



Vol.9 Special Issue No.1 (2026)

Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching

ISSN: 2591-801X

Proudly owned and sponsored by Kaplan Business School, Australia

Content Available at: <https://jalt.open-publishing.org/index.php/jalt/index>

Integrating intercultural and linguistic competences in Spanish Higher Education: Bridging the employability gap

Pilar Couto-Cantero ^A

^A *Universidad de la Coruña, Spain*

Patricia Arnaiz-Castro ^B

^B *Universidad de las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain*

Francisco J. Marín ^C

^C *Universidad de Córdoba, Spain*

Keywords

Bilingual education (BE);
employability;
higher education;
intercultural competence.

Abstract

The proliferation of Bilingual Education (BE) has emerged as a pivotal strategy for advancing the internationalization of higher education institutions (HEI) globally. While research has predominantly focused on linguistic outcomes, there remains a lacuna in scholarly discourse regarding the exploration of non-linguistic dimensions and implications of BE implementation. To address this gap, the present research studies the relationship between BE, self-perceived intercultural competence and employability. The views of undergraduates have not been sufficiently explored and this could be important, because learning theory posits that motivation and commitment of learners constitute critical determinants of education efficiency. Moreover, it elicits aspects which have been overlooked by research such as the perception of students who have been involved in bilingual programmes, and also of those who have been in traditional mainstream courses. The method used in this study involved a total of 669 students from various Spanish universities, which were collected through a validated multi-dimensional survey. Pairwise comparisons were conducted among students enrolled in three types of degree programmes: bilingual, partially bilingual, and non-bilingual. Additionally, the study investigates other variables, such as the branch of knowledge and the correlation between intercultural competence and employability perceptions, to evaluate their potential significant impact. Results revealed that students in bilingual programmes demonstrated significantly higher levels of self-perceived intercultural competence and employability compared to the other two groups, which did not show significant differences between them. The implications of these findings for higher education students regarding intercultural competence and employability are discussed.

Correspondence

fmarin@uco.es ^C

Article Info

Received: 12 May 2025

Revised: 3 November 2025

Accepted: 15 January 2026

Published: 25 May 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2026.9.S1.6>

Introduction

There exists a constant concern about the adjustment between the skills acquired at university and the demands of the labour market. Therefore, this analysis is intended to consider how academic training can be aimed at closing the gap between university and employment. One of the purposes of this study is to analyse the relevance of significantly integrating bilingual programmes into university education in order to improve the employability of graduates. Taking their perceptions into account is a fundamental element, as their opinions represent a key part of the university-employment equation. In contrast to other studies focusing on bilingual programmes or specific subjects for learning a modern language, this study focuses on the connection between linguistic communication skills and the employability possibilities that the acquisition of these skills can bring to students in university higher education programmes, aligning them with the demands of a close working environment.

Analysing these views of higher education students allows for a more precise investigation of the need to include these competences since students' main motivations for applying for a university degree are often career development in their chosen field of study. This would not only help to prevent future frustrations as well as inefficiency in educational investment but also ensure that the skills acquired are aligned with the demands of today's working environment. Universities have been striving to help their graduates to be employed, and academic training should aim to close the gap between university and employment. Data obtained from various job and employability portals, such as the *Anuario del mercado de trabajo, 2023* or *Employability of young people in Spain, 2024*, confirm that the youth (ages 15-24) unemployment rate in Spain stands at 28.5%, which is double the European Union average and has not improved in recent years (Martínez-Cantero, 2024).

The advancement and implementation of bilingual education remain among the foremost priorities of the Council of Europe (De Wit et al., 2015). However, establishing effective models for bilingual education is an ongoing empirical endeavour that encounters considerable challenges at scientific, institutional, and policy levels. These include unresolved debates regarding the best approaches to language and content integration (Coyle & Meyer, 2021; Sohn et al., 2022), limited teacher training and the lack of clear, consistent policies governing programme structure (Domke & Cerrato, 2024; Macaro, 2018; Richards & Pun, 2021; Rose et al., 2021). In Spain, the recent increase in higher education degrees offered fully or partially in English reflects the longstanding efforts of the Spanish government to promote English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), a strategy aligned with similar initiatives in other European nations and worldwide (Barrios & López Gutiérrez, 2023; De la Cruz-Cabanillas & Tejedor-Martínez, 2021; Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018; Patiño-Santos et al., 2024). Degrees that incorporate various subjects in English aim to equip students with a diverse set of skills and symbolic resources, thereby enabling them to meet the demands of future employment opportunities. As Shohamy (2013) argues, this approach is perceived to enhance the institutional prestige of universities that implement it, based on the assumption that it provides access to what is regarded as “central bastions of society” (p.201).

At the same time, the development of cross-curricular competences, defined as skills that are common to most professions and transferable across various activities, sectors or organizations has become a key focus of academic efforts to ensure a more adaptable workforce in an increasingly complex, dynamic, globalized, and interconnected world. Intercultural Competence (IC) is one example of a cross-curricular skill (Barret, 2011; Gutiérrez-Santiuste & Ritacco-Real, 2023; Sierra-Huedo & Nevado-Llopis, 2022). According to Aguilar (2018), “Intercultural Competence should become a learning outcome in [...] EMI courses” (p. 25). Various studies have highlighted the significance of incorporating IC as a fundamental skill for professional success in an increasingly globalized world (Díaz & Moore, 2018; Killick, 2016; Messelink et al., 2015). As countries continue to integrate into the global community, the importance of intercultural communication skills grows, making competence in this area a critical necessity. IC is now widely recognized as a graduate attribute sought by employers (Lantz-Deaton, 2017). Employers look for professionals who can identify, respect, and adjust their behaviour to align with diverse cultures and effectively operate in a variety of contexts (Gacel-Avila, 2005).

The strong connection between IC and employment skills is well-established and requires minimal elaboration. Students need an education that equips them to meet the demands of the 21st century, enabling them to mana-

-ge their responsibilities successfully both within and beyond their own ethnic and cultural groups (Banks, 2001). For example, in today's globalized workplaces, professionals are increasingly required to collaborate with colleagues and clients from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, demonstrating adaptability, empathy, and effective cross-cultural communication skills that are essential for employability and professional success. IC enhances team effectiveness by fostering cultural sensitivity, cohesion, respect and commitment (Lázár et al., 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2019). Importantly, the value of IC extends beyond intercultural settings: these competences are equally relevant for navigating differences within one's own cultural or organizational environment, underscoring their broad significance for workplace success. Barret et al. (2014) argue that individuals with well-developed IC are able not only to act appropriately in intercultural encounters but also to function as "mediators" who interpret and articulate differing worldviews. According to Byram et al. (2002) the foundation of the intercultural competence lies in the attitudes of the intercultural speaker and mediator. This mediating role is distinct from, and complementary to, other IC-related team benefits such as cultural sensitivity, cohesion, and respect (Lázár et al., 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2019). It operates both across and within cultural or linguistic groups, where intra-group differences in perspectives, values, or experiences may likewise lead to misunderstanding. Conversely, a deficiency in IC can result in prejudice, discrimination, and hostile communication, which are closely linked to misunderstandings among people with varying cultural identities and affiliations.

