



What influences Spanish student language teachers learning of English as a foreign language? A quantitative study of psychological, social and cultural factors

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Abstract

This paper explores the psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing student language teachers' strategies and attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 76 Spanish future language educators. The study's analysis identified key factors impacting future teachers' strategies and attitudes, including motivation, anxiety, teacher-student rapport, and cultural appreciation. Findings reveal that psychological factors like intrinsic motivation and enjoyment play a significant role in teachers' learning experiences. High levels of anxiety were also found to affect classroom participation negatively, while social factors like cultural awareness and the appreciation of Anglophone culture also significantly contributed to participants' eagerness to learn English. Furthermore, participation in bilingual programmes was associated with increased enjoyment and intrinsic motivation, highlighting the benefits of such programmes in enhancing language learning experiences. These insights can inform strategies to improve English language instruction and support classroom engagement in language education.

Keywords: psychological, cultural, and social factors; gender, bilingual programmes; English as a foreign language, student teachers

Introduction

The rise of English as a global lingua franca, fuelled by globalisation, the Internet, and transnational mobility, has redefined English proficiency as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) that mediates access to academic, economic, and sociopolitical opportunities (Jenkins, 2015).

In this study, English proficiency is operationally defined as the ability to perform linguistically and pragmatically in academic and professional contexts, measured through self-reported competence and institutional evaluations (EF EPI, 2023). Globalisation, meanwhile, refers to the interconnected forces (economic, technological, cultural) that amplify English's dominance while simultaneously triggering identity tensions in multilingual societies (Phillipson, 1992).

In Spain, where English proficiency remains low (35th in Europe; EF EPI, 2023), the push for linguistic modernization intersects with regional identity preservation—here defined as the institutional and individual efforts to maintain co-official languages (e.g., Catalan or Basque) amid English's increasing relevance (Lasagabaster & Herrarte, 2003). Spanish learners' motivation (operationalized through Gardner's 1985 integrative/instrumental framework) is primarily driven by job opportunities and youth culture (Seedhouse, 1995), yet hindered by limited authentic exposure (Kocaman, 2017). This paradox underscores the need to examine attitudes toward EFL learning—defined as the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dispositions shaping engagement (Chalak & Kassaian, 2020)—among future educators who will mediate these tensions.

Given the rapid expansion of English within Europe, it seems crucial to concentrate on the factors that may be obstructing these students' language learning process (Arnaiz & Guillén, 2013). This study is driven by the recognition that, although psychological (e.g., anxiety), social (e.g., peer influence), and cultural (e.g., identity) factors that affect foreign language learning have been widely studied (e.g., Chalak & Kassaian, 2020; Getie, 2020; Le & Le, 2022), their interplay in Spanish student teacher education, a context where teacher cognition (Borg, 2006) shapes future pedagogical practices, remains underexplored. At this juncture, this study focuses on fourth-year Primary Education student teachers at the University of (omitted for peer review), addressing: (1) how attitudes are influenced by gender, age, and bilingual programme participation (operationalized as enrolment in Content-and-Language-Integrated-Learning-based tracks; Pérez-Cañado, 2012); and (2) the implications of these attitudes for pedagogical approaches (e.g., reliance on the first language, cultural content integration).

By anchoring the study in Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model while incorporating critical language awareness (the ability to interrogate power dynamics in multilingualism; Byram, 2008), this research offers a novel contribution: its potential to reconceptualize English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) education in Spain. Student teachers' attitudes cannot only predict their future pedagogical approaches but also determine whether they will perpetuate or challenge cycles of linguistic ambivalence in classrooms. For policymakers, findings could inform teacher training programmes that address psychological barriers while fostering critical language awareness, a skill vital for reconciling global communication needs with regional identity preservation. This study can also contribute with insights to Europe's broader discourse on equitable multilingualism in the age of English dominance.

Literature Review

It is broadly acknowledged in the academic literature that learners' attitudes toward a foreign language constitute a significant predictor of their success in acquiring it. According to Prodromou (1992), a learner's success is linked to their positive attitudes towards the target language. Ajzan (1988) described attitude as a predisposition to react positively or negatively toward a particular object, individual, institution, or event.

Bai and Wang (2023), identify two distinct types of attitudes: one directed toward the speakers of the foreign language and another toward the perceived utility of the language by the learner. They contend that although these attitudes do not directly influence the learners' ability to acquire the language, they significantly impact their motivation to learn it. Therefore, it

seems evident that a significant relationship exists between students' attitudes toward language learning and their English learning outcomes. As a result, understanding the factors influencing student teachers' attitudes toward learning EFL seems essential to enable educators to address those contributing to negative perceptions and foster positive ones which promote effective language acquisition.

For the purposes of this study, we will examine the psychological, social, and cultural factors affecting EFL students' attitudes toward English learning. Additionally, the analysis will consider other relevant variables, including gender, age, and participation in bilingual education programmes.

Psychological Factors

Language learning, particularly for student teachers, is not merely a cognitive endeavour but a foundational element of professional identity formation. In teacher education, psychological factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety transcend individual learning outcomes; they shape pedagogical beliefs, instructional practices, and the capacity to foster inclusive language classrooms (Borg, 2006). This section operationalizes these concepts within the context of student teachers training (considering as future teachers, they are also language learners), emphasising their role in preparing educators to navigate the linguistic and emotional demands of EFL instruction.

Lambert (1963) highlights the importance of motivation and attitude toward the target culture in L2 acquisition. Motivation, the internal drive to meet specific needs, is crucial for persistence in language learning (Bao & Liu, 2021), and "avoidance motivations are associated with more anxious learning experiences" (Shurovi et al., 2025). Research consistently ties motivation to academic success, with Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) noting that even gifted learners struggle without it. However, motivation in student teachers goes beyond personal language acquisition goals. Rather, it encompasses the drive to master English as a tool for future classroom instruction, curricular innovation, and cross-cultural engagement (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Lambert's (1963) work on integrative motivation, which emphasizes affinity for the target culture, gains new relevance here: student teachers' attitudes toward English-speaking communities may influence their willingness to adopt communicative teaching methods or critically address linguistic imperialism in curricula (Phillipson, 1992).

Self-confidence, or the belief in one's ability to succeed, is another critical factor, as low self-confidence can hinder active engagement in language learning (Bao & Liu, 2021). Clément's (1980) social context model connects self-confidence to language anxiety and perceived competence, emphasising that exposure to L2 interactions in multicultural settings boosts confidence. But self-confidence is also critical for student teachers' willingness to experiment with student-centred pedagogies (e.g., task-based learning) and manage multilingual classrooms (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In this sense, Clément's (1980) social context model underscores the need for teacher training programmes to provide immersive experiences (e.g., exchanges, peer teaching simulations). Without such opportunities, low self-confidence may manifest as over-reliance on their first language during instruction, limiting students' exposure to meaningful English input (Cook, 2001).

Similarly, anxiety, particularly language anxiety, significantly impacts learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) identify three main causes: communication apprehension (fear of social interactions), test anxiety (fear of failure), and fear of negative evaluation (anticipating criticism). These anxieties are exacerbated in foreign language contexts, where learners may feel less proficient (García, 2023). Rodríguez and Abreu (2003) note that anxiety is influenced by affective, cognitive, and demographic factors, such as motivation, attitude, and cultural background.

High anxiety negatively affects language acquisition, academic performance, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Bao & Liu, 2021). In relation to future teachers' anxiety, Rodríguez and Abreu's (2003) framework, which links anxiety to cultural identity negotiation, highlights how student teachers from multilingual regions may experience tension between embracing English and preserving local linguistic heritage, complicating their classroom discourse.

