



ESCOLA DE DOUTORAMENTO  
INTERNACIONAL DA USC

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Tese de doutoramento

A STUDY OF THE BELIEFS OF  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS  
ABOUT LEARNING ENGLISH  
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
(EFL)

Santiago de Compostela, 2023

**Programa de Doutoramento en Estudos Ingleses Avanzados: Lingüística, Literatura e Cultura**

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UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

PROGRAMA DE DOUTORAMENTO EN ESTUDOS INGLESES  
AVANZADOS:  
LINGÜÍSTICA, LITERATURA E CULTURA

SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA  
2023



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En Santiago de Compostela, 20 de Febreiro de 2023

Sinatura electrónica

## **Agradecimientos / Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisors Dr. Ignacio Palacios Martínez and Dr. Mario Cal Varela. I could not have undertaken this journey without their invaluable academic advice, infinite patience and constant support throughout these years.

My sincere thanks should also go to those students and teachers at the USC who kindly took their time to participate in this study; this endeavor would not have been possible without them. I am also grateful to the members of the SPERTUS research team at the Faculty of Philology of the USC for their enthusiasm and support, particularly to Lidia Gómez García.

A special word of thanks goes to my family who have unconditionally supported me and bared with lack of time, and who have always encouraged me to remain resilient in the face of all challenges encountered.

Finally, for generous financial support, I am grateful to the European Regional Development Fund and the following institutions: The Regional Government of Galicia (grants GPC2015/004, ED431D 2017/09, ED431B 2018/05, ED431B 2021/02), the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (grant FFI2015-64057-P), and the Spanish State Research Agency (grants PGC2018-093622-B-I00 and PID2021-122267NB-I00).

## List of abbreviations

|              |                                           |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>BALLI</b> | Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory |
| <b>CF</b>    | Corrective Feedback                       |
| <b>CLIL</b>  | Content and Language Integrated Learning  |
| <b>CofP</b>  | Community of Practice                     |
| <b>CPH</b>   | Critical Period Hypothesis                |
| <b>EFL</b>   | English as a Foreign Language             |
| <b>ELF</b>   | English as a Lingua Franca                |
| <b>EMI</b>   | English as a Medium of Instruction        |
| <b>ESL</b>   | English as a Second Language              |
| <b>FI</b>    | Formal instruction                        |
| <b>FL</b>    | Foreign Language                          |
| <b>ICC</b>   | Intercultural Competence                  |
| <b>ICT</b>   | Information and Communication Technology  |
| <b>IDs</b>   | Individual learning Differences           |
| <b>L1</b>    | Mother tongue or native language          |
| <b>L2</b>    | Second language                           |
| <b>NNS</b>   | Non-native Speaker                        |
| <b>NS</b>    | Native Speaker                            |
| <b>SA</b>    | Study Abroad                              |
| <b>SCT</b>   | Socio-Cultural Theory                     |
| <b>SLA</b>   | Second Language Acquisition               |
| <b>TAs</b>   | Traditional Approaches in teaching        |
| <b>TL</b>    | Target Language                           |
| <b>WTC</b>   | Willingness to Communicate                |

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## Introduction

### A. Rationale of the study

In the 1980s the field of study on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) shifted its focus from the commonalities of language learners to their Individual Differences (IDs). At this time, the pioneering work of Peter Skehan (1989) highlighted the importance of research into learners' IDs for a better understanding of the connection between their distinctive characteristics and their attainment in language learning, an idea that sparked the interest of many specialists in the field: Horwitz, 1985; Wenden, 1986; Skehan, 1991; Dörnyei, 1998; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Barcelos & Kalaja, 2006; Griffiths, 2008; Pawlak, 2014; Oxford, 2017, to mention just a few. One of these was Rod Ellis (1994), who noted the impact of learners' IDs on their rate of acquisition of an L2 and identified the key social, affective and cognitive factors involved; within IDs, Ellis (Ibid.) included the concept of beliefs about language learning as one of the main variables or factors to be considered.

In essence, beliefs have been defined by psychologists as systems of meaning that individuals create from the world around them, which explains why different people act and think differently (have different beliefs) in common situations (Dweck, 2000). Attempts to find a single term for this ID-related construct in the field of SLA studies led to a wide array of suggestions, and thus far no consensus has been reached. Rather, beliefs have been referred to with a variety of terms, among them *mini theories* (Flavell, 1977) and *metacognitive knowledge* (Ibid., 1979), *preconceptions* (Horwitz, 1985) and *notions* (Ibid., 1988), *cultural beliefs* (Gardner, 1985), *culture of learning* (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996), *filters of reality* (Arnold, 2000), amongst others. Simply put, beliefs about language learning are the opinions, notions or preconceptions that learners hold and bring with them to the language classroom, and which in turn have been shaped by their previous personal and educational experiences. These beliefs not only allow individuals to assess the whole learning process and the different factors that condition it within their specific academic and social context but may also inform the approach they take during the learning experience itself. Hence, beliefs are central to students' learning, and as such are core to teachers' understanding of the ways in which their students manage language learning, helping them to monitor the learning process more effectively and guiding them to make use of more effective strategies. Finally, these beliefs are also an indicator of potential mismatches between the teachers' own behavior and expectations, and those of their learners (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011).

Over the past two decades research has focused on the different ways in which beliefs are formed, how they change and develop, and how they relate to the actions, emotions and identities of learners and teachers within the social and political contexts where the learning-teaching process takes place. Indeed, research on beliefs has mushroomed, and the studies in this area can be classified into three types according to the research instrument used (Barcelos 2000). Normative studies are usually based on the use of a list of statements in the form of a questionnaire, whereas metacognitive studies are typically conducted through interviews and self-reports; the third broad approach, which is context-based, includes a combination of different research tools to explore beliefs and their contextual character such as questionnaires, case studies, class observations, video recordings and journals.

Research thus far has identified the various different characteristics of this construct, which serves to account for its high degree of complexity. Beliefs have been found to fluctuate over

time and to be heavily influenced by the circumstances of the context where learning occurs. In a general sense these conditions may be related to the social, economic, cultural, educational and political circumstances of the area or location involved. However, they may also encompass issues on a narrower scale, such as the curriculum, educational policies, and the interactions of the learner with teachers and peers. Beliefs can have a mediational role in the actions and behaviors that learners adopt, provided that they have been internalized or appropriated by the learner. Beliefs also affect the choice of learning strategies and decisions made by the learner during the language learning process. Furthermore, they are closely connected to the affective component of learning, to motivation and purposive actions, and to the sense of identity at the individual and collective levels. So, the relevance of beliefs in identifying learners' attitudes and behavior towards language learning outweighs the elusiveness of the concept itself.

Despite of the abundant literature on beliefs about language learning around the world, only a few studies have been conducted in Spain so far (Arnold, 2000, 2009; Roothoof & Breeze, 2016; Lasagabaster, 2017; Lasagabaster et al., 2019), and the focus of these has mainly been on the connection of beliefs with specific variables or contexts within the process of English learning, rather than on a more complete inventory of beliefs of the learners under study. Arnold's work has focused on beliefs related to affective factors, Lasagabaster has mostly explored beliefs concerning English Mediated Instruction (EMI) courses and language policies, and Roothoof and Breeze investigated beliefs about error correction. At the pre-university levels of education, other Spanish specialists have also looked at the pre-conceptions of students and teachers (Díaz & Requejo, 2008; Uribe et al., 2008; Martínez Agudo, 2012, 2014; Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al., 2020). As regards the university context in Galicia, a study by Fernández Polo and Cal Varela (2007) explored the demands and challenges imposed by English on researchers at the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC). This study reported notable findings about the level of linguistic competence of students and their high levels of motivation towards the learning of English. However, for the purposes of the present research, Polo and Varela's study is contextually limited in that it did not include the USC students as participants. There are, to my knowledge, no existing studies of beliefs about learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at the Spanish university level involving both students and teachers.

Motivated by her extensive and varied experience as an EFL teacher in different countries, together with her interest in the language learning and teaching processes, the current author completed her master's degree as part of the Inter-university Master program in Advanced English Studies and its Applications (IMAES) at the USC. Her Master's thesis project<sup>1</sup> included class observations and informal conversations with students and teachers about the ways they approached the teaching and learning of English. This experience, together with the limited existing local research on the topic, led to the design of a broader, more thorough study to explore the main reasons underlying individual differences between students and teachers in terms of their management of the EFL teaching-learning process. The resulting project, to be reported in this dissertation, has as its main aim the identification of the beliefs of USC students and teachers about EFL and their comparison with beliefs previously identified in other studies.

The present empirical study is thus concerned with the learners' IDs as discussed by Ellis, with a particular focus on beliefs about learning English. Other variables, such as affective states, which Ellis also includes in his framework, will be analyzed here in terms of beliefs about EFL learning. In this study, the process of identifying the belief patterns of USC students and teachers takes as a point of comparison many of the national (Spanish) and international investigations mentioned above. The idea of *beliefs* as used here is closely aligned with the

*preconceptions* or *notions* that students hold (Horwitz, 1985, 1988) and the *conceptions of learning* as used by P. Benson & Lor (1999), towards an understanding of students' conceptions of what a FL is and what the process of learning it entails. Additionally, during the initial stage of the project, informal conversations were held with some students and teachers about EFL learning, and here a number of contextual issues closely related to their beliefs emerged recurrently. Thus, in light of Siegal's interactionist view (2003), where the social context is said to be created by the interplay of different social factors and the reciprocal impact between this and the SLA process itself, two specific contextual points will also be explored in the second part of the research, this with the aim of framing findings within "our own context" (Palacios Martínez, 1999, p. 24): these points are the Spanish context, and more specifically, the Galician one. Such specific areas of focus involve looking at the implementation of EMI programs and the potential effect of the socio-economic situation of students on their level of language proficiency. The research also relates to four of the main SLA issues as established by VanPatten and Benati (2010): what students bring to the class, individual differences, the effect of instruction, and constraints on acquisition. The data presented were collected via questionnaires and interviews over a period of two years, 2018 to 2019.

## B. Dissertation outline

The dissertation comprises five main chapters. Given the importance of the linguistic setting in which the study is framed, Chapter one describes the characteristics of this context with special attention to the coexistence of two official languages in the community, Galician and Spanish, and the presence and role of EFL in the Galician university system as a result of the language policies implemented during the process of the internationalization of the university sector.

Chapter two presents a review of the main theories and concepts relating to the research, in two parts. The first part provides an account of four of the central issues concerning the construct of beliefs: the terminology and definitions of beliefs traditionally used in research, the importance of the construct of belief for the process of language learning, the main approaches to research into belief, and the characteristics of this construct as revealed in different studies. In part two of the chapter, a series of second language acquisition (SLA) notions closely associated with beliefs are presented in relation to each of the five belief categories included in the study. Thus, the concept of *language distance* is discussed under the first category with regard to the difficulty of language learning. The second category concerns language *aptitude*, and this concept, along with its reconceptualization, is reviewed in light of the influence of *age*, *gender*, *learning experience*, *emotion* and *anxiety* on the language learning process. The third category addresses the nature of language learning and includes a discussion of the two most frequently studied learning environments (Pérez Vidal, 2014): *Formal Instruction (FI)* and the *Stay-Abroad (SA)*, as well as the concept of *intercultural competence*. Different aspects and theories about the construct of *motivation* are presented under the fourth belief category, the one that concerns motivations and expectations. Finally, the theoretical background of the fifth belief category, about learning and communication strategies, discusses the concepts of language *learning strategies*, *accent*, *ultimate attainment*, *corrective feedback*, and *the use of technological and digital resources for learning*. Following this, a review is provided of different theories and concepts on the two contextual elements to be included in the present study, English Mediated Instruction (EMI) at universities, and the connection between the socio-economic status of the learners and their level of language proficiency.

Chapter three sets out the goals of the study and describes the design and methodology used in the collection and analysis of data. Following a description of the participant population,

which includes both students and teachers, it goes on to offer a detailed explanation of the research instruments used, that is, the questionnaires and interviews conducted with a representative sample of students and university lecturers. This is completed with an account of the data collection process and the procedures therein, including pilot studies used to test the tools, among other issues. The final section of this chapter describes the preparation of the data collected towards conducting the analysis.

The most extensive section of this dissertation is Chapter 4, again in two parts. The first part comprises five main sections, each corresponding to one belief category. These sections all follow a similar structure. First, the data gathered through the questionnaires are presented, followed by the data collected through interviews, with attention paid first to the student data and then to the teacher data. Each of these sections concludes with a general discussion of the results for each of the belief categories considered. The second part of the chapter presents the views of students and teachers regarding the implementation of EMI programs at the USC, and the potential impact of the socio-economic factor on language learning.

Chapter five provides conclusions and the pedagogical implications of the study regarding the beliefs of students and teachers as identified, followed by some notes on the limitations of the investigation and recommendations for future research. The Appendixes section that follows contains the descriptive statistics for each belief category; additional material is also provided, such as sample of the questionnaires used, interview guides, and fragments of transcripts, as well as more details about the population sampling process.

# CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The rapid growth of globalization has been a catalyst for the learning of FLs, which are increasingly seen as essential tools in the economic, social and political dynamics of countries around the world. With the aim of fostering more effective economic growth and exchange, at both the intra- and inter-regional levels, the European Union has taken significant steps towards language education over recent decades. Such changes can be seen in the design of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in 2001, which was a major influence in the shift of language learning on the continent towards the communicative approach.<sup>2</sup> The CEFR is used in many countries (both EU member states and non-EU countries) to assess the written and oral proficiency levels of FL learners. Over its two-decade existence, it has been carefully monitored and tailored to meet the needs of its users. The *CEFR Companion Volume*, launched in 2018, encompasses descriptor scales for different types of mediation, such as text, communication, strategies in plurilingual contexts, as well as for sign language, and hence can be said to reflect the current linguistic and cultural diversity of the region and indeed the world.

Other iconic stages in the enhancement of language education and FL learning in the EU include: the standardization of Higher Education (HE) through the Bologna Process, which has sought to “facilitate student and staff mobility, to make higher education more inclusive and accessible,...attractive and competitive worldwide” (European Commission, 2020); the Erasmus Program, established in 1987, and another milestone which continues to enable the exchange of millions of students from a wide variety of institutions and countries; Strategy 2020, which seeks to strengthen the Union’s economic and social growth in the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis; and the Eurydice Network, which allows national groups in the EU member states to describe, compare and report on their corresponding educational systems and to foster cooperation and mobility within the Union. In a recent report, *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe – 2017*, the Eurydice Network describes trends in FL learning within the Union. It is noted that today European children appear to begin learning a FL at an earlier age than they used to. Applying a generalized measure involving the CEFR, most countries expect their students to reach a B2 level (independent user) at the end of secondary education. The data reported also indicate that students enrolled in vocational education learn fewer FLs than those in general education.

Mirroring this overall scenario, English is the preeminent FL in the EU and in all likelihood it will retain its dominant position here in the years ahead. This is illustrated in the key findings of *The future demand of English in Europe in 2025 and beyond*, a report commissioned by the British Council in 2018 which, despite reporting a predicted decrease in the number of EFL

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<sup>2</sup> The Communicative Approach, also called Communicative Language Teaching, is a method which focuses on language learning through meaningful interactive situations and emphasizes the use of creative rather than structured tasks (Dörnyei, 2013).



learners, foresees that the demand for English will shift to older groups (55+) and that technologies will continue to impact the teaching-learning process as well as the use of English. Although there will be continuous improvements in English teaching, the report states, the proficiency levels required by employers are unlikely to be achieved by the majority of students, and hence there will be a higher demand for candidates with better levels of English and English skills in more specific areas.

## 1.2 FOREIGN LANGUAGE (FL) LEARNING IN SPAIN

As a member state of the European Union, Spain's adherence to these regional modifications in language education has been a challenge in as much as the country has needed to use an overarching approach to cope with the Union's plans for homogenization, as well as the variety of regulations emerging from the country's own autonomous communities. Two of the most significant language policies introduced in Spain have been the Organic Education Law (LOE in Spanish), implemented in 2006, and its modified version, the Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE in Spanish), which came into force in 2013. The former established the requirement of acquiring core linguistic competences for both official and foreign languages, and the latter fostered plurilingual competences. More recently, in December 2020, the Organic Law of Modification of the Organic Law of Education (LOMLOE) was approved, which limits Spanish as a vehicular language in education as an attempt to be more inclusive of other, co-official languages. Under these regulations, many national strategies have been implemented: the introduction of Content-Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at the secondary level, an increase of FL teaching hours, updated curricula and programs to prioritize oral skills, the more effective use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) resources, standardized summative tests, more opportunities for the training of teachers, and opportunities for students to experience the natural use of a FL. At the HE level, changes have included the introduction of English Mediated Instruction (EMI) programs as part of the internationalization of universities.

At present, it is mandatory for Spanish students to study a first FL as part of their degrees, and they also have a second one as an elective subject. Despite having different first FL alternatives to choose from, English is the most commonly chosen as a first FL by students in Spain. The expected minimum CEFR level is B1 for the first FL at the end of secondary education (Baidak et al., 2017). Other general trends that can be identified are that the first FL (usually German, French or English) is introduced in the second stage of infant education, that the number of FL teaching hours increases along with the levels and grades, and that the second FL (commonly French) is usually offered at the secondary level with a frequency of 1-2 hours a week. As regards the oral skills, these are given priority in the primary years, but are brought into harmony with the written skills at the secondary level. Teachers' required level of preparation depends on their professional qualifications, but are expected to be certified at a CEFR B2 level or higher, plus all regional governments have introduced conversation assistants and linguistic counsellors in schools as auxiliary staff (Arroyo Pérez, 2012).

Despite working under a single national umbrella, the implementation of language policies has acquired different complexions in the Spanish autonomous communities, especially in the bilingual ones (Galicia, the Basque Country, Navarra, Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands), where the introduction of FLs is an added ingredient in the already inconsistent coexistence of official languages. This is illustrated, for example, in the study by Cots et al., (2012), where the authors contrasted the implementation of multilingual policies in three bilingual scenarios, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Wales. They reported that, while in



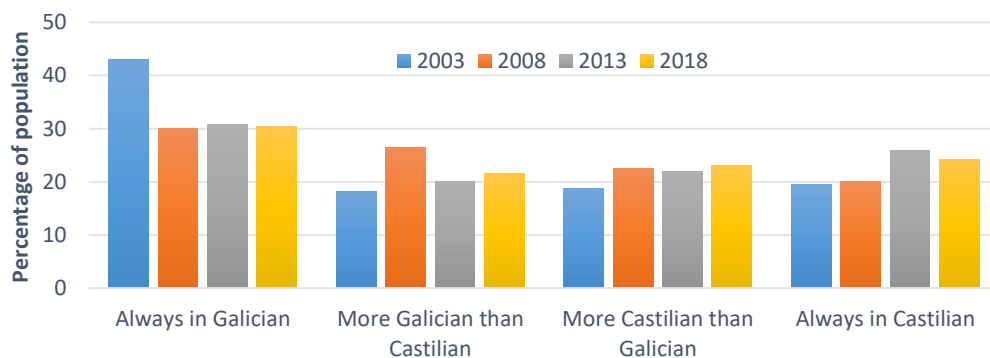
Catalonia total immersion plans for the whole population have been implemented, the Basque Country has adopted different linguistic models with variations in the use of Basque from one model to the other (Cots et al., 2012).

### 1.3 LANGUAGE POLICIES IN GALICIA, FROM BILINGUALISM TO PLURILINGUALISM

The Galician language is recognized in the Statute of Autonomy (1981) as the native language of Galicia and as an official language in the region alongside Spanish. Moreover, Galician is a symbol of identity and cultural heritage, and is used in all public, cultural and social domains in the community. With the linguistic rules established under the 1982 *Normas ortográficas e morfolóxicas do idioma Galego* (Spelling and morphological rules of the Galician language), Galician was established in formal contexts such as the mass media, politics and universities. Despite not being politically imposed, its relatively high number of users grants it a favorable position as a minority language as compared to some other multi-lingual regions in Spain.

This agenda of revitalization has had a positive impact on the sociolinguistics of Galician with the emergence of *neofalantes* (new-speakers), a term referring to both “a folk and academic concept to describe speakers who are brought up speaking Spanish, but who at some stage in their lives (usually adolescence or early adulthood) ‘become’ Galician speakers” (O’Rourke & Ramallo, 2013, p. 288). Such steps taken towards the standardization of Galician notwithstanding, the language has in fact been losing ground to Spanish in recent times, as noted by the Galician Institute of Statistics (IGE) in its 2018 Structural Survey on Households. Figure 1 below shows some evidence regarding this issue.

Figure 1: Frequency of use of Galician and Spanish as reported by the population older than 5 years over the five-year periods between 2003 and 2018



Data taken and adated from: <https://www.ige.gal>

This trend can largely be explained in terms of a reduction in intergenerational language transmission, this aggravated by the rapid process urbanization that Galicia has undergone in recent decades when,

language was yet another ingredient of the “modernity” to which they had committed themselves. (Ramallo, 2007, p. 24)

Against this unbalanced linguistic scenario, the implementation of the plurilingual program of education began about 10 years ago in Galicia with the order of the Consellería de Educación e Ordenación Universitaria [Education and University Ordinance Office] (Decreto 79/2010, Do 20 de Maio, Para o Plurilingüismo No Ensino Non Universitario de Galicia, 2010 - Decree 79/2010, May 20<sup>th</sup>, for plurilingualism in non-university levels). In this order, guidelines for FL learning at the pre-university stages were established on the basis of a balanced use of the co-official languages. Among the main principles described (page 9.243) are an equal level of language acquisition in the two co-official languages in Galicia (Spanish and Galician), the learning of FLs as part of the policies of plurilingualism in the Galicia’s educational system, plus the dynamization of the Galician language in schools.

Some decisions regarding practical aspects of the implementation of the program, however, have been left to schools, which has led to a variety of problems and concerns over the years. In his study on the implementation of CLIL programs in Galicia, San Isidro (2010) pointed out a number of issues that needed to be addressed to attain more consistency in the execution of the plurilingualism program. Apart from a common implementation framework and the allocation of equal levels of financial resources across Galicia, a better balance in the percentage use of languages between the two official languages and English was seen to be necessary. In addition, CLIL teaching in rural areas was affected by the stipulation that a minimum number of students (10-12) was required to run the program, and the coordination and assessment of CLIL programs also needed to be redefined (p. 59). Almost a decade after the implementation of the program, at the 2019 *VI Xornadas Educación e linguas en Galicia* (VI Conference on Education and Languages in Galicia), organized by the Office of Linguistic Standardization (OLS) and the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the USC, some of the difficulties encountered during the implementation of the program stemming from the issues already raised by San Isidro were discussed.

In infant education, for example, there seems to be a lack of precision regarding the right age to introduce the first FL and also regarding the language of instruction, since the order states that teachers should use the predominant native language of the children as determined by the institution on the basis of survey data gathered from parents. However, in private centers, plurilingualism for teachers largely involves Spanish and English while Galician is relegated to second place. Although Galician immersion programs for children in infant education were implemented as an initiative by the bipartisan government in 2006, these were discontinued with the introduction of the plurilingual school system (Álvarez, 2010; Orden DOG Consellería de Educación y Ordenación Universitaria, 2011). The language is now largely transmitted to children through their grandparents or parents, with the result that children who are Galician native speakers in their early years tend to switch their dominant language to Spanish once they start school, and hence a lower number of children speak Galician. At the elementary and secondary levels, rural schools in particular are affected by a shortage of teachers, resulting in an overload of the timetable for those teacher who work there. As a consequence, there is a gap between CLIL subjects and language subjects, and the preparation of teachers here, both linguistically and pedagogically, also needs enhancement. In some cases, the curriculum for CLIL subjects has been modified to make it more accessible to students in English, which has been counter-productive and demotivating for them, and the typically large numbers of students per class makes it very difficult to practice and develop speaking skills. The HE students who participated in the present research raised similar issues; they stressed the need to improve the

aims and practice of the policy on plurilingualism. So, despite the initiatives that have been taken by the Galician government over the past decade, such as language immersion programs for students and teachers, training programs for instructors, conversation assistants, and the provision of more resources, the effective implementation of plurilingualism in Galicia has progressed slowly and much remains to be assessed and resolved, especially in rural areas.

#### 1.4 INTERNATIONALIZATION AT GALICIAN UNIVERSITIES

Linguistic policies have also made progress in HE, with English as the main protagonist as a FL. Consistent with the move towards internationalization taking place at many universities around the world, Galician universities strive to attain greater international recognition. With this aim in mind, the three leading institutions here (the University of Vigo, the University of A Coruña, and the University of Santiago de Compostela) have devised and set in motion plans for internationalization in recent years (2013, 2015 and 2017, respectively). These plans are based on common general objectives: to increase the international mobility of students and staff, to recruit more international students at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels, to foster research and cooperation with more international institutions, and to grant a more international character to the range of courses offered by including some modules taught in FLs, chiefly in English.

In 2018, the Galician government launched the Excellency Plan of the Galician University comprising a series of strategies to improve the quality of internationalization programs. Among the main measures included in this initiative are: the option of studying existing degree courses but with 80% of the instruction in English (Xunta de Galicia, 2018); joint actions to attract undergraduate as well as master's students from Ibero-America; scholarships for those students who show academic excellence in their results and for teachers who organize activities to share and extend their knowledge in Galician society more broadly; and the awarding of the so-called "master of excellence" to those programs which meet a number of requirements relating to the quality of teaching and research, and the level of internationalization and employment demand (Xunta de Galicia, n.d.). In addition, the General Secretariat of Universities (Secretaría General de Universidades, in Spanish) at the regional level issued in 2019 instructions to offer simultaneous degrees in all three universities.

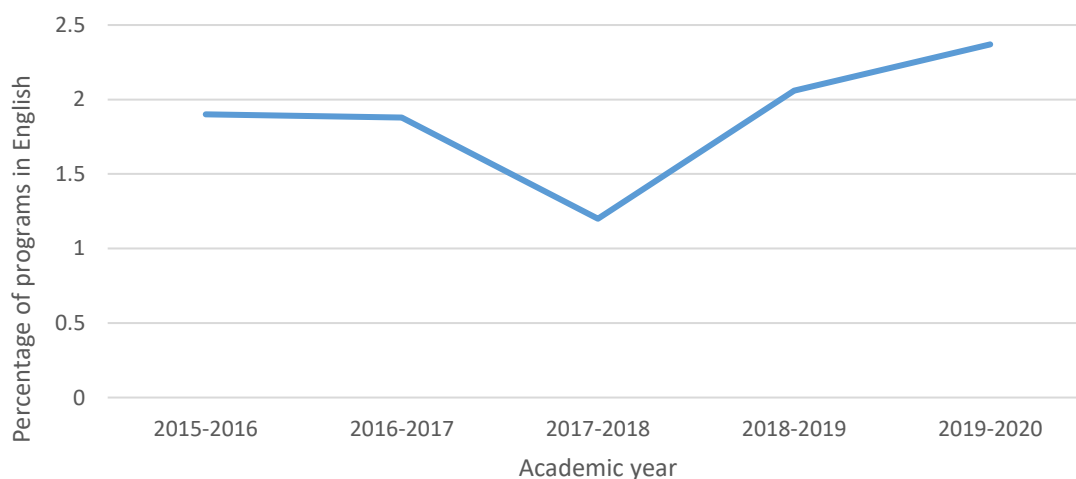
In this vein, the linguistic internationalization program at the University of Vigo offers a wide range of FL courses through its Language Center, as well as a high number of curricular subjects in English (around 138) in 14 different degrees, plus two other degrees with more than 80% of instruction in English (in 2019-2020). The total number of subjects taught in English the option is over 200, this excluding affiliated institutions (Universidade de Vigo, n.d.). In addition, this university has pioneered in Galicia the *English Friendly Program* to accommodate foreign students, which encompasses a number of subjects (149 in 2019-20) where the language of instruction is Spanish and/or Galician but students have access in English to a variety of resources including the syllabus, materials and bibliographical references, evaluations and tutoring hours, all these in order to allow them to follow up their learning and thus to foster a better immersion experience. As a means of supporting teaching staff here, the EMILAB service was made available; this is an online repository of materials and resources to aid university staff in their teaching and research work. The same university also offers the Higher Education Lecturing Accreditation (HELA), a test to assess the linguistic and interactive skills of teachers (Ibid.).

Turning to the University of A Coruña (UDC), this institution has implemented nine bilingual programs (seven degrees and two master's) where at least 50% of the content is

delivered in English, and where students are required to have a CEFR B1 level of English as a minimum to register. Five of these bilingual degrees, along with 11 master's programs, are also offered as simultaneous or combined degrees in which students are certified by the UDC and a foreign university (Universidade da Coruña, n.d.). This institution also has an International Summer School (ISS) that offers credit-bearing courses taught by foreign staff to international and local students during the summer. In terms of the linguistic level of teachers, from 2016 the UDC established the requirement of a certification at a CERF C1 level to deliver subjects in English, which in turn means a reduction to 25 hours in the individual's teaching timetable if delivering EMI subjects or to 15 hours for tutoring sessions in English. This regulation also includes a Plan of Linguistic Support for Instruction in English (PALDI in Galician) consisting of formative training in EMI and a 30-hour course of English completed with a test in order to obtain certification for those teachers who do not have it (Modificación da normativa reguladora da docencia en inglés nas titulacións na Universidade da Coruña, 2016).

At a slower pace, the University of Santiago de Compostela, where the present study has been carried out, has opened new avenues for internationalization with its 2017-2020 Plan, in which four different strategic lines of action were defined, the second of which focuses on the enhancement of the international character of teaching. Its Modern Language Center (MLC) offers both students and teachers a wide range of courses to foster linguistic training in a wide range of FLs apart from the official ones. As the following graph shows, the USC's academic courses offered in English continue to grow, despite having had a somewhat irregular development over the past five years.

Figure 2: Growing tendency of academic offer in English at the USC from 2015 to 2020



In the 2018-2019 academic year, the timeframe for the current study, the USC enforced the Regulation for Quality Teaching in FLs (LEDUS in Galician) which demands a CEFR C1 proficiency level for teachers delivering subjects in English and a B1 level for students registering for those classes. The linguistic accreditation of teachers is automatically renewed annually unless they obtain unfavorable results in student satisfaction surveys for two years in a row. They are also granted other benefits, such as a more stable and reduced teaching timetable, an additional entry in their professional evaluation, and some discounts on language courses for professional or individual interests at the MLC, where they also have access to

tutoring sessions to discuss methodological aspects if needed. As regards students, similar discounts are offered. The English-based subjects taken are recorded as a specific achievement in their academic transcripts for the interest of future employers, plus these students are given priority when applying for mobility programs and simultaneous or combined degree programs.

Excluding those courses from the Faculty of Philology, in 2018-2019 the USC offered over 50 subjects in English, with two faculties leading the way. The first of these is Chemical Engineering, a pioneering department in this sense, with around a dozen subjects which it has been offering in English for over a decade. Its international accreditation status has allowed them to offer a semester of mobility for foreign students. This initiative includes 9 curricular subjects fully taught in English, a Spanish course to certify their level by the Cervantes Institute, access to the USC dorms and facilities, and information about the city. On the other hand, the Faculty of Chemistry offers the degree of Chemistry in English with more than 80% of its subjects delivered in this language. Plus, students at Santiago can choose individual subjects in English in their Spanish/Galician programs. Further details on English subjects at the USC are provided in section 3.2 where methodological issues are discussed.

Against the national, regional and local background discussed above, the present study will focus on the beliefs of a group of target executors or stakeholders of the aforementioned policies and programs, more specifically a population of students and teachers from the USC, as a means of knowing first-hand the achievements and challenges in coping with the process of learning and using English as a FL in this setting. As we will see in the subsequent chapters, a belief can be simply understood as a strong opinion about what is considered right, good or appropriate, even if there is no (or not enough) evidence to support such an opinion. Indeed, the way we behave in our daily lives is founded on such convictions. Hence, these are brought to the classroom by students and teachers and constitute one of the foundations of their approaches to and expectations about the learning process. Over recent decades, research has paid particular attention to beliefs as one of the principal variables in the cognitive aspect of language learning, this in order to account for observable learning differences between students. A variety of approaches, theories and methods about beliefs have emerged from the literature, and many of the most relevant studies will be outlined in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter comprises the examination of the main concepts and core theories which have been used as the theoretical framework for the present study. Consistent with the general structure of this investigation, the theoretical considerations here presented branch into Sections 2.1 and 2.2. The former contains a review of previous belief research which addresses four main issues. The first part explores the different definitions of beliefs while the second part considers the importance of the construct of beliefs for language learning. The main characteristics of beliefs identified thus far through research are explained in the third part and, finally, the fourth part examines different language learning constructs that are closely intertwined with the sets of beliefs analyzed in this study. In addition, Section 2.2. in this chapter contains theoretical foundations pertinent to some contextual elements included in this study which are linked to USC students' and teachers' beliefs, namely the implementation of EMI programs, and inequalities regarding the students' proficiency level and learning opportunities.

### 2.1 LANGUAGE LEARNING AND BELIEFS

A plethora of research has been produced in different fields to study the human capacity for learning. From a psychological point of view, the term *learning* can accommodate different definitions depending on the theories and paradigms in this field. It could be considered:

a relatively permanent change in an individual's behaviour...[the] changes in the amount or type of knowledge that we have, or the way in which we reason about our world. Learning shows that we have benefitted from experience in some way and can work or act more effectively as a result. So learning can be evidenced by changes in strategy, or the ability to think differently about a problem. It enables us to anticipate outcomes and therefore act to control our environment. (Long et al., 2011, p. 14)

In the linguistic field most of the theoretical frameworks about language learning stem from psychological research, neurolinguistics, and cognitive development. A core theory within this area related to learning is the Piagetian model (Piaget, 1968), which states that as we grow, we create mental structures or schemas in our mind which are based on our interaction with the physical world. In this process, our brain transits through different stages of maturation which eventually allow us to create schemas for more abstract features and to develop higher-order thinking processes. Although he acknowledged the role of the interaction with the environment, Piaget focused on the mental adaptations occurring in the process of cognitive development.

Unlike Piaget, the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1967) highlighted the importance of experience and actions in cognition as the main vehicles that progressively lead to more complex and abstract thinking processes. He believed that through experience children create their own meanings of the world around them and they internalize those experiences. In addition, Vygotsky considered language both a result of the socialization process and a tool to construct knowledge. Linguistic interaction with adults allows children to function in "the zone



of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85) where the support offered by adults helps them to internalize actions and to achieve progress. He proposed two biological levels of cognition: the lower and the higher levels, the latter including consciousness which we can control using other higher-level tools such as language, numeracy, and logic. This is known as his *socio-cultural theory* (from now on, SCT), an important foundation for current studies on beliefs as referred further in this chapter.

As regards the concept of learning, this dissertation focuses more specifically on language learning and the distinct factors involved in it. Within this field, there is a huge body of research that has analyzed the way languages are learned, which has resulted in the coinage of a wide range of terms and concepts. For example, Corder (1967, p. 165) distinguishes the language available in the environment, e.g. the academic syllabus, as *input* while what the learner takes from it and controls in the form of linguistic competence is defined as *intake*. For his part, Selinker (1972, p. 214) introduces a separate linguistic system called *interlanguage*, a middle point between the learner’s L1 and L2 which includes five core processes: “first, *language transfer*; second, *transfer-of-training*; third, *strategies of second-language learning*; fourth, *strategies of second-language communication*; and fifth, *overgeneralization of TL linguistic material*.” (Ibid., p. 215). In her model of second language learning, Bialystok (1977) differentiates between *explicit knowledge* as the awareness about the different properties of the language, and *implicit knowledge* as the intuitive acknowledging of correct linguistic features. Later Stephen Krashen (1982) stated the distinction between *language learning* and *language acquisition*. The former can be defined as “conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them.” (Krashen, 1982, p. 10) while *acquisition* is a subconscious process for the acquirers where they are not aware of this process (Ibid.). In reviewing Bialystok and Krashen’s models as well as other models, the term *language development* was suggested by Smith (1981, p. 167) to encompass the dynamic interweaving of the conscious and unconscious processes in language learning.

Research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a relatively young area of study covering a wide scope of issues:

It is the study of how second languages are learned [...] It is the study of how learners create a new language system with only limited exposure to a second language. It is the study of what is learned of a second language and what is not learned; it is the study of why most second language learners do not achieve the same degree of knowledge and proficiency in a second language as they do in their native language; it is also the study of why only some learners appear to achieve native-like proficiency in more than one language. Additionally, second language acquisition is concerned with the nature of the hypotheses (whether conscious or unconscious) that learners come up with regarding the rules of the second language. (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 1)

Starting around the 1960s, research on SLA has witnessed the development of various methodologies including interpretative work and the more experimental type with a strong presence of empirical studies. This vast field of investigation encompasses different subfields such as the purely linguistic (e.g., grammar), psycholinguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic. Nine core issues or questions comprising SLA research are summarized by VanPatten & Benati (2010, p. 9),

1. What is the initial state? That is, what do learners bring to the task of acquisition in terms of underlying knowledge related to language?
2. Can L2 learners become native-like?
3. Is there a critical period?
4. What does development look like?
5. What are the roles of explicit and implicit learning in SLA?
6. What are the roles of input and output in SLA?
7. What are individual differences and how do they affect acquisition?
8. Does instruction make a difference?
9. What constraints are there on acquisition?

Stemming from a psychological differential approach, in the late 1980s, SLA research started to focus attention on the differences across learners as opposed to the commonalities or universals that had traditionally dominated its investigation until that moment. The pioneering work of Peter Skehan (1989) in this field triggered the interest of many other researchers (Gardner, 1987; R. Ellis, 1994; N. C. Ellis, 1996; Robinson, 2002; Dörnyei, 2006; Spolsky, 2007) towards various types of learners' Individual Differences (IDs). In his work, Skehan (1991, pp. 290-292) highlighted four main advantages about the importance of investigating IDs:

[...]t encourages quantification of the strength of relationship between any particular ID (e.g. aptitude) and language achievement.

[...]B]y examining the range of influences on second language achievement, interesting points of contact between different single IDs may be revealed.

...[I]t encourages the development of more formal models that relate IDs to one another and to language acquisition.

[...]A]n ID framework connects with the complexity of language learning and also its multi-causal nature.

Rod Ellis (1994, p. 35) states that learners' IDs have an impact on the rate of acquisition of an L2 and that the numerous ways in which learners differ from each other reflect the wide range of social, affective and cognitive factors of a human being. In this seminal work about SLA, where he offers a comprehensive overview of research in the area and examines the different variables that affect it, he proposes a framework to investigate IDs (Ibid., p. 473). His framework comprises three main sets of variables that influence language learning and which are closely interrelated: (i) *individual learner differences* consisting of beliefs about language learning, affective states and general factors, (ii) *learner strategies* and (iii) *language learning outcomes* which are related to proficiency, achievement, and rate of acquisition. As research within the field of language learning developed, specific words and acronyms also started to be used to characterize the different environments where this learning occurs. The following extract illustrates some of the main individual differences which are pertinent to this study:

Second language refers to a situation where the target language is an official one together with the native language; this is the status of English, for example, in many African and Asian countries...where it is an official language for a series of historical, economic and/or political reasons, in combination with the native language(s). A second language situation is also that of a Mexican or Peruvian, for example, who goes to work or to study in the United States. His/her native language is Spanish but s/he is learning English, the institutional

language of the country which is widely used in all walks of life. In contrast, we speak of a foreign language situation in contexts or situations similar to ours [in Spain] and to many European countries, where English is not an official language and contact with it is only available through formal instruction, books, newspapers, audio and video..., satellite TV, etc. Finally, second language acquisition (SLA) is a neutral term and is used to refer to both situations as well as to the general field of enquiry. (Palacios Martínez, 1999, p. 24).

More recently there have been two major pieces of work which have called for a shift of direction in SLA research from the purely cognitive approach. The first was a framework proposed by Block (2003) demanding a more articulated approach in SLA research through what he called the Input-Interaction-Output (IIO) Model which considers the social, identity and cultural dimensions of the learner. This social component should be included in the actual concept of language containing interactive and pragmatic elements. He also suggested readapting the acronym SLA as Additional or Other Language Acquisition to be more inclusive of multilingual learners and other learning contexts. The second piece of work, by Pavlenko (2013), epitomizes the affective turn as a period that started in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and where the affective factors in SLA started to be explored. She contends that to investigate and understand the connections between affective factors and L2 learning, a change from a single linguistic perspective to a multidisciplinary one which can cover the individual, social and cultural dimensions of emotions is deemed necessary.

The foreign language situation referred above by Palacios Martínez coincides with Siegal's classification of the different sociolinguistic environments or settings (Siegal, 2003, p. 179) i.e. EFL, an external L2 setting where the L2 is a foreign or distant language. This is the environment that concerns the learning of English in the present study. Siegal also describes three main parameters for analyzing the incidence of social contexts in SLA: the macro vs. micro analysis, the structural vs. interactional and the objective vs. subjective (Ibid., p. 183). The first juxtaposes the role of the language within society in general with its use in particular situations or specific activities. The second contrasts the way in which SLA is affected by a fixed structure of society against a dynamic interaction where social relationships are in constant change based on the language used. "Finally, the objective perspective concentrates on the observable aspects of the social context, while the subjective perspective concentrates on individuals' perceptions of these aspects." (Ibid., p. 184).

The analysis here conducted relates to some of the SLA issues listed by VanPatten and Benati (2010), more specifically to the first and the last three of them: what students bring to the class, individual differences, the effect of instruction, and constraints on acquisition. It is an empirical study concerned with the learners' IDs as presented by R. Ellis (1994) with particular focus on the beliefs about learning English. Other variables such as affective states, some general factors and learner strategies are also analyzed through the lens of beliefs about learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and it is this acronym which will be indistinctly used henceforth along with the neutral term SLA. As regards the contextual elements included in the second part within "our context" (Palacios Martínez, 1999, p. 24), i.e. the Spanish and more specifically the Galician context, the theoretical approach in the present study is Siegal's interactionist view where the social context is created by the interplay of different social factors and where there is a reciprocal impact between it and the process of SLA.

### 2.1.1 Defining beliefs

Psychologists state that people

develop beliefs that organize their world and give meaning to their experiences. These beliefs may be called “meaning systems,” and different people create different meaning systems...people's beliefs about themselves (their self-theories) can create different psychological worlds, leading them to think, feel, and act differently in identical situations. (Dweck, 2000, p. 9).

Beliefs are said to originate as a result of individuals reasoning about their problems and the resources available to them, a process which consists of a cognitive as well as a social dimension since these beliefs are also the result of the interactions between individuals and with the environment (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2006, p. 8). In the late 1970s, educational psychology started to make beliefs the focus of attention to explain the process of SLA. One peculiarity about conducting studies on beliefs about language learning, however, is that the experts in this field have not been able to reach a consensus thus far about a specific term to define this SLA construct, the main reason probably being its natural complexity, which makes it “a messy construct” (Pajares, 1992, p. 329). So far, beliefs have been identified through various definitions which either delimit a specific set of beliefs or provide a general concept of them. For example, in Bandura’s framework of psychological changes, the belief of individuals about their capacity to enact actions or behavior leading to successful results is defined as *self-efficacy* (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). This concept of beliefs has been used in different studies dealing with EFL learning (Truitt, 1995; Siebert, 2003; Borg, 2011; Mercer, 2011; Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019) and the power and/or willingness of the students to progress in their learning through sustained effort.

When expanding on the Piagetian theory about children’s knowledge or theory of mind, Flavell (1977) and later Hosenfeld (1978) refer to beliefs as *mini theories* we use to understand our reality and where experience is a main determinant of our behavior. Flavell analyzes several important aspects about beliefs. One of them is the distinction between the concepts of desire and belief: “A desire is an internal experience or disposition [which] can be satisfied or not [...] In contrast a belief is a conviction about reality; it is true or false [and] ...what we believe may bias what we perceive” (Ibid., pp. 199, 213). He later viewed beliefs as *metacognitive knowledge* which comprised three main categories: person, task, and strategies. The person category comprises the beliefs about yourself as a person and about other people “as cognitive processors” (Flavell, 1979, p. 907) and include intra as well as interindividual differences. The task category includes the information about the task available to the person which allows him/her to decide how to manage the task plus “the metacognitive knowledge about the task demands or goals” (Ibid.). As for the strategies category, a person holds different beliefs about what strategies are effective to attain certain goals when performing specific tasks. On the same line of metacognitive knowledge, however, Wenden (1999, p. 436) distinguishes between beliefs and metacognitive knowledge as the former are related to a person’s values and they tend to be more pervasive in people’s way of thinking. She also states a difference between metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies. The former is the information that learners acquire about their learning and the latter are those skills learners use to manage and regulate their learning, e.g., planning, monitoring and evaluating (Ibid.). Another important contribution in clarifying the concept of beliefs was the distinction introduced by Pajares (1992). He discusses the difficulty researchers had to differentiate between beliefs and

knowledge and concludes that a difference common to all the terms that had been used for beliefs was that “[b]elief is based on evaluation and judgement; knowledge is based on objective facts?.” (Ibid., p. 313).

Many other authors have contributed different terms to define beliefs. For example, when researching teachers’ beliefs, Clark (1987) uses the term *implicit theories* to refer to beliefs and he states that they are “eclectic aggregations of cause-effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices.” (p. 11) and that these are very important “in the judgements and interpretations that teachers make every day.” (Ibid.). Horwitz uses the terms *preconceptions* (1985) and *notions* (1988) to refer to beliefs and comments on the need to challenge students’ beliefs about language learning to make them aware of them, and to stimulate a change of those erroneous beliefs that may interfere with the SLA process. In response to criticisms made to his socio-educational model of second language learning, Gardner (1985, p. 110) uses the term *cultural beliefs* in reference to the students’, teachers’ and parents’ expectations about language learning that are created by the social environment where the process takes place. He also states that “[c]ultural beliefs, therefore, refer to those existing in the social context in which the individual lives, and though one would expect that the individual might share them, the focus is on the milieu itself, not on the individual” (Ibid., p. 111). In reference to teachers’ beliefs, Pajares (1992) uses the term *educational beliefs* and states that they

are required beliefs about confidence to affect students’ performance (teacher efficacy), about the nature of knowledge (epistemological beliefs), about causes of teachers’ or students’ performance (attributions, locus of control, motivation, writing apprehension, math anxiety), about perceptions of self and feelings of self-worth (self-concept, self-esteem), about confidence to perform specific tasks (self-efficacy). (p. 316)

Within the context of the teaching-learning process, beliefs have also been called *culture of learning* since

much behaviour in language classrooms is set within taken-for-granted frameworks of expectations, attitudes, values, and beliefs about what constitutes good learning, about how to teach or learn, whether and how to ask questions, what textbooks are for, and how language teaching relates to broader issues of the nature and purpose of education. (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p. 1)

In his study about the role of the teacher in the second language learning process, Woods (1996) uses the acronym *BAK* as a construct that integrates the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of teachers. The combination of these three terms is seen as a system that responds to the intermixed natural character of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge which surfaces in the teaching practice as a network. Yet, this author also confirms the individuality of the teachers’ belief systems which relates to their *BAK* network.

Another term used to refer to beliefs is that of *conceptions of learning* discussed by Benson & Lor (1999), which can be understood as “conceptions of what a foreign language is and of what the process of learning a foreign language consists of.” (Ibid., p. 465). The word *convictions* is also used by Peacock (1999, p. 247) to refer to the beliefs of EFL learners in Hong Kong.

Arnold (2000) identifies beliefs with strong *filters of reality* since our beliefs determine our actions, regardless of the truth. She explains that positive and negative beliefs may exert a



powerful influence on learning. Positive beliefs do not guarantee instant success, but they can encourage learners to use their internal resources more effectively and to become aware of the variety of resource choices available to them. Negative beliefs, on the other hand, produce low expectations which in turn result in lower motivation, and each failed attempt confirms the initial negative beliefs resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Beliefs originate in different ways, for instance, through our culture, through the accumulation of experience or through the expectations of significant others (e.g., teachers). In other words, if the students hold high expectations, these will help them develop language competence but if their expectations are low, these will result in incompetence (Ibid., p. 273).

In his review of research about teachers' beliefs and their actions, Borg (2003) uses the term *teachers' cognition* to refer to "what teachers think, know, and believe and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom" (Ibid, p. 81). He discusses four key questions about teachers' cognition, and states that teachers' previous experience as learners has a strong impact on their beliefs during their professional career. In addition, he warns about the importance of considering teachers' prior beliefs within the preparation programs they take, and the influence of the context which may enable or prevent teachers from taking actions consistent with their beliefs. For her part, Barcelos (1995) uses the term *culture of learning languages* to refer to

[l]earners' intuitive implicit (or explicit) knowledge made of beliefs, myths, cultural assumptions and ideals about how to learn languages. This knowledge, according to learners' age and social economic level, is based upon their previous educational experience, previous (and present) readings about language learning and contact with other people like family, friends, relatives, teachers and so forth. (Ibid., 2008, p. 9).

And some years later, within the contextual approach, she considers beliefs

a form of thought, constructions of reality, ways of seeing and perceiving the world and its phenomena which are co-constructed within our experiences and which result from an interactive process of interpretation and (re)signifying, and of being in the world and doing things with others. (Kalaja et al., 2015, p. 10)

Referring now more in particular to specific types of beliefs, Dweck (2000, p. xi) used the psychological term *meaning systems* or *self-theories* and later, (Ibid., 2006, p. 5), she also introduced the concept of *mindset* to refer to a deeply enrooted belief about yourself that guides and "permeates every part of your life." She distinguishes between the *fixed mindset*, a belief that your qualities are unchangeable, and which urges you to prove yourself constantly, and the *growth mindset*, "the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts." (Ibid., p. 8). These mindsets are related to intelligence, personality and other human traits, and they have a strong impact on motivation and behavior in language contexts and general learning (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Oxford, 2017).

Despite the diversity of terms contributed by different authors, it could be said that rather than drawing border lines between them when attempting to find an accurate definition, many terms share common ground and complement each other. For example, many of these notions are not limited to cognitive aspects but include contextual or social aspects as well. In spite of making the research area somehow complicated, this richness of terminology allows scholars to choose and combine definitions for the purpose of each study, which validates the malleability of this construct and imparts a high level of flexibility to its research. In this

investigation, the term *beliefs* is closely aligned with those of *preconceptions* or *notions* used by Horwitz (1985, 1988) and that of *conceptions of learning* used by P. Benson & Lor (1999).

The current study on the beliefs of the USC students and teachers focuses on exploring those preconceptions the subjects hold which have been shaped up by their previous personal and educational experience, and which they bring to the classroom. It is then an exploration of Barcelos' *culture of learning languages* at the USC. These beliefs not only allow them to assess English as a foreign language and the different factors that affect the process of learning within their academic and social context but also to reveal their way of approaching this process.

### 2.1.2 The importance of beliefs in SLA

As interest in research about beliefs was in crescendo, the different studies conducted started to validate their importance for learning, in general, and, more particularly, for SLA. Their prominence has been evidenced, for instance, in the mis-correspondence between the students' and the teachers' intentions and behaviors in class, in the way students choose and use learning strategies, and in the level of students' anxiety and of autonomy of learning (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2006, p.,1). Flavell (1977) referred to the importance of beliefs and desires in creating our intentions and subsequently performing actions whose successful or failed outcome trigger emotional reactions. He also alluded to the cultural origin of beliefs as "...a culture's history and current configuration hand the newborn child a ready-made set of values, beliefs, rules, possibilities, and impossibilities." (Flavell et al., 2002, p. 23). And as to the importance of belief awareness for learning, he stated that:

[i]t is important for educators to realize that students come to the classroom with misconceptions ...as opposed to no conceptions. These misconceptions can be remarkably resistant to instruction. Instruction often is not just a matter of teaching new information; it also involves correcting old beliefs often by showing that the child's beliefs work in some situations but not others or removing old beliefs and replacing them with new ones. (Flavell et al., 1977, p. 154)

In her study on the beliefs of German, French and Spanish students at the University of Texas, Horwitz (1988) concludes that foreign language teachers' awareness about students' beliefs would allow the latter to be more receptive to the different teaching methods used in the classroom. This belief awareness, she added, not only allows the teachers to know the way students approach the learning process but it also helps them to encourage the use of more effective learning strategies by their students. As stated by Ellis (1996, p. 479), the beliefs of the students is an "important area of enquiry, as it is reasonable to assume that their 'philosophy' dictates their approach to learning and choice of specific learning strategies." As to teachers' beliefs, Woods (1996) also claimed that Beliefs About Knowledge (*BAK*) is pervasive as evidenced in its frequent presence in teachers' practice and in "the effect it has on the teachers' organization of thoughts, decisions, and aspects of the course." (Ibid., p. 247).

Riley (1997) refers to the beliefs of the learner as Beliefs About Talk (*BATs*), and Beliefs About Language Learning (*BALLs*). He states that we tend to underestimate the popular beliefs of the learner and highlights their importance as "they influence learning behavior powerfully...[and] they give rise to different behaviors and attitudes to...self-instruction in language learning." (Ibid., pp. 128, 149). In his study of the beliefs of university students and teachers in Hong Kong, Peacock (1999) found that different beliefs had implications for language learning and teaching, and some of them had a negative impact on learning. However,



Ellis (2008) states that the impact of beliefs on learning has an indirect character as reflected on the choice of learning strategies by the student, and that a direct relationship between beliefs and proficiency was difficult to establish “since the fact that learners hold a particular belief is no guarantee they will act on it; conflicts with other strongly held beliefs, situational constraints, or personal reasons may prevent them.” (Ibid., p. 13).

Based on the Vygotskian concept of mediation presented by Lantolf (1994, p. 418), beliefs can be thus considered mediational tools in as much as they can be viewed as ‘devices’ which link the actions of students and teachers to the mental processes involved in language learning. Beliefs about language learning have also been associated to the affective educational dimension, i.e. *affect* as defined by Arnold (2009), which along with cognition constitute two important aspects of the development of the learner. This construct is further discussed in Section A.4 in this chapter. According to this author, “[i]t is... important to deal with any negative self-beliefs learners may have acquired, as these can severely inhibit their progress, and to encourage realistically positive views of oneself.” (Ibid., p. 15).

Many other studies have shown the importance of learners’ beliefs for different aspects of the process of SLA. For example, Bacon & Finnemann (1990) explored the anticipated reactions of the students towards the FL curriculum and concluded that their “beliefs and attitudes can be self-fulfilling” and for this reason curricular design should encourage a positive predisposition towards input. (Ibid., p. 469). For her part, Yang (1992) showed the role of students’ beliefs on their choice of learning strategies and highlighted the importance of two core dimensions for language learning: the cognitive dimension and the motivational dimension, as also shown in Ellis (2008). In their exploration about beliefs and conceptions of learning, Benson & Lor (1999) explained that not only is it important for teachers to know about their students’ beliefs but also if they are functional or dysfunctional, and ways to modify the dysfunctional beliefs. In his study, Negueruela-Azarola (2011) demonstrates the practical character that beliefs could acquire when they are transformed into conceptual tools for classroom practice. Other contributions by different authors (Kuntz, 1996; Peacock, 1999; Navarro & Thornton, 2011; Aragão, 2011; Martínez Agudo, 2012; Kalaja et al., 2015; Zaykovskaya et al., 2017; Centeno & Ponce, 2019; Zhang & Ardasheva, 2019; Getie, 2020; An & Thomas, 2021) have also expanded and enriched on the importance of learners’ beliefs in SLA.

Although research on beliefs initially concentrated on the learner, specialists later started to focus on teachers’ beliefs. As a result, a wide array of investigations (Pajares, 1992; Burns, 1992; Johnson, 1994; Borg, 2003, 2011; Palak & Walls, 2009; Barcelos & Kalaja, 2012; Vázquez-Alonso et al., 2013; Murashkina, 2021) have probed into the importance of studying teachers’ beliefs. The following extract summarizes the various aspects of teaching that have been proven to have a link to the beliefs of language educators,

[t]he importance of the beliefs held by language teachers has been related to (a) their reflections about their own practices (whether these help them to reflect or prevent them from doing so), (b) the actions taken and decisions made by them in their everyday practice, (c) their responses to changes or innovations, (d) their process of learning to teach, and (e) the possible resistance to new methods or activities in the language classroom on the part of the students. In addition, after graduation, language majors enter working life as teachers, textbook writers, evaluators, and administrators, and in that sense, they are like gatekeepers, mediating their beliefs to generations of learners and others around themselves over careers extending some 40 years in these various roles. It is therefore crucial to find out about their beliefs about language learning and teaching as

these might be reflected in their practices not only in classroom contexts but also in out-of-classroom contexts with possibly far-reaching consequences. (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2012, p. 1)

Cumming (1989, p. 46) stated that teachers' practical knowledge is personal and it is "based on unique experiences, individual conceptions and their interaction with local contexts." Pajares (1992) classified teachers' beliefs into core and peripheral, the former having a stronger influence on teacher's behavior than the latter. He contended that teachers use their beliefs to filter new information and knowledge. This distinction between core and peripheral beliefs was also used by Phipps & Borg (2009) in their study of grammar teaching beliefs and practice of three teachers, where clear tensions between their beliefs and practice were identified. These authors reviewed an extensive number of studies about the findings of teachers beliefs, which was summarized by Sadeghi & Abdi (2015),

teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning:

- may be powerfully influenced (positively or negatively) by teachers' own experiences as learners and are well established by the time teachers go to university
- act as a filter through which teachers interpret new information and experience
- may outweigh the effect of teacher education in influencing what teachers do in the classroom
- can exert a persistent long-term influence on teachers' instructional practices
- are, at the same time, not always reflected in what teachers do in the classroom
- interact bi-directionally with experience (i.e. beliefs influence practices and practices can also lead to changes in beliefs)
- have a powerful effect on teachers' pedagogical decisions
- strongly influence what and how teachers learn during language teaching education
- can be deep-rooted and resistant to change. (pp. 109-110)

This dissonance between teachers' beliefs and their practice was also corroborated by Paula Kalaja et al., 2015 in a longitudinal study comprising subjects in Finland and Brazil. They explained that:

This [dissonance] is probably due, first of all, to the emotions teachers experience when they are confronted with the behaviour and expectations of their students, and secondly, to the school environment and its norms, which may, in turn, prevent teachers from acting in accordance with their beliefs. This can create conflicting emotions in teachers, and thus affect their agency and identities as professionals. In other words, their ideals may clash with the realities of the classroom. (p. 208)

Furthermore, many other studies on beliefs (Kern, 1995; Banya & Chen, 1997; Barcelos, 2003; Siebert, 2003; Brown, 2009; Pan & Block, 2011; Wan et al., 2011) have included both students and teachers, often comparing their beliefs and analyzing the potential impact of the learners and educators' belief mis-correspondence on the SLA process. By way of example,

Kern (1995) highlights the importance of understanding students' and teachers' beliefs and the way they interact since it could allow them to set more realistic goals, to resolve students' frustrations, to provide better guidance to students, and to foster collaborative work between students and teachers through reflective partnership.

The provision of better guidance to the students is one of the core recommendations in the study conducted by Banya & Chen (1997), where they state that teachers can train the students on the learning strategies that good language learners use or on those which are more adequate to their learning styles or personalities. Siebert (2003) also highlighted the importance of beliefs for students and teachers. In the case of the students, belief awareness may help them to readjust their expectations about learning the language and to use more effective approaches. In her view, teachers should also be exposed through their university training programs to information about beliefs in different cultures in order to expand their choice of beliefs and strategies for different teaching situations.

Studying the beliefs of both teachers and students, rather than those of one group in isolation, enables a better understanding of the intricate dynamics of beliefs within educational contexts, according to Barcelos & Kalaja (2012), who explain that:

While learners may not necessarily learn what their teachers attempt to teach, a match in their beliefs is thought to be productive to learning, increasing motivation, and a mismatch in this respect counterproductive. Understanding this relationship (and especially mismatches) can provide insights into a number of aspects of the language classroom such as (a) misunderstandings and miscommunication, (b) challenges by students to their teachers' credibility, (c) the engagement of learners in strategies disapproved of by their teachers, and (d) withdrawal and feelings of unhappiness experienced by students. In short, the mismatches can affect learners' motivation, efforts, and the types of activities they choose to take part in. (pp. 3-4)

These authors as well as many others (Horwitz, 1988; Yang, 1992; Kern, 1995; Kuntz, 1996; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Dörnyei, 2006) contend that holding positive beliefs about language learning enables students to sustain motivation throughout this process, whereas negative beliefs may spur frustration and demotivation.

