sub-themes found in the data and considered to be linked to the research questions. Triangulation was achieved by integrating data from the different instruments used (questionnaires, reflection diaries and discussions), and participant perspectives from each group and over the two academic years of the projects.

In the next section, we present a selection of reoccurring themes from the analysis of the data collected by means of the various instruments used throughout the two projects.<sup>3</sup>

## **5. Results**

This section presents the themes that emerged across the instruments used to collect data: the student teachers' open-ended questionnaires, field journal entries and focus groups. They include the student teachers' perceptions of the children's command of English as unexpectedly insufficient; initial anxiety and feelings of low self-efficacy, which evolved positively over time; and satisfaction after participating in the SL projects.

### *5.1. The 'low level of English'*

A salient theme that came up in the student teachers' reflections, especially upon establishing first contact with the children they served, was the reaction of surprise at the "low level of English" achieved so far, despite being pupils with quite a lot of

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<sup>3</sup> Data Collection Instruments:

FG= Focus Groups, M= Journal entries from 2020-2021, PI= Project initial questionnaire, PO= Post-project questionnaire. The questionnaire codes are followed by 19 or 20, representing the year of response.

exposure to the language because they were at CLIL schools. Remarks showing these perceptions were included in the reflection diary entries, such as:

*(M.25.F 1.) I felt relaxed in the class and excited with the students although I thought their English level was going to be high. As it was difficult to make us be understood.*

*(M.20.D.) They barely wrote. Which confirmed that the situation had not evolved much since last year. Most have a very low level of English and are not able to express themselves in full sentences.*

*(M.10.I) The expectations we had were high. as it was a bilingual school with few students in each class. so we expected the English level to be high. We even thought that it might be boring or low-level for the students.*

Some student teachers identified ample variability in the command of English reached by children in the same class, and attributed the gap in achievement to different levels of family support, such as extra English lessons: (FGA-4) *“there were..like..some students who’d been to an academy so they knew how to write like two sentences. But the others didn’t know how to start it, they didn’t even know the pronouns.”* This comment relates to the introductory SL session when samples of the children’s writing were collected in order to establish a baseline for the university students’ teaching plans.

Likewise, in responses to the questionnaires, where the student teachers were asked to identify aspects of how their perspectives had changed, or aspects the R2L approach that captured their interest, the perception of deficits in the children’s abilities was quite prevalent:

*(GS-2-7) One thing that call my attention was the level of the students. They have a very low level of English and Spanish language. For this reason we tried to speak and explain all the time in English, but sometimes we had to explain the activity again in Spanish.*

This student expresses the contrast between the initial expectations about how much the children would be able to communicate through English, and subsequent realisation that plans often require adaptation on the fly.

## 5.2. Attitudes: self-efficacy and preconceptions about children's interest in literacy learning

The student teachers also highlighted their initial anxiety, and perception of limitations in their own preparation for teaching when considering the prospects of taking on a measure of responsibility for children's literacy learning, and in some cases, after delivering the first lessons, as in the diary entry (M.32.P) *"I felt really anxious about the uncertainty of everything which made me realize I will need to organize my classes very well in the future in order for this not to happen again."* They questioned their self-efficacy, as was also found by Liu and Lin (2017), although our participants also showed hope that they would be adequately guided by the team of university professors. To the pre-project questionnaire question "What do you feel worried about [in starting your participation in the project]?", this kind of concern was expressed in answers such as: (PI-19-2) *About making the children learn to read correctly.* Or, showing lack of self-confidence in general: (PI-19-16) *That I don't know enough to really help the children.* Or more specifically: (PI-19-17) *That I'll have difficulties when explaining, expressing myself.*

Meanwhile, hopes for adequate guidance were also voiced, as in responses collected in the pre-project questionnaire like: (PI-19-18) *At the beginning, about lack of knowledge in this specific area. Thanks to the [training] seminar, I think I'm going to learn a lot to be able to tackle the project.*

Initially, in response to a question on what the student teachers expected pupils of primary to feel towards literacy learning tasks (specifically, writing), they predominantly tended to think pupils would feel indifferent or outright rejection. Yet once the project was underway and a couple of lessons had been taught, the overriding

impression was that of children's true enthusiasm towards the activities the student teachers proposed. This suggests some degree of overcoming prejudice, perhaps based on memories of their own experiences of literacy learning at school, possibly based on assumptions about the behaviour and attitudes of culturally diverse, and those classified as at-risk, pupils.