Social and Cultural Factors

Social and cultural factors do not merely influence language learners—they fundamentally shape student teachers' perceptions of what language teaching entails and how it should be enacted. These perceptions, in turn, can inform their future instructional strategies, curricular priorities, and responses to sociolinguistic challenges in multilingual classrooms. This section recontextualizes socio-cultural theories within the framework of language teacher cognition (Borg, 2006), illustrating how student teachers' attitudes toward EFL are mediated by their lived experiences and sociocultural positioning.

Foreign language learning is shaped by parental attitudes, socioeconomic status, educational background, and cultural influences (Zhou, 2020). Parents play a vital role, with some actively supporting their children's learning, while others may passively oppose it or lack the resources to help. Barriers to parental involvement include time constraints, limited language proficiency, and insufficient skills (Forey et al., 2016). Families that value multilingualism and encourage language learning can motivate children, especially when exposure to the target language occurs at home or in multilingual settings (Zhou, 2020). Socioeconomic status also plays a significant role, as higher-income families can afford private tutors, language courses, and learning materials, increasing the likelihood of proficiency. In contrast, financial constraints often limit educational opportunities, as seen in countries like Saudi Arabia (Khan, 2011). Learners from high-income backgrounds are about 50% more likely to achieve higher proficiency levels (Walczak et al., 2017). Parents' education levels further influence language learning, as English-proficient parents can create valuable learning opportunities through daily interactions, travel, and authentic language exposure (Jones, 2013).

But parental attitudes and socioeconomic realities are not just motivational forces for learners, they also set student teachers' perceptions of educational equity and resource accessibility. For instance, teachers raised in high-income contexts, where private tutoring and international exposure were normalized (Walczak et al., 2017), may perceive language learning as inherently dependent on external resources, leading them to prioritize pedagogies based on rich material (such as technology integration). Conversely, those from financially constrained backgrounds may develop a heightened awareness of structural inequities, shaping their commitment to low-resource pedagogical innovations (Khan, 2011). Similarly, parents' educational backgrounds may influence student teachers' beliefs about language socialization, i.e., exposure to English-proficient parents who used the language daily may lead teachers to emphasize authentic communication over grammatical accuracy (Jones, 2013), whereas limited parental engagement might reinforce a perception of schools as the sole place for language learning.

Cultural and school-related factors also shape attitudes toward language learning. Peer influence is significant, with group acceptance often tied to shared values (Getie, 2020). Fear of ridicule or embarrassment can lead to reluctance in practicing correct pronunciation, while peer pressure may foster anxiety and negative perceptions (Bartram, 2006). Teachers and materials also impact motivation and attitudes. Effective teachers act as facilitators, providing positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, and helping learners identify strengths and set improvement goals (Astia, 2018; Bao & Liu, 2021). Materials, such as authentic resources, course books, and adapted content, influence engagement and motivation, with tailored

materials being particularly effective (Rondón & Vera, 2016; Wlodkowski, 1993). Student teachers' personal experiences with these factors can significantly shape their understanding of safe learning environments. For instance, those who internalized a fear of being mocked for mispronunciations may later emphasize error tolerance and emotional support in their own teaching. Likewise, an awareness of peer influence, which can encourage collaboration but also reinforce exclusion, can guide their approaches to group learning. Teachers who associated peer acceptance with linguistic conformity might also intentionally design activities that celebrate diversity, opposing pressures to standardize language use in the classroom.

Moreover, student teachers' instructional approaches in EFL may be influenced by their own learning experiences. This means that those educated in teacher-centred environments might emphasize explicit grammar instruction and structured practice, while those from learner-centred backgrounds may adopt more interactive, discussion-based teaching methods (Astia, 2018).

Language and culture are deeply interconnected. Language conveys structure and meaning in communication, while culture explains the reasons behind behaviour in specific contexts (Brooks, 1968). A thorough understanding of language features and cultural nuances is essential for effective communication (Hesar & Zarfsaz, 2012). Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), defined by Byram et al. (2002), involves a multifaceted approach, including cultural knowledge, respectful attitudes, drawing similarities to one's culture, navigating unfamiliar cultural elements, and cultural awareness. In this sense, language teachers should integrate cultural aspects into language instruction and connect learning to real-life contexts (Abdalla & Mohammed, 2020; Hernandez et al., 2021). In this sense, student teachers' perceptions of language teaching are inseparable from their negotiation of cultural identity. Those trained in ICC frameworks may often view language instruction to foster critical cultural awareness, bridging local and global contexts (Hernandez et al., 2021). However, in regions like Spain's multilingual communities, student teachers may perceive cultural integration as a threat to regional identity, leading to ambivalence in prioritizing English (Lasagabaster, 2017). This tension underscores the role of teacher education in reframing ICC as a skill to navigate hybrid identities in globalized classrooms (Abdalla & Mohammed, 2020).

Other Factors

Gardner's (1985) research underscores the influence of age and gender on learners' attitudes and success in language acquisition, factors widely studied in recent decades. Regarding age, the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) posits an optimal age for language learning, suggesting that implicit acquisition becomes more difficult after childhood due to cognitive changes (Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006). Age can influence student teachers' professional identity development. While adult learners in teacher education programmes often use their cognitive maturity to excel in metacognitive skills (e.g., reflective practice and curriculum analysis), they may also face language anxiety, which can arise from self-imposed pressures to achieve 'native-like' proficiency (Moyer, 2004).

As for gender, this influences not only language learning attitudes but also how student teachers approach instruction. Research suggests that female student teachers, often raised to communication based on relationships (Getie, 2020), tend to prefer collaborative, student-centred methods like group discussions and role-plays. In contrast, male student teachers may lean toward structured, task-based activities, reflecting societal expectations of 'pragmatic' masculinity (Bartram, 2006).

Finally, participation in bilingual programmes can significantly enhance attitudes toward language learning by fostering motivation, cultural awareness, and confidence, as evidenced

by Valdés et al. (2004), who found that acquiring a second language and bilingualism greatly benefit learners by improving their academic performance, enhancing cognitive skills, and shaping positive attitudes and beliefs. In Spain, where bilingual education models (e.g., Content and Language Integrated Learning) are increasingly implemented, research highlights their role in mitigating linguistic insecurity, particularly in regions with co-official languages like Catalonia and the Basque Country (Cenoz, 2009). However, studies also reveal tensions, as some stakeholders perceive English as a threat to regional language revitalization efforts (Pavón-Vázquez, 2018). This duality underscores the need to examine how student teachers negotiate these competing priorities in their pedagogical approaches. These programmes integrate language with content, making learning more meaningful and practical, which often leads to increased engagement and positive perceptions of plurilingualism (Gómez-Parra et al., 2021; Pérez-Cañado, 2012).

Empirically, bilingual programmes foster the ability to critically analyse language structures and functions, which equips student teachers to address learner errors empathetically and explain grammatical concepts through comparative first-second language analysis (Valdés et al., 2004). This skill is particularly vital in multilingual contexts, where teachers must navigate tensions between several languages (for example, in Spain, with Spanish, English and co-official languages; Lasagabaster, 2017). Despite these benefits, a critical gap persists: few studies explore how student teachers' bilingual experiences translate into classroom practices, especially in linguistically diverse settings like Spain. This study addresses that gap by investigating how bilingual education backgrounds shape student teachers' willingness to employ translanguaging strategies (e.g., strategic use of the first language) and advocate for plurilingual policies. By doing so, it offers actionable insights for teacher training programmes, such as incorporating modules on linguistic mediation and identity-aware pedagogy (Barbosa, 2020; García & Sylvan, 2019). Student teachers from bilingual backgrounds often perceive these tensions as opportunities for linguistic mediation, advocating for pedagogies that validate students' home languages while expanding their English competences (Barbosa, 2020).

