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## Chapter 7 Perceptions towards Multilingual Practices in Teacher Education

**Abstract:** Higher Education (HE) in Europe has been attributed an important role in fostering multilingualism and therefore, universities in Europe have developed policies (Extra & Yagmur, 2012; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013; Pavón, Lancaster & Bretones, 2019) and reflected on practices that could promote multilingualism in the last few years. In that line, approaches such as CLIL or EMI have also become common practices in some contexts. However, most of the experiences carried out in HE have proved not to be sufficient (Fortanet-Gómez, 2013) to reach the aims and thus, further research is needed (Dafouz & Smit, 2014). Focusing on Teacher Education, the intent of this chapter is to examine critically the practices carried out in Teacher Education at the Faculty of Humanities and Education of Mondragon University. The study was carried out by means of focus groups with student teachers and semi-structured interviews with teacher educator to analyse the existing perceptions towards multilingual practices at the Faculty of Humanities and Education from an ecological perspective (van Lier, 1998, 2004). Results show that the practices conducted are perceived as meaningful by the participants as a way to foster multilingualism. Moreover, results of this study call for a new step towards Pluriliteracies Teacher for Learning Approach to develop a more holistic and ecological perspective. However, conducting similar research studies in other contexts is needed due to the fact that to our knowledge, very few research studies have been carried out in HE to examine critically the practices carried out.

**Keywords:** multilingual practices, Higher Education, student teachers, CLIL, EMI.

### Introduction

Higher Education (HE) in Europe has been attributed an important role in fostering multilingualism and therefore, universities in Europe have developed policies (Extra & Yagmur, 2012; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013; Pavón, Lancaster & Bretones, 2019) and reflected on practices that could promote multilingualism in the last few years. In that line, approaches such as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) or EMI (English-Medium Instruction) have also become common practices in some contexts. Indeed, as Macaro et al. (2018) state, CLIL and EMI are a growing global phenomenon in all stages of education with a particular emphasis in HE. Thus, more and more universities offer programmes through the medium of English (Corrales et al., 2016; Lasagabaster, 2015;

Lasagabaster, Doiz & Sierra 2014; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2018). Consequently, research studies on CLIL and EMI have increased in the past two decades (Sagasta & Ipiña, 2016; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2016, 2018; Macaro et al., 2018) although primary and secondary education have been the main focus. Indeed, as Corrales et al. (2016), Costa and Coleman (2010), Lasagabaster (2015) and Lasagabaster and Doiz (2018) claim, research on tertiary education remains scarce.

## Studies in CLIL and EMI

Several international studies in HE have been conducted in recent years to analyse the impact of both approaches, CLIL and EMI, on students' and lecturers' perceptions towards the practices being carried out. As regards CLIL, Vilkancienė (2011) examined learners' perception regarding language, content and motivation by using a questionnaire. The author found that the participants of the study claimed gains in content, language and motivation, and conclude that CLIL has a lot to offer at tertiary level due to the fact that it brings a new pedagogical approach. Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012) also carried out a study to evaluate students' and lecturers' perceptions of CLIL. The authors conclude that students reported gains in listening and speaking skills. In the case of lectures, findings revealed that lecturers showed a positive attitude towards teaching through English. Nonetheless, the lecturers refused to be trained in CLIL. Similarly, Contero, Zayas and Arco Tirado (2018) conducted a study to identify lecturers' perceptions on their teaching skills when delivering CLIL lessons with 138 lecturers belonging to 66 different fields of knowledge in Andalusia. Their results depicted the following methodological shortcomings among Andalusian CLIL lecturers: interaction, cooperation, student autonomy, linguistic awareness and scaffolding, as well as convincing lecturers to generate an authentic CLIL environment in class.

As far as Teacher Education is concerned, Ipiña and Sagasta (2017) carried out a longitudinal analysis with 100 first-year Teacher Education students involved in a CLIL experience. The authors concluded that students' attitudes towards the target language changed significantly for the better due to educational variables such as the university's language project. Results also showed that the CLIL experience was an important factor in sustaining those positive attitudes. In that line, conclusions drawn in Pérez's (2018) study show that in-service teacher training is the key to develop positive perceptions towards CLIL. Furthermore, the overview conducted by Pérez (2018) depicts five main lines of action to address the deficiencies found in her context: modifying existing undergraduate degrees to guarantee methodological and theoretical basis, reinforcing CLIL preparation in

university teacher trainers, the creation of new bilingual degrees at both graduate and undergraduate level, offering specifically tailored courses for pre- and in-service teachers, and ongoing research into teacher training.

