



Language attitudes towards English in local and immigrant students in Catalonia: Analysis of the joint effect of language competence and region of origin

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Abstract: This paper investigates the attitudes towards English of autochthonous and immigrant students in Catalonia (Spain) by focusing on their region of origin and their language competence. The research examines the individual and the joint effect of both variables in the development of language attitudes. A questionnaire was administered to 954 students of Secondary Education. Results reveal that region of origin and language competence are influential in the development of language attitudes, and there is no joint effect when both variables are included in the same model. Attitudes towards English are predominantly favourable with significant differences between local and immigrant participants. Our results may contribute to a better understanding of the interplay between language and intercultural communication and its implications for education.

Keywords: language attitudes, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), immigration, Catalonia, Secondary Education.

Resumen: Este artículo investiga las actitudes hacia el inglés de estudiantes autóctonos e inmigrantes en Cataluña, centrándose en la región de origen y la competencia lingüística. La investigación examina el efecto individual y conjunto de ambas variables en el desarrollo de actitudes hacia el inglés. Se utilizó un cuestionario con 954 alumnos de Educación Secundaria. Los resultados revelan la región de origen y la competencia lingüística influyen en las actitudes lingüísticas, aunque no hay un efecto conjunto cuando se analizan en el mismo modelo. Las actitudes hacia el inglés son claramente positivas, con diferencias entre los participantes locales y extranjeros. Nuestros resultados pueden contribuir a un mejor entendimiento de la relación entre el lenguaje y la comunicación intercultural así como de las implicaciones en educación.

Palabras clave: actitudes lingüísticas, Inglés como lengua extranjera, inmigración, Cataluña, Educación Secundaria.

Introduction: Catalonia as a multicultural and multilingual territory

Globalization and geo-political factors have contributed to a dynamic demographic scenario, where migration flows have intensified internationally in the last decades with special emphasis in Europe. The case of Spain is particularly interesting, having received large-scale migrant flows since 2000 to become one of the main hosts for migration in Europe: The number of registered immigrants has rocketed from 0.91% in 1991 to 11.1% in 2019 according to the Spanish National Statistics Institute.¹ Within the European Union, Spain has the third largest number of non-nationals (5.2 million) according to the latest statistics provided by Eurostats.²

Within the Spanish context, Catalonia is of special interest, since it has become one of the main hosts for migrants: It is the territory receiving the largest number of newcomers in Spain, with 1,157,551 foreign residents in 2019. The number of immigrants has increased from 2.9% in 2000 to 15.1% in 2019,³ and the migration flows have resulted in significant socio-demographic changes in the adolescent population, with non-Spanish citizens under 19 years increasing by 30.4% between 2006 and 2016.

Arguably, the effective integration⁴ of young immigrants into the host society and its education system is of paramount importance. When pursuing this goal, schools have to be able to meet the demands of today's society and provide young students with appropriate tools and competences (Cots et al., 2010), one of them being the command of languages. In fact, speaking foreign languages has become a nuclear element of education systems worldwide (Eurydice, 2017), and the ability to speak several languages is required in 'spheres which encompass not only the job market, but also social integration (ever increasing migratory movements being a very good case in

point)' (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009, p. 4). Speaking more than one language is pivotal for intercultural communication in the global society: Multilingualism is becoming the norm while monolingualism is less frequent, not only in multilingual societies such as the Basque Country and Catalonia (Cenoz, 2001; Lasagabaster, 2017) but also in the international scenario (Jenkins, 2018). In this regard, the notion of language attitudes has to be approached here.

Language attitudes are understood as a key element in the development of multilingual and multicultural societies (Baker, 1992; Bernaus et al., 2004; Garret, 2010), and they have been on the research agenda in the Spanish context in the last two decades (see, for instance, Lasagabaster, 2017). However, although the study of language attitudes in Catalonia has produced a significant corpus of research (among others, Author, 2016; Arnau, 2013; Bernaus et al., 2007; Newman et al., 2013; Pujolar & Puigdevall, 2015), the majority of investigations have focused on language attitudes towards the majority and the minority language –Spanish and Catalan–, while the perceptions towards the foreign language –English– have been frequently ignored. Therefore, this study is intended to fill this gap by analysing the attitudes of local and immigrant students towards English as a Foreign Language (EFL), since we understand the command of a foreign language (being English the synonym for the global language today) should be in the core of a multilingual and multicultural society.

Although there is a solid theoretical backdrop on the perceptions of non-native speakers towards EFL –and towards English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)– (see Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Lasagabaster, 2004; Pennycook, 2017; Sharifian, 2009), the study of language attitudes towards English in multilingual contexts still deserves further investigation due to the following reasons: a) the pervasiveness of English as the international lingua franca and its position as the world's most taught foreign language

(Pennycook, 2017); b) the consolidation of English as a global language and its progressive disassociation to a particular culture or country (mainly, the US and the UK); c) the role of EFL in bilingual territories that have become multilingual areas as a result of socio-demographic changes triggered by globalization and migration flows.