Building on the links established between bilingualism, intercultural engagement, and the acquisition of employability-related competences, it can be hypothesized that bilingual degree programmes provide a context conducive to the development of both intercultural and employability skills. The present study therefore examines whether students participating in such programmes perceive themselves as better equipped in terms of intercultural competence and employability compared to those enrolled in non-bilingual degrees. Furthermore, participants enrolled in partially bilingual degree programmes, which offer some subjects in English and others in the L1, were selected for inclusion in accordance with the researchers' decision (e.g. Basibek et al., 2014 in Turkey; Poon, 2013 in Hong Kong). This decision was based on the fact that, in Spain, degrees delivered entirely in English mainly fall into two categories: those related to the training of English teachers or translators/interpreters, and those belonging to various disciplines typically offered by private universities. Consequently, it was considered that the perceptions of students enrolled in partially bilingual programmes, situated between bilingual and mainstream tracks, would also be valuable, as they would provide a more accurate representation of the Spanish higher education context. The paper begins with a review on the role of bilingualism in employability skills and intercultural competence in higher education. Next, it outlines the research aims and methodology of the study, including the instrument used, and the sampling approach. The results are then presented, followed by a discussion, and suggestions for future research.

This study is integrated into a larger research project aimed at understanding the perceptions of Spanish students across three educational levels regarding the potential advantages of their bilingual education. Hence, it has been undertaken within the framework of the national project entitled: "Spanish students' perception of the expected usefulness of bilingual education" (FoBE - Future of Bilingual Education, reference no. PID2021-127031OB-I00), which received funding from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation. In this context, acquiring linguistic competences, particularly in English, and intercultural skills emerges as a critical factor for enhancing the employability of graduates in a globalised labour market (Arnaiz-Castro & Couto-Cantero, 2024; Gómez-Parra et al., 2021a).

Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework underscores the urgency of reorienting higher education programmes towards a competence-based model, in which bilingualism serves as a transversal axis rather than an optional complement. In this section, we will explore the role of bilingualism in developing employability skills, as well as its impact on intercultural competences.

The role of bilingualism in employability

Quantitative studies demonstrate that graduates from bilingual programmes in Spain perceive higher employability than their monolingual peers, with statistically significant differences in dimensions such as salari-

-es, a 6.6% increase in self-perceived salary among bilinguals (Palacios-Hidalgo et al., 2022); labour mobility, and a greater willingness to work in international environments (Gómez-Parra, 2018). Hence, proficiency in English is crucial for employability, especially in a globalised labour market. Most reports and studies on universities and employment define the ideal graduate as one who has a solid basic knowledge of their degree, possesses some practical knowledge, is proficient in English, and incorporates motivation and the ability to learn (Del Peso et al., 2013; Solé-Moro et al., 2018). The University of Glasgow investigated employers' perceptions of new graduates' employability skills, and the steps universities should take to develop them (Lowden et al., 2011). And it is also notable that, for many professionals, having a sub-standard level of English can be a significant barrier to career advancement and hinders their access to important information (Hernández-March et al., 2009).

Moreover, it has been shown that bilinguals are distinguished by greater social awareness and greater social flexibility, which encourages them to increase both the number and diversity of social interactions in which they participate (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019; Ikizer & Ramírez-Esparza, 2018). All of these skills will be crucial for students in their future careers, as they will facilitate both their personal relationships and their employability in an increasingly diverse and globalised world whose smooth functioning depends to a large extent on intercultural communication (Deardoff, 2020).

Regarding the importance of English language skills for employment, there are recent studies that explore the impact of bilingualism on different aspects or dimensions such as intercultural awareness, mobility and specifically employability (Arnaiz-Castro et al., 2022; Gómez-Parra, 2018; Gómez-Parra et al., 2021b). Precisely, Arnaiz-Castro and Couto-Cantero (2024) argue that the benefits provided by bilingualism seem essential to meet the requirements of the globalised labour market:

Bilingual students excel in skills such as written comprehension and production, as well as oral production and comprehension. The advantages of bilingualism include improvements in communicative competence and executive brain functions, such as the ability to organise and apply specific behaviours according to the situation. In addition, bilinguals consciously manage their cognitive processes during language selection and production, which helps them understand different perspectives and empathise with others. They also have greater social awareness and flexibility, which increases the diversity of their social interactions (p. 9).

On the other hand, data obtained from various job portals and employability surveys indicate that for graduates who do not have an adequate level of English for the requirements inherent to the position or the profile demanded by the employer, accessing their first job is considerably complicated and underline the importance of English language skills as a determining factor in the employability of graduates (Anuario del Mercado de Trabajo, 2023; INE, 2024). Spain is in the moderate English proficiency category and occupies an intermediate position in the overall English proficiency ranking of 116 Countries and Regions (EPI, 2024). This suggests that, although a significant part of the population possesses English proficiency skills, there is still considerable room for improvement compared to other European countries showing higher levels of proficiency as: Netherlands, Norway or Sweden. Consequently, Spanish graduates will have to compete in the labour market with individuals who have a better command of English.

The role of bilingualism in Intercultural Competence

Bilingualism is widely recognized for fostering enhanced social awareness and sensitivity. By navigating the need to choose context-appropriate languages to ensure mutual understanding, bilingual individuals continually practice interpreting social cues. This ongoing engagement cultivates a heightened ability to discern others' perspectives and adapt communication effectively (Byram, 1997; Greenberg, 2013; Hsin et al., 2024; Liu, 2019). Empowered by this heightened awareness, bilingual individuals excel at navigating diverse social contexts, fostering cultural sensitivity and adaptability. As evidenced in Liu's (2019) study, conducted with students from various national backgrounds studying at a university in Beijing, the mentioned sensitivity increases as their language engagement deepens. Research further underscores this advantage, revealing that bilingual adults often outperform monolinguals in social flexibility, a competence that facilitates meaningful intercultural engagement and promotes frequent, dynamic interactions (Ikizer & Ramirez-Esparza, 2018). Effective communication and adaptive behaviour form the core of intercultural competence (Gutiérrez-Santiuste & Ritacco-Real, 2023).

