



mlrc

Multilingual Learning Research Center

*Do our multilingual students see their
linguistic and cultural heritage as an
asset or a challenge in our school
environment?*

**Action Research by Natalia Sánchez & Julia Sophie Hofer
2025/2026**



LAUDE SAN PEDRO INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

Do our multilingual students see their linguistic and cultural heritage as an asset or a challenge in our school environment?

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About Laude San Pedro International School

Laude San Pedro International College is an **International School in Marbella** with a program based on British and Spanish educational curricula.

Laude San Pedro International College was founded in 2004. The curriculum is based on the British National Curriculum (ages 3 to 18), with the option of choosing the Spanish system from the age of 12, depending on the individual aspirations of each student.

- We are only one campus, but we have three schools: EYFS and Primary School (British System), Secondary and Sixth Form (British System) and ESO/Bachillerato (Spanish System).
- We offer the Cambridge English Programme for our international students leading towards external assessments in the International Language Framework.
- Music, arts and technology are celebrated in our school, giving every child the opportunity to embrace their creativity and develop their confidence.
- Our school is operated by the International Schools Partnership (ISP) and our students work alongside their peers in sister schools all around the globe, giving you child an international network of connections.

About our Research Project

With this project, we would like to discover how multilingual children, at Laude San Pedro, see their own identity, if languages help them to connect with culture, family and community, if they face any tensions or challenges being “between” cultures. We would like to compare students’ countries of origin, the languages they speak at home, the amount of time they spend in their countries of origin during holidays, the time they dedicate each week to reading and writing in their home language, and any extra activities done in their native language.

Research Question

Draft 1. Do our multilingual students in Primary and Secondary see their linguistic and cultural heritage as an asset or a challenge in our school environment?

Draft 2. Do our multilingual students in KS2&KS3 see their linguistic and cultural heritage as an asset or a challenge in our school environment?

Draft 3. Do our multilingual students in KS2 (Elementary) &KS3 (Middle School) see their linguistic and cultural heritage as an asset or a challenge in our school environment?

Draft 4. Do our multilingual students see their linguistic and cultural heritage as an asset or a challenge in our school environment?

Literature Review

- In today's globalized world—marked by growing migration and an increase in intercultural marriages—the rising diversity of multilingual, transnational families presents a significant challenge for researchers investigating multilingualism in families and schools. Interviews with participants in a study conducted in Finland on family language practices provided evidence of attitudes toward multilingualism characterized by high levels of positive regard and pride (Nenonen, 2024).
- Multilingual learners—students who use more than one language at school—can be more affected by standardized tests in English. Exploring the relationship between English language assessment and teaching for multilingual learners can help schools become more inclusive. Understanding how schools can build on the strengths of multilingual learners also requires moving beyond the idea that English should be the only language used for learning (Nordmeyer, 2023).
- Translanguaging refers to the ways in which multilingual students communicate and construct meaning in the classroom by drawing on their full linguistic repertoire in diverse and dynamic ways. In one study, students responded positively to teacher-directed translanguaging, where learning activities were intentionally planned and structured to encourage the use of students' full communicative repertoires (Lujic, 2017).
- Language portraits have been especially useful for exploring students' lived experiences with language and how they see themselves as language users; with a sense of self-empowerment. These creative linguistic profiles show that languages and language-learning are linked to emotions, belonging and biographical experiences (Busch, 2028).

Methodology I

As part of this research project, we would like to see how students see themselves as multilingual individuals. For that we would like to give them an **anonymous questionnaire** to find out more about the languages they speak at home, if they are able to use the four language skills in those languages (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and how would they represent those language in their **language portrait*** (*a visual, creative, and introspective activity where individuals map their linguistic and cultural identities onto a human body silhouette, using colors, symbols, and labels*).



Methodology I: Questionnaire & Language Portrait

Laude San Pedro de Alcántara

Multilingualism Research Project Primary-

Student's number.....

Year Group.....

Date.....

1. Nationality/Nationalities

.....

2. Language/s that you speak at home

2.1. All the family together.....

2.2. Your father and you.....

2.3. Your mother and you.....

2.4. Your siblings and you.....

2.5. Other family members.....

3. Languages that you speak at school and with your friends

.....

4. Which language or languages do you prefer to use and when?

.....

5. Do you enjoy speaking more than one language? Why or why not?

.....

6. How does it feel like to speak more than one language? Why?

.....

7. Are you a MEP student? If so, how long have you been in the school?

.....

8. How long have you been living in Spain? If you remember, where were you living before that?

.....

9. 9.1 How often do you visit your home country/countries? More than once a year? Once a year? Occasionally? Never since you left?

9.2 For how long?

.....

10. What do you enjoy the most doing when you are back in your country?

.....

11. Do you read any books in your native language? How often?

.....

12. Do you watch tv/films in your native language? How often?

.....

13. Do you know how to write in your native language? If so, how often do you write and what do you usually write about?

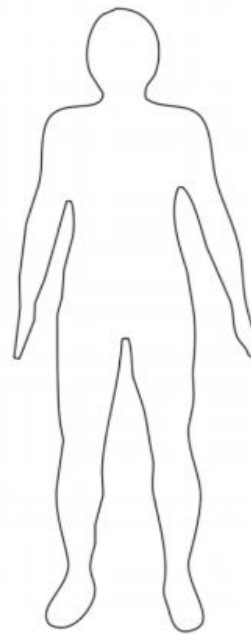
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14. Do you do any ECAs in your native language or attend any other activities? How often?

.....

.....

15. My Language Portrait



My languages:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?

.....

.....

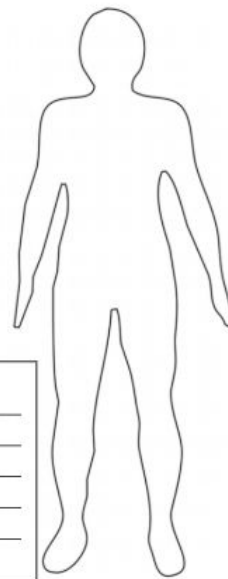
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15. My Language Portrait



Initials or Name:

.....

Methodology II

Once the questionnaire is answered and their language portrait completed, we will do a **case study** with all this information.

To complete this process, we will then explore how our multilingual learners perceive themselves within our school community. The team will meet weekly, whenever possible, to discuss our research, address challenges and questions that arise, and redirect the focus of the research if necessary.

Additionally, we will aim to connect monthly with other schools around the world that are engaged in similar research, in order to support, guide, and learn from one another.