As regards EMI, Corrales et al. (2016) carried out a case study to explore the perceptions of a group of computer science professors, students and the program administrator in a Colombian university. Results revealed that EMI has benefits but also brings some challenges. As regards benefits, the authors conclude that students and teachers have the opportunity to use language in authentic communicative situations and can enhance their technical vocabulary knowledge as well as building confidence when using the language. Moreover, participants of the study noted that working in English prepares them for their future professional needs. As far as challenges are concerned, Corrales et al. (2016) conclude that the success of the course depends on the language level and attitudes of all participants and also on professors' teaching style impact on students' experience. In the study conducted by Ball and Lindsay (2013) in the University of the Basque Country to analyse teachers' own perceptions regarding the demands of EMI, similar results emerged. In fact, the study showed that most of the participants highlighted their awareness of the methodological possibilities EMI offered and evidenced their language improvement as a consequence. Fernández Costales (2017) investigated the satisfaction degree of 255 undergraduate students engaged in English-taught undergraduate programmes in the University of Oviedo. Although results show that the overall satisfaction with English-taught programmes is rather high, the author identifies some areas of improvement, in particular, the level of English of the lecturers and more quality controls. Furthermore, Fernández Costales (2017) calls for more longitudinal studies to investigate the possible fluctuations in student satisfaction.

However, both theoretically and in terms of research, there is an ongoing debate on the concept of *integration* when defining programmes where content and language are taught together (Cenoz et al., 2014; Cenoz 2015; Cenoz & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2015; Coyle et al., 2017; Karabassova, 2018; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2018; Lin, 2015; Llinares, 2015; Meyer et al., 2015; Meyer & Coyle, 2017; Meyer et al., 2018; Ruiz de Zarobe & Cenoz, 2015; Sagasta & Ipiña, 2016; Schmidt-Unterberger, 2018). In fact, in the last years, the concept is being analysed from several perspectives (Llinares, 2015; Meyer et al., 2015; Meyer & Coyle., 2017; Meyer et al., 2018) but no clear answer has been developed yet. In that vein, Meyer et al. (2015) claim that integration has not been examined deeply yet. In fact, the authors call for a research agenda in which pluriliteracies are taken into account due to the fact that integration is natural in a pluriliteracies approach. As Meyer et al. (2015: 52) assert, "pluriliteracies development involves

the growing ability of individual learners to ‘language’ subject-specific concepts and knowledge in an appropriate style using appropriate genre moves for the specific purpose of communication in a range of modes.” In that line, and paying attention to tertiary education, Schmidt-Unterberger (2018: 3) considers that it is also necessary to think about “if and to what extent the teaching of discipline-specific language and academic communicative skills takes place.” Hence, van Lier’s (1998; 2004) ecological perspective could serve as a framework to better understand the integration proposed. And that is precisely the aim of the present chapter, to critically analyse student teachers’ and teacher educators’ perceptions towards the multilingual practices carried out in the Faculty of Humanities and Education.

### **Ecological Perspective**

The “integration phenomenon” of content and language is both complex and conflicting (Coyle et al., 2017) and even more in tertiary education settings. Moreover, as Harrop (2012) claims, although the tension between language and content has theoretically been resolved, the tension still prevails. The research studies presented above also show some dichotomies on content and language outcomes. In fact, a more holistic perspective is needed to value the impact on such approaches in tertiary education. In that line, Meyer et al. (2015, 2018) have proposed the Pluriliteracies Teaching for Learning Approach (PTL) as an educational proposal and anchor the process of learning in van Lier’s (1996, 24) ecological perspective (Meyer et al., 2018). The authors posit that “when the ecological potential of learning is shared and understood by those involved – as set out in the PTL approach – then the quality of learning is transparent and driven by participants” (Meyer et al., 2018: 253). Therefore, emergent ecological systems shape each learning and teaching episode and integration becomes natural. That is the reason why van Lier’s (1998; 2004) proposal is used to analyse student teachers and teacher educators voices in the present chapter.