The study of language attitudes towards English is especially relevant to assess the influence of the world's lingua franca in young students: The desirability effect of English, its importance in the labour market, and the social pressure to learn it are some of the underlying grounds for millions of people to learn English (Uribe et al., 2013). The global presence of English and its influence in key strategic areas such as economy, education and technology have also contributed to reinforce its position of supremacy and its role as the language to be learned for international communication (Jenkins, 2009; McKenzie, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2004). However, according to the results of official surveys, Spain consistently lags behind other European countries when it comes to foreign-language command (Eurydice, 2017).

The investigation of language attitudes towards English becomes particularly relevant when we examine the perceptions of immigrant students living in a multicultural and multilingual context such as Catalonia, a territory where Spanish and Catalan co-exist and where English is taught as a foreign language. At this point, it is worth recalling that the Spanish Constitution states that Spanish is the official language in the State, and it acknowledges that there are local or regional co-official languages in those bilingual territories where the corresponding Statutes of Autonomy include this possibility. In Catalonia, the Act of Linguistic Normalisation passed in 1983 was a landmark for the reinvigoration of the Catalan language. Since then, the introduction of Catalan as the instruction language at the school, the use of Catalan by the

Administration and its presence in the media have contributed to the normalisation and reinvigoration of the local language.

According to updated data from the survey on language use (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2019), the sociolinguistic panorama in Catalonia is characterised by societal bilingualism where Catalan and Spanish coexist: as regards language competence, 94.4% of respondents understand Catalan with 64.7% reporting being able to write, read, listen and speak in this language; on the other hand, 99.8% of interviewees understand Spanish, with 97.5% of participants being able to command the four skills. Concerning language use, Table 1 shows updated trends on the frequency and preferences when using Catalan and Spanish:

Table 1 - Sociolinguistic situation in Catalonia. Data: Generalitat de Catalunya (2019).

All in all, the sociolinguistic panorama in Catalonia is defined by its complexity. As claimed by Boix-Fuster and Paradís (2015, 167), the ‘dichotomy between majority and minority may prove to be very often ambiguous, or even contradictory’. These authors argue there is a continuum in language varieties and they challenge the existence of a mainstream language use. The intensification of migration flows in the

last decade has accentuated the diversity in the sociolinguistic puzzle of the Catalan multilingual territory.

When it comes to the relationship between languages and the school, Catalan and Spanish coexist in the education system, and students have to learn both of them plus a foreign language (English). Catalan is used as the language of instruction, with Spanish being also introduced as a tuition language: All students have to speak both languages by the end of Compulsory Education: They should achieve the B2 in Spanish and Catalan according to the Common Framework of Reference for the Languages, and they should reach the threshold level (B1) in the first foreign language. Likewise, students completing Baccalaureate⁵ should achieve a C1 in Catalan and Spanish and a B2 in the foreign language⁶.

Aiming to develop a better understanding of language attitudes, it is essential that the main influencing factors are examined: While language competence and the place of birth have been explored, most studies have scrutinised both factors independently and their joint effect has been ignored so far⁷. Also, the impact of the region of origin of immigrants in terms of Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish speaking areas has only been considered by a few studies (Author, 2016; Trenchs-Parera & Newman, 2009). Therefore, this paper will focus on the influence of the region of origin⁸ (taking into account the importance of the family language –Spanish-speaking vs. non-Spanish speaking–) and the language competence in English of local and immigrant students in Catalonia to examine their joint effect and the possible modulation of one variable over the other. To our best knowledge, the joint analysis of these two variables has not been yet examined in the study of language attitudes towards English of local and immigrant students of Secondary Education in Catalonia.

Theoretical framework

Language attitudes

The scientific literature offers a wide array of definitions for ‘attitude’. Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p.1) state that an attitude is ‘a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour’. Language attitudes express the feelings and perceptions of human beings towards languages.

Language attitudes have been a core element in the study of language learning since the seminal works of Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972). Language attitudes have been widely explored to analyse their impact on language command (Gardner, 1985), motivation and anxiety (Bernaus et al., 2007; Skehan, 1989), and the shaping of strategies in teaching and learning contexts (Author 1, 2008). Research in the field has also been devoted to the study of language maintenance and language change (Mora et al., 2006), self-identifications (Author 2 & Co-author, 2014), the relation between language attitudes and generational cohorts (Author 2 & Co-author, 2016; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), the identification of the most influential variables affecting speakers’ attitudes (Dewaele, 2005; Lasagabaster, 2005), and language attitudes towards national, international, and minority languages (Cenoz, 2001; Lasagabaster, 2003).

The studies developed in Canada by Gardner and Lambert (1972) underlined the relationship between language attitudes and language learning, concluding that attitudes held by individuals towards the L2 community influence the learning of this language; furthermore, learners’ positive attitudes will have an impact on their command of a given language (Baker, 1992; Cenoz, 2009). These types of attitudes have been related to integrative orientation, where learners establish some kind of desire to learn the language and customs of the target culture. According to Gardner (2001, p. 5), the concept of integrativeness stands for ‘a desire to learn a language in order to come