From the mid-20th century onward, a multitude of frameworks for conceptualizing intercultural competence have developed, offering complementary insights that deepen our understanding of this critical skill. The terms intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and intercultural competence (IC), for instance, exhibit conceptual distinctions in their relationship. For certain scholars, this relationship is defined by conceptualizing intercultural competence as the capacity to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contexts (Deardoff, 2020). In this perspective, intercultural competence is fundamentally equated with effective communication and encompasses the attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary for engaging in appropriate and meaningful interactions. In line with this perspective, scholars Barrett (2013, 2018) and Swartz and Shrivastava (2021) position intercultural communication competence (ICC) as encompassing three core dimensions: cognitive understanding, emotional awareness, and behavioural adaptability when engaging across cultural boundaries. This framework aligns with, yet differs from, the perspective that ICC constitutes a specialized subset within the broader construct of IC. As argued by Lantz-Deaton & Golubeva (2020), IC represents a comprehensive capability that subsumes ICC's narrower focus on interpersonal communication between individuals from distinct cultural backgrounds. Within this conceptualization, ICC serves as the foundational mechanism through which IC develops, emphasizing dialogic interaction as the primary vehicle for competence building. Regardless of theoretical positioning, both perspectives converge on the centrality of communication proficiency in IC development, a view strongly supported by Deardorff's (2020) research highlighting interactional skills as essential components of intercultural learning. In the present study, intercultural competence refers to the ability to interact and communicate effectively while acknowledging and respecting diverse identities. It is understood that "intercultural competence is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 241). This study also frames IC as a dynamic, learnable skill set that evolves through experiential growth, emphasizing that its interconnected competencies develop progressively over time. This conceptualization of IC as a lifelong process is already evident in Byram's (1997) seminal work.

Intercultural competence starts forming in early childhood and continues in high school and university (McGuire-Snieckus, 2015), but it is during university years that its development becomes most pronounced (Holubyncha et al., 2021). As elucidated by Lázár et al. (2023) in their examination of Hungarian university students' intercultural competences from a labour market perspective, it is imperative that students receive an education that equips them for the complexities of the 21st century; they must be adept at managing their work both effectively and efficiently within and beyond their ethnic and cultural community. Moreover, recent studies carried out across various countries have demonstrated that employers consider intercultural competences essential for graduate employability (Lázár et al., 2023; Lantz-Deaton & Golubeva, 2020; Pinto & Lourenço, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of integrating intercultural competence development within higher education curricula.

The study

While existing literature features extensive empirical investigations into intercultural competence across various educational levels, research on employability competences remains relatively underdeveloped. Notably the current Spanish research landscape lacks an integrated analytical framework that synthesizes both domains through the lens of university students' lived experiences. This study therefore aims to elucidate undergraduate perceptions regarding the perceived developmental impact of bilingual or partially bilingual degree programme participation on their intercultural capabilities and professional market readiness.

Research question and objectives

In this context, the research question that emerges from this study is the following: what is the perception of university students in bilingual programmes on the expected usefulness of their bilingual education? In order to answer this question, the following objectives (O) have been specified:

- O1. To compare the self-perceived employability skills of students enrolled in bilingual, partially bilingual and non-bilingual degree programmes.
- O2. To compare the self-perceived intercultural competence of students enrolled in bilingual, partially bilingual and non-bilingual degree programmes.

- O3. To analyse the correlation between the employability and intercultural competence dimensions of students enrolled in bilingual degree programmes.
- O4. To compare the different branches of knowledge among students enrolled in bilingual degree programmes with regard to self-perceived employability skills.
- O5. To compare the different branches of knowledge among students enrolled in bilingual degree programmes with regard to self-perceived intercultural competence.

Method

Participants

This study includes data from students from various Spanish universities, collected through a validated multi-dimensional survey in the first semester of the academic year 2024-2025. Of the 744 participants who submitted the questionnaire, 75 were excluded due to incomplete responses or failure to meet control question criteria. Consequently, the final sample included 669 students, yielding a response rate of 89.9%. Participants were categorized into three groups according to their level of engagement in bilingual education programmes, also referred to as English as Medium of Instruction (EMI). The implementation of EMI across undergraduate programmes in Spain exhibits significant heterogeneity in scope, structure, and institutional adoption. Although EMI is the established central term used to describe the distinct educational practice of teaching through English, variation is an integral part of what makes this type of instruction unique (Macaró, 2018; Richards & Pun, 2021; Rose et al., 2021). The three groups were described as follows:

1. Students in bilingual programmes: Students completing a university degree delivered entirely in a language other than their first language (n = 306).
2. Students in partially bilingual programmes: Students enrolled in degree programmes including between two and four subjects delivered in a language other than their first language (n = 189).
3. Students in non-bilingual programmes: Students completing all coursework in their native language (Spanish) (n = 174).

In all cases, English was the language of instruction in the bilingual and partially bilingual programmes. Within the bilingual group, participants were further categorized by their academic discipline (branch of knowledge) (see Figure 1 below).

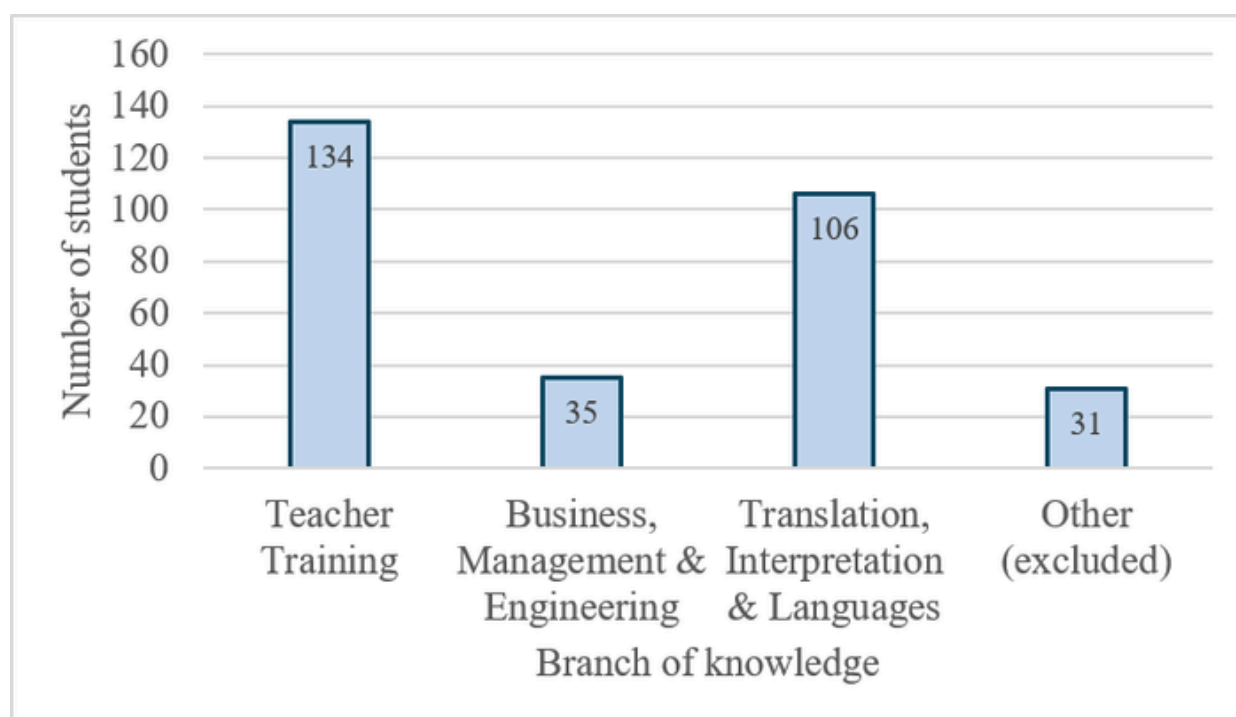


Figure 1. Background of participants (bilingual group).