Van Lier (1998; 2004) claims that the classroom is a multi-layered ecosystem and as a result, it is necessary to analyse more than teacher-student or student-student interaction (Carretero, 2004). Moreover, it is necessary to analyse, on the one hand, individual relationships within the context and on the other hand, the personal state. In that line, van Lier (2004) introduces the term of classroom ecology. From an ecological perspective, language is the tool individuals use with all the resources or content that the environment provides, by means of social interaction (Pedrosa, 2011). The multi-layered ecosystem is composed by three systems: the macrosystem (curriculum, language project and language policy),

the exosystem (syllabus, pedagogical actions and subjects), and the microsystem (teachers, students and opportunities for language use). Therefore, the individual is an active organism, and as van Lier (2004) mentions, language is the tool to interact with the rest of the ecosystems. Consequently, social interaction becomes a compulsory factor in teaching and learning processes (van Lier, 2004) and language and content cannot be divided. Indeed, as the author states there is an inseparable connection between language and content and the integration “lies at the core of the ecological approach of language learning” (van Lier, 2004: 3).

As Macaro et al. (2018) state, a systematic review of research in EMI and CLIL in HE is urgently required due to the fact that there are also insufficient studies demonstrating the kind of practice which may lead to beneficial outcomes including positive perceptions towards multilingual practices. And that is the added value of this chapter: to examine critically, following van Lier’s (2004) framework, perceptions student teachers and teacher educator have towards the multilingual practices carried out in Teacher Education at the Faculty of Humanities and Education of Mondragon University.

## The Study

Our study involved teacher educators and Year 4 student teachers. The aim was to examine critically the perceptions towards the practices carried out in Teacher Education at the Faculty of Humanities and Education of Mondragon University and therefore, participants were invited to give their opinion regarding the practices carried Teacher Education degrees, both Early Years and Primary Education. In this chapter, we focus on factors and variables developed by van Lier (2004) regarding the ecological perspective in order to answer the following research question: How do Teacher Educators, Early-Years student teachers, and Primary student teachers perceive the multilingual practices carried out in Teacher Education at the Faculty of Humanities and Education of Mondragon University?

Teacher Education at the Faculty of Humanities and Education of Mondragon University is a trilingual programme that has been running since 2009. The programme offers a four-year, full-time degree and consists of 240 ECTS. 80 % of the credits are delivered through the medium of Basque, 10 % through the medium of Spanish, and 10 % through English. Student teachers are expected to attain a C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) in Basque and Spanish, and B2 level in English in four years. As far as Spanish is concerned, three half-modules are offered to students

**Table 1.** Number of Participants per Year and Degree

Degree	Type of participant	Total	Participants selected
Early Years education degree	Teacher educators	6	2
	Student teachers (Year 4)	91 (whole cohort)	6
Primary Education degree	Teacher educators	7	2
	Student teachers (Year 4)	114 (whole cohort)	12

in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 4 and input in the 35 % of the modules is also offered in Spanish to all students. In the case of English, three full modules are taught in English, in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 4 as well as input in 20 % of the modules.

The participants were randomly selected for the present study. The student teachers were chosen from the different degrees offered in the faculty: Early Years Education degree and Primary Education degree. As far as teacher educators are concerned, they were considered in this study because as Banegas asserts, CLIL teachers themselves are central to understanding why CLIL may or may not work (Banegas, 2012). The selection criterion for teacher educators was the following: teacher educators should unfold lessons in both cycles of Early Years Education degree or Primary Education degree (1st cycle: Year 1 and Year 2 and 2nd cycle: Year 3 and Year 4). The following table [Table 1] depicts the participants involved.

Two focus groups were conducted in this study with students teachers. All of them followed the same guidelines which was previously designed by the researchers following the phases recommended by Murillo and Mena (2006). The aim was to obtain the opinions, perceptions and feelings (Krueger & Casey 2000) of the participants about the multilingual practices being carried out at the faculty and to reflect on the topic (Egaña 2010; Kitzinger 1994, 1995). All focus groups were audio-recorded. The focus groups conducted in 2014–2015 academic year were 54:06 minutes long on average.