In the light of the above, this study aims to answer the following research questions (RQs):

- Research Question 1 (RQ1). To what extent do psychological, social, and cultural factors influence student language teachers' learning of EFL?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2). Are there statistically significant differences in student language teachers' perceptions of the psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing their EFL learning according to gender?
- Research Question 3 (RQ3). Are there statistically significant differences in student language teachers' perceptions of the psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing their EFL learning depending on whether they participate in bilingual programmes?

Method

This study examines the psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing student language teachers at a Spanish university in their EFL learning. Moreover, it aims to verify the following hypotheses:

Participants

Convenience sampling techniques were used in the study. A total of 76 student teachers took part, who were enrolled in the courses “Lengua Extranjera para el Aula (inglés)” and

“Prácticum III”. The former is an optional course of the English language teaching specialty of the Degree in Primary Education, while the latter corresponds to placement in schools. In terms of gender, 68.4% of the participants ($n = 52$) identified themselves as women, whereas 31.6% ($n = 24$) identified themselves as men. No other gender identities were reported, so only the binary categories of man and woman were considered in this study. All participants were within the age range of 18–25 years, except for one participant who was in the 26–35 age range. Regarding nationality, 93.4% ($n = 71$) of the participants were Spanish. However, a minority of participants identified with other nationalities: 2.6 % were Finnish ($n = 2$), 1.3% were Italian ($n = 1$), 1.3% were Japanese ($n = 1$), and 1.3% were South Korean ($n=1$).

Additionally, 89.5% of the participants ($n = 68$) had participated in a bilingual education programme, whereas 10.5% ($n = 8$) had not. Regarding the academic level at which they participated, 52.6% ($n = 40$) had only participated at university, while smaller percentages had participated in elementary (3.9%, $n = 3$), middle (1.3%, $n = 1$), or high school (10.5%, $n = 8$). Considering other combinations of bilingual educational levels identified, 1.3% of the participants ($n = 1$) participated in both elementary and middle school; 1.3% ($n = 1$) participated in elementary, middle, and high school; 3.9% ($n = 3$) participated in elementary, middle, high school, and university; 3.9% ($n = 3$) participated in middle, high school, and university; and 10.5% ($n = 8$) participated in both high school and university.

The study is conducted following the Declaration of Helsinki and the Code of Responsible Practices and Integrity in Research at the University of (information omitted for peer review).

Instrument

A questionnaire, adapted from Abdulrahman (2023), was validated through a two-round Delphi method (Rahmani et al., 2020) involving two experts in applied linguistics and language teacher education. In the first round, experts evaluated the instrument’s content validity, assessing the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of each item to the study’s objectives. Their feedback led to revisions in 12 items (33% of the total), primarily to improve wording specificity and alignment with the Spanish EFL context. In the second round, experts confirmed the final version’s face validity, achieving 98% consensus on all items, which exceeded the recommended threshold of 75% for Delphi studies (Hsu & Sandford, 2007).

To ensure further reliability, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for all the items of the instrument, yielding an overall $\alpha = .876$. This high internal consistency confirms that the instrument reliably measured the intended constructs (Taber, 2018).

The adapted questionnaire consisted of an initial demographic data section and 36 items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree). It was distributed with the cooperation of two English teachers at the University of (omitted for peer review), who allowed its administration during class time. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the objectives of the study, as well as the exclusively research-oriented use and storage of the data. Participants were assured of their anonymity, informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and gave their informed consent. Data collection took place in person during regular class hours, with the cooperation of two English teachers at the University of (omitted), between December 2023 and March 2024, with a 100% response rate.

Procedure

The study followed five stages: (1) Identification of the problem: a literature review identified the psychological, social, and cultural factors. Additionally, other variables were examined, including gender, age, and participation in bilingual programmes; (2) Questionnaire design: items were adapted from Abdulrahman’s (2023) study, incorporating demographic ones on

gender and bilingual education participation; (3) Questionnaire administration: the questionnaire was distributed during class time, and its completion took approximately 10 minutes; (4) Questionnaire recording: completed questionnaires tabulated for analysis via Google Forms; and (5) Data analysis and drawing of conclusions: data were analysed using SPSS V28.0 for MacOS. Findings were compared with existing literature to conclude. Recommendations for improving language programmes were also made.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS V28.0 for MacOS. To test whether the sample followed a normal distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied considering the size of the sample. As the level of significance was $p < 0.05$ in all cases, the sample was assumed to follow a nonnormal distribution (Koh & Ahad, 2020). The nonnormal distribution and the limited number of participants led the researcher to apply nonparametric tests (Field, 2013). On the one hand, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed for comparisons between two groups, (i.e., men and women, participants and non-participants in bilingual programmes). On the other hand, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was employed for comparisons among more than two groups (i.e., participants in bilingual education programmes at different educational stages).

Results

The percentage of the participants’ responses per item according to the Likert scale, along with the mean scores and standard deviations for the questionnaire items, are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive data.

Item	%					M	SD
	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD		
Q01	82.9	13.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	4.75	.676
Q02	69.7	18.4	7.9	3.9	0.0	4.54	.807
Q03	80.3	13.2	5.3	0.0	1.3	4.71	.689
Q04	57.9	28.9	10.5	1.3	1.3	4.41	.836
Q05	56.6	30.3	9.2	1.3	2.6	4.37	.907
Q06	17.1	35.5	23.7	18.4	3.9	3.44	1.106
Q07	27.6	31.6	28.9	9.2	2.6	3.72	1.053
Q08	69.7	26.3	1.3	0.0	2.6	4.61	.767
Q09	43.4	27.6	21.1	5.3	2.6	4.04	1.051
Q10	25.0	31.6	9.2	17.1	17.1	3.30	1.452
Q11	34.2	44.7	13.2	6.6	1.3	4.04	.930
Q12	11.8	39.5	31.6	11.8	3.9	3.44	.990
Q13	50.0	27.6	14.5	3.9	2.6	4.20	1.013

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Item	%						SD
	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD	M	
Q14	36.8	32.9	9.2	11.8	9.2	3.76	1.315
Q15	55.3	28.9	11.8	2.6	1.3	4.34	.888
Q16	56.6	31.6	5.3	5.3	1.3	4.37	.907
Q17	59.2	27.6	7.9	2.6	1.3	4.43	.857
Q18	78.9	17.1	2.6	0.0	1.3	4.72	.645
Q19	38.2	26.3	31.6	2.6	1.3	3.97	.966
Q20	14.5	13.2	61.8	7.9	0.0	3.35	.835
Q21	10.5	21.1	46.1	18.4	3.9	3.16	.981
Q22	35.5	40.8	22.4	0.0	0.0	4.13	.759
Q23	67.1	30.3	1.3	1.3	0.0	4.63	.585
Q24	77.6	18.4	1.3	0.0	1.3	4.73	.622
Q25	51.3	35.5	11.8	0.0	1.3	4.36	.795
Q26	69.7	27.6	1.3	0.0	1.3	4.64	.647
Q27	27.6	32.9	27.6	9.2	2.6	3.74	1.050
Q28	5.3	3.9	2.6	19.7	68.4	1.58	1.086
Q29	19.7	22.4	46.1	9.2	2.6	3.47	1.000
Q30	43.4	39.5	11.8	2.6	2.6	4.18	.934
Q31	52.6	35.5	7.9	1.3	2.6	4.34	.888
Q32	42.1	36.8	15.8	0.0	3.9	4.15	.968
Q33	35.5	35.5	14.5	9.2	5.3	3.87	1.159
Q34	42.1	28.9	18.4	5.3	5.3	3.97	1.143
Q35	28.9	22.4	27.6	13.2	7.9	3.51	1.260
Q36	60.5	35.5	2.6	1.3	0.0	4.55	.620

Note: TA = Totally agree; A = Agree A = Agree; NA/ND = Nor agree nor disagree; D = Disagree; TD = Totally disagree; M = Mean scores; SD = Standard deviations. Responses with the highest percentages indicated in bold.