Instrument

The instrument used was a closed-ended questionnaire consisting of five sections and employing an 11-point Likert scale (0 = not at all, 10 = to a great extent). The first section collected demographic information and data about participants' programmes of study through approximately 30 questions; the second focused on internationalization, including one question about participation in mobility programmes and around 15 items; the third on employability (8 items); the fourth on intercultural competence (9 items); and the final section on plurilingual competence (8 items). The third and fourth dimensions, employability and intercultural competence, were the primary focus of this study. This questionnaire was developed under the Spanish national research project: "Future of Bilingual Education (FoBE)" (Ref. PID2021-127031OB-I00) funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation.

Prior to full data collection, the questionnaire was meticulously validated. A pilot test with 325 participants confirmed both its internal validity and reliability, with key psychometric indicators (e.g., CFI = 0.919, TLI = 0.909, RMSEA = 0.06) all within acceptable thresholds (Espejo-Mohedano, 2024). These results ensure that the tool provides robust and nuanced insights into students' attitudes and beliefs about bilingual education's role in their academic and social development.

With the data collected for the present study, internal consistency analyses were conducted separately for each dimension, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Internal consistency reliability for each dimension.

Dimension	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω	Interpretation
Employability	0.9424	0.9437	Excellent reliability
Intercultural Competence	0.9487	0.9515	Excellent reliability

Note. All coefficients exceed 0.94, indicating high internal consistency. Item deletion did not improve reliability for either dimension.

Data collection

This study was approved by the Ethics Review Committee at the University of Córdoba (Spain) and was conducted under the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki. The online survey was distributed to universities across Spain, targeting bachelor's and master's degree students, along the year 2024. Students were invited to participate by their teachers and informed about the study's purpose and the anonymity of their responses before providing consent and completing the survey. Most responses were received from the Universities of Las Palmas, A Coruña, and Córdoba, institutions affiliated with the research team, where student participation was actively encouraged. As a result, other universities were less represented than initially intended.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were first calculated for the full sample. To test differences between groups, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed for both employability and intercultural competence. Subsequently, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was employed to examine the relationships between the two core dimensions and their constituent items, focusing specifically on students participating in bilingual programmes. This analysis was followed by a more detailed examination of potential differences across branches of knowledge within this group.

General results according to programme type

Regarding the employability scale, analysis of the data showed that students enrolled in bilingual degree programmes reported the highest self-perceived scores ($M = 7.90$, $SD = 1.97$), followed in descending order by those in partially bilingual programmes ($M = 7.46$, $SD = 2.24$), and those in non-bilingual programmes ($M = 7.30$, $SD = 2.37$) (see the left panel of Figure 2).

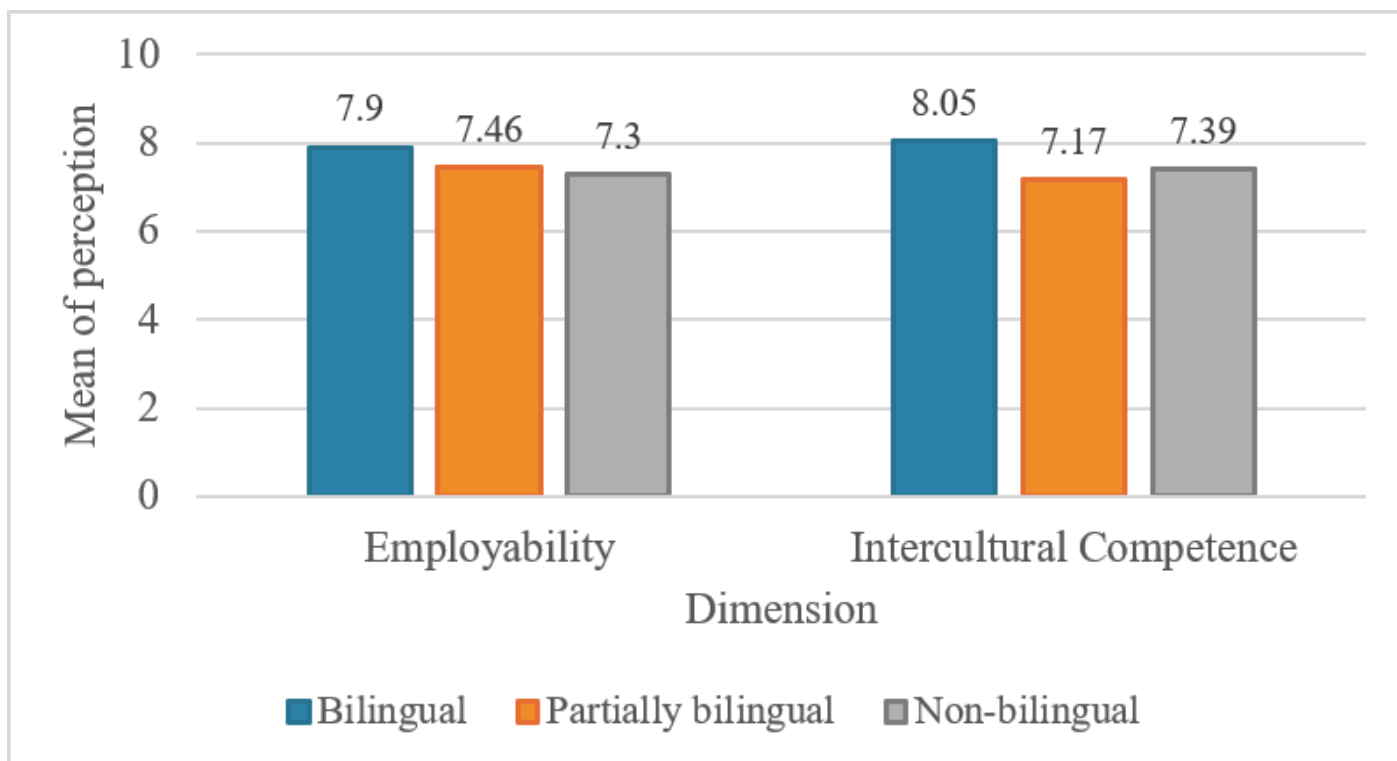


Figure 2. Mean employability and intercultural competence scores by programme type.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to assess overall differences among the three groups, yielding a statistically significant result ($\chi^2(2) = 8.13$, $p = 0.017$), which justified the use of post hoc pairwise comparisons. These comparisons (see the first three rows in Table 2) were performed using the Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner (DSCF) test, which indicated that the only statistically significant difference was between the bilingual and non-bilingual groups. When focusing exclusively on students in the bilingual and partially bilingual degree groups and analysing individual items, students in the former consistently achieved higher scores; however, statistical significance was noted solely for the item *"I believe that my participation in a bilingual programme will offer me the profession of my choice"* ($W = -5.2057$, $p = 0.0007$).