In the case of the semi-structured interviews conducted with teacher educators, an outline was designed and followed by the researchers when carrying out the interviews in order to get comparable data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) and to establish the core of issues to be covered (Freebody, 2003). The semi-structured interviews were 46:21 minutes long on average and followed the recommendations given by Newby (2010) to reflect the main research questions and avoid misunderstandings.

**Table 2.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Analysis Conducted from the Focus Groups

	Primary Education Degree Year	Early Years Education Degree Year
Macro-system	6,39 % (11 turns)	3,88 % (11 turns)
Meso-system	53,48 % (92 turns)	60,07 % (170 turns)
Micro-system	40,11 % (69 turns)	36,04 % (102 turns)
Total	172 turn coded (total: 254 turns)	283 turns coded (total: 316 turns)

The data gathered from these focus groups and semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analysed using the Atlas.ti software and following the categories proposed in van Lier's (2004) framework. That is to say, van Lier's ecological system was used as a framework to analyse students' and teachers' voices. Turns of interaction were the unit of analysis of this study in both, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. In the macrosystem or exosystem topics related to the language policy or language program of the university were included. Under the concept of meso-system, turns coded as syllabus and pedagogical actions were identified. In the micro category proposed by van Lier (2004) turns of interaction coded as teachers, students and classroom sessions were analysed in order to capture the perceptions towards the multilingual practices.

As regards the procedure followed, first, two blind researchers examined and coded 15 % (10 % of the focus groups and 5 % of the semi-structured interviews) of the data with a success rate of 83 %. Consistent discussion was conducted when disagreeing. Second, the rest of the data were coded with a success rate of 94 % by the blind researchers and discussions were carried out when researchers disagreed. Third, percentages of the turns were calculated to allow descriptive quantitative comparison. Last, participants' voices that provide critical analysis were elected to exemplify the factors and variables adduced by the student teachers and teacher educators when discussing on the multilingual practices carried out in the degrees.

## Results

The following table [Table 2] depicts the frequencies and percentages calculated following van Lier's (2004) framework of macro-, meso- and micro-systems from the analysis of the focus groups.

The main focus of both groups, Early Year Education student teachers and Primary Education student teachers, is on the meso-system (60,07 % of the turns in Early Years Education and 53,48 % in Primary Education). However, Early

Years Education and Primary Education participants also adduced to macro-system and micro-system as displayed in Table 2<sup>1</sup>.

Among the turns coded under the category of macro-system, language program and policy of the university play an important role for both groups of student teachers. As depicted in the following example, Primary Education student teachers perceive that the language policy and language program should be explicitly discussed with students while unfolding the multilingual practices.

**Extract 1: Primary Education student teachers' focus-group (turns 143–144)**

ST\_G2PE: I think... well, I miss knowing about the language policy of the university, I don't know... I guess that you put into practice that policy and it may be logical for you but we may not understand what we are doing nor why. And I reckon that knowing why we do what we do and how we do it is important. Now, in our 4th year, I understand why we were doing that and the other in our first and second year but I didn't understand it while I was doing it.

SS\_G1PE: They mentioned something in our first year about the language program and the language policy but it should be repeated while we are doing things. I agree with her, I've understood some things in my 4th year about the language program.

Moreover, Early Years Education participants of our study point out the fact that the university's main language is Basque and the importance of being aware of it from the very beginning. Indeed, the role of Basque in the language program and language policy is perceived as an important factor:

**Extract 2: Early Years Education student teachers' focus-group (turn 124)**

SS\_G4EY: When you enrol this University, you know that it is a Basque university and that your Basque language level should be high, or... can you imagine yourself going to a Catalan university and saying "I don't know catalan" [the rest of the students laugh] You should know where you are coming and that the Basque will be the main language of communication.

Although the macro-system is not the main focus for the participants of our study (6,39 % in Primary Education and 3,88 % in Early Years Education), it is notable that for both groups, being aware and knowing about the language program and language policy is important. Thus, participants of this study clearly identified aspects to be improved. That is to say, the macro-system should also be worked on with student teachers in order to better understand the multilingual practices carried out in the faculty.