As regards the pedagogical implications of belief studies, however, one current concern is the debate about the adequacy or pertinence of teachers' intervention strategies to try to influence those beliefs of the students which interfere negatively with the SLA process. In their comprehensive study about research on beliefs, Bernat & Gvozdenko (2005) point to the existence of a research niche about the nature of beliefs to prove more consistently their relationship to variables such as personal identity, cultural background, personality and self-esteem. Beliefs are thought to be deeply intertwined with these variables, which makes them more resistant to change as shown by some studies (Weinstein, 1994; Alexander & Dochy, 1995; Peacock, 2001). Therefore, pedagogical intervention in attempting to transform or replace negative beliefs should be taken with caution. Rather than forcing new beliefs, it is recommended to make students and teachers aware of their own since in articulating their beliefs, they might become more receptive to experimenting new ways of approaching the language learning process, which in turn may result in belief change.

### 2.1.3 Main research findings about belief systems

The wide array of studies on beliefs conducted within the SLA field were based on the use of different research methodologies, which in the past years have mainly trifurcated into the normative, the metacognitive and the contextual approaches as classified by Barcelos (2000). This classification, along with many other aspects of beliefs, has been described in different pieces of work (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Barcelos, 2006; Sadeghi & Abdi, 2015).

Studies within the normative approach identify beliefs through sets of pre-determined statements usually in the form of questionnaires. This approach has its origin in the pioneering instrument designed by Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988), the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), which is used in the present study. Ever since its creation, the BALLI has been validated, readapted and used by many researchers (Yang, 1992; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Banya & Chen, 1997; Peacock, 1999, 2001; Chawhan & Oliver, 2000; Altan, 2006; Nikitina, 2006; Bernat & Lloyd, 2007; Ariogul et al., 2009; Loewen et al., 2009; Özdemir, 2013; Abdolhazadeh & Rajaei Nia, 2014; Fujiwara, 2015, 2018; Paniagua, 2017). Other specialists have created their own questionnaires or combined structural features of the BALLI into their new designs (Kuntz, 1996; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Agudo, 2012, 2014). The fact that these normative studies use pre-set statements to explore the dynamic, changeable belief variable has been pointed out as their main disadvantage since this ‘snapshot’ approach grants beliefs a static, stable character. Despite this, it is a practical method to identify erroneous beliefs and to collect a large amount of data in a short time and in different contexts. In the case of the present project, offering the respondents the opportunity to reflect about the questionnaire statements seemed to have an immediate, albeit basic, awareness raising effect about their beliefs, as expressed by their reactions.

The metacognitive approach takes its roots from the work developed by Flavell (1977, 1979) and its main advocate was Wenden (1986, 1991, 1999). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this author referred to the beliefs of language learners as metacognitive knowledge, which is, in simple words, “what learners know about learning.” (Wenden, 1999, p. 435). As part of her work, Wenden (1986) offered an orientation program for teachers to study their learners’ beliefs as a way to help them accept different approaches to learning better. Within this approach, the data is collected mainly through interviews and self-reports, which allows learners to articulate their beliefs and talk about different aspects of language learning including their expectations and approach to this process. However, one of the drawbacks of this approach, as stated by Barcelos (2000), is the difficulty of showing the contextual character of beliefs. Besides, its identification is only based on intentions rather than actions.

Finally, the contextual approach combines research methods other than questionnaires, for example, longitudinal case studies, content analysis, learning journals, informal conversations, drawings, classroom observations, video recording analysis, metaphor analysis, etc. (See Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011 for a summary of contextual studies). These studies are emic in character as they collect data in the form of learners’ individual interpretations, viewpoints and expectations which emerge from their interactions within specific contexts. However, the data gathered through the studies within the contextual approach is usually limited by the size of the sample and not always more successful than other approaches regarding the findings about beliefs.

The present project takes some features of each of the three approaches described above. Despite being normative in character, the use of interviews as a tool to expand on the data collected through questionnaires gives it a metacognitive turn. In addition, some elements about the social and academic teaching-learning context are also briefly explored, which reflects its

contextual character as well. All in all, rather than restricting itself to a particular approach this study attempts to combine features of the three approaches to identify the beliefs of the USC students and teachers.

The extensive body of research about SLA has disclosed several important characteristics about beliefs and their corresponding pedagogical implications, which have been highlighted by authors such as Yang (1992), Kern (1995), Ellis (2008) and Barcelos & Kalaja (2011). Beliefs are said to have a fluctuating and contextual character, i.e., they change over time based on the interactions of the learner with other individuals within different contextual scenarios, two features that have been evidenced in different studies. For example, in his book about teachers' beliefs, Woods (1996), states that Beliefs About Knowledge (*BAK*) networks are constantly evolving, which grants it a dynamic character and helps to explain "the process of teacher change and the process of curricular evolution." (Ibid., p. 251). While conducting research on the beliefs of 124 student teachers in the Netherlands, Tillema (1998) found out that some beliefs were unchanged by a training program, while others, such as adopting a more self-regulative approach to teaching, were transformed. This study also offered a model to explain how these belief changes occurred (or not). In their empirical study of Japanese students who experienced a 15-week stay-abroad period, Ellis & Tanaka, (2003) also found belief changes based on enhanced proficiency, as well as on experiential and analytical language learning. The study of beliefs of 70 English learners during a stay-abroad period in the USA conducted by Amuzie & Winke (2009) showed how their beliefs about learner autonomy and the role of the teacher changed. For his part, Riley (2009) studied a group of 695 Japanese students and teachers during a nine-month period and concluded that there was a change in the students' expectations and beliefs about language learning with regards to aspects such as affective factors and the direction of their teachers' beliefs. In addition, an enquiry conducted by Peng (2011) in the form of a case study within the Chinese EFL context disclosed substantial changes in the beliefs of this subject during his transition from high school to college.

Belief changes can also occur as a result of the influence of significant others "who can affect a person's decisions to incorporate new beliefs or reinforce old ones" (Barcelos & Kalaja 2011, p. 286). These significant others can be individuals or conditions relevant to the learner, for example, other learners, friends, teachers, advisors, academic programs, etc. which offer different interpretations, experiences, or circumstances of the events for the learner to take on and execute actions. This belief adoption by the learner and its use as a mediational tool for learning is often referred to in the SLA literature as belief *internalization* or *appropriation*. Enrooted in the Vygotskian approach and the Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT), this construct refers to the bidirectional complex connections that learners establish between the external social environment and their internal construction of new meanings along the process of language learning. "Internalization is the origin of mediated thinking, and it is always connected to externalization: the communicative act of making visible our conceptualizations." (Negueruela, 2013, p. 3095). Therefore, belief internalization is an important condition for SLA learners and teachers to align the beliefs they hold with the learning-teaching agentic actions they enact, an (un)alignment that has been identified in different belief studies (Yang, 1992, 1999; Liao, 2004; Mohebi & Khodadady, 2011; Kim, 2013). This concept adds up to the complexity of belief analysis as shown by White (1999) in her longitudinal study of self-instructed language learners. Her results showed that there were three core constructs to the learners' conceptualization of the initial stages of learning which later evidenced shifts of the learners' expectations and beliefs: the context, tolerance of ambiguity and locus of control. Another study conducted by Cabaroglu & Roberts (2000) also showed the belief changes that 20 student teachers went through during one year of their PGCE program. They showed how different



variables related to course design such as the pre-service course, belief development opportunities, confrontation of pre-existing beliefs and self-regulated learning opportunities caused belief changes in this group of student teachers. Navarro & Thornton (2011) conducted a study on the belief path of two Japanese students. It also disclosed evidence of belief appropriation in the case of one of the learners, who, as a result of interaction with her advisor, took on the belief of activity-balance and started to use it to mediate her actions (Ibid., p. 297). Along the same lines, Huang et al. (2021) followed the belief changes of three novice teachers in Hong Kong during one year, and found that they were not only reshaped by the teaching contexts they encountered but were also detrimental to the formation of their teacher identity.

The contextual character of beliefs has also been elicited through different research pieces. In exploring the connection between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their practice, Burns (1996) identified three levels at which context interacts with teachers' practice: the institutional context, teachers' beliefs about language and learners, and instruction. When studying cultural differences in beliefs, Horwitz (1999) pointed out the learning context, chiefly the language learning situation (ESL vs. EFL) and classroom practices, as reasons to explain the learners' belief differences found. Borg (2003) stressed the importance of contextual factors such as the institutional (private vs. public), the social (institutional and parents' demands), the instructional (teaching practice) and the physical (classroom size, teachers' heavy workloads) which may negatively affect the correspondence between teachers' beliefs and practice. Diab (2006) studied the beliefs of Lebanese learners of English and French, and found out that their beliefs, especially those about the difficulty of language learning and their motivation to learn English, were related to the political and socio-cultural context of their home country. In a similar vein, Ellis (2008) showed the situated and dynamic character of language learners' beliefs when contrasting three different studies and he stated that beliefs "change as a product of new situational experiences and, in particular, the attributions that learners make for their successes and failures." (Ibid., pp. 22-23). Apairach & Vibulphol (2015) also found belief differences between Thai students involved in two learning contexts: English programs and regular public programs. In their cross-cultural study on the link between gender and beliefs, Bernat & Lloyd (2007) also provided contextual reasons to explain the belief differences found. In addition, the work by Pérez Vidal et al. (2018) reports the findings of different studies carried out in three different learning contexts: EFL formal instruction (FI), Study-abroad (SA) and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). They found contextual differences such as better speaking gains and affect for SA students, more pragmatic benefits and more self-confidence for EMI students, and a generalized need to focus FI on pronunciation.

On the same line, in its ethnographic study of five Chinese students in Hong Kong, Gao (2010) offers evidence of the links between students' beliefs and strategy choice "to the micro-and macro-political contexts and discourses..." (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011, p. 285). Apart from describing the socio-political motivations of the subjects to study away from their mainland, Gao discusses aspects such as family expectations, institutional resources, and peer pressure and how they impact on their choice of learning strategies as English learners. Other studies adopting the contextual approach take the Vygotskian socio-cultural theory (SCT) as a foundation to explore, for example, the process of belief formation in a group of 7-9-year-old foreign language learners in Finland (Alanen, 2003), to explore "beliefs as contextually situated social meanings emerging in specific sense-making activities." (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011, p. 369), to probe into the beliefs of EFL students and teachers within an ongoing globalization process of the country (Pan & Block, 2011), and to propose "an expanded learner belief framework – guided by the constructs of language ideology and positioning..." (De Costa, 2011 p. 355). In addition, Doiz & Lasagabaster, (2018) investigated a group of Spanish university



students and teachers, and their motivational self-esteem within the context of English Mediated Instruction (EMI). They concluded that this learning increases the learners' vulnerability, and actively interacts with their L2 motivation component.

As has been previously mentioned when discussing the different definitions of beliefs, this language learning variable is also characterized by a high level of complexity. Pajares (1992) explains this entanglement by comparing the construct of beliefs with that of knowledge. He states that beliefs underlie knowledge and that beliefs can also become attitudes and values, the three of which make up an individual's belief system (Ibid., p. 314). This complexity is also shown by Kalaja (1995) where she proposes that beliefs should be seen as social constructions since they are created through social interaction, are closely connected to each other and to the context, and they have a changing character. Benson & Lor (1999) suggested that the best way to understand learners' beliefs is by considering three different levels of analysis: *conceptions* which are a higher level, more abstract thinking category "...concerned with what the learner thinks the objects and processes of learning are" (p. 464); *beliefs* consisting of what learners consider to be true about the objects and processes of learning; and *approach*, which is the level at which conceptions and beliefs are shown. Despite clearly identifying three sets of beliefs (work, method, and motivation) when conducting their study, they noticed overlapping between the different categories, which adds up to the complexity of this variable. In his three-year longitudinal case study, Mercer (2011) also shows that beliefs form a multilayered network where some are expressed in a more general form and are less situational while others are more specific and context-related. She also adds that "these different layers of beliefs may appear to be contradictory and...the potential relationship between them can be mediated by various affective and self-related processes." (p. 343).

It is precisely the close intertwining with the *affective component* of learning which constitutes another strong feature of beliefs. Simply put, a learner who holds negative beliefs about their linguistic abilities will most likely lose motivation, feel frustrated and put less effort into their learning, which may lead, for instance, into a lower level of interaction or a wrong choice of strategies to complete tasks. McIntyre (1995) contended that the affective variables or *affect* are part of the learners' individual differences, that they go beyond an aptitude for the language, and that when they are negative, they affect the cognitive system. In the words of Arnold (1999, 2009) "affect refers essentially to the area of emotions, feelings, beliefs, moods and attitudes, which greatly influences our behavior" (1999, p. 145). It is, along with cognition, part and parcel of the development of a person, and it is paramount in the language classroom as in this environment the learner's image is more vulnerable due to the incapacity to express ideas accurately in the FL (Ibid.). Within the classroom context, affect is closely linked to the volition of learners to communicate in the foreign language.

According to Corno (1993), *volition* is understood as "...an ability to buckle down to tasks that goes beyond goal directedness or persistence in the face of difficulty" (p. 14). Unlike motivation, which helps the learner to set goals and the corresponding strategies, volition protects against abandoning the task or goal, that is, it makes the learner persevere towards goal attainment. Students who are able to self-regulate their learning usually use, among others, volitional strategies (Ibid., 2001; Bartels et al., 2009). These strategies have been found to play an important part as regards self-image and strategy awareness, as shown by Lee & Oxford (2008) in their study of Korean students.

In SLA processes, volition has been intricately linked to the concept of *Willingness to Communicate* (WTC). Pinning its origins on the pioneering work of McCroskey & Baer (1985), WTC has been defined as "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person to person, using a L2" (Macintyre et al., 1998, p. 547). The latter authors proposed a

WTC model in the form of a pyramid (Ibid.) which includes twelve variables within the linguistic, communicative, and psychological categories. WTC is considered a pre-requisite for effective oral interaction in the L2, it requires the learner to be psychologically prepared to take advantage of any opportunity to communicate in the L2, “and anything that increases...anxiety will reduce one's self-confidence and, therefore, one's WTC” (Macintyre et al., 1998, p. 549). The affective components of anxiety and self-perceived competence have been found to affect WTC in different studies (Horwitz et al., 1986; Moody, 1988; Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Lahuerta, 2013). In her work about learning strategies, Oxford (2011) describes different tactics that can be used within the affective strategy category to enhance motivation, volition and WTC.

Within the study of affect in language learning, the most studied emotion has been *anxiety*, a concept that is further expanded in this report under the category of Learning Aptitude. According to MacIntyre (2002), “anxiety can play a causal role in creating individual differences in language achievement.” (p. 65) and he has signaled its negative effects in the academic area, where it has been negatively correlated to course grades, in the cognitive area, where it causes disruption in thinking and reasoning, in the social area, where it can cause reluctance to communicate, and in the personal area, where it causes learners to underestimate their level of proficiency and degrade their self-concept (Ibid, pp. 66-67). When probing into the link between the students’ beliefs and choice of learning strategies, Yang (1999) found a high percentage of students who felt timid when speaking English and this feeling correlated negatively with all the functional practical strategies of the learners in her study. The construct of affect has also been approached as the concept of *emotional intelligence* (Gardner, 1987) in different projects in Southern Spain where a variety of pedagogical alternatives have been offered to improve the affective factors involved in the learning process (Fonseca, 2002). Aragão (2011) used narrative documents and visual representations from his EFL students to explore the link between their beliefs and emotions. The participants reported speaking as the most difficult skill, they perceived their level of proficiency lower than it was and felt embarrassed and inhibited in class by what they believed their classmates and the teacher thought about their level of English.

In her review of different studies about the connection of anxiety and second language learning, Horwitz (2001) presents different aspects that relate to learners’ anxiety. For example, the cultural background of the learners, and some classroom elements such as the relationship of the learners with their classmates, their teachers, as well as the type and the focus of instruction. This negative effect of the social and learning environment is further referred to in this chapter under the topic of *demotivation*. As regards the role of teachers to reduce language learning anxiety in the classroom, Burns (1992) suggested that it is essential that the teacher helps the learners to build confidence and feel at ease to become better involved in learning and to interact effectively with others. In this regard, Arnold (2009) warns that for teachers to improve affect, it is not enough to be reassuring and to help students confront their negative beliefs about learning. It also important to help them visualize their progress, achievements and capabilities clearly during the learning process so that they can build up self-esteem.

Not only are beliefs correlated with affective factors, but also with the constructs of *motivation* and *identity*., Gardner & Lambert (1972) claimed that motivation is made up of three main elements: effort, desire and affect. This can be of two types, *integrative*, which includes the learners’ positive attitude towards the target language community and their desire to integrate within this group, and the *instrumental* type, where the learner adopts a more functional use of the language as a means to attain social or economic gains or objectives. In their study about motivation in SLA, Carrió-Pastor & Mestre (2014) showed how the students

with an integrative motivation put more effort on practicing the language and chose different learning strategies, whereas those with an instrumental motivation gave priority to using the target language for communication rather than learning about it. For their part, Rivero-Menéndez et al. (2018) compared the level of motivation of two groups of students enrolled in accounting studies with English and Spanish as languages of instruction. They found that the EMI group displayed a higher level of motivation as evidenced by their choice of learning strategies, their level of self-confidence and the time they spent studying. A more detailed account of the construct of learners and teachers' motivation is included in the next section under the belief category of *Motivations* and *Expectations*.

There are also many studies which prove the connection of beliefs to the construct of *identity*, which has been defined as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 1997, p. 410). From a sociocultural perspective, identity is related to “a desire for recognition, affiliation, security, and safety which are all dependent on how material resources are distributed in society” (Kalaja et al., 2015a, p. 18).

Initially focused on the study of aspects such as gender, age, L1 and ethnic origin, the study of learners' identity has lately shifted towards elements based on the social character of learning. So, learners' identity is constructed on the basis of the relationship they establish with the L2 and the social world. This relationship has been coined as *investment* (Norton, 1995, p. 17) and it depends on the meaning, purpose or use subjects give to the target language. Thus, “an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space.” (p. 18).

According to Kalaja et al. (2015a), learners' and teachers' identities are believed to be dynamic, multilayered systems shaped by the contextual conditions of their realities, and they are “closely related to many other important aspects of L2 learning and teaching, such as beliefs, agency and emotions” (Ibid., p. 22). Different studies have shown how beliefs and motivation shape up the identity of the learner. Based on a complex system theory, Menezes De Oliveira (2011) studied a group of Japanese and Brazilian EFL learners and her results showed that the different dimensions of the learners' identity (fractals) had an impact on each other, on the process of FL learning and were, in turn, influenced by the learning context. As regards the identity of teachers, Wenger (2007) states it comprises not only the way teachers see themselves and how they are seen by others but also their accumulated life experience, so their identity is personal and social at the same time. According to Tsui (2011, p. 33), research on *teachers' identity* has started to gain ground only recently and it has grown on three main directions: its multidimensional character, its personal and social dimensions, and the relationship between agency and structure in identity formation. In their study of portfolio autobiographies of two pre-service teachers, Antonek et al. (1997) illustrated the singular and complex character of the formation of teachers' professional identities which comprised different aspects, such as affect, subject matter, human relations and instruction (p. 24). Similarly, through a narrative of her own experience during her doctoral studies in Canada, He (2002) shows the impact of the professional, the socio-cultural and the political contexts on the formation of teachers' identity.

The analysis of this construct of identity has lately been expanded beyond the immediate learning and social environment of the learner. Norton & Pavlenko (2019), for example, analyzed identity in language learning drawing on the concept of *imagined (political) communities* (Anderson, 1983, 1991, 2006) and other concepts. In Anderson's view, nation states were created by languages of power which emerged along with social development. These nations are imagined (in language) because their members hold an image of communion or “horizontal comradeship” (p. 7) with their fellow-members despite not knowing them or even

having heard of them. Then, Norton & Pavlenko (2019) discuss the learner's membership in imagined communities based on five strongly interconnected identity clusters relevant to English as an international language: "(1) postcolonial, (2) global, (3) ethnic, (4) multilingual, and (5) gendered identities" (p. 4). Of these, the second, fourth and fifth clusters are relevant to the present investigation. The second identity cluster is based on the positioning and actions taken by countries in non-postcolonial contexts to align with Western powers and enter the global market through foreign language education, mainly in English. The fourth identity category includes the limitations of imagining communities and identities imposed on and for English learners by discourses that include labels such as non-natives (NNS), English as a Second Language (ESL) users, interlanguage speakers, etc. especially within native speaking environments. And the fifth cluster deals with the possibility a language, English specifically, offers for the learners to imagine different gendered identities for themselves. These authors also signal the need for teachers to consider the variety of identity clusters present in the classroom and take advantage of the wide range of possibilities it offers to the learner (Ibid., p. 13).

As regards identity and imagined communities, the above-mentioned study by Doiz & Lasagabaster (2018) illustrates the global identity cluster as it was situated within the context of English Mediated Instruction (EMI); its results show that students' and teachers' international identities are fostered in this learning environment. They also found out that this learning context contributes to the subjects' formation of a multilingual identity. So, learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning are intricately linked to their level of investment and identity. Although the connections between these constructs are far from being unidirectional, by way of a simplified example, a learner in an EFL context who believes that knowing English will guarantee better job opportunities, could decide to invest in learning this language which could result in the development of different clusters of imagined identities, e.g., being a global, multilingual, professional.

Another recently emerged construct in SLA that has been found to relate closely to beliefs is *agency*, which in Bandura's words "refers to acts done intentionally..." i.e. its key feature is "the power to originate actions for given purposes..." (Ibid., 1997, p. 3). According to Kalaja et al. (2015a), this term has its origins in the studies conducted in the 1970s that followed an individualistic approach and that referred to autonomy, initiative and intrinsic motivation. More recently, with the use of the sociocultural theory, agency encompasses the idea of the individual as part of their environment, therefore it has been defined as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001, p. 112) and its essence can be expressed in the idea of "what the learner does in order to learn..." (Aro, 2015, p. 48). Although the boundaries across the definitions of learner autonomy and agency are rather blurry, they are "socially mediated and constrained," and "are both fundamentally concerned with the role of individuality in social life..." (Benson, 2011, p. 49). In one of her studies, Vitanova (2010) presents the different agentic acts of the subjects in her study who were immigrants into the United States, to show how their agency was enacted through creative and responsible acts and in relation to others. According to Mercer (2012),

[a]gency is...not only concerned with what is observable but it also involves non-visible behaviours, beliefs, thoughts and feelings; all of which must be understood in relation to the various contexts and affordances from which they cannot be abstracted. (p. 42)

This author identified in her case study four sets of beliefs that were intertwined with the complex construct of agency of the learner: self-beliefs, mindsets, beliefs about language learning, and beliefs about contexts. In addition, Aro (2015) conducted a longitudinal study over a 14 year period to monitor the development of agency. Her results showed that at a younger age the subjects' agency was more markedly influenced by the (mis)correspondence between the learning and teaching methods, whereas as young adults they relied more on the acceptance and use of their own strengths as learners.

Jointly intertwined with the agentic actions that a learner may carry out to learn a language is the construct of *learning autonomy*, defined by Holec (1981, p. 3) as “the ability to take charge of one's own learning”. This author differentiates between *autonomy* understood as a feature of the learner and *self-direction*, understood as a feature of the processes of learning and explains that the former does not necessarily imply a strong presence of the latter since the self-direction of an autonomous learner depends on how much they decide to invest their autonomous abilities to organize and conduct goal-oriented action towards learning. As demonstrated by research, the level of autonomy of a learner or a teacher can have a reflection on their agency, which may also affect the formation of their own identity (Lamb & Reinders, 2008b; Oxford, 2017; Teng, 2018; Raya & Vieira, 2021).

Another belief system that is central to the construct of agency is *self-efficacy*. As previously presented in this report under the section that introduces the definitions of beliefs (p.12), Bandura (1977) refers to it as people's beliefs about their personal ability to complete a task successfully in order to attain a goal. This author states that,

perceived self-efficacy is concerned not with the number of skills you have, but with what you believe you can do with what you have under a variety of circumstances...it is an important contributor to performance accomplishments, whatever the underlying skills might be. (p. 37)

Self-efficacy is a multidimensional belief system which varies depending on the type and demands of the task, the activity domain, and the contextual circumstances (Ibid., p. 42). Various pieces of research have shown the connection of self-efficacy beliefs to various aspects of language learning. For instance, in their study of perceived self-efficacy involving 102 students in social studies, Zimmerman et al. (1992) concluded that “perceived efficacy to achieve motivates academic attainment both directly and indirectly by influencing personal goal setting. Self-efficacy and goals in combination contribute to subsequent academic attainment” (Ibid, p. 674). Pajares (1996) studied the role of self-efficacy beliefs of middle school gifted vs. regular-education students in mathematical problem-solving. The former group showed higher math self-efficacy, better self-efficacy for regulated learning as well as a lower level of anxiety. Based on these findings, this author stated that:

researchers and school practitioners should be looking to students' beliefs about their academic capabilities as important predictors of other affective variables and of academic performances and that efforts should be made to identify these beliefs, for they are important components of motivation and behavior. (p. 341)

In their study of Japanese students during a study-abroad period, Ellis & Tanaka (2003) also found significant changes in the learners' beliefs about self-efficacy or their level of confidence. Self-efficacy could also be influenced by instruction or the methodology used in class as demonstrated by Graham & Macaro (2008) in their study of 68 learners of French whose self-efficacy and listening proficiency were boosted by a tailored strategy instruction



program. Other studies have also linked self-efficacy to affect, as is the case of Zhang & Ardasheva (2019), who studied self-efficacy in English public speaking skills within a group of 263 Chinese EFL learners. They found that different learners responded differently to their instructor methodologies and suggested that affect can have a negative impact on self-efficacy.

Thus far, the theoretical constructs and studies related to beliefs presented in this section illustrate the complexity of the construct of beliefs and their centrality to the process of language learning. They are the main foundation underlying the analysis of the pattern of beliefs of the USC students and teachers about EFL learning in this project. In addition, this study took as a theoretical support different factors and/or variables about the process of language learning which are captured in the five categories or system of beliefs explored. Despite their importance and the attention that these SLA factors deserve, the comprehensive body of existing literature about them is too large to include in this report, so a succinct section on each of them focusing on their main connection to beliefs is presented next.

## **2.1.4 Different SLA constructs underlying the belief categories explored in this study**

### **2.1.4.1 The difficulty of language learning**

The first set of beliefs included in the present project probes into the level of difficulty of EFL. Learners usually hold beliefs about which languages are more difficult to learn than others. When explaining this level of difficulty, one concept that is commonly used as an argument is *language distance*, which basically refers to the level of difference between two languages, and whose accurate measurement has long posed a challenge to researchers. In tracing the origins and evolution of languages, historical linguists designed linguistic family trees, a useful visual representation of general language development. However, this graphical description does not allow for accurate measures of language distance and some other disadvantages have also been pointed out, e.g. this perspective omits linguistic overlaps as it shows clear-cut boundaries across languages and it initially made the representation of language subgroups difficult (Hoenigswald, 1990). Despite the challenge of measuring language distance accurately, a speech community usually holds notions or beliefs about the degree of difficulty of learning specific second and foreign languages as compared to their mother tongue, as stated by Corder (1981) who explains that

learners may have quite clear (but, of course, sometimes mistaken) beliefs about what is similar in their mother tongue and the target language, and therefore 'borrowable'. In the earlier stages they seem to err in regarding the mother tongue as more unique than it is in fact. As he progresses...the more realistic his assessment of language distance becomes..., this largely corresponds to the formal linguistic relatedness of the languages in question to the mother tongue. (p. 96)

According to Ellis (1994, p. 327), the distance between two languages can limit language transfer, one of the internal factors of the language learning process. This has been one of the main reasons why linguists, statisticians, and other specialists have approached the measurement of the distance between languages using different methods. One of these is to determine the degree of mutual intelligibility, i.e. the degree to which the users of two languages can understand each other without previous linguistic familiarity or with little effort. So, languages with a high level of mutual intelligibility are closer to each other. Gooskens & Swarte (2017) explain that this level of congruency can be analyzed based on the identification of



linguistic predictors such as lexicon, phonology, orthography, morphology and syntax, and non-linguistic predictors such as previous exposure to the language or language learning experience and attitudes. It can also be classified as *asymmetrical*, when one of the users understands the other better, or *symmetrical*, when both can understand each other at a similar level. In their project about European language families including Germanic, Romance and Slavic, Van Heuven et al., (2015) explain that mutual intelligibility between two languages will be lower, the greater the geographical distance and the earlier the individual historical changes each of the languages has gone through. They concluded that mutual intelligibility for European languages is in general poor — i.e. language distance is large — and that a great part of the existing intelligibility level is caused by non-linguistic factors, mainly prior exposure to the related languages. They also found out that while for Germanic and Slavic languages the lexicon is a strong linguistic predictor of language distance, in the case of Romance languages the phonic element is the most relevant factor.

Other studies have also explored the concept of language distance from different perspectives to the previous one. Based on the difficulty that Americans have at learning other languages, Chiswick & Miller (2004) used regression analysis to offer a numerical measure of the language distance and its effect on language proficiency for immigrants into the United States and Canada. Beenstock & Repetto (2007) studied the effect of language distance (language of origin vs. language of destination) for immigrants into Israel, and the socio-economic and political effects on the Hebrew language. And more recently, in their experiment to compare 44 European languages synchronically, Gamallo et al. (2017) used perplexity of *N*-gram models extracted from text corpora they collected as a measure of language distance to plot the numeric results on a map (Ibid., p. 19). They justified the relative position of English at the core of the map based on its high number of borrowings from Romance languages, chiefly Latin and French, plus its many interactions with other language families (Ibid., p. 17). This research project from the ProLNat group (Gamallo, Alegria, et al., 2017) offers free access online to a distance finder, where you can retrieve the distance between two languages. According to this resource, while the language distance between Spanish and Galician is 6, that between Spanish and English is 22 and that between Galician and English is 31. So, based on Corder's idea, even without knowledge about the exact values of language distance, learners and teachers usually hold notions about the level of intelligibility between their mother tongue/s and the target language, and their level of exposure to the latter seems to correlate positively to the level of certainty of their beliefs.

#### 2.1.4.2 Language aptitude

Different linguistic constructs underlie the second set of beliefs included in this study which refer to language aptitude, a strong predictor of academic success as stated by Dörnyei (2005, p. 31). As with most linguistic studies, research on language aptitude is enrooted in the psychological field where J.B. Carroll produced two core foundational tools that have been used in research up to the present day. He and his colleague Stanley Sapon produced the Modern Language Aptitude Test or MLAT (Carroll & Sapon, 1959/2002), and a conceptual framework that comprised four main components of aptitude,

The factors are phonemic coding ability (the capacity to retain, through appropriate coding, unfamiliar auditory material); inductive language learning ability (a talent to find generalizations based on language input, and then be able to extrapolate and produce language based on such generalizations); grammatical sensitivity (the ability to identify the functions of words in

sentences); and associative learning (the capacity to make links between verbal elements such as first language (L1) and second language (L2) words. (Skehan, 2014, p. 381)

In his review of Carroll's work, R. Ellis (1994, pp. 494-499) summarizes the main views of this author regarding the construct of aptitude. Carroll characterized aptitude as different from achievement, as separated from motivation, a stable factor, and different from general intelligence. His ideas caused much controversy in the field and different studies have shown opposite results and views. For example, Gardner (1980) showed a correlation of aptitude and motivation using the MLAT and the Attitude Motivation Index (AMI) tests, and in her study of French students in the USA, Horwitz (1987) showed correlations of aptitude to both linguistic and communicative competences. In addition, some connections were proven between the rate of first language development, and specifically the ability to deal with decontextualized language and aptitude in the studies conducted by Skehan (1991, p. 278). He also accounted for a disparity in all components of aptitude in the case of strong language learners. In the same vein, Cummins proposed a continuum as a framework to fit his Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) model to illustrate the dynamic connections between academic performance and language proficiency, which, according to Ellis (1994, p. 498), correspond to aptitude and intelligence. The Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery [PLAB] (Pimsleur, 1966) has also been used as a measure of aptitude.

Based on all these previous studies, the construct of aptitude has more recently been reconceptualized as “a conglomerate of individual characteristics that interact dynamically with the situation in which learning takes place” (Kormos, 2013, p. 132) or “an umbrella term consisting of a set of COGNITIVE abilities” (Biedroń et al., 2017, p. 2). Dörnyei (2005) refers to it as a hybrid term comprising different cognitive factors that make up for “the capacity to master a foreign language” (Ibid., p. 33) and recognizes it as a synonym of learning ability. He also explains that although intelligence is another synonym for ability, it is a more general term applicable not only to learning but to different areas of human performance, and that in language learning it is often referred to as language aptitude, propensity, talent, or flair for languages (Ibid., pp. 32-33). Research conducted by Robinson (2002, 2005) has proven the complex character of aptitude as he could identify specific sets of cognitive abilities associated to task demands, and suggest the design of aptitude tests adapted to the complexity of the construct. Kormos (2013) examined the connections of language aptitude with the concepts of working memory and phonological short-term memory, and she also stated that the affective and conative aspects of learners might have a stronger impact on learning than the cognitive components. In his overview of research which links aptitude to grammar, Skehan (2015, pp. 3-4) makes reference to different aptitude tests which have been designed as part of more contemporary research on cognitive psychology. Some examples of this are the LLAMA battery (Meara, 2005), which follows Carroll's conceptual framework, and other tests which do not, such as the CANAL-F test (Grigorenko et al., 2002) and the HiLab battery (Linck et al., 2013). Another study showing the intricate connections of aptitude components was that of Zólyomi (2021), who in studying Hungarian adults found variations of aptitude related to the age and gender of the participants as well as their learning strategies and motivation.

However, apart from the pioneering BALLI and subsequent studies based on it (Horwitz, 1985, 1987, 1988; Yang, 1992; Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Cotteral, 1995; Chawhan & Oliver, 2000), research specifically addressing the beliefs of the students about aptitude and their effect on SLA remains a niche for further investigation, as stated by Burns & García (2017). These scholars used the fixed/incremental framework (Dweck, 2000) to conduct a comparative study

about the beliefs of Spanish Extremaduran students regarding language learning. The subjects self-assessed their aptitude in English and in Portuguese, and the results showed that they believed aptitude in English to be more fixed than in Portuguese. Dweck's framework explains the different ways in which people understand intelligence: the *fixed intelligence theory* and the *malleable intelligence theory*. Students who view intelligence as fixed usually worry about how much of it they have and how to show it in front of others, therefore challenges usually represent a threat to them. In contrast, learners who view intelligence as malleable see its potential for growth through learning and effort, so "they focus on the idea that everyone, with effort and guidance, can increase their intellectual abilities." This belief fosters a wish to learn and to welcome challenges (Ibid., pp. 2-3). Interestingly, within this framework, effort is seen as negative by fixed-intelligent learners because they relate it to their deficiencies, whereas malleable-intelligent learners see it as a positive way to develop one's abilities and full potential (Ibid., pp. 39-41). So, drawing from the psychological and linguistic concepts, it could be theorized that if learners identify aptitude with having the intelligence, talent, or flair for languages as stated by Dörnyei, their beliefs or self-theories about their aptitude (fixed or malleable) could have a strong impact on their perceived self-efficacy, which consequently could affect their motivation, effort and agentic actions in learning.

Language learners also hold beliefs about the effect of *age* and *gender* on their learning ability or aptitude, two other variables that account for Individual Learning Differences (IDs) and that have also been the focus of much research in SLA. Regarding age, a foundational theory constructed by Penfield & Roberts (1959) was the Critical Period Hypothesis or CPH, which was later popularized by Lenneberg (1967). Simply put this theory states that the ability for language learners to develop normal, native-like competence is limited to a critical period or age range when the plasticity of the brain is higher. This theory has helped to sustain the belief that the younger a learner enters the process of SLA, the greater linguistic proficiency s(he) will attain, i.e. younger children learn an L2 faster and more effortlessly than older children and adults (R. Ellis, 2008; Larsen–Freeman, 2008). In his analysis of this variable of age and related studies, Ellis (1994) concluded that in terms of rate of learning, particularly grammar, adults have an advantage over children, whereas the latter are the ones who can acquire native accent effortlessly provided they have enough exposure to the L2. While children are more likely to develop native grammatical competence, some adults can do so both in speaking and writing; yet the former are more likely to attain accurate pronunciation and grammar than adults. Finally, he adds, age does not seem to have an impact on grammar acquisition, but it does on pronunciation (Ibid., pp. 491-2).

Much controversy, however, has been generated about the year boundaries of the critical period, the increase and decrease of proficiency out of this critical period and the general effect of age on SLA (See Bista, 2008 for a summary of studies). Moreover, the dichotomy of the naturalistic environment versus the instructional environment added to the debate as the former offers a higher level of exposure which reduces the time to develop linguistic competence as opposed to the latter (D. M. Singleton & Lengyel, 1995). These authors also warned that the CPH should be interpreted "as a general tendency and not as an absolute, immutable law" (Ibid., p. 4). In this regard different studies have focused on the effects of age on the development of phonetic proficiency. Martohardjono & Flynn (1995), for example, contended that general phonological abilities are maintained throughout all age stages up to adulthood. Also, Bongaerts (1999) reports results where adults developed native-like pronunciation and hypothesizes that the type of learner (e.g., highly motivated about native-like accent) and contextual factors such as a large amount of input in the L2 contributed to their success, albeit he calls these cases 'exceptional' (Ibid., 1999, p. 154). Later, this scholar (2005, p. 109) declared the CPH as

unsustainable based on the review and analysis of several key studies on this issue. The exceptionality mentioned by Bongaerts (1999) was also addressed by Moyer (2014) with regard to commonalities across different case studies of adult learners who developed a native-like accent. He stated that “[e]xceptional learning is by no means a one-dimensional phenomenon...it is the manifestation of a constellation of factors – cognitive, psychological, social and experiential.” This means that adult learners who have greater cognitive flexibility, a flexible, conscious selective approach to specific strategies, a meta-analytic orientation, a high level of motivation, access to authentic input and interaction, and a type of personality oriented towards social interaction and meta-cognition can develop native-like proficiency effectively (Ibid, p. 18). This author contended that in phonology, exceptional learners have no particular talents,

[i]nstead they respond with flexibility and a great measure of self-reflection, continuing to direct their efforts toward accent even after achieving solid fluency overall. Some even initiate painful trade-offs, such as avoiding contact with other speakers of their mother tongue to prioritize immersion in the new language. Few among us are willing to go to such extremes, leaving our linguistic (and emotional) comfort zone for the sake of fully adopting the sounds of a different culture. (Moyer, 2013, p. 178)

In the same vein, research about the effect of age on language acquisition has also been conducted within the Spanish context. A representative example is the Barcelona Age Factor (BAF) Project, which started in 1995 in the Spanish community of Catalonia during the introduction of foreign languages in the primary stages of the public educational system. Muñoz (2006) conducted a study on learners who were part of this project to explore a possible correlation between age and the use of certain grammatical morphemes or functors. Her results showed no difference across age groups in the way they learned these functors and a higher rate of learning of these morphological units in the case of older learners. In addition, she reported that after a certain amount of exposure to the language and upon moving beyond the initial language levels, learners started to reach accuracy in the order of these morphological features, an order that was more strongly influenced by the level of proficiency than by the learning context (p. 123). In their study, Marinova-Todd et al. (2000) tackled three different misconceptions about the CPH and the beliefs people hold about it in SLA. They contended that arguments in favor of this theory are inconsistent on account of misinterpretation, misattribution or misemphasis. The first refers to the taken-for-granted idea that children are faster learners, the second refers to the erroneous attribution of proficiency levels to the brain organization of the learners, and the third refers to the overgeneralization of research results which report on some types of adult learners and excludes others (Ibid., p. 11). At present the impact of age on SLA remains a contentious area, and the general popular belief that the younger you learn a language, the better your native-like proficiency, is still latent and widespread.

The dichotomy male-female learners applied to successful language learning has been under researched when compared to other language learning constructs. Traditionally referred to as the variable of *sex*, it has later shifted to the term *gender* to emphasize its socially constructed character (R. Ellis, 1994). However, the two terms are often used interchangeably, as in the case of the present project. Sunderland (2010) identifies three areas in the field of gender and foreign language education: the first one is the *subject matter*, i.e., the language as such with aspects like the gender of nouns, gender-related social questions, vocabulary, and gendered discourse closely related with gendered styles and the context of a Community of

Practice (CofP). She draws on the definition of CofP given by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992),

an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavor. A community of practice is . . . defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages. (p. 95)

Sunderland identifies the language classroom with a CofP, where if gender is relevant, it will be a topic of discussion. The second area she describes is language learning *processes* including teaching and learning, and the links to motivation and attitude, learners' beliefs, expectations, and models of language learning, all of which can be gendered (Ibid., p. 3). The question whether males or females are better or faster learners falls within this dimension, as do teachers' beliefs and their derived practice about the effect of gender on the learning process of their students. According to this author, when teachers' pedagogical practice tends to create or reinforce learners' gender patterns, we are in the presence of the notion of *gendering*. The third area described is *classroom materials*, which includes all materials whether commercially or individually created by the teacher and/or the institution and whose content can be gendered. So, within the second area of *processes*, despite the fact that the effect of gender on the language learning proficiency of learners remains unclear, according to Sunderland, the superiority of girls over boys as to the L2 rate of acquisition is a popular belief among teachers (Ibid, pp. 3-4). This belief is justified by the results of different studies such as the ones described by Ellis (1994, pp. 202-204) where it was reported that girls were higher achievers of the L2 especially as regards vocabulary and verbal skills, and that they had more positive attitudes towards learning. In contrast, other findings reported no differences between the gender groups and/or specific motivations and learning strategies for each of them. Based on these contradictory results, Ellis concluded that although in general, females outperform males, this is not always the case in as much as there are other variables at play together with gender which determine the learners' level of L2 proficiency (Ibid.).

In the same vein, in a project about the connections between gender and the use of different learning strategies, Oxford et al. (1988) described four studies whose results showed that girls used a wider and more varied number of learning strategies than boys. They argued that these differences could be caused by the fact that girls show a higher social orientation, which is evident in their web-organized type of social interaction as opposed to a hierarchical type of interaction for boys. This social orientation of females might explain their choice of socially-oriented language practice, general study habits that avoid rote memorization and that show a desire for more social approval, and a more frequent use of conversational strategies. Other variables apart from gender were also found to be at play in these studies, such as the type of task, the kind and amount of instruction, the context, and testing methods.

In addition, in their study of the beliefs of EFL learners and teachers in Hong Kong, Peacock (1999) also reported females being more skillful at assessing their self-efficacy and their ability in listening and reading. Likewise, more recent studies have proved that the effect of gender on language learning is still unclear. For example, Fernández Fontecha summarizes gender differences found in more current research. These include boys doing better in mathematics and visual-spatial tasks while girls having stronger verbal skills, better word memorization, faster rate of word production and better reading skills (2010., p. 93). This author also argues that although females outperform males regarding specific areas of FL vocabulary



learning, no significant gender-based differences have been found in learning other vocabulary sections (Ibid., p. 94). So, despite the results reported in all these studies, up to the present no definite theory about the effect of gender on proficiency in SLA has been formulated. The study of this variable has also taken place in other linguistic areas where different hypotheses such as the Difference Framework and the CofP previously referred to by Sunderland (2010) have been developed.<sup>3</sup> With the global surge of gender equality and the prolific research in the area of gender studies, it is a plausible consideration that the beliefs about the importance of gender for language learning, such as the superiority of female learners over male learners, is now seen through a different lens, especially by the younger generations of learners and educators, an idea that would need more validation through research.

The beliefs of the students about their aptitude for language learning are also influenced by their *individual learning experience*. In fact, although beliefs are said to be “rooted in social and cultural interactions...each individual has a unique life history. No two individuals can share the exact same experiences, even if they share a culture and a social community.” (Aro, 2015a, p.28). Different studies have addressed the impact of previous learning experience on students’ and teachers’ beliefs (Horwitz, 1988; Cumming, 1989; Elbaum et al., 1993; Banya & Chen, 1997; E. M. Ellis, 2006; Busch, 2010; Navarro & Thornton, 2011; Waniek-Klimczak, 2011; Marqués-Pascual, 2011; Moodie, 2016; Leonard & Shea, 2017; Lai et al., 2018) based on variables such as learning strategies, affective factors, instruction and language immersion. In referring to the factors that affect the choice of learning strategies used by learners, Ellis (1994, p. 543) considers the learner’s personal background as an important factor in as much as the accumulation of linguistic experience caters for a more effective and varied choice and use of strategies. He shows through different studies that those students with more years of instruction, those in higher educational levels and those with previous studies of other foreign languages used a wider range of effective learning strategies. One example of this effect of experience was the longitudinal socio-cultural case study of a Chinese student in Hong Kong conducted by Andy Gao (2007) where he showed how the learner’s personal experience about the language learning process guided the choice of learning strategies she used. So, students with a richer and more positive previous language learning experience can be more effective learners. Likewise, in a study about conversational strategies in Australia involving EFL students from five Asian countries, Sawir (2005) shows how the learning difficulties of the subjects stemmed from the previous learning experience which was focused on traditional teaching methods and its resulting belief formation.

As has been stated in the previous section in this chapter, beliefs have also a strong connection to affective variables such as *emotion* and *anxiety*. These parameters are also an important part of previous language experience in shaping up beliefs about aptitude for language learning. According to MacIntyre (2002), although not explored as much as anxiety, emotion is pervasive, a behavior energizer, changeable over time and it is said to be closely connected to motivation since behavior is governed by motivated actions. In his view,

emotions often carry with them impulses to act in a particular way appropriate to the emotion. ...these impulses to act might be highly appropriate or inappropriate for smooth social functioning, including L2 interaction. For example, feeling embarrassed usually produces the urge to withdraw and hide oneself, regardless of the source of the embarrassment. It is virtually impossible to imagine a L2 learner who does not embarrass himself or herself from time to time. How an individual reacts will be governed in large measure by the



intensity of the emotional reaction. It might be in the learner's best academic, financial, cultural, and social interest to keep talking, but if the emotion is too strong, the person will try to withdraw. It stands to reason that L2 students should talk in order to learn, but reason and emotion are separate issues. (p. 62)

Yet, in their review of research on emotion, Dewaele & Li (2020) show how as from 2010 onwards more studies have taken as a foundation the new trend of Positive Psychology, which is about "...the study of what goes right or the good things in life..." (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 5). These studies have explored both positive (joy, gratitude, enjoyment, pride, etc.) and negative emotions (shame, guilt, embarrassment, fear, etc.) in second language learning and teaching and have also shown the strong interconnections of emotions with other constructs, such as attitude and motivation. For instance, in a study conducted by Aragão (2011), the main focus was students' beliefs about their self-concept and its link with embarrassment and self-esteem. His results proved the tight links between beliefs and emotions. For her part, King (2018) offered a framework to study teachers' emotions taking as a starting-point the research-validated idea that teachers' emotions are closely related to their perceived level of fulfillment of their goals (p. 143). This scholar also included three core recommendations for teachers to control negative emotions in class: modifying situations or tasks to prevent students' behavior from triggering negative emotions, deploying attention which refers to focusing on students' positive behavior and rather ignoring the negative petty behavior displays, and cognitive change referred to reappraising a situation through self-talk (Ibid., p. 154). Hence, in coping with the learning-teaching process, students' and teachers' positive and negative emotions may trigger actions or behavior based on the beliefs they hold, which consequently influence each other's belief systems.

As regards *anxiety*, it has been defined as "a distinct set of beliefs, perceptions, and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom..." (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 130). In this study the authors used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to study the level of anxiety of students. They found out that although the level of foreign language anxiety varies within a class group, at the university level anxious students are common in foreign language classrooms, especially if they are beginners, as they feel unable to cope with the task of learning a foreign language. In explaining the cyclical relationship between anxiety, cognition and behavior, MacIntyre (1995, p. 93) distinguishes between state anxiety and trait anxiety, the former being a temporary anxious reaction to a specific experience or event while the latter is a more long-lasting predisposition to react anxiously to language learning in general. In other words, the accumulation of learning experiences that constantly trigger negative emotions and generate state anxiety can lead to the development of trait anxiety, which in turn may foster learners' beliefs of reduced self-efficacy and limited agency during the process of language learning. In Horwitz' s study (1986) they also suggest that one way of reducing learners' anxiety is through teachers' actions to change the learning contexts, and these environments are strongly connected to the third belief category explored in the present study about the nature of language learning.

#### 2.1.4.3 The nature of language learning

Learners and teachers may have different preconceptions about the essence or nature of the language learning process. Dörnyei (2005, p. 93) contends that learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects since it is not exclusively about learning a communication code, but it is also part of the learner's 'core' related to mental processes and identity. In this regard, individuals tend to have preconceptions about key

strategies or processes that enable effective language learning. For instance “[m]any people believe that learning another language is merely a matter of translating from English or learning grammar rules or vocabulary words” (Horwitz, 1985, p. 337). These beliefs generally respond to previous experiences of the individual when coping with foreign language input. In SLA, this experience is commonly constructed within different learning contexts. Two of these most studied environments are Formal Instruction [FI] and Stay Abroad [SA] periods. Despite of the fact that these two contexts vary in terms of the type of input and interactions, and the level of language exposure the learner experiences, the positive effects of both learning environments in SLA have been demonstrated (Pérez Vidal et al., 2018, pp. 3-5). For instance, Ellis, (1994, p. 659) states that FI increases accuracy and stimulates progress through linguistic developmental sequences, and that these effects are long-term. For her part, Pérez Vidal (2014, pp. 23-24) explains that SA contexts allow for the engagement of different cognitive mechanisms and a high level of social and cultural interaction in the target language which in turn allow for the development of L2 fluency and socio-pragmatic competence, among other features.

#### *2.1.4.3.1 The Formal Instruction (FI) learning environment*

Within the FI context, two non-exclusive important factors underlying belief formation are instructional methods and instruction delivery. Regarding the former, many different instructional methods have been developed and used along the years. Some of these include the Grammar-Translation method with a focus on the detailed analysis of grammar rules the translation of sentences and texts, and the Direct Method, where lessons are delivered completely in the target language, grammar is taught inductively, and oral skills are progressively developed. Also, the Audiolingual Method based on the development of listening and speaking and then the written skills in that order, plus the Situational Method based on the oral introduction and situational practice of input and its subsequent written practice once sufficient lexis and grammar has been learnt. More recently, the Communicative Method introduced in the 80's and 90's comprised the functional use of all skills as a system for interaction and communication for a range of purposes and functions. This method gave way to others such as the Task-Based Method and the Content-Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Method. In the former, the four skills can be combined differently to complete a task whose main purpose is exchanging and understanding meanings in the target language. The latter emerged as a result of the European policy to promote plurilingualism and it is a kind of personalized learning where the student reconstructs the content and learns it through the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Also, as a result of the same policy and under similar instructional principles, the English Mediated Instruction (EMI) or Integrated Content Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) method emerged. This instructional method will be discussed in more detail in the second part of this chapter as part of the academic contextual elements that affect the beliefs of the USC students and teachers about EFL learning. However, geographical, and socio-economic factors interfere with the consistent implementation of state-of-the-art instructional methods. For instance, the Grammar-Translation Method, although rejected today by a great number of educational systems, continues to permeate instruction under the label of Traditional Approaches (TAs).



They [TAs] are often thought of as “grammar-translation”: a cluster of practices including explicit grammatical explanations, detailed examples illustrating grammatical rules, bilingual vocabulary lists and translation exercises, and perhaps a focus on reading literary texts...they have persisted for longer in most

developing parts of the world than in more economically developed ones, due to the slower development of educational systems and language teacher training, cultural perceptions and different ways of change, limited learning resources and finance. (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011, p. 558).

More specific reasons for the still current use of the Grammar-Translation Method are “(a) the limited command of spoken English of language teachers, (b) the fact that this was the method their teachers used, (c) it gives teachers a sense of control and authority in the classroom, and (d) it works well in large classes” (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 7). These authors also state that the textbooks used today at the tertiary educational level sometimes evidence the use of the grammar-translation approach (Ibid.). So, exposure to different types of methods may shape up and change the learner’s beliefs about the nature of language learning.

Furthermore, instruction delivery is a second factor that has a direct influence on the process of belief formation. The type and quality of the instruction received by the learner is strongly connected to the language experience and beliefs about the nature of language learning. From a cognitive perspective, Doughty (2003, p. 256) refers to the importance of L2 instruction for SLA, more specifically explicit instruction in the case of adults, and states that “...maturationally constrained changes in language processing result from and, in turn, subsequently influence the learner’s experience with language input” (Ibid.). The role of instruction on the learner’s development of language competence has been seen through the lens of different SLA theories. For example, under the Universal Grammar Theory (UG), instruction is believed to act as a bridge between the implicit knowledge of the students (L1 and principles of UG) and their explicit knowledge (L2) but when teaching focuses exclusively on the latter, it is not useful for learning, according to some SLA specialists. Under the Skills Theory, instruction helps to convert declarative knowledge (simple linguistic features explicitly taught) into procedural knowledge (more complex structures learnt and retrieved effortlessly). So, teaching focused exclusively on declarative knowledge or on inconsistent procedural knowledge is ineffective. Within the Input-Interaction-Output Theory (IIO), instruction should include the adjusting of the input to the level of development of the learner and its modification to make it more comprehensible, feedback should be given, and opportunities to produce output should be guaranteed. Finally, within the Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT), which conceives social interaction as part of cognition, instruction should include conceptual meanings rather than just rules, and it should transit from an initial awareness raising role to the teaching of control and internalization of those conceptual meanings followed by connections of grammar with social interaction (William, 2013, p. 5008). In Doughty’s view (2003, p. 256), although the effectiveness of L2 instruction remains a contentious issue today, its effectiveness is valid as long as it caters for the students’ learning needs (Ibid.). For his part, Ellis (1994, p. 611) states that, although up until the 1990s FI was identified with grammar teaching, it has acquired a broader role that includes cognitive goals such as language-centered instruction (e.g. teaching vocabulary grammar, phonology, etc.) and learner-centered instruction which focuses on the accommodation of teaching to the learners’ learning styles. Besides, it includes metacognitive goals, mostly concerned with teaching the use of effective learning strategies. According to this author, the different ways in which each learner approaches the process of SLA pose a challenge to finding effective instruction which matches their learning. However, teachers can achieve this matching by adjusting and accommodating instruction to the students’ learning needs and styles.

It must also be observed that quality instruction demands a high level of teachers’ preparation, including both knowledge about their content area and the target language, even

more so in the twenty first century when most of the educational institutions have acquired a more multilingual and plurilingual character. In their study about teachers' professional competence, Kunter et al. (2013) reported "positive effects of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, enthusiasm for teaching, and self-regulatory skills on instructional quality, which in turn affected student outcomes." (p. 805). Like in most parts of the world, in Spain the student teachers' preparation stage takes place mostly in tertiary education. This stage is extremely important since, apart from equipping student teachers with the necessary tools to cope with the educational environment, this period has also been identified with the point where their initial beliefs serve as a foundation to start forming their professional identity. Also referred to as *practical theories*, teachers' pedagogical beliefs, along with other beliefs such as social, political and moral ones, act as a framework to plan and deliver their teaching as well as to reflect on it (Ye He et al., 2011; Lopes & Pereira, 2012; Stenberg et al., 2014). Unfortunately, not all the approaches and/or programs to train teachers are effective and one of the main current issues identified by different studies is the discrepancy between the theoretical preparation they receive and the reality they have to cope with in the classroom (Freeman, 1989; K. E. Johnson, 1992; Freeman & Richards, 1993, 1996; Y. E. Johnson, 1994; J.C. Richards, 1998; H. D. Brown, 2000; He & Levin, 2008; Caires et al., 2012; Jack C. Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Spicer-Escalante & DeJonge-Kannan, 2014; C. P. Brown, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Haverly et al., 2020). This mismatch was identified by Johnson (1996), who pinpointed "...the need for teacher preparation programs to put forth a realistic view of teaching that recognizes the realities of classroom life and adequately prepares pre-service teachers to cope with those realities." (p. 47). In the same mood, while comparing the perceptions of Australian and Spanish secondary teachers about their level of preparedness for teaching, Noguera & McCluskey (2017) found that the Spanish teachers were demotivated by theoretical lessons and that they had profited much more from their practicum period. In addition, they reported that the preparation program (CAP<sup>4</sup>, current Master of Education) was not useful as "it did not give them sufficient training or the teaching skills they needed for their first job as teachers. The knowledge imparted was too theoretical and far removed from real school conditions and did not provide them with the methodological resources needed for teaching" (Ibid., p. 110). They also reported a lack of preparation on motivation strategies and on dealing with diversity in the classroom. In all likelihood, at least during the initial stages of their practice, teachers tend to use the same methodology they have learnt through in their preparation years. As Murdoch (1994) stated,

Trainees whose methodological knowledge is mainly communicated to them via a lecture mode of presentation are likely to adopt a transmission style of teaching with their own pupils later on, which will be ill-suited to the task of developing the children's communication skills. (p. 254)

Moreover, in order to provide quality instruction, EFL teachers are also expected to be linguistically competent in the target language, and training programs usually do not provide this preparation adequately. In fact, it has been reported that EFL teachers lack linguistic competence in many countries (Murdoch, 1994; Sadtono, 1995; J.C. Richards, 1998; Sešek, 2007). Richards (1998) acknowledged communication as a core component of instruction and learning. He claimed that teachers should be prepared not only on teaching the foreign language per se but also on communication skills in general. This can be done by, for example, requiring



<sup>4</sup> Certificate of Pedagogical Aptitude (CAP): a one-year post-graduate training course available in Spain until 2009 required to teach at the secondary level.



them to start their practice teaching in a subject other than the target language and then transit to language teaching, and by doing activities such as public speaking or oral presentations. He also contended that Non-Native Speaking (NNS) teachers' language proficiency should be high enough to perform a series of specific speech acts and functions that require being fluent in the target language. (p. 6)

Aside from the level of preparation of teachers, other factors relative to the academic context such as student class size, the load of working hours and professional development opportunities may also hinder good quality instruction. These contextual aspects will be further discussed in the second part of this chapter. Hence, as has been previously discussed, beliefs are changeable and contextual in character. They vary and shift based, among many other factors, on the accumulation of experiences. Students spend many hours in the classroom where instruction is an important part, if not the main, of their learning context. The type and quality of instruction they experience has an impact on their beliefs about the nature of language learning. In the same vein, teachers' beliefs about the essence of learning a language may change along with professional preparation and experience, and as those responsible for instruction delivery, teachers become one of "the significant others" who can potentially induce belief formation and change in the learners.

#### 2.1.4.3.2 *The Stay Abroad learning environment*

The second type of context mentioned where foreign language learners usually accumulate learning experience is the Stay Abroad (SA) environment, which is popularly considered as the optimal experience for SLA. From the neurolinguistic perspective, the greater the immersive experience in the L2 context, the better enhancement of the brain areas in charge of language processing, particularly the phonological and articulative zones (Hayakawa & Marian, 2019, p. 12). Most of these learning benefits during periods overseas are included in the comprehensive review of approaches and studies by Isabelli-García et al. (2018) on the SA experience. These enquiries, albeit limited in number or contradictory in results, show a general positive development of the aspects of listening, writing, and reading skills in SA environments. According to these authors, although the speaking skill has welcomed the greatest number of studies and "...atomistic aspects such as fluency (speech rate, length of turns, hesitancy, and self-repetitions), pronunciation, spoken grammatical accuracy, and pragmatics..." (p. 453) develop over SA periods, no complete conclusive results have consistently corroborated the benefits of periods overseas on oral proficiency. This inconclusiveness is also referred to by Pérez Vidal et al. (2018) while contrasting the effects of different learning contexts on SLA, which include the latest turn of SA studies to non-linguistic learners' IDs such as cultural awareness, changes of identity, FL anxiety and WTC (p. 5). They claim that the empirical studies conducted so far do not categorically prove the positive effects of SA on the language progress of the learners. Rather, "what such results seem to prove, is the notorious variation in amount of progress made..." often explained by the learners' individual ability to take advantage of the learning opportunities available in a SA context (p. 6), in other words, their self-regulation capacity. According to Zimmerman (1989, p. 329), "students can be described as self-regulated to the degree that they are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process.", and proposes a triadic social cognitive view of the construct involving the interconnection of three core processes: the person or self, the environment and behavior. In the same vein, Dörnyei & Ushioda (2012) state that this capacity relates to the learners' ability "to reflect on their learning process, to attribute negative outcomes to factors within their control such as effort or choice of strategies, and to engage in constructive

thinking about themselves as active agents of their learning.” (Ibid., p. 405) in order to sustain motivation. So, although it is true that students’ linguistic proficiency benefits in different ways from an SA experience, this does not imply that language immersion automatically guarantees a categorical linguistic growth in as much as it depends on the learner’s motivation and self-regulation to profit from the opportunities this learning context offers. Besides, other factors such as the time length of the SA period, the SA curriculum and pedagogy, and the learner’s social context and relationships also affect the development of proficiency during SA periods.