Concerning the analysis of the intercultural competence scale, it can be observed that students in the bilingual degree group once again reported the highest scores ($M = 8.05$, $SD = 1.92$), followed by students in the non-bilingual degree group ($M = 7.39$, $SD = 2.24$), and those in the partially bilingual programme ($M = 7.17$, $SD = 2.40$) (see the right panel of Figure 2 above). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant overall difference among the three groups ($\chi^2(2) = 21.12$, $p < 0.001$), with a small effect size ($\epsilon^2 = 0.0316$). Given this result, pairwise comparisons were conducted using the DSCF test, which identified statistically significant differences between participants in the bilingual and non-bilingual degree programmes, as well as between those in the bilingual and partially bilingual degree programmes (see the last three rows of Table 2). No significant difference was observed between participants in the partially bilingual and non-bilingual degree groups.

To explore these results in greater depth, an item-level analysis was conducted between students in the bilingual and partially bilingual degree programmes, revealing a consistent trend in favour of those in the bilingual group

across all items. The most statistically significant differences emerged in statements related to personal and global development, such as: “[I believe that my participation in a bilingual programme] *will offer me the possibility of feeling a citizen of the world*” ($W = -6.1257, p = 0.0001$); “*will improve my empathy*” ($W = -5.7349, p = 0.0001$); and “*will have a positive impact on the way I am as an intercultural individual*” ($W = -5.4545, p = 0.0003$).

Table 2. Pairwise comparisons for employability and intercultural competence (DSCF Test).

Dimension	Dimension	W	p-value
Bilingual vs. Non-bilingual	Employability	-3.603	0.029*
Bilingual vs. Partially bilingual	Employability	-3.018	0.083
Non-bilingual vs. Partially bilingual	Employability	0.624	0.898
Bilingual vs. Non-bilingual	Intercultural Competence	-4.67	0.003**
Bilingual vs. Partially bilingual	Intercultural Competence	-5.910	0.001**
Non-bilingual vs. Partially bilingual	Intercultural Competence	-1.180	0.683

Note. Statistical significance is indicated as follows: $p < 0.05^*$, $p < 0.01^{**}$, $p < 0.001^{***}$.

Correlation between intercultural competence and employability among students enrolled in bilingual programmes

The Spearman correlation performed with the scores corresponding to students in the bilingual programme revealed a moderate-to-strong association between the employability and the intercultural competence dimensions ($\rho = 0.6294, p < 0.001$).

At the item level, notable and statistically significant correlations (all with p -values < 0.001) were found between employability and intercultural competence statements. For example, “[I believe that my participation in a bilingual programme will offer me the following in the future:] *create a competitive international profile in social media*” was significantly correlated with “[I believe that my participation in a bilingual programme] *will offer me the possibility of feeling like a citizen of the world*” ($\rho = 0.5607$), “*improve my empathy (i.e., the ability to put oneself in someone else’s shoes)*” ($\rho = 0.4433$) and “*have a positive impact on the way I am as an intercultural individual*” ($\rho = 0.5118$). Likewise, the item “*get a job abroad*” showed strong correlations with “*improve my ability to adapt to different cultural contexts*” ($\rho = 0.5338$) and “*improve my knowledge of other cultures*” ($\rho = 0.5567$). These findings suggest that students who perceive greater intercultural development through bilingual education also anticipate professional advantages, particularly regarding global mobility, personal branding, and cross-cultural career readiness.

Focused results: Students in bilingual degrees by branch of knowledge

To assess whether the branch of knowledge associated with students' degree programmes influenced their perceptions, the data from those enrolled in the bilingual programme were analysed separately. The aim of this analysis was to determine whether students enrolled in degrees from different academic disciplines perceive bilingual education differently in terms of its contribution to employability skills and intercultural competence. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated some statistically significant differences in both dimensions across the branches of knowledge. Specifically, pairwise comparisons using the Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner test (see Table 3) revealed that students in Translation and Interpretation/Languages had significantly higher perceptions of both employability skills and intercultural competence than those in Teacher Training. No significant differences were observed between the other branches of knowledge.

Table 3. Pairwise comparisons – Employability and Intercultural Competence by branch of knowledge.

Branch of knowledge	Dimension	Mean	W	<i>p</i> -value
Teacher Training	Employability	7.57	2.592	0.159
Business, Management & Engineering		8.11		
Teacher Training	Employability	7.57	4.862	0.002**
Translation & Interpretation / Languages		8.28		
Business, Management & Engineering	Employability	8.11	0.638	0.894
Translation & Interpretation / Languages		8.28		
Teacher Training	Intercultural Competence	7.87	0.019	1
Business, Management & Engineering		7.44		
Teacher Training	Intercultural Competence	7.87	3.971	0.014*
Translation & Interpretation / Languages		8.4		
Business, Management & Engineering	Intercultural Competence	7.44	2.199	0.266
Teacher Training		7.87		

Note. All pairwise comparisons were performed using the Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner (DSCF) test. Sample sizes: Teacher Training (*n* = 134), Business, Management & Engineering (*n* = 35), Translation & Interpretation / Languages (*n* = 106).

When comparing students in the *Teacher Training* (TT) degree with those in the *Translation & Interpretation / Languages* (TIL) degree, several statistically significant differences emerged in favour of the TIL group. In the employability dimension, TIL students scored notably higher in *"the profession of my choice"* (8.83 vs. 7.53, $p < .0001$), *"a better salary"* (8.56 vs. 7.49, $p < .0001$), *"early access to the labour market"* (8.38 vs. 7.83, $p = .0310$), *"getting a job abroad"* (9.04 vs. 8.41, $p = .0006$), and *"creating a competitive international profile"* (7.78 vs. 7.41, $p = .0072$). Although differences in *"promotion," "social prestige,"* and *"collaboration networks"* were not statistically significant, the TIL group consistently showed higher mean values.

Similarly, in the dimension of intercultural competence, TIL students reported significantly greater perceived benefits in several areas: *"adapting to different cultural contexts"* (8.75 vs. 8.01, $p = .0009$), *"willingness to live abroad"* (8.19 vs. 7.59, $p = .0224$), *"knowledge of other cultures"* (8.93 vs. 8.29, $p = .0053$), *"access to cultural products"* (9.12 vs. 8.41, $p = .0011$). Additionally, they reported significantly higher scores in self-perceptions as intercultural individuals, specifically in *"the way I am"* (8.50 vs. 8.05, $p = .0336$) and *"the way I live"* (8.47 vs. 8.09, $p = .0465$) as intercultural individuals. Although other items, such as *"will improve my empathy"* and *"will favour my understanding and acceptance of others"* did not reach statistical significance, the overall trend continued to favour the TIL group.