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1 All focus groups were carried out in Basque and extracts were translated by the researchers for the present chapter.



Among meso-system, the syllabus is the main area of concern for Primary Education and Early Years Education student teachers. However, the participants of our study refer also to specific multilingual pedagogical actions in the focus groups conducted in this study. As it could be observed in the example below, student teachers taking part in our study consider that some multilingual pedagogical actions could be important for their future career.

**Extract 3: Primary Education student teachers' focus-group (turn 32)**

SS\_G4PE: ...and then we have some sessions in Spanish but I don't know if carrying out some tasks in Spanish is meaningful. . . sometimes I think that it may be better if we do that in Basque but I guess that those actions may also be linked with our future needs. . . having an interview with some parents for example, we should know how to do that in Spanish also.

**Extract 4: Primary Education student teachers' focus-group (turn 84)**

SS\_B4PE: (...) . . . but then in our 4th year (...) is a language exam enough to measure our language level? I don't agree. . . and only in Basque. If I learn by heart some rules and I pass the exam? Does that mean I master the language? No way! You will forget everything in 2 months! I think that the process is important.

As stated above, the syllabus is the main area of concern. In that line, do not question the use of different languages in the curriculum and subject as displayed in the examples above.

**Extract 5: Primary Education student teachers' focus-group (turns 146–150)**

SS\_G7PE: .. and then you have a subject in English.. and. . .

SS\_B2PE: Yes, suddenly you have a subject, Life Place Learning. . . (participants laugh) and you don't understand why you have to do that subject in English..

SS\_B1PE: uff

SS\_B2PE: We have had different subjects in English in our first, second and third year linked with european education systems, multiculturalism, language learning. . . but.. that one?

SS\_G4PE: I think that the language is not the problem in that subject, I think that the content is the problem. I don't understand the sense of the subject. In fact, I think that having some subjects in English is a great opportunity for us... using the three languages, Basque, Spanish and English in the curriculum is very useful.

Data about language accuracy and the transversal process of language learning is also revealing. The extract below shows student teachers' reflection on language development opportunities in the curriculum.

**Extract 6: Early Years Education student teachers' focus-group (turns 133–141).**

SS\_G3EY: I think that a huge importance is given to language accuracy.

SS\_G2EY: I agree. It doesn't really matter the language but the process should be the aim, the writing and oral skills but not the number of mistakes in a sentence.

SS\_G4EY: I would include more practical things

SS\_G3EY: Yes, that's it. In order to focus on language accuracy in some subjects we could work on how to write notes to parents and work on language by means of those activities in different languages.

SS\_G1EY: Language and content should be coherently assessed in all subjects, not only in some of them and they should be meaningful.

SS\_B1EY: Not just in the last task

SS\_B2EY: That's it, during the 4 years.

SS\_B1EY: And in all the subjects.

SS\_G3EY: Yes, to have more opportunities to develop our languages.

Concerning the micro-system, Early Years Education and Primary Education student teachers refer to teacher educators as an important factor. As it could be observed in the examples below, student teachers taking part in our study consider that teacher educators have a big responsibility on the practices carried out in the Faculty.

**Extract 7: Primary Education student teachers' focus-group (turns 80–81).**

SS\_G5PE: I think that in practice there are differences among classrooms. Depending on the teacher you have, you may work more on some things, they may be more severe... I think that as they ask us to work on groups, they should also work together and agree on the criteria.

SS\_G4PE: yes, using the same criteria is important because you can see that all students pass the subjects in some groups and not in other groups...

**Extract 8: Early Years Education student teachers' focus-group (turns 208–221).**

SS\_B1EY: The minimum language-requirements should be set for all subjects and in all languages.

SS\_G2EY: And who will assess those requirements?

SS\_G1EY: And do you think that all teachers will be able to assess those minimum requirements?

SS\_B1EY: I think so. But, it requires more time and more work.

SS\_G1EY: Do you think so? Imagine SS\_G2YE that I do a master next year and I start working here, do you think that I will be able to assess your content and your language?