Finally, another element that learners may hold beliefs about regarding the nature of language learning is the importance of *intercultural competence*, ICC henceforth. These beliefs are closely linked to the construct of integrative motivation, as will be shortly discussed in this section, and they can be seen at the collective and the individual level. Gardner’s definition of cultural beliefs presented at the beginning of this chapter (Gardner, 1985, p. 111) clearly explains the cultural beliefs at the collective level as he identifies them with the expectations of different social groups such as teachers, parents and students about learning a language. He adds that the social conditions may influence a community’s cultural beliefs as well as the ultimate goal or purpose of learning a language as seen, for example, in the fact that the utilitarian use of the language may be dominant in some cultural contexts (Ibid., p. 110). At the individual level, Iglesias (2010, p. 9) states that we understand other cultures by establishing comparisons based on similarities and differences which take our own experiences as a starting-point. This allows us to form representations of others based on our attitude to what is different.

In order to reach ICC, learners should develop intercultural awareness, which means gaining awareness of their culture and being willing to engage in communicative interactions in the foreign language which may threaten their identity (Ibid., p. 17). In gaining awareness of their home culture and of the foreign culture, learners develop “reciprocal learning and bi-directional adaptation, i.e. a combination of the L1 and L2 cultures, which results in enriched cultural exchanges” (Merino & Avello, 2018, p. 285). These authors also point out that in FI contexts, although the Communicative Method opened the door to intercultural learning in the classroom and some evidence of cultural aspects has progressively been incorporated to FL education, this type of instruction in practice remains focused on formal linguistic structures and culture tends to be relegated to the background. In contrast, they say, in SA environments ICC has been a main research target and the results of many studies have demonstrated that even when for some learners an SA period helps to reinforce stereotypes rather than to develop ICC, a psychological change leading to the relativization of beliefs about the foreign culture and to intercultural development has been confirmed by most research. Having said this, the extent to which a learner values culture as an important part of language learning depends on the learning contexts they have accumulated experience in. In FI within an EFL environment, for instance, developing cultural awareness may depend on the teaching materials used, as shown by Canga Alonso & Cifone Ponte (2016) who found that the cultural terms in textbooks and consequently those used by students had an international character. So, it could be expected that, even today when a wide range of original material and direct contact opportunities with native speakers are readily available to learn about the foreign culture, EFL learners who have only been exposed to the language through FI at home may confer a lower level of importance on the learning of the foreign culture than those with SA experience or with a combination of FI and SA learning. At the same time, this positioning of the individuals with regard to the importance of the target culture might be influenced by the purpose or main motivation underlying their choice of learning a FL. As Jiménez Catalán (2010) states “[a]n FL may have an important role in the beliefs of the community: English for example in Spain is thought to be an important language for prospective jobs, for traveling, for education, particularly because



of the euro and within the European community” (p. 6). These motivations constitute the fourth category of beliefs explored in the present project.

#### 2.1.4.4 Motivations and Expectations

As regards this fourth system of beliefs, the preconceived motivations and expectations students and teachers hold about learning and teaching a foreign language may also have a strong influence on the way they approach this process and on the linguistic achievement of the students. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), the construct of motivation consists of two categories, the *level* of motivation, which refers to how much motivation a person has, and the *orientation*, which refers to the type of motivation, i.e. the “attitudes and goals that give rise to the action” (p. 54). These psychologists distinguish between “*intrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and *extrinsic motivation*, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ibid., p. 55). Another psychological construct frequently elicited in language learning concerning motivation is that of *language mindsets* (Dweck, 2006), defined as “domain-specific beliefs about whether the ability to learn languages is malleable or not” (Lou & Noels, 2019, p. 2). These scholars propose the *Language-Mindset Meaning System* comprising mindsets and their related motivational factors that guide the behavior of the learners in attaining their language learning goals. Mindsets also have important pedagogical implications. As these scholars explain, students’ mindsets are malleable and since they hold both types, fixed mindsets and growth mindsets, they can shift between them easily and quickly under proper stimulus such as different methodologies and teachers’ interventions. Oxford (2017, p. 85) explained that:

If learners have a growth mindset, they are likely to believe in the value of L2 learning strategies and to employ those strategies in a highly task-oriented way, leading to success. A growth mindset also fosters self-regulation. Learners with a growth mindset have tremendous advantages in L2 learning, because they can overcome barriers resiliently and employ creative ways to learn. Learners with this mindset are agentic and hopeful.

In choosing to learn a foreign language, students may have a particular motivation, i.e. “an ‘intention’ to learn the language with various aims in mind, and to pursue these aims with varying degrees of drive strength” (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 267). As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, these authors classified this motivation in SLA into two types, “‘integrative,’ where the aim in language study is to learn more about the language group, or to meet more and *different* people; ‘instrumental’, where the reasons reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement’ (Ibid.). In other words, while integrative motivation implies an identification of the learner with the members of the target culture including the absorption of some of their behavioral traits (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), instrumental motivation is about learning the language with the purpose of meeting more practical everyday life objectives, such as obtaining a better job, a salary increase or a scholarship. Gardner (1985) also proposed the Socio-educational Model comprising four stages where motivation is closely related to the social environment of the learners and where attitude and motivation can be both cause and effect granting these constructs a dynamic rather than a static character. In addition, Ellis (1994) lists other types of motivation, such as task motivation that refers to the learner’s interest when completing a task, Machiavellian motivation referred to the intentions of learning a language to

overpower its native speakers, and resultative motivation which refers to the enjoyment of succeeding at learning the L2 (p. 715). According to Oxford (2011, p. 92), a desirable level of intrinsic motivation or *flow* refers to a state where the individual enjoys both competence and challenge, a sense of fulfilment and is effectively engaged.

More recently, this construct has been explored more in-depth and expanded. In a situated analysis of motivation within EFL environments, Dörnyei & Otto (1998) presented the *Process Model of L2 Motivation* accounting for its dynamic temporal fluctuations. Motivation in education is first, multifaceted as it includes strong interconnections across the learner's values, beliefs, attitudes, self-confidence, self-esteem and self-regulation plus contextual elements, such as peer group relationships, the teachers and the learning materials. Second, it is unstable as it fluctuates constantly and quickly as part of the learner's daily dynamic mental processes (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003, p. 614). Their model included five main motivational factors, one of which was "the individuals *subjective values and norms* that have developed during the past, as a reaction to past experiences...[which] refers to the more or less organized collections or internalized perceptions, beliefs, and feelings related to who one is in the social world" (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998, p. 52).

Later, in re-adapting this construct of motivation to current SLA, Dörnyei (2000) uses the term *motives* to refer to instrumental motivation, and describes it as including not only intentions of learners to obtain jobs and economic rewards via the language but also to use it for better socialization and enjoyment of interactions with their FL friends and original sources. Then, he (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) used the psychological theories of the possible selves, which refer to the way an individual views their potential and conceptualizes the future in terms of hopes and wishes via imagery, to propose the L2 Motivational Self System. This includes three types of selves as components of motivation within the language learning process:

- (1) Ideal L2 Self, which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self': if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the 'ideal L2 self' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves
- (2) Ought-to L2 Self, which concerns the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes
- (3) L2 Learning Experience, which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success) (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009b, p. 29)

The motivational power of the Ideal L2 Self is positively correlated to the level of detailed elaboration and vividness of the self-image of the learner, and it is also influenced by the extent to which the learner sees their future self as possible or realistic, which triggers their optimism, self-efficacy and control. So, it includes both integrative as well as instrumental motivation. The Ought-to L2 Self relates to learners' individual features such as self-confidence and a wish for successful performance. Since it is tightly bound to norms and expectations which could be induced by others, it may include views or ideas which do not necessarily correspond with the learner's ideal self, and in this sense, it implies a contradiction between the personal and social identity of the student. So, of these two selves, the former is internalized by the learner, closely related to their ideal identity and triggers motivation, whereas the latter is more external and reduces motivation and the amount of effort invested by the student in FL learning. Thus, a

learner with a poor self-concept or an ought-self will likely lack motivation to learn as opposed to a learner who has an ideal self (Ibid., 2005, p. 103). The L2 Learning Experience is based on the different techniques learned and used by the student to promote a positive behavior towards learning, i.e. motivational strategies, 30 of which were proposed by this author. These self-motivation practices include students' realistic beliefs as an element to generate initial motivation as well as a series of pedagogical interventions such as tackling students' and teachers' belief mis-correspondence to enhance motivation (Ibid., 2005, pp. 85, 112). An example of the ideal self of teachers is provided by a study conducted by K. E. Johnson (1996, p.30) where she showed how an ill-prepared student teacher used her self-image as a teacher and her vision of teaching to rise above the challenges of real teaching through a trial-and-error learning process.

In addition, to further complement the construct of motivation, Dörnyei & Ushioda (2001, 2011) also defined the term *demotivation* as “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action” (p. 139). Some examples of these external forces or demotivators for learners are the dominant pedagogy, teachers' immediacy behavior, family's attitude, classroom physical environment, mis-correspondence between the learners' preferences and the teachers' methods, L2 being compulsory, books and materials, among others. These authors label demotivation the “dark side” of motivation where:

dynamic interactions with the immediate and wider social context of L2 learning, use and experience are central... [It is] a salient phenomenon in L2 studies and... [not only] teachers and educational systems have a considerable responsibility in this respect... [but also] pernicious influences of attitudes and discourses that prevail in society at large over which...educators have little control. (p. 156)

Furthermore, the construct of motivation has also been readjusted to the global character of language learning. For example, Yashima (2009a, p. 145) put forward the concept of *international posture* when bringing the concept of integrative motivation to the current globalized SLA scenario. According to this author, “*international posture*...tries to capture a tendency to relate oneself to the international community rather than [identifying with] any specific L2 group, as a construct more pertinent to EFL contexts”. And also referring to the learning context, Lasabagaster (2013, p. 380) states that, in ESL environments where a regional language is included, integrative motivation may be more pervasive while in EFL environments the instrumentality of English is more prevalent as a main motivator. So, the beliefs students hold regarding integrative motivation are influenced by the learning context and in EFL contexts usually direct contact with foreign natives and their culture tends to be limited, which may affect the level of integrative motivation as defined by Gardner. However, under Dörnyei's ideal self-system, motivation can be fostered in FI contexts through the third type of self, the L2 Learning Experience (Dörnyei, 2001, 2009). This explains the results presented by Trenchs-Parera & Juan-Garau (2018) as regards EFL students' motivation and belief changes in FI and SA contexts. In the FI scenario, they found no variations regarding the already high initial motivation and positive beliefs, rather increased self-confidence and effort plus reduced anxiety were observed. Also, the SA context proved to be more effective to increase motivation as well as the international posture of the students.

Not only is learners' motivation important for language learning but also teachers' motivation. In their comprehensive work, Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011) offer a series of important points in this sense. They state that the enthusiasm and commitment instructors display in their

practice plays a crucial role in fostering and maintaining learners' motivation (p. 158). They also contend that teachers' intrinsic motivation, which is traditionally associated to choosing this profession,

is related to the inherent joy of pursuing a meaningful activity related to one's subject area of interest, in an autonomous manner, within a vivacious collegial community, with self-efficacy, instructional goals and performance feedback being critical factors in modifying the level of effort and persistence. (p. 163)

In addition, they classify the contextual influences on the level of motivation of teachers as micro-contextual and macro-contextual influences. The former include factors within the scope of school functioning, such as school norms and climate, resources, class size, facilities, system of rewards, among others. The latter, however, comprise external social factors such as parents, the media and politicians (Ibid., p. 164). Finally, they describe the five most common demotivational causes underlying the teachers' motivational crisis which has grown dramatically during the past two decades: the stress generated by the job, the lack of teacher autonomy, limited self-efficacy partly caused by poor training programs, invariable content and limitations to intellectual growth, and deficient career structures. Another point they address as a potential demotivating factor of ELT teachers in particular is the dichotomy Native Speaker (NS) teachers versus Non-Native Speaker (NNS) teachers of English. This is mostly explained by the fact that NNS teachers may feel at a disadvantage within the profession and experience some disempowerment and discrimination, which directly connects with their level of motivation. For example, many NNS teachers feel skeptical about using their pronunciation model to teach this language feature because it means they expose themselves to judgement and to people's biases (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 365). Similarly, NS teachers may also experience some negative reactions as regards the standardization of Global English discourses, e.g., ELF. With regard to the importance of teachers' motivation and the intrapersonal dimension of their professional identity, Dörnyei & Hiver (2017) have lately proposed the metaphorical concept of *teacher immunity* to refer to a defense mechanism that teachers develop in coping with issues and disruptions they encounter in their work environment and that serve the purpose of survival during their practice. These authors distinguish *productive immunity*, a durable use of resilience and accumulated experience to enact change and adequately respond to incidents and disturbances, from *maladaptive immunity*, which triggers defense responses that become permanent and rigid and lead to inert, fossilized practice. They also suggest three ways of restarting productive immunity in teachers: *awareness raising*, *coping strategies*, and *narratives of resolution* (Ibid., p. 13). As seen thus far, the beliefs students and teachers hold regarding their main motivations to learn and teach a language are also part and parcel of the intertwined complex network of factors underlying the language learning process and they are a driving force that may directly affect the subjects' level of investment, motivation and identity.

#### 2.1.4.5 Learning and Communication Strategies

The fifth and last category of beliefs explored in this study concerns the choice of learning and communication strategies that learners believe to be the most effective. The connection between beliefs and learning strategies has been explained by different researchers (Horwitz, 1988; Wenden, 1991; R. Ellis, 1994; Yang, 1999; Bremner, 1999; Oxford, 1990,

1996; Oxford & Crookall, 2016), especially with regard to learners' beliefs about self-efficacy. In Oxford's words (2003, p. 274), "L2 learning strategies can help learners improve their own perception, reception, storage, retention, and retrieval of language information." Oxford (2011, 2017) also explains that self-efficacious learners can self-regulate their learning better and are more effective at frequently using a higher and wider number of learning strategies. For his part, R. Ellis (1994, p. 529) states that learning strategies have a mediating role in language learning as their choice and use by the learner depends on many IDs, such as beliefs, and on different situational factors. For example, Yang (1999) found a significant negative correlation between the level of shyness expressed by the students and their use of practical functional strategies. She also reported correlations between the motivational factors, self-efficacy, perceived value and nature of spoken English, and learning strategies. In the same vein, the results of the cross-cultural study conducted by Griffiths (2003) show that advanced-level and elementary-level students varied significantly as regards the number of strategies and frequency of use. In addition, the nationality of the subjects also marked a difference, and the strategies used by advanced students were more complex and interactive.

Similar to the inaccuracy concerning the definition of beliefs, defining *strategy* has also posed a challenge to researchers. In their review about language learning strategies, Griffiths & Oxford (2014, pp. 1-2) offer a comprehensive account of the research conducted in this area which includes various definitions. They report that strategies have been named, for example, *techniques* or *devices* (Rubin, 1975), *procedures* (O'Malley et al., 1985), *learning behaviors* (Politzer & McGroarty, 1985), *actions* (Oxford, 1990), *techniques* (Stern, 1992), and *activities* (Griffiths, 2008). Most of these definitions share two main important features: these strategies are used as tools by the learner and their main goal is to foster language learning competence.

The terminology used in this fifth category of beliefs as part of the present study distinguishes between learning strategies and communication strategies as stated by the designer of the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) when describing its structure, "...Items 17 and 21 refer to learning strategies, and items 7, 9, 12, 13, 18, and 19 concern communication strategies..." (Horwitz, 1988, p. 289). This difference was proposed in Tarone's work (1981) where she defined communication strategies based on the interactionist character of an exchange where there is a negotiation of meaning by both interlocutors with the purpose of bridging the gap between their linguistic and socio-linguistic knowledge (p. 288). In contrast, she said, learning strategies are defined as attempts "to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (p. 290). In spite of this differentiation, Tarone warns about the difficulty of using this classification to label the use of learning strategies based on motivation. For instance, some strategies may not necessarily have the purpose of communicating meaning (e.g. memorization and repetition) so they can be classified as learning strategies. However, in using other communication strategies, learning takes place unconsciously, which makes the classification difficult.

Although the original label of this belief category has been retained in the present study, no distinction between communication and learning strategies is included. Rather, this category of beliefs is viewed in the light of Rebecca Oxford's definition of learning strategies (Oxford, 1990, p. 8), "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" There are two main reasons underlying this decision. First, this definition, similarly to the concept of beliefs, not only has an effect on learners but also on teachers, not only affects the cognitive dimension but also the socio-cultural dimension and some other features are also similar to those of beliefs, e.g. not being always observable. Second, from the strictly linguistic viewpoint,



the meaning of the word *action* encloses the process of taking a variety of steps and behaviors, i.e. of doing, which conveniently suits the construct of *agency* that has been previously discussed in this chapter. Besides, the use of words such as *easier*, *enjoyable*, *effective* and of the repeated comparative particle *more* convey a positive, encouraging effect of progress attainment as a part of the important affective component of learning. In the same vein, Oxford (1990, 2011) distinguished between *strategies*, understood as a general plan of action to attain a goal, and *tactics* which are the specific ways in which a strategy is employed to reach that goal. For instance, some tactics a learner could use to apply the strategy of paying attention are listening for details or for understanding the lyrics of a song, identifying characters' emotions in a text or noticing signs of anxiety before a presentation (Ibid, 2011, p. 31). This distinction is not taken into consideration in the present study either since its main purpose is not an in-depth analysis of the USC students' and teachers' strategies, but rather identifying the beliefs underlying strategy use. Thus, the term *strategy/ies* is used here with a more generic meaning to refer to goal-oriented actions of any kind, whether at the strategic or tactical level, which students undertake to improve their competence in all linguistic areas.

As described by Oxford, this definition of learning strategies is characterized by a strong orientation to communicative competence through general and specific forms of learner participation in meaningful, contextualized interactions. These strategies allow for increasing self-direction of the learner, which fosters independence and self-confidence. Besides, they expand on the role of the teachers as they need to identify them, provide training on them and guide students into self-direction. They serve as a tool to solve problems, enact actions and involve learners at the cognitive, metacognitive and affective levels. They are also flexible since they vary depending on how the learners choose them and combine them; yet sometimes they are difficult to observe as their use takes place in the mind of the learner (Ibid.). As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the choice and frequency use of learning strategies may also be affected by many factors such as the learning stage, motivation, type of task, teacher expectations, learning styles, nationality, personality, etc. (Ibid., pp. 8-13). In classifying learning strategies, different authors (Rubin, 1975; Chamot & O'Malley, 1990; Stern, 1992; Naiman, 1996) contributed typologies of strategies. Expanding on previous classifications, Oxford (1986, 1990) also offered a taxonomy in the form of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which has been used in many studies as a tool to survey and identify learners' strategy use (Oxford & Burry-stock, 1995; Oxford, 1996; Bremner, 1999; Wharton, 2000; Olivares-Cuhat, 2002; Rossiter, 2003; Mokuedi & Oliver, 2007; Hou, 2018; Montero-Saiz, 2020). The SILL initially comprised six categories of strategies: cognitive, compensation, memory (direct strategies), social, metacognitive and affective (indirect strategies). This model was later readjusted to the Strategic Self-Regulation (S<sup>2</sup>R) Model comprising four categories: cognitive, affective, sociocultural-interactive and metastrategies, where each subset of metastrategies corresponds to each of the other three strategy categories and help the learner to control them (Oxford, 2011).

This model has metacognitive strategies as a core component. "Metacognition can be defined simply as thinking about thinking. Learners who are metacognitively aware ...have strategies for finding out or figuring out what they need to do..." (Anderson, 2002, p. 2). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, from the three dimensions of metacognitive knowledge, person, task, and strategy (Flavell, 1979), the latter depends much on the beliefs a person holds about what strategies are effective to attain a goal. Metastrategies are thus an important part of metacognition as they serve a strong self-regulative function of cognitive processes and decisions taken while learning, as attested by the case of highly successful learners with different levels of proficiency (Oxford, 2011). In addition, the S<sup>2</sup>R Model can

accommodate different strategy assistance methods for teachers to aid students in choosing and using strategies to self-regulate their learning, and it takes as a foundation the respect for the learner's own strategies that are valid in their culture. As acknowledged by different authors (O'Malley et al., 1985; Oxford, 1990; N. J. Anderson 2002; Chamot, 2004), helping students to develop their cognitive and metacognitive strategies is extremely important as it enables them to become more effective learners. According to Oxford (2011), strategy assistance can be provided to learners in different ways. It may consist of direct strategy instruction courses implemented apart from language instruction programs, such as the *Styles-and strategies-based Instruction (SSBI)* designed by Cohen & Weaver (2006), or integrated within L2 instruction programs. The latter option is considered more convenient (Chamot, 2004), and so is *explicit* rather than *implicit* instruction (Oxford, 1990). Many other programs and studies have been designed regarding strategy instruction (Ellis & Sinclair, 1990; Palincsar et al., 1991; Dörnyei, 1995, 2013; Pressley & Harris, 2006; Olson & Land, 2007; Graham & MacAro, 2008; Manchón, 2008), where the benefits for the learner's linguistic progress have been demonstrated.

The beliefs of the students and teachers regarding learning and communication strategies which are explored in the present study take as a reference Oxford's S<sup>2</sup>R Model, and they are founded on different linguistic constructs, most of which have already been presented throughout this chapter. Yet, two more need to be noted, namely *accent* and *corrective feedback*. Within the phonological domain, accent is considered a prosodic element comprising different aspects such as loudness, length and pitch, and which emphasizes important words to create a typical melodic pattern (Bolinger, 1986, p. 26). In Moyer's words (2013), "[a]ccent is a set of dynamic segmental and suprasegmental habits that convey linguistic meaning along with social and situational affiliation" (p. 11). *Global foreign accent*, a more pertinent term for the present study, is "[the] overall impression concerning NSs form whether or not and to what degree a person sounds native or nonnative" (Major, 2001, p. 19). In other words, the degree to which an individual can produce accurately the melodic pattern of a foreign language denotes their level of native-like accent as well as some traces of their background. In the present study, a combination of both Moyer and Major's definitions serves as a basis to explore the beliefs of the students and teachers about accent in a bidirectional fashion from the speaker-listener stands, i.e. their beliefs about speaking with a native-like accent and/or speaking with their L1 accent.

In SLA, this prosodic feature has generated much controversy. According to Beinhoff (2013), it is popular wisdom that a neutral or standard accent exists; however, sociolinguistics has proved this not to be true because every accent conveys some additional information about its user. In addition, there is much debate among specialists as to what standard English really is, and while this term refers only to the written language, accent is generally referred to as Received Pronunciation [RP] (pp. 42-43), a model that has lately started to lose momentum (Riney et al., 2005; Jenkins et al., 2018). As regards the ability of the learners to acquire a NS accent, there is also much debate. In describing this issue, VanPatten & Benati (2010, p. 16) identify three main positions mostly based on research into the grammar and pronunciation of ESL or EFL learners: a group of researchers that considers it impossible for learners to develop a native-like ability, another group who considers it possible, and a third group who accepts it as possible but only in some linguistic domains and with potential problems between competence and production. These authors also point out at the links between this native-likeness with two main elements, the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) and *ultimate attainment*.

Regarding the former, which has already been discussed earlier in this chapter (See p.35), these authors align their opinion with the group that is skeptical about the existence of a CP

(Section A.4.2 on Language Aptitude in this report). However, Moyer (2013) contends that procedural knowledge, i.e. phonological variation and style, is acquired in the L1 at an early age along with grammar and lexicon, and it cannot be taught explicitly in the classroom in later stages, so a social network is needed as an interactive base to acquire this knowledge (p. 13). He also states that in developing their phonological skills, beginner students tend to insert vowels and delete consonants, for example, as simplification strategies and that if the foreign accent is too strong, communication may fail (p. 15). Concerning ultimate attainment, Van Patten & Benati (2010) define it as “the point at which learners seem to stop progressing” and state that “[u]ltimate attainment for all unimpaired L1 learners is a native system” (p. 162). In their view, although there is sufficient research now about the possibility of NNSs to attain NS ability, accent included, they do not generally choose to profit from this prospect, and the reasons underlying this behavior need to be further explored (Ibid., p. 20). One plausible explanation at the individual level might be sustained on the basis of motivation and the L2 Motivational Self System previously referred to. Within the Ideal L2 self, learners with strong integrative motivation might strive to develop a (near) native accent to reach ultimate attainment, while those learners with a strong instrumentalist motivation, such as EFL learners, might be less interested in native-like accent. Even more, some learners may see it “as an unrealistic target” (Moyer, 2013, p. 18). This author also observes that “...ultimate attainment is likely a function of the quantity and quality of language experience” (p. 18) and that accent has a positive correlation with the consistent contact with NSs and the constant use of L2 in many different areas (Ibid.).

From a more general sociolinguistic perspective, another reason learners may have not to strive for native-like accent could be the globalization of English resulting in a process of adaptation of this language to its new role as a lingua franca. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has been simply defined as “a contact language between speakers and speaker groups when at least one of them uses it as a second language” (Mauranen, 2018, p. 8). As to the linguistic aspects within the ELF context, accent perception is based on various cues which help speakers identify each other as NSs or NNSs of English in communicative situations. Jenkins (2000) proposed the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), a set of pronunciation features to be taught as ELF which consists of those elements commonly found in interactions between NNSs. This LFC helps to keep intelligibility, and its components should be considered as acceptable variations rather than deviating errors from native English varieties. The LFC includes three main categories of items: sounds, nuclear stress, and articulatory setting (Jenkins, 2000, pp. 136-162). By way of example, some of these are variations in consonant sounds such as final /s/, the difference between /tʃ/-/ʃ/, /r/, and dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ (Beinhoff, 2013, p. 50). Also, teaching the students to shorten unaccented vowels but to keep their quality, to produce nuclear stress and placement correctly, to position and adapt articulators adequately for the L2, and to use phonation to the best of their ability are part of the LFC. In addition, ELF allows its users to build and negotiate their own identity since they can accommodate their behavior to the communicative situation (Jenkins, 2007; Nogami, 2019). While the peculiarities of an accent might affect the way in which the social identity of the speaker is perceived, a foreign accent is not necessarily a reflection of the user’s general proficiency since it does not include grammar and vocabulary proficiency. Accent could be influenced by other factors, for instance, the level of intrinsic motivation based on a sense of identification with the L2-group, the socio-cultural impact of the L1 on the L2 accent when learners prefer to keep their L1 accent when performing in the TL to mark their L1 membership, and the learner’s choice of a model of accent based on English variants (Ibid., pp. 55, 65). When referring to the sociolinguistic position of ELF, Seidlhofer (2011) stated:

[a]lthough the widespread occurrence of this appropriation and adaptation of English as a lingua franca is an established fact, its recognition as an entirely natural, and indeed inevitable, sociolinguistic process has been consistently withheld (p. 69).

However, evidence of the progressive recognition of ELF has started to show as regards the element of accent. According to Albl-Mikasa (2018, p. 374), a foreign accent can influence spoken text comprehension; however, it does not pose a difficulty for interpreters unless the speaker makes major changes. Also, in a study that explored attitudes about ELF accent, which involved 326 NNS and NS teachers from 12 countries, Jenkins (2007) asked the subjects to complete a ranking and rating task of accents plus a map-labelling task to describe 10 specific accents. The results showed the subjects' high preference for the native variants, mainly UK and US, as a reference of correctness and intelligibility and they also believed that these accents were the best ones. Yet, some NNS accents were also described as being aesthetic and intelligible for international communication. For instance, although the Spanish-accented English was classified as somehow strong, speedy and phonetically imprecise, it was also perceived as melodious and intelligible (Ibid., p. 169). Based on these results, Jenkins was hopeful about the future legitimization of ELF accents. And in fact this spreading ELF recognition and use is seen in the growth of research and its resulting collection of corpora, e.g. the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE, 2001), the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (ELFA, 2003) and the Asian Corpus of English (ACE, 2009), and publications on the topic (Jenkins et al., 2018; Pineda-Hernández, 2018; Melchor & Walsh, 2020; Bowles & Murphy, 2021; Rodríguez Sánchez Ruiz et al., 2021; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022, to mention just a few).

Other pedagogical practices that are more adequate to the reality of the bilingual and multilingual settings and that have started to be used recently as an alternative to the NES canon are *translanguaging* and *code switching*. Originating in the 1980s, the term *translanguaging* was applied by García (2009) as a pedagogical strategy to use in bilingual and multilingual settings and was defined as “..multiple discursive practices that bilingual speakers use to understand the bilingual world in which they live” (Lasagabaster & García, 2014, p. 558). In translanguaging, students use all the linguistic and pragmatic resources they have accrued from the languages they know and/or are learning (e.g., gestures, L1 materials to understand the L2, combining languages to create new terms, etc.) as a way of learning. This pedagogical practice is acknowledged as valid by educators (Ibid.). *Code switching*, in contrast, can be viewed as a form of translanguaging which consists in the alternative use of two or more languages during a communicative event (Gumperz, 1972). This strategy is frequently used in bilingual communities, it demands a high level of linguistic competence in the languages involved, and it has certain positive connotations as regards the identity of the users (Palacios Martínez et al., 2019). Thus, it appears that the strong instrumentalist motivation typical of EFL contexts coupled with the growing recognition of the role of ELF and multilingual practices, offer an ideal scenario for the students and teachers' beliefs to start shifting to a positioning towards ultimate attainment which disregards an interest for developing accent nativelikeness.

The second construct underlying the beliefs about learning strategies is *corrective feedback*, CF hereafter. Also named as *error treatment*, *correction* and *repair*, this element of classroom interaction “refers to the feedback that learners receive on the linguistic errors they make in their oral or written production in a second language...” (Ellis & Sheen, 2011, p. 593). There are different types of corrective feedback, oral or written, on-line (immediately after error occurrence) or off-line (some time after error occurrence), input-providing (correct form



provided to the learner) or output-prompting (elicits correction from the learner). It can also be implicit (teacher requests clarification of utterance) or explicit (teacher corrects error directly or provides metalinguistic explanation). Recasts are a common form of corrective feedback that can be conversational and implicit (the teacher produces a confirmation check to clarify the message) or didactic and explicit when the teacher reformulates the utterance despite not having caused communication issues (Ibid.). So, within this typology we can easily classify written feedback as being always explicit, whether input-providing or output-prompting, and mostly off-line, unless when communication occurs on-line (pun intended) in some forms of computer-mediated interactions such as in a chat room, app or forum, whereas oral corrective feedback can take all forms.

Although there is enough evidence to show the benefits of CF (Wenden, 1986; Havranek, 2002; Lyster, 2004; Sheen, 2007; Grim, 2008; Loewen et al., 2009; R. Ellis, 2009; Larsen-Freeman, 2010; Spada, 2011; Pawlak, 2014; R. Ellis et al., 2016; S. Benson & DeKeyser, 2019), thus far its usefulness as a pedagogical intervention to aid learners develop proficiency remains controversial, mainly because CF falls within the Form-Focus Instruction (FFI) approach. Unlike Meaning Focused Instruction (MFI) where learners' attention is not directed to linguistic features as in communicative and naturalistic approaches, FFI does encourage learners to pay attention to target forms while they are in a communicative task (Pawlak, 2014, pp. 19-20). The present study aligns with the supporters of the latter idea. Ellis (2011, p. 437) distinguishes between implicit FFI and explicit FFI, and suggests that the latter, be it proactive (preventive) or reactive (after error occurrence), aids language acquisition even in unplanned activities. He stresses the importance of metalinguistic information as a form of explicit FFI which increases learners' awareness both by noticing and by understanding the language features. This can in turn enhance both implicit knowledge, i.e., "knowledge that is tacit, proceduralized, and thus available for automatic processing [and explicit knowledge], i.e. knowledge that is conscious, metalinguistic, and typically only available for use in controlled processing" (Ellis et al., 2016, p. 280). In addition, some types of CF have proven to be more effective than others depending on the language features, the type of learner and other contextual factors (Havranek, 2002; Grim, 2008; S. Benson & DeKeyser, 2019).

One of the issues pointed out by Ellis (1994, p. 584) about CF and which is relevant to the present study is the attitudes of the learners and teachers about it. Research has shown that there is a well-established tradition of a general welcoming attitude towards CF on the part of the learners and teachers, and many students consider teachers the main source of CF (Saito, 1994; Loewen et al., 2009; H. Zhu, 2010; Park, 2010; Hamouda et al., 2011; Azar & Molavi, 2013; Lyster et al., 2013; Martínez Agudo, 2015; Motlagh, 2015; Uyaniker, 2018; Y. Zhu & Wang, 2019; T. Zhang et al., 2021). Some of these studies have yielded interesting findings, for example, a gap between the amount and type of CF expected by the learner and that considered adequate by the teacher (Park, 2010; Lyster et al., 2013), and a disparity between the types of CF teachers believe should be used and the ones they actually provide to their students (Uyaniker, 2018). In spite of addressing several aspects of CF, according to R. Ellis et al. (2016, p. 277), studies addressing the on-line / off-line typology based on the immediacy with which CF is provided are limited in number, as so are those addressing the link between CF and affect. These authors validate the advantages of immediate CF as an activator of implicit knowledge.

Bearing in mind the attitudes towards the timing of CF, some teaching approaches, e.g. the Audiolingual Method, fully supported immediate CF; others such as the Silent Way and Suggestopedia were extreme detractors, while the Communicative Approach set out CF immediacy when the purpose of the interaction was accuracy but not when it was fluency (Ibid.). The latter approach is adopted by Pawlak (2014), who explains that for oral CF the



timing classification could be of three types: immediate (right after error occurrence), delayed (after the communicative event has finished) or postponed (at the end of the lesson or later), and that oral CF depends on the nature of the activity and the time within the lesson (p. 118). Furthermore, Ellis (2013, p. 3) explains that while researchers have mostly focused on the cognitive dimension of CF, teachers and educators consider both positive CF and negative CF. The former is about confirming the correctness of an utterance, which provides affective support to the learner as it increases motivation through praise. He states that “[p]raising students is seen as an important way of fostering positive attitudes to learning. Correcting students may be deemed necessary but it is also seen as potentially dangerous because it can damage learners’ receptivity to learning” (Ibid.), as had been stated by Nunan (1991) and Ur (1996).

Be it as it may, CF may help to prevent the learners from fixing incorrect linguistic habits which could result in *error fossilisation*. Selinker (1972, p. 215) defined fossilization as “linguistic items, rules, and subsystems which speakers of a particular NL will tend to keep in their IL relative to a particular TL, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation and instruction he receives in the TL.” In their compendium of fossilization studies, Han & Odlin (2006, p. 3) summarize its main features:

First, it pertains to IL features that deviate from the TL norms. Second, it can be found in every linguistic domain (e.g. phonology, syntax, morphology). Third, it exhibits persistence and resistance. Fourth, it can occur with both adult and child learners. Fifth, it often takes the form of backsliding.

According to these authors, there is much inconsistency in distinguishing fossilization from lack of learning or non-nativeness, and the limited number of empirical studies, especially of the most effective longitudinal type, makes it even more difficult to avoid simplifying the difference between them. Long (2003) questions the need to conceptualize fossilization despite the generalized use that researchers and educators have made of the term in the SLA field (Mukattash, 1986; Wei, 2008; Fauziati, 2011; Shaari & Bataineh, 2015; Tajeddin & Tabatabaeian, 2017). He signals its ambiguity as it could be referred to as a product or as a process, and also indicates that unless there is consistent evidence that allows to strengthen the concept of fossilization, the more real term *stabilization* should be used instead (p. 489). In his view, stabilization may occur for both erroneous and correct structures, the case of the latter referred to as positive fossilization by Ellis (1985). Focusing on fossilization as a product, Odling, Alonso, & Alonso-Vázquez (2006, p. 83) presented a case of L2-L3 transfer as evidence of stabilization involving Spanish and Galician languages. Using a passage correction exercise as an elicitation device of the perfect tense use, they tested three groups of subjects: native speakers of American English, (near) bilinguals Spanish-Galician, and Spanish with no knowledge of Galician. The results of the study showed evidence, albeit indirect, of the potential impact of transfer on fossilization. As they explain, their results show that “fossilization may arise from a stabilization in production patterns linked to a tendency to use the past simple instead of the present perfect or to produce hypercorrect uses of the perfect.” This tendency, they explain, is shown in the use of the past simple to communicate ideas that should be conveyed through the present perfect in Castilian Spanish, an indirect example of the effect of transfer on fossilization. Thus, the beliefs of the students and teachers as regards CF are an important element in the process of language learning in as much as they have a direct

impact on implicit and explicit learning and can tackle the transfer of structures across languages to stabilize the TL structural systems correctly.

Finally, also pertinent to this last belief category of learning and communication strategies is *the use of technological and digital resources for learning*. With the advent of the Digital Revolution and the Information Age, the use of information technology has permeated every area of life including all fields of education where computer-mediated teaching and learning has practically become a standard. At present, the benefits of using technology for language learning are indisputable (Stepp, 2002; Zhao et al., 2002; Chapelle, 2003; Govender, 2013; Celik & Aytin, 2014; Rodgers, 2014; Rahimi, 2017; Jack C. Richards & Varier et al., 2017; among others). Despite the variety of technological resources that can be used for education, one of the main terms to refer to the mediation of technology in teaching and learning is Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which in the past decades has shifted from *behavioristic*, i.e. associated to drills, grammar and translation, to *communicative* and *integrative*, i.e. task, project and content-based tasks integrated with technology (Bo-Kristensen & Meyer, p. 29). These authors also comment on the changeability of CALL and the fast-paced emergence of different alternatives in language learning through its use, for instance, the most recent mobile versions of the traditional language lab. Based on various combinations of technology for learning, there are different classifications of lesson formats, such as the Flipped Classroom, Blended Classroom and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), such as the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) and the Multi-User Virtual Environments (MUEs) as well as learning platforms, namely Moodle, Blackboard, Coursera, Skillshare, Future Learn, to name just a few. The use of CALL within the learning environment of the classroom, however, has been found to be more limited and limiting than outside the classroom mainly because of the insufficient provision and/or use of the technological resources, the lack of updated pedagogy and professional development, attitudes of teachers, inflexibility of curricula, outdated materials, lack of administrative support, among others (Cuban et al., 2001; Zhao et al., 2002; Zhao & Frank, 2003; Vodanovich & Piotrowski, 2005; Hansson, 2010; Podovšovnik, 2020).

Many of the actions that students take to enhance their learning also occur in out-of-class contexts where technology plays a crucial role. For this reason Learning Beyond the Classroom (LBC), as stated by Reinders (2021, p. 63), is a long-life process that for successful learners “takes place outside the classroom, in the form of homework, independent activities such as listening to music in the target language, browsing the Internet, playing digital games, and a myriad of other activities” (Ibid.). This author describes the impact of technology on the four dimensions of LBC: *location*, where the boundaries of the classroom have become more mobile, accessible and malleable, *formality*, where a learner can take on naturalistic learning with the support of digital resources, *pedagogy*, where the formal intervention of teachers has acquired new forms, and *control*, where making decisions is no longer invested only on the teacher. Based on Oxford’s typology of learning strategies, the self-directed use of technology by learners falls within the metastrategy category of Organizing Learning and Obtaining Resources for Cognition (Oxford, 2017, p. 181). She also pointed out in her 2011 work the impact that exposure to digital systems has on the choices, styles, motivation and preferences of learners. Thus, training the learners in these strategies is very important as their choice of technology may be influenced by different factors, such as teachers’ and peers’ encouragement and teachers’ practice (Lai & Gu, 2011; Lai, 2015).

Apart from the digital divide in terms of learners’ disability (Podovšovnik, 2020, p. 150) and socio-economic factors (Kuo-Hsun et al., 2019) that technology-based education has brought about, one of the issues that has generated much debate as regards the use of technology

for language instruction has been the technological gap between students and teachers. Prensky (2001, p. 2) used the term *Digital Natives* to refer to the new generations of students who ‘are all “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet’ because they have grown using these resources. Then he referred to members of other generations as *Digital Immigrants* who are constantly learning and catching up with new technologies but that in so doing still retain some behaviors and habits learnt from their initial socialization processes. He contended that educators should readapt their teaching methodologies to the needs of the Digital Natives so that learning is successful. However, Bax (2011, p. 9) points out that teachers need more than to accommodate to the needs of the Digital Natives, they need to focus not only on the learners but also on learning so that the opinions, beliefs and wants of the students can be challenged to foster the growth of their critical thinking and analytical skills. This mismatch has been identified in research through studies about digital competence. Ferrari (2012, pp. 3-4), defines digital competence as

the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes (thus including abilities, strategies, values and awareness) that are required when using ICT and digital media to perform tasks; solve problems; communicate; manage information; collaborate; create and share content; and build knowledge effectively, efficiently, appropriately, critically, creatively, autonomously, flexibly, ethically, reflectively for work, leisure, participation, learning, socialising, consuming, and empowerment.

Bearing in mind the fact that the younger generations are digital natives, their digital competence is many times taken for granted. However, some research has demonstrated that this is not necessarily the case (Y. Li & Ranieri, 2010; Pascual, 2017; Seghayer et al., 2020; Janschitz & Penker, 2022). In their study, Li & Ranieri (2010) found an unequal level of digital competence among students which was influenced by the type of school (public or private) they attended and their age, not by access to and frequency of use of computers and the Internet. In addition, some learners’ issues as regards the use of VLEs, for example, have also been identified such as *cyberslacking*, the use of devices and Internet for personal purposes during the course of a learning activity and *technostress*, a state of mental fatigue and strain caused by the inability to cope with the rapid changes in technology (Li & Liu, 2022). Research has addressed the lack of digital competence of language teachers as well (R. Hall et al., 2014; Pozos Pérez & Tejada Fernández, 2018; Guillén-Gámez & Mayorga-Fernández, 2020; Palacios et al., 2020; Podovšovnik, 2020; Belda-medina, 2021; Guillén-Gámez et al., 2021). In their review of 21 studies about teachers’ digital competences and professional development over a decade (2008-2018), Fernández-Batanero et al. (2020) identified the need for further studies as well as for more effective teacher pedagogical and ICT training.

Certainly, technology integration has implied a broad process of transition which has been affecting practically all dimensions of the teaching-learning process in the past decades and where educators have seen their roles shifted, expanded and re-learned. Castrillo (2015), for example, explains how the typical interactions learner-teacher are no longer the prevailing type in MOOC environments, and proposes a framework to classify teachers’ roles along the different stages of the course such as the teacher as a structure designer and content generator (pre-course stage), curator, facilitator, course-manager and administrator (course stage), and researcher (post-course). Other studies have also focused on the changing roles of teachers (Wang, 2015; Van Den Branden, 2016; Podgorsek et al., 2019; Podovšovnik, 2020). According to Kadel (2005), technology integration is a process that demands an extreme positive attitude

on the part of educators to overcome challenges successfully. However, being open to change is not just enough to provide effective CALL instruction, as demonstrated by Vannatta & Fordham (2004). They also found that the number of hours beyond their regular working schedule and the number of hours of technology training that teachers receive, along with their attitude, were the three main factors determining the extent to which teachers used technology in their practice. The first of these factors was also validated in the studies by Vodanovich & Piotrowski (2005) and Cabero-Almenara et al. (2021). For his part, Kessler (2007) found a mismatch between the CALL preparation formally offered to student teachers through their programs and their actual preparation obtained informally and ad hoc by themselves. He acknowledged that while the latter is effective in the initial stages of transitioning to CALL instruction since it allows creativity and adaptation, a more solid long-term system of professional development is needed.

The daily changing character of technology has also brought about other issues related to multiliteracies that teachers should incorporate into their newly-acquired roles. Chun et al. (2016), for example, explain that in technology-mediated language teaching, instructors should be aware not only of the learning context but of the physical medium itself, for the same message, e.g. in print, may be experienced differently in a blog, an issue also raised by Burnett (2009) as regards reading skills. Teachers also need to adopt a broad perspective to develop multiliteracies in their students for them to cope with different changes, especially regarding the connections between culture, material resources, social context and meaning. In addition, they should make their students aware of the different registers used, for instance, in forums and other genres. Other issues such as the pertinence of teaching students the language of digital genres, e.g. how to tweet, have also emerged (Chun et al., 2016, pp. 67-71). Research and institutions including the UNESCO through its ICT Framework for Teachers (UNESCO & Microsoft, 2011) claim for the need of a better preparation of teachers as regards the use of technology to enhance their professional skills.

The effects of beliefs as regards the use of technology for language learning has also started to be explored. Lamb & Reinders (2008) state that teachers' beliefs and practice can influence learning autonomy in and beyond the classroom, as shown by Lai (2015) in a study where three roles of teachers (as affect, capacity and behavior supporters) demonstrated a positive effect on the self-directed use of technology of their students. While reviewing 14 studies conducted in eight countries which explored the links between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their use of technology in their practice, Tondeur et al. (2017) reported five main findings. First, a bidirectional relationship between teachers' beliefs and technology use with the former influencing the latter and the latter leading to the formation of new beliefs. Second, teachers' beliefs may prevent technology integration, especially if traditionalist beliefs are pervasive. Third, the connections between teachers' beliefs and their use of technology needs a multidimensional approach. Fourth, professional development on the use of technologies is more profitable for teachers if their pedagogical beliefs are understood. And fifth, the school context plays a major role in understanding the connections between teachers' beliefs and technology use. Concerning the students' beliefs about the use of CALL, these have been found to correlate positively with the level of exposure to technology both inside and outside the classroom (Sydorenko et al., 2017), so a well-designed and motivating CALL may be effective to increase students' motivation for learning. Likewise, the study conducted by Başaran & Cabaroğlu (2014) showed how the beliefs of the students about EFL learning can be changed through technology-mediated instruction.

As has been previously discussed, the beliefs of the students and teachers about the most convenient learning strategies to use in their learning are closely connected to the constructs of

self-regulation, autonomy and agency. Hence, the use of technology as a learning strategy is also connected to the learners' and the teachers' beliefs because the type of technology they choose as well as the purpose, frequency and effectiveness of its use reflect the students' and the teachers' beliefs on how best to learn the language.

Thus far, the first part of this chapter has summarized the main characteristics of beliefs as well as core constructs in SLA that closely relate to each category of the USC learners and teachers' beliefs treated in this study. The variety of aspects that has been included in this first part emphasizes the highly complex nature of beliefs, and at the same time their protagonist role as an ID that serves as a basis to understand learners' and teachers' opinions, actions and behavior towards EFL. With the purpose of widening the scope of the study a little and of further understanding the beliefs of the subjects involved in this project, the second section that follows considers theories and concepts pertinent in particular to the USC academic and socio-political context where EFL learning takes place.

## 2.2 CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS RELATED TO BELIEFS ABOUT EFL LEARNING AT THE USC

As has been previously stated, the beliefs about language learning have a contextual character, i.e., they reflect the circumstances or conditions related to this learning which help to explain it. At a macrolevel, such circumstances encompass the socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-political dimensions of this learning process. H. D. Brown (2000, p. 115) states that the connections between those dimensions and language learning are clearly evidenced in specific linguistic features such as misunderstandings, interaction, negotiation of meaning and pragmatic aspects of communicative events that take place at the communal, national and international levels. He identifies three main categories of issues related to these language dimensions, two of which are of particular relevance for the present study: issues related to the EFL context and issues about language policies. As a result of the globalization process, English has risen as “an economic skill, a marketable commodity, and a form of cultural capital” (Salomone, 2022, p. 8). Within this scenario, the EFL learning context has become directly dependent on the top-down language policies adopted by the different *actors*, i.e. the government, its corresponding sectors and institutional authorities (S. Zhao, 2011, p. 915). The impact of the expansion of English on the history, politics and economics of the different regions and countries which in turn have led to decisions about language policies in educational systems has given rise to the debate of different aspects related to language learning.

In Europe, aside from the growing use of English in European Union institutions, it [the debate] generally centers on educational quality and access in higher education, the burdens on students and faculty, and the preservation of national languages and identity, with an occasional reference to less privileged students, many of whom are immigrants. (Salomone, 2022, p. 5).

According to Stern (1991, p. 277), the socio-cultural dimension of language learning is evidenced on different behaviors adopted by the individuals, for example, on the different attitudes towards learning languages which confer a certain status on each language. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the prominence given to a foreign language may depend on the value that language has for the community or on stereotypes about it, and these collective social attitudes underlie the beliefs students bring to class and their level of motivation for language learning.



As regards the socio-political dimension of language learning, the adoption of linguistic policies towards multilingualism and plurilingualism carries with it the linguistic power of languages. According to Kachru (1986, p. 123), linguistic power may take two main forms: the first is the introduction of an additional code to the linguistic repertoire of a speech community or group whether by strategies of perception, regulation, inducement or force. The second is based on the elimination of a linguistic variety and the exaltation of another. So, mainly the first form of linguistic power is potentially present in the language policies adopted by the educational systems as their regularization may modify the linguistic behavior of the different target regions or areas by adding a communication code [English in this case] to the existing stock of national and local languages, and in this sense it can be viewed as a linguistic and cultural invader (Phillipson, 2009, p. 192) that may generate sentiments of imposition, linguistic threat and identity loss (Shohamy, 2007, p. 130). The rapid expansion of English has granted it a hegemonic character worldwide, and its presence in academic programs of the different educational systems as a result of the internationalization process is pervasive (Crystal, 2003; Coleman, 2006). This linguistic shift and its resulting policy implementation have proven to be both troublesome and beneficial. A series of conflicts related to the preservation of the local language/s and the negative effects of the presence of English have emerged. By way of example, in The Netherlands a public debate about the prevalence of English in Higher Education (HE), where even court procedures about it involved at least two universities, started in 2017. In this country there are general concerns about the impoverishment of Dutch as an academic language, a phenomenon that has a negative impact on their cultural identity. Other countries such as Sweden, Italy, France and Germany are witnessing similar conflicts (Gabriëls & Wilkinson 2021). In the Spanish context, the case of Catalonia, where “language has become a main source of political strife” (Erdocia, 2020, p. 1), is another example of the socio-political connotations of the implementation of linguistic policies. This author contends that “the education authorities jumped hastily and lightly on the bandwagon of plurilingualism without really taking it seriously” motivated by the adoption of an international trend and by political reasons. And in so doing, the inconsistent implementation of these policies has caused many contradictions as regards, for example, instruction in Catalan as well as reluctance to change on the part of many educators (Ibid., p. 10). These issues have also been explored in the Basque Country by Doiz et al. (2014), who studied the opinions of students, teachers and administrators about multilingual policies and the presence of English at the university. Their results evidenced the students’ fear about English being a threat to the recovery or protection of the Basque language.

Furthermore, the socio-economic dimension of language learning is also affected by the Socio-Economic Status (SES hereof) of an individual, which comprises factors such as income, type of occupation, and educational level (Butler & Le, 2018). This SES usually shapes the social pecking order of a country or area (Tollefson, 1991; Pennycook, 2007). In ESL environments in South Africa and India, for instance, individuals with knowledge of English are granted a better social status than the individuals who can speak only vernacular languages, and school children educated in English-medium institutions have better access to higher education and careers (Ricento 2010, p. 137). The effects of the learners’ socio-economic status on the learning of EFL has also been explored in some studies (Kormos & Kiddle, 2013; Block, 2015; Lee, 2018; Pinilla-Portiño, 2018), the results here show that despite not being the direct source of inequalities, English is a mediator between them and the imitation of social class organization in educational systems where this foreign language has become a central point of debate and where being proficient in it may accentuate inequalities between learners (Block, 2015, p. 11). In addition, Bowles & Murphy (2021, p. 21) state that “[t]he ideological

assumption that internationalization... [in language learning] improves societies is still questionable” because the use given to English depends on the changes and events taking place in the real economic sector, and while it grants upward social mobility to some individuals, it also maintains inequalities and non-inclusion.

Although the socio-economic status of most learners in Spain is comparatively better and more equal than those in developing countries, there are some inequities which have been identified to have an impact on educational opportunities (Calero et al., 2007; San Isidro, 2010) and on EFL learning in particular. In the study conducted in the community of Catalonia by Cid (2020), which involved learners in two public schools and a language academy, the results obtained showed that the difference in access to resources in public schools and to EFL extracurricular learning opportunities had a negative impact on EFL learning as it stressed learners’ inequalities within and between schools. In addition, the combination of different types of centers (public, private and publicly-funded private) emphasized the disparities in EFL performance. In their study about the attitudes towards languages in Galicia, Loredó et al (2007, p. 40) surveyed 207 university student teachers from the cities of Santiago de Compostela, Lugo and A Coruña. With regard to SES or “socio-professional status” (Ibid., p. 58), they reported that the upper social class conveyed more positive attitudes towards English and more negative attitudes towards Galician than the lower social class (Ibid.). These attitudinal disparities are likely to reflect the differences in access to FL learning. Although no in-depth study on the connections between the SES and EFL learning has been conducted in Galicia so far—to the best of this author’s knowledge—the contextual similarities with Cid’s study regarding the triple school network type invite to explore a possible impact of the SES on EFL learning locally. This research niche could include opportunities such as better access to ICT resources for learning, access to private language schools and academies, to private tutoring, and to language immersion periods abroad as variables related to the SES of Galician learners.

The adoption of multilingual policies reflects the fast pace of the process of internationalization across the different educational levels. Two types of instruction that have emerged as a result of the implementation of the pluri-linguistic policy in the Spanish EFL environment are the Content Language Integrated Instruction (CLIL) in secondary education and the EMI programs at the tertiary level. The common feature between these two types of instruction is that subject content is delivered to the students in English. Several studies have shown the benefits of CLIL programs for the linguistic competence of the students (Grim, 2008; San Isidro, 2010; Lorenzo et al., 2011; Merino & Lasagabaster, 2018). In their collection of studies about the initial stages of CLIL implementation in different Spanish communities and areas, Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe (2010) highlighted its positive effect as regards the increased quality and faster rate of English learning without harmful effects on the local languages in the case of bilingual communities (p. 25). In this publication, Navés & Victori (2010, pp. 41-46) also reported the benefits of CLIL to improve writing, grammar and vocabulary acquisition of Spanish learners. Yet, these studies also warned about the need to monitor and evaluate the implementation process of CLIL in each Autonomous Community especially as regards the learners’ proficiency gains, the methodology used and the level of preparation of the teachers.

Another study in this volume conducted by Xabier San Isidro (p. 55) involving CLIL and non-CLIL classes in public schools assessed the effectiveness of this program in Galicia. His results also showed the positive effects of CLIL for the learners’ English language competence; yet he warns about the CLIL group choosing this type of instruction voluntarily out of their own motivation, which could have affected the results. He also reported on the absence of gender differences and the presence of disparities as regards students’ oral performance based

on the school geographic context, i.e. rural vs. urban schools. He attributed these differences to the fact that students in rural areas have a more limited access to educational technology which offers the opportunity of more exposure to the language beyond curricular hours (Ibid., p. 75). More recently, a study by González Gándara (2015) involving 747 students from 13 different Galician schools also reported the beneficial impact of CLIL for the linguistic performance of the students. He, once more, pointed out the unequal share of language use between Galician, Spanish and English exacerbated by the voluntary participatory character of teachers and students in the program. He also highlighted different bureaucratic hurdles which undermine the consistent functioning of CLIL such as the lack of commitment of administrators and the linguistic certification requirements imposed on teachers.

In a similar vein, Bowles & Murphy (2021, p. 2) point out that as the process of internationalization has reached every area of HE, many discrepancies between policies and the actual practice have been found. For instance, regarding its main purpose, stakeholders claim that these policies are intended to improve learners' preparation and the quality of learning while studies have shown the economic drive behind it through the recruitment of international students and mobility overseas (Cots et al., 2012; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Brogginì & Costa, 2017). The importance given to the internationalization of the curriculum and to pedagogical matters related to teachers' training and learners' experience constitute another mismatch worth noting (Bowles & Murphy, Ibid.). Fueled by educational initiatives such as the Erasmus program and the Bologna Process in Europe, the process of internationalization in HE has required the learning of foreign languages and within this scenario EMI programs have thrived continuously and have become an icon of English learning. According to the European Association for International Education (EAIE), by 2017 Europe had offered 68,000 Bachelor's degrees and 54,000 Masters' programs delivered in English (Bowles & Murphy, 2021, p. 8). The presence of EMI programs in bilingual and multilingual communities mirrors the socio-political dimension of language learning referred to earlier in this section. As a result of their implementation in HE, linguistic friction has emerged either due to "the decreasing use of home languages (e.g. in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, or Norway) or [...] a need for languages to be equally distributed [...] (e.g. in Luxembourg, Bolzano, or Catalonia)" (Dafouz & Smit, 2014, p. 2). This friction is evidenced in the students' and teachers' sentiments of helplessness about the imposition of English and of fear about it affecting the presence or normalization of the national or minority languages (Wilkinson, 2013; Doiz et al., 2014; Bowles & Murphy, 2021). Bearing in mind the multilingual character of tertiary education today, Dafouz & Smit (2014) proposed the conceptual framework labelled English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings (EMEMUS) to understand universities today as an environment where students gain knowledge and skills using the languages they already know as well as the ones they are learning (p. 3).

Despite their fast mushrooming, thus far the results of the studies conducted concerning the effectiveness of EMI programs for learning, which have been more limited in number compared to studies on CLIL programs, have been rather ambiguous. On the one hand, these programs are generally welcomed by students and teachers (Doiz et al., 2011; Tatzl, 2011; Fortanet-Gómez, 2012; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014; Aguilar, 2017; Kong & Wei, 2019; An & Thomas, 2021). According to the results reported by Rogier (2012) while exploring the effects of EMI on the linguistic competence of UAE students, all four main English skills, that is, speaking, reading, writing, and listening were significantly improved in that same order. These studies also show that the main gains are mostly based on the instrumentality of English since EMI increases learners' opportunities to practice and enhance their linguistic skills and get better prepared for mobility experiences and the employment market. Teachers also report the

benefits of EMI programs in helping them to develop their linguistic competence through regular practice, giving them an extra feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction plus some administrative and/or financial incentives. On the other hand, a series of issues have surfaced from EMI instruction mainly as regards the level of English proficiency of the learners, the level of preparation and attitude of the teachers together with the policy implementation and stakeholders' involvement. Most of these issues have been addressed by growing research and initiatives such as the creation of the association Integrated Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) during the past decade. Regarding the level of English competence of the students, much concern has been voiced (Jenkins, 2007; Doiz et al., 2011; Murata & Iino in Jenkins et al., 2018; Bowles & Murphy, 2021) about the effective learning of content and the development of linguistic skills through EMI. There are marked differences in linguistic competence among the local students, and between them and international students which cause them to struggle much while learning through EMI or to refuse entering these programs for fear of failure (Fortanet-Gómez, 2011; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Aguilar, 2017). Based on the evidence reported in different studies, Dearden (2018, p. 327) contends that students entering universities and colleges need a level of English high enough to understand the academic subjects and to integrate successfully into their academic community through the execution of different tasks, which are generally demanding. By way of example, in their study about the impact of EMI on language proficiency and affect which involved 136 Chinese undergraduates, Lei & Hu (2014) found that students' competence at the pre-university level was the strongest predictor of language proficiency and affect at the tertiary level.