closer to the other language community'. Following Gardner's socio-educational model (1985), as long as students are enthusiastic and open towards learning the language and culture of the target speech community, the outcome in the learning process will be favoured; on the contrary, if students have little or no desire in having contact with the target culture, their performance when learning the foreign language will be weaker. Opposite to this, instrumental orientation towards language learning refers to individuals who are not interested in learning about the target culture but study the language to meet a specific goal –e.g., improving their professional career, travelling to other countries, etc.–, pursuing concrete instrumental rewards (Gardner, 1985; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model has been subsequently revisited (see, for instance, Dörnyei, 2005, 2010), and recent approaches have put into question its appropriateness in certain settings: Namely, the notion of integrativeness has been challenged by its lack of suitability to explain motivational factors of students with low exposure to the L2 and limited contact with the language community, and more recent accounts deem integrative orientation as inappropriate for most foreign language contexts (Dörnyei, 2010; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lamb, 2017). Instead, learners' 'international orientation' (Yashima, 2002) has been found a more fit-for-purpose and useful construct to cater for the orientation of students to learn a foreign language. This idea refers to the willingness of students of EFL to command English for global communication with native and non-native speakers around the world.

Paradoxically, attitudes have been regarded as the identity attribute *par excellence* (Author 1, 2008; Edwards, 2009; Fishman, 1977) since they reflect membership to a community and are deeply tied to ideologies and language preferences (Alarcón & Parella, 2013; Trenchs-Parera & Newman, 2009). However, the



pervasiveness of English does not facilitate the identification of non-native speakers with the origin culture and the speech community: Learners of English are driven by their desire to master a language that is an asset for global communication (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). Today, it can be claimed that English is not exclusively regarded as the language of the United Kingdom or the United States, but rather as a tool for intercultural exchange (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; McKenzie, 2010, p. 2).

The shift of English into a global language suggests that the perception of non-native speakers towards it has to be framed by considering the dynamic nature of language attitudes (Dörnyei, 2010, Norton, 2000). Assuming that attitudes towards foreign language are ‘language-specific’ (Dewaele, 2005, p. 131; Bernaus et al., 2004) it can be expected that English is perceived in a *specific* way due to its pervasiveness and global relevance.

Since English is ‘a language of international, and therefore intercultural, communication’ (Sharifian, 2009, p. 2), the attitudes developed towards it by young students are pivotal to promote intercultural communication (and attitudes) at the school. In fact, the notion of ‘intercultural competence’, is nowadays a key element in the curriculum of any foreign language. The specialised literature underlines the relevance of language attitudes in the development of interculturality, multiculturalism and a mindset towards intercultural communication across languages and cultures (Author, 2016).

Research in the Spanish context

Most studies examining language attitudes in Spain have focused on the perception towards the local and the national language in the bilingual contexts of the Basque Country and Catalonia (see Alarcón & Parella, 2013; Bernaus et al., 2004; Bernaus et al., 2007; Lasagabaster, 2003; Woolard & Gang, 1990).

Regarding attitudes towards foreign languages, Cenoz (2001) investigated the perception of English in students of Primary Education, Secondary Education, and Baccalaureate. The most salient finding of her study reveals a decline in attitudes towards the foreign language associated with the age of the participants: Educational and psychological factors may lead to a decrease in students' appreciation of English as they get older, according to Cenoz, due to the transition from the family environment to a more 'individualised' setting in the case of teenagers (where friends gain weight against the family background); also, she points to the methodology of English language teaching in Secondary Education and Baccalaureate, which is more grammar-based than in Primary Education and might then contribute to a decline in students' interest. However, it is worth mentioning that other studies in the international context (see, for instance, Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002) challenge the erosion in language attitudes towards English due to its role as a global language, which keeps students' interest towards learning this language in particular.

Lasagabaster (2003) provides an extensive review on language attitudes in his study on students of higher education in the Basque Country: Relying on a sample of 1,087 participants, he examines language attitudes towards Basque, Spanish, and English, and their relation to the language competence acquired in the foreign language. This study does not report age-related differences in attitudes towards English in undergraduate students. Instead, Lasagabaster accentuates a strong instrumental component of attitudes of university students towards the foreign language; furthermore, the study finds a positive correlation between language attitudes to English and the language competence of students in the foreign language; according to the results of this investigation, language competence becomes the most definite influence

on students' attitudes, and overcomes the importance of their L1 (a conclusion which is also underlined in Lasagabaster, 2005).

Investigating the same context, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009) conducted a survey to test possible differences between students of EFL and those enrolled in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programmes in the Basque Country. The questionnaire was passed to a sample of 287 students of Secondary Education, and the results determined that the CLIL group showed significantly better attitudes towards English than students learning in EFL contexts. Moreover, this study concurs with the previous one in stressing that language competence seems to be the most influential variable in the development of positive attitudes to the foreign language. Having said that, it has to be noticed that Lasagabaster (2003) and Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009) examined language attitudes of Basque students –they did not compare the results of immigrant vs. local participants– who were mostly Spanish/Euskara bilinguals (so these studies did not include students with non-Spanish family backgrounds).