As shown in Table 1, participants generally exhibit a positive perception of various aspects related to learning English as a foreign language. Moreover, the analysis of psychological, social, and cultural factors affecting foreign language learning reveals additional insights, as detailed below.

Psychological Factors

A substantial majority of participants express a strong desire to master multiple languages (Q01, 96.1%) and engage with media in multiple languages (Q02, 88.1%). This indicates

a strong interest in multilingualism and literacy in foreign languages. High commitment to learning English (Q11, 78.9%) and enjoyment of the process (Q13, 77.6%) suggest a positive perception of learning English. A significant number of participants view English as essential for their careers (Q17, 86.8%), professional performance (Q35, 51.3%), and job opportunities (Q36, 96%).

Confidence in English language learning abilities is notable (Q09, 71%), although some fear of making mistakes affects participation (Q10, 56.6%). Participants show strong attention to understanding English (Q05, 86.9%) and more than half of them make daily efforts to keep up with classes (Q06, 52.6%). Additionally, seeking help when facing difficulties (Q07, 59.2%) suggests proactive learning behaviour.

Social Factors

Teacher-student relationships play a crucial role in the learning process, with most participants valuing good rapport with their teachers (Q08, 96%). Interest in social interactions is evident, as many enjoy meeting speakers of other languages (Q04, 86.8%) and wish to have more native English-speaking friends (Q19, 64.5%). The already mentioned proactive approach to seeking help (Q07, 59.2%) highlights the importance of a supportive learning environment. In addition, the practical benefits of English learning receive strong agreement (Q36, 60.5%).

Cultural Factors

Participants acknowledge the cultural advantages of learning English, particularly for communication with diverse groups (Q24, 96%) and a deeper appreciation of Anglophone culture (Q25, 86.8%). Their curiosity is reflected in their desire to understand all aspects of the language (Q27, 60.5%) and study English to connect with native speakers (Q22, 76.3%) and interact more easily with them (Q26, 97.3%). Cultural differences in the English classroom are also acknowledged as a relevant factor (Q29, 42.1%).

Gender

Considering the non-normal distribution of the sample, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to identify statistically significant differences in responses across the 36 items based on gender. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Differences regarding gender.

Item	Gender	N	Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Q01	Woman	52	36.20	504.500	-2.041	.041
	Man	24	43.48			
Q02	Woman	52	38.73	612.000	-.166	.868
	Man	24	38.00			
Q03	Woman	52	36.59	524.500	-1.604	.109
	Man	24	42.65			
Q04	Woman	52	36.13	501.000	-1.556	.120
	Man	24	43.63			

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Item	Gender	N	Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Q05	Woman	52	39.08	594.000	−.377	.706
	Man	24	37.25			
Q06	Woman	51	40.58	480.500	−1.550	.121
	Man	24	32.52			
Q07	Woman	52	36.54	522.000	−1.187	.235
	Man	24	42.75			
Q08	Woman	52	36.70	530.500	−1.303	.192
	Man	24	42.40			
Q09	Woman	52	39.74	559.500	−.765	.444
	Man	24	35.81			
Q10	Woman	52	38.04	600.000	−.276	.782
	Man	24	39.50			
Q11	Woman	52	38.66	615.000	−.102	.919
	Man	24	38.15			
Q12	Woman	51	40.59	480.000	−1.580	.114
	Man	24	32.50			
Q13	Woman	51	42.23	396.500	−2.663	.008
	Man	24	29.02			
Q14	Woman	52	36.51	520.500	−1.212	.226
	Man	24	42.81			
Q15	Woman	52	37.38	566.000	−.722	.470
	Man	24	40.92			
Q16	Woman	52	40.27	532.000	−1.159	.247
	Man	24	34.67			
Q17	Woman	52	39.38	526.000	−.948	.343
	Man	23	34.87			
Q18	Woman	52	39.16	589.500	−.544	.587
	Man	24	37.06			
Q19	Woman	52	37.59	576.500	−.561	.575
	Man	24	40.48			
Q20	Woman	50	34.67	458.500	−1.902	.057
	Man	24	43.40			
Q21	Woman	52	36.79	535.000	−1.057	.291
	Man	24	42.21			
Q22	Woman	51	36.08	514.000	−1.192	.233
	Man	24	42.08			

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Item	Gender	N	Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p
Q23	Woman	52	37.94	595.000	−.396	.692
	Man	24	39.71			
Q24	Woman	51	39.96	512.000	−1.595	.111
	Man	24	33.83			
Q25	Woman	52	40.23	534.000	−1.112	.266
	Man	24	34.75			
Q26	Woman	52	38.88	604.000	−.279	.780
	Man	24	37.67			
Q27	Woman	52	38.99	598.500	−.297	.767
	Man	24	37.44			
Q28	Woman	52	36.68	529.500	−1.288	.198
	Man	24	42.44			
Q29	Woman	52	40.67	511.000	−1.344	.179
	Man	24	33.79			
Q30	Woman	52	37.97	596.500	−.332	.740
	Man	24	39.65			
Q31	Woman	52	38.97	599.500	−.304	.761
	Man	24	37.48			
Q32	Woman	52	39.16	537.500	−.747	.455
	Man	23	35.37			
Q33	Woman	52	39.28	583.500	−.475	.635
	Man	24	36.81			
Q34	Woman	52	40.10	541.000	−.981	.327
	Man	24	35.04			
Q35	Woman	52	37.94	595.000	−.334	.738
	Man	24	39.71			
Q36	Woman	52	38.88	604.500	−.254	.799
	Man	24	37.69			

Note: $p < 0.05$ is recognized as statistically significant (in bold).

Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were found in two items (Q01, Q13), with men scoring higher in their desire to speak multiple languages, while women showed greater enjoyment in learning English. Overall, women scored higher on more than half of the items (20/36), indicating a more positive attitude towards learning English. Notably, men scored higher on the only item reflecting a critical in the sole item reflecting a critical viewpoint of English culture (Q28).

The Effects of Bilingual Programmes

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to identify statistically significant differences in responses across the 36 items based on participants’ involvement in bilingual programmes (Table 3).

Table 3. Differences regarding participation in a bilingual programme.