As these studies have shown, the reaction on the part of the students might partly stem from the two opposing English norms used today in teaching EMI, the NES norm and the ELF norm. In the former, linguistic accuracy in terms of English native rules is stressed in learning and assessment, while the latter includes multilingual practices, such as the use of the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2000), translanguaging and code switching as referred earlier in this chapter (p. 50-51). The choice between these two norms is not without problems. While different scholars support the use of multilingual practices as a solution for the issues emanating from EMI instruction (Doiz et al., 2013; Murata & Iino, 2018; Murata, 2019; An & Thomas, 2021; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022), others are more skeptical. Bowles & Murphy (2021), for example, question the adequacy of an ELF pedagogy for the needs of EMI learners. In their view, the effectiveness of multilingual practices in large international classes is questionable as the linguistic diversity of the students craves for “a unified and unifying model for a diversified and diversifying class” (Ibid., p. 12). In these environments, international students might resent, for example, that teachers and other students codeswitch into L1s they are not familiar with (Ibid.). There also seems to be a controversy as regards the attitudes or expectations of the students about their teachers' use of English in class. For example, in Spain, students at the universities of the Basque Country and Córdoba (Lasagabaster et al., 2019) are skeptical about their teachers' codeswitching into their L1s since they expect a limited use of the L1 in their EMI lessons, and they correlate their instructors' English competence with the frequency of codeswitching. In addition, Harding & McNamara (2018, p. 570) as well as Shohamy (2018, p. 583) analyzed the need to create assessment tasks based on ELF practices instead of trying to adapt traditional existing assessment to ELF use.

Other research studies have also shown that low proficiency in English also mars the understanding of the EMI subject content (Doiz et al., 2011; Shohamy, 2012) and effective communication and interactions in the classroom (Y. Wang, 2019; Kaur, 2021), or that it has no impact on the academic performance of learners (Dafouz et al., 2014; Lei & Hu, 2014). The development of disciplinary literacy, understood as “*the ability to appropriately participate in*



*the communicative practices of a discipline*” [original in cursive] (Airey, 2011, p. 3) also appears to be lacking in EMI. As regards this academic literacy, it should also be noted that a multilingual pedagogy should provide for effective preparation of EMI students in academic English. Hyland (2016, p. 22) states that academic English combines different practices and strategies which are specific to each field of knowledge when communicating an idea, and that these practices and strategies are not usually taught by subject teachers, so Academic English specialists should train students in developing these skills. At present, academic ELF has started to be used especially in lectures where an interactive approach is followed and where interactive co-operation including for instance, rephrasing, questions and directives, guarantee effective communication (Mauranen, 2016, p. 47). As to written academic ELF, it has also started to change (Ibid.), although there is still a need for proofreaders, journal editors and reviewers to accommodate to the ELF discursive styles of NNES academics (Mur-Dueñas, 2013). So, both oral and academic written skills need also to be developed through EMI. In spite of all these controversial points, it is the feeling of this author that linguistic accommodation in EMI instruction is necessary in as much as “the objective of an EMI education is to internationalise, not anglicize.” (Dearden, 2018, p. 332).

Furthermore, some studies have reported on the learners’ skeptical or negative attitudes towards EMI programs, precisely founded on their low English proficiency level and its impact on their learning (Du & Jackson, 2018; Ekoç, 2018; Kong & Wei, 2019; Lasagabaster et al., 2019). In terms of policy implementation, however, access to EMI programs does not take much into account the unequal English competence of the students. Dearden (2018, p. 328) claims that policy makers and administrators do not pay much attention to this need and that “[t]here seems to be an acceptance that high school English is sufficient, or at least will have to do” to succeed in EMI programs. This scholar also refers to two initiatives taken by different institutions to tackle learners’ linguistic inequalities, granting students access to EMI programs based on their English level usually set at B1 (CEFR) and taking a one-year preparatory program as a requirement to enroll in EMI. Yet, while the former engenders social inequalities since the most proficient pre-university students in English may be those with better access to extra learning opportunities, the time span of the latter might not be enough to prepare students well and Prep-EMI teachers’ close collaboration is necessary (Ibid.). Not only is students’ access to EMI programs a problem but also the distribution of EMI subjects across the curriculum. Some educators and stakeholders show disagreement, for example, as to whether subjects in English should be offered at the beginning or instead progressively along the degree years, whether they should be mandatory or optional, and the number of credits assigned to each course in English (Fortanet-Gómez, 2011; D’Angelo, 2019; Y. Wang, 2021).

EMI programs also imply a change in the role of the teachers. Research studies (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Palmer et al., 2011; Cots et al., 2012; Doiz et al., 2013b; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Kirkgöz & Dikilitaş, 2018; Murata, 2019; Bowles & Murphy, 2021) have identified positive as well negative aspects of EMI as reported by teachers. Along with the advantages of EMI disclosed in these studies, the debate whether EMI teachers should also be language teachers has been a neural point within the implementation of this type of instruction. Recent research has shown a general tendency of EMI teachers to bypass linguistic issues in their practice (Doiz et al., 2011; Dafouz, 2014; Dearden, 2015; Aguilar, 2017) based, for example, on the limited use of the language for their content area in the case of teachers in the natural sciences (Dearden, 2018), but also on the fact they are not English specialists and have to prioritize content teaching within the limited time frame of their curricular programs (Airey, 2012; F. Costa, 2012). A second issue identified in EMI environments has been the teachers’ linguistic competence in English to deliver this type of instruction. Inadequate linguistic



preparation of EMI teachers has also been reported (Lei & Hu, 2014; Dearden & Macaro, 2016), which has not been paid much attention to in policy documents (Aizawa & McKinley, 2021, p. 40).

As these studies have demonstrated, while it is unrealistic to expect EMI teachers to become English language teachers and vice versa, it is necessary to find a balance across pedagogical practices in the classroom initially through more professional development and training adjusted to the demands of EMI and/or through team-teaching alternatives, the latter of which could be beneficial for and welcomed by EMI students (Lasagabaster et al., 2019). This same study as well as others (Airey, 2016; Aguilar, 2017; Mede et al., 2018) have also voiced teachers' concerns about the extra responsibilities that EMI entails for them and the lack of administrative and financial support from other stakeholders. In Dearden's words (2018, p. 327),

Amongst academics the view is prevalent that universities are discharging their EMI responsibilities onto the teaching staff, not giving the move to EMI education sufficient thought or preparation, not investing in resources. Institutions are unaware of or unwilling to recognise the extra burden that EMI places on teachers in terms of preparing and delivering their lectures.

Most of the issues about EMI identified so far in these research studies seem to be enrooted in a common substrate, the inconsistent policies of implementation of these programs. As Bowles & Murphy (2021, p. 10) state, “[t]he consequences of a lack of policy, or having only a partial policy, can also be problematic. Lack of clarity about what an existing policy actually entails is also a hindrance to effectiveness.” In different HE systems, lack of clarity in the linguistic policies adopted at the higher educational levels (e.g. Ministries) has led to their misinterpretation at lower levels (e.g. institutions), which has resulted in limited or incongruent procedures and strategies to make teaching content in English more effective. This, coupled with a need to better monitor and assess the functioning of these programs, are pressing needs in many tertiary educational institutions these days (Palmer et al., 2011; Doiz et al., 2013c; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Ekoç, 2018).

As has been discussed earlier in this chapter, the accumulation of learning experience and the interactions with the social and learning context while transiting through the different educational stages help to construct the beliefs and opinions that students hold about the process of language learning. Thus, the contextual circumstances described in this second section may have a strong impact on the beliefs of the students and teachers about learning English in as much as they can act as “significant others” (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011). Bearing in mind that in EFL environments the contact of the students with English is mostly through formal instruction, it is expected that the educational systems guarantee proper conditions to deliver quality learning to all.

### 2.3 GENERAL SUMMARY OF THIS CHAPTER

Overall, this chapter has attempted to outline the main features of the construct of beliefs, chiefly their intertwined connections to different SLA variables and processes, the variety of terminology used to define them, and the three main research approaches that have emerged in studying them: (the normative, the metacognitive and the contextual approaches. In addition, the main characteristics of beliefs have been introduced, mainly their fluctuating and contextual

character, their complexity and their strong connections with variables such as affect, learning strategy choice, motivation, identity, agency and self-efficacy.

As regards other main SLA constructs related to each set of beliefs explored in the present study, this chapter has encapsulated main theoretical points about language distance, aptitude, age, gender, previous language experience, the Formal Instruction and Stay-Aboard learning contexts, and the use of technological and digital resources for learning. Finally, the second part of the chapter has discussed research arguments about two contextual elements relevant to the beliefs of USC students and teachers, the implementation of EMI programs and the socio-economic status of the learners. Against this background, the next chapter reports on the main purpose and research questions the present study was grounded on as well as the methodology used to collect and analyze the data about the beliefs that the USC students and teachers hold about EFL learning and teaching.

## CHAPTER 3 – PURPOSE AND METHOD

### 3.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This investigation has its origin in the author's preliminary findings while conducting her master's degree dissertation. At that time, the data collected through a smaller scale survey and some class observations triggered a research interest about the underlying assumptions and ways of approaching the EFL learning process of USC students and teachers.

As explained above in chapter 2, the study of beliefs has attracted the attention of a large number of applied linguists during the past fifty years (Horwitz, 1987; Truitt, 1995, Benson & Lor, 1999; Chawhan & Oliver, 2000; Schulz, 2001; Siebert, 2003; Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Altan, 2006; Ellis, 2008; Brown, 2009; Ferreira Barcelos, 2015; Zhong, 2015) and different studies continue to corroborate their impact, albeit indirect, on the students' general approach to language learning. A number of Spanish scholars have also produced work as regards beliefs in language learning (Díaz & Requejo, 2008; Uribe et al., 2008; Agudo, 2014; Arnold, 2018; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018; Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al., 2020) by paying attention to issues, such as the relationship between beliefs and language learning attitude, gender, social class, motivation and affect, language policies, teacher needs, amongst others. Framed in the particular learning context of Galicia, the study by Cal Varela and Fernández Polo (2007) probed into the challenges and demands that English poses for teachers and researchers at the USC. Through a survey addressed to 25 different departments, they could identify the attitudes and learning preferences of the respondents, among many other aspects. This study shed light on two important points: first, the low level of proficiency in English and other foreign languages as perceived by the working staff, and second, their open-mindedness and good predisposition towards the learning and improvement of their foreign language skills since they are considered to be an essential tool for their own work.

Apart from this study, very little research has thoroughly addressed the topic of beliefs about language learning and none so far has included USC students and teachers as the target population. The current investigation then seeks to contribute useful information in terms of the pre-conceptions, practices and opinions that students and teachers hold about EFL learning in the hope that their experience and judgement further informs educators, curriculum designers and other stakeholders about the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process of this language at the USC. The findings obtained and the conclusions reached may possibly encourage studies in other universities in Galicia and in Spain. With this purpose in mind, the following main objectives and research questions for this study are identified:

Objective A. To identify and compare the pattern of beliefs about EFL learning which USC students and teachers hold.

Research questions:



A.1 What pattern of beliefs about EFL learning do USC students and teachers hold?

A.2 Do USC teachers and students share similar beliefs about EFL learning?

A.3 Are USC students' and teachers' beliefs comparable to those identified in previous studies conducted in other institutions in Spain and in other countries?

Objective B. To explore some contextual factors related to the beliefs about EFL learning.  
Research questions:

B.1 What main contextual factors are identified by USC students and teachers as having an impact on EFL learning?

B.2 How do USC students and teachers assess these contextual factors?

The research questions under the second objective mainly focus on the impact of linguistic policies, chiefly the implementation of English Mediated Instruction (EMI) and of linguistic and socio-economic disparities for students when accessing tertiary education. The choice of these specific contextual factors stems from informal conversations the researcher sustained with some students and teachers prior to the study and from some comments contributed by the surveyed participants in the initial stage of the data-gathering process. The social setting or context is considered to have an important role in language learning as, for instance, '[social] factors help to shape the learners' attitudes which, in turn, influence learning outcomes' (Ellis 1996, p. 197). The term *context* in this study refers to the situational and social factors, which along with beliefs, influence the learning strategies chosen by students (*Ibid.*) and their way to come close with the language learning process. These factors are not restricted to the academic environment; they comprise elements from the external social setting where beliefs are enrooted, and which seem to be salient for their learning.

## 3.2 METHOD AND DESIGN

### 3.2.1 Participants

#### 3.2.1.1 Students

A total of 649 subjects participated in this study, 614 of them were students and 35 were teachers. The students' age ranged between 17 and 61 years with an average of 19.5 years. As regards their level, 33.5% of the students were in the first year of their degree (N= 206), 21.6% of them in the second year (N=133), 23.3 % in the third year (N=143), 19.2% in the fourth year (118) and, finally, 2.3% of them were enrolled in a master's program (N=14). A total of 66.9 % were female students (N=411) while 33.1% were male (N=203). As regards nationality, 91.5% of the students were Spanish (N=562), 2.2 % were half Spanish, i.e. Spanish plus another nationality (N=14) and 6.1% were from other countries (N=38). As regards their mother tongue, the participant students reported a high variety:

Table 1

*Mother tongue/s of students who participated in this study*

| Mother tongue/s             | Number of students | Percentage of total student sample (%) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Galician                    | 45                 | 7                                      |
| Galician-Spanish            | 16                 | 3                                      |
| Spanish                     | 113                | 19                                     |
| Spanish-Galician            | 382                | 62                                     |
| Local+foreign mother tongue | 27                 | 4                                      |
| Foreign mother tongue       | 31                 | 5                                      |
| Total                       | 614                | 100                                    |

As seen in the table above, the mother tongue of the students portrays/reveals the different shades resulting from the unequal use of Spanish and Galician within the context of this bilingual community as described in section 1.3. Regarding foreign mother tongues, the following were reported: Arabic, Armenian, Berber, Mandarin Chinese, Dari, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Moroccan, Persian, Portuguese, Romanian and Swiss German plus two Spanish minority languages, Catalan and Basque. Only 23.6% (N=145) of the 614 students reported they had had a stay-abroad experience in a country where the foreign language/s they knew was spoken. The duration of such experience fluctuated between one and 216 months, with 60% of the students on average spending half a year abroad.

Data collection through interviews involved the participation of 56 students from different schools and faculties at the USC. The age range of the group of interviewees was between 18 and 25 years. A total of 78 % of them (N= 44) were female students while 22 % (N=12) were males. As regards academics, 9% of the students were enrolled in master programs [Chemistry-Biology, Advanced English Studies and Physics] (N=5) and 91% were undergraduate students (N=51), of whom 3.9% were in the first year of their degree (N=2), 43.1% in their second year (N=22), 21.5% in their third year (N=11) and 31.3% were in fourth year (N=16).

### 3.2.1.2 Teacher participants

The extended section of the study also comprised the exploration of the teachers' beliefs about EFL learning. To this end, a total of 35 teachers were surveyed through a questionnaire versioned from the students' questionnaire. A total of 89 % of them (N=31) were based in the Santiago campus and 11 % (N=4) in Lugo. More in particular, 37 % of them, that is, a total of 13 taught only at the Faculty of Philology while six of them, that is, 17 % of the total combined their teaching at the Faculty of Philology and at other faculties and schools, while 46 % (N= 16) offered instruction in USC faculties and centers other than those mentioned above. As regards the programs taught, 48 % (N=17) of them delivered undergraduate programs, an equal number were involved in both degree and master's programs, and 3 % (N=1) taught only postgraduate students. As regards their nationality, 88 % of the participating teachers (N=31) were Spanish, one (3 %) was Spanish-American and 9 % (N=3) were from three foreign countries: Ireland, Italy and the United States. In terms of their mother tongue, a similar picture to that of the student population emerged as illustrated in the graph below:



Table 2

*Mother tongue/s of teachers who participated in this study*

| Mother tongue/s             | Number of teachers | Percentage of total teacher sample (%) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Galician                    | 7                  | 20                                     |
| Spanish                     | 14                 | 40                                     |
| Spanish-Galician            | 8                  | 23                                     |
| Local+foreign mother tongue | 2                  | 6                                      |
| Foreign mother tongue       | 4                  | 11                                     |
| Total                       | 35                 | 100                                    |

The teaching experience in this group ranged from five to more than 20 years. In the case of 20 of them, their teaching experience was below 10 years whereas the remaining group of 15 of them had more than 16 years teaching experience. The survey was complemented with individual interviews with 22 teachers from most faculties and schools, the majority of whom had expressed through the questionnaire their willingness to hold a conversation. There were 12 females and ten males who delivered instruction in different areas of the USC. Of these, six taught only at the Faculty of Philology (Santiago campus), ten of them offered courses at the Faculty of Philology and other university schools (two of them were based in the Lugo campus) and nine of them were EMI teachers in Santiago. As regards their teaching experience, 14 of them had more than 16 years teaching experience while in the case of eight of them their experience was below 12 years.

### 3.2.2 Research instruments

The design of this study follows a mixed method sequence **QUAN**→ **qual**<sup>5</sup> according to the Mixed-method Matrix (Johnson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2013) where the quantitative method, a questionnaire, has a dominant status and the qualitative one, an interview, is used to put flesh on the bones of the patterns identified through the former. This mixed method model serves five main purposes (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham 1989, p. 259): *triangulation* seeking convergence of the results, *complementarity*, which allows the researcher to elaborate on and to clarify the results, *development*, where the results of one method inform the other, *initiation* seeking to uncover contradictions or new perspectives between the methods used, and *expansion*, where the breadth and range of the enquiry is extended. In this study, the combination of the quantitative and qualitative methods aimed chiefly at the triangulation purpose, and it has enabled the clarification and in-depth exploration of the data obtained as well as the expansion of the study to a population group different from the initial one. It should also be noted that the use of questionnaires and interviews in this study followed the ethical guidelines as stated by the USC in its code of practice for research (Código de Boas Práticas Na Investigación Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2018, p.11-12). In this case, the identity of all the participants remained anonymous and data beyond academics, if any, remained dissociated via data coding. As a first step, all the participants were orally informed about the purpose of the study and the contact information of the researcher to request their

<sup>5</sup> QUAN= quantitative (\*capital letters indicate priority), qual= qualitative, the arrow denotes sequence

collaboration. Also, the introductory part of the questionnaire made explicit its purpose and anonymity while verbal consent was obtained from the participants at the beginning of each interview.

The original plan for the present inquiry was to include solely the student body. However, the data initially obtained craved for additional exploration of the beliefs and opinions of the teachers as well. Although questionnaires present a number of limitations which are “...connected to the way [they] are completed by participants, participants’ literacy and proficiency levels [and] issues with the design...” (Iwaniec 2020, p. 326), they are practical data collection tools in as much as they can yield a large amount of easy-to-process data in a relatively short period of time. The malleability and easiness of their design also make them a very convenient instrument which allows to explore chiefly three types of data about the respondents: *factual questions*, e.g. of the demographic type, *behavioral questions* about lifestyle, habits and suchlike and *attitudinal questions* such as opinions, values and beliefs (Dörnyei 2007, p. 102). The questionnaire used in the present study comprises primarily the latter type of questions.

### 3.2.2.1 Questionnaires

#### 3.2.2.1.1 *The students’ questionnaire*

The students’ statement battery was a tailored version of the *Beliefs About Learning Language Inventory* (BALLI), which was designed by Elaine Horwitz in 1983 and whose construction involved a large group of teachers, psychologists and students at the University of Texas-Austin. The original model was further expanded during the 1980s resulting in different versions which responded to the type of population to be surveyed. Three of the most popular adaptations according to Patricia Kuntz (1996) were ‘...one for ESL students (1984, 1987), another for foreign language teachers (1985), and a third for foreign language students (1988, 1990)’ which the current investigation rests upon.

This statement inventory explores five main categories of beliefs, each of which contains a subset of the statements. Table 3 further on illustrates the distribution of statements as per belief category in the original BALLI (Horwitz, 1988) as well as the adaptations made for this study. In contrast with its original version, the BALLI used in this study was expanded from 34 to 39 items to collect data about a few aspects the students had pointed out in previous informal conversations with the researcher. Two of the six additional statements (See items 32 and 33 on Table 3) sought to identify the level of importance the respondents attributed to the factors of motivation and participation in class to learn English. Three other statements (36 to 39 — See Appendix A for a questionnaire sample) briefly explored the students’ opinions about learning through EMI.

In terms of structure and organization of the items included in the questionnaire, the items were arranged into four sections. The first one grouped common scale statements (1-33) on beliefs; the second part comprised belief statements 34 and 35 whose scale wording was different, plus a close question (36) as an opener to items 37-39 in the following section regarding the EMI experience. The need to use question 36 is explained by the fact that not all the students at this age had had a content-language integrated experience at previous educational levels. The last segment of the questionnaire included 12 items on demographic data and a concluding open question for further suggestions and comments. Regarding its terminology and wording, the BALLI was tailored to meet the reality of the USC learning context. To this end, three main changes were introduced. Some of the statements referring to foreign languages in general were narrowed down to English specifically, references to

countries or cultures were adapted to the international student body present at the USC, and the phrasing of the remarks was adjusted to make it more accessible to the proficiency level of the students. In the same vein, a revised translation of the questionnaire into Spanish and another one in Galician were made available online in tandem with the English version as shown in Appendix A1.

Table 3

*Statements per belief category in BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) and adaptations for the current study*

| Belief Categories                          | Statements in original BALLI questionnaire                                                                                                                                                                               | Adapted BALLI statements for current study                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>The difficulty of language learning</i> | 1. Some languages are easier to learn than others.                                                                                                                                                                       | 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                            | 2. The language I'm trying to learn is: 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5) a very easy language: very difficult, very easy.              | 34. Learning English is... (Very difficult / Difficult / Somewhat difficult / Somewhat easy / Easy / Very easy).                                                                                                           |
|                                            | 3. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak this language very well.                                                                                                                                              | 5. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                            | 14. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) you can't learn a language in 1 hour a day. | 35. If someone spent an hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? (Less than 1 year / 1-2 years / 3-5 years / 6-8 years / About 10 years / You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day. |
|                                            | 24. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.                                                                                                                                                            | 21. It is easier to speak than to understand English.                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                            | 28. It is easier to read and write this language than to speak and understand it.                                                                                                                                        | 25. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.                                                                                                                                                |
| <i>Foreign language aptitude</i>           | 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.                                                                                                                                                    | 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                            | 2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.                                                                                                                                | 2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.                                                                                                                                  |
|                                            | 10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.                                                                                                                                 | 9. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.                                                                                                                                    |
|                                            | 15. I have foreign language aptitude.                                                                                                                                                                                    | 13. I have a natural aptitude for the learning of foreign languages.                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                            | 22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                                             | 19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                            | 29. People who are good at math and sciences are not good at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                 | 26. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                    |
|                                            | 32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.                                                                                                                                                   | 29. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                            | 33. Americans are good at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                                                    | 30. In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                                           |
|                                            | 34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.                                                                                                                                                                      | 31. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                            | 4. The language I'm trying to learn is structured in the same way as English.                                                                                                                                            | 4. English is structured in the same way as my native language.                                                                                                                                                            |

| Belief Categories                            | Statements in original BALLI questionnaire                                                                                              | Adapted BALLI statements for current study                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>The nature of language learning</i>       | 5. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.                                                  | 7. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.                         |
|                                              | 11. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.                                                                    | 10. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.                                           |
|                                              | 16. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.                                           | 14. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.                                 |
|                                              | 20. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.                                                  | 18. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules.                                        |
|                                              | 25. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.                                                       | 22. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.                                                |
| <i>Learning and communication strategies</i> | 26. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of translating from English.                                                         | 23. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from my native language.                                |
|                                              | 6. It is important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.                                                                | 6. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.                                                  |
|                                              | 7. You shouldn't say anything in the foreign language until you can say it correctly.                                                   | 8. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.                                      |
|                                              | 12. If I heard someone speaking the language I'm trying to learn, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language. | 11. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language. |
|                                              | 13. It's ok to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language.                                                                  | 12. It is okay to guess-if you do not know a word in English.                                                  |
|                                              | 17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.                                                                                       | 15. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.                                                              |
|                                              | 18. I feel self-conscious speaking the foreign language in front of other people.                                                       | 16. I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.                                                 |
|                                              | 19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.                                  | 17. If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.         |
|                                              | 21. It is important to practice in the language laboratory.                                                                             | Excluded from this version                                                                                     |
|                                              | 23. If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.                                                | 20. If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.                                    |
| <i>Motivations and expectations</i>          | 27. If I get to speak this language very well, I will help me get a good job.                                                           | 24. If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job.                                      |
|                                              | 30. Americans think that it is important to speak a foreign language.                                                                   | 27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.                                          |
|                                              | 31. I would like to learn this language so that I can get to know its speakers better.                                                  | 28. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.                               |
|                                              | -                                                                                                                                       | 32. Participating in class is important to learn English.                                                      |
|                                              | -                                                                                                                                       | 33. Motivation is important to learn English.                                                                  |



The dissonance between the two questionnaires as regards the numbering of the statements results from a few organizational changes introduced. Those statements with a different wording in the scale (i.e. items 4 and 14 in the original BALLI) were moved towards the end of the adapted questionnaire to enable a steadier answering process for the participant students. Likewise, statement 21 from the original BALLI was removed in its version as students today have replaced practice in the laboratory with the use of a wide array of technological resources. This aspect about language practice was explored further through the interview. Moreover, a continuum of six possible answers arranged in the form of a Likert scale followed each statement in the questionnaire, and although the wording of the scales varied for some questions, they were all coded into the same sequence for the analysis. Based on the previous use of this type of system by other researchers (Iwaniec, 2020), an odd-numbered option was excluded from the scale to encourage respondents to consider their answers more in depth and thus feel forced to choose a negative or a positive position. All the statements included in the questionnaire were affirmative, thus no use of reverse scale was necessary for the analysis.

Since its creation, the validity and reliability of the BALLI has largely been put to the test by different researchers (Kuntz, 1996; Yang, 1999; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006; Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011; Ferreira Barcelos, 2015), and its editing and adaptation to each teaching-learning reality has allowed to probe deeper into beliefs as a category of the learning process. In this study, a Cronbach Alfa coefficient test was conducted via the SPSS statistical program to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire items in both the students and the teachers' survey on beliefs. The reliability ranged in both cases between 0.6 and 0.7, an acceptable measure for studies in the fields of humanities and social sciences (Taber, 2018).

#### 3.2.2.1.2 *The questionnaire addressed to teachers*

The battery of statements used to explore the beliefs of the teachers about EFL learning was adapted from the students' BALLI version and comprised 33 questions arranged into three sections. The first section (questions 1-5a) requested demographic data. The second (questions 6-30) was targeted at the beliefs and opinions of the teachers. In the last section (questions 31-33) the opinions of the teachers about the learning strategies of the students were explored, and the respondents were invited to make suggestions for the improvement of EFL learning at the USC through an open item. A checkbox was included at the end so that teachers could express their willingness to take part in an interview. (See Appendix B for a questionnaire sample).

Table 4 below describes the different adjustments made to design the teachers' questionnaire. Four items (35, 13, 19, 26) were excluded from the categories of *The difficulty of language learning* and *Foreign language aptitude*. In the same line, the wording of some items does not probe directly into the teachers' beliefs about themselves but rather into their beliefs with regard to their students. By way of example, compare students' items 34 and 5 with teacher's statements 16 and 10 respectively on Table 4. Such decisions respond to the fact that the data elicited through these statements was too debatable or irrelevant due to the linguistic background of the teachers, or the pattern of answers obtained in the students' survey was remarkably homogeneous.

Table 4

*Statements per belief category in students' questionnaire and adaptations for the teachers' questionnaire*

| Belief Categories                          | Statements about beliefs in students' questionnaire                                                                                                                                                                             | Statements about beliefs in teachers' questionnaire                                       |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>The difficulty of language learning</i> | 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.                                                                                                                                                                              | 8. Some languages are easier to learn than others.                                        |
|                                            | 34. Learning English is... (Very difficult / Difficult / Somewhat difficult / Somewhat easy / Easy / Very easy)                                                                                                                 | 16. Learning English is easy for my students.                                             |
|                                            | 5. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.                                                                                                                                                           | 10. I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.          |
|                                            | 35. If someone spent one hour every day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? (Less than 1 year / 1-2 years / 3-5 years / 6-8 years / About 10 years / You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day. | Not included                                                                              |
|                                            | 21. It is easier to speak than to understand English.                                                                                                                                                                           | 24. It is easier to speak than to understand English.                                     |
|                                            | 25. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.                                                                                                                                                     | 17. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.               |
| <i>Foreign language aptitude</i>           | 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.                                                                                                                                                           | 6. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.                     |
|                                            | 2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.                                                                                                                                       | 7. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language. |
|                                            | 8. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.                                                                                                                                         | 14. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.  |
|                                            | 13. I have a natural aptitude for the learning of foreign languages.                                                                                                                                                            | Not included                                                                              |
|                                            | 19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                                                    | Not included                                                                              |
|                                            | 26. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                         | Not included                                                                              |
|                                            | 29. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.                                                                                                                                                          | 21. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.                    |
|                                            | 30. In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.                                                                                                                                                                | 22. In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.                          |
|                                            | 31. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.                                                                                                                                                                             | 30. I think that more extroverted students can learn English better than the rest.        |
|                                            | 4. English is structured in the same way as my native language.                                                                                                                                                                 | 9. English is structured in the same way as my native language.                           |

| Belief Categories                            | Statements about beliefs in students' questionnaire                                                            | Statements about beliefs in teachers' questionnaire                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>The nature of language learning</i>       | 7. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.                         | 12. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.                                                                       |
|                                              | 10. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.                                           | 15. The best way to learn English is in an English-speaking country.                                                                                          |
|                                              | 14. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.                                 | 31e. They focus on learning a lot of vocabulary.                                                                                                              |
|                                              | 18. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules.                                        | 31l. They focus on learning a lot of grammar.                                                                                                                 |
|                                              | 22. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.                                                | 23. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.                                                                                               |
|                                              | 23. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from my native language.                                | 31i. They constantly translate from their mother tongue.                                                                                                      |
| <i>Learning and communication strategies</i> | 6. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.                                                  | 11. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.                                                                                                |
|                                              | 8. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.                                      | 13. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.                                                                                    |
|                                              | 11. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language. | 31a. If they hear someone speaking English, they get actively involved in the conversation.                                                                   |
|                                              | 12. It is okay to guess-if you do not know a word in English.                                                  | 31b. When they don't know a word in English, they try to guess its meaning.                                                                                   |
|                                              | 15. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.                                                              | 18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot to learn English.                                                                                            |
|                                              | 16. I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.                                                 | 26. My students feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.                                                                                      |
|                                              | 17. If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.         | 19. If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.                                                        |
|                                              | 20. If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.                                    | 20. If a student speaks English very well, s(he) will have many opportunities to use it.                                                                      |
| <i>Motivations and expectations</i>          | 24. If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job.                                      | 25. If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job.                                                                                     |
|                                              | 27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.                                          | 27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.                                                                                         |
|                                              | 28. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.                               | 31m. They interact in English with friends overseas, Erasmus students and tourists.                                                                           |
|                                              | 32. Participating in class is important to learn English.                                                      | 31c. They participate actively in class (in English).<br>31o. They ask questions in English and frequently request help to clarify doubts about the language. |
|                                              | 33. Motivation is important to learn English.                                                                  | 31d. They show good motivation and enthusiasm in most of the activities.                                                                                      |

In addition, eight of the statements in the students' survey were regrouped within question 31 in the form of learning strategies, along with six additional items targeting forms of language practice. Unlike the rest of the scales used in the survey questions, section three in this questionnaire uses a four-level scale instead of the six levels used in other sections, since its main objective was to have the teachers succinctly assess the frequency with which students used the learning strategies they had formerly outlined through their survey and interview. Such scale difference demanded a third Cronbach reliability test whose result was at 0.7. Consistent with the students' survey, versions of the questionnaire in the two official languages and in English were made available online to the teachers who participated in the survey (See appendix B1).

### 3.2.2.2 Interviews

Interviews are a popular research instrument whose versatile character allows for the collection of different types of data which cannot be retrieved through the use of questionnaires (Wray & Bloomer, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007).

#### 3.2.2.2.1 Interviews conducted with students

In this study a semi-structured interview comprising a set of 16 questions was used in order to explore key points on beliefs previously identified through the BALLI survey. The interview questions addressed specific aspects of the main belief categories as well as some academic and social aspects related to the USC learning context the students seemed to consider important. The questions served a guiding purpose and they combined *content*, *probes* and a *closing question* (Dörnyei, 2007; Rolland et al., 2020). As an ice breaker to create rapport and put the respondents at ease, the opening segment of the interview consisted in a short informal exchange, chiefly related to the academic area of the students and where the researcher introduced herself. As regards the content questions, the first of them was directed at the level of difficulty of EFL learning. Questions three to ten covered different aspects about the conditions of learning, mainly language aptitude, learning strategies and the use of technological resources. Items 11 to 15 explored the students' opinions concerning the aforementioned social and academic conditions. Although most of the questions tended to narrow down the topic of discussion, in all cases respondents were given an open opportunity and/or prompted to elaborate on their answers. Consistent with the procedure for the questionnaire, the students interviewed were offered the opportunity of answering the interview in any of the three languages (Galician, Spanish or English). Appendix D contains a sample of the interview guide followed by the distribution of the interview questions corresponding to each category of beliefs surveyed through the questionnaire (Appendix D1) and a transcription sample of responses (Appendix D2).

#### 3.2.2.2.2 Interviews conducted with teachers

Having the questionnaire as a common original source, the design of the teachers' interview shared some similarities with that of the students in terms of its general structure and organization, although it was four items shorter. The first part of this semi-structured interview (questions 1-5) probes into reasons and opinions to interpret the teachers' pattern of beliefs which had emerged through the questionnaire. Questions 6 and 10 tapped into two of the most outstanding points regarding the English language learning strategies used by students: the oral skills and the use of resources available for language learning. The interviewees also

commented on two teaching practices, one directed to error correction and the other concerning the importance of possessing a native accent through questions 7 and 8. In addition, a few social aspects related to the USC learning context were included in questions 9 and 11; the closing item demanded a brief assessment of EMI as a teaching methodology at the USC. An example of the interview guide is available in Appendix E and some transcription samples in Appendix E1.

### 3.2.2.3 Data analysis instruments

Two main instruments have been used in this study to carry out the data analysis process: the statistical programs SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) and N-Vivo program. The former is an interactive software package produced by the American company SPSS based in Chicago. It was released by its developers Norman H. Nie, Dale H. Bent and C. Hadlai Hull in 1968 and has been continuously upgraded ever since. Although it cannot be regarded as a program for beginners or newcomers to the field, 'it is appropriate for people who have little experience in statistics and programming because of its user-friendly interactive features' (Dörnyei 2007, p. 198) and it is ideal for the analysis of quantitative data. Due to its long-standing presence in the market, its support materials, tutorials and instructions are readily available to all users. On the other hand, the type of statistical test to run in SPSS depends on the data and purpose of the investigation. So, the researcher should carefully choose and decide how best to use the program to obtain the optimal results.

With regards to the NVivo program, it is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) tool that was made public in 1999 by Tom and Lyn Richards. This program allows researchers to organize qualitative data in order to analyze it more thoroughly and clearly by constructing models and linking different elements. One of its main advantages is that the data can be imported in different document formats, and it allows to carry out and monitor teamwork. In the present study, the SPSS was used to run different types of tests including the Cronbach Alfa, as well as parametric tests (chiefly the Independent T-Test, the ANOVA test and the Pearson correlation coefficient) plus descriptive statistics. Meanwhile, the NVivo program helped to identify the most frequently occurring terms and phrases which occurred within the interview answers to describe and compare the different opinions expressed by students and teachers through the final open question in each questionnaire and those contained in the interviews. The use of both these tools made it easier to establish better links across the data obtained via the questionnaires and interviews, which, in turn, catered for a more thorough discussion of the results.

## 3.2.3 Data gathering

### 3.2.3.1 Identification and selection of the target population sample

#### 3.2.3.1.1 *Sample of students selected for the survey*

In the 2018-2019 academic year, when this study was started, the USC offered 58 official undergraduate programs and 65 master's courses (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, n.d.-b) where English constituted 2.11 % and 1.64 % respectively of all the linguistic use at the USC (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, n.d.-a). The data gathering process was initiated with the identification of the programs where the language of instruction was English at the USC. Two main actions were taken for this purpose: first, the revision of the documentation publicly available for each program through the schools' and faculties' websites. The second step was to contact the program coordinators first via electronic mail and

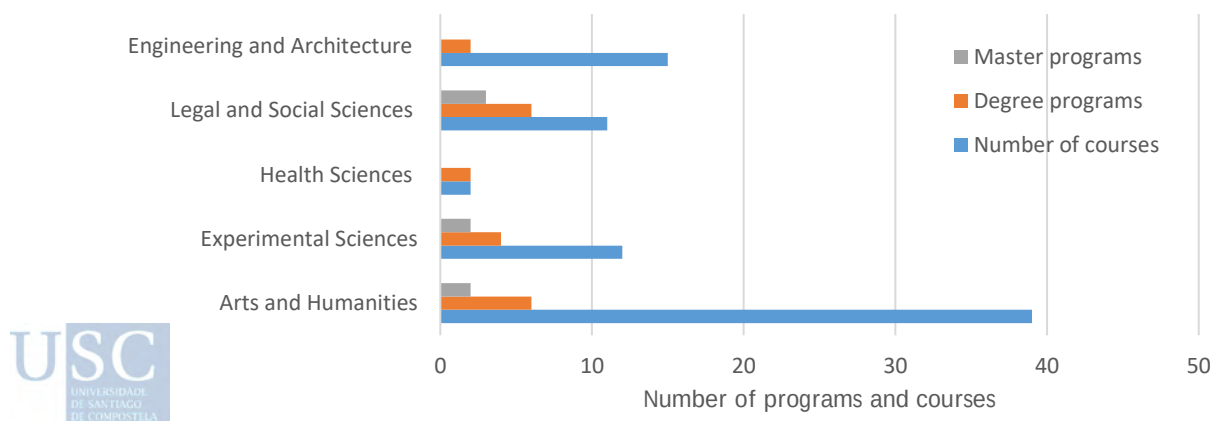


then through telephone calls to get hold of those who did not reply in writing. As to the first stage, the information available on the website evidenced the effort to make the studies at the USC more reachable to foreign students since many of the program documents are accessible in the two official languages, that is, Galician and Spanish, as well as in English. This is applicable to both subjects delivered in English and those where instruction is in Galician and/or Spanish but English is used for other purposes such as accessing bibliography and scientific information relevant to the program. The data was for the most part readily accessible on the network; yet it must be pointed out that not all the program descriptions made it explicit or clear whether the instruction was in English. In addition, some courses offered had been changed because of adjustments made to the degree programs, which was not duly reflected on the website.

In order to obtain more reliable data, a message requesting confirmation about the courses taught in English was sent to 45 coordinators of undergraduate programs and to 58 of master's programs. The former group had a response rate of 60 % which was increased to 86 % through personal phone calls. In the case of the latter, their initial replies were at a percentage of 81% and the calls raised them to 87%. The written replies in particular enriched the data, especially in the case of the master's program supervisors as they included some additional information concerning other forms of English language use aside from the instructional purpose (See Table 5 below). The main reasons that prevented achieving a higher response rate were the inaccessibility of contact details (e.g. telephone number) of the coordinator as they were missing or outdated on the web, some unanswered e-mails and calls, and the coordinator's cessation whether permanently or temporarily, due to a stay-abroad period for instance. Twenty-two of the undergraduate programs included 93 subjects in English which were delivered in 12 faculties and schools, eight located in the campus of Santiago de Compostela and four in Lugo, enrolling about 5,791 students, who comprised the target population of the present study. Not only did these subjects vary as to their weight in the programs but also in terms of the purpose for which English instruction was used. There were 41 subjects offered as obligatory, 23 as optional and 15 as basic modules. As regards English use, eight courses used English for General Purposes (EGP henceforth), 16 used English for Specific Purposes (ESP henceforth), and 55 as EMI. In the case of the latter, the degrees at the Faculty of Philology accounted for 54.5 % (30 EMI subjects).

Figure 3 below outlines the distribution of the undergraduate subjects and master's programs with instruction in English as per field of study at the moment when this research project started.

Figure 3: Academic offer of courses and programs in English at the USC (2018-2019)



Notwithstanding the fact that only seven of the masters programs offered instruction in English, the data gathered through the program coordinators suggests that the use of this foreign language at the USC takes many other forms beyond classroom instruction. Aside from the two postgraduate courses which had 100% of the instruction in English (Theoretical Chemistry and Computer Modelling / Advanced English Studies and its Applications), the use of English varied in the other masters programs from 14.81% in the Erasmus Mundus Lexicography Master Program to 0.73% in the Master's Program in Secondary Education in the campus of Santiago (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, n.d.-a). Other programs also consider a good level of English as a necessary, if not a required, prerequisite to accept students (e.g., Biomedical Research / Chemical Research and Industrial Chemistry / Nanoscience and Nanotechnology) even though their teaching is in Spanish and/or Galician. Beyond the instruction in the foreign language, it seems that the latent need for the presence and use of English continues to exert pressure over teachers and students, as evidenced in the comments shared by the masters programs supervisors. By way of example, in one of the courses the increasing number of Chinese students compelled teachers to start delivering some modules in English. In another case, they organized an outdoor program consisting of an exchange with the University of Cumbria based on experiential learning where English surfaced as a main communication channel. Other instances where its use was spontaneously reported are summarized in the table below:

Table 5

*Other uses of English in master programs as reported by the coordinators (2018-19)*

| Activity/event where English was used                                        | No. of master programs |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Bibliographic search and revision (Scientific publications, journals, books) | 12                     |
| Tutoring                                                                     | 2                      |
| Asking questions in class to the teacher                                     | 2                      |
| Exams, final projects and /or master's dissertation                          | 5                      |
| Learning technical terminology/concepts which cannot be translated           | 1                      |
| Interaction with guest speakers and specialists                              | 2                      |
| Use of software                                                              | 1                      |

This additional data contributed by the coordinators sheds light on a potential niche for future research where a more in-depth study could unveil the true extent to which English is used and needed at the USC by all stakeholders. The next stage in the data gathering process consisted of the selection of the population sample. To this end, the total number of students enrolled in each of the 79 subjects was obtained through the Registrar's Office at the Department of English and German Philology. It is necessary to clarify that the groups of students at the Faculty of Philology are mixed due to the flexibility of the programs offered.

For instance, as part of their academic minor, students from Classical, Spanish, Galician and/or Modern Philology may attend English Language lessons together with students in the degree of English Studies. Likewise, those faculties that offer double or combined degrees (e.g. Chemistry-Biology, Chemistry-Physics) or degree programs in transition (e.g. Criminology-*Curso Puente*) also combine students in this way. In the case of the degrees on Teacher Training (both Early Years and Elementary), all four subjects are offered in both campuses. Such combinations result in an increased number of students per subject. Regarding the sampling method, a quota sampling technique within the non-probability sample category (Dörnyei, 2007) was used, by which 30 % of the number of students registered in each subject was initially decided upon. For the obligatory and basic-module subjects which had a similar number of students and were taught in the same semester and academic year, an average of the students enrolled was used to calculate this 30 % as there is a very high probability that the same students took such different subjects. A similar procedure was followed in the case of consecutive optional subjects, e.g. Legal English I and II. The table in Appendix F shows detailed information about the sampling process of undergraduate students as per programs and subjects offered in English at the USC faculties and schools.

Bearing in mind that the beliefs of the students in the masters programs could also be valuable for the study, a small sample of students was added to the core population of undergraduates. A random criterion was followed to choose the population sample of masters students with the main purpose of having one or two students representing their field of study as the groups in these programs are usually small and the instruction in English is limited to a few courses. However, throughout the process of data collection the final population sample surveyed differs slightly from the initial figures as summarized in Table 6 below.

Table 6

*Variations in population sample size initially planned and the final sample used in the study.*

| USC School / Faculty                                             | Initial sample<br>(30% of students<br>registered in<br>subjects with<br>English<br>instruction) | Sample of<br>undergraduate<br>students<br>surveyed | Sample of<br>master's<br>students<br>surveyed |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Faculty of Communication Sciences (Campus Santiago)              | 14                                                                                              | 17                                                 | 0                                             |
| Faculty of Education (Campus of Santiago)                        | 46                                                                                              | 52                                                 | 6                                             |
| Faculty of Law (Campus of Santiago)                              | 41                                                                                              | 40                                                 | 0                                             |
| Faculty of Philology (Campus of Santiago)                        | 113                                                                                             | 166                                                | 8                                             |
| Faculty of Physics (Campus of Santiago)                          | 26                                                                                              | 47                                                 | 1                                             |
| Faculty of Medicine and Odontology (Campus of Santiago)          | 17                                                                                              | 41                                                 | 0                                             |
| Faculty of Chemistry (Campus of Santiago)                        | 144                                                                                             | 165                                                | 1                                             |
| Higher Technical Engineering School (Campus of Santiago)         | 78                                                                                              | 28                                                 | 0                                             |
| Faculty of Business, Administration and Management (Lugo Campus) | 4                                                                                               | 0                                                  | 0                                             |
| Teacher Training College (Lugo Campus)                           | 37                                                                                              | 28                                                 | 2                                             |

| USC School / Faculty                        | Initial sample<br>(30% of students<br>registered in<br>subjects with<br>English<br>instruction) | Sample of<br>undergraduate<br>students<br>surveyed | Sample of<br>master's<br>students<br>surveyed |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Faculty of Humanities (Lugo Campus)         | 17                                                                                              | 10                                                 | 0                                             |
| Faculty of Veterinary Science (Lugo Campus) | 5                                                                                               | 0                                                  | 0                                             |
| Agricultural Engineering (Lugo Campus)      | -                                                                                               | 1                                                  | 0                                             |
| Faculty of Economics (Campus of Santiago)   | -                                                                                               | -                                                  | 1                                             |
| TOTAL                                       | 542                                                                                             | 595                                                | 19                                            |
|                                             |                                                                                                 | 614                                                |                                               |

The discrepancies in the figures presented above were mainly due to a low response rate by the students to the online questionnaire, and the impossibility to arrange a meeting with those groups (See further section 3.2.3.3). In some cases, contact with the responsible instructor was not possible, some of them were under pressure to cover the content in the program and/or some groups were going through an exam period. Such absence of undergraduate and master's students may have undermined the representativeness of the population sample.

#### 3.2.3.1.2 Sample of the students selected for the interviews

In the selection process of the interviewees, the main objective was to have a group as representative as possible of those who had answered the survey. To this purpose, a cross-section of the questionnaire respondents was devised through a systematic sample criterion where a ratio 1:10 (one interviewee per 10 questionnaire respondents) was used to determine the size and variety of the group. Within a pool of about 60 potential interviewees, a random criterion was followed to approach those to have a conversation with which resulted in a total of 56 successfully conducted interviews. Table 7 below illustrates the distribution of the interviewees as per faculty or school.

Table 7

*Distribution of student population sample for questionnaires and interviews*

| USC School / Faculty                                     | Students<br>surveyed<br>through<br>questionnaire | Initial<br>sample of<br>students to<br>interview | Final<br>sample of<br>students<br>interviewed |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Faculty of Communication Sciences (Campus Santiago)      | 17                                               | 2                                                | 3                                             |
| Faculty of Education (Campus of Santiago)                | 58                                               | 5                                                | 8                                             |
| Faculty of Law (Campus of Santiago)                      | 40                                               | 4                                                | 3                                             |
| Faculty of Philology (Campus of Santiago)                | 174                                              | 17                                               | 15                                            |
| Faculty of Physics (Campus of Santiago)                  | 48                                               | 5                                                | 5                                             |
| Faculty of Medicine and Odontology (Campus of Santiago)  | 41                                               | 4                                                | 2                                             |
| Faculty of Chemistry (Campus of Santiago)                | 165                                              | 16                                               | 11                                            |
| Higher Technical Engineering School (Campus of Santiago) | 28                                               | 2                                                | 4                                             |

| USC School / Faculty                   | Students surveyed through questionnaire | Initial sample of students to interview | Final sample of students interviewed |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Teacher Training College (Lugo Campus) | 30                                      | 3                                       | 5                                    |
| Faculty of Humanities (Lugo Campus)    | 12                                      | 1                                       | -                                    |
| Agricultural Engineering (Lugo Campus) | 1                                       | 1                                       | -                                    |
| Total                                  | 614                                     | 60                                      | 56                                   |

The four interviews conducted at the Lugo campus revealed a similar pattern of answers to those conducted in the Santiago campus, which made it unnecessary for the researcher to extend the interview process in Lugo.

### 3.2.3.1.3 Sample selected for the questionnaire addressed to teachers

In order to identify the population of teachers, a procedure similar to that of the students was followed. Via the USC website, the contact details of those teachers delivering subjects in English was obtained and a total of 121 electronic mails were sent to teaching staff at both campuses. Although the response rate was at a low 29 % (N=35), most of the faculties and schools were represented in this sample, as illustrated in Table 8 below.

Table 8

*Faculties and schools where the respondent teachers delivered instruction*

| Faculty / School<br>(S: Santiago Campus, L: Lugo Campus)                            | Number of questionnaire respondents |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Chemistry (S)                                                                       | 6                                   |
| Chemistry (S), Education (S), Engineering School (HTES) (S), Law (S), Philology (S) | 1                                   |
| Communication Sciences(S), Philology (S)                                            | 1                                   |
| Education Sciences(S), Engineering School (HTES) (S), Philology (S), Odontology (S) | 1                                   |
| Education Sciences(S), Philology (S)                                                | 2                                   |
| Education Sciences(S), Philology (S), Odontology (S)                                | 1                                   |
| Engineering School (HTES) (S)                                                       | 1                                   |
| Engineering School (HTES) (S)                                                       | 2                                   |
| Engineering School (HTES) (S), Chemistry (S)                                        | 1                                   |
| Humanities (L), Teacher Training (L)                                                | 2                                   |
| Odontology (S)                                                                      | 1                                   |
| Philology (S)                                                                       | 13                                  |
| Physics (S)                                                                         | 1                                   |
| Teacher Training(L)                                                                 | 1                                   |
| Teacher Training(L), Humanitites (L)                                                | 1                                   |
| Total                                                                               | 35                                  |

Accessing the teachers' contact details through the university website also allowed the researcher to probe through the questionnaire into their consent to be interviewed. From the 35 questionnaire respondents, 51% (N=18) accepted to be interviewed, and individual e-mails to other four non-respondent teachers completed the sample so that 22 interviews were successfully carried out.

### 3.2.3.2 Procedures and piloting of the tools for data collection



As explained in section 3.2.2.1, the questionnaire addressed to the group of students was an adapted version of the BALLI designed by Horwitz in 1988. Once the instrument was ready, the piloting stage was carried out. The questionnaire was given in the three languages to



a group of nine students who voluntarily accepted to take part in the piloting process. Of them, seven belonged to the Faculty of Philology, one male and three female undergraduates and three postgraduates. Another male student was from the Faculty of Law and one female student was from the Faculty of Chemistry. They all offered valuable feedback in terms of the wording of some questions for better clarity, the need to expand the demographic section, and functional issues related to paging and printing, and the online version vs. the printed version. In order to administer the questionnaire to the participating students, an introductory e-mail containing the corresponding access link was sent to the degree coordinators and/or individual teachers who delivered instruction in the target groups; these teachers shared the message with the students through their online forum spaces. In some cases, chiefly at the Faculty of Philology, the researcher could arrange a short visit to some groups of students at the beginning or at the end of a lesson to introduce the project and kindly encourage students to complete the questionnaire.

The low response rate to the online questionnaire forced the researcher to continue the data collection using printed copies. In this case, e-mail contact or approaching teachers directly at the different faculties and schools before or after a lesson allowed for the arrangement of a specific time to have access to the classrooms and give out the questionnaire. Some circumstances in this procedure may have affected the quality of the answers. Due to the researcher's presence the students may have felt under pressure to contribute additional comments in the last open question, and some of them left items unanswered, probably out of distraction; a glitch that was not present in the online version as their answer format was designed as obligatory. As regards the teachers' questionnaire, the trial-run was conducted with two teachers who delivered instruction at two different faculties, a male Philology teacher and a female lecturer of the Faculty of Education. Their feedback was positive in general and minor adjustments had to be made to the questionnaire, except for a demographic question in the English version whose wording did not accommodate for international teachers. Once details were completed, an online version was offered, through which the respondents contributed interesting comments, particularly in the final open question. As regards the interviews, despite the fact that "[piloting] is more important in quantitative studies than in qualitative ones..." (Dörnyei 2007, p. 75), the first two interviews conducted with the students (two females from the Faculties of Philology and Chemistry) were observed as a trial-run where one of the questions related to the language aptitude category of beliefs had to be reworded as this did not seem to be completely clear to them. In addition, both interviews resulted in an effective ice-breaker for the researcher to approach the participant students and to practice her interviewing skills.

In order to recruit the interviewees, requesting collaboration through the questionnaire was discarded since sharing personal information, i.e. contact details, with an external unknown researcher who is not a teacher at the university might have been too sensitive and presumably the students would refrain from it. Instead, personal contact in the communal areas of the faculties, e.g., the library and hallways, to request consent and conduct the interview was used as a main strategy.

Although all of the interviewees were willing to collaborate, in general the process was marked by shyness and the researcher had to resort to many prompt questions to have the students expand on their ideas. All the interviews were recorded, initially with a voice recorder which was later replaced by a mobile phone for the sake of better-quality sound. As regards the teachers' interview, a rehearsal was conducted with one male teacher from the Faculty of Philology whose observations on using follow-up questions and general feedback were very useful. Their interview took a network format since these conversations were framed within the lockdown period due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants made their contribution through

video-calls or audio-calls via Microsoft Teams and/or Skype, and electronic mail. Their contribution was valuable as they enriched their comments and opinions with personal experience.

### 3.2.3.3 Preparing the data and conducting the analysis

Once the data collection stage was finalized, the process of pruning the information was started. In the case of the students, a total of 625 questionnaires were completed, 11 of which were discarded since their answers were incomplete. As to the teachers' questionnaire, all the collected responses were included in the analysis. The questionnaire data in Spanish and Galician was translated into English before starting the coding process. The answer scales were transformed into numeric values following the criterion of representing the most positive answers with the highest digit, as exemplified in Table 9 below:

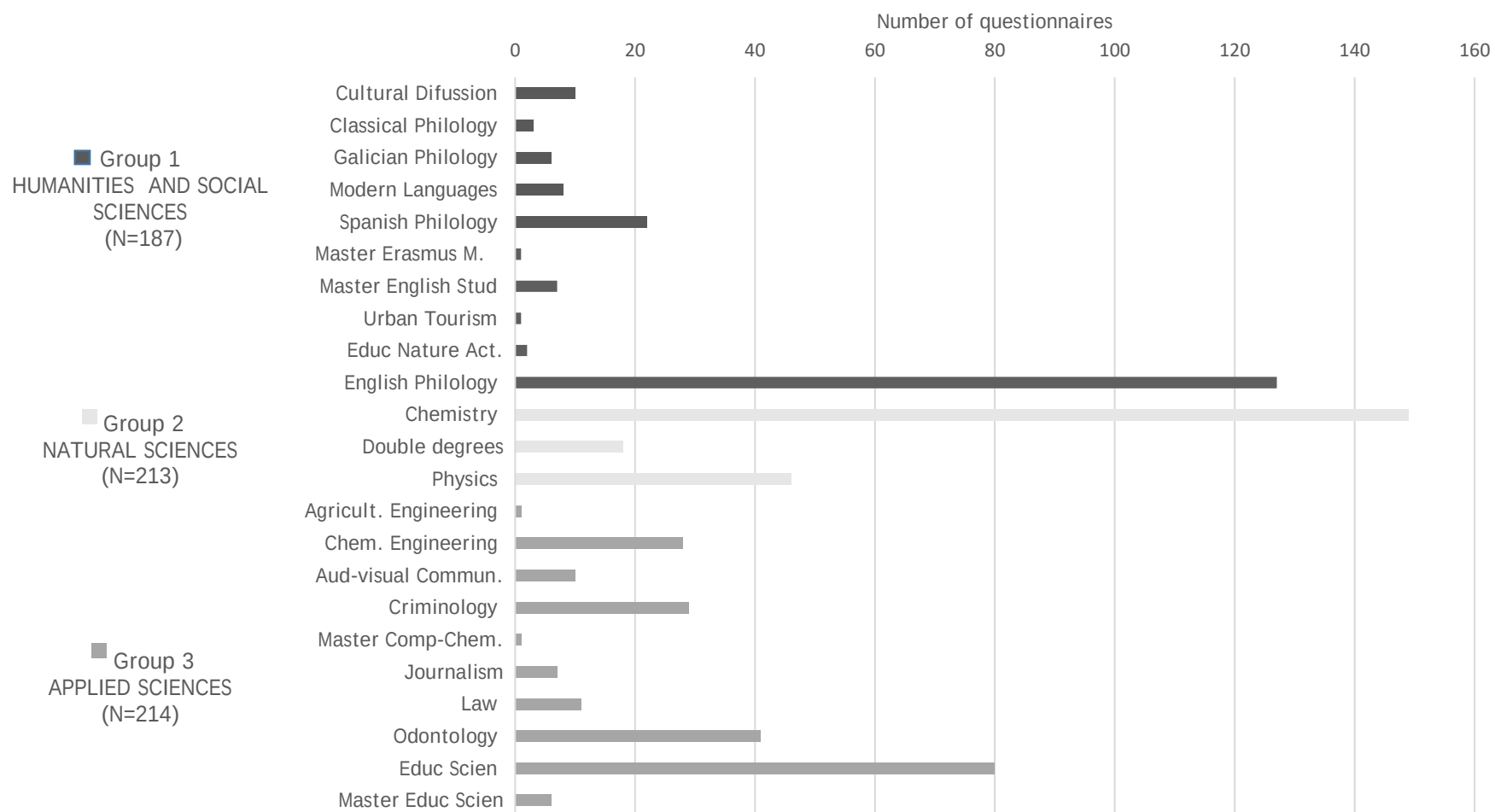
Table 9

*Example of scale coding for questionnaire answers*

| Strongly agree | Agree | Slightly agree | Slightly disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 6              | 5     | 4              | 3                 | 2        | 1                 |

Due to the variety in the number of students and fields of study, the completed questionnaires were distributed into three main groups in order to have a more balanced data for the analysis. Figure 4 below illustrates the groups with their corresponding number of questionnaires. In the same line, the responses of the teachers were distributed into two main groups: the English Mediated Instruction (EMI) teachers (N=16) and the General English (GE) teachers (N=19).

Figure 4: Organization of questionnaires as per academic areas for data analysis



To analyze the quantitative data from the questionnaires, three main statistical tests were used, the Independent Samples t-Test to explore the statistical differences between the means of two groups, the ANOVA test to compare three or more groups, and the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. An alpha level of .05 was used in all these tests. For multiple comparisons, the items where the homogeneity variance was over .05, a Tukey's HSD post hoc test was used while for items where the homogeneity variance was below .05, a Games-Howell post hoc test was employed. The discussion of the data does not include the extreme values that stood out from the overall pattern of responses, which are shown as outliers in the graphs of this study, as they accounted for less than 5% of the answers, which was considered unlikely to affect the general pattern of responses in each category.

In addition, three variables for each group of participants were chosen to analyze the data. For the students, these were the field of studies they were enrolled in, foreign language experience, and gender, while the variables for the teachers were years of professional experience, type of English instruction, and gender.

The choice of these variables was not made at random since it was based on different opinions expressed by USC students and teachers while holding conversations with this author about EFL learning in the preliminary stages of the project. In the case of the participant students, the first variable on the field of studies looked into their response differences first as regards the three general academic fields, that is, Humanities and Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Applied Sciences (See Figure 4 above) and then, more specifically, as to the 11 academic degree subgroups organized for the analysis (See Appendix F1). In order to explore the second student variable about foreign language experience more consistently, three different factors were included within it: first, the number of additional languages other than their mother tongue/s the students knew; second, the total of foreign languages they had learned by formal instruction; and third, their possible linguistic immersion experience in SA contexts. Meanwhile, the variable of gender was also included for both groups, students and teachers. This decision responded to an interest in the beliefs of the participant subjects regarding the effect of this variable for SLA within the modern social context where gender equality has gained momentum. As regards the teachers' variables regarding years of experience and type of English instruction, the former was intended to explore the potential belief differences that may have existed as a result of the teachers' professional experience, while the latter allowed to explore their beliefs and approaches connected to their practice under different academic circumstances.