For the purpose of this paper, it is worth mentioning investigations that focused on attitudes towards English of local and immigrant participants: Bernaus et al. (2004) screened the attitudes towards Catalan, Spanish, and English of 114 autochthonous and migrant students of Secondary Education in Catalonia (34.2% of the students were from Spain, 10.5% came from Latin America, 31.6% came from African countries, and 23.7% were from Asia). This research revealed that immigrants have better attitudes towards English than their Spanish counterparts, who are also more reluctant towards learning the foreign language. The authors conclude that the instrumental value of English (i.e., its importance in the labour market) is the driving force underlying the positive attitudes and the willingness to learn this language, a finding that concurs with previous studies in Spain that linked motivation and attitudes towards English with

social pressure and the relevance of foreign languages in the labour market. Bernaus et al. (2004) also found that the majority of attitude and motivation variables are language-specific, and participants develop different orientations towards the local, the national, and the foreign language.

In the Basque context, we also find studies analysing language attitudes towards the minority, the national, and the international language: Ibararán et al. (2008) analysed the attitude of 125 autochthonous and migrant students of Secondary Education towards Basque, Spanish, and English. The main conclusions report that English is clearly favoured in terms of language attitudes compared to the local language (Basque). This research also determines that immigrant students have better attitudes towards the foreign language than Spanish participants, although no differences were identified according to the country of origin of migrants, irrespective of their mother tongue (Spanish or other language). It is worth mentioning the fact that Ibararán et al. (2008) focused on a predominantly Spanish-speaking area within the Basque Country where the minority language is less invigorated; also, the complexity of Euskara and its modest number of speakers may partially influence the attitude of immigrants towards this language, in comparison with the results observed in the Catalan context.

Although the present section is not aimed to be comprehensive, it provides a general picture on the latest investigations on language attitudes of local and migrant students towards EFL in two bilingual territories in Spain. In spite of the topicality of migration flows and the pervasiveness of English today, the attitudes of migrant students towards EFL have received relatively scarce attention within the field. The mixed findings in the research results presented here may be explained on the basis of the dynamic nature of language attitudes, which may evolve and change according to

several factors (e.g. age, educational stage, family language, monolingual vs. bilingual participants, region of origin, etc.). Also, we need to consider the development of language-specific attitudes (Bernaus et al., 2004), meaning that English may be perceived in a different manner due to its status of lingua franca (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Pennycook, 2017). All in all, we feel the investigation of language attitudes towards EFL in Spanish multilingual settings clearly deserves further attention, as there are few studies analysing migrants' attitudes towards the international language, and the consideration of the family language (Spanish-speaking vs. non-Spanish speaking) has not been sufficiently explored. Moreover, the current research will not only examine the individual influence of the region of origin and the language competence on a representative sample, but it will also consider the joint effect.

The present study

The current investigation has been developed in Catalonia and relies on a sample of 954 participants: Local and immigrant students of Secondary Education who answered a questionnaire assessing their perceptions towards the foreign language.

The analysis of the individual and joint effect of the region of origin (and being Spanish speakers or not) and the language command of participants in English has not been approached in this context and can contribute to the field by providing new insights regarding the elements that shape and model language attitudes in related settings. Therefore, the paper aims to follow the next research objectives:

- (1) To analyse the impact of being autochthonous (Spanish) or immigrant in the development of language attitudes towards English in students of Secondary Education living in Catalonia.

- (2) To study language attitudes towards English within the group of immigrants being analysed, identifying possible differences according to the region of origin of immigrant students of Secondary Education living in Catalonia (i.e. Latin America vs. Maghreb, which translates into Spanish-speaking vs. non-Spanish speaking).
- (3) To analyse the joint and interrelation impact of the region of origin and the language command of students in the shaping of language attitudes towards English in Catalonia.

Methodology

Participants

The total sample of this study is composed of 954 participants (48.8% male and 51.2% female respondents) who answered a questionnaire on language attitudes. The average age of participants was 14.7 years (range=6; SD=1.2). All subjects are students of Secondary Education enrolled in 10 schools in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. The educational establishments were selected according to the distribution of immigrant students and the heterogeneity of the Catalan territory: Hence, urban and rural schools in Barcelona (3), Gerona (3), Tarragona (2), and Lleida (2) were considered in this research, with the aim to have a representative sample of the young immigrant population living in the area.

All schools use Catalan and Spanish as tuition languages, with English being taught as a foreign language (3 hours per week). The students taking part in the study were not enrolled in CLIL programmes, where English is used as the language of instruction.

The sample can be divided in two main groups, namely local participants (673) and immigrants (281). ‘Local’ participants were Spanish-Catalan bilingual speakers born in Catalonia. ‘Immigrants’ were students born in other countries who migrated to Catalonia with their families: All participants are students of Secondary Education who have been living in the region for several years, and they are all fluent in Catalan.

For the purpose of this study, the sample has been reorganised to consider two main groups of immigrants: Those from Latin American countries (206, all of them native speakers of Spanish) and those from Maghreb (75, all of them native speakers of languages other than Spanish). The rationale to operationalise these two groups were based on one criterion: These areas provide most young immigrants aged between 14 and 18 living in Catalonia according to the Catalan Statistics Institute, and there is a concentration between these two groups in the areas where data were collected. The distribution of participants by country of origin is shown in Table 2:

Table 2 - Distribution of participants by country of origin.

Variables

The following variables have been considered in the analysis:

- a) Attitudes towards English: Variable with a range from -10 to +10 in which -10 is a totally negative attitude, 0 a totally neutral attitude, and +10 totally positive.