Discussion

This study makes several important contributions to the literature on employability skills and intercultural competence in bilingual contexts. First, it describes the self-perceived benefits of bilingual education in these areas and compares the scores obtained by three groups: students in bilingual, partially bilingual and non-bilingual degree programmes. The results indicate that those in the bilingual programme reported higher levels of self-perceived employability skills and intercultural competence than the other two groups. However, statistical significance was not observed in all cases. Notably, the only statistical significance between participants in the bilingual and partially bilingual degree programmes in the employability dimension was found in the item [I believe that my participation in a bilingual programme] *will offer me the profession of my choice*. This finding aligns with previous research on the subject (Palacios-Hidalgo et al., 2022; Gómez-Parra, 2018). In fact, the importance of acquiring English language skills to find the profession of one's choice, within the employability dimension, has been highlighted by several scholars, including Arnaiz-Castro et al., (2022); Gómez-Parra, (2018) or Gómez-Parra et al. (2021a). Furthermore, Arnaiz-Castro and Couto-Cantero (2024) emphasise that the advantages conferred by bilingual education programmes are essential for accessing improved labour market conditions.

In the intercultural competence dimension, a statistically significant disparity was identified between participants in bilingual degree programmes and those in the partially bilingual degree programmes across all evaluated items, with the most pronounced statistical relevance attributed to aspects pertaining to personal development and global perspective. These results suggest that individuals' self-assessed intercultural competence is indeed influenced or moderated by their engagement with and utilization of the target language. As individuals interact more extensively with the target language, they are likely to develop heightened intercultural sensitivity, a pattern also observed in previous research (Greenberg, 2013; Hsin et al., 2024; Liu, 2019).

The moderate-to-strong association between employability and intercultural competence underscores the imperative of integrating bilingual programmes within educational institutions to foster these competences. This perspective aligns with the work of Bochenek et al. (2025), who emphasise the critical importance of cultivating intercultural skills to advance global partnership and enhance student employability. Furthermore, it is essential to recognise that the term "global", as articulated by Johnston & López (2022), functions as an inclusive construct that encompasses domestic, intercultural, and international collaboration. This reinforces the notion that education should not focus solely on the individual learner but must also address their adaptability and effectiveness across diverse sociocultural and professional settings (Herrera Granda et al., 2022; Pugh & Lozano-Rodríguez, 2019).

The impact of higher education programmes, measures, and systematic evaluations on promoting graduates' e-

-employability skills remains relatively underexplored, particularly within the domains of Teacher Training (TT) and Translation & Interpretation / Languages (TIL). However, a report by the University of Glasgow (Lowden et al., 2011) investigated employers' perceptions of new graduates' employability skills and the steps universities should take to develop them. These findings align closely with the third domain of this study: Business, Management & Engineering (BME). The report revealed that faculties and departments were not significantly engaged in promoting student employability. It also indicated that internships were more prevalent in management and business courses, as well as finance and accounting degrees, where practical skills and business experience are deemed essential for achieving employment competences.

Regarding the comparison between the TT and TIL domains, the study highlighted that TIL Spanish students had significantly higher perceptions of both employability skills and intercultural competence compared to TT Spanish students. These results are consistent with Jackson's (2012) research, which suggested that factors such as work experience, engagement with the skills agenda, and the stage of degree studies significantly impact employability skills. The higher employability scores for TIL students may be attributed to the greater likelihood of these programmes providing real opportunities to secure their desired profession, receive better salaries, and access the labour market through internships and paid work-based learning experiences during their studies. On the contrary, TT students do not receive paid work-based learning experiences during their studies, at least in Spain (Hall et al., 2010; Lowden et al., 2011).

As well as the authors of this research, Lowden et al. (2011) concur that developing employability skills and intercultural competence should be integrated into Higher Education Institutions' strategic planning at both faculty and departmental levels. Furthermore, Higher Education Institutions should assume a significant responsibility for facilitating graduates' integration into professional life and, consequently, into society (Petreikienė & Pukelis, 2007).

Conclusions

Limitations

This study addressed the existing research gap by examining the relationship between intercultural competence and employability skills within the framework of bilingual education. Nevertheless, as in many other studies several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the authors were unable to obtain comparable sample sizes across the three participant groups. A larger sample of students in Business, Management, and Engineering would be required to explore potential differences with greater statistical power. Consequently, future research should prioritise recruiting balanced numbers of respondents from each sector to enhance generalizability and enable more precise comparative analyses. Additionally, extending the research context to include other communities within Spain would be a valuable direction for subsequent studies.

Future directions and recommendations

Future studies should employ mixed-method designs to explore participants' perspectives on intercultural competence experiences and employability skills through interviews and self-reflective writing. This approach would not only triangulate the quantitative findings but also help assess the strengths and weaknesses of specific programmes. Our findings underscore the potential for higher education institutions to enhance their commitment to intercultural sensitivity. Examining students' perceptions is essential, as data from participants in bilingual programmes may contribute to the design of more effective and tailored programmes. The information gathered in this study aims to be useful to educational authorities and public policymakers.

Empirical evidence supports that bilingual programmes not only enhance employability but also mitigate cognitive and social asymmetries in the global labour market. Scaling these programmes requires public policies that prioritise equity and alignment with sectoral demands, avoiding the saturation of degrees with low labour market insertion. Therefore, two lines of action are proposed regarding the implications for educational policies

to bridge the employability-labour market gap. The first involves curricular strengthening, integrating linguistic and intercultural competences into all degrees, with a focus on technical-professional English. The second entails collaboration between universities and industries which should be fostered to design degrees aligned with strategic sectors where English is a priority requirement (Del Peso et al., 2013).

Summary

In conclusion, the data analysis presented in this study successfully addressed the previous research question regarding university students' perceptions of the usefulness of their bilingual education. Comparing the self-perceived employability skills and intercultural competences of students in the bilingual, partially bilingual, and non-bilingual degree programmes (O1 and O2) revealed that students in the bilingual programmes consistently achieved higher scores. Regarding the correlation between the employability and intercultural competence dimensions among students in the bilingual degree programme (O3), the results demonstrated that those who perceived greater intercultural development through bilingual education were also more likely to anticipate professional advantages such as global mobility, personal branding and cross-cultural career readiness. Finally, when comparing students in bilingual degree programmes across different branches of knowledge in terms of self-perceived employability skills and intercultural competence (O4 and O5), students in the Translation & Interpretation/Languages group reported significantly greater benefits in most items.