The data provided by the interviews was transcribed and arranged into an inventory of the answers as per interview questions. The transcription was essentially orthographical and it was based on the premise of transcribing only the necessary excerpts (Wray & Bloomer, 2006). This final document was then translated into English. For the analysis of this interview data, the transcripts of the answers were transferred to Excel spreadsheets and imported into the NVivo program, which automatically coded every question as a *node*, every answer as a *reference* and every respondent as a *case*. In addition, the program allowed for the creation of new nodes where similar references could be coded under. This procedure enabled the comparison of answers through the running of queries and the visualization of results and patterns via different elements such as word frequency clouds, mind maps and concept maps. These were the main tools used in order to imprint a more quantitative character to the reporting of the students' and teachers' interview responses. The information obtained through the data collection stage is illustrated and discussed in the following chapter, that is, chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will present the data gathered by means of questionnaires and interviews on the general beliefs of the students and teachers about the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at the USC in two main parts. The first and more extensive of these (Part A) comprises the data on the five categories of beliefs, the last of which was expanded with teachers' assessments of the learning strategies used by the students. Part B then discusses the findings pertaining to the contextual elements and consists in a brief exploration of teachers' and students' experiences with English-Mediated Instruction (EMI) and their views on certain socio-economic aspects that may affect EFL learning. This arrangement of findings follows the structure of the study itself, as described in Section 3.1.

The results in the first section are reported under the five belief categories identified in the original version of BALLI (Horwitz 1987). However, in the case of categories four (Learning and Communication Strategies) and five (Motivations and Expectations) the traditional order has been reversed in the current report for the sake of stronger textual cohesion. All the categories are introduced in a hierarchical general-to-specific order. In this way, the first stage within each tier comprises elements of the overall pattern of answers identified through descriptive statistics, and in the second part a more detailed diagnosis arising from the ANOVA tests for various groups, the *t*-tests of independent samples to compare two groups, and Pearson correlation coefficients, is included. The most salient aspects of the beliefs of USC students and teachers are discussed once the results for each belief category have been presented. In a similar vein, the information retrieved through the interviews is presented per category in combination with that of the questionnaires, this to expand and enrich the patterns identified.

### 4.1 PART A: THE BELIEFS OF THE USC STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

#### 4.1.1 Belief category 1: The difficulty of language learning

Learners and educators judge the difficulty of learning a foreign language at different levels based on their personal experience and on what they understand by “language families”. This category of beliefs explores the level of difficulty of learning English as perceived by USC students and teachers from general and individual points of view. To this end, six statements (STs) from the students' survey and two interview questions (IQt) were used. In the questionnaire, the STs included in this category were the following:

- ST3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.
- ST5. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.
- ST21. It is easier to speak than to understand English.
- ST25. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.
- ST34. Learning English is very difficult / difficult...
- ST35. If someone spent one hour everyday learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?



As regards the questionnaire scales used in this category, the first four statements shared a common scale and the final two had differentiated scales, as shown in Table 1:

Table 10

*Scales for the different questionnaire items about the difficulty of language learning*

| Scale for statements<br>3, 5, 21, 25 | Scale for statement<br>34 | Scale for statement<br>35                     | Common numeric<br>conversion for all<br>three scales |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Strongly agree                       | Very easy                 | About 10 years                                | 6                                                    |
| Agree                                | Easy                      | 6-8 years                                     | 5                                                    |
| Slightly agree                       | Somewhat easy             | 3-5 years                                     | 4                                                    |
| Slightly disagree                    | Somewhat difficult        | 1-2 years                                     | 3                                                    |
| Disagree                             | Difficult                 | Less than 1 year                              | 2                                                    |
| Strongly disagree                    | Very difficult            | You can't learn a<br>language in 1 hour a day | 1                                                    |

#### 4.1.1.1 Descriptive statistics of the students' responses to the questionnaire

At first glance, the overall picture of responses for this category indicates a consensus ( $M=5.10$ ,  $SD=0.42$ ) on differences across languages in terms of learning difficulty. This pattern of responses is depicted in Figures 47 to 52 in Appendix C1. As illustrated in Figure 47, just 6% of the students firmly believe there is no difference in the level of learning difficulty across languages, while the remaining 94% accept there is some difference. Within the latter group, the largest number (43%,  $N=251$ ) were utterly convinced, the second subgroup (41%,  $N=239$ ) expressed simple agreement, and the third subgroup (15%,  $N=87$ ) were hesitant about this statement. In addition, the students seem to share a high level of confidence about their future English-speaking skills ( $M=4.64$ ,  $SD=0.46$ ), as evidenced by their reaction to ST5 (Fig 48). There were more positive answers (87%,  $N=533$ ) than negative ones (13%,  $N=81$ ), which indicates a high level of optimism and enthusiasm about learning English. As to the positive answers, 28% of the students ( $N=149$ ) were thoroughly convinced about their future oral competence, 41% ( $N=217$ ) were more neutral, and 31% ( $N=167$ ) were more skeptical.

However, it is precisely oral performance in English which seems to be the most challenging for them ( $M=2.62$ ,  $SD=0.05$ ), as seen in Figure 49. Most of the students (79%,  $N=483$ ) acknowledged the difficulty of oral performance over the ability of understanding English, while 21% ( $N=131$ ) expressed the opposite view. Within the largest group, 22% ( $N=105$ ) were wholly certain, 46% ( $N=224$ ) simply agreed, and 32% ( $N=154$ ) were hesitant.

When comparing the level of difficulty between the written and the oral skills (ST25, Fig 50), a more balanced distribution of answers across the positive-negative scale is observed ( $M=3.57$ ,  $SD=0.05$ ). In this case, about 54% of the students ( $N=331$ ) rated written skills as easier than oral ones, with 46% ( $N=283$ ) expressing the opposite view. In the former group, 45% ( $N=149$ ) hesitantly rated written skills to be easier, 36% ( $N=120$ ) were more discreet in their answer, and a small proportion (19%,  $N=62$ ) were fully convinced as to their response here. In the latter group, 37% ( $N=104$ ) were hesitant in favoring oral skills over written ones, 47% ( $N=134$ ) simply agreed, and 16% ( $N=45$ ) were more confident in their response. The two extremes of the scale (*strongly agree* / *strongly disagree*) were chosen in the lowest number of answers, which shows a generally conservative reaction towards the statement.

On the whole, learning English seems to be neither too easy nor too difficult for the students questioned ( $M=3.70$ ,  $SD=0.04$ ). The responses to this item (ST34, Fig 51) were positive for 57% of the subjects ( $N=349$ ) and negative for the remaining 43% ( $N=265$ ), which could indicate that English is considered by learners as a rather easy language. Yet, the highest number of answers on both sides of the scale were clustered between the levels “somewhat easy” (60% of all positive answers,  $N=209$ ) and “somewhat difficult” (73% of all negative answers,  $N=195$ ). These figures suggest that the level of difficulty in learning English is perceived as “average” by students. As to the rest of the learners who expressed a positive opinion on the claim that English has a low level of difficulty, 35% ( $N=122$ ) chose a neutral position and 5% ( $N=18$ ) were fully convinced about it. The opposing group, however, included 24% ( $N=64$ ) intermediate answers and 3% ( $N=6$ ) of more categorical answers. Finally, in their general view about ST35 (Fig 52), the respondents considered that language fluency could be attained within one or two years based on a daily hour of practice ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=0.04$ ). More specifically, 65% ( $N=245$ ) chose to see learning as being possible within this timeframe, 25% ( $N=95$ ) considered that less than one year would be sufficient, while the remaining 10% ( $N=36$ ) expressed the impossibility of learning a language fluently if practiced for one hour a day. On the other hand, 39% ( $N=238$ ) of the learners chose a timeframe between three and ten years, while 77% ( $N=183$ ) favored a period of three to five years. Finally, 15% ( $N=36$ ) referred to six to eight years as necessary to become fluent, and 8% ( $N=19$ ) chose a time span of about ten years.

#### 4.1.1.2 Variables considered. Testing for differences in students’ beliefs about the difficulty of language learning

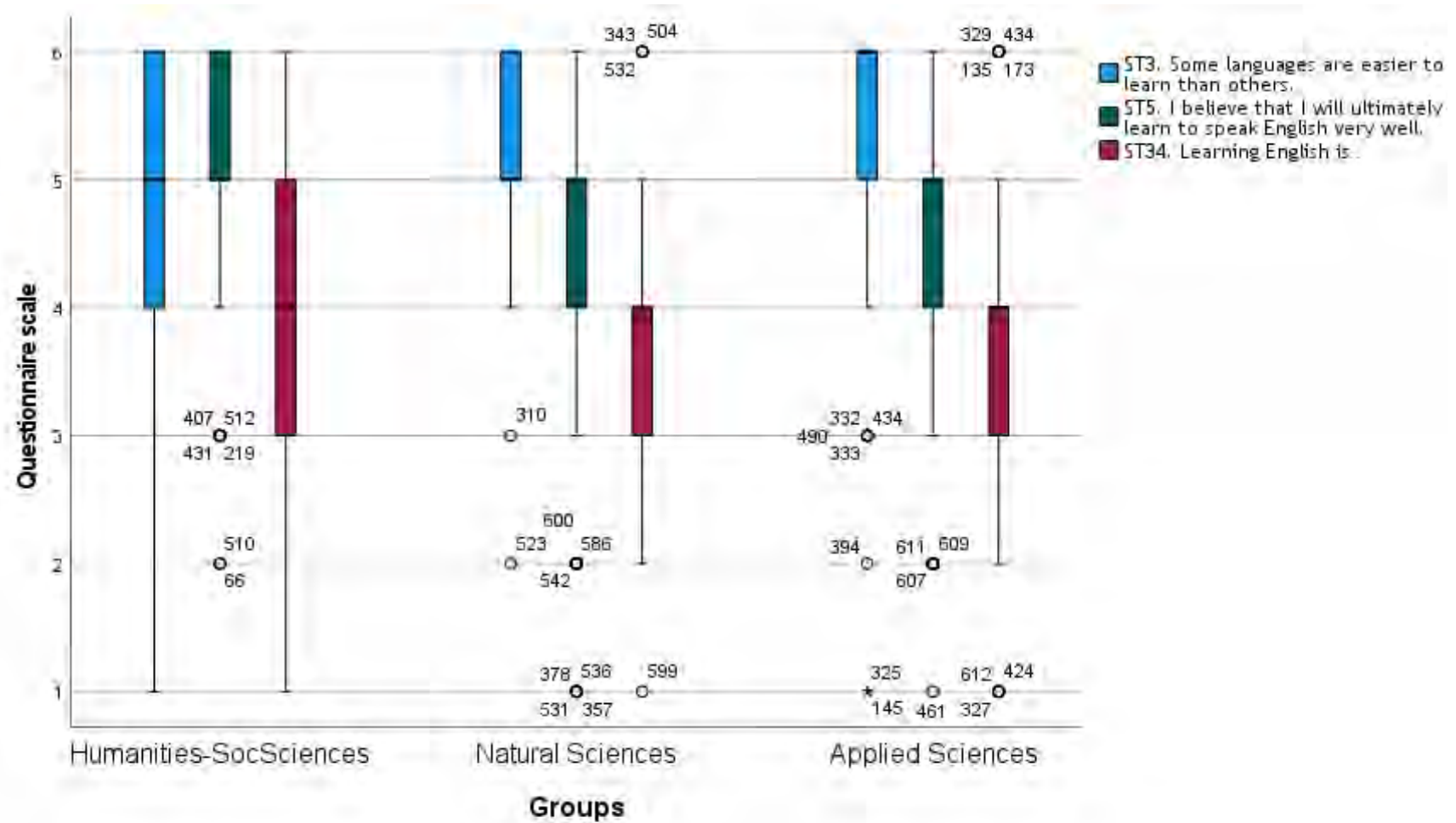
In this section, for every belief category the results will be analyzed according to the three student variables considered in this study. First, the field of study, which comprises the three main general groups arranged per academic area (see Figure 4, p.85 in this report). This first variable is also explored more specifically by comparing the questionnaire responses of the students across eleven different degrees, these referred to as subgroups in the analysis (Appendix F1). In this case, most subgroups contain the responses of students who are involved exclusively in one degree. However, other subgroups combine students’ answers from academically related areas where there was a low number of questionnaires collected, for instance in Criminology and Law or Journalism and Audiovisual Communication. As regards the second variable, this refers to students’ foreign language experience, which includes the foreign languages they know, the foreign languages learned through instruction, and their stay-abroad experience. Finally, the results in relation to the third variable, gender, are reported. As described in Chapter three on methodology, we will be considering five variables in total: the general academic area to which a student belongs, including the specific degree they are completing, their knowledge of foreign languages, the languages they have learned through formal instruction, their experience of stays abroad, and the factor of gender.

##### 4.1.1.2.1 Variable 1: The effects of the groups and subgroups in terms of beliefs about the difficulty of language learning.

When comparing the answers of the students in relation to area of study, EFL learning experience, and gender, certain significant intergroup differences emerge from the general pattern of answers, as shown in Figure 5 below. In the three main academic fields, the groups differed regarding the perceived level of difficulty when learning different languages,  $F(2, 613) = 27.8$ ,  $p < .001$ . The Games-Howell’s test showed that the mean value for ST3 of the

students in the Humanities and Social Sciences area ( $M=4.65$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ) was significantly different from those from the Natural Sciences ( $M=5.23$ ,  $SD=0.71$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [-0.87, -0.37]), and also differed significantly from the responses of the Applied Sciences group ( $M=5.34$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [-0.94, -0.41]). However, no significant difference was found between the second and third of these groups, who provided more homogenous answers. Thus, Humanities and Social Sciences respondents are more doubtful about the difficulty of learning different languages than the rest of the students. A similar pattern of differences was also found concerning ST5 in terms of their level of confidence in their future English competence,  $F(2, 613) = 22.4$ ,  $p < .001$ . The Humanities and Social Sciences group ( $M=5.08$ ,  $SD=0.82$ ) was more confident than the Natural Sciences group ( $M=4.48$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.35, 0.84]), and even more confident than the Applied Sciences group ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.44, 0.92]). By contrast, no meaningful variations were identified between the latter two groups (Natural Sciences and Applied Sciences), which indicates a similar level of confidence about the future English proficiency of these students. Finally, concerning the perceived level of difficulty of learning English (ST34), there was one significant difference,  $F(2, 613) = 5.87$ ,  $p = .003$ . Once again the students in the Humanities and Social Sciences constituted a contrast here, in that they found English easier ( $M=3.90$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ) than the students in the Applied Sciences ( $M=3.55$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ), ( $p = .03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.10, 0.59]).

Figure 5: Main statistical differences across the students' responses to statements 3, 5 and 34 based on the main academic areas



When exploring the responses of students in each of the 11 different degrees or subgroups, variations concerning STs 3, 5, 25 and 34 were identified. With an ANOVA test value of  $F(10, 613) = 6.86$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , responses about the difficulty of learning different languages (ST3) were different. The results of the comparisons are shown in Table 11 and Figure 6 below. The table generated in SPSS for the Games-Howell test sets out the significant differences across all the degrees, and some descriptive data has also been included. It shows that the students following the English language degree are much less likely to believe that some languages are easier to learn than others, although they do not differ significantly from the students in the other languages and literature group. No other significant differences were found across the other subgroups, which indicates that they tend to agree rather homogeneously with this statement. As seen in the table below, the greatest differences were between the English language students and students in Cultural Studies, and those in Educational Sciences.

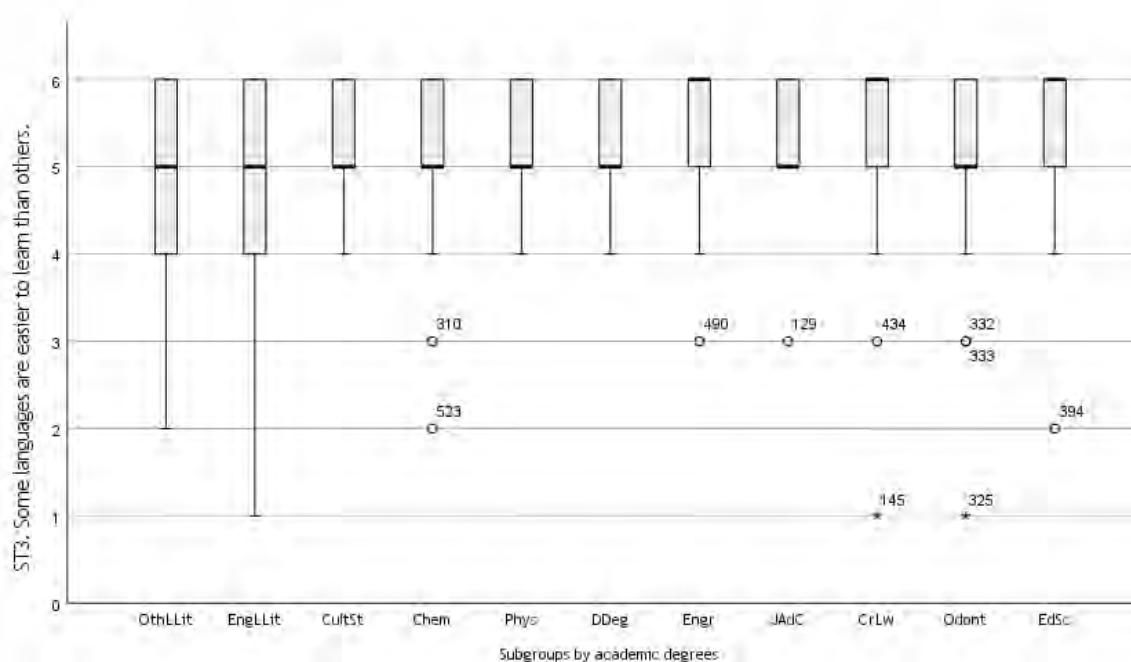
Table 11

*Significant statistical differences across the subgroups regarding ST3*

| Dependent Variable: 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others. |                                                       |                             |               |      |                         |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------|-------------------------|----------------|
| (I) SUBGr                                                              | (J) SUBGr<br>(Mean of answers)                        | Mean<br>Difference<br>(I-J) | Std.<br>Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |                |
|                                                                        |                                                       |                             |               |      | Lower<br>Bound          | Upper<br>Bound |
| English Studies<br>(N=134)<br>(M=4.51, SD=1.39)                        | Cultural Studies (N=13)<br>(M=5.38, SD=0.65)          | -,870 <sup>*</sup>          | ,217          | ,017 | -1,64                   | -,10           |
|                                                                        | Chemistry (N=149)<br>(M=5.28, SD=0.74)                | -,760 <sup>*</sup>          | ,135          | ,000 | -1,20                   | -,32           |
|                                                                        | Physics (N=46)<br>(M=5.24, SD=0.70)                   | -,724 <sup>*</sup>          | ,159          | ,001 | -1,24                   | -,20           |
|                                                                        | Double Degree Science<br>(N=18)<br>(M=5.28, SD=0.75)  | -,763 <sup>*</sup>          | ,214          | ,037 | -1,50                   | -,03           |
|                                                                        | Engineering (N=30)<br>(M=5.30, SD=0.87)               | -,785 <sup>*</sup>          | ,200          | ,009 | -1,45                   | -,12           |
|                                                                        | Journ-Aud Vis Communic<br>(N=17)<br>(M=5.29, SD=0.77) | -,779 <sup>*</sup>          | ,223          | ,046 | -1,55                   | -,01           |
|                                                                        | Criminology-Law (N=40)<br>(M=5.28, SD=1.06)           | -,760 <sup>*</sup>          | ,207          | ,017 | -1,44                   | -,08           |
|                                                                        | Odontology (N=41)<br>(M=5.22, SD=1.03)                | -,705 <sup>*</sup>          | ,202          | ,030 | -1,37                   | -,04           |
|                                                                        | Educational Sciences<br>(N=86)<br>(M=5.40, SD=0.77)   | -,880 <sup>*</sup>          | ,147          | ,000 | -1,36                   | -,40           |

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. \*

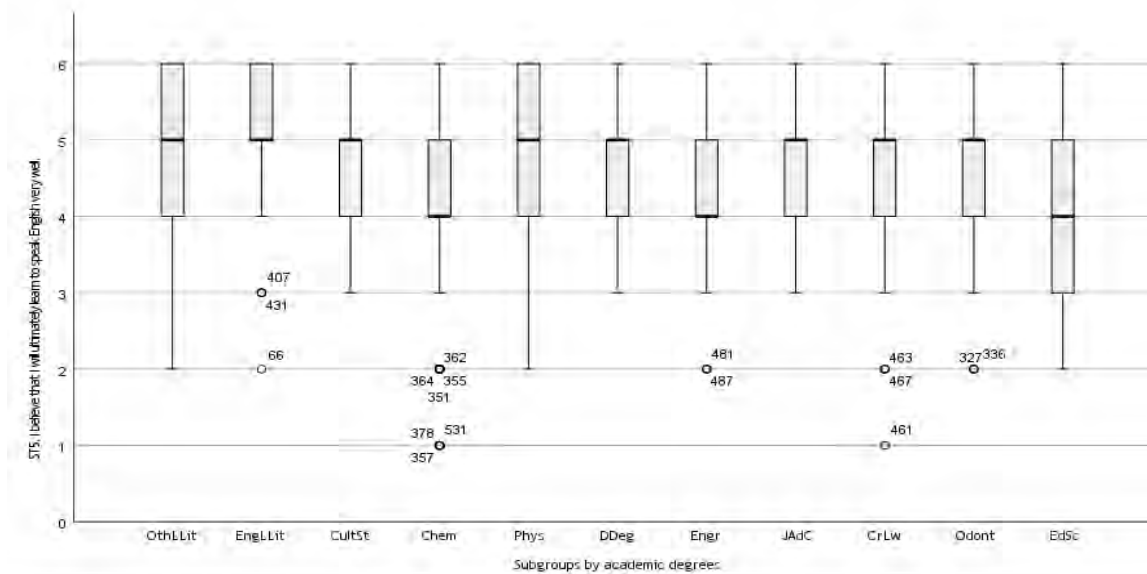
Figure 6: Language and literature students agree less with the idea that learning some languages is more difficult than learning others.



In the same vein, there were also significant differences as regards ST5 in terms of their confidence in their future English proficiency,  $F(10, 613) = 6.77$ ,  $p < .001$ . Once again, the greatest difference found through the Games-Howell post hoc test was between the opinions of the English language students ( $M=5.19$ ,  $SD=0.82$ ) and those in Educational Sciences ( $M=4.17$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.52, 1.51]). The former show the highest level of confidence of all the groups, while the latter show the lowest. Other differences were found between the English language learners ( $M=5.19$ ,  $SD=0.82$ ) and the Chemistry students ( $M=4.34$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.43, 1.26]), those in Engineering ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.9, 1.48]), and in Odontology ( $M=4.54$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.7, 1.23]). Moreover, there were significant disparities in the level of confidence between students of Physics ( $M=4.87$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) and student teachers ( $M=4.17$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ) ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.4, 1.35]). The box plots in Figure 7 show the comparisons across the subgroups for ST5.

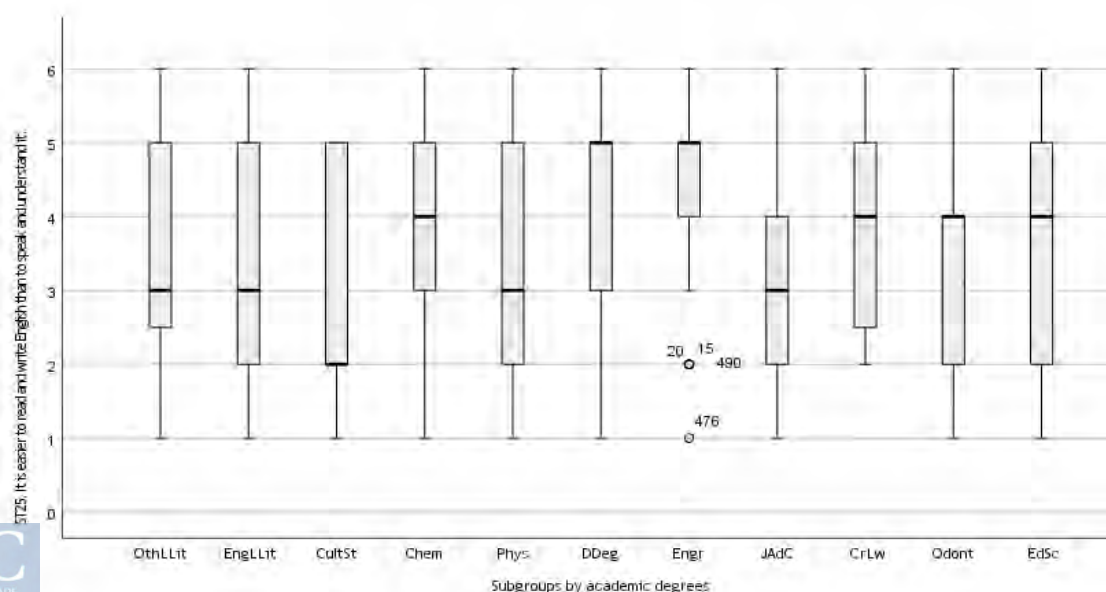


Figure 7: English language students showed the highest level of confidence as to their future oral skills in English while student teachers showed the lowest level.



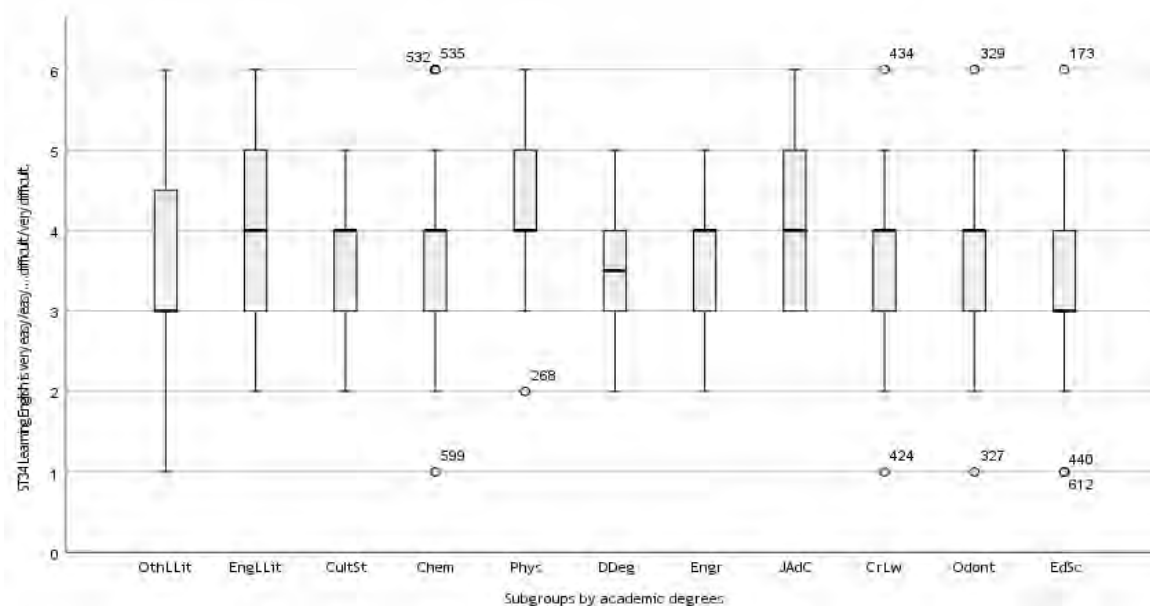
Furthermore, as shown in Figure 8 below, few statistical differences were found for ST25 on the issue of the written skills being easier than the oral skills,  $F(10, 613) = 2.26, p = .01$ . Tukey's HSD post hoc test yielded evidence of disagreement between the students on the English degree ( $M=3.37, SD=1.40$ ) and those in Engineering ( $M=4.43, SD=1.23$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. =  $[-2.01, 0.13]$ ); the latter group saw written skills to be easier than oral ones. Besides, their answers varied even more from those of students of Journalism and Audiovisual Communication ( $M=3.00, SD=1.36$ ), ( $p = .04$ , 95% C.I. =  $[0.01, 2.86]$ ), who seem to find the oral skills easier.

Figure 8: Journalism and English language learners find oral skills easier while engineers find them more difficult.



In addition, when assessing the general level of difficulty of English (ST34), some variations were also found,  $F(10, 613) = 3.48$ ,  $p < .001$ . As expected, the group learning English ( $M=4.00$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ) found the process easier than the students of Chemistry ( $M=3.60$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ), ( $p = .03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.01, 0.78]) and much easier than in the case of student teachers ( $M=3.36$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.19, 1.09]). However, of all the degrees, Physics students ( $M=4.04$ ,  $SD=0.81$ ) found learning English easier than the rest, while student teachers ( $M=3.36$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ) found it the most difficult of any group ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.9, 1.28]). Figure 9 below sets out the results of the comparison across the subgroups for ST34.

Figure 9: Physics and English language learners find learning EFL easier while student teachers find it difficult.



As seen in this section, the field of study has some impact on the beliefs of USC students about the level of difficulty of learning EFL and other languages. As expected, the students enrolled in Humanities and Social Sciences in general find learning English relatively easier and show a higher level of confidence about their future linguistic competence in the target language. However, the data also show some reactions that digress from this general pattern, such as in the case of Physics students, who assess English as easy. Likewise, the answers of student teachers, in particular for STs 3, 5 and 34, who claimed that English is difficult and feel less confident about their English skills, point at the need for more in-depth research into the reasons underlying such beliefs and concerns about learning English.

#### 4.1.1.2.2 Variable 2: The effects of the language learning experience on beliefs about the difficulty of learning a new language.

A second variable included in this analysis was Language Learning Experience (henceforth LLE). Various studies in neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics and linguistics (Bandura, 1977; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991; Biber et al., 1993; Jackendoff, 1994; R. Ellis, 1996; Paradis, 2004; Aitchison, 2007; Edwards, 2012; García & Wei, 2018; De Zubizaray & Schiller, 2019) have explored the human capacity to learn languages and the processes involved

in this learning. As to second language acquisition, they have also looked the different ways in which we use our previous language learning experience when learning a new language, since acquiring more languages seems to increase our overall personal capacity here (Edwards, 2012, p. 16). Hence, this section explores the beliefs of USC students based on the extent of their LLE.

In the questionnaire given to students, the LLE variable comprised three main demographic items. The first was the number of languages other than their mother tongue that they knew, either as a SL, a FL or a LF (henceforth *extra languages*). The second aspect was the number of foreign languages learnt at school (henceforth *learnt FL*). The third element considered students' experience of living abroad, either as part of an academic exchange program or as a personal experience, in countries where their learnt FL/s were spoken (henceforth *SA experience*).

As regards extra languages, 39% of students (N=239) reported knowing one extra language, 41% (N=256) stated that they knew two, and 15% (N=90) claimed three. The smallest group, representing 5% (N=29), reported they were familiar with four or five extra languages. These numbers reflect the high level of multilingualism of the student body at the USC, this probably a result of the internationalization process.

The tests for the statements on the difficulty of language learning did not yield many disparities across the groups of students with different extra languages. The responses for STs 3, 21, 25 and 35 showed a consistent, unvarying pattern. By contrast, statistical differences were found for ST5 as to confidence about their future language performance,  $F(4, 613) = 9.89$   $p < .001$ . As anticipated, students who knew one extra language felt less confident than the rest ( $M=4.32$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ), while those who knew five languages expressed the highest level of confidence of all ( $M=5.64$ ,  $SD=0.67$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [-2.0, -0.63]). Those with one extra language also differed from students who knew two ( $M=4.78$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [-0.73, -0.18]), and from those who knew three ( $M=4.94$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [-0.99, -0.26]). Differences between the students with the highest levels of multilingualism ( $M=5.64$ ,  $SD=0.67$ ) and those with two extra languages ( $M=4.78$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [-1.54, -0.18]) and with four extra languages ( $M=4.61$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [-1.95, -0.10]) were also identified.

In addition, a similar pattern of variation in students' assessments of the general difficulty of English (ST34) was found,  $F(4, 613) = 7.20$   $p < .001$ . As revealed by Tukey's HSD test, learners who knew five languages ( $M=4.82$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ) were the most positive about English being easy, while those students who knew four languages ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ) were the most negative ( $p = .04$ , 95% C.I. = [-2.43, -0.32]). The response of students with five extra languages also varied at different levels from the other groups. They were different in terms of the responses of those students with one extra language ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [-2.16, -0.47]), those with two ( $M=3.81$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [-0.56, -0.06]) and those with three other languages ( $M=3.83$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [-1.86, -0.11]). This marked difference in the responses to statements (STs) 5 and 34 between students who knew four and five languages may be related to the language family of the extra languages of the former group. From the 18 subjects in this group, 17 had Spanish and/or English as their mother tongue while one of them had Italian. It could be possible that the extra languages they knew may have all belonged to the Romance language family, where language distance may explain their assessment of English. Their answers might also be related to aspects of affect or other learning IDs. Bearing in mind the differences in responses for the previous statements and the idea that the more languages people know, the easier it should be for them to learn new ones, a Pearson's correlation coefficient test was carried out for all six statements in this category. Its

results yielded a strong positive correlation [ $r(614) = .80, p = .04$ ] for ST21 and a weak negative correlation for ST35 [ $r(612) = -.10, p < .01$ ], whereas no significant correlation was identified for the rest of the statements. Thus, these correlations suggest that those students who know more languages find it easier to speak in English; yet, they also have a higher tendency to underestimate the time required to develop proficiency in English.

Considering the responses in light of the number of additional languages, more than half of the students (60%,  $N=369$ ) said that they had learnt one foreign language at school, a smaller number (36%,  $N=222$ ) had received formal instruction in two additional languages, whereas 20 of them (3%) had learnt three languages; only a few of them (0.6%,  $N=4$ ) reported learning four extra languages formally.

As regards the comparison across these groups in terms of the perceived difficulty of language learning, the tests yielded very similar results to those reported above in relation to extra languages. In this case, beliefs, STs 3, 5, 21 and 25 presented no variations, whereas there were statistical differences for ST34,  $F(3, 613) = 4.01, p < .01$ . Although the students seemed more conservative when assessing the level of difficulty of the language, there seems to be a consensus on it being relatively easy. The only significant difference in this regard was between the group who had received formal instruction in one language ( $M=3.60, SD=1.00$ ) and those who had received it in two languages ( $M=3.89, SD=1.04$ ), ( $p < .001, 95\% \text{ C.I.} = [-0.51, -0.7]$ ). At this point, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient test for this strand of the LLE variable produced a significant positive correlation [ $r(612) = .10, p = .01$ ] for ST34, which indicates the positive effect of instruction in language learning.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1, p. 65 regarding the description of the participants in the study, 24% ( $N=145$ ) reported having had a Stay Abroad (SA) experience. The remaining 76% ( $N=469$ ) had not experienced any kind of language immersion. When comparing their answers on the difficulty of language learning, a similar pattern was found for most of the statements (ST3, 21, 25 and 35). However, STs 5 and 34 once again yielded significant differences as shown in the corresponding test results,  $F(1, 613) = 17.9, p < .01$  and  $F(3, 613) = 3.8, p = .04$ . Regarding ST5, about students' confidence in their future English competence, those with no SA experience ( $M=4.53, SD=1.15$ ) showed a lower level of confidence than those who had experienced language immersion ( $M=4.98, SD=0.98$ ),  $t(612) = -4.23, p < .01$ . As regards ST34, where the students assessed the general level of difficulty of learning English, similar differences were also found,  $t(612) = -1.97, p = .04$ . As expected, students with no SA experience found learning English more difficult ( $M=3.66, SD=1.03$ ) than students with an SA background ( $M=3.85, SD=0.98$ ).

Based on these results, LLE seems to be linked to academic achievement and to beliefs here, as it has a positive impact on oral communication in EFL; it can contribute to achieving fluency in a shorter period of time and to increasing the level of confidence of students to interact in English, in that they perceive the language learning process to be easier.

#### 4.1.1.2.3 Variable 3: The effects of gender on beliefs about the difficulty of language learning.

In terms of gender groups, 67% of respondents from the USC ( $N=411$ ) were female, and 33% ( $N=203$ ) were male. When exploring their responses in this belief category, a general homogeneous pattern was found. However, some discrepancies were identified in the answers to ST3,  $F(1, 612) = 8.33, p = .004$  and ST25,  $F(1, 612) = 19.00, p < .001$ . According to the  $t$ -test for independent samples, male students are more convinced ( $M=5.27, SD=0.92$ ) than females ( $M=5.01, SD=1.06$ ) about different languages and the difficulty in learning them,  $t(612)$

= -2.88,  $p < .01$ . In addition, male students ( $M=3.93$ ,  $SD=1.41$ ) perceived the written skills to be easier than oral ones, unlike their female counterparts ( $M=3.39$ ,  $SD=1.44$ ),  $t(612) = -4.3$ ,  $p < .01$ .

#### 4.1.1.3 Descriptive statistics of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire

As noted in Section 3.2, the questionnaire was designed to explore the beliefs of the 35 teachers involved in the study (see Section 3.2.1.2, page 65) regarding the difficulty of language learning, and was designed based on the students' questionnaire. Teachers' beliefs in this category were elicited through the following statements.

- ST8. Some languages are easier to learn than others.
- ST10. I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.
- ST16. Learning English is easy for my students.
- ST17. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.
- ST24. It is easier to speak than to understand English.

In the case of STs 10 and 16, the wording was readjusted to explore teachers' perspectives about their students. The pattern of responses of teachers to all the statements in this second belief category are shown in Figures 53 to 57, Appendix C2. At first glance, the results for ST8 (Fig 53) seem to illustrate a consensus as to the different levels of difficulty across various languages, with a vast majority of respondents (88%,  $N=31$ ) choosing points towards the highest values of the scale ( $M=4.77$ ,  $SD=0.20$ ). A similar pattern was shown for ST10 (Fig 54), about the expectations of the teachers regarding their students' future oral performance ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=0.16$ ). Yet 77% ( $N=27$ ) were more cautious in their positive response and expressed no radical stance. The teachers also expressed a balanced opinion for ST16 (Fig 55), on English being easy for their students ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SD=0.15$ ). About 46% ( $N=16$ ) were negative or hesitant about this issue, while the other 54% ( $N=19$ ) were more positive. In general, these teachers also seemed to agree with the idea that written skills are easier than oral ones ( $M=4.00$ ,  $SD=0.21$ ), this explored through ST17 (Fig 56). Here, about 69% ( $N=24$ ) responded on the positive side of the scale. By contrast, a generally negative response (67%,  $N=23$ ) was found for ST24 (Fig 57), on speaking being easier than understanding English ( $M=2.91$ ,  $SD=0.23$ ).

#### 4.1.1.4 Testing differences in teachers' beliefs about the difficulty of language learning

As was the case above, in the following section the results obtained from the questionnaires given to teachers will be analyzed in light of the three variables selected: years of experience, type of English instruction, and gender. Based on the years of experience in their profession (see section 3.2.1.2, page 64), the statistical tests produced no significant differences as to responses to the five statements on the difficulty of language learning. However, as regards the type of English instruction delivered by the teachers, referred to in this study as *English Use* (henceforth *EngUse*), a significant statistical difference was found for ST24 concerning the disparate level of difficulty between oral expression and language comprehension  $t(33) = -3.44$ ,  $p < .001$ . As described in section 3.2.3.3, page 84, two main groups were identified regarding *EngUse*, General English (GE) teachers ( $N=19$ ) and EMI teachers ( $N=16$ ). The former seem to be less convinced ( $M=2.26$ ,  $SD=1.04$ ) than the latter ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=1.40$ ) about how easy oral skills were in relation to understanding the language. As regards the gender variable, the generally homogenous pattern of answers on the issue of the difficulty of language learning was only seen to alter for ST10,  $t(33) = 2.06$ ,  $p < .004$ . Female teachers (49%,  $N=17$ ) feel more



hopeful ( $M=3.67$ ,  $SD=0.66$ ) than male teachers (51%,  $N=18$ ) about the future oral performance of their students ( $M=3.11$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ).

#### 4.1.1.5 Interview data from students and teachers on the difficulty of language learning

This section includes the data gathered through the interviews conducted with both groups of participants in the study. As previously described (Section 3.2.3.3, page 86), the responses were analyzed using the N-Vivo software, which coded the answer of each interviewee to each question as a reference. Then, the number of similar answers to a question were grouped and reported in the format (# ref), e.g. (40 ref). Some quotes of interviewed students (henceforth IntSt) and teachers (henceforth IntT) are also used to illustrate the points discussed in this section.

The reasons behind the level of difficulty of English as perceived by students and teachers were explored through the first interview item (Appendices D and E respectively). When assessing the level of difficulty of English, 82% of students ( $N=46$ ) rate English as an easy language to learn, and the remaining 18% ( $N=10$ ) state that they find it difficult. According to most of the students who find learning English easier, this is mainly due to the time they have been exposed to the learning of this foreign language (39 ref), whereas a smaller number of reasons relating to the structural system of the language were also mentioned (13 ref). As for the students who find English difficult, they justify their responses with arguments relating to their teachers' methodologies (7 ref) and certain affective factors, such as low self-esteem (5 3ref). Figure 10 below provides a summary of the main reasons given by students here.

Figure 10: Students' main arguments relating to the difficulty of learning English

| I find it easy because...  | I find it difficult because...  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>-We've been learning it since an early age.</i>                                                            | <i>-I'm not very good at it.</i>                                                                                     |
| <i>-English pronunciation and grammar are simpler than for other languages.</i>                               | <i>-Pronunciation is complicated as the graphemes are pronounced differently.</i>                                    |
| <i>-We are more familiar with it than with other foreign languages.</i>                                       | <i>-Perhaps because of the way teachers explain it or teach it.</i>                                                  |
| <i>-We are constantly bombarded with it so we are used to it.</i>                                             | <i>-...because they force it on you since you are very little.</i>                                                   |
| <i>-It's more structured, schematic than other languages.</i>                                                 | <i>-It's embarrassing to speak it.</i>                                                                               |

In the case of the teachers, their responses to the issue of level of difficulty were more balanced, with 55% ( $N=12$ ) stating that this is an easy language, and the remaining 45% regarding learning English as a difficult process. As to the arguments used to justify their



opinions, 19 of them refer to different structural aspects of the language and to its distance from their L1(s), while three cite methodological reasons, the individual and collective level of use and practice, and the age at which students start being exposed to this language. The word frequencies in Table 12 below show the difference in the answers of both students and teachers. The rows highlighted in yellow illustrate the opinion that English is an easy language, and those in blue indicate it is a difficult language. The word counts show that the students tend to underestimate the level of difficulty of the language to a higher degree than their teachers. Besides, the use of the terms *age* / *early* / *young* by students support the idea that they have been exposed to English for a long time, while the words *Spanish* / *complicated* / *structures* used by the teachers surveyed illustrate some of the linguistic reasons that they noted make English more difficult.

Table 12

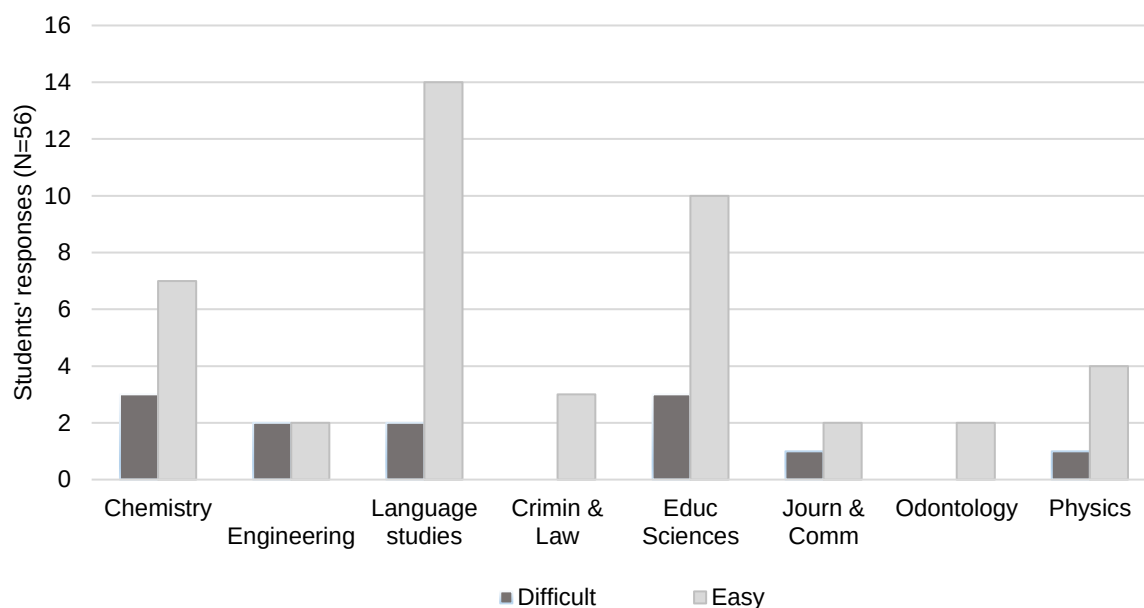
*Reasons given by the students and teachers questioned about the level of difficulty of EFL*

■ Easy      ■ Difficult

| Students' answers to interview question 1 (N=56) |       |                                     | Teachers' answers to interview question 1 (N=22) |       |                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------|
| Word                                             | Count | Similar Words                       | Word                                             | Count | Similar Words                             |
| easy                                             | 47    | easy, simple                        | difficult                                        | 32    | difficult, difficulties, difficulty, hard |
| difficult                                        | 14    | difficult                           | easy                                             | 20    | easy, simple, simplicity                  |
| compared                                         | 12    | compare, compared, like, relatively | spanish                                          | 16    | spanish                                   |
| easier                                           | 11    | easier                              | level                                            | 15    | even, level, point                        |
| age                                              | 9     | age, older, year, years             | complicated                                      | 9     | complex, complicated, complicates         |
| early                                            | 6     | early, others                       | different                                        | 8     | different                                 |
| complicated                                      | 5     | complicated                         | structures                                       | 6     | constructions, structures                 |
| young                                            | 5     | young                               | depends                                          | 5     | depend, depends                           |
| declinations                                     | 4     | declensions, declinations           | compared                                         | 4     | compared, correspondence                  |
| constantly                                       | 10    | always, constantly                  | pronunciation                                    | 4     | pronunciation                             |

In their answers to this interview question, no differences were identified across the variable of gender. Similarly, no striking disparities were found across the different academic areas or degrees, in that the responses reporting English as a difficult language had a generally even distribution across the different disciplines. Students in Chemistry and Educational Sciences had the highest number of respondents who report struggling with English, and within the Language and Literature group, the students not majoring in English Language and Literature were the ones most likely to express this opinion. Students of Criminology and Law, as well as Odontology, were the exception as they did not view English as difficult, although this might have been due in part to the small number of interviewees in these fields. Figure 11 below shows the distribution of answers per academic area.

Figure 11: Assessment of the level of difficulty of EFL by students in different academic areas



The group of teachers interviewed consisted of 10 males and 12 females. Within the male group, seven considered English an easy language while the other three claimed it is difficult. In the female group, seven viewed English as difficult and the remaining five believed it to be an easy language to learn. As regards the type of instruction they deliver, four of the five EMI teachers interviewed regarded English as uncomplicated, while the opinions of the 17 GE teachers were more balanced: nine saw English as difficult, and the remaining eight teachers believed it to be easy.

#### 4.1.1.6 General Discussion on Belief Category 1: The difficulty of language learning

The data for this category indicate that USC students and teachers seem to share a generally uniform pattern of beliefs about the difficulty of learning English. Both groups agree on the idea that some languages are easier to learn than others, i.e. they “support the concept of a language learning difficulty hierarchy” (Horwitz, 1988, p. 285), a belief that has also been found in many other national and international studies (Chawhan & Oliver, 2000; Siebert, 2003; Altan, 2006; Ariogul et al, 2009; Agudo, 2014, to mention just a few). As regards the difficulty of learning English in particular, both students and teachers in general seem to consider it demanding to a certain extent, while students with a wider linguistic background and experience overseas perceived EFL learning as easier. This ease of learning might be due to the benefits of SA experience, which serves to enhance students’ oral proficiency, lexico-grammatical ability, motivation, and beliefs (Pérez Vidal, 2014, p. 46). By contrast, the students’ tendency to underestimate the difficulty of learning English is stronger than that of the teachers. A similar reaction from students was found by Peacock (1999) where this student belief was also correlated with a low level of language proficiency. Interestingly, teachers and students differed regarding the arguments given to support the perceived level of difficulty of English as compared to their mother tongue/s. Based on the classification of Gooskens & Swarte (2017, p. 125), while USC teachers justified the concept of language distance and mutual intelligibility

more frequently through linguistic predictors or variables such as morphosyntactic, lexical and phonological elements, the students generally supported their opinions with extra-linguistic predictors, chiefly the level of exposure to the language in and beyond the classroom. Comments such as the following illustrate why they find English less difficult or even easy:

[...] because I've been studying it since I was a little kid. (IntSt5)

Easy because I'm more familiar with English than with other languages. (IntSt10)

Easy because it is present in almost everything that we do today: the music we listen to, what we eat, in books, it's everywhere. (IntSt16)

[...] because we're constantly bombarded with English, we read in English for the degree and so, we're more used to it. (IntSt47)

Most of the answers containing arguments of this type were from EMI students across different academic levels, while only nine responses containing formal structural arguments about the language were from students in the area of Philology. Thus, USC students approach the level of difficulty of English based on the experience of their daily contact with it and the purpose of its use, rather than on a more formal concept of language distance. This corroborates the correlation between the level of exposure to the TL and the beliefs about the level of intelligibility across languages as reported by Corder (1981), a correlation that also explains the different assessment of TL difficulty by those respondents from the USC with language immersion experience. On the same lines, the answers of students from different academic years do not reflect any variations of this notion that underestimates the level of difficulty of English, seemingly due to a lack of a more formal appreciation of the TL (Ibid.), so assessing language distance more realistically appears to be lacking, especially for EMI students. From these results it could be argued that the instrumentalist character of English learning, coupled with limited exposure to this language in EFL environments, may prevent students from assessing language distance more accurately, which in turn helps to perpetuate the idea that English is an easy language. As observed in various studies (Horwitz 1987, 1988; Dörnyei 1998), downplaying the level of difficulty of the TL may interact negatively with the affective dimension during the language learning process, in that failing to attain goals may generate disappointment and low perceived self-efficacy. In addition, the discordance between the preconceptions of students and teachers about the difficulty of learning English is also consistent with the findings of other studies where a lack of belief correspondence between students and teachers was identified (Kern, 1995; Barcelos, 2003; Brown, 2009; Wan et al., 2011; Pan & Block, 2011).

Within the generally homogenous questionnaire answers given by the students who assess English to be an easy language, the data also evidence some differences in beliefs regarding the participants' perception of the level of difficulty of learning this language. Of particular relevance here is the pattern of answers across the groups per academic fields and, more specifically, of student teachers who seem to have difficulties concerning their perceived self-efficacy. This was evidenced in their low level of confidence in their future linguistic competence and in their assessment of English as a rather difficult language to learn, a view that differs from the general pattern of responses. These preconceptions might be related to the affective dimension of learning, something also shown by their frustration about the long time they have been learning English. As Pajares (2002, p. 116) observe, beliefs about self-efficacy have an intuitive character in as much as the results of students' actions and behavior affect

their level of confidence in their capabilities. As a result, their academic performance partly depends on what they believe they have learnt and can learn. Another plausible reason to explain such low perceived self-efficacy could be related to their previous learning experience. As shown in the interview responses, traditional teaching approaches (TAs) at the pre-university levels are often not in line with students' learning needs. Extracts from interviews here illustrate their frustration with TAs:

[...] in our teaching system they teach the lessons in Spanish and give long lists of vocabulary and verbs in English (IntSt26)

[...] the methods shouldn't be the traditional ones like completing exercises in the book. Lessons should be more dynamic and participative... (IntSt3)

Our problem is that everything is theoretical and based on grammar unlike other countries where grammar is not the priority but that you can express your ideas and explain your points...(IntSt9)

In other words, everything seems to indicate that at the secondary school level, USC students need to develop a solid base as regards the communicative functions of EFL, since whereas learning through the TAs they encountered might have taught them about the formal features of English and how to compare English to their L1s, they were not taught in a way that helped them to use the language for practical purposes or through engaging in social interaction (Jin & Cortazzi in Hinkel, 2011, p. 559). This low perceived self-efficacy, rooted as it is in negative prior learning experiences through TAs at the secondary level, might also be reflected in the choices of linguistic skills that students reported as being easier or more difficult. As Pajares (Ibid.) argues, the level of perceived self-confidence has an impact on the tasks and activities that students choose, and at an individual level they tend to select those activities with which they feel more confident.

In terms of the difficulty of the four main traditional language skills, the learners and the teachers participating in this study concurred that the written skills are easier than the oral ones, and that listening is easier than speaking. Based on these answers, the comfort zone of the USC students when using English for different purposes can be seen as falling within the limits of the listening skill, something which has been found in other studies for EFL learners (Yang, 1999; Ellis, 2008; Sargsyan and Kurghinyan, 2016). The use of this compensation strategy could be explained by the sheer amount of auditory material in English they have been exposed to as digital natives. This finding mirrors the contemporary communicative nature of language beliefs, as opposed to more traditional forms of learning as noted by Sakui & Gaies (1999) in their study of Japanese students. Besides, such a preference also explains why listening is the main skill they use to practice subskills such as vocabulary and pronunciation through the use of technological resources, a topic discussed further in Section 4.1.5. Category five about learning and communication strategies. This standard individual practice of listening could also act as a means to compensate for any shortfalls in the TAs experienced in secondary education noted above. In the same way, and regarding the variable of gender, the USC female students reported oral skills being easier than written ones, unlike their male counterparts. This might be explained by the higher social orientation in the form of web-based interaction of females as opposed to the pyramidal type of social orientation reported for males (Oxford, 1998).

Furthermore, USC students estimate that they will attain language proficiency within five years, a belief that is consistent with the findings of other studies (Mantle-Bromley, 1995; Yang,

1999; Siebert, 2003; Altan, 2006). Horwitz (1988, p. 286) warned about the possible effects of students' estimation of language learning time, since those who perceive it to be a fast process might become frustrated with their relatively slow progress, while learners who see it requiring a longer period of acquisition might themselves become demotivated and uncommitted in view of the long period ahead. This was shown by Martínez Agudo (2014) in his study of the beliefs of secondary students in Extremadura, where learners expressed dissatisfaction about the English instruction received and their slow learning progress (Ibid., p. 297). In this regard, the present data on interviews with USC students also revealed feelings of frustration with the long time spent on learning of English through instruction and the slow progress made, as exemplified in these extracts:

I had English at school for 15 years and I don't know much, only grammar and verbs and these basic things (IntSt15)

You start in early years and now at university I do not see myself speaking English. After so many years studying it, we can't communicate at an appropriate level... (InSt25)

#### 4.1.1.7 Brief summary of beliefs about the difficulty of language learning

Based on the data for this belief category, we can say that although some variations were found in relation to the variables under study, both students and teachers at the USC share a homogenous pattern of beliefs with regard to the difficulty of language learning. These participants acknowledge there are different levels of difficulty in the learning process across foreign languages, and they assess the difficulty of learning EFL as average. Despite the challenges that oral communication in English poses for students as compared to written language, they are confident about their future oral communicative skills, which is in some ways consistent with the fact that they also tend to underestimate the time needed to attain linguistic fluency. This positive assessment of the oral skills in English was expressed to a higher degree by EMI teachers than by GE teachers. In addition, the results show that the academic field of studies and prior experience of linguistic immersion experience both have an effect on the beliefs of students in this category. Other aspects about beliefs here, such as how they relate to the affective component of learning and to students' previous academic experience, were also shown in the data. However, the disparities found indicate a need to explore more thoroughly the reasons underlying the low perceived self-efficacy of students and their struggles with learning English.

#### 4.1.2 Belief category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude

This second category of beliefs probes into the students and teachers' opinions about the existence of distinctive individual features which may enable or hamper a more effective learning of a foreign language. "Thus, these items address the issue of individual potential for achievement in language learning" (Horwitz 1988, p. 287).

Nine different statements of the general questionnaire are included in this category:

|                                                                                     |     |                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | ST1 | It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.                     |
|                                                                                     | ST2 | Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language. |

- ST9 It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.
- ST13 I have a natural aptitude for the learning of foreign languages.
- ST19 Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.
- ST26 People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.
- ST29 People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.
- ST30 In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.
- ST31 Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

All these questionnaire statements contained the same scale format which covered the six-level continuum from *Strongly agree* to *Strongly disagree* as described in Table 9, Section 3.2.3.3, p.84.

#### 4.1.2.1 Descriptive statistics of the students' responses to the questionnaire

The general pattern of responses for this category on foreign language aptitude shows a variety of reactions towards the items in this category, as represented in Figures 58 to 66 in Appendix C3. There was a prevailing positive stance towards STs 1, 2, 9, 13 and 31. In reference to ST1 (Fig 58), the importance of age in learning a foreign language grouped about 96% of the responses ( $N=588$ ) at the highest half of the scale, favoring the idea that a younger age enables a better FL learning ( $M=5.22$ ,  $SD=0.03$ ). A very similar percentage of positive reactions (96%,  $N=592$ ) corresponded to ST31 (Fig 66), where most of the students agreed that everyone has the potential to learn a foreign language ( $M=5.20$ ,  $SD=0.03$ ). However, these answers also show a certain degree of skepticism marked by weaker positive opinions as compared with ST1. These weak positive answers were also shown for STs 2 (Fig 59) and 9 (Fig 60). As to the former, a plain affirmative response (79%,  $N=485$ ) towards an innate ability of some people to learn a FL was given ( $M=4.23$ ,  $SD=0.04$ ), whereas in the latter about 87% of the students ( $N=536$ ) considered previous foreign language experience an important aspect that facilitates the learning of a new language ( $M=4.47$ ,  $SD=0.04$ ). In addition, for ST13, respondents also seemed doubtfully positive about their own aptitude to learn a FL, ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=0.05$ ), which is evidenced by the piling of 62% of the answers ( $N=380$ ) on the lowest positive layer of the scale (Fig 61).

In contrast, a consistent collective disagreement was shown for STs 19, ( $M=1.75$ ,  $SD=0.04$ ) and 26 ( $M=1.69$ ,  $SD=0.03$ ) as illustrated in Figures 62 and 63 respectively. In both cases, almost all the students ( $N=558$ , 91%) rejected the existence of a possible connection between people's gender and their level of competence in a foreign language (ST19), or a connection between students' academic field and their level of performance in a foreign language (ST26). The responses to both statements had a very similar distribution pattern along the scale continuum. As regards STs 29 (Fig 64) and 30 (Fig 65), the data gathered had a more balanced distribution since many of the answers concentrated in the four main central levels of the scale sequence. For ST29, on the relationship between the plurilingual competence of a person and his/her level of intelligence, 57% of the answers ( $N=350$ ) were positive and 43% ( $N=264$ ) were negative ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=0.05$ ), with the labels *slightly agree* and *disagree* being salient for each scale section respectively. In the case of ST30, the negative layers of the scale attracted about 70% of the answers ( $N=433$ ) on the students' assessment regarding the ability of FL learning of their nationals while the other 30% ( $N=181$ ) were positive about it. For both scale ends, the highest



percentage grouped on the layers *slightly disagree* and *slightly agree* which showed a high level of hesitation ( $M=2.87$ ,  $SD=0.04$ ).