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Mann- Whitney U	p
Q01	Yes	68	38.81	251.000	.587
	No	8	35.88		
Q02	Yes	68	38.28	257.000	.754
	No	8	40.38		
Q03	Yes	68	38.14	247.500	.550
	No	8	41.56		
Q04	Yes	68	38.07	243.000	.579
	No	8	42.13		
Q05	Yes	68	39.26	220.000	.322
	No	8	32.00		
Q06	Yes	67	38.97	203.000	.247
	No	8	29.88		
Q07	Yes	68	38.93	242.500	.603
	No	8	34.81		
Q08	Yes	68	38.22	253.000	.688
	No	8	40.88		
Q09	Yes	68	39.24	222.000	.369
	No	8	32.25		
Q10	Yes	68	38.27	256.500	.787
	No	8	40.44		
Q11	Yes	68	39.40	211.000	.268
	No	8	30.88		
Q12	Yes	67	38.40	241.000	.625
	No	8	34.63		
Q13	Yes	67	39.83	145.500	.022
	No	8	22.69		
Q14	Yes	68	37.59	210.000	.272
	No	8	46.25		
Q15	Yes	68	38.69	259.000	.806
	No	8	36.88		

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Mann- Whitney U	p
Q16	Yes	68	39.02	236.500	.498
	No	8	34.06		
Q17	Yes	68	37.82	226.000	.802
	No	7	39.71		
Q18	Yes	68	37.56	208.000	.127
	No	8	46.50		
Q19	Yes	68	37.82	226.000	.410
	No	8	44.25		
Q20	Yes	66	36.80	217.500	.346
	No	8	43.31		
Q21	Yes	68	37.97	236.000	.517
	No	8	43.00		
Q22	Yes	67	36.43	163.000	.054
	No	8	51.13		
Q23	Yes	68	38.12	246.000	.591
	No	8	41.75		
Q24	Yes	67	38.13	259.000	.828
	No	8	36.88		
Q25	Yes	68	39.01	237.000	.513
	No	8	34.13		
Q26	Yes	68	38.24	254.000	.703
	No	8	40.75		
Q27	Yes	68	40.21	156.000	.041
	No	8	24.00		
Q28	Yes	68	38.93	243.000	.549
	No	8	34.88		
Q29	Yes	68	39.54	201.500	.204
	No	8	29.69		
Q30	Yes	68	38.51	271.500	.993
	No	8	38.44		
Q31	Yes	68	38.60	265.500	.903
	No	8	37.69		
Q32	Yes	67	38.72	220.000	.376
	No	8	32.00		

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U	p
Q33	Yes	68	40.34	147.000	.026
	No	8	22.88		
Q34	Yes	68	39.28	219.000	.343
	No	8	31.88		
Q35	Yes	68	37.32	191.000	.160
	No	8	48.56		
Q36	Yes	68	38.35	191.500	.836
	No	8	39.81		

Note: $p < 0.05$ is recognized as statistically significant (in bold).

Statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were found in three items (Q13, Q27, Q33; see Table 3), with participants who had participated in bilingual programmes scoring higher, indicating a greater enjoyment of learning English, a stronger desire to know all aspects of English, and a willingness to continue studying it in the future. Additionally, those with bilingual education experience scored higher on more than half of the items (20/36), reflecting greater enthusiasm and motivation. However, they also scored higher on the only item reflecting a critical viewpoint towards English culture (Q28). Finally, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis H test was used to examine differences among various types of bilingual programmes (Table 4).

Statistically significant differences were found only in item 27 (“I have a strong desire to know all aspects of the English language”). These differences favoured participants who had studied in bilingual programmes throughout elementary, middle, and high school, as well as those who had experienced bilingual education across all stages, including university.

Discussion

This study explores student teachers’ perceptions of the psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing their English learning as a foreign language. At this stage, revising the study’s hypothesis is essential.

Findings from Table 1 help us answer RQ1 (*To what extent do psychological, social, and cultural factors influence student language teachers’ learning*). The high percentage of agreement across questionnaire items highlights that participants recognize the impact of these factors on their learning experience. Moreover, these responses generally reveal positive opinions. Regarding psychological factors, strong agreement with statements like “I would like to speak many languages perfectly” (Q1) and “I want to learn as much English as possible” (Q18) reflects student language teachers’ enthusiasm for language learning. This enthusiasm may stem from increased awareness of English as a global skill and a sense of professional necessity among future teachers. Moreover, Graddol’s (2006) prediction that English will become a basic skill in education systems globally underscores the importance learners place on multilingualism. As English proficiency alone may no longer provide a competitive advantage, learners’ desire to refine their linguistic skills reflects a broader linguistic ambition towards multilingualism, now seen as essential (Ushioda, 2017). This finding suggests that student teachers recognize English

Table 4. Differences regarding type of bilingual programme

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q01	Elementary school	3	45.00	9.066	.431
	Middle school	1	45.00		
	High school	8	40.44		
	University	40	37.35		
	ES+MS	1	3.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	45.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	45.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	45.00		
	HS+U	8	40.44		
	None	8	35.88		
Q02	Elementary school	3	38.83	5.361	.802
	Middle school	1	16.50		
	High school	8	36.19		
	University	40	38.23		
	ES+MS	1	16.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	50.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	50.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	34.00		
	HS+U	8	41.63		
	None	8	40.38		
Q03	Elementary school	3	46.00	10.097	.343
	Middle school	1	46.00		
	High school	8	35.06		
	University	40	37.66		
	ES+MS	1	10.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	10.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	46.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	46.00		
	HS+U	8	40.69		
	None	8	41.56		
Q04	Elementary school	3	32.50	7.256	.611
	Middle school	1	21.50		
	High school	8	38.00		
	University	40	38.50		
	ES+MS	1	54.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	54.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	54.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	43.50		
	HS+U	8	27.88		
	None	8	42.13		

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q05	Elementary school	3	33.00	5.747	.765
	Middle school	1	55.00		
	High school	8	36.63		
	University	40	38.90		
	ES+MS	1	22.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	55.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	55.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	44.00		
	HS+U	8	36.63		
	None	8	32.00		
Q06	Elementary school	3	49.50	6.577	.681
	Middle school	1	49.00		
	High school	8	48.88		
	University	39	35.49		
	ES+MS	1	26.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	49.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	49.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	36.17		
	HS+U	8	38.25		
	None	8	29.88		
Q07	Elementary school	3	44.50	6.450	.694
	Middle school	1	66.00		
	High school	8	35.94		
	University	40	38.19		
	ES+MS	1	20.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	20.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	35.67		
	MS+HS+U	3	58.50		
	HS+U	8	38.69		
	None	8	34.81		
Q08	Elementary school	3	37.83	7.439	.591
	Middle school	1	50.00		
	High school	8	30.44		
	University	40	37.54		
	ES+MS	1	13.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	50.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	50.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	50.00		
	HS+U	8	40.88		
	None	8	40.88		

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q09	Elementary school	3	44.83	9.932	.356
	Middle school	1	60.00		
	High school	8	42.94		
	University	40	33.98		
	ES+MS	1	33.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	60.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	60.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	42.00		
	HS+U	8	46.50		
	None	8	32.25		
Q10	Elementary school	3	31.33	11.985	.214
	Middle school	1	7.00		
	High school	8	33.44		
	University	40	40.61		
	ES+MS	1	20.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	7.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	28.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	24.17		
	HS+U	8	53.06		
	None	8	40.44		
Q11	Elementary school	3	33.67	3.686	.931
	Middle school	1	33.50		
	High school	8	38.25		
	University	40	38.41		
	ES+MS	1	33.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	63.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	46.17		
	MS+HS+U	3	43.50		
	HS+U	8	42.00		
	None	8	30.88		
Q12	Elementary school	3	34.50	5.678	.772
	Middle school	1	71.00		
	High school	7	39.93		
	University	40	39.35		
	ES+MS	1	24.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	51.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	22.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	37.00		
	HS+U	8	36.31		
	None	8	34.63		