SS\_G2EY: Yes, you should.

SS\_G1EY: I have the language title needed but it may not be enough to work in this university.

SS\_G3EY: . . . I don't know. . .

SS\_G1EY: That is what I mean.

SS\_G2EY: Yes, yes

SS\_G4EY: Should teacher be content experts and language or languages experts then?

SS\_G1EY: Or content teachers can assess the work done first and language experts after. . .

SS\_B1EY: Or teachers could be trained on language

SS\_G2EY: Training yes...

**Table 3.** Frequencies and Percentages of the Analysis Conducted from the Semi-Structured Interviews

	<b>Early Year Education teacher educators</b>	<b>Primary Education teacher educators</b>
Macro-system	54,61 % (71 turns)	44,91 % (53 turns)
Meso-system	27,69 % (36 turns)	28,81 % (34 turns)
Micro-system	17,69 % (23 turns)	26,27 % (31 turns)
Total	(130 turns coded (total: 151 turns)	118 turns coded (total: 134 turns)

The participants of our study refer also to the opportunities for language use offered by and in the faculty. As shown in the example below, student teachers participating in our study think that the multilingual practices offered by the faculty are not enough and individual processes as well as personal effort are needed.

**Extract 9: Primary Education student teachers' focus-group (turns 178–179)**

SS\_B2PE: I think that the university offers resources for language development; mainly for Basque and English but practices should be more consistent and constant.

SS\_G3PE: But it may not be enough for all students. For example, a student that may not have a high language level, do you think that he or she could develop the level required in 4 years?

**Extract 10: Early Years Education student teachers' focus-group (turn 196)**

SS\_G1EY: . . . or setting some aims to be achieved in 4 years and design individual processes to reach the objectives. Because being aware is necessary but you need to make some effort to improve your language level and the faculty could not offer individual opportunities during 4 years.

As displayed in Table 2 and exemplified above, the macro-, meso- and micro-factors adduced by the Early Years Education and the Primary Education student teachers are similar. Therefore, we might say that student teachers in both degrees perceive the multilingual practices carried out at the faculty as useful but improvable.

As far as teacher educators are concerned, data from the semi-structured interviews is summarised in the following table [Table 3]. Table 3 shows the frequencies and percentages calculated following van Lier's (2004) framework of macro-, meso- and micro-systems from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews<sup>2</sup>.

2 2 interviews were carried out in Basque, 1 in Spanish and 1 in English: Extracts were translated by the researchers for the present chapter.

The main focus of the semi-structured interviews is on the macro-systems; 54,61 % of the turns in Early Year Education and 44,91 % in Primary Education. As displayed in the example below, teacher educators pay particular attention to the integration of content and language. In fact, as exemplified below teacher educators consider that the design of the curriculum may help student teachers develop their language level.

**Extract 11: Early Years Education teacher educators' interviews (turn 9)**

T4EY: ... I think that the integration of content and language could be more than a pedagogical approach. Indeed, I believe that it is a way of understanding teaching and learning processes and organizing the curriculum by means of the integration of content and language in different languages could be a good opportunity to foster students' language development.

**Extract 12: Primary Education teacher educators' interview (turn 24)**

T2PE: In the case of English, I think that the integration of content and language is necessary if we want student teachers to foster that approach at schools. Moreover, I really believe that this approach is interesting due to the fact that individual students' learning path throughout the four years could be promoted.

Teacher educators also alluded to factors related to the meso-system. As shown in the following extract, a high percentage of turns refer to the syllabus and subjects offered in the Faculty as well as to the pedagogical actions and interventions of the teachers.

**Extract 13: Early Years Education teacher educators' interview (turn 49)**

T1EY: [...] The integration of content and language implies using different methodologies in our subjects and therefore, the design of the sessions takes into account diversity. But not only that, the syllabus of the course is also created considering the diversity of the students.

**Extract 14: Primary Education teacher educators' interview (turn 30)**

T2PE: [...]... by means of subjects offered at the faculty student teachers deal with real materials and real tasks and they realize that they, they do have a lot more knowledge in the language and content than expected . . . From my experience the CLIL approach includes students as well and expects them to.. to use their own knowledge, giving students the protagonism in all subjects.