Overall, we contend that this study contributes to the field of bilingual education by drawing attention to the following: the interconnection between intercultural competence and employability skills; and the importance of considering less-explored parameters in the Spanish context, such as branches of knowledge. As Arco-Tirado et al. (2018) argue, the successful implementation of high-quality bilingual education programmes and policies is contingent upon the nature and robustness of the available evidence.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

The current study has been supported by the national competitive Project entitled: "la percepción de los estudiantes sobre la utilidad de la educación bilingüe" Future of Bilingual Education (FoBE). Spanish Government, Science, and Innovation Ministry. Ref. No.: PID2021-127031OB-I00.

References

Anuario del Mercado de Trabajo. (2023). Madrid: ADECCO Group Institute. <https://www.adeccoinstitute.es/empleo-y-relaciones-laborales/mercado-de-trabajo-2023/>

Aguilar, M. (2018). Integrating intercultural competence in ESP and EMI: From theory to practice. *ESP Today. Journal of English for Specific Purposes at Tertiary Level*, 6(1), 25–43. <https://doi.org/10.18485/esptoday.2018.6.1.2>

Arco-Tirado, J. L., Fernández-Martín, F., Ramos-García, A. M., Littvay, L., Villoria, J. & Naranjo, J. A. A. (2018). Counterfactual impact evaluation of a bilingual program on students' grade point average at a Spanish university. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 68, 81–89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.02.013>

Arnaiz-Castro, P. & Couto-Cantero, P. (2024). Percepciones sobre las competencias intercultural y plurilingüe en estudiantes de 2o de Bachillerato en España. Mercedes Osuna Rodríguez María Isabel Amor Almedina Antonio J-

-esús Tinedo Rodríguez, Irene Dios Sánchez, Francisco Poyato López y Francisca Santiago Morales (Coords.). *XII Premio "Luis Rodríguez" de Investigación en Interculturalidad* (pp. 6-18). UCOPress. Editorial Universidad de Córdoba.

Arnaiz-Castro, P., Gómez-Parra, M. E., & Espejo-Mohedano, R. (2022). An exploration of the impact of bilingualism on mobility, employability, and intercultural competence: The Colombian case. *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, 57, 179–197. <https://doi.org/10.2478/stap-2022-0008>

Banks, J. A. (2001). Citizenship education and diversity: Implications for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(1), 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052001002>

Barrett, M. D. (2011). Intercultural competence. *EWC Statement Series*, 2, 23–27.

Barrett, M. D. (2018). How schools can promote the intercultural competence of young people. *European Psychologist*, 23(1), 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000308>

Barrios E. & López-Gutiérrez, A. (2023). Language learning in a partially English-taught teacher education programme: language gains and student perceptions. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 20(2), 504–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2021.1888956>

Basibek, N., Dolmaci, M., Cengiz, B. C., Bür, B., Dilek, Y., & Kara, B. (2014). Lecturers' perceptions of English medium instruction at engineering departments of higher education: A study on partial English medium instruction at some state universities in Turkey. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 116, 1819–1825. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.477>

Bochenek, A., Howard, H. A., & Mayhook, Z. A. (2025). Integrating intercultural competencies in an introductory business information literacy course. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 25(1), 107–136.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching: A practical introduction for teachers*. Language Policy Division, Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education, Council of Europe.

Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2019). Multilingualism, translanguaging, and minority languages in SLA. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103, 130–135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12529>

Coyle D., Meyer O. (2021). *Beyond CLIL: Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning*. Cambridge University Press.

De la Cruz-Cabanillas, I. & Tejedor-Martínez, C. (2021). EMI and Intercultural Competence at University of Alcalá: The case of the Master's Degree in Teacher Training. *Language Value*, 14(2), 1–23. Universitat Jaume I ePress: Castelló, Spain. <https://doi.org/10.6035/languagev.6118>

De Wit, H., Hunter, F., Howard, L., & Egron-Polak, E. (2015). *Internationalisation of higher education*. Brussels, Belgium: European Union. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2861/444393>.

Dearden, J. (2014). *English as a medium of instruction – a growing global phenomenon*. British Council. https://www.britishcouncil.es/sites/default/files/english_council_english_as_a_medium_of_instruction.pdf

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10(3), 241–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>

Deardorff, D. K. (2020). *Manual for developing intercultural competencies: Story circles*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370336>

Del Peso, M., Hernández March, J., & Rabadán Gómez, A. B. (2013). Desajustes entre formación y empleo en el ámbito de las enseñanzas técnicas universitarias: La visión de los empleadores de la Comunidad de Madrid: Mismatches between Higher Education and the Labour Market in Engineering Sciences: The Employers Point of View in the Region of Madrid. *Revista de Educación*, 360, 244–267. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2011-360-110>

Díaz, A. R., & Moore, P. J. (2018). (Re)imagining a course in intercultural communication for the 21st century. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 1 (3), 84–99. <https://dx.doi.org/10.29140/ice.v1n3.84>

Domke, L. M. & Cerrato, M. A. (2024). Integrating content and language instruction for multilingual learners: a systematic review across programme types. *Review of Educational Research*, 10, 1–40. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543241298667>

Espejo-Mohedano, R. (2024). Design of a questionnaire to evaluate Spanish students' perception of the expected usefulness of bilingual education. In J. M. Antolí Martínez, S. Mengual-Andrés, A. López-Padrón, C. Lorenzo Álvarez, & V. Onrubia Martínez (Eds.). *Proceedings 3rd International Congress: Education and Knowledge* (pp. 10-12). Ediciones Octaedro.

Gacel-Avila, J. (2005). The internationalization of higher education: A paradigm for global citizens. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 9, 121–136. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315304263795>

Gómez-Parra, M. E. (2018). Bilingual and intercultural education (BIE): Meeting 21st century educational demands. *Theoria et Historia Scientiarum*, 15, 85–99. <https://doi.org/10.12775/ths.2018.006>

Gómez-Parra, M. E., & Huertas-Abril, C. A., & Espejo-Mohedano, R. (2021a). Employment, work abroad and bilingual education: Spanish bilingual graduates' self-perceived employability, mobility and intercultural competence. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 12(2), 279–298. <https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2021vol12no2art10777>

Gómez-Parra, M. E., & Huertas-Abril, C. A., & Espejo-Mohedano, R. (2021b). Key factors to evaluate the impact of bilingual programs: Employability, mobility and intercultural awareness. *Porta Linguarum*, 35, 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.v0i35.15453>

Greenberg, N. E. (2013). A project to increase faculty's cultural competence in mentoring English as a second language nursing students. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing*, 8(4), 128–135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.teln.2013.07.003>

Gutiérrez-Santiuste, E., & Ritacco-Real, M. (2023). Intercultural communicative competence in higher education through telecollaboration: typology and development. *Education and Information Technologies*, 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11751-3>

Hall, M., Higson, H., & Bullivant, N. (2010). The role of the undergraduate work placement in developing employment competences: results from a 5 year survey of employers. *Graduate Market Trends, 2010* (Online). <https://research.aston.ac.uk/en/publications/the-role-of-the-undergraduate-work-placement-in-developing-employ-2>