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q13	Elementary school	3	46.67	11.688	.231
	Middle school	1	56.50		
	High school	8	43.44		
	University	39	35.83		
	ES+MS	1	27.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	56.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	56.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	46.67		
	HS+U	8	41.75		
	None	8	22.69		
Q14	Elementary school	3	20.00	9.214	.418
	Middle school	1	62.50		
	High school	8	44.25		
	University	40	38.01		
	ES+MS	1	12.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	20.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	26.17		
	MS+HS+U	3	34.17		
	HS+U	8	43.25		
	None	8	46.25		
Q15	Elementary school	3	34.17	12.746	.174
	Middle school	1	55.50		
	High school	8	29.56		
	University	40	38.08		
	ES+MS	1	8.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	8.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	55.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	55.50		
	HS+U	8	45.56		
	None	8	36.88		
Q16	Elementary school	3	26.67	9.098	.428
	Middle school	1	55.00		
	High school	8	46.63		
	University	40	35.44		
	ES+MS	1	55.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	55.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	55.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	32.67		
	HS+U	8	44.38		
	None	8	34.06		

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q17	Elementary school	3	31.00	7.656	.569
	Middle school	1	53.00		
	High school	8	38.44		
	University	40	36.33		
	ES+MS	1	2.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	53.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	53.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	42.00		
	HS+U	8	40.63		
	None	7	39.71		
Q18	Elementary school	3	46.50	12.787	.172
	Middle school	1	46.50		
	High school	8	28.25		
	University	40	34.95		
	ES+MS	1	46.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	46.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	46.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	46.50		
	HS+U	8	46.50		
	None	8	46.50		
Q19	Elementary school	3	31.00	9.555	.388
	Middle school	1	37.50		
	High school	8	41.19		
	University	40	37.42		
	ES+MS	1	37.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	62.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	53.83		
	MS+HS+U	3	53.83		
	HS+U	8	24.06		
	None	8	44.25		
Q20	Elementary school	3	52.50	12.769	.173
	Middle school	1	30.00		
	High school	8	43.31		
	University	38	37.76		
	ES+MS	1	30.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	58.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	39.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	30.67		
	HS+U	8	20.06		
	None	8	43.31		

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q21	Elementary school	3	47.50	8.614	.474
	Middle school	1	60.50		
	High school	8	32.63		
	University	40	39.99		
	ES+MS	1	60.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	35.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	26.83		
	MS+HS+U	3	15.83		
	HS+U	8	36.88		
	None	8	43.00		
Q22	Elementary school	3	34.67	11.387	.250
	Middle school	1	33.00		
	High school	8	31.25		
	University	39	35.64		
	ES+MS	1	33.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	33.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	52.33		
	MS+HS+U	3	62.00		
	HS+U	8	31.88		
	None	8	51.13		
Q23	Elementary school	3	38.67	11.753	.228
	Middle school	1	51.00		
	High school	8	21.75		
	University	40	39.58		
	ES+MS	1	51.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	14.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	51.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	38.67		
	HS+U	8	41.75		
	None	8	41.75		
Q24	Elementary school	3	46.00	3.770	.926
	Middle school	1	46.00		
	High school	8	36.88		
	University	39	38.10		
	ES+MS	1	46.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	46.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	46.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	33.83		
	HS+U	8	32.31		
	None	8	36.88		

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q25	Elementary school	3	57.00	7.700	.565
	Middle school	1	24.00		
	High school	8	38.25		
	University	40	36.85		
	ES+MS	1	24.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	24.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	57.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	40.00		
	HS+U	8	42.38		
	None	8	34.13		
Q26	Elementary school	3	37.67	9.209	.418
	Middle school	1	13.00		
	High school	8	26.88		
	University	40	38.33		
	ES+MS	1	50.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	50.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	50.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	50.00		
	HS+U	8	40.75		
	None	8	40.75		
Q27	Elementary school	3	50.67	18.379	.031
	Middle school	1	20.00		
	High school	8	30.88		
	University	40	36.65		
	ES+MS	1	20.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	66.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	66.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	50.67		
	HS+U	8	51.63		
	None	8	24.00		
Q28	Elementary school	3	40.50	4.239	.895
	Middle school	1	26.50		
	High school	8	44.63		
	University	40	39.03		
	ES+MS	1	26.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	26.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	37.67		
	MS+HS+U	3	26.50		
	HS+U	8	41.94		
	None	8	34.88		

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q29	Elementary school	3	35.67	9.555	.388
	Middle school	1	69.00		
	High school	8	42.63		
	University	40	36.81		
	ES+MS	1	27.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	53.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	63.67		
	MS+HS+U	3	35.67		
	HS+U	8	40.13		
	None	8	29.69		
Q30	Elementary school	3	49.50	11.554	.240
	Middle school	1	9.00		
	High school	8	37.88		
	University	40	35.49		
	ES+MS	1	9.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	60.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	60.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	49.50		
	HS+U	8	42.63		
	None	8	38.44		
Q31	Elementary school	3	45.33	11.880	.220
	Middle school	1	6.50		
	High school	8	29.31		
	University	40	36.94		
	ES+MS	1	23.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	56.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	56.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	56.50		
	HS+U	8	43.94		
	None	8	37.69		
Q32	Elementary school	3	59.50	10.576	.306
	Middle school	1	29.50		
	High school	8	34.50		
	University	39	35.85		
	ES+MS	1	29.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	59.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	59.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	49.50		
	HS+U	8	37.00		
	None	8	32.00		

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Item	Participation in a bilingual programme	N	Mean rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	p
Q33	Elementary school	3	47.67	10.687	.298
	Middle school	1	36.00		
	High school	8	39.13		
	University	40	38.33		
	ES+MS	1	17.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	63.00		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	54.00		
	MS+HS+U	3	54.00		
	HS+U	8	39.25		
	None	8	22.88		
Q34	Elementary school	3	45.50	12.280	.198
	Middle school	1	33.50		
	High school	8	31.25		
	University	40	36.35		
	ES+MS	1	15.50		
	ES+MS+HS	1	60.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	60.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	60.50		
	HS+U	8	44.75		
	None	8	31.88		
Q35	Elementary school	3	33.33	10.169	.337
	Middle school	1	27.00		
	High school	8	31.25		
	University	40	36.61		
	ES+MS	1	27.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	65.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	65.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	38.33		
	HS+U	8	36.50		
	None	8	48.56		
Q36	Elementary school	3	41.33	11.730	.229
	Middle school	1	53.50		
	High school	8	24.31		
	University	40	37.23		
	ES+MS	1	17.00		
	ES+MS+HS	1	53.50		
	ES+MS+HS+U	3	53.50		
	MS+HS+U	3	41.33		
	HS+U	8	48.94		
	None	8	39.81		

Note: ES+MS = Elementary School and Middle School; ES+MS+HS = Elementary School, Middle School and High School; ES+MS+HS+U = Elementary School, Middle School, High School and University; MS+HS+U = Middle School, High School and University; HS+U = High School and university. *p* < 0.05 is recognized as statistically significant (in bold).

as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) necessary for professional mobility, explaining their strong motivation despite potential anxiety. Moreover, this insight has clear pedagogical implications: teacher educators should encourage multilingual competence and offer exposure to other languages alongside English, which could further nurture learner motivation and enhance intercultural understanding.

Additionally, the desire to communicate effectively with English speakers and its relevance for career opportunities emphasize the practical value learners place on language learning. These findings align with Gardner and Lambert's (1972) distinction between *integrative motivation*, or the desire to learn a language to interact meaningfully with its speakers, and *instrumental motivation*, which focuses on practical benefits such as job prospects. Dörnyei's (1990) research on EFL learners in Hungary concluded that instrumental motivation supports learning to an intermediate level, but higher proficiency requires integrative motivation. In the context of this study, student teachers appear to combine both types of motivation, with instrumental goals driving initial engagement and integrative elements sustaining long-term learning. In any case, educators should design curricula that support both types of motivation, for example by combining career-focused language tasks (e.g., writing job applications or practicing interviews) with culturally rich materials (e.g., authentic texts and intercultural communication scenarios). This dual approach can help sustain motivation across different learner profiles.