- b) Local/immigrant: This variable comprises the categories local/immigrant participants.
- c) Region of origin: This variable takes into account the origin of the participants, grouped according to the two regions (Latin America and Maghreb).
- d) Language competence: Variable expressing the level of English of participants (their academic performance in English at the school). In order to know the language competence of participants, teachers provided the level of English of every student.

Research tool

The research tool was a sociolinguistic questionnaire specifically designed to assess the language attitudes of participants. This survey was adapted from the tool developed by the Service for Teaching of Catalan, which is based on the work by Sharp et al. (1973). The sociolinguistic questionnaire used for this research has already been utilised prior investigations analysing language attitudes (Author 3, 2008; Author 1 & Co-author, 2015). The adapted version for the current research focuses on students' attitudes towards English (Table 3 includes some sample questions).

Table 3. Sample items of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire comprises 10 statements of dichotomous reply (yes/no). Every question is scored +1 or -1, according to the favourable or unfavourable answer provided by participants. The sum yields a score ranging between -10 (a completely unfavourable attitude) and +10 (a completely favourable attitude), 0 being a completely neutral attitude. Reliability tests were carried out by means of the test-retest procedure with a two-month interval between both applications, obtaining a correlation of $r=.703$ ($p<.0001$). Validation of the scale revealed a Cronbach's alpha result of .783, showing a good level of homogeneity in the items of the survey.⁹

Treatment of results

The questionnaire was administered individually to the participants, who answered the survey anonymously.¹⁰ Data were analysed using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) v. 24, which allowed us to calculate the impact of the variables being examined.

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and mean comparison tests were used in the analysis to assess the influence of the region of origin of immigrants and their language competence on their attitudes towards English. ANOVA and Bonferroni's tests were applied, aiming for a deeper analysis when the first result is significant. A second step in the analysis included General Linear Models (GLM), which were intended to study the joint effect of the language competence and the region of origin of the subjects.

Analysis of results

First, descriptive data are presented together with the analysis of the individual effect of the variable local/immigrant (first objective of the study). Next, the separate impact of the region of origin and the language command on the language attitudes is examined through bivariate analyses, aiming to evaluate the differences in attitudes towards English between Spanish and non-Spanish speaking migrants (second objective). Finally, the analysis of the aggregate effect of both variables on language attitudes is presented to establish their influence and, if any, elucidate which has the greatest impact (multivariate analysis) in the construction of language attitudes (third objective of the current research).

Language attitudes of Spanish and immigrant students

Results show that attitudes towards English are rather positive in both Spanish and immigrant students: The mean was 5.32 for local participants (SD=4.63) and 5.92 for migrants (SD=4.30). Therefore, it can be argued that attitudes towards the foreign language are mostly encouraging, especially, if we take into account that the scale applied in the questionnaire ranges between -10 and +10.

Secondly, results of the ANOVA show statistically significant differences between autochthonous and immigrant participants, with the latter showing better attitudes towards English than their local counterparts ($F=3.928$; $p=.048$).

Region of origin and language competence: Bivariate analysis

The analyses show that both language command and region of origin are influential in the development of language attitudes towards English. When analysing the region of origin of immigrants, the results show statistically significant differences between immigrants from Latin America –Spanish-speaking– and those from Africa –non-

Spanish speaking– ($F=7.033$; $p=.008$). According to their responses, young immigrants from Latin American countries have better attitudes towards English ($x=6.34$; $SD=3.96$) than students coming from Maghreb ($x=5.00$; $SD=4.89$).

As for the language competence of students in English, statistically significant differences can also be determined between local and immigrant participants (Chi-squared= 57.354 ; $p<.000$), with the former showing better competence in the foreign language (see Table 4).

Table 4. Language competence of participants.

While 33.3% of local students have an advanced or upper-advanced level in the foreign language, only 11.8% of immigrant participants fall in this group. Also, statistically significant differences can be confirmed within the group of immigrant students, with participants from Latin America showing slightly better results than their counterparts from Africa (Chi-squared= 10.332 ; $p<.035$).

The one-way ANOVA confirms there are statistically significant differences when we examine language competence of participants and their attitudes towards the foreign language ($F=14.54$; $p=.000$), with students with advanced levels of English showing significantly better attitudes.

Language competence and region of origin: Multivariate analysis

The bivariate analysis showed that the command of English and the region of origin have some degree of influence when modelling attitudes towards the foreign language of local and immigrant students in Catalonia. Next, we present the results of the analysis when both variables are included in the same explanatory model.

The GLM analysing data from the whole sample renders two important results (Table 5): Firstly, it confirms the individual impact of both variables on students' attitudes towards English. Secondly, although the region of origin and the language command do have an individual effect on the development of language attitudes, the GLM discards the joint effect of both variables on the shaping of such attitudes towards English. In fact, our model does not allow to claim that one variable modulates the other when they are examined jointly.

Table 5. General Linear Model: Autochthonous and immigrants. Dependent variable: Attitude towards English. Fixed factors: Region of origin/language competence.