#### 4.1.2.2 Variables considered. Testing for students' belief differences about foreign language aptitude

##### 4.1.2.2.1 Variable 1: The effects of the groups and subgroups on the beliefs about foreign language aptitude

Based on the grouping of the respondents according to their general academic field, the tests resulted in significant statistical differences for five out of the nine statements in the category of FL aptitude. The differences found concentrate on the shades of the opinions given within a narrow stretch of the scale rather than on strong contrasts of viewpoints across the complete scale continuum. Although all the students agreed on the importance of age to learn a foreign language (ST1), there was a main fluctuation in their opinion,  $F(2, 613) = 3.5$ ,  $p = 0.02$ . The respondents in the Humanities and Social Sciences group were more convinced about it ( $M=5.37$ ,  $SD=0.87$ ) than the group in Natural Sciences ( $M=5.13$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.2, 0.46]). The students also rejected any possible connection between the variable of gender (ST19),  $F(2, 613) = 10.0$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and their academic field (ST26),  $F(2, 613) = 10.5$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , to different levels of language performance. Once again, the main response differences for ST19 were between the Humanities and Social Sciences group ( $M=2.00$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ), and the Natural Sciences students ( $M=1.53$ ,  $SD=0.82$ ), ( $p = .04$ , 95% C.I. = [0.23, 0.72]), where the latter were more utterly convinced there is no correspondence between gender and linguistic capacity.

A similar pattern in response differences was identified for ST26. The students in Natural Sciences were more certain ( $M=1.46$ ,  $SD=0.76$ ) than those in Humanities and Social Sciences ( $M=1.87$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ) that the academic field does not affect linguistic capacity, ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.20, 0.63]). However, no significant difference was identified for the Applied Sciences group as regards STs 1, 19 nor 26. Moreover, the statistical tests also identified disparities in the answers concerning the students' individual aptitude to learn a FL (ST13),  $F(2, 613) = 8.8$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . In this case, the learners in Humanities and Social Sciences ( $M=4.19$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ) were more convinced about having an aptitude to learn foreign languages than those in the Natural Sciences area ( $M= 3.75$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.16, 0.71]), and were also more convinced than the Applied Sciences group ( $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.18, 0.73]). Lastly, the students agreed in general that people in Spain have a low capacity to learn foreign languages (ST30), yet their level of assessment also differed,  $F(2, 613) = 8.6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . While the Humanities and Social Sciences group ( $M=2.74$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ) differed from the Applied Sciences group ( $M=3.14$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ) ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.20, 0.63]) because the former felt more negative about it, the answers of the latter also diverged from the those of the Natural Sciences group ( $M=2.71$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.20, 0.63]) and were the most positive of all. No striking variations, however, were found between the answers of the Humanities and Social Sciences group and those of the students in Natural Sciences.

When comparing the answers across the eleven subgroups for more specific areas of study, seven of the nine statements revealed significant statistical differences (STs 1, 2, 13, 19, 26, 29, 30). The answers for ST1 yielded one main statistical difference,  $F(10, 613) = 2.5$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , between the students in English Studies ( $M=5.40$ ,  $SD=0.86$ ) and student teachers ( $M=4.97$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ), ( $p = .03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.01, 0.85]). The former were more convinced than the latter about the effect of age on EFL learning. In the case of significant differences for ST2,  $F(10, 613) = 3.6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , the results show that the responses of student teachers ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=1.27$ )

were different from those of the students in other four academic specialties. The former were less convinced about this than students in English Language and Literature ( $M=4.38$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ), students in Physics ( $M=4.41$ ,  $SD=0.77$ ), students in Engineering ( $M=4.67$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ) and students in Criminology and Law ( $M=4.63$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ) that people are born with a special ability to learn languages. Table 13 and Figure 12 below depict these results.

Table 13

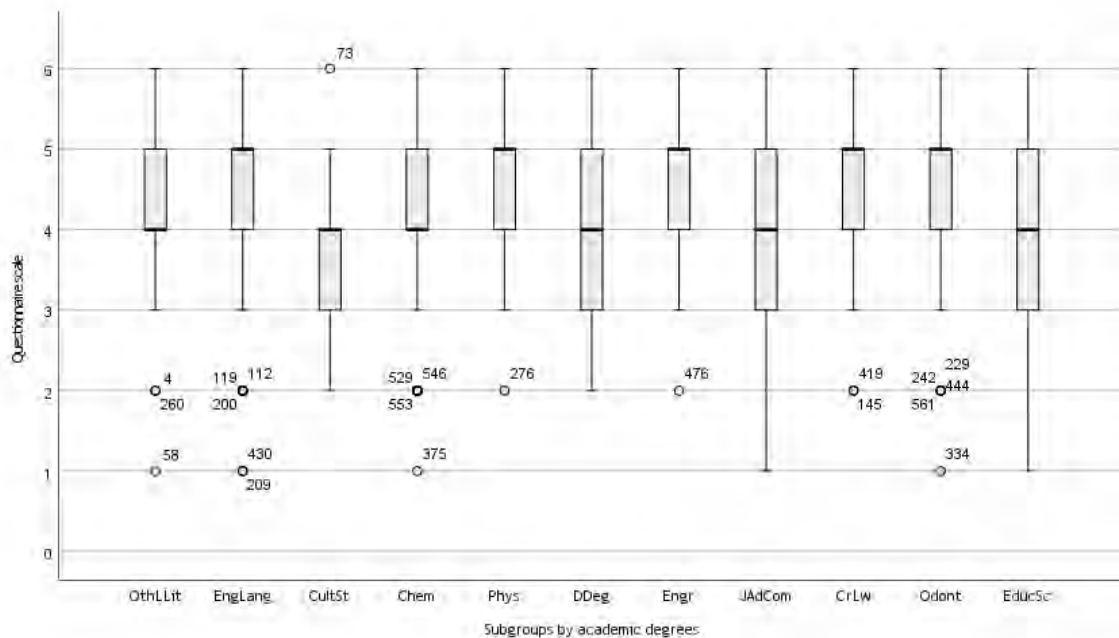
*Tukey's HSD test, significant statistical differences across the subgroups regarding ST2*

Dependent Variable: 2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.

| (I) SUBGr                                             | (J) SUBGr                                           | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
|                                                       |                                                     |                       |            |      | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| Education Sciences (N=86)<br>( $M=3.72$ , $SD=1.27$ ) | English Studies (N=134)<br>( $M=4.38$ , $SD=1.12$ ) | -,660*                | ,157       | ,002 | 1,17                    | -,15        |
|                                                       | Physics (N=46)<br>( $M=4.41$ , $SD=0.77$ )          | -,692*                | ,208       | ,037 | 1,36                    | -,02        |
|                                                       | Engineering (N=30)<br>( $M=4.67$ , $SD=0.95$ )      | -,946*                | ,242       | ,005 | 1,73                    | -,17        |
|                                                       | Criminology-Law (N=40)<br>( $M=4.63$ , $SD=1.10$ )  | -,904*                | ,218       | ,002 | 1,61                    | -,20        |

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level\*.

Figure 12: Significant statistical differences in the answers to ST2 (Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language) across the different academic degrees (N=614)



At a value of  $F(10, 613) = 2.9, p < 0.01$ , the tests for ST13 about students having an aptitude or a gift for the learning of foreign languages yielded two main significant differences. The English Language and Literature students feel more confident about having an aptitude ( $M=4.24, SD=1.00$ ) than their peers in Chemistry ( $M=3.64, SD=1.26$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. =  $[0.16, 1.03]$ ), and even more confident than student teachers ( $M=3.55, SD=1.35$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. =  $[0.14, 1.25]$ ). However, more variation was identified regarding the impact of gender on people's learning capacity (ST19). As can be seen in Table 14 below, the students in Odontology were more convinced about a higher female capacity for languages, followed by the learners of other languages, those in the English degree and the rest of the groups in that order.

In the same vein, the reactions towards ST26 about a negative correlation between competence in Sciences and foreign languages received a general negative response sprinkled by some disagreement,  $F(10, 613) = 4.3, p < 0.01$ . Unsurprisingly, the students in Physics were more radically convinced ( $M=1.30, SD=0.51$ ) than students in English Language and Literature ( $M=1.84, SD=0.96$ ) that being in the scientific academic field has no relationship with the level of competence in foreign languages ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. =  $[0.16, 0.90]$ ), as were the learners in double degrees of Sciences ( $M=1.28, SD=0.57$ ), ( $p = .04$ , 95% C.I. =  $[0.01, 1.11]$ ).

Table 14

*Significant statistical differences across the subgroups regarding ST19*

| Dependent Variable: 19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages. |                                                         |                       |            |      |                         |             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| (I) SUBGr                                                                        | (J) SUBGr                                               | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|                                                                                  |                                                         |                       |            |      | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| Double Degrees (N=18)<br>( $M=1.17, SD=0.38$ )                                   | Other Languages and Lit (N=40)<br>( $M=2.08, SD=1.43$ ) | -,908*                | ,245       | ,020 | -1,73                   | -,08        |
|                                                                                  | English Studies (N=134)<br>( $M=1.97, SD=1.14$ )        | -,803*                | ,134       | ,000 | -1,25                   | -,36        |
|                                                                                  | Chemistry (N=149)<br>( $M=1.56, SD=0.85$ )              | -,397*                | ,114       | ,042 | -,79                    | -,01        |
|                                                                                  | Odontology (N=41)<br>( $M=2.37, SD=1.19$ )              | -1,199*               | ,208       | ,000 | -1,90                   | -,50        |
| English Studies (N=134)<br>( $M=1.97, SD=1.14$ )                                 | Chemistry (N=149)<br>( $M=1.56, SD=0.85$ )              | ,406*                 | ,121       | ,037 | ,01                     | ,80         |
|                                                                                  | Educational Sciences (N=86)<br>( $M=1.41, SD=0.77$ )    | ,563*                 | ,129       | ,001 | ,14                     | ,98         |
| Odontology (N=41)<br>( $M=2.37, SD=1.19$ )                                       | Chemistry (N=149)<br>( $M=1.56, SD=0.85$ )              | ,802*                 | ,200       | ,008 | ,13                     | 1,48        |
|                                                                                  | Physics (N=46)<br>( $M=1.54, SD=0.83$ )                 | ,822*                 | ,224       | ,019 | ,08                     | 1,57        |
|                                                                                  | Chemistry (N=149)<br>( $M=1.56, SD=0.85$ )              | ,959*                 | ,205       | ,001 | ,27                     | 1,65        |

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level\*.

Besides, the answers of the learners in Physics ( $M=1.30, SD=0.51$ ) were also more radical than those of the students in Engineering ( $M=2.10, SD=1.18$ ), ( $p = .04$ , 95% C.I. =  $[-1.58, -$

0.01]), and also more radical than the answers of Odontology students ( $M=2.12$ ,  $SD=1.45$ ), ( $p=.04$ , 95% C.I. = [-1.62, -0.01]). Three marked differences in the responses to ST29 on a potential link between plurilingual competence and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) level were also found,  $F(10, 603) = 3.08$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The student teachers disagreed more with this correlation ( $M=3.13$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ) than the group studying other languages ( $M=3.93$ ,  $SD=1.36$ ), ( $p=.04$ , 95% C.I. = [0.01, 1.58]). They also disagreed more about this idea compared to students in Engineering ( $M=4.17$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.17, 1.91]), and those in Odontology ( $M=3.93$ ,  $SD=1.33$ ), ( $p=.03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.02, 1.58]). Lastly, ST30 about the opinion of the students on the learning capacity of people in their country elicited timid negative opinions in general and one significant disparity,  $F(10, 613) = 2.74$ ,  $p < .01$ . The English Language and Literature students ( $M=2.66$ ,  $SD=1.18$ ) were slightly more negative about this learning capacity than the student teachers ( $M=3.21$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ), ( $p=.03$ , 95% C.I. = [-1.06, -0.03]).

#### 4.1.2.2.2 Variable 2: The effects of language learning experience on the beliefs about foreign language aptitude.

Based on the number of extra languages the students knew, the data did not show significant statistical differences that altered the general pattern of responses, except for ST13 on a natural ability to learn foreign languages,  $F(4, 609) = 7.60$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The students who knew three extra languages ( $M=4.38$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ) felt more confident about their natural ability than the students with one extra language ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.34, 1.16]). The former were also more certain than the group with two extra languages ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.10, 0.90]). As to a possible interconnection between these two variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient test confirmed the existence of a mild positive correlation [ $r(612) = 0.20$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ] between them, which indicates that the more languages students learn, the more positive they tend to become about their natural linguistic ability. Furthermore, the learning experience of the students based on the languages learned by instruction also marked a few significant differences in the responses of the subjects. One difference was found for ST13 about having a natural linguistic aptitude,  $F(3, 610) = 4.37$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The students instructed in three languages ( $M=4.5$ ,  $SD=0.9$ ) felt more confident about this aptitude than those instructed in only one language ( $M=3.7$ ,  $SD=1.2$ ), ( $p=.02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.08, 1.52]).

As regards the connection between the academic field of studies and the quality of linguistic performance (ST26), the results showed a main pattern of variation in the students' opinions,  $F(3, 610) = 4.47$ ,  $p < .01$ . The students with one instructed language ( $M=1.6$ ,  $SD=0.9$ ) rejected more radically the idea about students in the Science and Math areas having less linguistic potential than the group with three instructed languages ( $M=2.2$ ,  $SD=1.3$ ), ( $p=.03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.04, 1.17]). Finally, as shown by the difference found for ST30 about the ability of the students' fellow nationals to learn languages,  $F(3, 610) = 3.40$ ,  $p=.01$ , the students with two instructed languages ( $M=3.0$ ,  $SD=1.1$ ) were slightly more positive in their assessment than those with one instructed language ( $M=2.7$ ,  $SD=1.1$ ), ( $p=.03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.01, 0.53]). Similar to the item of *extra languages*, the general pattern of beliefs based on the students' SA experience was only altered by the responses to ST13 about a self-assessment of their natural ability to learn a FL  $t(612) = -3.1$ ,  $p < .01$ . Those students with SA experience showed a higher level of confidence ( $M=4.1$ ,  $SD=1.1$ ) about their natural ability than those who had never experienced language immersion ( $M=3.7$ ,  $SD=1.2$ ). However, no significant correlation between these two variables was found.

#### 4.1.2.2.3 Variable 3: The effects of gender on the beliefs about the difficulty of language learning.

In reference to the gender groups, only one minor statistical difference was identified for ST9 about the impact of previous FL learning on the acquisition of a new foreign language  $t(612) = -2.1, p=.03$ . Male students ( $M=4.6, SD=1.0$ ) seemed to be more convinced than females about the certainty of this general statement ( $M=4.4, SD=1.1$ ).

Overall, the data on the second category of foreign language aptitude with regard to the variable of Language Learning Experience reinforces the pattern observed in the first category of beliefs. The more extensive the LLE of the students, the more confident they seem to become about their own natural ability to learn the language. This variable may also change the way students perceive the capacity of others to learn a foreign language and their flexibility about the impact that other factors like academic expertise may have on language performance, which evidences the dynamic nature of beliefs.

#### 4.1.2.3 Descriptive statistics of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire

The questionnaire addressed to the teachers surveyed contained the following five main statements on this specific category of foreign language aptitude. Since they were an extension of the students' survey, and the linguistic formation and experience of the teachers could have presumably rendered the questions confusing or the answers could be regarded as obvious, items 13, 19, 26 and 31 were excluded. By way of example, in ST13 *I have a natural aptitude for the learning of foreign languages*, the concept of *aptitude* may have sparked a debatable response.

- ST6 It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.
- ST7 Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.
- ST14 It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.
- ST21 People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.
- ST22 In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.

As shown in Figures 67 to 71 in Appendix C4, the general answers contributed by the teachers in terms of foreign language aptitude when compared to those of the students show an almost identical pattern for ST6 (Fig 67) and ST14 (Fig 69) about the positive impact of age and of previous language learning respectively on the acquisition of a foreign language. As to the former item, 80% ( $N=28$ ) of the responses loaded into the two highest positive layers of the scale ( $M=5.09, SD=0.13$ ), whereas for the second item, 88% ( $N=31$ ) occupied the same position ( $M=5.20, SD=0.10$ ). Statement 7 (Fig 68) about the innate ability of some people to learn languages found a little more skepticism with 57% ( $N=20$ ) of the answers at the top levels and 34% ( $N=12$ ) slightly agreeing ( $M=4.63, SD=0.17$ ).

In contrast, the reaction to the other two items, ST21 and ST22, was more negative. For ST21 (Fig 70) on plurilingual competence and the level of intelligence, 63% ( $N=22$ ) of the answers occupied the negative part of the scale while 54% ( $N=12$ ) of which expressed plain disagreement, ( $M=3.03, SD=0.21$ ). However, they were less unanimous than the responses to ST22 (Fig 71) on their fellow countrymen's capacity for language learning, where about 89% of the answers ( $N=31$ ) fell under the negative section of the scale, ( $M=2.57, SD=0.17$ ).



#### 4.1.2.4 Testing for teachers' belief differences about foreign language aptitude

When probing into the data to identify possible differences in the teachers' answers regarding this category of beliefs, none of the three variables revealed significant statistical differences. This result points to a solid pattern of the USC teachers' beliefs regarding foreign language aptitude.

#### 4.1.2.5 Interview data from students and teachers on foreign language aptitude

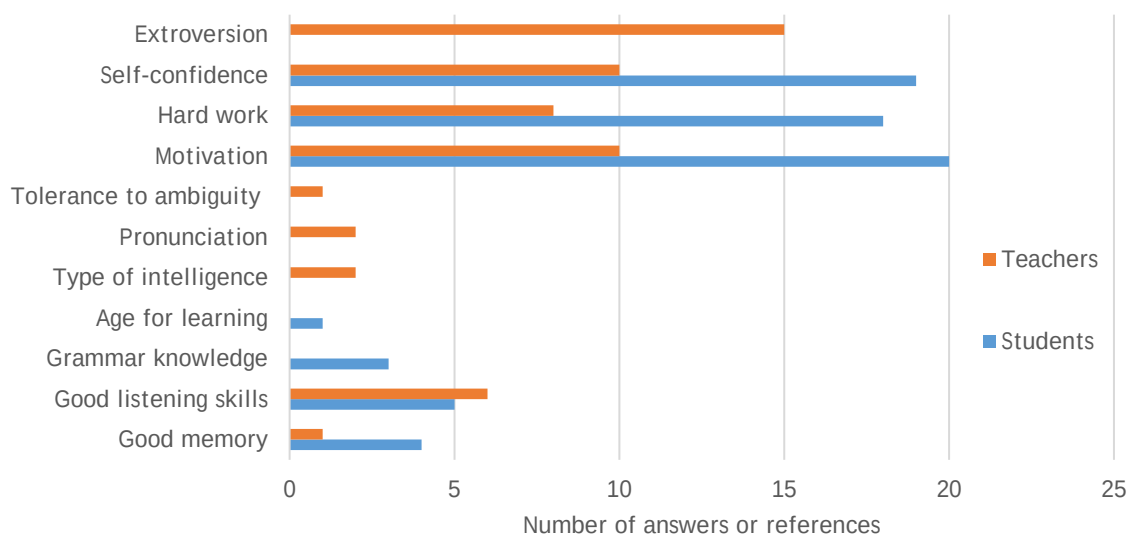
Three interview questions probed into this category of beliefs in the case of both students and teachers (Appendixes D and E). The first of them explored the potential existence of an aptitude for language learning and the personality traits that would help a person to learn a language better. The second question extended beyond those traits into other factors which are necessary for learning, and the third item elicited reasons behind the cultural assumption that Spanish people have low proficiency in English.

When asked about a presumed special aptitude to learn languages, all the students (100%, N=56) agreed that no special abilities are needed. However, some of them acknowledged a number of factors or dimensions that might enable learning faster, e.g. having a good memory (4 ref)<sup>6</sup>, good listening skills (5 ref), solid grammar knowledge (3 ref), learning at a young age (1 ref) and having a good teacher (4 ref). As regards those most quoted aspects that, in their opinion, are very important for language learning, motivation (20 ref), hard work (18 ref) and self-confidence (19 ref) stood out as the most prominent.

In the case of the teachers, 64% of them (N=14) made some type of reference to the existence of a 'gift/talent/inborn skill/better predisposed brain'. They basically alluded to good listening skills (6 ref), the students' type of intelligence (2 ref), good memory (1 ref), grammar structures (1 ref), neat pronunciation (2 ref) and tolerance to ambiguity (1 ref). The non-special aptitudes most frequently referred to were learners' hard work (8 ref), self-confidence (10 ref), extroversion (15 ref), motivation (10 ref) and a positive attitude towards language learning (1 ref). As regards the variables of gender and academic field for the students and gender and type of instruction for the teachers, no differences were found in the data collected through the interviews. Figure 13 below summarizes all the references and reveals the overlapping areas or common opinion nodes for both groups of respondents.

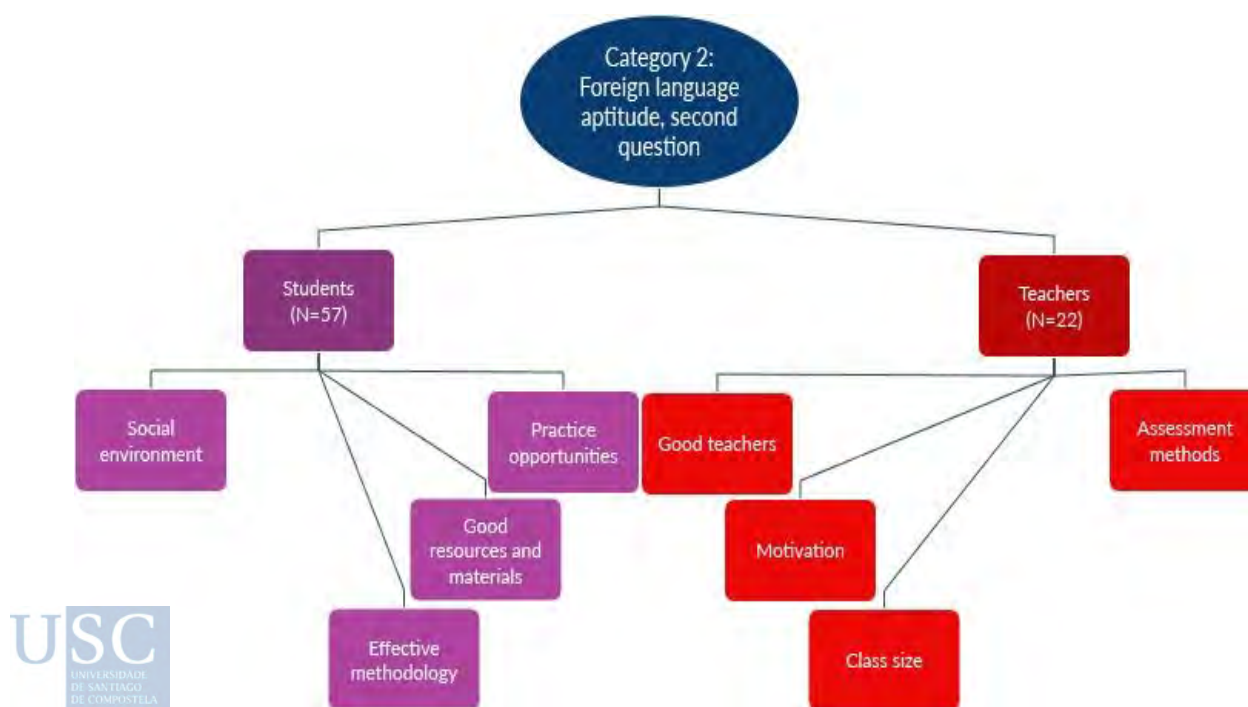


Figure 13: References to first question on foreign language aptitude by students (N=57) and teachers (N=22)



Regarding the second question in this category, which referred to other aspects that are important in language learning, the answers of both students and teachers also contained many common points. Figure 14 below summarizes the main response nodes identified; those clustered in the center of the map were common to students' and teachers' responses and encompassed the highest number of references.

Figure 14: Students and teachers agreed that effective methodology and resources used by good teachers in motivated small classes are ideal conditions for learning English.



Both groups referred to the importance of using an effective methodology when learning a language. The students contributed 12 references to the importance of new methods comprising a greater focus on speaking skills rather than grammar as well as English skills for more daily, practical purposes. In this regard the teachers questioned made three references which pinpointed the need for curricular reforms at the pre-university levels in terms of content, methodology and teacher training plus the use of effective methods to involve students actively in lessons at the university. The node on the use of good resources and materials consisted of 16 references by students and 11 references by teachers. The former group commented on the need to use new audiovisual resources, books and materials better adjusted to the level and reality of the students, while the latter mentioned the need to use materials that attract the students' attention and that cater for the understanding of the content taught in the foreign language. Practice opportunities branched out in two references from the students and five from the teachers where they expressed the importance of creating more favorable circumstances for the students to practice the language i.e. immersion programs, more exposure to native speakers and more cultural exchanges. To a lesser extent, the factors of motivation and class size were also referred to, with the latter containing one reference from the students and two from the teachers. As regard motivation, the students mostly pinpointed the demand of teachers who can motivate them in their lessons (12 ref) while the teachers not only acknowledged this need but also that the students find their own motivation to learn the language (10 ref).

In addition to motivation, the node referring to good teachers contained the highest number of references as well as other child nodes. The students contributed a total of 23 references with three of them focusing on the teachers' training level, while there were 17 mentions by the teachers. This means that while the former group was more laconic in their comments, the second one pinpointed the importance of the type of teacher in terms of personality (2 ref), academic and linguistic training (5 ref) and the methods and activities they prepare (5 ref). Finally, both groups briefly referred to the impact of the social environment in terms of friends and interlocutors, or other extrinsic factors to learn the language (2 ref), while the two mentions of the assessment methods were made by the teachers. The pattern of the students' answers based on the variables of gender and academic field was very consistent as many of them pointed out the need to have better teachers who could motivate them, be linguistically prepared and who could speak English consistently. Similarly, the mentions of better teaching resources were made by subjects of both genders and across the different degrees. Yet, some Philology students also commented on the need to reduce class size as a large group often hampers the opportunities to practice the language (3 ref).

On the same line, the answers elicited from the teachers questioned were very similar as regards the variable of gender. Yet, in terms of the type of instruction, the GE teachers seem to be more aware of the impact the role of the teacher has on the students' EFL learning process (11 ref) than the EMI teachers (1 ref). The third question of the interview that loaded into this category of foreign language aptitude retrieved a similar pattern of answers. In both groups, the majority agreed with this popular belief about the low level of English competence of Spaniards, albeit many of them acknowledged the situation is progressively improving. As regards the students, 81% (N=46) agreed with the statement and the other 19% (N=11) disagreed. Similarly, 77% of the teachers (N=17) supported this remark and 23% of them (N=5) rejected it. The main arguments advanced, as well as the number of references is summarized in Table 15 below, where the central column contains the main nodes common to both groups.

Table 15

*Summary of interview responses to the third question on foreign language aptitude*

| Students                                                                                                                                                                                 | Main node             | Teachers                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Weak speaking skills / bad pronunciation / only know grammar, English not needed as Spanish is an important language (7 ref)                                                             | Linguistic reasons    | Phonological system different from mother tongue's, more difficult / language distance / difficult understanding vocabulary and phrasal verbs / speaking is the biggest difficulty / Spanish is a powerful language (9 ref) |
| The methodology and programs are bad quality / teachers do not motivate students / no skills progress across levels in the programs (11 ref)                                             | Educational context   | Low quality teaching in the educational system / insufficient teachers' training / deficient methods / inadequate class size / use of the language limited to school environment (14 ref)                                   |
| Differences with other countries, Portugal in particular / lack of exposure to native language / politicians do not role model the language / a myth compared to other countries (8 ref) | Geo-political reasons | Lack of exposure to native language / not enough government resources invested in FL learning / lack of solid demand of high quality in FL learning / differences with other countries (9 ref)                              |
| The mass media reinforces this belief about low English competence / all films are dubbed in Spanish unlike with what is the case in Portugal (6 ref)                                    | Mass Media            | Mass media is sensationalist about it / films and other programs are dubbed in Spanish, which is not the case in Portugal (14 ref)                                                                                          |
| Lack of practice / Overconfidence about a high level of English / laziness to use it and practice (11 ref)                                                                               | Individual learner    | Lack of self-motivation / laziness / a fear to ridicule / shyness (8 ref)                                                                                                                                                   |
| Younger generations are better at English / it is getting better now (6 ref)                                                                                                             | Improving tendency    | The level of English is improving nowadays / there are more resources to learn it / its demand is higher (5 ref)                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                          |                       | <u>Cultural reasons</u> : Spaniards are open and sociable; yet they are shy when speaking English / they apologize for their English / Spanish people travel a lot which has helped them to learn English (3 ref)           |

The answers to this interview question for both groups of respondents did not contain contrasting differences across any of the variables included in this study.

#### 4.1.2.6 General Discussion on Belief Category 2: Foreign Language Aptitude

The results of the analysis for this second belief category show that students and teachers share a very similar pattern of beliefs about foreign language aptitude; yet these are not without variations. Although a collective high level of confidence about the students' future English competence was expressed by both groups of participants, the participant learners seemed to be doubtful about their own innate ability to learn a language and acknowledged speaking as the most important as well as the most challenging skill to learn. Similarly, although they acknowledge the potential of any individual to learn English, they believe that there is an innate individual ability that marks a difference in foreign language learning. These results are comparable to those of previous studies (Horwitz, 1999; Yang, 1999; Chawhan and Oliver, 2000; Aragão, 2011). Paradoxically, although the development of the oral component seems to be affected by factors such as the learning context and the limited opportunities for contact with native speakers, USC learners do not attempt to seek alternative forms of practice to develop

this language skill as frequently as they should, a view shared by both students and teachers. And as one participant teacher stated, “[t]he lesson should be only one small component of learning. Outside the classroom there should be situations and forms of practice that foster language learning.” (IntT4). This behavior suggests a contradictory or dysfunctional belief regarding the students’ high level of confidence about their future communicative skills, a trait also identified by Yang (1999, p. 530). Different reasons might be at play here when trying to explain such dysfunctionality. One of them could be a lack of learner independence to organize and execute their own practice, a factor that some of the teachers questioned pointed out in the interview comments. The data also shows that USC students are highly dependent on their academic environment and their teachers to practice English, a belief that has a negative impact on their learning:

[...] if I believe that you can only learn a language in the presence of and under the supervision of a teacher, whose responsibility is ‘to make me work,’ that, too, will influence my approach to how I envisage my learning a language, my role as a learner, which in turn will have a crucial impact on how I behave: for example it is likely that my reaction to any kind of self-directed work will be extremely negative and that I will in consequence achieve poor results. (Riley, 1997, p. 129)

One of the hurdles that may impede learners’ independence may have to do with the traditional approaches to teaching in educational systems (Knowles, 1976, p. 20). Similarly to the results presented in this report for the first belief category, the participants in this study also referred in this category to the traditional approaches (TAs) to EFL learning in the Galician context, which are visible across different levels of the educational system (see node Educational Context, Table 15). Since teaching based on TAs prevents the practical use of the target language in meaningful social interactive situations (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011, p. 559), students develop poor strategies through instruction to self-direct their language practice beyond the classroom, especially for the oral production skill. Moreover, the need to foster independence in students is closely linked to the concept of learning autonomy. In this respect, a distinction between proactive and reactive autonomy has been established (Littlewood, 1999, p. 75). The former refers to the learners’ taking full control by making decisions about what to learn and how to learn it while in the latter other agents (institutions and teachers, for instance) make decisions for them which “...are disconnected from the broader contexts of the learners’ lives.” (Lamb and Reinders, 2008, p. 25). As exposed by one of the instructors when explaining the limited use of the resources by the students:

The type of English that they use in their life is the one they have learned on their own because they also transfer its use to contexts like those of their learning. Their contexts and the teachers’ contexts don’t usually match. (IntT6)

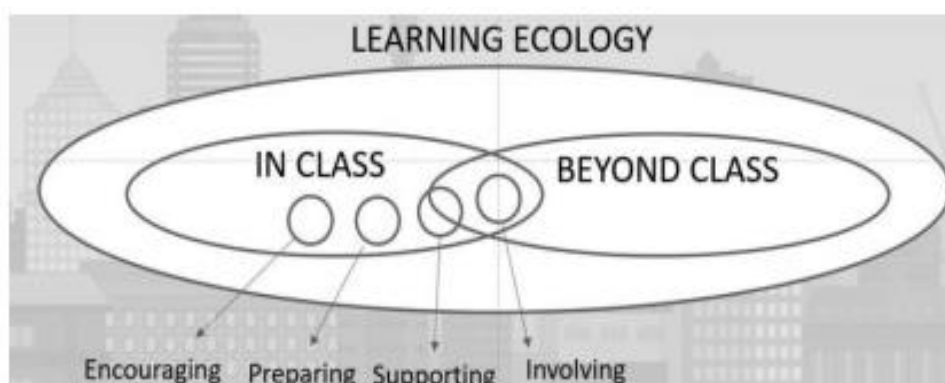
The data gathered also indicates that teachers expect students to show not only reactive but also proactive autonomy towards the whole learning process, as illustrated in these comments:

[...] if the motivation of the student is to learn, they will seek any resource that may help them. (IntT5)

I'm not sure why they don't use these resources as we're talking about digital generations, they should be adapted to using them for learning and for other purposes too. (IntT16)

These opinions indicate an assumption that being highly motivated and/or a digital native implies that the student automatically knows how to organize and execute their individual learning and how to adapt it to their specific needs. Fostering learning independence and autonomy should also be part of the teachers' roles by providing guidance to students on how to assess and monitor their own learning and progress (Teng, 2018, p. 16). Particularly in the past decades, when research about language learning has focused its attention more on "the *whole* learner as a person" (Reinders, 2021, p. 67) we should try to understand better all the aspects of the students' life that affect their learning. This author proposed the Learning Ecology framework, illustrated in Figure 15 below, which shows the extension of learning beyond the classroom, a model that could be used by USC teachers in their practice to include more often the combination of in-class and out-of-class projects and activities that use a variety of resources effectively to offer students more opportunities to use the language for practical communication.

Figure 15: The Learning Ecology framework (Taken from Reinders, 2021 p. 67)



So, the mismatch between the students' confidence about their future competence in English coupled with a low level of practice and the teachers' high expectations of students' autonomy points towards a need to explicitly train USC students to become more autonomous in their learning. This guidance can take different forms, it can emphasize the learner's independent interaction with learning resources and educational technologies, it can be directed to change the learners' behaviors and attitudes towards independent learning, or emphasize the learner's control over planning and evaluation in the classroom or at the curricular level (Benson, 2011, p. 125). From these options, the first two choices could be more suitable for USC educators since the learners' control over classroom planning and evaluation or curricula in schools is "like swimming against the tide because dominant cultures of teaching tend to foster conformity rather than empowerment." (Raya & Vieira, 2021, p. 4). Based on the concept of learner training, fostering learners' autonomy would allow students to become aware of the different factors that affect their learning and to guide them into the effective use of the learning strategies and resources most adequate for them (G. Ellis & Sinclair, 1990, p. 21). Should such training be provided successfully at the USC, more cohesion within the learning-teaching process could be attained.



Another plausible reason for the limited conversation practice beyond the classroom may be enrooted in affective factors such as a lack of Willingness to Communicate (WTC). Initially defined as the personal predisposition or likelihood of a person to freely engage in communication (McCroskey and Baer, 1985), within it “perhaps the most dramatic variable one can change in the communication setting is the language of discourse.” (Macintyre et al. 1998, p. 546). WTC in the L2 and the different factors that affect it was later approached from a situational perspective rather than a personality-trait one and modeled in a pyramidal shape with a bottom-up progression towards the use of the target language (Ibid., p. 547). In this report, the section on the fifth category of beliefs about Learning and Communication Strategies summarizes the main arguments offered by students and teachers to explain their limited practice of the speaking skill, and it shows the correspondence of these arguments with each of the stages of the WTC model. However, the most obvious reason for this lack of conversation practice could be attributed to the disadvantage of the learning environment where the target language is learned. In other words, English is not a vehicular language in the social context of this study; therefore, its communicative function is restricted to a small number of interactions mostly within very specific academic spaces. This was also an argument stated by some of the participants in this study,

I’ve never heard my classmates speaking English outside the classroom. It is not necessary because you can communicate perfectly well in your mother tongue.  
(IntSt10)

We never practice because it’s not necessary, we have Spanish and Galician to talk. We’re not used to it either, we only speak with international students.  
(IntSt13)

We never hear classmates speaking English outside the classroom. Some of them have English certificates but they never speak English. We don’t practice it because, for instance, if out of four people, only one knows how to speak English well the other three won’t speak. Besides, it is not necessary since we have Spanish and Galician. (IntSt21)

The belief dysfunctionality of the USC students as regards their confidence in their future linguistic competence in contrast to a lack of linguistic practice is also indicative of the fluctuation of beliefs as described by Yang and Kim (2009), which refers to the different changes the beliefs of a learner can undertake based on their interactions and involvement in different contexts. Not only could belief fluctuation be related to the time of exposure but also to the students’ investment, i.e. “the socially and historically constructed relationships of learners to the target language...” (Norton 1997, p. 411). As shown by a study of undergraduate students at the University of Oviedo (Lahuerta, 2013), these belief fluctuations also illustrate the impact that affective factors and perceived language competence may have on L2 performance in addition to the contextual dimension. The lack of conversation practice beyond the classroom was mainly justified by insufficient opportunities to interact with native speakers. However, relying solely on interactions with native speakers does not necessarily guarantee effective practice, for example, in terms of obtaining feedback about the students’ performance. In this sense, when discussing the phonological aspects of ELF, Jenkins states that in the interaction between non-native speakers (NNS) with native speakers (NS),



[...] listeners [NS] are concerned also about the face-loss of their non-fluent interlocutors, for the signalling of non-comprehension...may serve to draw the attention to the latter's [NNS] inaccuracies of phonological form, in other words, to their 'poor' English accent (Jenkins, 2000, p. 77).

Hence, making students aware of the effectiveness of alternative interaction forms within the ELF approach instead of self-limiting their practice to native speakers or teachers could also contribute to a higher frequency of conversation practice beyond the classroom. This, in turn, may help to enhance their speaking skills.

Consistent with other research conducted in the field of beliefs (Horwitz 1988; Siebert, 2003; Altan, 2006), the USC subjects involved in this study also expressed a general consensus about the importance of age in learning a FL. This belief may be sustained by the influence of the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) theory in language learning contributed by Penfield and Lenneberg in the 1960s, which is based on the plasticity of the brain. However, more recent studies (Oxford, 1990; Dörnyei, 2007; Moyer, 2014; Singleton & Pfenninger, 2018) have elicited other factors (e.g. socio-affective conditions, personality, motivation) as main determinants of effective language learning. Updating the students about these theoretical changes regarding the factor of age may offer them a new perspective about their own learning experience, linguistic competence, and future skills.

In addition, the students disagreed about a potential interrelationship between their specific academic field and their level of performance in the language. However, one of the opinions expressed by a questionnaire respondent contradicts this general pattern of answers:

On the question about the improvement of my language skills when learning content in English, I'd like to add that I think this improvement depends on the subject. In my case, my English level has progressed very little from the previous level because many words in the field of chemistry are very similar and I don't usually have to write texts. In my opinion, for more theoretical subjects, the level of difficulty would be higher but so would the improvement [of the linguistic skills]. (QtSt 252)

These opposing pieces of data show that while there is no scientific evidence about a variation of potential to learn EFL across students based on their vocation, there is a varying degree of development of their English skills affected by contextual factors such as the implementation of subjects taught in English (EMI). A closer look at this type of instruction is included in the second part of this analysis (Section 4.2 Part B, p.166).

With reference to the EFL learning potential of the population in general, the teachers and students questioned expressed their disagreement, and the former group showed a stronger negative perception than the latter about this point. The teachers' position runs parallel to the data gathered through the last question on the category of foreign language aptitude (see Appendixes I and J) about Spanish people's negative perception of their English performance. Their arguments are enrooted in various individual and collective factors that range from laziness to the role of mass media. This perceived negative self-efficacy about the use of English contradicts the openness, autonomy and deep familiarity typical of the positive politeness attributed to Spaniards (Recuero, 2019). On a more positive note, the answers of some students and teachers also support a shift on this social belief based on the most recent improvements in the quality of teaching and the availability of more teaching and learning resources. As shown

in the Deweyan study conducted by Ana M. Barcelos, "...students' and teachers' beliefs...and actions shape the context and are shaped by it." (2003, p. 194). Having said this, the positioning of the learners with regard to this belief may indirectly dampen their motivation to learn the language since it might increase their self-consciousness to engage actively in communication, especially with native speakers.

Similarly to what is the case in previous studies (Horwitz, 1988; Yang, 1999; Altan, 2006; Agudo, 2014), both groups of participants in this project acknowledged the existence of some innate abilities for FL learning. However, they also consider other factors, such as personal commitment, effort, determination, and motivation as the main determinants in successful learning. These views evidence the findings of many studies conducted on motivation (Ellis, 1996; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991; Ushioda, 2006; Dörnyei, 2009). One of the foundational ideas about motivation is that "attitudes play a role in language learning through their influence on motivation" (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991, p. 58). These authors also distinguish between orientations and motivation.

Orientations refer to reasons for studying a second language, while motivation refers to the directed, reinforcing effort to learn the language" [and] "...it is not so much the orientation that promotes achievement but rather the motivation. If an integrative or instrumental orientation is not linked with heightened motivation to learn the second language, it is difficult to see how either could promote proficiency. (Ibid).

Consistent with the findings of previous studies (Horwitz, 1999; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; N.-D. Yang, 1999; Martínez Agudo, 2014), the subjects in this study declared high instrumental and integrative orientations towards EFL learning and they expressed, in general, a positive, receptive attitude in relation to this process. The results suggest that motivation plays a crucial role in EFL learning for USC students, and it needs to be examined in closer detail. Based on the L2 Motivational Self System designed by Dörnyei (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009, p.c29), three main components comprise this motivational system: the *ideal L2 self* (the integrative and internalized instrumental motives of the student), the *ought-to L2 self* (the more extrinsic instrumental motives), and the third component of motivation is the students' L2 learning experience (elements related to the immediate learning environment and experience). While the first two components do not seem to affect negatively the EFL learning process of USC students, issues about the third element were a recurrent factor identified in the present study. As previously discussed in this report, the pervasive use of traditional approaches (TAs) in teaching has a negative impact on student's learning. Apart from the references to TAs at the pre-university levels, more than 75 references were labelled across the data in relation to deficiencies in the EFL teaching-learning process at the Secondary School level, which in turn reflects negatively on the learning process in higher education. A small sample of some of the pitfalls commented on by the participants were:

#### The programs:

In the classroom it is necessary to implement a serious change as to the way of teaching English or any other foreign language. They mainly tend to repeat the same content year after year and to emphasize the grammar and written skills and when the student enters university at around the age of 18, they realize they don't really know English (InSt57)

Undoubtedly, a good curricula reform at the Secondary and High School levels. There should be a thorough revision of the programs, content, and methodology as well as good teacher training. It is unacceptable that the students start learning English since they are in early years, and they get to the university with an alarmingly low level of the language in general terms. (InT8)

Teachers' pedagogical and language training:

Teachers...if they show they like it, students will feel motivated. Also, the variety of activities presented in class to avoid routine and keep the interest of the students. (InSt56)

First, the teacher should be able to motivate students. In foreign languages you must be a role model of the language. You cannot have a pitiful level of the language and expect your students to be good at it. You also have to be good at choosing the learning materials, which need to be attractive to the student but also useful for learning and adjusted to the correct level of the students. (InT8)

Materials:

[...] when I started last year, I had higher expectations about the level of difficulty of the books we would use, but some of them are very easy and boring too. (InSt 32)

Unfortunately, although there are some exceptions to the rule, Spain is a country in which textbooks continue to be the fundamental teaching material used in the classroom and the types of activities most textbooks include still follow a rather traditional approach to language learning. (InT2)

Dörnyei (2001, p. 21) has also referred to the fluctuating character of motivation over time consisting of three main stages: choice motivation (where motivation is generated), executive motivation (where motivation is maintained and protected) and motivational retrospection (where students assess their past experiences, and which determines their level of motivation to engage in future activities). This student's perception of her low self-efficacy in English shows the long-term demotivating effect that external factors, such as unsuccessful instruction in CLIL programs in this case, may have on students:

I didn't choose any courses in English in my degree and I don't practice English because I don't see it necessary to torture myself with courses that I'm not good at. This is because of a bad experience I had during Secondary Education while learning maths in English. (IntSt 9)

Students and teachers also cited the motivation factor to explain the reasons behind the limitations of certain learning and communication strategies such as the ineffective use of technological resources and the lack of conversation practice beyond the classroom. Even though teachers acknowledged their own responsibility for not offering enough guidance and

encouragement as to the use of technology for learning, few references were made to the quality of classroom instruction, an aspect that was pinpointed as a demotivating factor by students on several occasions. Undeniably, classroom instruction may strongly impact the approach of the student towards the future learning of the language since “belief changes represent a remediation process between the learner and the L2 learning environment, showing the learner’s agentic efforts to maintain (or abandon) L2 goals.” (Yang and Kim, 2011, p. 332). This belief conflict has also been identified in other studies (Chambers, 1993; Oxford, 1998; Sakui & Gaies, 1999) where “teachers appear to have a different view of why their students appear unmotivated.” (Ellis, 2012, p. 326).

In addition to this, over 23 students stated in these interviews that motivation to learn English was the teacher’s responsibility while every teacher interviewed expressed at least once that students need self-motivation to learn. Similarly, the motivational factor was frequently associated to other terms which were indicative of students’ attitude towards learning. When mentioning the necessary requirements or conditions to learn a foreign language, learners used phrases such as *you need to be interested / be proactive / be hard-working / practice a lot / cannot be lazy / have strong will*. Some teachers referred to the students’ negative attitudes as *passive learning / individual effort is required / don’t want to make an effort*. As previously mentioned in this report, the construct of motivation is closely connected to the agentic actions of students, so a high or low level of motivation is usually identified through agency, or the level of effort students show through their actions. Both motivation and agency are also founded on the psychological construct of *self-theories* (Dweck, 2000), within which effort can be assessed positively or negatively by students depending on their type of mindset.

Students with a fixed mindset or who see intelligence as fixed and unchangeable, usually consider effort as negative since “...[i]f you have to work hard at something, it means you’re not good at it. If you’re good at something, you shouldn’t need effort.” (Ibid., p. 39). In contrast, students with an incremental mindset or who consider intelligence malleable see personal effort as positive because it is “something that, far from undermining your ability, allows you to fully use your ability and realize your potential.” (Ibid., p. 40). This author recommends helping students to move into an incremental mindset and to encourage effort accompanied by “an emphasis on learning and the enjoyment of challenge” to avoid generating learning anxiety from work overload (Ibid., p. 235). Thus, while fostering students’ motivation through a wide range of strategies is part and parcel of the teachers’ practice, these results suggest a need for USC teachers to promote self-motivating strategies in students as another means to guide them into becoming more autonomous learners (Dornyei, 2001, p. 109).

#### 4.1.2.7 Brief summary about beliefs regarding language learning aptitude

The results for this category broadly indicate that the beliefs of USC students about foreign language aptitude share a common model, with different shades of certainty in their opinions and with certain elements comparable to those found in other studies in the literature. The USC students in our study agree on the potential of all individuals to learn a foreign language and on the idea that no special abilities are required, yet they express some doubts in their somewhat positive assessments as to their own aptitude to learn languages. They also acknowledge that there are innate abilities here, and that other variables and factors, such as age, memory, listening skills, effort, motivation and previous foreign language experience, might have an impact on the learning of English. This well illustrates the contradictory character of the concept of beliefs. Such beliefs are also characterized by some discrepancies, especially in terms of those where there is a lack of agreement between students and teachers. Our data

also show that there is no correlation between the aspects of gender or the academic field of studies with the level of competence in English; however, they show some degree of connection between plurilingual competence and the individual IQ range. In addition, our subjects do not consider that those from their own national background have a strong capacity to learn foreign languages. Different levels of opinions were identified within this general model of belief, which can be explained by the nature of the learners' general area of study and indeed their specific academic field. Another aspect that activates these disparities is the students' language learning experience, in particular their prior experience of language immersion.

#### 4.1.3 Belief category 3: The nature of language learning

Through this category of beliefs, we have access to the participants' individual approach towards the process of learning a language and what this process means to them. Issues such as the culture of the foreign country (STs 7 and 10), their structural perception of the FL as compared to their mother tongue and to other subjects (STs 4 and 22), and their individual focus towards language learning with regard to the task (STs 14, 18, 23) comprise this third category of beliefs. Consistent with most of the questionnaire items, the statements in this category also shared the six-point scale scheme. The items about the nature of language learning are the following:

- ST4. English is structured in the same way as my native language.
- ST7. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.
- ST10. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.
- ST14. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.
- ST18. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules.
- ST22. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.
- ST23. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from my native language.

##### 4.1.3.1 Descriptive statistics of the students' responses to the questionnaire

Figures 72 to 78 in Appendix C5 illustrate the heterogeneous reactions the students showed regarding this category of beliefs. Concerning the relevance of the cultural aspect in the learning of a foreign language (ST7, Fig 73), the respondents expressed conflicting opinions ( $M=3.52$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ). Thus, 55% ( $N=338$ ) acknowledged it is important to know the foreign culture to learn a FL while the remaining 45% ( $N=276$ ) disagreed with the statement. Within the former group most of the answers (62%,  $N=211$ ) loaded into the *slightly agree* layer, which indicates the indecisive agreement of these students. In contrast, a more solid general agreement with ST10 (Fig 74) about the effectiveness of language immersion was expressed by 97% of the students ( $N=597$ ), of these 52% ( $N=308$ ) were unyielding in their opinion ( $M=5.33$ ,  $SD=0.83$ ). About 69% of the students ( $N=425$ ) disagreed with the view that the structure of English is similar to that of their native language (ST4, Fig 72), with most of these students (34%,  $N=143$ ) expressing plain disagreement ( $M=3.00$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ). As regards ST22 (Fig 77) on the comparison of learning English to the learning of other subjects, a similar pattern of answers was obtained. Around 76% of the respondents ( $N=469$ ) accepted the learning differences between them and more than half of them (56%,  $N=265$ ) expressed plain agreement ( $M=4.25$ ,  $SD=1.292$ ). When sharing their individual approach to English learning tasks, some similarities and differences were also identified. For ST14 (Fig 75) about placing the focus of learning on vocabulary, 55% of the participants ( $N=335$ ) disagreed while the other 45% ( $N=279$ ) supported



this statement. Both parts, however, loaded the largest number of opinions onto the layers expressing most uncertainty ( $M=3.31$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ). In a similar vein, ST18 (Fig 76), concerning the focus of learning being on grammar, received 68% ( $N=420$ ) of negative reactions as compared to 32% ( $N=194$ ) on the opposite side ( $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=1.20$ )<sup>4</sup>. Finally, a focus on translation as a main approach to learn English (ST23, Fig 78) was rejected by most of the students questioned (85%,  $N=521$ ), of whom 46% ( $N=239$ ) contributed a plain answer ( $M=2.21$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ).

#### 4.1.3.2 Variables considered. Testing for students' belief differences about the nature of language learning

##### 4.1.3.2.1 Variable 1: The effects of the groups and subgroups on beliefs about the nature of language learning.

In this category of beliefs, a very consistent belief pattern of the groups in the three main academic areas was observed, with no statistical differences found in their answers. In contrast, when comparing the responses across the subgroups, the ANOVA test yielded two significant statistical disparities. In the case of ST22,  $F(10,603) = 2.42$ ,  $p < .01$ , Chemistry students were more convinced that learning English is different from learning other subjects ( $M=4.05$ ,  $SD=1.39$ ) as compared to students in other languages and literatures ( $M=4.85$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.12, 1.48]), and to Journalism and Audiovisual Communication students ( $M=4.76$ ,  $SD=0.66$ ), ( $p = .03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.03, 1.39]). In addition, the student teachers were less certain about this statement ( $M=4.03$ ,  $SD=1.45$ ) than students in other languages and literatures ( $M=4.85$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.05, 1.58]). The second significant belief difference between the subgroups was for ST23 regarding the learning of English mostly by translating from their mother tongue,  $F(10,603) = 3.00$ ,  $p < .01$ . The students in English language ( $M=1.86$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ) disagreed more vehemently about using this approach to learn English than the students in other languages and literatures ( $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=1.38$ ), ( $p = .03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.03, 1.61]). Besides, the latter group disagreed less with this view than the group formed by Engineering students ( $M=2.57$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.04, 1.38]).

##### 4.1.3.2.2 Variable 2: The effects of Language Learning Experience (LLE) on beliefs about the nature of language learning.

With respect to the number of extra languages, the pattern of beliefs on the nature of language learning remained uniform except for ST7 concerned with culture as an important part of language learning  $F(4,609) = 3.79$ ,  $p < .01$ . In this regard, those students with the highest number of extra languages gave more importance to culture as a part of language learning ( $M=4.45$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ) than those students with knowledge of a lower number of extra languages ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.10, 2.12]). Yet, the tests results showed no significant correlation between these two variables. As regards the second item of LLE, *learnt FL*, the tests did not yield any significant statistical differences that disrupted the consistency of the general pattern of beliefs. In contrast, regarding the possible belief disparities based on the students' SA experience, ST7 about the cultural aspect was again approached differently,  $t(612) = -2.24$ ,  $p = .02$ . The students with experience abroad ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=1.72$ ) conceived the foreign culture as an important part of language learning more than those respondents without any language immersion experience ( $M=3.46$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ).

As regards the gender variable, no significant differences were observed within the general pattern of students' beliefs on the nature of language learning, this is the reason why its analysis



was excluded from this section. Despite the aforementioned response differences stemming mainly from the students' academic fields and their language learning background, we can conclude that USC students seem to share a general uniform pattern of beliefs regarding the nature of language learning. They confer a certain level of importance to the cultural aspect as part of the language learning process as well as great relevance to language immersion for effective learning. They also perceive the learning of English as differing from the learning of other subjects and as holding structural differences with regard to their mother tongue. Finally, they do not seem to approach their learning exclusively through the study of grammar nor the use of translation; however, they appear to be a little more prone to focusing on vocabulary learning.

#### 4.1.3.3 Descriptive statistics of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire

The teachers' beliefs about the nature of language learning were explored mainly through the following five items:

ST9. English is structured in the same way as my native language.

ST12. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.

ST15. The best way to learn English is in an English-speaking country.

ST18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot to learn English.

ST23. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.

In this case, ST15 is the homologue of ST10 in the students' questionnaire; yet its wording was changed to make it more convincing considering the pattern of answers the students had contributed. Instead of exploring the teachers' views on where the focus of the learning task should be (vocabulary, grammar or translation), ST18 was targeted at their approach to repetition and practice as a more holistic way of learning. This is an item students were asked about within the next category on learning and communication strategies.

Figures 79 to 83 in Appendix C6 show the distribution of the answers contributed by the participant teachers to each statement in this belief category. They expressed a general disagreement with ST9 (Fig 79) concerning the structural similarities of English with their mother tongue ( $M=3.00$ ,  $SD=0.21$ ). About 66% ( $N=23$ ) of the answers stood within the negative response section and its highest number (61%,  $N=14$ ) expressed plain disagreement. With regard to the importance of the foreign culture for language learning (ST12, Fig 80), approximately 69% of the teachers ( $N=24$ ) supported the statement, although the largest group of these (46%,  $N=11$ ) expressed their support shyly, ( $M=3.91$ ,  $SD=0.22$ ). Consistent with the reactions of students, most of the teachers questioned (86%,  $N=30$ ) also favored language immersion (ST15, Fig 81) as the best way to learn a language, with about 43% of them ( $N=13$ ) expressing unhesitant agreement ( $M=4.60$ ,  $SD=0.19$ ). Likewise, a similar pattern of beliefs was revealed in the case of ST18 on the importance of language practice (Fig 82), ( $M=4.80$ ,  $SD=0.14$ ), and ST23 about the differences between learning English and learning other subjects (Fig 83), ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=0.24$ ). In both cases most of the responses loaded into the positive side of the scale and the largest group concentrated their answers on the highest scale level. In contrast, ST18 had a higher number of positive reactions (91%,  $N=32$ ) than ST23 (71%,  $N=25$ ), and the distribution in the latter case was wider as all the scale labels contained answers unlike it was the case in the former, where answers were only marked in the central and positive sections.

#### 4.1.3.4 Testing for teachers' belief differences about the nature of language learning

##### 4.1.3.4.1 *Variables: The effect of experience, language use and gender on beliefs about the nature of language learning*

The tests conducted on the responses of the participating teachers with professional experience, type of English instruction and gender as independent variables did not reveal many significant differences. In fact, the only disparity found was on the variable of language use for ST15 regarding the importance of language immersion as the best way to learn a foreign language,  $t(33) = -3.04, p < .01$ . The data shows that EMI teachers are more positively convinced about the effectiveness of language immersion ( $M=5.19, SD=0.75$ ) than do the GE teachers ( $M=4.11, SD=1.24$ ). Thus, overall, we can say that, akin to the beliefs of students, the pattern of beliefs of USC teachers about the nature of language learning shows a high level of consistency.

#### 4.1.3.5 Interview data from students and teachers on the nature of language learning

One question was included in the interviews to further probe into the students' and teachers' beliefs regarding the nature of language learning (Appendices D and E). In this case, the data collected was mainly focused on their opinions about the effectiveness of language learning through immersion in the native environment. In the group of students, 70% of the answers ( $N=40$ ) supported the view that this is the most effective way to learn a language, while the other 30% ( $N=17$ ) was skeptical about it. A similar distribution of the answers was found among the teachers since 68% ( $N=15$ ) of them concurred on the effectiveness of the immersion experience while the other 32% ( $N=7$ ) remained more neutral. In terms of the advantages offered to the visitors by the native environment, the students interviewed highlighted the convenience of having native teachers (3 ref), learning faster and more (7 ref), validating their academic learning through practice (3 ref), having more practice opportunities available beyond the classroom (3 ref) and a limited use of mother tongue and forced use of the foreign language (8 ref). Similarly, the teachers interviewed stated that this experience guarantees more exposure to the FL and a larger input, hence, a better learning (3 ref), it imposes the use of the language as a communicative tool outside the classroom (3 ref), it contributes to better oral proficiency (6 ref), and it grants more practice opportunities beyond the classroom (3 ref).

As to the more specific linguistic gains, the students interviewed stated that you learn 'real' pronunciation (2 ref), commonly used language and expressions different from those learnt in the classroom (6 ref), their listening skills are improved (2 ref), their fluency, vocabulary and speaking skills in general are enhanced (5 ref), and they become more familiar with different language varieties (1 ref). Similarly, the teachers surveyed mentioned the enhancement of pronunciation (2 ref), the development of fluency skills (1 ref), the familiarity with different registers (1 ref) and with some cultural aspects such as pronunciation across social classes (1 ref). Based on these advantages as well as on the number of references contributed by each group, we can say that the students interviewed consider the immersion experience more positively than the participant teachers. In addition, the latter also shared more conditions required for the effectiveness of immersion as well as disadvantages. In this regard, they said that in the native environment the student should be controlled to guarantee an active and a passive use of the language (1 ref). One of the students reinforced this idea stating that "...globalization might take you to find speakers of your mother tongue in other countries, which limits your (EFL) practice". Teachers also mentioned that it depends on the degree of motivation and the attitude of the learner towards taking advantage of the experience (2 ref),

that grammar and written skills are not so highly improved as compared to the oral skills (2 ref), that previous academic instruction is necessary to validate learning in practice (3 ref) and that language learning effectiveness also depends on the native English regional variety used in the area or the country visited by the student (1 ref).

Other aspects referred to by the teachers interviewed included the effectiveness of learning as depending only on commitment and hard work rather than on the immersion experience (1 ref), and on the current availability of enough resources that allow students to learn the language effectively without traveling overseas (2 ref). On this point, two students also mentioned the availability of resources as a useful tool not only to learn but also to practice before the immersion experience so as to soften the cultural shock. Moreover, the teachers interviewed pointed out that the opportunities for language immersion are limited by the economic resources of the student (1 ref), and that the experience could be counter-productive if the student did not see the need to complement it with academic learning (1 ref). As regards the students' variables of gender and academic area, not many differences were found in their answers. Yet, most of the Philology respondents and a few from Chemistry and Educational Sciences perceived the stay-abroad experience as an opportunity to reinforce their previous academic learning rather than a direct, instant learning event. Such supportive approach was also shared by most of the teachers regardless their gender or type of instruction.