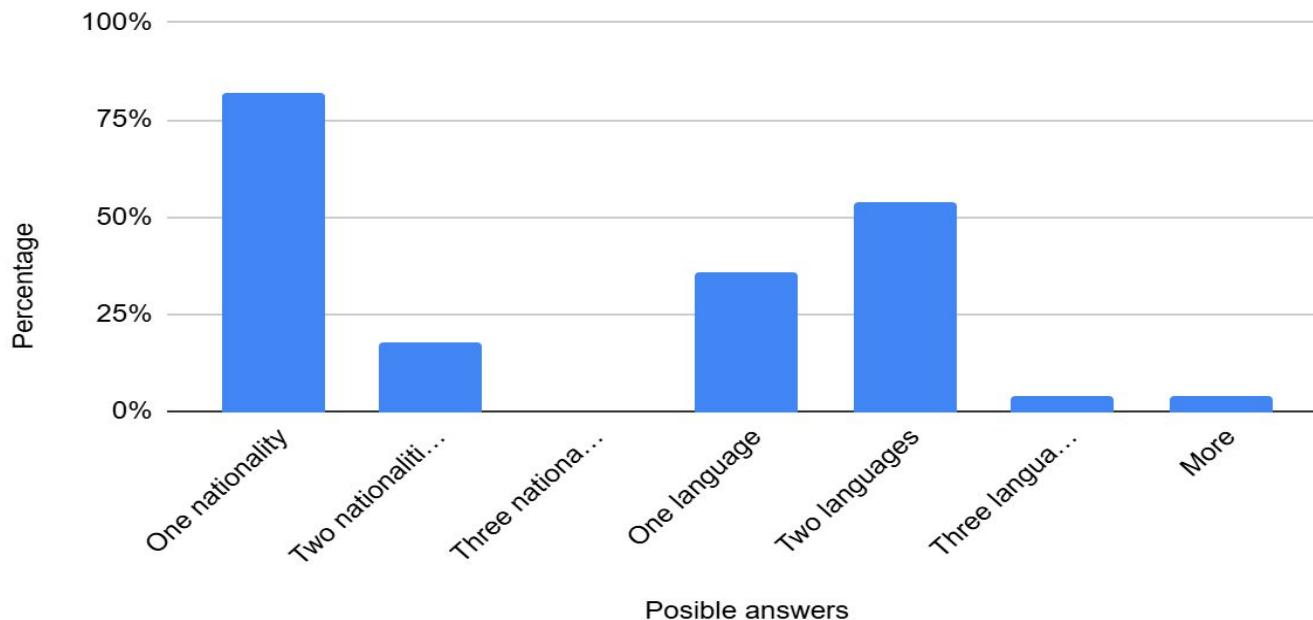
Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the action research, we will inform parents that we are part of a multilinguistic project with the MLRC and that we would like to conduct research about our multilingual students. All information will be collected anonymously and/or the name of students will be coded; however, if parents do not wish for their child to participate, we kindly ask that they inform us. Additionally, all data will be stored securely, and the identities of the participants will remain protected and confidential.



Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Primary School

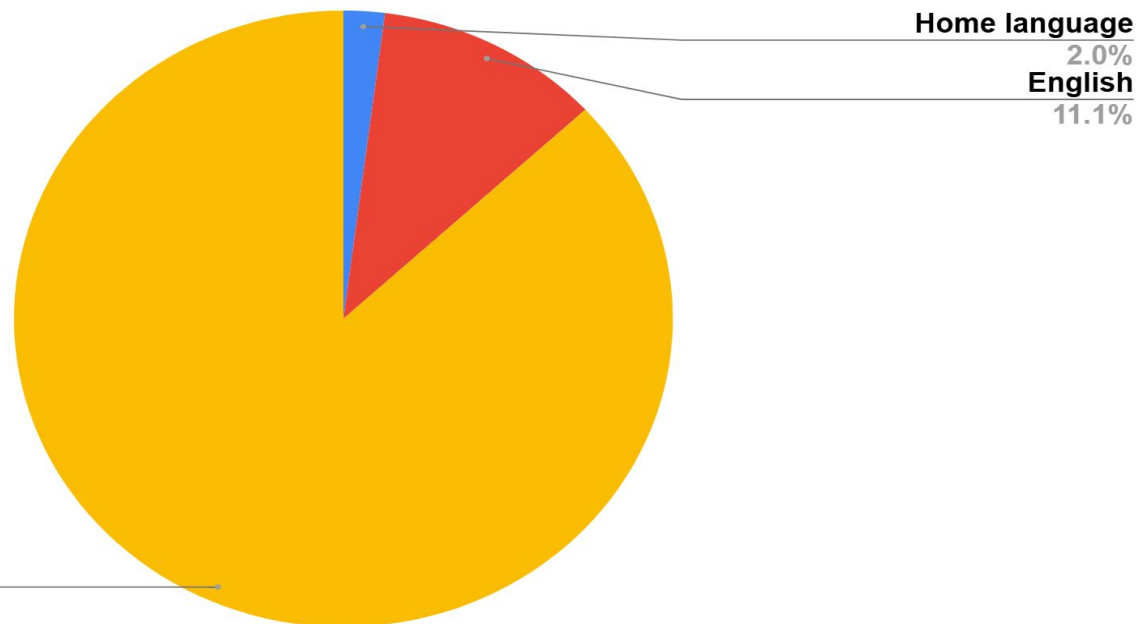
Nationalities and Languages spoken





Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Primary School

Language of preference





Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Primary School

Feelings about multilingualism

N/A

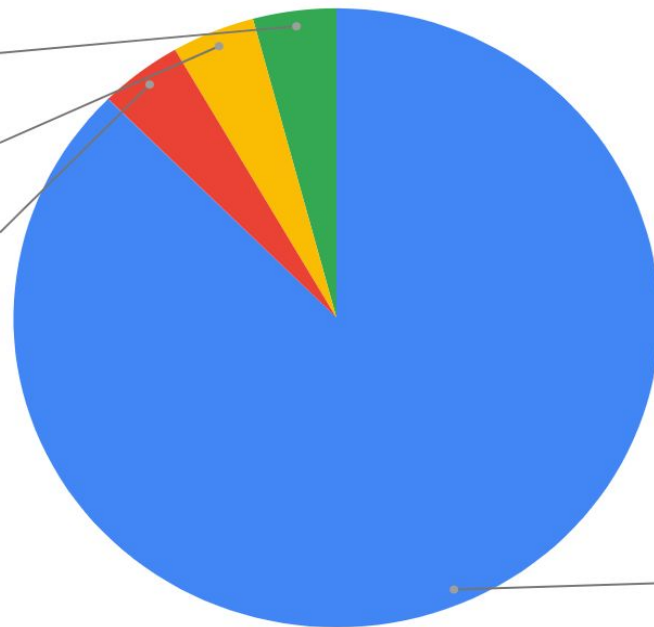
4.2%

Neutral

4.2%

Negative

4.2%



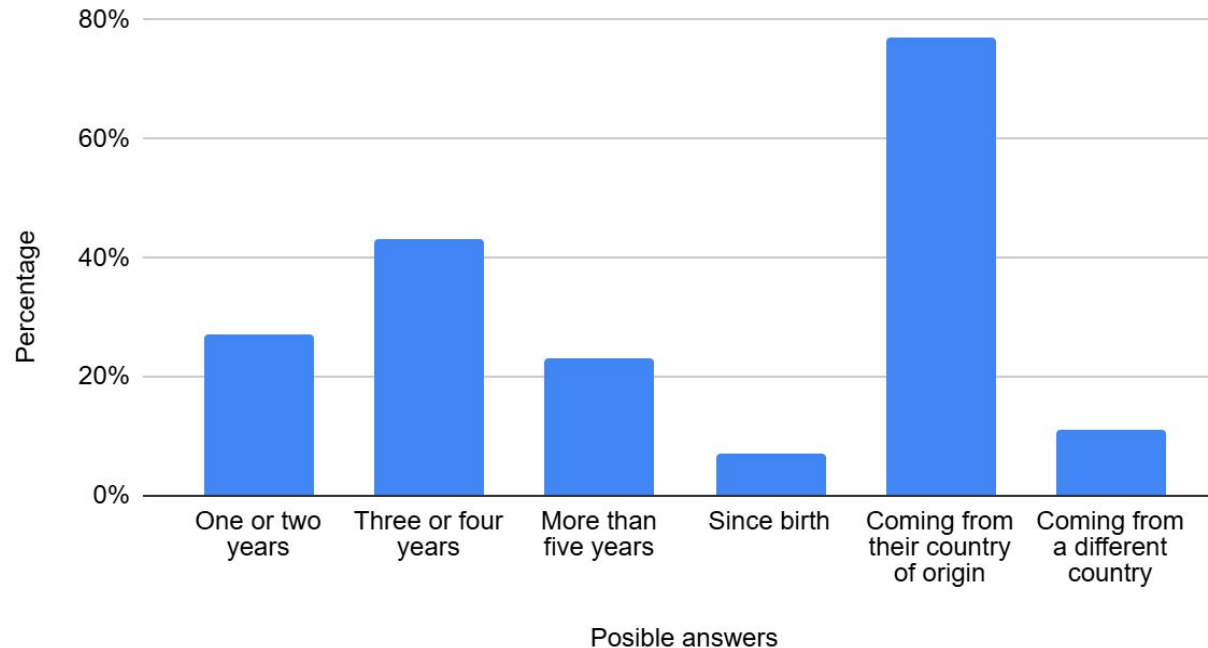
Positive

87.5%



Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Primary School

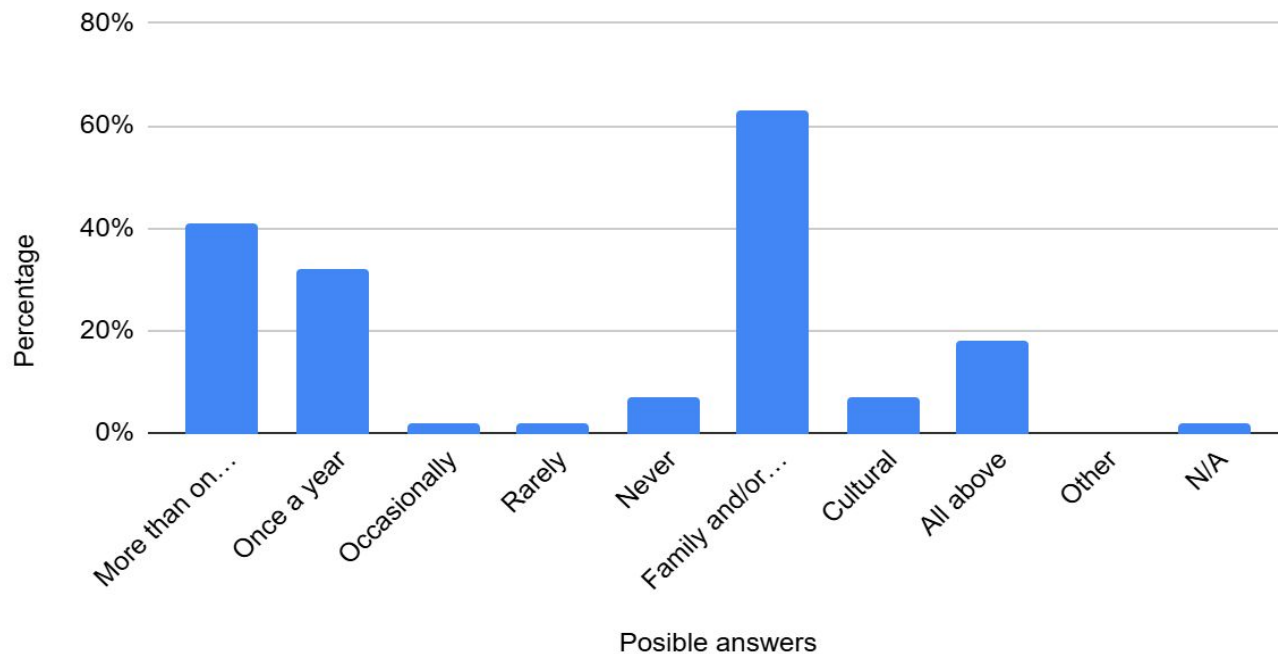
Years in Spain and country of origin





Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Primary School

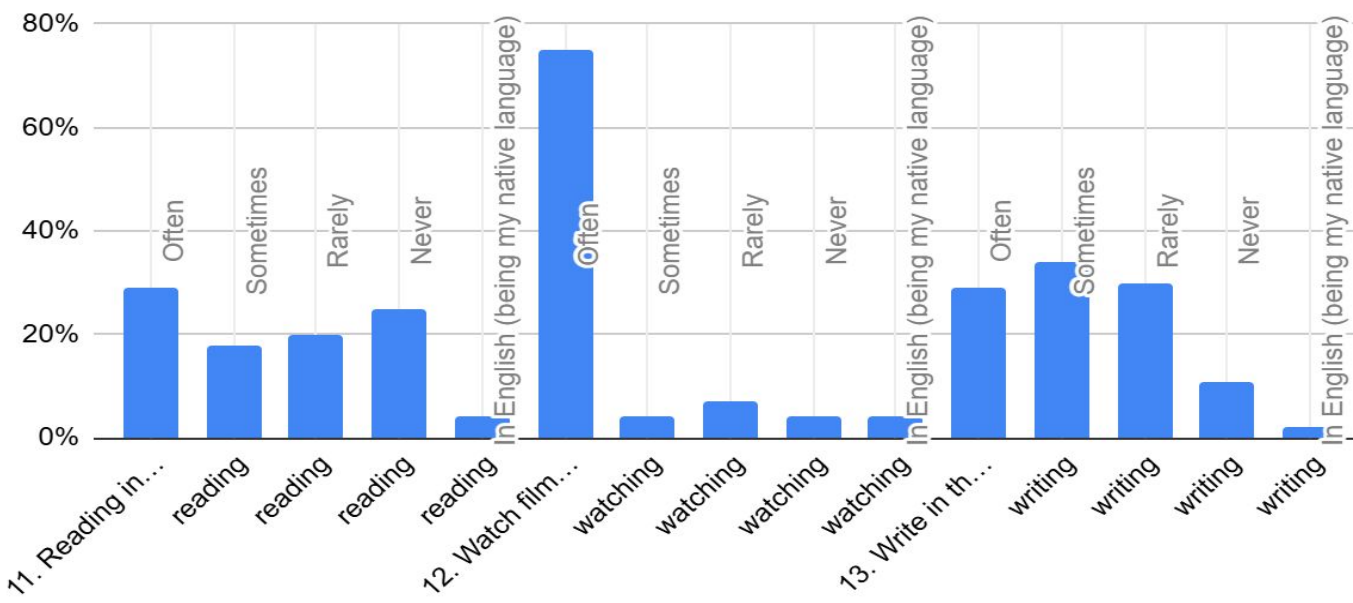
Visiting home country and favourite things





Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Primary School

Reading, Watching and Writing in native language/s

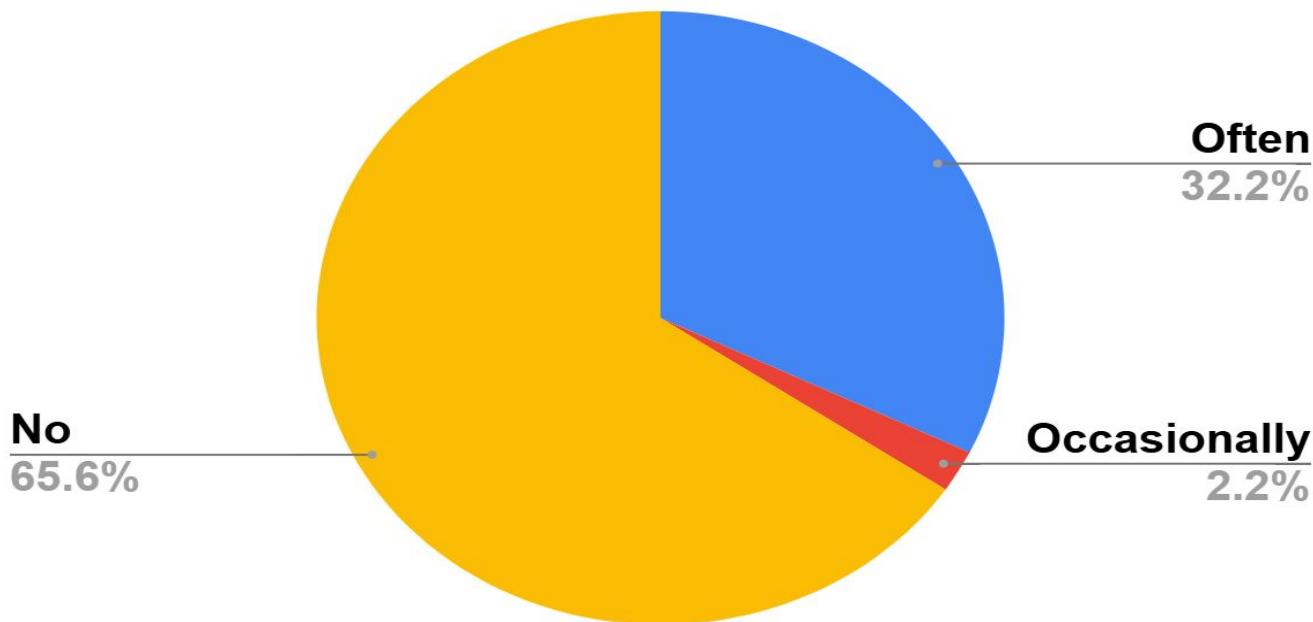




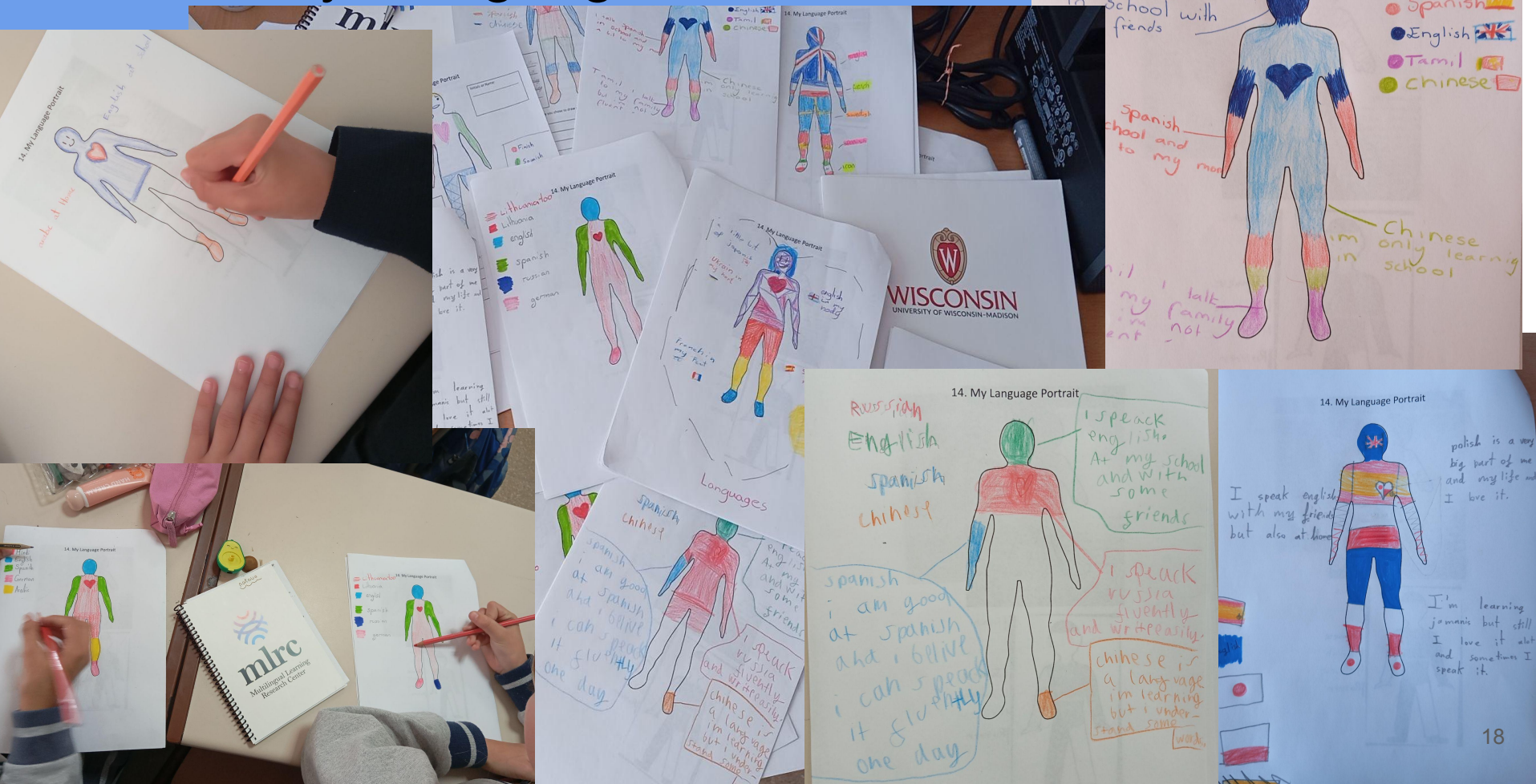
Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data

Primary School

Extracurricular activities in native language/s



Primary: Language Portraits



Findings: Case study in Primary

Based on the data analysis of the questionnaire (question 6) and findings related to “feelings about multilingualism”, some of those students were asked again about it.