Discussion

According to the results of the study, it can be stated that the attitude of young adolescents towards English is rather positive, with local and immigrant participants showing a good perception towards the language (with means over +5 in a -10 to +10 scale). This concurs with prior research in the Basque context (Lasagabaster, 2003; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009) that report optimistic attitudes of local students towards

the foreign language, although these studies did not screen migrant population and, therefore, differences between both groups were not established. It is worth mentioning that our study did not explore students' perceptions towards Spanish and Catalan and, hence, no comparisons can be established among the three languages, as this falls out of the scope of our research objectives. However, it has to be underlined that the positive attitudes towards a language reflect the interest of students to communicate in this particular language and connect with speakers and language communities, as has been widely explored in the literature (Lasagabaster, 2017; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Yashima, 2002). Language attitudes are pivotal for enhancing or hindering intercultural communication, which is one of the assets of English due to its pervasiveness as a global language. Although the global dimension of the English language may support its power as a tool for intercultural communication, it would be interesting to compare language attitudes towards the foreign language in our sample with their perceptions towards the two languages spoken in Catalonia and present in the educational setting, following prior studies on multilingualism in related contexts (Cenoz, 2009; Lasagabaster, 2003).

All in all, our results support the favourable vision of local and migrant students of Secondary Education living in Catalonia towards English. A possible explanation for this finding is the possibility that the pervasiveness of English may be the driving force in the development of language attitudes, especially if we consider the importance of English in the labour market, and also its prevalence in audiovisual media and Information and Communication Technologies, which are widely utilised by young people through the Web and mobile devices. In this sense, the development of language-specific attitudes (Bernaus et al., 2004) may have implications when dealing with English due to its status of global language. The fact that local students show better

levels in English might be explained by the fact that they are usually more academically oriented towards school activities while migrants are often more inclined to social-related issues, as explained by Newman et al. (2013).

Regarding the first objective of the current paper, our results underscore that immigrant students living in Catalonia develop better attitudes towards English than their local counterparts. This conclusion seems to be consistent with previous studies carried out in bilingual contexts in Spain (Bernaus et al., 2007; Ibarrarán et al., 2008; Lasagabaster, 2003, 2005), where Spanish participants also reported worse attitudes than immigrant speakers of EFL. A possible explanation for this tendency might be that Spanish is a prominent player in today's world language panorama: It is widely recognised as one of the most influential languages, its growth and scope have continued to increase in the last few decades and, today, it has a strong presence in the media and the Internet. Spanish can be used as a communication tool in international settings, and its importance and world presence may be recognised by the Spanish (and immigrant) participants who took part in our study. However, this line of argumentation does not explain the fact that statistically significant differences are also found within the group of immigrants (second objective of the current paper), with Latin American students showing better attitudes than youngsters coming from Maghreb. Since all the participants coming from Latin American countries were native speakers of Spanish, it can be claimed that being Spanish-speaker may not be detrimental in the development of attitudes towards English –or, at least, this variable by itself may not determine language attitudes–.

The fact that students from Latin American countries show the most favourable attitudes towards English can be partially explained by the proximity of many of the countries of origin to the United States. As commented in Uribe et al. (2013), the social

pressure to learn the language in this region may be linked to the interest of students in English, which would be more noticeable than in the area of Maghreb. Also, participants from Latin America have slightly better language command than the ones from Africa, although it has to be taken into account that the correlation between language attitudes and performance in the foreign language does not entail causality in our study: In other words, it is not clear whether language attitudes are the cause or the effect of language competence.

As for the third objective, the multivariate analysis reveals there is not a joint effect of language command and region of origin on the development of language attitudes. In other words, although both variables have an effect on students' language attitudes, the joint and interrelation impact of the two elements has to be discarded. The lack of statistical significance of the joint effect of the region of origin and the language competence may provide new insights on the investigation of language attitudes: While prior research in the Spanish context reported on the limited impact of the region of origin when compared to language competence in the development of language attitudes (Bernaus et al., 2004; Bernaus et al., 2007; Ibarrarán et al., 2008; Lasagabaster, 2003), the results of the multivariate analyses does not allow to confirm this tendency and identifies both variables as potentially influential when considered in the same model. Also, when analysed jointly the language competence does not seem to modulate the region of origin in the shaping of language attitudes towards English.

Conclusions

The uniqueness of the present study lies in the analysis of the individual and joint effect of language competence and the region of origin in the development of language attitudes towards EFL in local and immigrant students in a multilingual setting. To our best knowledge, this is the first research examining local and immigrant

students in Catalonia where attitudes towards English are analysed through bivariate and multivariate analysis. The aim of the paper was to reach a better understanding of the modelling of language attitudes by scrutinizing the possible differences with a representative sample ($n = 954$) and focusing on inter- and intra- group variance.

Our findings provide new insights to the field of language attitudes, since the origin of students and their language command do have an impact in the shaping of attitudes towards English: When considered in the same model, both variables seem to determine the development of perceptions and attitudes towards English in local and immigrant participants. This does not tally with prior research in the field which emphasised the relevance of students' language command over their region of origin (Bernaus et al., 2007; Ibararán et al., 2008; Lasagabaster, 2005), although the study does confirm previous tendencies on the negative attitudes of local students towards English when compared with migrant participants (Lasagabaster, 2003). In any case, it has to be underlined that both groups show rather favourable perceptions towards the foreign language, and this inclination may be framed within theories claiming that attitudes can be language-specific (Dewaele, 2005, p. 131; Bernaus et al., 2004). In this context, the pervasiveness and global relevance of English may explain the way it is perceived by students of Secondary Education, and contributes to explain the lack of impact of being Spanish-speaker or non-Spanish-speaker in the development of attitudes towards English.