However, the present study reveals that psychological barriers, particularly fear of making mistakes (Q10), can hinder motivation and oral participation in language learning. This anxiety likely stems from the performance expectations placed on future language teachers, who may feel pressured to demonstrate 'native-like' proficiency (Moyer, 2004). The lower level of agreement with this item if compared with other items, suggests that motivation may counterbalance anxiety, as noted by Rodríguez and Abreu (2003). Consequently, student teachers who voluntarily pursue English studies are likely to be more motivated than those who do not. Strong agreement with the item "Lack of motivation highly affects English learning" (Q14) aligns with Zabidin et al. (2023), who found that motivation helps mitigate communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. While motivation does not eliminate these challenges, it enables learners to manage them more effectively. From a pedagogical standpoint, this highlights the importance of fostering a safe and encouraging classroom climate where learners feel comfortable making errors and taking risks. Activities such as peer support groups, anonymous question submission and regular self-reflection can reduce affective barriers and promote learner autonomy. Thus, these findings emphasize the need for educators to create a supportive, low-anxiety learning environment through strategies like process-focused feedback and low-stakes practice opportunities. For Spanish teacher education programmes, this suggests three key improvements: (1) integrating "error-friendly" pedagogical training that models how to normalize mistakes during micro-teaching sessions, and (2) expanding bilingual education courses to all trainees, not just those in bilingual tracks, as Andalusia's educational plan anticipates doubling bilingual schools by 2030.

Concerning social factors, student teachers recognize the social and practical value of learning English, particularly for communication and career opportunities, aligning with Gardner and Lambert's (1972) distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation. Teacher support is seen as crucial for a positive learning environment. However, some student teachers hesitate to seek help, which may reflect concerns about being perceived as incompetent (Zarrinabadi, 2014). This suggests a need for teacher education programmes to emphasize relational pedagogy, training future teachers to create psychologically safe classrooms where help-seeking is normalized. Research by Zarrinabadi (2014) and Méndez et al.

(2015) emphasize the significant role of teachers in fostering learners' confidence and participation, with supportive teaching strategies enhancing engagement, while a lack of emotional support can lead to insecurity. These findings should prompt Spanish universities to include "relational pedagogy" modules in their curricula, teaching student teachers how to build trust through consistent feedback routines and approachable communication styles.

Cultural factors significantly influence student teachers' motivation to learn English, as they see it as a tool for cultural engagement (Q02) and global communication (Q24). Research by Palacios-Hidalgo et al. (2022) supports this, showing that bilingual programmes foster cultural awareness, enhance learners' eagerness to learn English, and openness to mobility. This cultural motivation is particularly relevant in Spain's multilingual context, where English serves as a neutral bridge language between different linguistic communities (Lasagabaster, 2017). This suggests that a deeper appreciation of diverse cultures strengthens one's desire to learn English. Student teachers largely reject the idea that English is unnecessary (Q28), recognising its global significance. Research by Hernandez et al. (2021) further highlights how cultural exposure enhances language proficiency, with positive attitudes towards learning driven by an interest in drawing connections between the target culture and their own to develop a shared understanding, and a desire to overcome cultural challenges. For teacher education, this underscores the value of incorporating intercultural comparison activities that help students make meaningful connections between English and their local context.

Regarding RQ 2 (*Are there statistically significant differences in student language teachers' perceptions of the psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing their EFL learning according to gender?*), female student teachers generally exhibited more positive attitudes towards learning English (see Table 2), yet statistically significant differences emerged only in two items: men showed greater interest in multilingualism (Q01), which may reflect how societal expectations position men as pragmatic accumulators of linguistic capital for career advancement (Piller & Takahashi, 2006), while women expressed more enjoyment in learning English (Q13), consistent with research showing female learners often approach language study as a means of relational connection and personal growth (Kissau & Turnbull, 2008). The absence of significant differences in most items indicates that both genders share similar views on the practical and social benefits of learning English. This convergence suggests that while affective dispositions vary by gender, the professional imperative to master English transcends these differences in teacher education contexts (Martínez et al., 2015). Only psychological factors were statistically significant, pointing to gender-based variations in intrinsic motivation and enjoyment, while both groups widely acknowledge the role of English in global communication, career prospects, and cultural exchange.

These results echo findings by Martínez et al. (2015) who found no gender differences in various language learning strategies among Spanish EFL student teachers. They also align with Sabiq et al. (2021) and Iwaniec (2019), who reported higher motivation and engagement among women despite learners' overall interest in English. Similarly, Al Harthy (2017), identified greater integrative motivation in female learners. This reinforces the idea that women tend to exhibit higher enthusiasm and commitment, while men exhibit value English for its practical benefits. For teacher educators, these nuanced differences recommend gender-responsive approaches: career-aligned task design (e.g., simulated international negotiations) may better engage male student teachers' pragmatic orientation, while collaborative, relationally rich activities (e.g., intercultural dialogue journals) could leverage female student teachers' affective strengths.

Finally, focusing on RQ3 (*Are there statistically significant differences in student language teachers' perceptions of the psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing their EFL*

learning depending on whether or not they participate in bilingual programmes?), only three items showed statistically significant differences (see Table 3 and Table 4). These findings suggest that bilingual programme experience enhances enjoyment (Q13), likely due to bilingual education approaches that reduce anxiety by embedding language learning in meaningful content engagement (Dalton-Puffer, 2011), intrinsic motivation (Q33), where participants develop a “multilingual identity” through sustained plurilingual classroom experiences (Pavlenko, 2003), and a desire to explore English in depth (Q27), reflecting the intercultural curiosity cultivated in quality bilingual programmes (Gómez-Parra et al., 2021). These findings align with Mearns et al. (2017), who reported greater motivation among bilingual learners, and with Gómez-Parra et al. (2021), whose study at the University of (omitted for peer review) highlighted the positive impact of bilingual education on employability, mobility, and intercultural awareness. The pedagogical implications are clear: teacher training programmes should harness bilingual participants’ experiences by pairing them as peer mentors in mixed-cohort workshops, while systematically incorporating bilingual education elements (e.g., content-based grammar modules) across all EFL courses to democratize access to these motivational benefits. Additionally, targeted support (e.g., conversation cafes with international students) could help bridge the experiential gap for non-bilingual participants.

These results should be interpreted, however, in the light of some limitations. First, the sample size may not be representative of the broader population since the participants are restricted to only one university in Andalusia. Therefore, the results might not be generalisable to other settings and future research could benefit from larger and more diverse samples from different universities in Spain to validate these results. Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as student teachers might overestimate or underestimate their attitudes and motivations, which qualitative methods like interviews could help mitigate. Future studies could incorporate the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz, 1983) as an objective measure to triangulate self-reported anxiety data and identify specific anxiety triggers (e.g., test anxiety vs. communication apprehension) among pre-service teachers. Third, other factors, such as socioeconomic background and prior exposure to English outside the classroom, could be explored in future research. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into how psychological, social, and cultural factors evolve over time. Finally, the study focused solely on student teachers, excluding other educational levels that might exhibit different patterns.