After teaching several literacy lessons, we find statements evidencing, on one hand, awareness of the need to be prepared to teach pupils with diverse ability levels. On the other hand, simultaneously, some of the participants' affirmations show that the students' self-efficacy improved, as they claimed that they had progressed in understanding how to plan for and teach using the R2L approach.

*(PO-2.20-22) I have changed completely my ideas about teaching written language, because now I know that only by preparing and guiding students before reading a text they will be able to understand it, and consequently will be capable of developing better the writing skills.*

*(PO-2.20-8) I did not realize that students could have such different levels in the same classroom. After participating in the Service Learning, I think it is really important to adjust to all their needs and help them become the best they could be and this approach could help do that.*

A number of comments along similar lines show how students began to develop a clear vision of teachers' roles in ensuring the success of all learners and adapting to diverse learning paces. They became aware that by preparing children to read and explicitly working on comprehension by discussing the language used in a text, teachers have it in their hands to ensure that their pupils progress in literacy.

However, there were also students who continued to view the classroom experiences framed within a deficit model: *(PO-20-17) The approach is helping them to write sentences but the kids don't have enough level to change the sentence to something they want to write; therefore, we only change some vocabulary or specific*

*words from the original sentence.* Similar ideas are voiced by several students, suggesting that they continued to encounter situations where their lesson plans did not fit closely enough with the pupils' needs, which they framed as arising due to the pupils' "low level of English", for instance (PO-20-14) *I was working with children who had extremely little knowledge of English and it was difficult to follow all the steps.* Both comments suggest the student teachers lacked a strong grasp of basic principles of R2L, such as scaffolding tasks to ensure every child's success. In addition, they faced the challenge of apprehending R2L with a limited number of sessions – and no previous experience as schoolteachers – which not all student teachers managed to do optimally.

### *5.3. Positive outlooks after implementing R2L*

Meanwhile, our data also included evidence that the student teachers' experiences in the projects were leading to overcoming negative stereotypes and deficit frames (Kirkland, 2014), a process to which gaining understanding of R2L clearly contributed:

*(PO-20-34) One of the principles of R2L caught my attention. Every student in a class must be supported to succeed at the same level of learning tasks, regardless of ability. What changes is the level of support the students receive, not the level of tasks they are given. During Practicum I. the students in the classroom did tasks depending on the level, making the gap between them bigger and bigger. I hadn't stopped to think about it. Therefore, from now on I will incorporate R2L to my future educational experiences.*

This statement is consistent with those of other students, who also expressed their satisfaction with the interest and enjoyment shown by the pupils throughout the project. Similarly, some highlighted their evolving awareness of the role of explicit teaching, as developed in the "detailed reading" strategy:

*(M7D2) In spite of having the lowest level of the class. my group was working really hard and making me very happy about it... the detailed reading worked better than we expected as they remembered quite well the plot of the story.*

In this student's remark, and other similar ones, we find evidence of overcoming an attitude of children's varying needs from a deficit standpoint and expectations of lack of pupils' interest.

## **6. Conclusions**

Issues related to teacher preparation for literacy education and for CLIL in our context are complex: Spain has been a pioneering nation in the spread of CLIL, but this innovation has not been free of controversy, as it has been seen as tangential to other priorities such as the need to ensure adequate progress and success of all pupils. The projects reported on have, according to our data, contributed towards improving on the scant preparation of students in ITE in evidence-based teaching approaches, in particular, for systematic teaching of literacies and hands-on experiences in CLIL as a path towards overcoming some of the challenges reflected in the educational results mentioned in the introduction.