#### 4.1.3.6 General Discussion on Belief Category 3: The nature of language learning

In a similar study of beliefs of university students in Turkey (Altan, 2006), the subjects participating in the survey alluded to grammar and vocabulary as main aspects in their learning approach to English while they rejected translating from their mother tongue as a useful practice. Comparatively, the USC students questioned consider vocabulary as a relatively important aspect in EFL learning; yet they regard grammar and translation as unimportant, as also validated by the USC teachers in their assessment of the students' learning strategies. This belief about vocabulary learning is common across EFL learners since

[...]vocabulary knowledge is strongly associated with a range of language skills,... it is essential for oral communication [, and] much of L1 and L2 vocabulary learning happens through environmental exposure to new words, primarily through reading and listening. (Ardasheva & Tao Hao 2020, p. 1).

The beliefs of the students about the main skills and subskills to learn and practice can also be modified by direct pedagogical intervention, as demonstrated by Başaran & Cabaroğlu (2014) in a study where the use of podcasts proved to be effective in the change of students beliefs as regards the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies and motivations and expectations. Having said this, USC learners could benefit from more guidance on the adoption of a more integrative approach of all skills in their practice of English. Moreover, as pointed out in Section 4.1.1.6 for the first belief category (p.107), listening is the main skill used by USC students to practice English, so they take advantage of this environmental exposure through mass media and technological resources to expand their inventory of words. Hence, there seems to be a dichotomy between the vocabulary students learn through individual practice and the vocabulary learned in the classroom. This disconnection was also pointed out by one of the subjects participating in the survey:

They should teach us words about daily life in a real English context because everything that we are taught is theoretical, if I were in London right now I wouldn't know what to do. Lessons should be more dynamic and practical. (IntSt18)

Notwithstanding the artificial character of the classroom environment as regards the validity of communicative situations, tailoring the teaching materials and programs to the students' learning needs may clearly contribute to a more solid learning of vocabulary as well as other linguistic features. When teaching vocabulary, apart from pre-selecting items which are relevant to the students' needs, their introduction through original material should be interesting for students, and in a subsequent stage they should be guided to use these terms in communicative situations that allow them to learn and show different grammatical functions, collocational issues and constraints on use (Nation, 2001, p. 78).

Consistent with other studies on students and teachers' beliefs (Horwitz, 1988; N.-D. Yang, 1999; Altan, 2006; Pan & Block, 2011; Peng, 2011), an additional point of general agreement found in the data was that the best way to learn a language is spending time in a country where it is spoken. Different specialists in the field (Howard, 2005; Jim Cummins, 2009; Lord, 2010; Dewaele et al., 2013; Coleman, 2015; Leonard & Shea, 2017; Pérez Vidal et al., 2018;) have highlighted the significant benefits of an immersion experience, even more so when it is combined with classroom instruction. Such benefits were also evidenced in the data obtained in this study with respect to the variable of Language Learning Experience (LLE), where students with some overseas experience showed more flexibility and confidence towards different aspects of language learning. In addition, all the opinions contributed by the participants regarding the limitations of practice opportunities referred to interaction with native speakers. However, as shown in other studies, for instance, the sociocultural analysis conducted by Yang & Kim, "...even if an L2 learner decides to go abroad... SA[Study Abroad] participation per se does not guarantee a high level of personal L2 success unless the learner aligns his or her L2 learning beliefs with the L2 learning environment." (Yang and Kim, 2011, p. 331). Unlike the USC teachers, the students interviewed showed very few signs of awareness, if any, about the need to make an effort and work hard during an SA period to improve their language competence. This is consistent with the results found by Mercer & Ryan (2009) regarding the connection between EFL learning beliefs and mindsets. They reported that "beliefs about a natural, effortless type of language acquisition during an extensive stay abroad do not seem to correspond with growth mindset beliefs emphasizing the role of effort and hard work." (p. 441), and that further research between these two sets of beliefs is needed.

As found in the study conducted by Doiz et al. (2011) at the University of the Basque Country (UBC), in this study USC students also pointed out the advantage of having teachers who are native speakers of English. This myth of the NES teacher being the ideal teacher is still pervasive in some educational institutions; yet, it is being gradually debunked by studies which show that both types of teachers can fulfill their roles efficiently (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Ustunluoglu, 2007; Alseweed, 2012). Updating the USC students about this latest trend might offer them a different viewpoint of their preconceptions regarding language teachers.

When assessing immersion opportunities in the English-speaking countries, there is a pressing need for USC teachers to make the students aware of two key factors: the importance that internalizing beliefs has for mediation in their learning in an SA context, and the possibility of creating their own language immersive experiences through a more effective use of learning strategies and the resources available when faced with limited opportunities of stay-abroad periods. Instructing students on these factors could also bridge the belief dysfunctionality

between the importance learners conferred on practicing and repeating in the questionnaire and the low frequency of practice they acknowledged in the interviews.

#### 4.1.3.7 Brief summary of beliefs about the nature of language learning

Similarly to the results from the previous belief categories reported, the group of USC students and teachers questioned share a common system of assumptions about the nature of language learning. In general, they recognize that the process of learning English is different from that of learning other subjects. Although somehow hesitantly, they also acknowledge the importance of vocabulary and of the cultural aspects of the language in the process of learning English, especially the group of teachers and students with extensive language learning experience (LLE). Regarding the idea that SA experience is the most effective way to learn the language, there was also general agreement, with EMI teachers and students showing the strongest consensus. Likewise, the participants rejected the idea that English and their native language/s share a common structure, and that focusing mainly on grammar or vocabulary are effective ways to learn this FL. As seen thus far, the variables of LLE for students and of English instruction in the case of teachers generate some disparities within the general belief pattern for this category.

#### 4.1.4 Belief category 4: Motivations and expectations

This fourth category of beliefs explores the students' approach towards the opportunities or favorable conditions they may have access to according to their level of language competence in English. Items 20, 24 and 28 address these opportunities directly while ST27 assesses their perception on the importance of English from the cultural point of view. These statements were outlined in the questionnaire as follows:

ST20. If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.

ST24. If I get to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job.

ST27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.

ST28. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.

##### 4.1.4.1 Descriptive statistics of students' responses to the questionnaire

The beliefs shared by the students with regard to their motivations and expectations about learning EFL were in general very similar, as depicted on Figures 84 to 87 in Appendix C7. As regards ST20 (Fig 84), about 88% of the respondents (N=540) agreed about the different opportunities to use English they will have if they know the language ( $M=4.72$ ,  $SD=0.04$ ). Furthermore, as shown in Figure 85 for ST24, a higher number of the students questioned (95%, N=584) acknowledged English competence as an advantage to reach a better position in the job market, ( $M=5.07$ ,  $SD=0.03$ ). Similarly, when asked about the importance of English learning in their culture through ST27 (Fig 86), 92% of them (N=568) expressed their agreement, ( $M=4.94$ ,  $SD=0.04$ ). However, a smaller majority (83%, N=509) expressed their intention of using the language as a tool to come closer to its speakers (ST28), ( $M=4.50$ ,  $SD=0.05$ ), as depicted in Figure 87. The largest group of respondents expressed full agreement with all the statements presented in this section.



#### 4.1.4.2 Variables considered. Testing for students' belief differences about motivations and expectations

##### 4.1.4.2.1 Variable 1: The effect of the groups and subgroups on beliefs about motivations and expectations

The answer patterns across the three main areas of knowledge yielded significant statistical differences in all the four items of this category as displayed in Figures 16 to 19 below.

Figure 16: Students' responses per main academic areas to ST20: If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it (N=614)

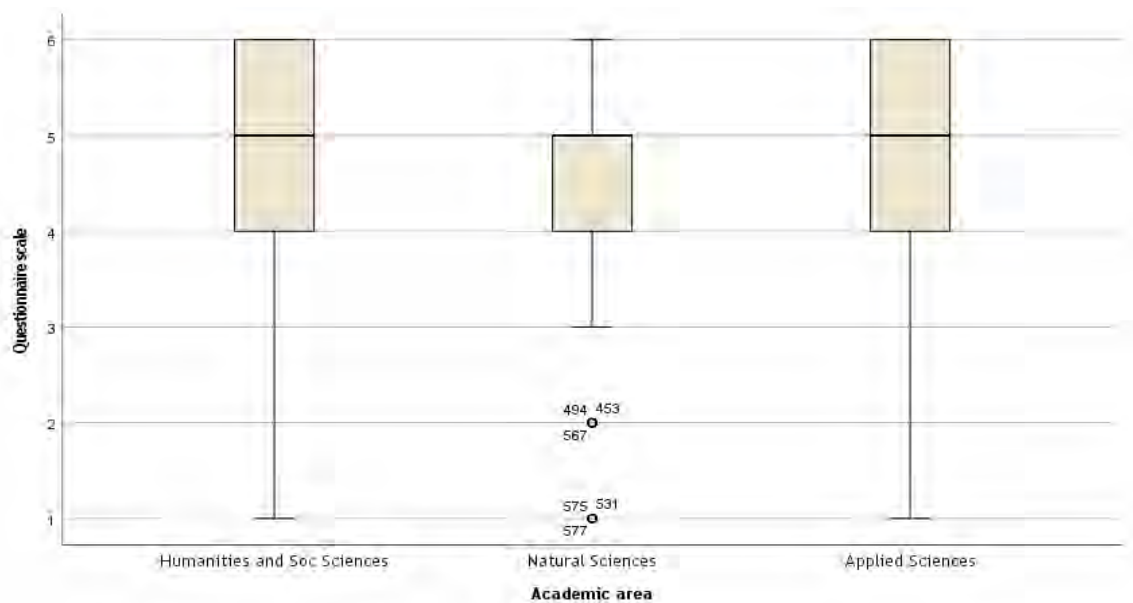




Figure 17: Students' responses per main academic areas to ST27: In my country people think that it is important to speak English (N=614)

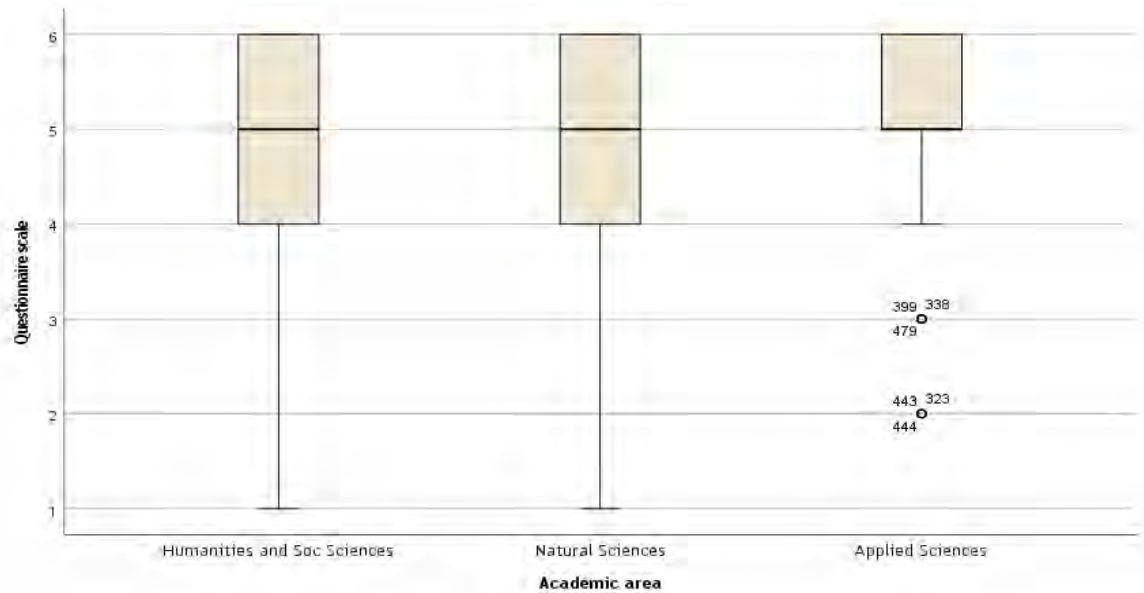


Figure 18: Students' responses per main academic areas to ST24: If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job (N=614)

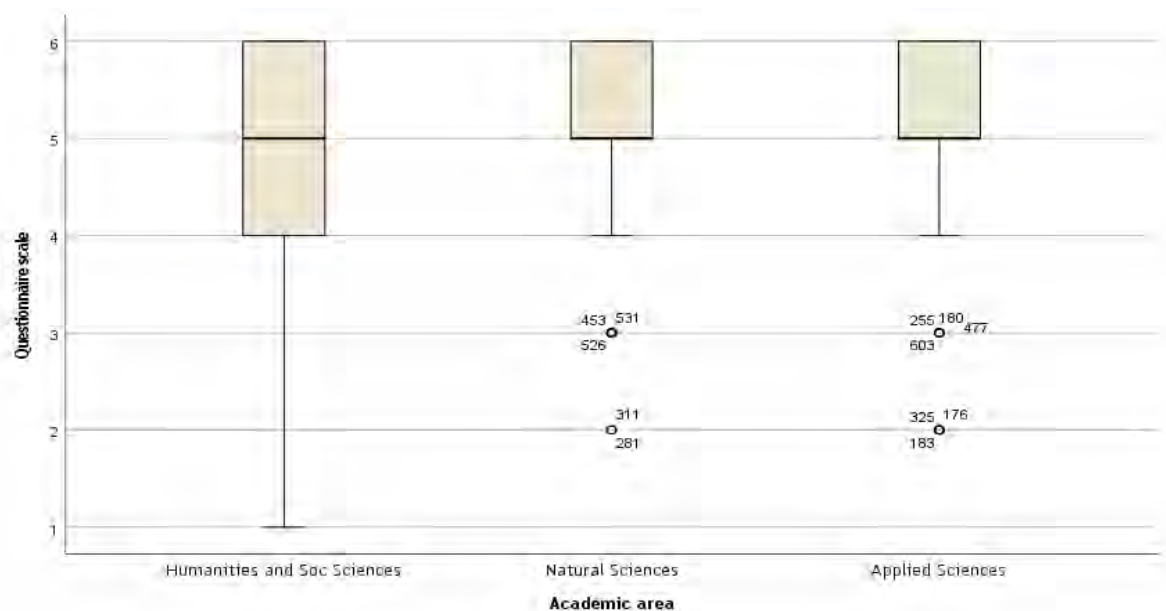
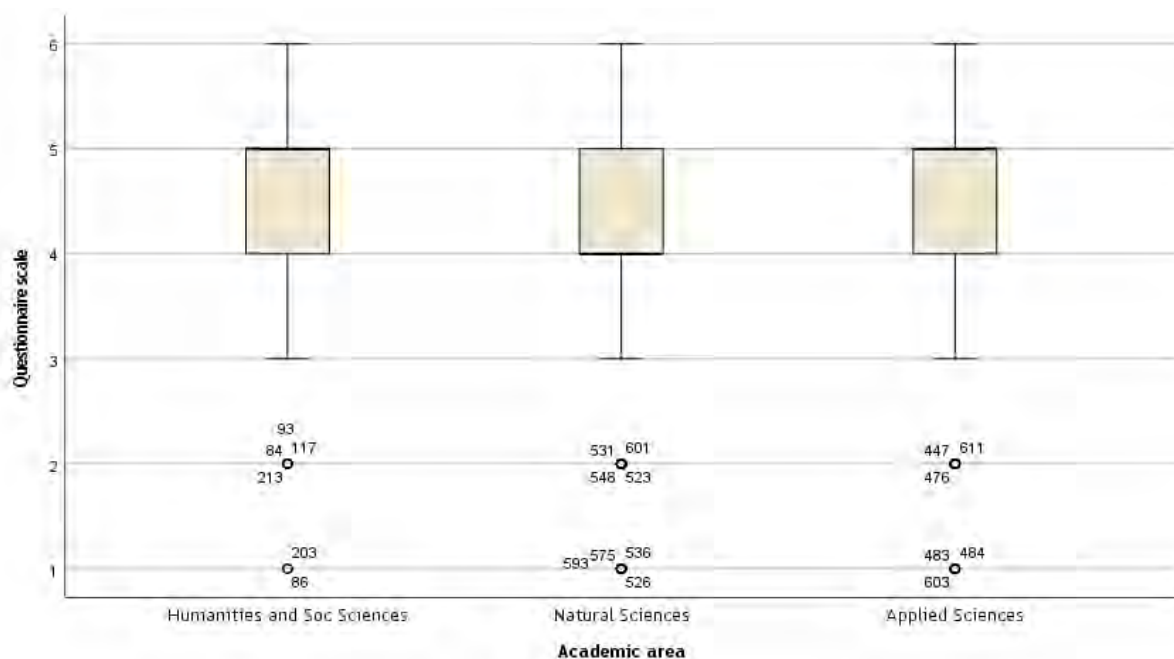


Figure 19: Students' responses per main academic areas to ST28: I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better (N=614)



The important differences found in these four statements were mostly marked by the answers of the students in the Natural Sciences group. As regards ST20 (Fig 16),  $F(2, 611) = 3.90$ ,  $p = .02$ , the latter group of students seem to be less convinced that a higher English competence may guarantee more opportunities to use this language ( $M=4.55$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ) than students in Applied Sciences ( $M=4.85$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.04, 0.56]). In addition, concerning the utilitarian value of English for the employment market (ST24, Fig 17),  $F(2, 611) = 9.39$ ,  $p < .01$ , they were more convinced about it ( $M=5.19$   $SD=0.85$ ) than the learners in Applied Sciences ( $M=4.88$   $SD=0.96$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.10, 0.52]). This last group in Applied Sciences, however, was also more certain about the utilitarian purpose of English ( $M=5.12$   $SD=0.87$ ) than learners in the Humanities and Social Sciences ( $M=4.88$   $SD=0.96$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.03, 0.46]). The Natural Sciences group was also less supportive of ST28, (Fig 19),  $F(2, 611) = 9.39$ ,  $p < .01$ , about using English with the purpose of interacting with its speakers ( $M=4.23$   $SD=1.32$ ) than the students in the Humanities and Social Sciences group ( $M=4.76$   $SD=1.01$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.10, 2.12]). Finally, they also differed with the other groups regarding the importance their society confers on knowing English (ST27, Fig 18),  $F(2, 611) = 5.05$ ,  $p < .01$ . They feel less certain about this social recognition of English ( $M=4.83$   $SD=0.99$ ) than the group in the Applied Sciences ( $M=5.12$   $SD=0.93$ ).

In reference to the subgroups, some significant statistical differences were also found concerning statements 24 about the instrumental value of English, ST27 regarding the importance society gives to English competence and ST28 about using English to approach its users. The box plots and table that follow illustrate these opinions contributed by the students enrolled in the different degrees. The results of the ANOVA test for each of these statements were the following:

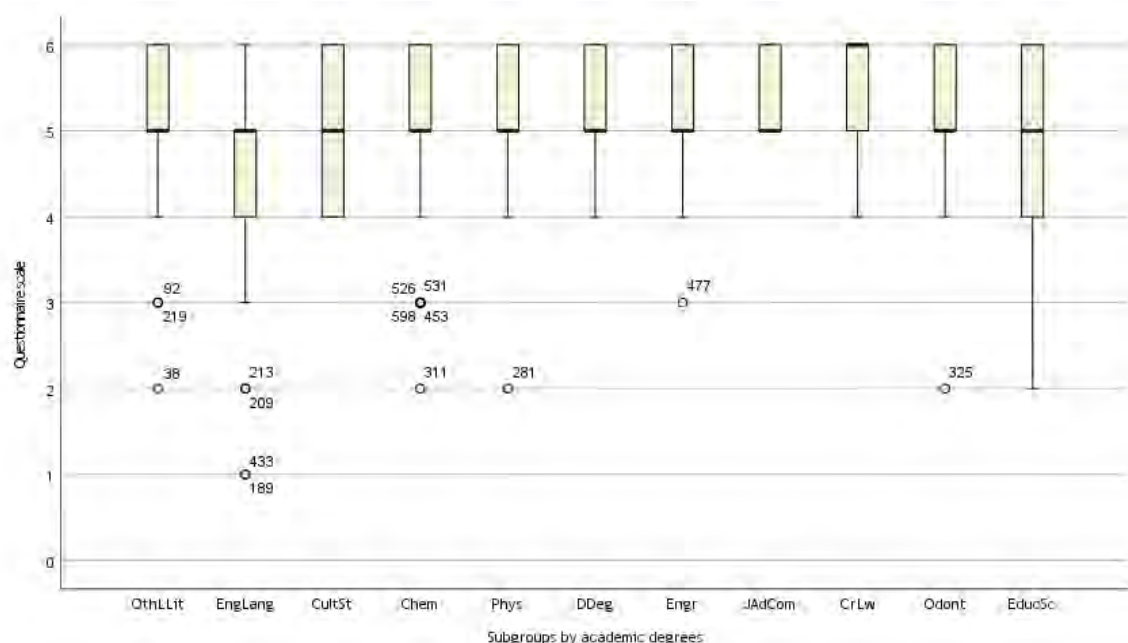
ST24  $F(10, 603) = 3.16, p < .01$

ST27  $F(10, 603) = 4.73, p < .01$

ST28  $F(10, 603) = 3.99, p < .01$

As regards the instrumental use of the language explored in ST24 (Fig 20), few statistically significant differences were found. These showed that the learners in English studies ( $M= 4.81$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ) were less convinced about this view than the students in Chemistry ( $M=5.21$ ,  $SD=0.88$ ), ( $p= .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.05, 0.74]), and were also less convinced than Criminology and Law students ( $M=5.45$ ,  $SD=0.71$ ), ( $p< .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.12, 1.16]). At the same time, the latter group of Criminology and Law participants expressed more agreement with this utilitarian use of English than student teachers ( $M=4.86$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ), ( $p= .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.04, 1.14]).

Figure 20: Significant statistical differences in the answers to ST24 (If I get to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job) across the different academic degrees (N=614)



However, many more disparities were identified regarding the importance that Spanish people grant to having the ability to speak in English (ST27). These variations across the subgroups are illustrated in Table 16 and Fig 21 below, where the values indicate that the Journalism and Audiovisual Communication students together with those studying Criminology and Law, and Educational Sciences were more supportive of this view than the rest of the groups of students in other degrees.

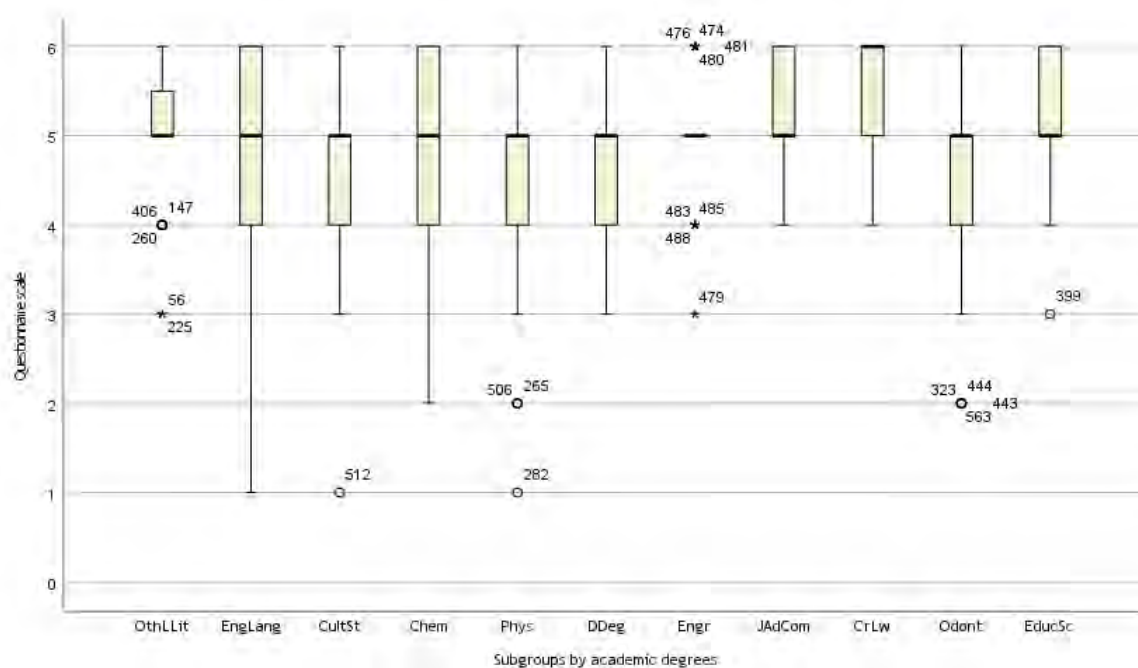
Table 16

*Significant statistical differences across the subgroups regarding ST27 In my country people think that it is important to speak English (N=614)*

| Dependent Variable: 27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English. |                                              |                       |            |      |                         |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| (I) SUBGr                                                                                 | (J) SUBGr                                    | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|                                                                                           |                                              |                       |            |      | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| Journ-AdV Com (N=17)<br>(M=5.41 SD=0.61)                                                  | Physics (N=46)<br>(M=4.57, SD=1.12)          | .847*                 | .224       | .016 | .09                     | 1.60        |
|                                                                                           | Odontology (N=41)<br>(M=4.41, SD=1.28)       | .997*                 | .250       | .009 | 0.16                    | 1.84        |
| Crimin-Law (N=40)<br>(M=5.45, SD=0.74)                                                    | Physics (N=46)<br>(M=4.57, SD=1.12)          | .885*                 | .204       | .002 | .21                     | 1.56        |
|                                                                                           | English Studies (N=134)<br>(M=4.88, SD=1.11) | .569*                 | .152       | .014 | .07                     | 1.07        |
|                                                                                           | Chemistry (N=149)<br>(M=4.91, SD=0.96)       | .537*                 | .142       | .013 | .06                     | 1.01        |
|                                                                                           | Odontology (N=41)<br>(M=4.41, SD=1.28)       | 1.035*                | .233       | .002 | .26                     | 1.81        |
| Educational Sciences (N=86)<br>(M=5.29, SD=0.71)                                          | English Studies (N=134)<br>(M=4.88, SD=1.11) | .410*                 | .123       | .040 | .01                     | .81         |
|                                                                                           | Chemistry (N=149)<br>(M=4.91, SD=0.96)       | .378*                 | .111       | .030 | .02                     | .74         |
|                                                                                           | Physics (N=46)<br>(M=4.57, SD=1.12)          | .725*                 | .183       | .008 | .11                     | 1.34        |
|                                                                                           | Odontology (N=41)<br>(M=4.41, SD=1.28)       | .876*                 | .215       | .007 | .15                     | 1.60        |

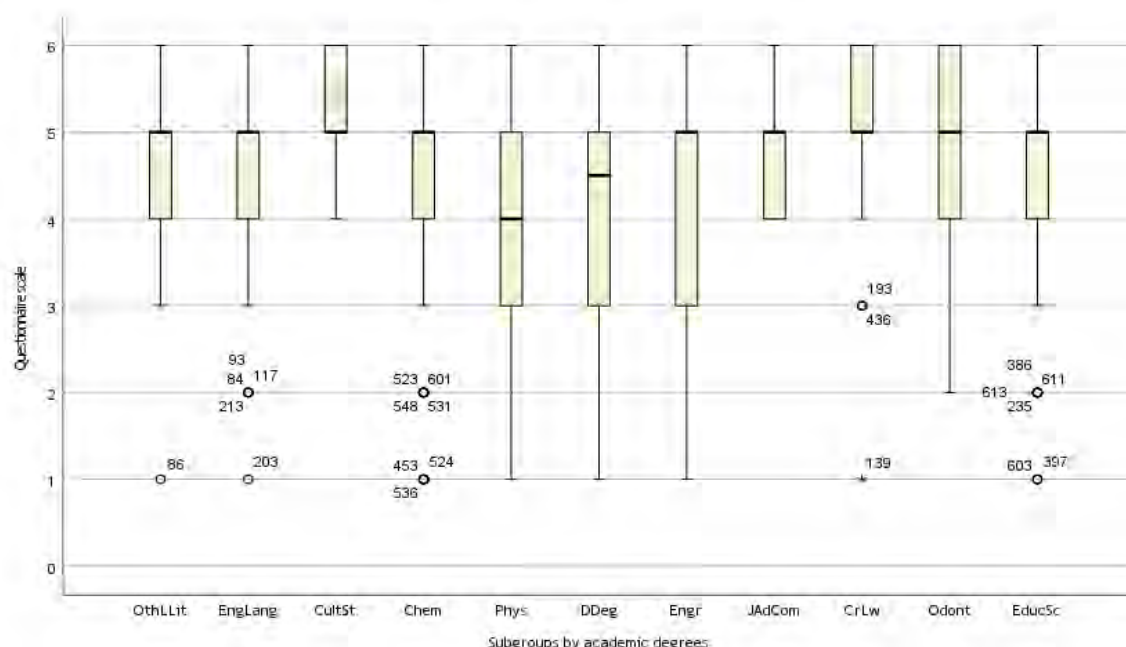
\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Figure 21: Significant statistical differences in the answers to ST27 (In my country people think that it is important to speak English) across the different academic degrees (N=614)



Finally, according to the Games-Howell post-hoc test, the students enrolled in Cultural Studies as well as those in Physics dissented between them and with other students in their opinion about the use of English to get to know its speakers better (ST28, Fig 22 below). The learners in Cultural Studies were more confident ( $M=5.31$ ,  $SD=0.63$ ) than those in Chemistry ( $M=4.37$ ,  $SD=1.32$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.21, 1.44]), and those studying Physics ( $M=3.91$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.58, 2.21]), and they were also more convinced about this view than student teachers ( $M=4.38$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.15, 1.69]). For their part, students in Physics were less approving of using English to socialize with their speakers ( $M=3.91$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ) than English language students ( $M=4.74$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.22, 1.44]). Physics students also supported this view less than Journalism and Audiovisual and Communication students ( $M=4.88$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.12, 1.82]), and less than those enrolled in the Criminology and Law degrees ( $M=5.00$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.31, 1.87]).

Figure 22: Significant statistical differences in the answers to ST28 (I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better) across the different academic degrees (N=614)

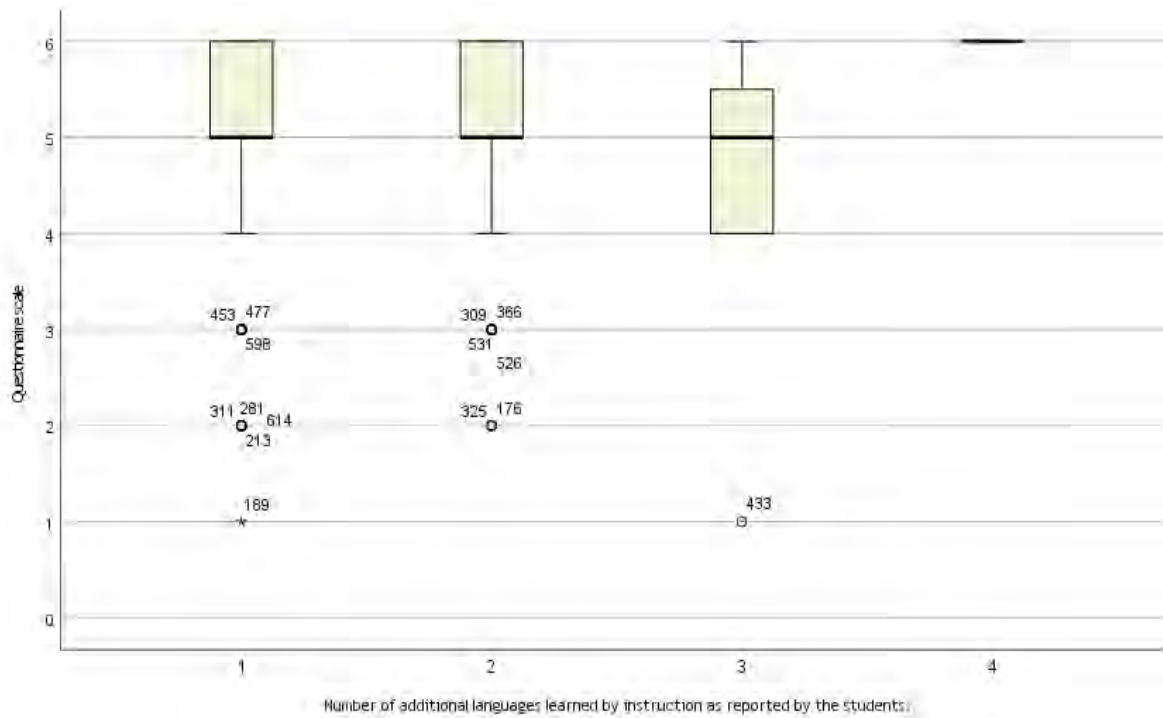


#### 4.1.4.2.2 Variable 2: The effect of Language Learning Experience (LLE) on beliefs about motivations and expectations

At a value of  $F(4, 609) = 3.02$ ,  $p = .017$ , the tests revealed some response disparities for ST24 based on the number of foreign languages the students questioned claimed to know. The data indicates that those students with the richest linguistic experience ( $M=4.27$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ) held a more skeptic opinion about the instrumental use of the language than students with one additional foreign language ( $M=5.15$ ,  $SD=0.80$ ) ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.12, 1.64]) and that learners with two additional languages ( $M=5.07$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ), ( $p < .003$ , 95% C.I. = [0.04, 1.56]). This means that perhaps those students with more linguistic experience have other motivations about learning languages which go beyond using second or foreign language competence to obtain better employment opportunities. However, no significant correlation between these two factors was revealed through the tests. When probing into the students' motivations and expectations as regards the languages learned through formal instruction, two questionnaire items disclosed some differences: ST24 on the instrumental use of English,  $F(3, 610) = 2.67$ ,  $p = .047$ , and ST27 about the importance given to English in their society,  $F(3, 610) = 2.77$ ,  $p = .041$ . As illustrated in Figure 23 below, the students who had received instruction in the highest number of foreign languages were utterly convinced about ST24 on the instrumental use of the language ( $M=6.00$ ,  $SD=0.00$ ) unlike students who had been instructed in only one language ( $M=5.12$ ,  $SD=0.90$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.71, 1.00]), those instructed in two foreign languages ( $M=4.99$ ,  $SD=0.87$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.86, 1.16]) and those who had learned three languages by instruction ( $M=4.80$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.48, 1.92]).

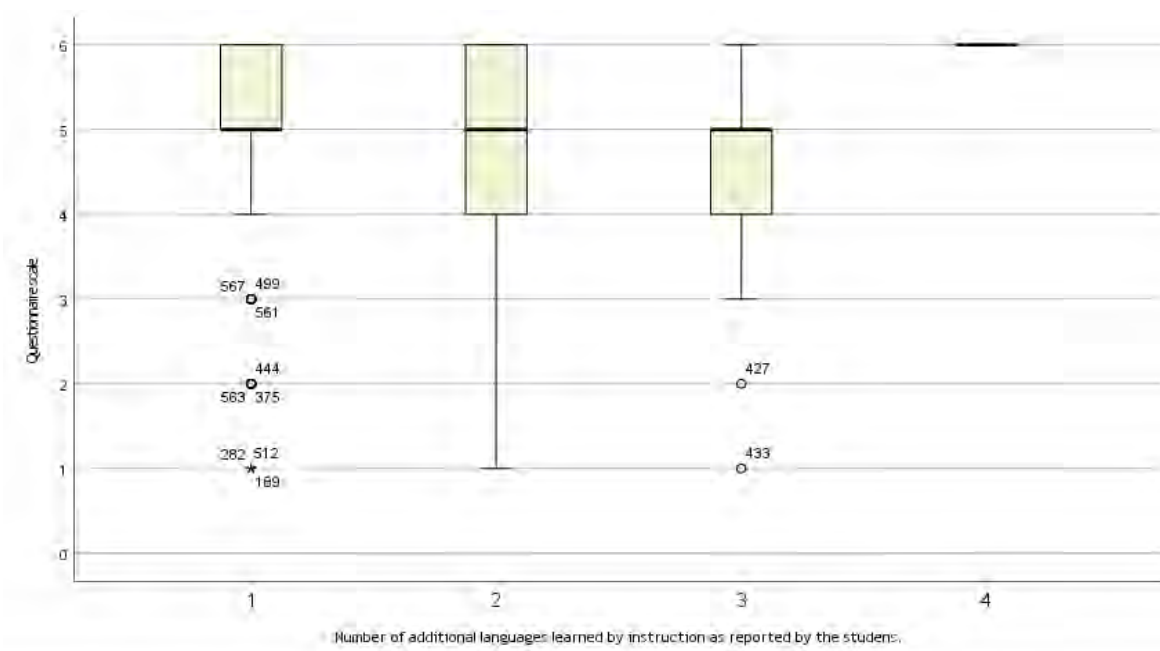


Figure 23: Students' answers to ST24 (If I learn to speak English very well, it will help me get a good job) based on the number of languages learned by instruction (N=614)



A very similar pattern was found for ST27, as shown on Figure 24 below. The students who had learned four additional foreign languages at school ( $M=6.00$ ,  $SD=0.00$ ) were fully positive about the importance that people in their country give to speaking English. Their view was stronger than that of those who had been instructed in only one foreign language ( $M=4.96$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.91, 1.18]) and than those who had learned two foreign languages at school ( $M=4.95$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.87, 1.22]): besides they also felt more positive than those who had learned three languages ( $M=4.45$ ,  $SD=1.31$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.72, 2.38]).

Figure 24: Students' answers to ST27 (In my country people think that it is important to speak English) based on the number of languages learned by instruction (N=614)



Akin to the result for the number of extra languages, no significant correlation was found for these statements. In addition, based on their SA experience, the students' beliefs about their EFL learning motivations and expectations showed no difference or correlation of any kind.

#### 4.1.4.2.3 Variable 3: The effect of gender on the beliefs about motivations and expectations

When testing for disparities between gender groups, ST27 and ST28 produced some differences with values of  $t(612) = 4.76, p=.01$  in the case of the former and  $t(612) = 2.87, p=.01$  in the case of the latter. Based on this data, it seems that female students ( $M=5.08, SD=0.93$ ) react more positively than male students ( $M=4.67, SD=1.08$ ) towards the value given to English communication in their culture. Moreover, females supported the idea of learning English to approach native speakers ( $M=4.60, SD=1.16$ ) more than males ( $M=4.30, SD=1.37$ ), which is consistent with the socially interactive and communicative behavior of females as found by Oxford et al.(1988), among others.

#### 4.1.4.3 Descriptive statistics of teachers' responses to the questionnaire

The beliefs of the teachers regarding the category of motivations and expectations, included the following three items:

- ST20. If a student speaks English very well, s(he) will have many opportunities to use it.
- ST25. If my students learn to speak English very well, it will help them to get a good job.
- ST27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.

Figures 88 to 90 in Appendix C8 depict the general pattern of responses for the category on motivations and expectations as expressed by the teachers questioned. As we can see, all the respondents reacted positively to the three statements, albeit with different degrees of assertion. For ST20 (Fig 88) on the students' opportunities to use English, there was more skepticism as compared to the other items: 43% (N=15) of the teachers agreed timidly while a slightly higher number (46%, N=16) expressed plain agreement, ( $M=4.60$ ,  $SD=0.11$ ). This firm stand is precisely salient for ST25 (Fig 89) about the instrumental use of the language, where 69% of the teachers (N=24) chose this option, ( $M=5.09$ ,  $SD=0.09$ ). Finally, the most positive feedback was expressed for ST27 (Fig 90), with 43% (N=15) and 40% (N=14) of the answers being *agree* and *strongly agree* in that order, ( $M=5.23$ ,  $SD=0.12$ ).

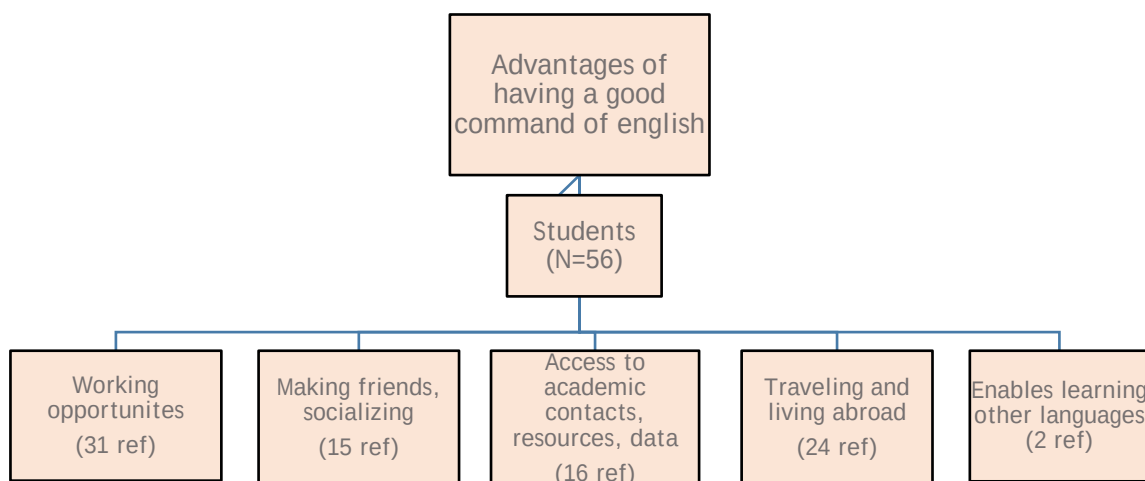
#### 4.1.4.4 Testing for teachers' belief differences about motivations and expectations

Considering the three variables included in the analysis of the teachers' responses, only one significant statistical difference was found for item 20,  $t(612) = -2.24$ ,  $p=.02$ . It appears that male teachers are more optimistic ( $M=4.83$ ,  $SD=0.70$ ) than females ( $M=4.35$ ,  $SD=0.60$ ) about the different opportunities that speaking English provides for their students.

#### 4.1.4.5 Interview data from students and teachers on motivations and expectations

One of the interview questions loaded into this belief category, which explored the benefits or advantages that knowing English has for students (Qt 2, Appendix D). Although no similar question was included in the teachers' interview, some of their comments about such benefits were gathered through other questions, especially via their assessment of the implementation of EMI subjects at the USC (Qt 12, Appendix E). As regards students' responses, there was a very consistent pattern of answers referring mainly to five types of advantages; these are summarized in Figure 25 below.

Figure 25: Summary of students' answers to Qt2 on motivations and expectations



A closer look at their opinions and arguments through a word frequency query in NVivo (Figure 26 below) revealed the most recurring terms used in their explanation of these aforementioned advantages.

[illegible]

As mentioned earlier in the section corresponding to the second category of beliefs, the subjects in this study give a high instrumental and integrative value to the learning of English mostly in terms of job opportunities, studying and doing research, traveling, and socializing with native speakers. Similar findings have been retrieved in other studies of beliefs (Sakui and Gaies, 1999; Horwitz, 1999; Pan and Block, 2011; Agudo, 2014). In line with the results obtained in another comparative study of students in the degrees of Teaching Education and Health Care (Saravia & Bernaus, 2008), the USC students in the main group of the Natural Sciences as well as those in the degree of Educational Sciences seem to give English a higher instrumentalist value and a lower integrative one than the rest of the groups. Such low expectations of integration combined with the strong instrumental value given to the language in these fields of study may be indicative of the secondary role these students attribute to

As mentioned earlier in the section corresponding to the second category of beliefs, subjects in this study give a high instrumental and integrative value to the learning of English, mostly in terms of job opportunities, studying and doing research, traveling, and interacting with native speakers. Similar findings have been retrieved in other studies of beliefs about English (e.g., Gaies, 1999; Horwitz, 1999; Pan and Block, 2011; Agudo, 2014). In line with the findings obtained in another comparative study of students in the degrees of Teaching Education and Health Care (Saravia & Bernaus, 2008), the USC students in the main group of the Natural Sciences as well as those in the degree of Educational Sciences seem to give English a higher instrumental value and a lower integrative one than the rest of the groups. Such low ratings of integration combined with the strong instrumental value given to the language in the fields of study may be indicative of the secondary role these students attribute to

English and of the limited expectations about using this language in their future professional practice, which they restrict to the local or national employment market. As expressed by a student teacher when enquired about the advantages of knowing English:

It is the language that helps us communicate better with other people around the world, wherever you go it is the main language. For our profession it doesn't have much use unless we want to work abroad. (IntSt21)

In addition, the students enrolled in the Cultural Studies degree supported the use of English for socialization more than the rest of the students. This belief is consistent with the agentic actions carried out by these USC students and teachers regarding the organization of extra activities to practice English (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3 on data gathering). The integrative value of EFL may also be overridden by its instrumental use as also evidenced in the expectations of some EMI teachers:

So, it is a lingua franca and it's important to learn it; yet, not with the same intensity in all schools, it depends on the faculty and degree.... So, for a social worker knowing English is important but their work is local...In my case, as a Chemical engineer even when my company is local, I need to purchase a machine, for instance, from Holland or we're involved in a project with a Canadian team, so I need English more because I have to access and study information in English. (IntT18)

So, the specific academic field the learners are involved in strongly influences their motivation based on the purpose they use the language for. Apart from the IDs and the particular beliefs of each student, these patterns across the different academic fields may also respond to group dynamics since "the motivation of individual learners is significantly affected by the various groupings they are part of" (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 89). These motivational differences could also evidence two of the motivational influences and temporal patterns classified by this scholar as the movement into a new life phase and the internalization of external goals and imported visions (Ibid., p. 88). In other words, at the start of their university studies, USC learners begin to crystallize and incorporate their main future goals including the final use they will give to the foreign language after they graduate, all of which is influenced by the academic and social contexts and has a direct impact on the students' motivational level to learn and use the language. These disparities also show that the motivations and expectations of the USC students and teachers illustrate the contextual character of beliefs that has been previously analyzed in the theoretical background of this study. In addition, this belief category reflects the strong instrumentalist character that English has acquired in its spread as an international language in higher education.

#### 4.1.4.7 Brief summary of beliefs about motivations and expectations

In conclusion, and similarly to the former belief categories, we can claim that the motivations and expectations of USC students regarding the learning and use of English share common ground. They all agree on the different opportunities that competence in English offers, especially for the labor market. The strongest supporters of this utilitarian point of view are those from the field of Natural Sciences (especially those in Physics) as well as students with a wide experience of linguistic instruction. The former do not expect to learn English for

socializing with native speakers to a great extent, and they are less convinced than the rest of the groups that their fellow nationals consider speaking English to be important. This opinion runs contrary to the views expressed by female students and learners with extensive formal language learning, who acknowledged the potential of English for socialization and its value as a cultural asset. Thus, we can say that, consistent with the previous belief categories, students' motivations and expectations are affected to a certain degree by their academic field, their language learning experiences, and their gender.

#### 4.1.5 Belief category 5: Learning and communication strategies

The fifth and last category of beliefs comprising learning and communication strategies was explored in greater depth in this study as it comprises statements which “are probably the most directly related to a student's actual language learning practices” (Horwitz 1988, p. 289). It is this category which bridges the first and second parts of this report and enables the introduction of elements such as the frequency of language practice as well as the use of technology as a learning tool. As previously mentioned in this report (Chapter 2, Section 2.1.4.5, p. 46) the term *strategies* is used in this study to refer to any kind of action the learners undertake to learn the language, so in this section the words *strategies* and *tactics* are used indistinctively to refer to these actions. The items contained in this category of beliefs are the following:

- ST6. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.
- ST8. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.
- ST11. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language.
- ST12. It is okay to guess if you do not know a word in English.
- ST15. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.
- ST16. I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.
- ST17. If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.
- ST32. Participating in class is important to learn English.
- ST33. Motivation is important to learn English.

This set of items explored different factors that may affect the communication strategies students are likely to consider most effective and worth using. Statements 6 and 8 of the students' questionnaire investigated the expectations of the learners in terms of language proficiency whereas remarks 11 and 12 tapped into their willingness to take risks in initiating communication in English. Some motivational aspects were scrutinized through items 16 and 33, and ST17 addressed error correction.

In the original BALLI (Horwitz, 1988), this category included two main learning strategies, statement 17, here ST15, which was concerned with the importance of practicing and repeating language patterns, and item 21, which dealt with the importance of practicing in the language laboratory. Although the latter was removed from the versioned questionnaire used in this study, this learning strategy was explored in the interviews with direct reference to the use of technological resources available to students today. In addition, ST32 concerning participation in class as a learning strategy was also included as a particular interest of the researcher about the students' assessment of this strategy.



#### 4.1.5.1 Descriptive statistics of the students' responses to the questionnaire

In this category, the pattern of responses varied across the different statements. However, STs 8, 12, 15, 32 and 33 revealed the greatest consensus. Figures 91 to 99 in Appendix C9 represent the pattern of responses found. Strong disagreement about not taking risks to make mistakes when speaking in English (ST8, Fig 92) was expressed by 97% of the respondents (N=594), 48% of whom (N=283) were radical in their opinion, ( $M=1.72$ ,  $SD=0.03$ ). The answers for ST12 (Fig. 94) about guessing unknown words as a communicative strategy grouped towards the positive end of the scale with 93% (N=569) of the students supporting the statement while 48% of them (N=272) adopted an uncompromising stand, ( $M=4.76$ ,  $SD=0.03$ ). Similarly, ST15 (Fig 95) dealing with constant repetition and practice as a learning method was supported by 97% of the participants (N=599), the highest number of whom (51%, N=307) answered firmly, ( $M=5.36$ ,  $SD=0.03$ ). As regards ST32 (Fig 98) about the importance of class participation, 94% of the students (N=577) agreed, out of these 46% (N=268) and 39% (N=225) stated plain and resolute agreement respectively, ( $M=5.07$ ,  $SD=0.03$ ). However, even more positive determination was expressed about item ST33 (Fig 99) where 96% of the students (N=588) acknowledged motivation as a necessary factor to learn the language, 70% of this total (N=409) were radical in their stand, ( $M=5.61$ ,  $SD=0.02$ ).

In contrast, the answers to STs 6, 11, 16 and 17 had a more widespread distribution along the scale. Approximately 73% of the students (N=450) considered having a good accent as an important aspect when speaking English (ST6, Fig 91), 46% of them (N=208) mildly agreed with the remark, ( $M=4.05$ ,  $SD=0.05$ ). Approaching someone speaking in English to initiate interaction (ST11, Fig 93) seems to be a communication strategy used by about 78% of the students ( $M=4.33$ ,  $SD=0.05$ ) at different levels of confidence or frequency (e.g. 155 of them timidly agreed, 213 agreed plainly and 110 concurred firmly). ST16 (Fig 96) probed into one of the most challenging aspects of oral language performance for the students, self-consciousness. In this regard, about 58% of the students (N=355) recognized feeling shy when speaking English while the remaining 42% (N=259) expressed an opposite opinion, ( $M=3.62$ ,  $SD=0.06$ ). In the former subgroup, about 60% (N=212) of the answers were plain and firm, whereas in the latter, these answers obtained accounted for 74% (N=191). Finally, ST17 (Fig 97) on the lack of error correction as a cause of error fossilization also originated various reactions, ( $M=3.75$ ,  $SD=0.05$ ). About 59% of the students supported this statement while the remaining 41% rejected it. Yet, within the supporter group, about 79% of the answers (N=287) occupied the *slightly agree* and *agree* scale layers, and in the detractor group, these levels accounted for 82% (N=208) of the responses.

#### 4.1.5.2 Testing for students' belief differences about learning and communication strategies

##### 4.1.5.2.1 Variable 1: The effects of the groups and subgroups on beliefs about learning and communication strategies

As regards the comparison of responses for this belief category across the three main areas of study, two of the nine statements revealed statistical differences. At a value of  $F(2,611) = 4.08$ ,  $p = 0.01$ , the reactions to ST17 (Figure 27 below) about correcting errors in the early learning stages seem to indicate that the students in the Natural Sciences support this idea more clearly ( $M=3.98$ ,  $SD= 1.32$ ) than those learners in Applied Sciences ( $M= 3.59$ ,  $SD= 1.60$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.05, 0.72]). There was also a statistically significant difference,  $F(2,611) = 3.70$ ,  $p = 0.02$ , in terms of considering motivation as an important aspect to learn English (ST33,

Figure 28 below). In this case, the Natural Sciences group marked a mild difference as their answers were slightly less firm within the positive scale continuum ( $M= 5.53$ ,  $SD= 0.58$ ) than those of the students in Humanities and Social Sciences ( $M=5.70$ ,  $SD=0.61$ ), ( $p= .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.02, 0.31]).

Figure 27: Students' answers to ST17 (If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on) based on the main academic areas (N=614)

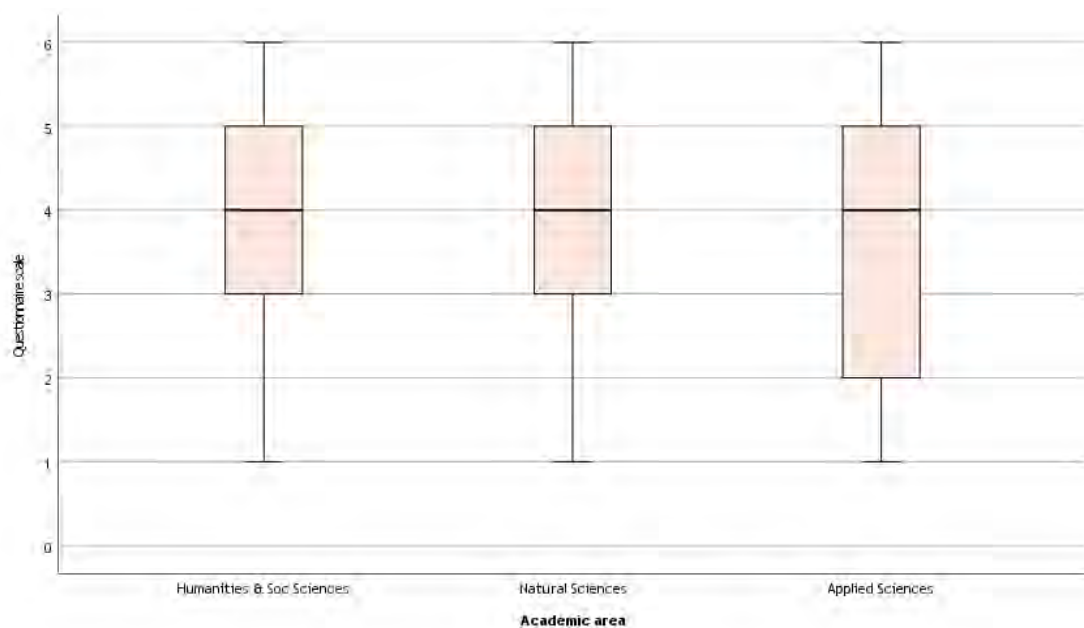
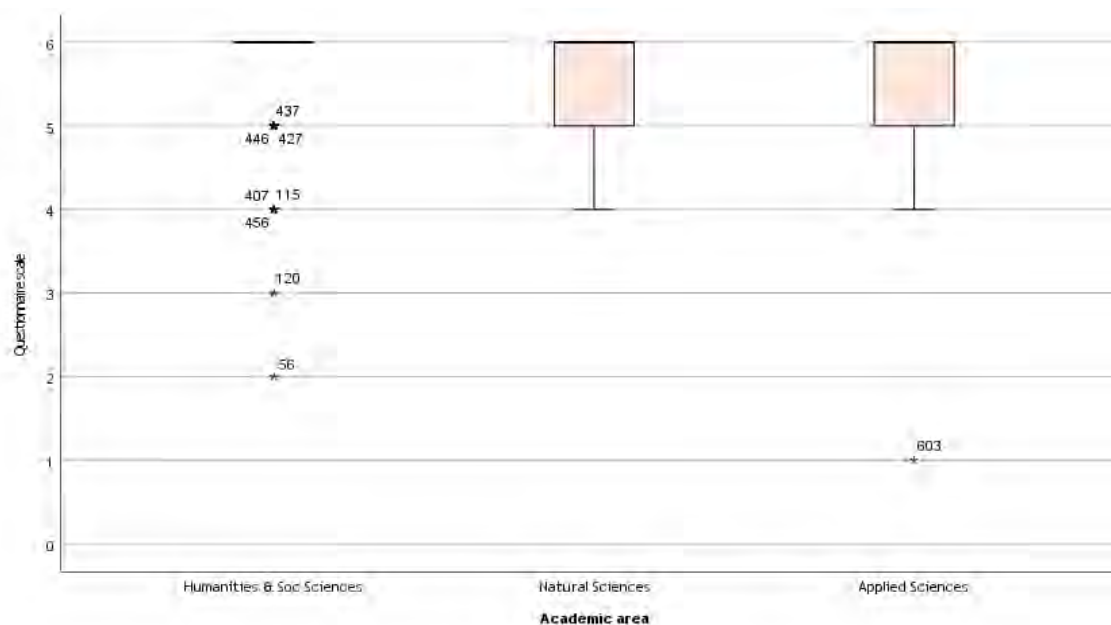


Figure 28: Students' answers to ST33 (Motivation is important to learn English) based on the main academic areas (N=614)



As regards the subgroups, five of the nine statements unveiled disparities in the students' responses. These results are summarized in Table 17 below.

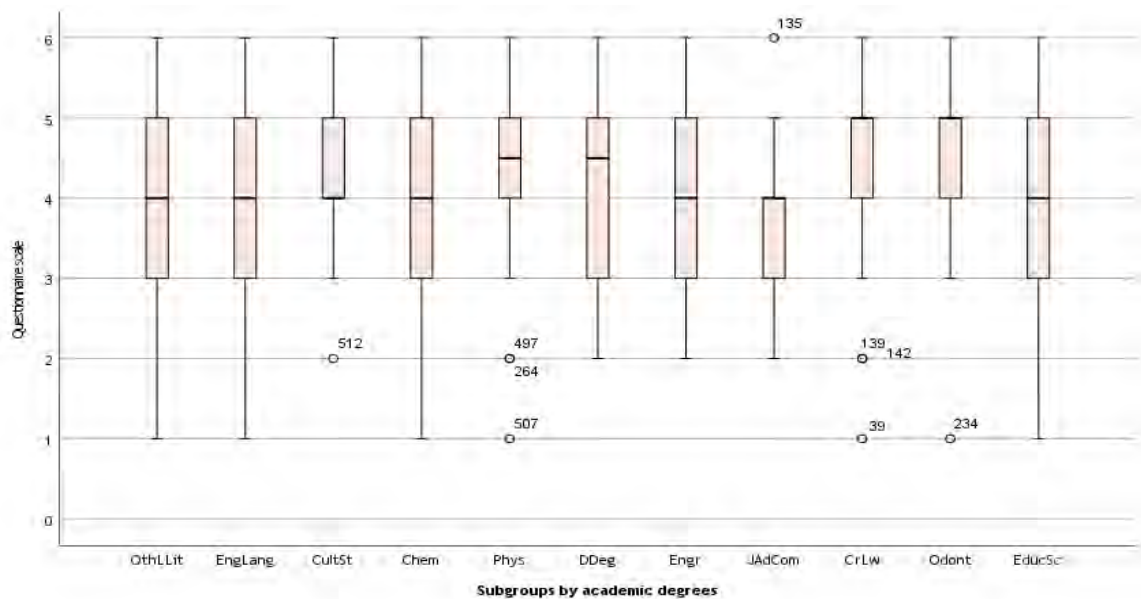
Table 17

*Statistical differences across the subgroups for learning and communication strategies (N=614)*

| Questionnaire item                                                                                             | Test result                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ST6: It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.                                                | $F(10, 603) = 3.36, p < .05$ |
| ST8: You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.                                    | $F(10, 603) = 2.20, p = .05$ |
| ST11: If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I can practice speaking the language. | $F(10, 603) = 2.23, p = .05$ |
| ST16: I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.                                               | $F(10, 603) = 2.57, p < .05$ |
| ST17: If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.       | $F(10, 603) = 4.14, p < .05$ |

The reactions of the students to ST6 regarding the importance of accent are depicted in Figure 29 below.