Here are some of their reflections:

Being multilingual is positive because....

- You can communicate with so many people.
- When you can not find a word in a language to express yourself, you can use the other language.
- You can help people who struggle to communicate in a particular language if you speak it.

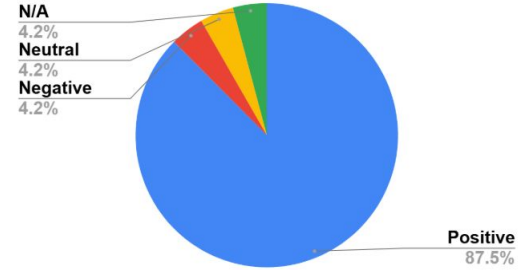
Being multilingual is sometimes negative because....

- “There are those moments when I am talking to my relatives who don’t speak English and I can only think of the English word so I can not continue because I don’t know that particular word in their language and it feels awkward”
- “After being multilingual at school, when I go back home it is hard for me to speak only one language”
- “Having my mother speaking two languages, like me, and my dad only English, I prefer when I can mix both languages than when I have to only speak one”.

Being multilingual makes us have fun moments such as....

- “Once I could not remember how to say the word “police car” in English nor my home language when I was talking to my parents, so I just made the sound to be understood”
- “Sometimes, when I speak Swedish to my parents and I want to say the word “orange juice” in Swedish, I always say a made up word that sounds like Swedish but it is not real, I say “orange jos” instead “appelsinjos”

Feelings about multilingualism



Reflections about Research in Primary

- Students loved the experience!
- No parents objected from taking part in the research project.
- Students enjoyed taking time out during Spanish to talk about their home language and make connections among the class with students who share the same language.
- Students who did not have another native speaker in the group felt supportive by other students who did not share that language.
- Students were very respectful among each other's cultures and languages.
- Students agreed that being multilingual has lots of positive things such as: other people can not understand what you say, it's fun, you can make more friends, understand more people, help other people,... Although they found very little reasons to say that being multilingual can be negative, they pointed out that: can be tiring using more than one language at the same time, they don't like making mistakes in English, sometimes they forget words in a particular language and reading a particular language can be hard.

Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data

Secondary School KS3 (Year 8)

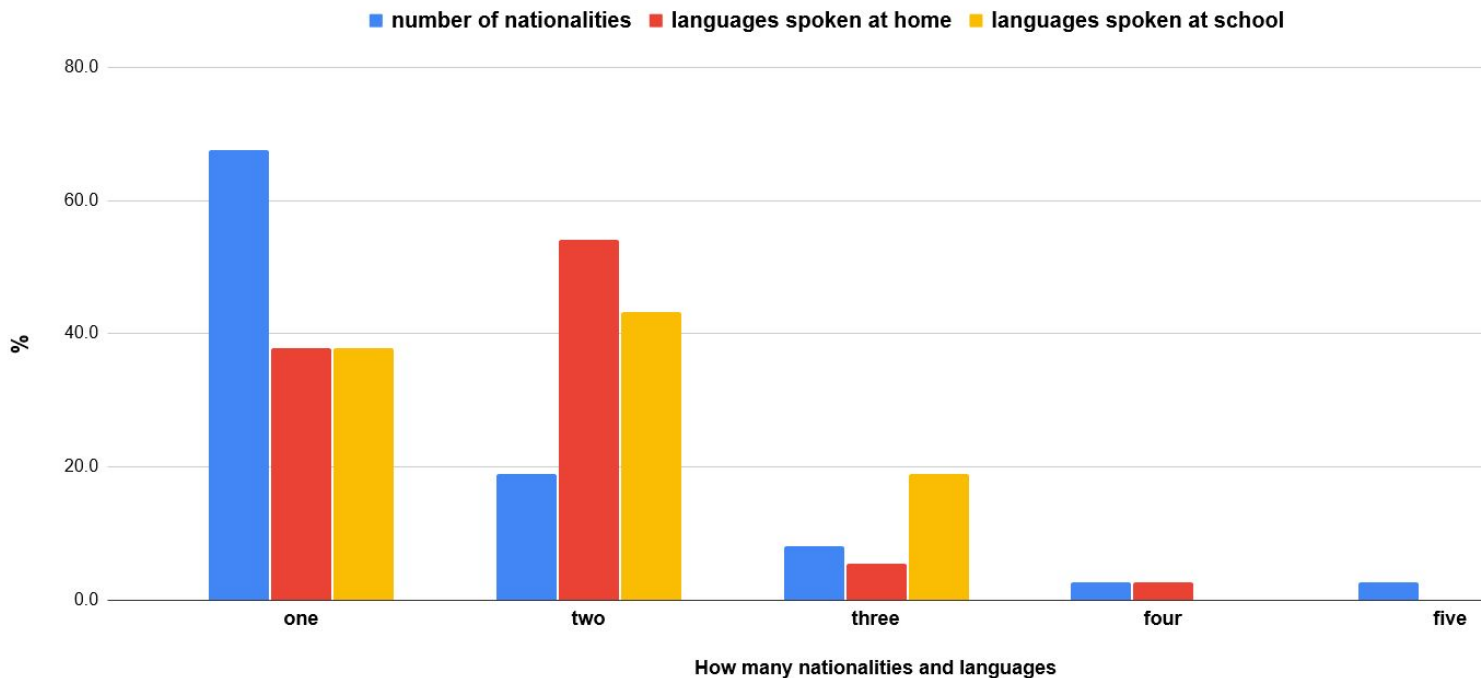
WORD CLOUD: “What languages do Year 8 students speak at home?”





Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Secondary School KS3 (Year 8)

Nationalities and Languages spoken



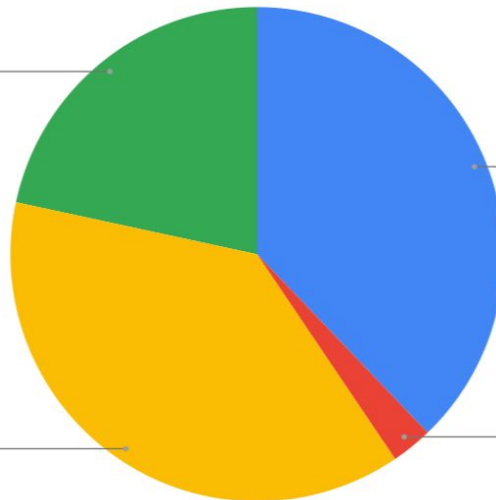


Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Secondary School KS3 (Year 8)

Language of preference

MLE* - English
21.6%

Home language
37.8%



Both: MLE + Home
37.8%

Official - Spanish
2.7%

* MLE = Main Language of Education



Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data

Secondary School KS3 (Year 8)

Feelings about multilingualism

confusing

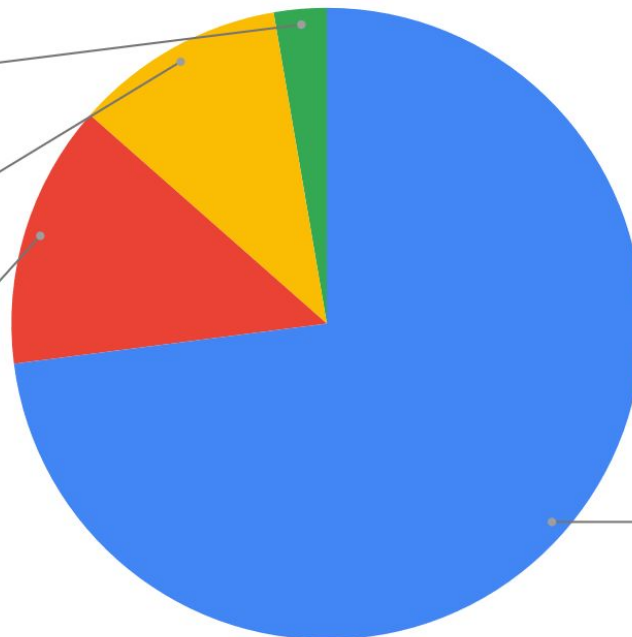
2.7%

negative

10.8%

don't know

13.5%



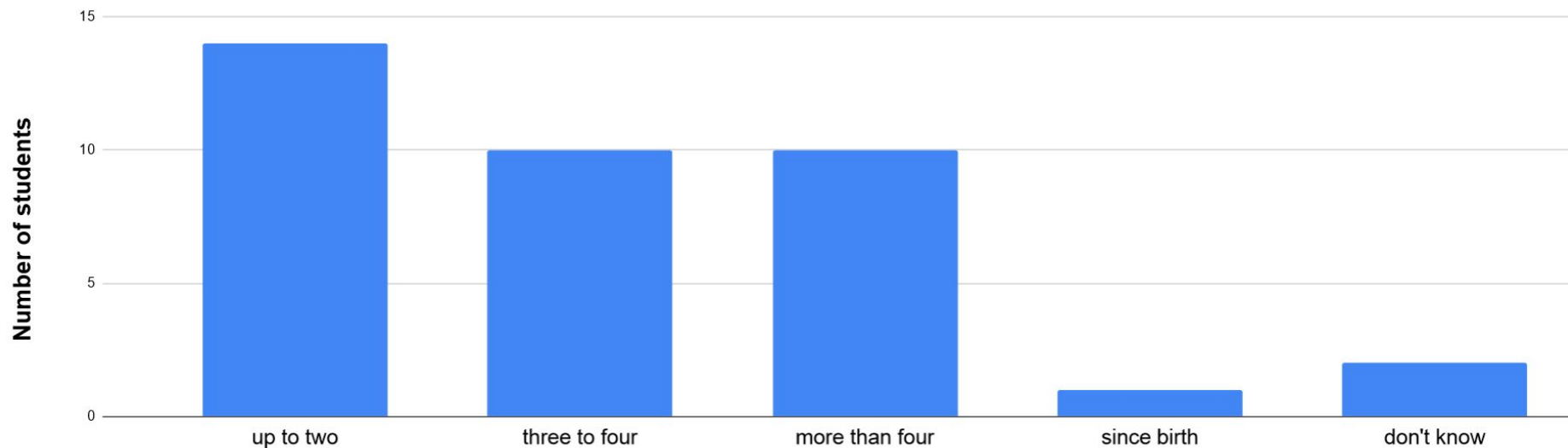
positive

73.0%



Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Secondary School KS3 (Year 8)

Years in Spain

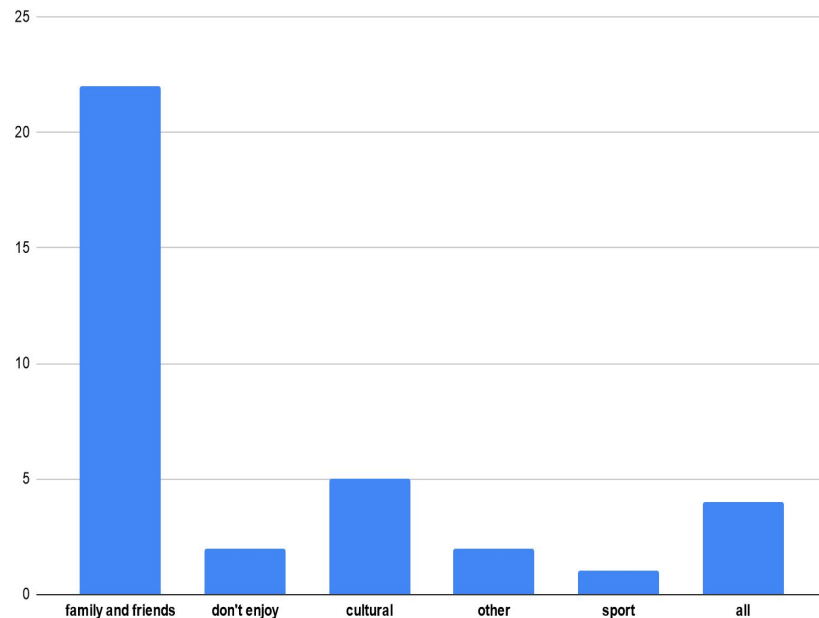
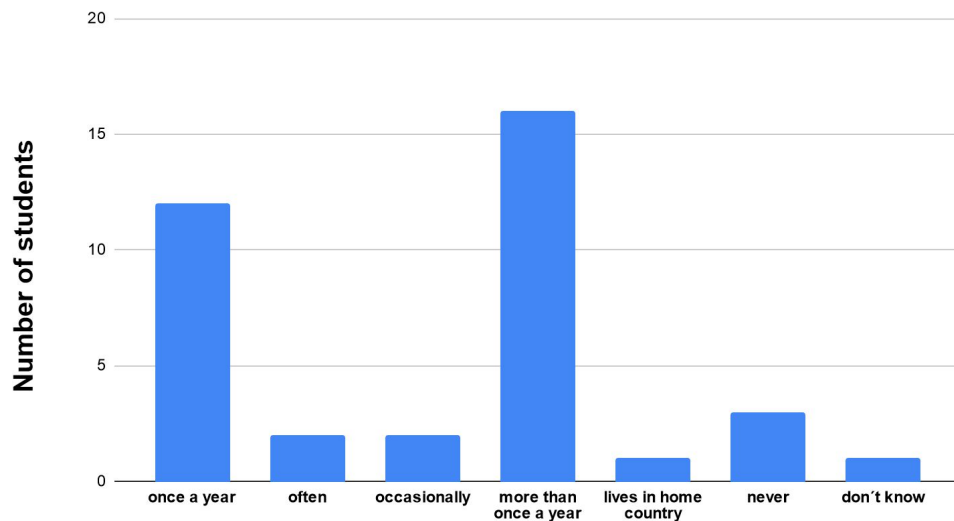




Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data

Secondary School KS3 (Year 8)

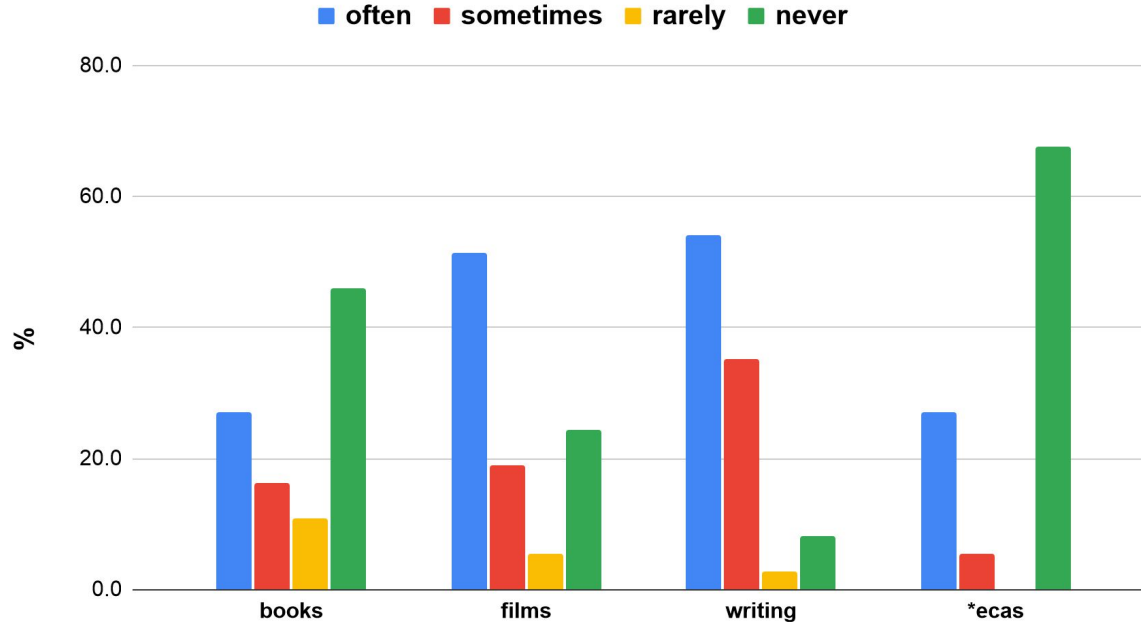
Visiting home country and favourite things





Findings: Analysing and Interpretation of the Data Secondary School KS3 (Year 8)

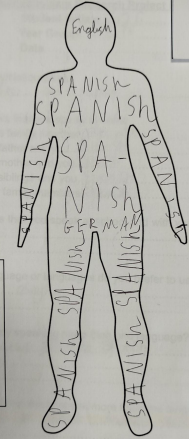
Reading, Watching, Writing and Ecas in native language/s



*ecas = extracurricular activities

Secondary: Language Portraits

15. My Language Portrait

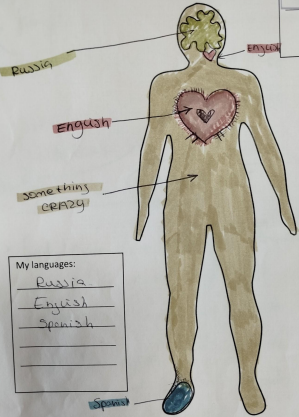


My languages:
Spanish
English
German

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?

I can read English because in school we speak English. Spanish is the language of my nation.

15. My Language Portrait



My languages:
Russia
English
Spanish

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?

without words I love English, Russia and Spanish but my body is something CRAZY

15. My Language Portrait



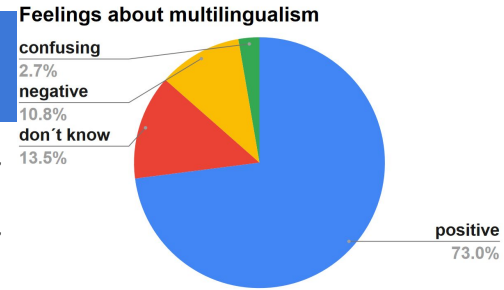
My languages:
Czech
English
Slovakian
Spanish
French

Can you say a bit about why you chose to draw your language portrait the way you did?

When I am in school I speak English at home I speak Czech. I know how to speak Slovakian. When I go somewhere I speak Spanish. I am learning French.

Findings: Case study in Secondary

Based on the data analysis of the questionnaire (question 6) and findings related to “feelings about multilingualism”, a case study was conducted by interviewing 4 students: 1 student whose feelings are positive, 1 student with sometimes negative perception, 1 student who stated confusing and 1 student who mentioned “I don’t know”.



Speaking more than 1 language feels positive because....

- It's really cool and I really enjoy that.
- I love learning and especially learning something useful; something to be proud of.
- Last school year was quite tricky, because I was not sure if I understood well in different subjects, but this year I only see it positive and I am proud of myself.

Speaking more than 1 language feels sometimes negative because....

- There is more to study, which can be more work.
- I prefer to speak in my home language.
- However it is not only negative, as I can speak to more people knowing different languages.

Speaking more than 1 language can feel confusing because

- It sometimes feels confusing because you forget some words and you say them in another language.
- I sometimes mix languages and it feels weird, because I have the feeling I am not smart enough.
- My parents encourage me to speak, learn and use many languages, so I am successful in life.

I don't know what speaking more than 1 language feels because....

- Because I don't know how it is speaking only one language.
- I like speaking to other people in different languages.
- My parents only speak one language.

Reflections about Research in **Secondary**

- All students were eager to participate and had the permission from home.
- Students talked to each other in a respectful way and exchanged insights.
- In comparison, most students have only one nationality, but are mostly bi- and multilingual at home and in school.
- According to the questionnaire, most of the students prefer to speak their home language/s or both home and school languages rather than the school language (MLE= main language of education).
- Also, **most of the students have a positive attitude towards multilingualism** offering evidence in their comments.
- Students cited that being multilingual has lots of **positive things** such as: being able to communicate and understand many more people, it is fun, being different from others, it feels smart, I can make more friends, learning something new, very useful, and I can just switch languages.
- Students cited that being multilingual can **sometimes be challenging** because: there is more to study, the feeling of being different than others, and difficulties understanding different subjects.
- The majority frequently visits (more than once a year and at least once a year) their home countries and enjoys visiting their friends and family there. I was also mentioned that due to conflict in some countries they prefer not to go back home.
- There is a significant difference in what situation native languages are being used: for writing and watching films “often” was the dominant answer whereas for reading books and afterschool clubs “never”.
- Phone messaging was often referred to as a form of writing. Comparing the data from Primary and Secondary students, Primary students only sometimes write, whereas Secondary students report writing more often. This seems to be because Secondary students have mobile phones and therefore write text messages and similar forms of communication more frequently.