As in any research, the present study has some limitations: On the one hand, the data provided are restricted to the case of local and immigrant students living in Catalonia, and some of the variables (the region of origin) have been operationalised for the statistical analyses. Second, the study scrutinises the attitudes of the two groups of immigrants which are more prominent in the region. Further analysis which examine the

attitudes developed by migrants from other areas (Europe, Asia) would be welcome. Also, it has to be noticed that the study focuses on the academic performance in English at the school, as we did not assess extracurricular activities or the time of exposure to the foreign language outside the educational setting as in other investigations (Lasagabaster, 2017).

Prospective research lines may include the effect of English regarding the modelling of attitudes of local and immigrant students towards Spanish and Catalan, or the analysis of the length of stay of immigrants in Catalonia in the development of these attitudes (exploring the possible changes and variances). A related issue to be explored is whether or not the (worse) attitudes of Spanish students towards English might be a determining factor in the results of international surveys (European Commission, 2012), where the command of foreign languages is consistently identified as one of Spain's weaknesses in education. Also, more studies focusing on Spanish-speaking participants (mainly from Spain and Latin America, but also from Western Sahara) are welcome to assess possible divergences and identify motivating factors. Finally, mixed research models (qualitative and quantitative) and longitudinal studies can be applied in order to evaluate to what extent motivation and language attitudes might result in possible social inequalities, not only between immigrants and locals, but also within these two groups and the many categories and sub-groups that integrate them.

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Table 1. Sociolinguistic situation in Catalonia.

| | Catalan | Spanish | Catalan & Spanish | Other | Don't know / Refuse |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Which is the first language you spoke at home?</i> | 31.50% | 52.70% | 2.80% | 11.60% | 1.40% |
| <i>Which language do you use more frequently?</i> | 36.10% | 48.60% | 7.40% | 7.30% | 0.6% |
| <i>Which language do you identify with?</i> | 36.30% | 46.60% | 6.90% | 9.40% | 0.5% |

For Peer Review

Table 2. Distribution of participants.

| <i>Region of origin</i> | <i>Country of origin</i> | <i>Number of participants</i> | <i>Totals</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Europe | Spain | 673 | 673 |
| Latin America | Argentina | 31 | 206 |
| | Bolivia | 30 | |
| | Chile | 12 | |
| | Colombia | 25 | |
| | Cuba | 1 | |
| | Dominican Republic | 15 | |
| | El Salvador | 1 | |
| | Ecuador | 53 | |
| | Honduras | 7 | |
| | Mexico | 1 | |
| | Peru | 14 | |
| | Uruguay | 7 | |
| Venezuela | 9 | | |
| Maghreb | Algeria | 4 | 75 |
| | Morocco | 70 | |
| | Sahara | 1 | |
| | | | 954 |

Peer Review

Table 3. Sample items of the questionnaire.

| | | Yes | No |
|-----------|--|------------|-----------|
| 1 | English is a beautiful language | | |
| 2 | Everyone living in Catalonia should speak English | | |
| 3 | English should only be taught in England and in English-speaking countries | | |
| 4 | I like listening to people talking in English | | |
| 5 | In Catalonia, French should be taught instead of English | | |
| 6 | I like (or would like) to be able to speak English | | |
| 7 | Learning English is not useful because I will not use it in the future | | |
| 8 | Learning English is boring | | |
| 9 | English should be spoken by everyone in Europe | | |
| 10 | Spanish and Catalan are more important than English | | |

Peer Review

Table 4. Language competence of participants.

| Level | Maghreb | Latin America | Spain | Total |
|---------------------------|---------|---------------|-------|-------|
| Beginner | 25 | 43 | 17 | 85 |
| | 33.3% | 20.8% | 2.5% | 8.9% |
| Pre-Intermediate | 18 | 60 | 182 | 260 |
| | 24% | 29% | 27% | 27.2% |
| Intermediate | 27 | 92 | 250 | 369 |
| | 36% | 45% | 37.1% | 38.6% |
| Upper-Intermediate | 4 | 8 | 124 | 136 |
| | 5.3% | 3.8% | 18.4% | 14.2% |
| Advanced | 1 | 3 | 100 | 104 |
| | 1.3% | 1.4% | 14.9% | 11% |
| Total | 75 | 206 | 673 | 954 |

Review

Table 5. General Linear Model.

| | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------------|----------|
| Corrected Model | 8.461 | .000** | .071 |
| Intercept | 733.748 | .000** | .424 |
| Origin | 10.156 | .001** | .010 |
| Language competence | 10.947 | .000** | .042 |
| Origin* Language competence | 1.056 | .377 | .004 |

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1. Spanish National Statistics Institute: <http://www.ine.es/en/welcome.shtml>. Accessed on September 10th, 2020.
 2. Eurostats: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/>. Accessed on September 10th, 2020.
 3. Catalan Statistics Institute: <http://www.idescat.cat/>. Accessed on September 10th, 2020.