Ultimately, the implications of this study can be highly beneficial for foreign language teachers, since understanding the obstacles that hinder students’ progress in acquiring a foreign language enables teachers to implement effective strategies and techniques to mitigate these issues. Additionally, informing students about potential difficulties they might encounter can help them better prepare and maintain their motivation throughout their language-learning journey. While the study’s context is specific to one university in Andalusia, the findings may be cautiously extended to other contexts with similar linguistic and educational conditions: (1) regions with co-official languages (e.g., Wales or Friesland) where bilingual education affects English learning attitudes, (2) countries implementing bilingual where similar motivation/anxiety patterns may emerge, and (3) teacher education systems with gender imbalances in language departments. However, the cultural emphasis on multilingualism in Spain’s regional contexts may limit direct comparisons with monolingual education systems. In any case, further research involving a larger and more diverse sample would be necessary to confirm the broader applicability of these results.

Conclusion

This paper provides valuable insights for language teaching. First, while intrinsic motivation was high, fear of making mistakes hindered participation in class. To address this issue, Horwitz’s

(1983) FLCA can help educators assess classroom anxiety, identify its causes, and implement targeted intervention strategies. Second, since teacher-rapport and opportunities for authentic interaction in English emerged as important motivators for student teachers, educators should prioritize building strong, supportive relationships with their students as well as provide access to Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) opportunities which emphasize the real-world application of language skills. Third, since English is viewed as a tool for cross-cultural understanding, integrating discussions on global issues and cultural exchange initiatives in teacher education can sustain motivation and engagement. Fourth, gender differences call for differentiated strategies: increasing male student teachers' motivation requires lessons that align with their interests, while COIL opportunities with multilingual speakers can encourage female student teachers to value multilingual proficiency. Regardless of gender, conducting an initial survey can further help teachers tailor teaching strategies to learners' needs and preferences. Finally, given the positive impact of bilingual programmes on motivation and cultural awareness, policymakers should ensure sufficient funding and resources to optimize their implementation across all educational levels.

Disclosure Statement

The authors participated equally in the writing of the article and in the development of the research project. They also declare no competing interests and that the content of this paper presents an accurate account of the work performed as well as an objective discussion of its significance.

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Appendix: Questionnaire on psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence students’ foreign language learning

Personal information

Age	18–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	+55
Gender	Man	Woman	Other	Prefer not to say	
Nationality					
Have you ever participated in a bilingual education programme? If so, at which academic level?	Elementary school	Middle school	High school	University	

Mark the corresponding option according to your personal perceptions. Please note: TA = Totally agree (totalmente de acuerdo); A = Agree (de acuerdo); NA/ND = Nor agree nor disagree (neutral); D = Disagree (en desacuerdo); TD = Totally disagree (totalmente en desacuerdo).

Q01. I would like to speak many languages perfectly. P01. Me gustaría hablar muchos idiomas perfectamente	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q02. I wish I could read newspapers, books, and magazines in many other languages. P02. Desearía poder leer periódicos, libros y revistas en muchas otras lenguas.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q03. If I had plans to live in another country, I would try to learn the language spoken there. P03. Si tuviera planes de vivir en otro país, trataría de aprender la lengua que allí se habla.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q04. I really enjoy meeting people who speak other languages. P04. Me gusta mucho conocer gente que habla otras lenguas.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q05. I pay a lot of attention to try to understand everything I see and hear in English. P05. Pongo mucha atención para tratar de entender todo lo que veo y escucho en inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q06. I keep up with my English classes by working on them daily. P06. Voy al día con mis clases de inglés trabajando a diario en ellas.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q07. When I have trouble understanding something in my English, I always ask my teacher for help. P07. Cuando tengo problemas para entender algo en mi clase de inglés, siempre le pido ayuda a mi profesor/a.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q08. Good rapport with teachers positively impacts my learning process. P08. Una buena relación con los/as profesores/as impacta positivamente en mi proceso de aprendizaje.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q09. I feel secure about my abilities in learning English. P09. Me siento seguro/a sobre mis habilidades en el aprendizaje del inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q10. Fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed in the classroom affects my proactive participation level. P10. El miedo de cometer errores y ser ridiculizado/a en la clase afecta mi nivel de participación activa.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q11. I really put a lot of effort into learning English. P11. Realmente pongo mucho empeño en aprender inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD

(Continued)

(Continued)

Q12. When I am studying English, I ignore distractions and focus on the activity I am doing. P12. Cuando estoy estudiando inglés, ignoro las distracciones y le pongo atención a la actividad que estoy realizando.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q13. I truly enjoy learning English. P13. Realmente disfruto aprendiendo inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q14. Lack of motivation highly affects English learning. P14. La falta de motivación afecta gravemente al aprendizaje del inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q15. My attitude towards English in the classroom is a significant factor that affects the learning process. P15. Mi actitud hacia el inglés en la clase es un factor significativo que afecta al proceso de aprendizaje.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q16. I feel I can actually use the language learnt. P16. Siento que realmente puedo poner en práctica la lengua aprendida.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q17. The English class is a very important part of the curriculum in my career. P17. La clase de inglés es una parte muy importante del plan de estudios en mi carrera.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q18. I want to learn as much English as possible. P18. Quiero aprender tanto inglés como me sea posible.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q19. I wish to have many friends who are native English speakers. P19. Desearía tener muchos amigos/as que sean hablantes nativos/as de inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q20. Native English speakers are very kind and sociable. P20. Los hablantes nativos de inglés son muy amables y sociables.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q21. Native English speakers can be very proud because they have made valuable contributions to the world. P21. Los hablantes nativos de inglés se pueden sentir muy orgullosos porque han hecho contribuciones muy valiosas para el mundo.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD

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Q22. I would like to meet more native English speakers. P22. Me gustaría conocer a más hablantes nativos de inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q23. Studying English is important because it will allow me to feel comfortable when interacting with people who speak that language. P23. Estudiar inglés es importante porque me permitirá sentirme cómodo/a cuando me relacione con personas que hablen esa lengua.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q24. I feel that studying English is important because it will allow me to communicate with a greater number of people from different cultures in the world. P24. Siento que estudiar inglés es importante porque me permitirá comunicarme con un número mayor de personas de diferentes culturas en el mundo.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q25. Studying English is important because it will allow me to understand and appreciate Anglophone culture better. Estudiar inglés es importante porque me permitirá entender y apreciar mejor la cultura angloparlante.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q26. It is important to study English because I will have the opportunity to interact more easily with people who speak that language. P26. Es importante estudiar inglés porque tendré la oportunidad de interactuar más fácilmente con gente que habla esa lengua.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q27. I have a strong desire to know all aspects of the English language. P27. Siento un fuerte deseo por conocer todos los aspectos de la lengua inglesa.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q28. English is a Western tool and I have no need to learn it. P28. El inglés es una herramienta occidental y no tengo necesidad de aprenderlo.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q29. Cultural differences are a significant factor in the English classroom. P29. Las diferencias culturales son un factor significativo en la clase de inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q30. I want to learn English so well that it seems like my native language. P30. Quiero aprender el inglés tan bien hasta que parezca mi lengua materna.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q31. The desire I have to learn English is high. P31. El deseo que tengo de aprender inglés es alto.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD

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Q32. I enjoy the activities in my English classes more than those in other classes. P32. Disfruto las actividades de mis clases de inglés más que las de otras clases.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q33. I like the English class so much that I want to continue studying this language in the future. P33. Me gusta tanto la clase de inglés que quiero seguir estudiando esta lengua en el futuro.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q34. I enjoy my English classes. P34. Disfruto mis clases de inglés.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q35. Studying English is important because it is indispensable for one to be recognized as an educated person. P35. Estudiar inglés es importante porque es indispensable para que uno/a sea reconocido/a como una persona con educación.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD
Q36. Studying English is important because it will be useful for me to get a good job. P36. Estudiar inglés es importante porque me será útil para obtener un buen empleo.	TA	A	NA/ND	D	TD