The project descriptions and analysis presented herein point towards some preliminary conclusions with relevance for several domains. The experiences accumulated through the design and implementation of SL projects for student teachers relate to results of interest for ITE. We have considered, in particular, needs for the preparation of future CLIL teachers, on whom the projects were focused, for literacy instruction. In consonance with the central principle of CLIL as an approach that truly integrates language with content, for effective teaching, educators require the ability to address the linguistic demands of the school curriculum areas. CLIL teachers must not only develop awareness of these demands, but also face them by applying instructional scaffolding to ensure the academic success of learners from increasingly diverse linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds in our context's urban classrooms. Meanwhile,

implementing the projects was innovative among previous initiatives in providing training in R2L in two important ways. The original context where R2L was developed and in which teachers were prepared for applying it was through in-service training; the fact that we work with pre-service teachers entailed an additional challenge, because these student teachers lack the experience and knowledge base of practising professionals and have difficulty identifying the kinds of learning needs that can be expected of children and, therefore, planning lessons effectively. And secondly, the application of R2L in CLIL also represents a novel challenge, since this approach has mainly been applied in linguistic communities where the language of schooling is present in society, whereas the presence of English in the lives of the primary pupils in our context may only be marginal.

As to the research questions (RQs) that we have sought to explore, the following observations can be highlighted. To begin, in relation to RQ (1) *What kind of impact did participating in the SL projects, including training and hands-on implementation of R2L, make on the student teachers' attitudes and views about literacy instruction?* These student teachers were seen to follow a process that affected their perceptions and dispositions towards literacy instruction. It included enhancing their awareness of the real needs of primary pupils for explicit and systematic teaching in order to develop literacies in English (a second or additional language), even as these children are still developing reading and writing in Spanish and beginning to understand and produce spoken English. While becoming aware of this need for explicit teaching, the diversity of pupils' progress and pace in learning English and in general reading and writing abilities also became salient to the student teachers.

The data analysed also revealed insights related to RQ (2) *How, and to what extent, did the student teachers come to value the teaching-learning cycle of R2L*

*strategies as a means to ensure the attainment of successful learning within CLIL?* It has been shown that in the R2L training provided, the student teachers learnt of this approach that was designed with the central intention of scaffolding reading comprehension and writing to ensure the success of all students, with proven effectiveness especially for disadvantaged learners. Their reflections showed satisfaction with the strategies that they learned to implement, as they witnessed how the R2L approach enables teachers to adjust their practices to pupils' real needs. Pupils who may need more support receive it, so that rather than being offered lower-level learning tasks, they are guided to participate alongside their peers, and this leads to shifting the expectations towards progress for every learner.

Lastly, regarding RQ (3) *To what extent will learning about culturally and linguistically diverse CLIL pupils' literacy learning needs motivate student teachers to strengthen their own competencies for instruction using R2L?*, our data suggest that on moving into the primary classroom, the student teachers observed gaps in literacy levels among pupils within one classroom and across schools. In questioning the causes for this situation, and attempting to apply the training they had received, these future teachers showed signs of changing attitudes, adopting more proactive and empowered stances, as compared to views that some had held corresponding to deficit models of the children's interest and enthusiasm for learning, and of children's personal or family circumstances as negative factors affecting their expectations. Finally, their statements suggest a tendency of these students towards conceiving themselves as prepared to act in the face of the educational challenges we have described with high expectations for the pupils and evidence-based strategies for teaching, such as those that make up the R2L approach.

All in all, through the opportunities afforded by these projects, the student teachers confronted their assumptions about the children's potential for literacy in English, enacting reading and writing as sociocultural practices. Their participation also enabled these future teachers to view the children in a new light, as interested and enthusiastic learners.

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