4 By integration, we refer to the creation of a common public culture which may be understood as a 'shared space for communication, coexistence, acknowledgement and participation of our diverse and differentiated society, so that the Catalan nation continues to be the referent for all the people who live and work in Catalonia' (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2008, p. 49). The overarching principle is to promote a common multilingual framework where languages are the key tool that facilitate multicultural communication and social mobility and cohesion.

5. This is an education stage in the Spanish system following Secondary Education. After completing it, students can take the university entrance exam or access vocational training.

6. English as a foreign language is a compulsory subject in Secondary Education in Catalonia, where students have 3 hours per week. Other languages can be taken as optional subjects, although students have less tuition hours per week.

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7. The joint effect examines the impact of both variables together. Beyond analyzing the influence of the place of birth and language competence separately, our model assesses what happens when both elements are present in the generation of language attitudes (i.e. if one is more prominent or if it modulates the influence of the other).
8. The region of origin has been operationalised as a variable to group the two main sources of immigrants considered in the study: Participants from Latin America (coming from Spanish-speaking countries) and Maghreb (coming from non-Spanish speaking countries). Regarding autochthonous students, all participants are bilingual speakers of Spanish and Catalan.
9. Cronbach' alpha is a statistical test used to measure internal consistency reliability. This is a figure ranging between 0 and 1: The higher the score, the more internal consistency (see, for instance, Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p.112).
10. When collecting the surveys, teachers provided the language competence for every student which was noted down in each; sheets where coded, so the surveys could be identified while keeping anonymity.

| | Catalan | Spanish | Catalan & Spanish | Other | Don't know / Refuse |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Which is the first language you spoke at home?</i> | 31.50% | 52.70% | 2.80% | 11.60% | 1.40% |
| <i>Which language do you use more frequently?</i> | 36.10% | 48.60% | 7.40% | 7.30% | 0.6% |
| <i>Which language do you identify with?</i> | 36.30% | 46.60% | 6.90% | 9.40% | 0.5% |

Table 1 - Sociolinguistic situation in Catalonia. Data: Generalitat de Catalunya (2019).

155x57mm (300 x 300 DPI)

| <i>Region of origin</i> | <i>Country of origin</i> | <i>Number of participants</i> | <i>Totals</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Europe | Spain | 673 | 673 |
| Latin America | Argentina | 31 | 206 |
| | Bolivia | 30 | |
| | Chile | 12 | |
| | Colombia | 25 | |
| | Cuba | 1 | |
| | Dominican Republic | 15 | |
| | El Salvador | 1 | |
| | Ecuador | 53 | |
| | Honduras | 7 | |
| | Mexico | 1 | |
| | Peru | 14 | |
| Uruguay | 7 | | |
| Venezuela | 9 | | |
| Maghreb | Algeria | 4 | 75 |
| | Morocco | 70 | |
| | Sahara | 1 | |
| | | | 954 |

Table 2 - Distribution of participants by country of origin.

155x105mm (300 x 300 DPI)

| | | Yes | No |
|-----------|--|-----|----|
| 1 | English is a beautiful language | | |
| 2 | Everyone living in Catalonia should speak English | | |
| 3 | English should only be taught in England and in English-speaking countries | | |
| 4 | I like listening to people talking in English | | |
| 5 | In Catalonia, French should be taught instead of English | | |
| 6 | I like (or would like) to be able to speak English | | |
| 7 | Learning English is not useful because I will not use it in the future | | |
| 8 | Learning English is boring | | |
| 9 | English should be spoken by everyone in Europe | | |
| 10 | Spanish and Catalan are more important than English | | |

Table 3. Sample items of the questionnaire.

155x83mm (300 x 300 DPI)

| Level | Maghreb | Latin America | Spain | Total |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Beginner | 25 | 43 | 17 | 85 |
| | 33.3% | 20.8% | 2.5% | 8.9% |
| Pre-Intermediate | 18 | 60 | 182 | 260 |
| | 24% | 29% | 27% | 27.2% |
| Intermediate | 27 | 92 | 250 | 369 |
| | 36% | 45% | 37.1% | 38.6% |
| Upper-Intermediate | 4 | 8 | 124 | 136 |
| | 5.3% | 3.8% | 18.4% | 14.2% |
| Advanced | 1 | 3 | 100 | 104 |
| | 1.3% | 1.4% | 14.9% | 11% |
| Total | 75 | 206 | 673 | 954 |

Table 4. Language competence of participants.

155x112mm (300 x 300 DPI)

| | F | Sig. | η^2 |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------------|----------|
| Corrected Model | 8.461 | .000** | .071 |
| Intercept | 733.748 | .000** | .424 |
| Origin | 10.156 | .001** | .010 |
| Language competence | 10.947 | .000** | .042 |
| Origin* Language competence | 1.056 | .377 | .004 |

Table 5. General Linear Model: Autochthonous and immigrants. Dependent variable: Attitude towards English. Fixed factors: Region of origin/language competence.

139x33mm (300 x 300 DPI)