Discussion

How are these findings relevant to our school context?

Going back to our research question ***“Do our multilingual students see their linguistic and cultural heritage as an asset or a challenge in our school environment?”***, the best response is that most of our students have a positive attitude toward multilingualism in the school environment.

The results of our study show that most students see their linguistic repertoire as an asset, which is a strong foundation for language learning in our school. Our school is already starting to embrace **translanguaging** practices in the classroom to support our multilingual students feel comfortable and make more connections during their learning. As the nature of our school is multilingual, translanguaging becomes a necessity in our teaching practise to support understanding and learning. At the same time, the findings encourage us to place even more emphasis on multilingual approaches in teaching, as they can further strengthen participation, understanding, and inclusion across the school community.

As important as it is to support our multilingual students at school, we should also continue to raise awareness within our **wider school community** by connecting with the **families** in order to help them understand how beneficial home language instruction is. This not only supports the development of English, if it is not their native language, but also helps students maintain their other home languages, enabling them to develop strong roots in their linguistic and cultural heritage. Strong foundation in home languages naturally accelerates the acquisition of subsequent languages and strengthens a child's cultural identity and well-being. We, educators, can not do this alone, we need families involved too.



Discussion

How are these findings relevant to other schools?

We believe that institutions like *MLRC* (Multilingual Learning Research Center) are highly valuable to give educators a voice and a chance to connect with other teachers who may be facing similar challenges regarding multilingualism or who have done so in the past and can now share their best practices. We hope to do the same now with our own findings: we wish this Capstone can give some ideas, some answers, or some encouragement to other educators who may find similarities to the nature of our school.

We are taking so much with us from other schools' findings. This has helped us to visualise better our goals, our reality and our own findings. A big thank you to the researchers from other schools, from previous years, for sharing their Capstones with us and for the colleagues from other schools we have met in this incredible journey which started in Málaga 2026. We take with us more than knowledge, we have met incredible people: educators, coaches, that will stay with us for many years. The support we have received from everyone has been invaluable. Your passion for what you do has inspired us, THANK YOU!



Looking forward

- To continue with teacher-directed translanguageing in the classrooms.
- School meetings with parents about multilingualism.
- To create a *“multilingual corner”* area in the library by collecting second hand books in as many languages as possible that are represented in our school.
- Possibility of a multilingual online library which students could access via their chromebooks.
- To continue celebrating languages across the school.
- To keep supporting our multicultural and multilingual students: *“Being multilingual is a strength”, “Having an accent does not mean a lack of knowledge. An accent means courage, a willingness to learn other languages”* (Williams et al., 2025).
- To keep in touch with other colleagues who were also involved in the MLRC to check on them and their projects.

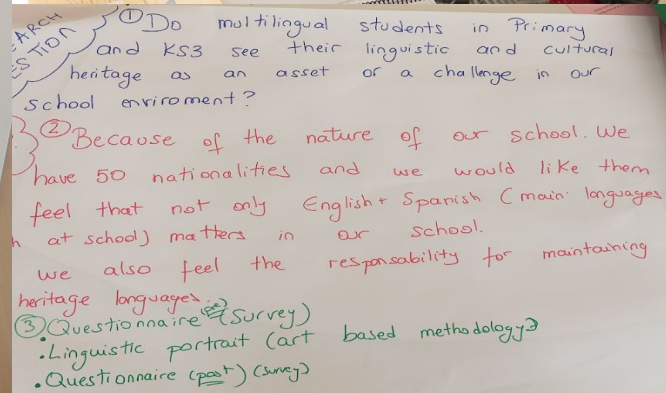
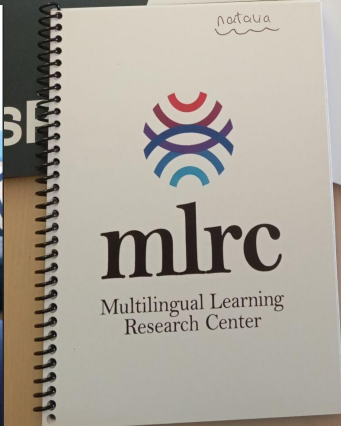
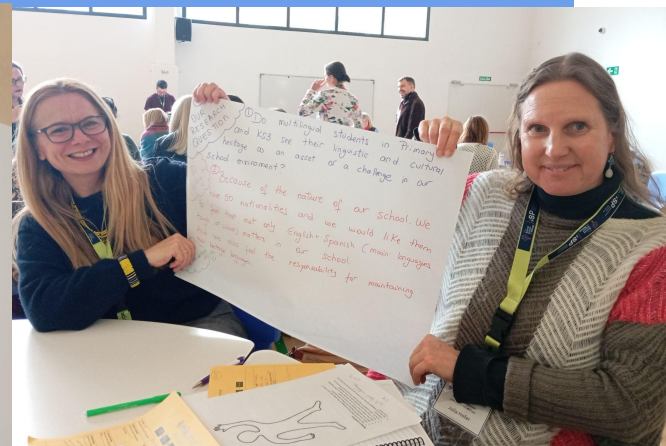
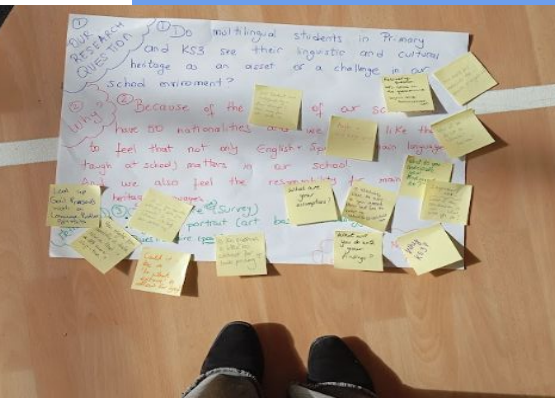


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3. Chaika, O. (2023). Translanguaging in multilingual classrooms: A case study analysis. *Philological Review*, 1(21), 127–135.
4. Lujic, R. (2017). Translanguaging or Transgressing Language Borders to communicate and to learn in International Schools. *International Journal for Linguistic, Literary and Cultural Research*, 2(3), 219-228.
5. Nenonen, O. (2024). Family language policy in a transnational family living in Finland: multilingual repertoire, language practices, and child agency. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 1-7.
6. Nordmeyer, J. (2023). From testing to teaching: Equity for multilingual learners in international schools. *Teachers College Record*, 125(7–8), 247–275.
7. Williams, B. et al. (2025). Between languages and cultures: exploring the impact of translanguaging on local staff in international school environments. *MLRC CAPSTONE PUBLICATION*.



Thank you MLRC Team!





“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much” Helen Keller