Hernández-March, J., Martín del Peso, M., & Leguey, S. (2009). Graduates' skills and higher education: The employers' perspective. *Tertiary education and management*, 15, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583880802699978>

Herrera Granda, A., Yepes, S. M., Montes Granada, W. F., & Alvarez Salazar, J. (2022). Students' self-perception of social, emotional, and intercultural competences in a public higher education institution in Colombia. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 17(2), 158–172. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-02-2022-0032>

Hsin, L. B., Galloway, E. P., & Snow, C. E. (2024). Supporting social strengths amid emerging bilingualism: effects of Word Generation on social perspective taking in English learners' writing. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 27(6), 854–869. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2024.2319869>

Ikizer, E. G., & Ramírez-Esparza, N. (2018). *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 21(5), 957–969. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728917000414>

INE, 2024. Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA). Tasa de paro juvenil. Madrid: Instituto Nacional de Estadística. https://www.ine.es/ss/Satellite?L=es_ES&c=INESeccion_C&cid=1259925463174

Jackson, D. (2012). Testing a model of undergraduate competence in employability skills and its implications for stakeholders. *Journal of Education and Work*, 27(2), 220–242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2012.718750>

Johnston, D., & López, I. (2022). Connecting beyond the classroom: Why you should be globally connecting your courses and how it benefits you and your students. In D. Johnston and I. López (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of Collaborative Online Learning and Global Engagement*, (pp. 3–17). American Council on Education. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119634867.ch1>

Killick, D. (2016). *Internationalization and diversity in higher education: Implications for teaching, learning and assessment*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Lantz-Deaton, C. (2017) Internationalisation and the development of students' intercultural competence, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 22(5), 532–550. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1273209>

Lantz-Deaton, C., & Golubeva, I. (2020). *Intercultural competence for college and university students*. Springer.

Lázár, T., Farkas, J., Hajdú, Z., Tar, I., Czeller, M., & D'Arrigo, M. (2023). The Relations between students' intercultural communication competencies and employability. *Central European Journal of Educational Research*, 5(2), 72–79. <https://doi.org/10.37441/cej/2023/5/2/13222>

Liu, M. (2019). Predicting Effects of Demographic, Linguistic and Psychological Variables on University International Students' Intercultural Communication Sensitivity. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 6(3), 123–133. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/277>

Lowden, K., Hall, S., Elliot, D., & Lewin, J. (2011). *Employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates*. University of Glasgow. Project Report. SCRE Centre and Edge Foundation. https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/employability_skills_as_pdf_-_final_online_version.pdf

Macaro, E. (2018). *English medium instruction*. Oxford University Press.

Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching*, 51(1), 36–76. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000350>

Martínez-Cantero, R. (2024). El papel de la educación dual en la mejora de la empleabilidad. En J. L. Mateu Gordon, C. Molina Hernández, & L. Luceño Casals (Eds.), *Innovación docente en Ciencias Sociales y disciplinas artísticas: Administración de Empresas, Economía, Derecho, Ciencias Políticas y Arquitectura, Arte y Diseño de Moda* (pp. 191-211). Dykinson. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=9867372>

McGuire-Snieckus, R. (2015). Towards a unified vision and assessment of the multifaceted construct of global citizenship in higher education. In J. Friedman, V Haverkate, B. Oomen, E. Park & M. Sklad (Eds.). *Going global in higher education: the theory, teaching and measurement of global citizenship* (pp. 115–124). Middelburg.

Messelink, H., Van Maele, J., & Spencer-Oatey, H. (2015). Intercultural competencies: What students in study and placement mobility should be learning. *Intercultural Education*, 26, 62–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2015.993555>

Palacios-Hidalgo, F. J., Gómez-Parra, M. E., Huertas-Abril, C. A., & Espejo-Mohedano, R. (2022). Participation in bilingual education programs as a key factor to linguistic success: the Spanish case. *Language and education*, 36(6), 560-575. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2021.1933019>

Patiño-Santos, P., Trenchs-Parera, M., & Pastena, A. (2024): Becoming “Global” in Higher Education: Positioning and Agency in Young People's Language Biographies, *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2024.2325128>

Petreikienė, I. J., & Pukelis, K. (2007). Quality Assessment in Internationalised Studies: Experience of Socrates/ Erasmus Programme Participants. *The Quality of Higher Education* (4), 74–101.

Pinto, S., & Lourenço, M. (2021). Intercultural competence in the voices of Portuguese employers: Implications for higher education institutions. *EDULEARN21 Proceedings*, 1857–1865. <https://doi.org/10.21125/edulearn.2021.0433>

Poon, A. Y. (2013). Will the new fine-tuning medium-of-instruction policy alleviate the threats of dominance of English-medium instruction in Hong Kong? *Current Issues in Language Planning*. 14(1), 34–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2013.791223>

Pugh, G. & Lozano-Rodríguez, A. (2019), El desarrollo de competencias genéricas en la educación técnica de nivel superior: un estudio de caso. *Calidad en la Educación*, 50, 143–279. <https://doi.org/10.31619/caledu.n50.725>

Richards, J. C., & Pun, J. (2021). A typology of English-medium instruction. *RELC Journal*, 54(2), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220968584>

Rose, H., Macaro, E., Sahan, K., Aizawa, I., Zhou, S., & Wei, M. (2021). Defining English Medium Instruction: striving for comparative equivalence. *Language Teaching*, 56(4), 539–550. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0261444821000483>

Shohamy, E. (2013). A critical perspective on the use of English as a Medium of Instruction at Universities. In A. Doiz, D. Lasagabaster & J. M. Sierra (Eds.). *English-medium instruction at universities. Global challenges* (pp. 196–210). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698162-014>

Sierra-Huedo, M. L., & Nevado-Llopis, A., (2022). Promoting the development of intercultural competence in higher education through intercultural learning interventions. *Revista Electrónica Educare*, 26(2), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.15359/ree.26-2.28>

Sohn, B., dos Santos, P., & Lin, A. M. Y. (2022). Translanguaging and Trans-Semiotizing for Critical Integration of Content and Language in Plurilingual Educational Settings. *RELC Journal*, 53(2), 355–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882221114480>

Solé-Moro, M. L., Sánchez-Torres, J. A., & Argila-Irurita, A. (2018). Los egresados universitarios y la inserción laboral: un acercamiento al panorama latinoamericano y español. *Revista CEA*, 4(8), 67–74. <https://doi.org/10.22430/24223182.1048>

Swartz, S., & Shrivastava, A. (2021). Stepping up the game—meeting the needs of global business through virtual team projects. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning* 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-02-2021-003>

Zhang, X., & Zhou, M. (2019). Interventions to promote learners' intercultural competence: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 71, 3–47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.04.006>

Copyright: © 2026. Pilar Couto-Cantero, Patricia Arnaiz-Castro and Francisco J. Marín. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.