Teacher educators share their perceptions towards the micro-system factors. The extracts depicted below show the added value of the integration on students' feelings. Indeed, both extracts emphasize the impact of the approach on students.

**Extract 15: Early Years Education teacher educators' interview (turn 49)**

T4EY: [...] I feel that it [meaning integration of content and language] fosters natural interaction among student teachers and of course, with me. I think that they feel

comfortable in the classroom, there is a relaxed atmosphere and their attitude towards learning changes. I guess that our characteristics, as teachers I mean, may also have an impact, eh. . . some students may feel better with one teacher than with another but. . . anyway, there is a big difference promoted by the approach itself and the way of understanding language teaching and learning processes.

**Extract 16: Primary Education teacher educators' interview (turn 63)**

T3PE: I see that the diversity of options offered to the students methodologically... individual work, group work. . . makes a difference and students feel secure. However, I believe that it is not easy to get used to the integration of content and language at the very beginning. Some students may feel lost in the first subject but they get used to it in a couple of weeks.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Approaches such as CLIL or EMI have become common practices to foster multilingualism (Corrales et al., 2016; Lasagabaster, 2015; Lasagabaster, Doiz & Sierra 2014; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2018) in HE. However, studies are still scarce (Corrales et al., 2016; Costa and Coleman, 2010; Lasagabaster, 2015; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2018) and hence, systematic research is urgently required (Macaro et al., 2018) to identify the factors that may impact on undergraduate students' and university teachers' positive perceptions.

The present study offers further original insights into the perceptions about multilingual practices in the context of HE. Its goal has been to critically examine the multilingual practices carried out in the Faculty of Humanities and Education at Mondragon Unibertsitatea to arrive at a more accessible understanding of our programme from an ecological perspective. In so doing we have collectively, both from the perspective of student teachers and teacher educators, drawn on scenarios to improve multilingual practices because as Fernandez Costales (2017) claims, the influence of EMI or CLIL at university level needs to be evaluated, not only in relation to the benefits in language competence or the gains in particular skills, but also at a macro-level and using multidisciplinary approaches. In the same line, van Lier's (2004) ecological perspective served as a framework to capture learning and teaching episodes in the present study. Moreover, the complexity of the ecosystem was to be captured by analysing student teachers' and teacher educators' voices.

This study confirms that student teachers, both Primary and Early Years, perception towards the multilingual practices carried out at the faculty as useful but

improvable as in other studies (Corrales et al., 2016). In particular, the present study revealed that the student teachers' voices clearly indicate that participants' perception is rather positive towards the multilingual practices offered at the university, a conclusion which is supported by previous studies (Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012; Fernandez Costales, 2017). However, the data of the current study also revealed that most student teachers identify aspects to be improved in the Faculty's offer. Our study depicted that no difference was found among the factors alluded by Early Years Education and the Primary Education student teachers. It is interesting that the main focus is on factors related to the meso-system for all student teachers. As our findings show, the syllabus is the main area of concern for student teachers although they refer also to specific multilingual pedagogical actions as they are the most noticeable variables of their daily multilingual practices. Among macro-system, language program and policy of the university play an important role for both groups of student teachers and the role of Basque in the language program was considered important. Indeed, in contexts where a minority language is the language of instruction – which is our case – students recognise the need to develop their minority-language competence in academic settings. Concerning the micro-system, student teachers participating in our study emphasised the importance and responsibility of teacher educators. Indeed, teachers are the most significant variables that have an effect on students' perceptions towards classroom practices (Havik & Westergård, 2019) through their interactions with students.

However, findings enacted from student teachers show areas to improve. Student teachers highlighted the importance of being aware and knowing about the language program and language policy. Some participants agreed on the idea that to better understand the multilingual practices being carried out in the Faculty systematic explicitation is needed on the part of teacher educators. Focusing on individual factors, participants in our study allude to the effort needed to develop their individual language competence. Furthermore, as in other research studies conducted in HE (Aguilar and Rodríguez, 2012), the main focus of the focus groups was placed on language and not in content. This should lead us to consider that student teachers require a holistic view of the program in order to develop positive perceptions towards all pedagogical actions designed at the university.

As regards teacher educators, the main focus was of the interviews carried out in this study was on the macro-system and a particular attention was paid in the integration of content and language. As student teachers, teacher educators refer to the syllabus and subjects offered in the Faculty as well as to the pedagogical actions and their interventions. Teacher educators reflect on students' feelings.

As far as the interactive model is concerned, this CLIL experience presents as a transactional model and not a transmission model (Van Lier, 2004), and it is focused towards the protagonism of the learner, engaging the learners as active participants in the learning process: “the centrality of student’s experience and the importance of encouraging active student learning rather than a passive reception of knowledge” (Van Lier, 2004).

The present study was an attempt to conduct a comprehensive analysis on the implementation of multilingual programmes at university level as proposed by Fernandez Costales (2017) with a particular emphasis on holistic issues that might contribute to determine the value of integration of content and language. While the general outcome seems to be rather positive, this research underlines that there is still room for improvement, in particular as regards the awareness on content and language development. In this sense, moving towards a *Pluriliteracies teaching for learning approach* (Meyer et al., 2015; 2017; 2018) can be useful to unveil some of the complexities of multilingual practices in integrated learning settings. In that line, our findings confirm what Meyer et al. (2015: 44) assert. The authors state that “adopting a CLIL research does not automatically lead to effective learning and increased subject-specific task performance.” Thus, teaching explicitly academic language is necessary to impact on the construction and communication of knowledge (Meyer et al., 2015; Meyer & Coyle, 2017). Mohan, Leung, and Slater (2010) stress the importance of conceptualising learning if integration is the aim and moreover, as claimed by Coyle et al. (2017), taking into account the ecosystem of learning may help us systematically including other factors (emotional and affective factors among others) that impact on the learning process.

The emerging research agenda around CLIL evidences the need to focus on a deeper understanding of the role of subject specific literacies in the enablement and improvement of the effective learning. Meyer et al. (2015, 2017) believe that it’s essential to work on a model which support new classroom practices as well as prioritise and promote the development of the students’ pluriliterate repertoires. In that vein, the authors propose the *Pluriliteracies teaching for learning approach* to develop subject specific literacies in more than one language, and to provide pathways for deeper learning into and across languages, disciplines and cultures (Meyer et al., 2018) which will prepare students for living and working in the Knowledge Age (Meyer & Coyle, 2017). Hence, the *Pluriliteracies teaching for learning approach* focuses on the development of subject specific literacies and transferable knowledge and skills as well as on personal growth, offering a pathway for deeper learning. We believe that redesigning our practices considering the *Pluriliteracies teaching for learning approach* could help us improving

the aspects highlighted by student teachers. Furthermore, Lasagabaster (2018) asserts that English-medium instruction (EMI) or CLIL courses are common at university level on a global scale but there is a scarcity of pedagogical guidelines about how to implement effective courses. In that line, this study offers also some pedagogical implications.

Based on the results obtained, our plurilingual curriculum will take into account the approach proposed by Meyer et al. (2018) to foster the meaning making of student teachers. Hence, the proposal will strengthen the connection between the conceptualising continua and communicating continuum (Meyer et al. 2015) because it “becomes evident as novices increase their meaning-making potential by moving outwards along the continuum alongside an ability to verbalize their increasingly complex conceptual understanding adequately in the appropriate language” (Meyer & Coyle, 2017: 7). Nonetheless, the *Pluriliteracies teaching for learning approach* will also evidence the fundamental importance of variables such as generation and sustainment of learner commitment and achievement, and mentoring dimension in order to offer a unified model that “allows for the design of deeper learning ecologies where mentors and mentees are engaged in the processes of constructing and communicating of knowledge” (Meyer et al., 2018: 241).

At an institutional level and from the view of teacher educators, more training is required to understand the *Pluriliteracies teaching for learning approach* and impact on both, student teachers’ and teacher educators’ perception towards the multilingual practices conducted. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are welcome to investigate the possible fluctuations of the same participants from Year 1 to Year 4. Also, conducting similar research studies in other contexts is needed due to the fact that to our knowledge, very few research studies have been carried out in HE to examine critically the perceptions of all actors involved in the practices carried out.

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