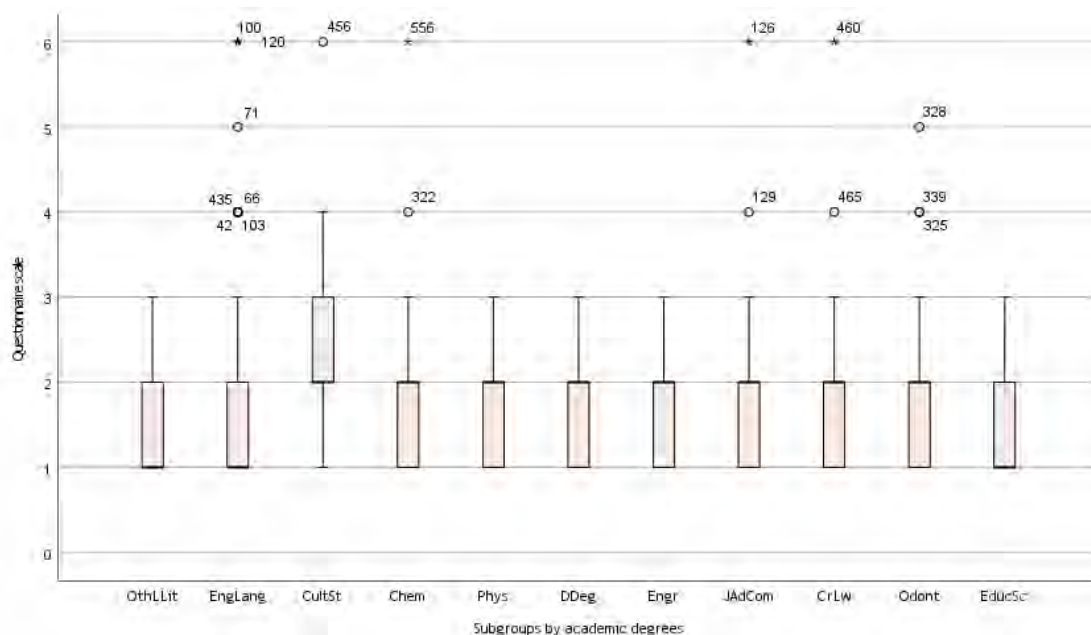
Figure 29: Significant statistical differences in the answers to ST6 (It is important to speak English with an excellent accent) across the different academic degrees (N=614)



This data indicates that the groups of students enrolled in the degrees of Criminology and Law ( $M=4.55$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ), ( $p = .04$ , 95% C.I. = [0.01, 1.46]) as well as those in Odontology ( $M=4.68$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.15, 1.59]) supported the importance of having a good accent in the foreign language more than the students in English Studies ( $M=3.81$ ,  $SD=1.38$ ). Similarly, student teachers also considered a native-like accent less important ( $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=1.31$ ) than those students in Criminology-Law ( $M=4.55$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.09, 1.64]) and in Odontology ( $M=4.68$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.23, 1.76]).

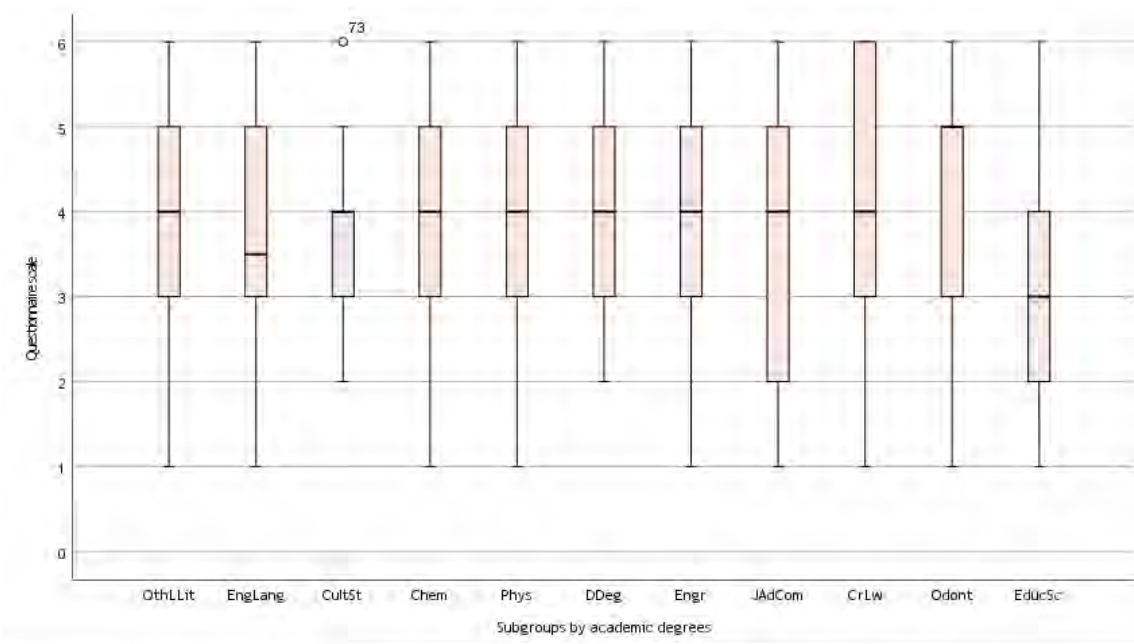
Although the negative pattern of answers for ST8 (Fig 30) on not using erroneous language to communicate was very homogenous, the students in the Cultural Studies degrees, i.e. tourism, cultural diffusion, and management of nature-based activities, reacted less negatively ( $M=2.46$ ,  $SD=1.45$ ) than learners in the group of languages other than English ( $M=1.55$ ,  $SD=0.78$ ), ( $p= .03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.03, 1.79]), and also less negatively than students in Educational Sciences ( $M=1.49$ ,  $SD=0.54$ ), ( $p< .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.15, 1.79]) who were the most emphatic detractors.

Figure 30: Significant statistical differences in the answers to ST8 (You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly) across the different academic degrees (N=614)



Likewise, the respondents expressed a general positive disposition to approach interlocutors to practice English (ST11). In this case, only one main significant disparity was identified through the ANOVA test. The learners in the Chemistry degree seemed more confident about meeting other English speakers to practice ( $M=4.55$ ,  $SD=1.18$ ) than the students enrolled in Journalism and Audiovisual Communication ( $M=3.41$ ,  $SD=1.54$ ), ( $p= .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.07, 2.21]). As regards ST16, which probed into the students' level of shyness when communicating in English, a lower level of communication apprehension was shown by the students in Engineering ( $M=2.70$ ,  $SD=1.48$ ) as compared to the learners in English Studies ( $M=3.84$ ,  $SD=1.64$ ), ( $p= .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.11, 2.18]) and to student teachers ( $M=3.92$ ,  $SD=1.56$ ), ( $p= .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.13, 2.31]). Lastly, indecisiveness characterized the participants' reactions to ST17 (Fig 31 below) about the convenience of error correction at the beginning of the language learning process. Although most of the subgroups loaded their average responses onto the *slightly agree* layer, some striking disparities were marked by student teachers ( $M=3.05$ ,  $SD=1.43$ ), who were the most dubious of all the respondents. They were more hesitant about this statement than students in the Language and Literature degrees other than English ( $M=4.13$ ,  $SD=1.43$ ), ( $p< .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.20, 1.96]), as well as than those in English Studies ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=1.38$ ), ( $p< .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.42, 1.66]). This level of indecisiveness of student teachers also contrasted with the views of the learners enrolled in Criminology and Law ( $M=4.00$ ,  $SD=1.75$ ), ( $p= .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.08, 1.83]) and with the answers of the students in Odontology ( $M=4.15$ ,  $SD=1.65$ ), ( $p< .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.23, 1.97]).

Figure 31: Significant statistical differences in the answers to ST17 (If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on) across the different academic degrees (N=614)



#### 4.1.5.2.2 Variable 2: The effect of Language Learning Experience (LLE) on beliefs about learning and communication strategies

As regards the knowledge of other languages apart from their mother tongue/s, the tests identified one significant difference for ST16,  $F(4,609) = 2.87$ ,  $p = .02$ . In this case, the students with four extra languages felt much more self-conscious about speaking English in front of other people ( $M=4.61$ ,  $SD=1.37$ ) than the students who knew five other languages apart from their L1 ( $M=2.64$ ,  $SD=1.74$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.30, 3.65]). This difference might be explained on the basis of language distance between the four extra languages of the former group and English, since the typological distance between languages could increase the speaker's level of anxiety (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Those students who knew five languages showed the highest level of confidence when interacting in English. These findings could evidence the complexity of affective factors in language learning as, apparently, knowing a variety of languages does not necessarily result in self-confidence when using them. No significant correlations were identified between these two variables.

Regarding the comparison of the student's beliefs based on the languages learnt through formal instruction, no significant statistical differences were identified. Yet, a positive correlation was identified between ST15 and this variable [ $r(612) = .086$ ,  $p = .033$ ]. This result shows that as the learners are instructed on more languages, they confer more importance on practicing and repeating for learning. Concerning the differences based on the students' experience overseas, statements 6, 11 and 16 disclosed significant disparities. In the case of the former,  $t(612) = -2.80$ ,  $p < .001$ , which referred to the importance of having a good accent, the data indicates that those students who have lived abroad acknowledged the importance of this accent more ( $M=4.30$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ) than the group who had no immersion experience ( $M= 3.97$ ,  $SD= 1.27$ ). A similar pattern of reactions is displayed for STs 11 and 16. For ST11 on initiating



communication as a form of practice  $t(612) = -2.68, p < .001$ , the students with experience abroad showed a higher level of confidence, ( $M = 4.58, SD = 1.28$ ) than those without SA experience ( $M = 4.25, SD = 1.30$ ). Similarly, for ST16 about feeling shy when speaking English  $t(612) = 4.16, p < .001$ , the former group expressed a lower level of self-consciousness ( $M = 3.14, SD = 1.60$ ) than those without any language immersion experience, ( $M = 3.77, SD = 1.58$ ). However, no significant statistical correlations were found for these variables.

#### 4.1.5.2.3 Variable 3: The effect of gender on beliefs about learning and communication strategies

Finally, the comparisons based on the variable of gender yielded differences for ST15 and ST16. Within the positive spectrum of reactions for ST15, the data shows a greater support of the importance of practice and repetition as a learning strategy  $t(612) = 4.05, p < .001$  by the female ( $M = 5.44, SD = 0.71$ ) than by male group ( $M = 5.18, SD = 0.86$ ). Similarly, regarding ST16,  $t(612) = 5.59, p < .001$ , females seem to feel more embarrassed when speaking in English in front of other people ( $M = 3.87, SD = 1.59$ ) than their male counterparts ( $M = 3.11, SD = 1.51$ ).

#### 4.1.5.3 Descriptive statistics of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire

To explore the teachers' beliefs about learning and communication strategies, six main items were included in their questionnaire. In addition, question 31 unfolded into 15 additional items whose main purpose was to explore the teachers' opinions and level of awareness about the learning strategies used by the students. Thus, the results in this section are presented in two parts which include the following points:

- Part A:
- ST11. It is important to speak English with a very good accent.
  - ST13. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.
  - ST18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot to learn English.
  - ST19. While learning English, if you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.
  - ST26. My students feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.
  - ST30. I think that more extroverted students can learn English better than the rest.

- Part B
- 31. My students use the following strategies to learn and practice English:

- ST31a. If they hear someone speaking English, they get actively involved in the conversation.
- ST31b. When they don't know a word in English, they try to guess its meaning.
- ST31c. They participate actively in class (in English).
- ST31d. They show good motivation and enthusiasm in most of the activities.
- ST31e. They focus on learning a lot of vocabulary.
- ST31f. They use social media (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) in English.
- ST31g. They watch films and TV series in the original version (either with or without subtitles).
- ST31h. They read books in English in their leisure time.
- ST31i. They constantly translate from their mother tongue.



- ST31j. They listen to music in English to understand the lyrics of the songs.  
 ST31k. They speak in English among themselves outside classroom.  
 ST31l. They focus on learning a lot of grammar.  
 ST31m. They interact in English with friends overseas, Erasmus students and tourists.  
 ST31n. They use many resources like online dictionaries, translators, websites, and specific apps (e.g. OTranscribe, Grammarly, TruePhonetics, TED, etc.) to practice.  
 ST31o. They ask questions in English and frequently request help to clarify doubts about the language.

In Part A, the six-item scale continuum (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) used in most of the questionnaire statements was included, whereas Part B on the teachers' assessment comprises the scale shown on Table 18 below:

Table 18

*Teachers' answer scale ST31*

| Scale item      | Coding number for the analysis |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| I don't know    | 1                              |
| Rarely          | 2                              |
| Sometimes       | 3                              |
| Very frequently | 4                              |

#### 4.1.5.3.1 Teachers' beliefs about learning and communication strategies

In reference to the general pattern of responses contributed by the teachers questioned, the data depicts similar reactions to statements 11, 18, 26 and 30, while there were differences for STs 13 and 19. Figures 100 to 105 included in Appendix C10 illustrate these answers. As shown in Figure 100 for ST11, there was a consensus about the importance of possessing a good accent in communication ( $M=4.06$ ,  $SD=0.23$ ). In this case, about 71% of the respondents ( $N=25$ ) agreed with this statement, and more than half of them (56%,  $N=14$ ) expressed plain agreement. The same level of support (71%) was expressed for ST18 about the importance of repetition and practice for learning ( $M=4.80$ ,  $SD=0.14$ ) with a higher number of conventional answers (76%,  $N=19$ ) as shown in Figure 102. In addition, ST26 about the students' self-consciousness when speaking in English (Fig. 104) was acknowledged by most of the teachers questioned (91%,  $N=32$ ), ( $M=4.63$ ,  $SD=0.14$ ). In the case of ST30 (Fig. 105), most of the positive answers were more dubious with 69% of the teachers ( $N=24$ ) slightly agreeing on the fact that extrovert students learn better English than the rest, ( $M=4.03$ ,  $SD=0.11$ ). In contrast, ST13 about not taking risks to make mistakes when communicating (Fig 101) was utterly rejected by 100% of the teachers ( $N=35$ ), ( $M= 1.54$ ,  $SD=0.09$ ), whereas ST19 about error correction (Fig 103) seemed to be more debatable, ( $M=3.11$ ,  $SD=0.22$ ). For the latter, the reactions were distributed between 57% of the teachers who disagreed ( $N=20$ ) and the remaining 43% who supported this statement ( $N=15$ ).

#### 4.1.5.3.2 Teachers' assessment on the students' learning and communication strategies

The distribution of teachers' responses as illustrated in Appendix 111 shows a uniform pattern for STs 31a to 31e, 31l and 31o. In these seven items most of the teachers (74%,  $N=26$ ) considered that their students initiate interaction to practice English just occasionally ( $M=2.14$ ,  $SD=0.13$ ). About 80% ( $N=28$ ) also claimed that students seldom take the risk to guess words in English ( $M=2.54$ ,  $SD=0.13$ ), participate actively in class ( $M=2.66$ ,  $SD=0.10$ ) or show motivation ( $M=2.57$ ,  $SD=0.10$ ) about their learning. Most of these respondents (94%,  $N=33$ ) also reported that students do not often ask questions or request help ( $M=2.40$ ,  $SD=0.10$ ), and about 66% of them ( $N=23$ ) stated that their learners do not focus on learning vocabulary ( $M=2.31$ ,  $SD=0.16$ ) nor on grammar ( $M=2.11$ ,  $SD=0.15$ ). Despite the fact that 46% of the teachers ( $N=16$ ) acknowledged not being familiar with the students' leisure reading strategy, 43% of them ( $N=15$ ) stated that they hardly use it, ( $M=1.66$ ,  $SD=0.11$ ). As regards the general reactions to ST31g on the use of films and TV series to learn, 66% of the respondents ( $N=23$ ) acknowledged that this practice is used frequently or intermittently by students whereas 34% of them ( $N=12$ ) were not aware of its use, ( $M=2.43$ ,  $SD=0.19$ ). An akin reaction to ST31i about the use of translation shows that 51% of the teachers ( $N=18$ ) thought the students adopt this strategy sometimes, while 31% of them ( $N=11$ ) admit that they are not aware of its use ( $M=2.49$ ,  $SD=0.18$ ). Finally, as regards ST31k on the use of oral practice out of the classroom, 74% of the teachers ( $N=26$ ) confirmed that students rarely use this learning strategy while the other 26% ( $N=9$ ) maintained that they were not familiar with it, ( $M=1.74$ ,  $SD=0.07$ ). Equivalently, the responses gathered about four other items in this section of the questionnaire showed that 66% of the teachers ( $N=23$ ) do not know if the students use social networks in English ( $M=1.63$ ,  $SD=0.15$ ), that 57% of them ( $N=20$ ) are not fully aware of if they listen to songs to understand the lyrics as a form of listening practice ( $M=1.89$ ,  $SD=0.19$ ), that 49% of the teachers ( $N=17$ ) cannot say if their students interact with native and other non-native English speakers beyond the classroom ( $M=1.86$ ,  $SD=0.15$ ), and that 60% of them ( $N=21$ ) do not know if their students use specialized resources online to practice the language ( $M=1.60$ ,  $SD=0.13$ ).

#### 4.1.5.4 Testing for teachers' belief differences about learning and communication strategies

##### 4.1.5.4.1 Variables: The effect of experience, language use and gender on beliefs about learning and communication strategies

As regards the statements in Part A about the teachers' beliefs on learning and communication strategies, the parametric tests for the variables years of experience and gender did not reveal any significant statistical differences across the items. However, ST19 based on the use of English for instruction, yielded a statistical disparity,  $t(33) = -2.25$ ,  $p=.03$ . EMI teachers seem to favor error correction at an early stage of EFL learning ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ) more than their fellow GE teachers ( $M=2.68$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ). When exploring the responses for Part B on the teachers' opinions about the students' strategies, no significant statistical differences for the variable *years of experience* was found. As regards language use, however, the GE teachers believe students watch films and TV series frequently to practice their English ( $M=2.89$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ) whereas the EMI teachers seem to be more unaware ( $M=1.88$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ) of their students' use of this strategy,  $t(33) = 2.89$ ,  $p<.01$ .

In addition, two other statements revealed significant statistical differences when the gender variable was considered: STs 31a and 31i. Female teachers believe more firmly that students

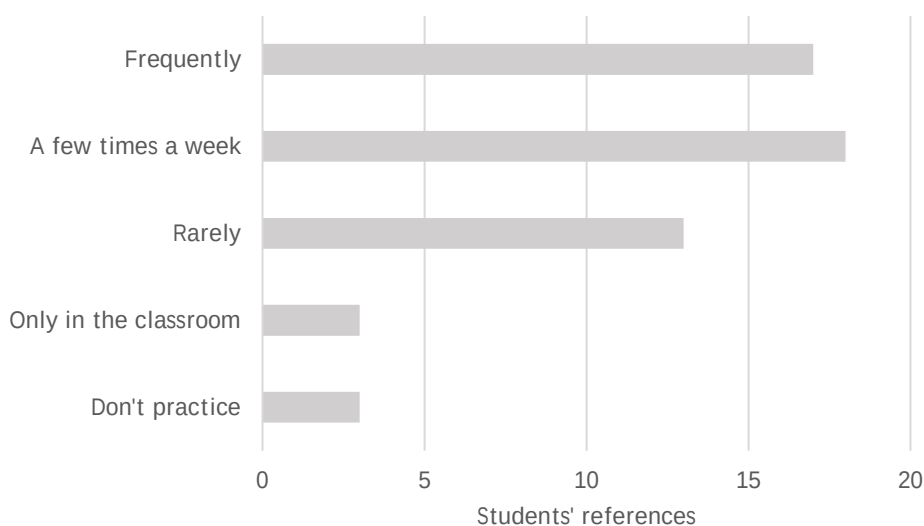
approach other speakers to initiate interaction in English ( $M=2.59$ ,  $SD=0.61$ ) than their male counterparts, ( $M=1.72$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ),  $t(33) = 3,70$ ,  $p<.01$ . Likewise, female teachers recognized the students' strategies of translating from their mother tongue ( $M=3.00$ ,  $SD=0.70$ ) more than the male group ( $M=2.00$ ,  $SD=1.18$ ),  $t(33) = 3,04$ ,  $p<.01$ . In conclusion, the teachers seem to share a homogenous pattern of beliefs about the category of learning and communication strategies. However, there are also some differences based on the type of instruction received and on gender.

#### 4.1.5.5 Interview data from students and teachers on learning and communication strategies

Regarding this fifth category of beliefs, seven interview questions for students and four for teachers were used to explore in greater depth their opinions and arguments (Appendices I and J). For both groups of respondents, the first question in this category (Qt6, Appendix D and Qt5, Appendix E respectively) explored the frequency of language practice. The students self-assessed the regularity of their individual practice while the teachers questioned suggested the periodicity with which they should do this practice.

Figure 32 below summarizes the students' answers as well as the number of references identified as per frequency level. In this case, 54 of the 56 interviewees, that is 96%, contributed a concise answer to the question. As we can see, about 63% of the students ( $N=34$ ) interviewed claimed they do not practice English, do it rarely or just a few times a week. The other 37% ( $N=20$ ) maintained that they do regular practice either in the classroom or on their own.

Figure 32: Students' self-assessment on the frequency of English practice



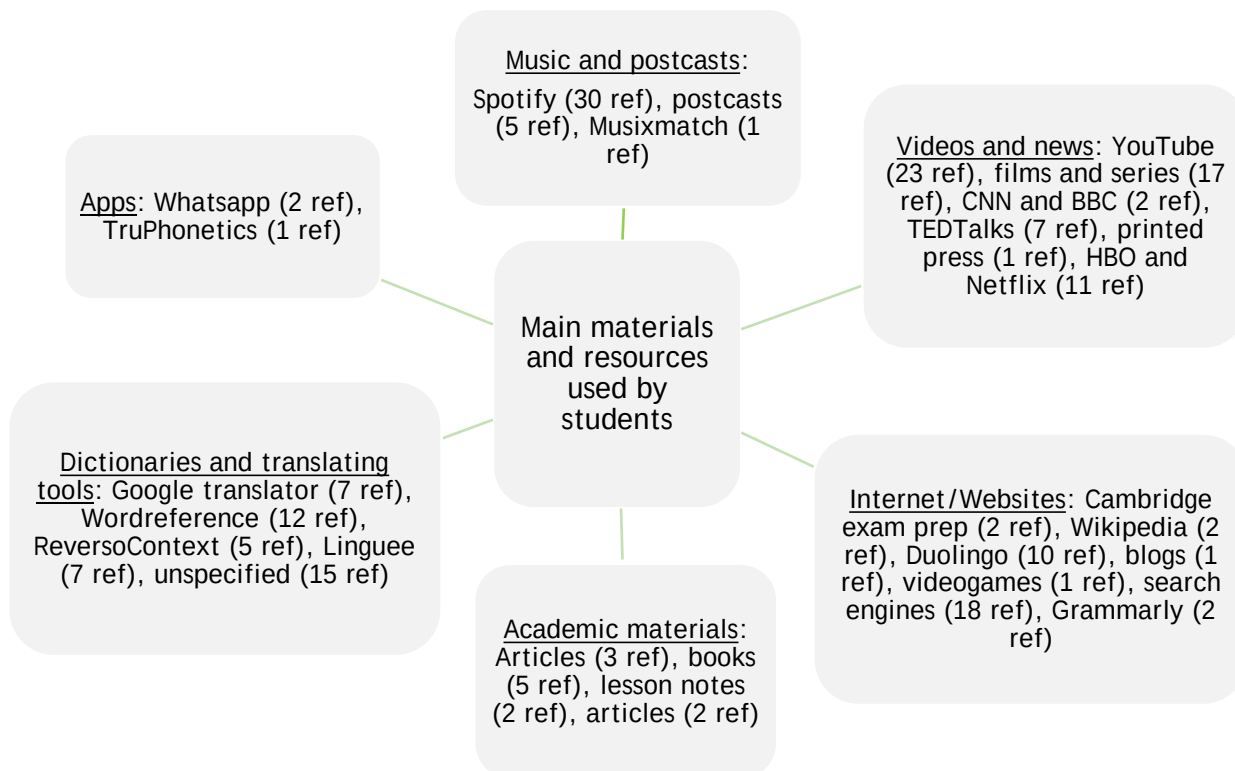
As regards the skills they practiced, there was a common general pattern with listening (38 ref) and reading (14 ref) being the most frequently rehearsed. The former is mostly done through listening to music in English, either by singing to practice pronunciation, to understand the lyrics or to write them down and then translate them. They also confirmed watching films and series to memorize vocabulary as well as grammar and pronunciation patterns (5 ref). The reading skills are drilled through leisure and/or academic reading of printed and digital materials and resources. In addition, some students interviewed gave several reasons for the little practice of the productive skills. Regarding speaking, they mostly referred to the lack of native interlocutors or opportunities to use the language (2 ref) and the restriction of their practice to the classroom

environment (4 ref), although opportunities here available are reduced by the large size of the groups. They also reported they use social networks to practice scarcely (3 ref) and that they only hold interactions in English with foreign friends abroad, foreign flat mates or Erasmus/exchange students (4 ref).

As regards the teachers interviewed, they emphasized the importance of constant and daily practice (21 ref). Some of them highlighted the need to practice every day during short periods of time rather than a few times a week for long hours (3 ref). In contrast, one instructor admitted being pleased with the language level of the students and did not consider it necessary to force the practice of English outside the classroom. Concerning the skills to practice, 50% of the respondents (N=11) argued that drilling all the skills is important. Yet, speaking seems to require the most practice (10 ref), followed by listening (3 ref), reading (2 ref) and writing (1 ref). In the case of the latter, a few respondents commented that today students are better at speaking and listening than a few years back, but their writing skills are weaker (2 ref). In contrast, another teacher stated that the students' life circumstances within a NNS environment enable the frequent practice of the receptive skills (1 ref). In the same vein, another teacher claimed that the skills to practice depend on the student's motivation and learning purposes. "For instance, if their motivation is literary, reading will be the priority. If their motivation is to visit a native-speaking country, speaking and listening will prevail" (IntT4). For this item there were also six suggestions about the need for students to use the technological resources available to practice and enhance their learning. Such use of technology for learning was probed into in the students' interview through questions 7, 8 and 9 (Appendix D). The corresponding question in the teachers' interview (Qt 6, Appendix E) explored the possible arguments behind the infrequent and/or ineffective use of these resources by students.

Concerning the type of resources and devices, the students interviewed reported using mostly their mobile phone (34 ref), the computer (38 ref), television (34 ref), the tablet (11 ref), books (7 ref) and the radio (1 ref). At a more detailed level in the responses to question 8, they reported the use of different materials and resources, most of which are in a digital format. As depicted in Figure 33 below, music and visual input have a protagonist role in the students' individual practice.

Figure 33: Main resources used to practice EFL as reported by the students in the interview (N=56)



In terms of the benefits these resources bear, the students questioned referred to the improvement of pronunciation (19 ref), listening (5 ref) and vocabulary (26 ref). They also mentioned the availability of information to complete academic work (2 ref), the improvement of lexical accuracy (6 ref), the immediacy of error correction and feedback, e.g. through FAQs (2 ref), examples given from original sources (1 ref), access to word etymology and historical facts (2 ref), becoming familiar with different language variants, speakers and registers (2 ref), language not being didactic nor adapted but more spontaneous and natural (1 ref). In contrast, not many disadvantages were highlighted, except for the opinion of one respondent who explained that the American English variant of a website she had used made it more difficult for her to practice because she was used to the British variant. In addition, a group of students also acknowledged not knowing or using websites or apps specific to their academic field to enhance their learning (16 ref).

Not many differences were identified across the students' answers based on gender or academic field, except for the students in the Language and Literature degrees who seemed to be more familiar with the use of some resources specific to their field such as dictionaries (11 ref), online translators (8 ref) and other specialized webs (3 ref) than the rest of their peers from other faculties and schools.

When enquired about the students' infrequent use of resources for learning, the teachers shared a variety of reasons whose main clues are illustrated in the word frequency cloud in Figure 34.

differences were identified.



differences were identified.

differences were identified.



The following interview items (Qt10, Appendix D and Qt7, Appendix E) explored the students' and the teachers' approach to error correction as a learning strategy. Regarding their feelings about being corrected in English, 91% of the students interviewed (N=51) of all genders and across all academic areas agreed they did not mind being corrected while the remaining 9% (N=5) were more skeptical about it. In terms of the advantages of error correction, the former group argued that it is beneficial or necessary to expand your learning and improve your language level (27 ref), that they prefer it or like it as a learning strategy (10 ref), that it helps one to improve pronunciation (3 ref), that its purpose is not to ridicule students but to help them (1 ref), and that if errors were not corrected, students would continue repeating the same mistakes thinking that their linguistic performance is correct (1 ref). Similarly, they acknowledged the effectiveness of error correction only when it is done properly and respectfully, as otherwise it may turn into 'a mockery' (10 ref). Other students welcome error correction if it is not too constant or continuous (5 ref), if done only by teachers or people who are proficient in the language (2 ref), if they can learn from the corrections (1 ref) or if they match the linguistic level of the student (1 ref). Finally, two respondents stated that communicating the message is more important than the quality of the language used.

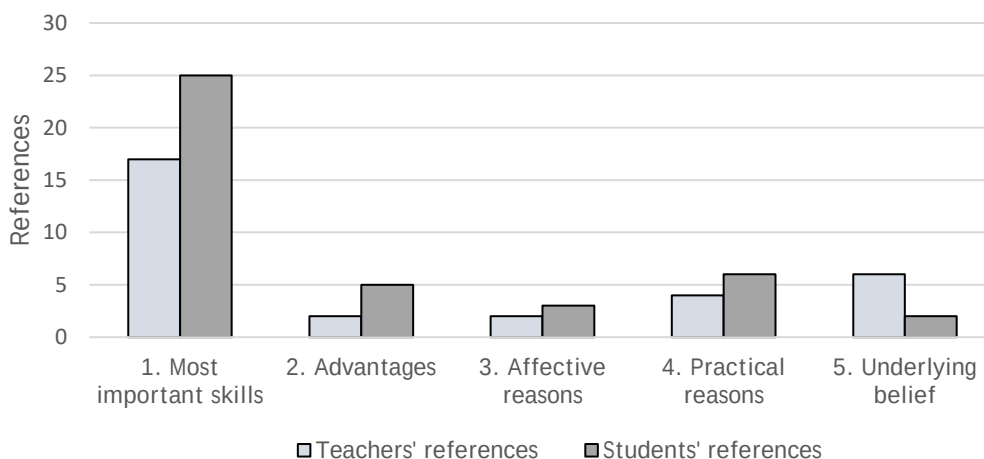
When questioned about the importance of correcting students' errors, about 82% of the teachers (N=18) concurred on its usefulness and a small proportion of them, 18% (N=4), did not consider it important. Despite acknowledging its validity to avoid error fossilization (4 ref), the teachers interviewed mentioned a wider variety of aspects that govern the effectiveness of this strategy if compared to the number of references contributed by the students. They stated that corrections should be accompanied by positive reinforcement (3 ref) and that a balance between correction frequency and speech production should be kept (4 ref). On this point they also suggested minimizing interruptions and using the correction techniques of reformulation and error summary followed by collective feedback (8 ref). Other respondents elicited the negative affective impact that correction may have on students, i.e. they may feel intimidated, shy or embarrassed (11 ref) and some could be more intolerant depending on their personality (3 ref). Yet, one instructor pointed out that "...if a student is very motivated, they should be receptive to error correction all the time." (IntT11).

In addition, some other aspects related to the learning context were mentioned. In the teachers' view, error correction should be carried out depending on the type of activity being learnt (10 ref) and on the level of students (4 ref). In the case of oral production and lower levels, correction should be very limited or not done while it should be thorough in writing, grammar, or vocabulary tasks, and even more with students at higher levels (9 ref). Other instructors highlighted that class size affects the amount and frequency of error correction that a teacher can enact (1 ref) and that there is a cultural side to it which may affect the receptivity of the students to being corrected (1 ref). Finally, some differences between GE teachers and EMI teachers also surfaced from these answers, albeit not across gender groups. While one GE teacher stated that error correction is important for English majors because "they will be specialists who need to know the intricacies of the language" (IntT12), an EMI teacher acknowledged not correcting his students unless the content or message was unintelligible because "the main objective in our faculty is to facilitate the learning of English through EMI, not to get them certified in English; these are not English lessons but lessons in English" (IntT16).

As regards the following question in this belief category, about 93% of the students (N=53) and 91% of the teachers interviewed (N=20) did not consider that having a good accent was an important aspect when speaking in English, and both groups offered several arguments and reasons to sustain their viewpoint. Figure 35 below displays the five main nodes, i.e. clusters or

categories of similar answers, and the references, i.e. the number of answers, contributed by students and teachers on this particular issue.

Figure 35: Students and teachers' nodes and references on *accent*



Concerning the first node about the most important skills, the respondents stated that communicating the message clearly (16 ref), making yourself understood (8 ref), correct pronunciation (12 ref) as well as accuracy and fluency (6 ref) were the most important aspects when expressing yourself in English rather than accent. Other comments grouped under the second node regarding the advantages of speaking with an accent: it enriches and complements your communicative skills when interacting with other NNSs as it enables the learning of strategies they use to express ideas, especially when talking about their culture and some other typical features that may be difficult to verbalize (2 ref), it is a type of personal or group cultural wealth (1 ref) and it is considered a positive individual or particular 'mark' of the speaker that may grant authenticity (3 ref). Regarding this mark, however, another interviewee expressed her dissatisfaction about her origins being identified through her accent when speaking in English. In addition, a few students and teachers identified the affective impact that accent may have for EFL users such as self-consciousness when speaking in English in front of other people (1 ref), a source of public mockery at high school level (1 ref), prejudiced attitudes of NSs against NNSs (1 ref) and students undervaluing teachers whose accent is not native or close to native (1 ref).

Different arguments related to practical aspects of EFL were also adduced by the interviewees. They stated that it is not possible for NNSs to speak with a native accent or at least not consistently (4 ref), and they also perceived the difficulty of changing one's accent. They also added that having a good accent takes a long time and continued language immersion is necessary to acquire a native-like accent (2 ref). Finally, a few of them referred to the fact that NNSs around the world also speak with an accent (4 ref). Despite the variety of arguments against the importance of having a good accent, some respondents held the belief that it is a suitable measure of language proficiency. In this regard, they said that in EFL learning the ideal accent should be as close as possible to that of the native speaker (2 ref), and that learners should try to approximate one of the native varieties as close as possible (1 ref). Some participants also claimed that many teachers expect a native or close-to-native accent from their students (1 ref), that accent is an indicator of higher proficiency (3 ref) and that it is preferable to listen to a native-like

speaker rather than to one with a strong NN accent (1 ref). As regards the three variables considered, no striking differences were identified across the responses of the students and teachers based on their gender, academic area, or type of instruction. Even the students enrolled in Language and Literature degrees “consider having a good accent important but not indispensable” (IntSt30).

The last item on the category of learning strategies referred to speaking practice beyond the classroom as a tool for learning and it was explored through questions 13 (Appendix D) and 10 (Appendix E). When asked if they practiced speaking in English outside the classroom, a consistent sequence of negative answers was revealed. In this case, 80% of the students (N=45) admitted they rarely or never use this learning strategy while 20% (N=11) confirmed they take advantage of it only sometimes or not as frequently. Within the latter group, some of them confessed limiting their practice to interactions with flat mates (1 ref), friends (2 ref), tourists (1 ref) or only when traveling abroad (1 ref). A similar opinion was shared by one teacher who favored the practice with foreign students and international group exchanges. The following word clouds in Figures 36 and 37 illustrate the most recurrent terms used by both groups of respondents when sustaining their viewpoint. As we can see, the use of terms such as *shy/shyness/feel* by the students and *embarrassment/ridicule/fear* by the teachers, indicate the impact of the affective component when using this strategy. While the students used terms such as *comfortable/necessary*, the teachers used *bilingual/comfortable* to refer to the prevailing communication codes via the local languages which relegates English to the background. Besides, the negative reaction to speaking in English out of the classroom among peers is also shown by the terms *strange/weird* used by the students and *unnatural/artificial* as used by the teachers.

Figure 36: Word frequency cloud of teachers’ responses to interview Qt10 about practicing English outside the classroom (N=22)



Figure 37: Word frequency cloud of students' responses to interview Qt13 about practicing English outside the classroom (N=56)



On a more positive side, some students (8 ref) and a few teachers (3 ref) acknowledged this practice as being a good alternative, especially to counteract the limited opportunities of learning through a language immersion experience. In contrast, the main arguments shared by both groups to justify its lack of use loaded into five main nodes whose references are summarized in Table 19 below.

Table 19

*Interviewees' reasons for not speaking English beyond the classroom*

| Students' references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Nodes                                        | Teachers' references                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| We want comfort (7 ref), we are lazy (4 ref), not necessary as we have our mother tongue/s to interact with each other (21 ref)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Attitude and preferences                     | Due to laziness (2 ref), it depends on the student's personality (2 ref), they prefer communicating in their mother tongue/s for comfort (3 ref), they limit this practice to interacting with Erasmus students but they do not take full advantage of it (2 ref), we ascribe communication codes to certain people and it is difficult to change them (2 ref), even in class they tend to interact in their mother tongue (2 ref), lack of motivation (5 ref), they focus on ESP for their profession so they have no interest in general English (1 ref), I'm not sure this practice is important or necessary (1 ref), I favor other types of practice instead, like singing in English out loud or self-monitoring their pronunciation (1 ref) |
| Perceived as 'a torture' (1 ref), considered strange or weird by peers (8 ref), they mock you or laugh at you (2 ref), due to shyness (7 ref), use only writing on the chat to avoid face-to-face interaction (1 ref), there is prejudice against practicing in public (1 ref)                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Affective factors                            | They perceive it as unnatural (5 ref), may cause discomfort (3 ref), due to peer pressure or teasing (2 ref), a fear of ridicule, embarrassment, or shyness (10 ref), effective communication with friends is a priority (2 ref), students and even teachers find it weird (3 ref), due to being judged (1 ref)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Not used to this practice (4 ref), lack of confidence (3 ref), not proficient enough to communicate (3 ref), high achievers are the active speakers in a group (1 ref), this practice is unnecessary as we can communicate in English at a certain level already (1 ref)                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Perceived language competence and experience | Lack of confidence (1 ref), not worth it as peers have a low English level too (2 ref), they are not used to this kind of practice (1 ref), it is difficult for them (1 ref)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| This practice is not done in class, not even by the students that take EMI subjects (2 ref), practice is limited to the classroom (3 ref), do not like English due to a bad experience in a CLIL subject at Secondary School (1 ref), the focus of education is on the low-quality learning of many languages rather than on fewer with high quality unlike in Northern countries (1 ref), education focuses only on the written skills and students practice to pass exams (1 ref) | Educational context                          | There is a lack of opportunities to practice (2 ref), little attention is paid to speaking in the Spanish educational system (1 ref), when practicing individually there is no teacher to supervise or correct them (3 ref), this practice is limited to the classroom (1 ref), English cannot be considered as a compulsory course, students learn to pass an exam (1 ref)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| We already have problems with Galician, so English complicates the linguistic situation even more (1 ref), English is perceived as an imperialist language so they may look down on you (1 ref)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Socio-political factors                      | English is not a threat for Galician (3 ref) it mostly affects the courses in Spanish (1 ref), we should foster plurilingualism from a positive point of view (1 ref), due to cultural differences foreigners are more self-disciplined and practice more consistently (1 ref), Spaniards have a high level of anxiety and embarrassment about speaking English (1 ref), in this country we don't live in English (1 ref)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |



Furthermore, in the specific case of two respondents from the faculty of Philology, they also considered this practice outside classroom to be perceived as normal, especially if interacting with Erasmus students and other international interlocutors at the faculty or in the TANDEM sessions organized by the USC Modern Languages Center (CLM in Spanish) for open learning. Lastly, no distinctive pattern of answers for either the students' or the teachers' responses was identified.

#### 4.1.5.6 General Discussion on Belief Category 5: Learning and Communication Strategies

Regarding this category of beliefs, USC students and teachers also found common ground about the importance of having a good accent for communication. According to the results obtained from the questionnaire, they still seem to consider it a standard of quality when performing in English, a view which was also found by Horwitz (1999) and Jenkins (2007) in their studies. The data also shows that the students with a wider learning experience overseas value having a good accent in English more than the rest of the learners, which might be indicative of the contextual and changing character of beliefs. This importance conferred to accent could be a trace of the popular belief that SLA is about "slowly replacing the features of the L1 that intrude into the L2 with those of the target language and so of approximating ever closer to native-speaker speech" (Ellis, 1985, p. 19). However, according to Moyer (2013), "...accent is a fluid, contextualized expression of our personal and social identity as well as our communicative stance" (p. 10). In this regards, the interview responses of the subjects in this study showed an opposite view if compared to those in the questionnaire. Not only did they contribute several arguments to support their disinterest in speaking with a native accent but also the positive aspects of showing your L1 accent when performing in the foreign language. This is also a main feature identified for an English as an International Language (EIL) speech community, where speakers, on the one hand, want to communicate effectively in terms of pronunciation in the FL (convergence) but on the other, they preserve their L1 accent as a sign of their L1 identity (maintenance) [Jenkins, 2000, p. 172].

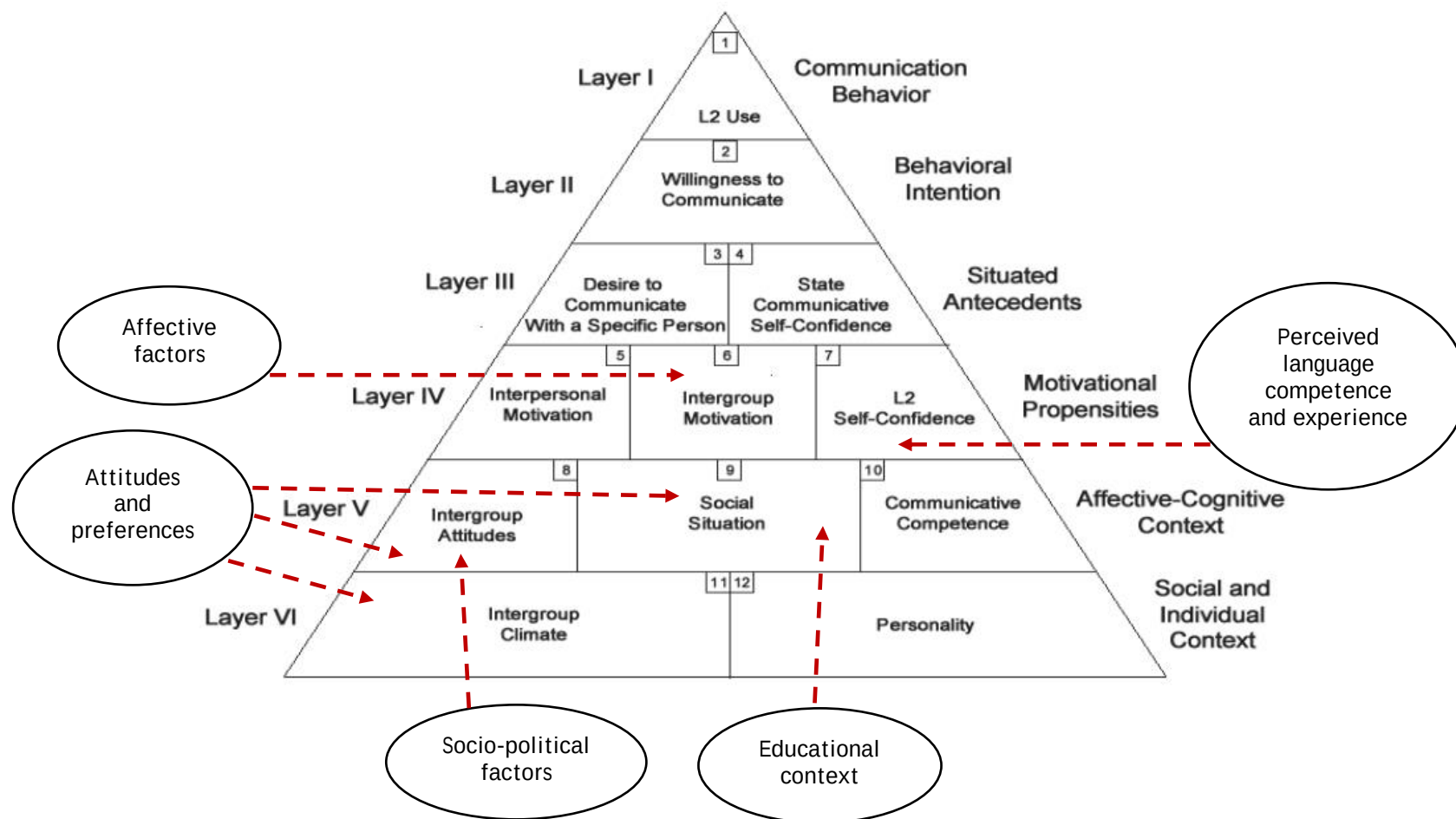
Another set of strategies referred to taking risks such as guessing unknown terminology, participating in class and initiating interaction. Regarding the former, most of the students questioned validated this strategy as a useful tool in their learning, and the teachers' responses to the questionnaire supported this opinion. However, according to the information gathered from the interviews, most of the teachers perceive the learners use it on few occasions in the classroom. Although the teachers' perception may differ from the students' and both may even be different from the real extent to which students use guessing as a learning strategy, this mismatch may be indicative of the complex nature of beliefs and, as already mentioned, there is no guarantee that students display a learning behavior based on the beliefs they hold unless they have appropriated those beliefs. Moreover, the subjects in this study considered participation in class an important strategy to develop their language skills. It must be noted, however, that even when the level of participation of students is considered an effective strategy for language learning, some scholars (Delaney, 2012; Sato & Ballinger, 2012; Fernández Dobao, 2016) have also reported that the frequency of participation of learners does not necessarily correlate to their level of learning as passive learners also benefit from the interactions of their peers and teachers. This may explain why the answers of the subjects in this study to this questionnaire item (ST32) was less firm than when they evaluated the importance of motivation for learning (ST33).



Concerning the strategy of initiating interaction there are some important elements at play when the students use it in their learning. Although the USC teachers questioned reported that students do not initiate interaction nor participate in class frequently, the participant learners approved of these strategies to practice English. This reaction and the general absence of USC students' speaking practice with their classmates is consistent with the findings of a study about belief changes of university students in Japan (Riley, 2009). In this case the subjects claimed that they did not practice speaking English with their classmates because they did not consider them as a 'perfect' or 'real' model of the language. Moreover, in their answers the USC learners surveyed showed more consistency when assessing the importance of motivation to learn than the importance of participating in class, probably because they feel self-conscious when speaking in English. This shyness indicates that their level of learning anxiety may affect their Willingness to Communicate (WTC) since from the psychological perspective, WTC is closely linked to low levels of anxiety, high perceptions of linguistic competence and motivation for learning (MacIntyre et al., 2020). This could also explain why the students do not generally practice the speaking skill out of the classroom.

In the pyramid-shaped model of WTC (Macintyre et al., 1998, p. 547), which is illustrated below, the first three layers at the top represent the influences of specific situations on WTC at a particular time, while the three bottom layers stand for "stable, enduring influences on the process" (Ibid.). *Layer I* refers to any type of communication behavior in the L2 displayed in and out of the classroom, while *Layer II* refers to the disposition or intention of the student to interact in the L2 as expressed, for example, when they raise their hands in class. Moreover, *Layer III* results from a combination of a desire to communicate with a specific person, which is understood as a mixture of affiliation and control, and the level of perceived competence and lack of anxiety of the students. As regards *Layer IV* on motivational propensities, it includes both situational and enduring influences, which rest upon "the affective and cognitive contexts of intergroup interaction and ultimately lead to state self-confidence and a desire to interact with a particular person." (Ibid., p. 550). *Layer V* contains variables that are external to the specific language learning context and that are more individual to the learners such as prior learning experience, motives and beliefs. Finally, *Layer VI* at the bottom of the model consists of the interaction of the individual and society, the former includes stable personality features of the individual while the latter refers to the intergroup climate in which the speakers progress in their learning (Ibid., pp. 551-555). Figure 38 below illustrates the correspondence between the reasons for a lack of oral practice out of the classroom reported by the subjects interviewed (Table 19) and the different layers and points of the WTC model.

Figure 38: Correspondence between the interview answers on speaking practice and the WTC model. Adapted from Macintyre et al. (1998, p. 547)



The answer cluster or node of attitudes and preferences reported by the USC students and teachers interviewed corresponds to points 8 on Intergroup Attitudes and 9 on Social Situation within *Layer V* of the WTC model. These answers show the students' low level of motivation about the L2, which may have been caused by negative "experiences in the language classroom and in other contexts where there has been opportunity to learn and use the language" (Macintyre et al., 1998, p. 552). The fact that USC students feel more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue/s is also congruent with point 9 on the Social Situation, which includes the participants, the setting and the channel of communication, among others, as main influences on WTC. These answers also connect to point 11 in *Layer VI* based on Intergroup Climate since the structural characteristics of the community such as "ethnolinguistic vitality and communication networks" (Ibid., p. 555) determine the frequency and intensity of use of the L2. In the same vein, the node of answers of the USC students and teachers on affective factors connects to point 6 about Intergroup Motivation in *Layer IV*. In this case they experience peer pressure and teasing when speaking in English out of the classroom, which seems to occur as a form of control within the group, and students avoid this type of exposure in front of their peers to protect group membership, i.e. their affiliation.

Regarding the responses about perceived language competence and experience, these clearly reflect the beliefs of the USC students about not being able "to communicate in the L2 in an effective and adaptive manner" (Ibid., p. 551), as shown by point 7 on L2 Self-confidence in *Layer IV*. In other words, these students show a low level of L2 confidence. According to these authors, L2 confidence has a cognitive component based on the self-evaluation of the students about their L2 skills, and an affective component based on language anxiety caused by the uneasiness of using the language (Ibid.). Moreover, Figures 36 and 37 (Section 4.1.5.5) showing word clouds on the arguments of the respondents also contain some terms hinting at the lack of communicative self-confidence of the students, for example: *shy / confident / comfortable / shyness / embarrassment / ridicule / fear / feel*. Most of the teachers also concurred that in terms of personality, more extroverted students learn faster and better. As expressed by one of the instructors: "Extroverted students have an advantage as well as those who are not afraid to make mistakes because they can speak unhesitatingly, unlike those who tend to end up in 'I better shut up.'" (IntT1). Although not explored at length in the present study, these results indicate that affective factors such as anxiety interfere in the process of language learning for USC students, and they should be researched further. The interference of these affective factors has also been identified in many other belief studies (Horwitz, 1988; Sakui and Gaies, 1999; Yang, 1999; Ellis, 2008).

Turning back to the model of WTC, the arguments included in the node of educational context show a dysfunctionality in attaining the goals or intention of discourse, i.e. the purpose of the speakers or students of learning how to use the L2 in communicative situations, which reflects point 9 on the Social Situation in *Layer IV*. This indicates that students need to be offered better quality training in terms of oral skills, especially in Secondary Education. This lack of preparation coupled with the fact that they restrict their L2 learning and use to the setting of the classroom, has a strong negative impact on WTC. Finally, although the socio-political stands shown by USC students and teachers seem contradictory, they reflect the attitudes resulting from the friction of languages in contact. These reactions conform to point 8 on Intergroup Attitudes in *Layer V* and they could be explained by fear of assimilation (Ibid., p. 552). Although an assimilation process does not apply to the contextual reality of USC subjects since there are not contrasting cultural groups in Galicia, the presence of English discloses some traces of fear of identity loss, which belong into this category of the WTC framework. Thus, as seen from the interview answers, a combination of different factors mar the students'

willingness to communicate which may explain their lack of speaking practice in and out of the classroom.

Another element involved in initiating and maintaining interaction in the L2 is corrective feedback. In their answers to the questionnaire, the students expressed a strong consensus about speaking in English even if they make mistakes, as previously found in similar studies (Horwitz, 1988; Peacock, 1999; Liao, 2004; Altan, 2006; Mohebi and Khodadady, 2011; Agudo, 2014 ). In contrast, more divided opinions were verbalized about the most adequate moment to be corrected in their learning with the greatest number of students supporting the idea that correction should be made in the initial stages. When interviewed, the great majority of them stated they feel comfortable about being corrected, if correction is done properly, as they perceive it as an effective learning technique. As to the instructors, they expressed more disagreement with using this learning strategy in the initial stages of learning and argued that correction should be done with caution, through positive reinforcement and not so frequently so as to avoid a negative impact on the affective component of learning, which is consistent with the latest interactionist perspective of oral correction (Ellis, 2009; Martínez Agudo, 2012). While both groups offer valid arguments, their opposing belief about correcting errors in the initial stages of learning may indicate that the USC students do not receive as much correction as they would like to, and/or that they need to be made aware of the different feedback channels that teachers use to correct them. “Accordingly, the real challenge for teachers is to make sure that their corrective feedback is actually noticed and understood on the part of learners.” (Martínez Agudo, 2012, p. 124).

Horwitz (1988) claimed that the level of difficulty that students attribute to learning a language could influence their level of commitment to this learning. In one of the main studies on beliefs conducted with Chinese students, the results showed that “the majority of students who judged English to be an easy language...also indicated that they spent at least moderate effort in learning English in contrast to less effort invested by those who rated English as difficult” (N.-D. Yang, 1999. p. 522). The data obtained in the present study from USC students diverges from the results of the study conducted by Yang. When assessing the importance of practicing the language for learning, the great majority of the USC students and teachers questioned agreed that practice should be done frequently. However, over half of the students confirmed that they practice English very little, if at all. Evidence of practice on the part of the students such as participating actively and enthusiastically in class, asking questions, requesting help, and reading for leisure were also assessed as infrequent by the teachers. According to the data obtained, USC students prefer to practice English scantily and more leisurely mainly through the exposure to audiovisual input, an approach to practice that has also been identified in more recent studies (Sargsyan and Kurghinyan, 2016; Hoi, 2017; Nugroho and Triana, 2021). Their choice of resources and digital materials also mirrors the ones chosen by Portuguese students as reported by Morgado et al. (2019) and the forms of personal investment that manifest the Ideal L2 self of Basque students (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018). Moreover, as shown by a study of 546 Chinese graduate students conducted by Tang & Tian (2015) about the connections of their beliefs and learning strategies, these are changeable and the variety and frequency of use may reduce with time. These authors claimed for further need of strategy training on the part of instructors to aid students in developing better skills to work autonomously, a claim that seems to be applicable as well to the USC learners that participated in this study.

Another aspect explored regarding the learning and communication strategies was the level of awareness the participant teachers had about their students’ use of such strategies. Over 22% of the instructors reported unawareness in eleven out of the fifteen learning tactics assessed.

The strategies used by students that teachers reported not knowing about were mostly those used out of the classroom: leisure reading, watching films in the original version, participating in social media in English, listening to music with the purpose of understanding the lyrics, speaking with foreign people, and using technological resources and online tools to practice. In their answers, the group of EMI teachers were less aware than GE teachers of the extent to which their students use these tactics. As we have previously discussed, students can potentially develop or use different learning strategies based on the beliefs they hold and take advantage of the out-of-class environment to extend their learning. Therefore,

[i]f beliefs influence the actions that learners perform to learn an L2, they cannot be ignored by teachers. Little learning is likely if there is a mismatch between the teacher's and the students' belief systems. This suggests the need for teachers to make their own beliefs about language learning explicit, to find out about their students' beliefs, to help their students become aware of and to evaluate their own beliefs and to address any mismatch in theirs and their students' belief systems. (Ellis, 2008, p. 24)

The data also reveals the teachers' perception of the limited use of technological resources and online tools by USC learners. The most frequently used digital resources are music, videos, search engines and some translating tools, as also identified in other studies (Sargsyan and Kurghinyan, 2016; Hoi, 2017; Nugroho and Triana, 2021). Not only did some teachers acknowledge that students do not know how to use these resources effectively but also admitted to their own lack of instruction and guidance as well as their ineffective use of these resources to teach. The benefits of using ICT in the teaching-learning process have been highlighted by several scholars (see Ghasemi and Hashemi, 2011 for a summary). For the learners, instruction on metacognitive strategies to improve their language proficiency through the use of ICT could also help them to become more autonomous learners in the light of a sociocultural approach to learning (Ariza & Sánchez, 2013; Jiménez Raya & Vieira, 2021). Other studies have also identified several aspects which might interfere with an effective use of technology by teachers (Reid, 2002; Palak & Walls, 2009; Melvina et al., 2021), among which there are the need to be trained, the quality of internet services and resources, and teachers' time. The data gathered as regards this belief strand seems to indicate that equipping teachers and students with the necessary strategies to make a more effective use of technological resources is a pressing need at the USC at this particular moment since "living in a digital environment does not reliably imply being digitally competent" (Li & Ranieri, 2010, p. 1041).

#### 4.1.5.7 Brief summary of beliefs about learning and communication strategies

Akin to the results of the previous categories analyzed in this study, the USC students and teachers surveyed share similar beliefs regarding the learning and communication strategies used in EFL learning. They approve risk-taking tactics such as making errors and guessing words to interact orally in English. In general, they consider motivation, constant practice, repetition and class participation to be important, especially so in the case of the female learners surveyed and those students with a richer linguistic background. Nevertheless, the teacher participants reported a limited use of these strategies by their students. In addition, this group supported the view of a native accent as a mark of proficiency in English, an idea that is approved of by the students in Applied Sciences, but not by student teachers. All participants,



and particularly female teachers and learners with extensive LLE, recognize that approaching English speakers to practice the language is an effective strategy, one that they sometimes put into practice. Besides, the pattern of answers here also reveals a high level of self-consciousness when students interact in English, especially in the case of student teachers and female learners. As regards error correction, there is a mismatch of beliefs between students and teachers since the former prefer this process to be done at the initial stages of learning while the latter disagree with such an idea. In this case, Natural Sciences students and EMI teachers were strong supporters of early error correction. Finally, although teachers reported that they were aware of the use of some strategies by their students, such as watching films and TV series and the use of translation, in general they confessed to not being familiar with their students' use of a number of other strategies that these students in fact reported. Hence, it can be said that the variables selected for this study to analyze the responses of each group of participants can be seen as having an effect on their belief systems about EFL learning.

## 4.2 PART B: SOME CONTEXTUAL ASPECTS RELATED TO EFL LEARNING AT THE USC

As a result of informal conversations with the students and teachers during the preparation process of this study and due to the diverse character of the population surveyed, the researcher developed a few points of interest pertaining to the teaching-learning context of the USC. Thus, this section describes the state of opinions with regard to three issues: the recent implementation of English Mediated Instruction (EMI) at the USC, potential inequalities in terms of EFL learning opportunities, plus the level of linguistic preparation of the novice students upon entering the USC. The students' opinions about the second and third items were mainly gathered through the interviews since the length of the questionnaire did not allow for more items. To collect the teachers' views, two questionnaire items were used which were further expanded in the interviews.

### 4.2.1 Descriptive statistics of students' beliefs about EMI courses at the USC

Four main items in the questionnaire, STs 36 to 39, were used to scan the impressions of students about content learning in English as a recently implemented methodology. The first closed question identified those students who had any experience of learning subjects in English at pre-university levels. The other three statements, however, had different scales and probed into the students' perception about the learning of both the content of the subject and the foreign language as illustrated in Table 20 below.

Table 20

*Questionnaire items that explored the beliefs of USC students concerning EMI courses*

| Questionnaire statement                                                                                                                                                                      | Answer alternatives and scales                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ST36. Do you have any experience in any bilingual or plurilingual program? This question refers to learning content subjects like biology, history or P.E. in English at any school level... | Yes/No                                                                                            |
| ST37. My level of satisfaction about learning English through another subject is...                                                                                                          | very low /low/a bit low/a bit high/high/very high                                                 |
| ST38. When I learn other subjects in English, my English skills develop...                                                                                                                   | not a bit/very little/a bit/moderately/much/very much                                             |
| ST39. When I learn a subject in English, I learn the content of this subject...                                                                                                              | 0 (I can't learn it)/with much difficulty/with difficulty/with some difficulty/easily/very easily |



More than half of all the participants in this study (55%, N=338) confirmed their previous experience in content learning through English instruction and answered the items in this category. Figures 39-41 illustrate the general pattern of their responses.

Figure 39: Students' responses to ST37. My level of satisfaction about learning English through another subject is...(N=338)

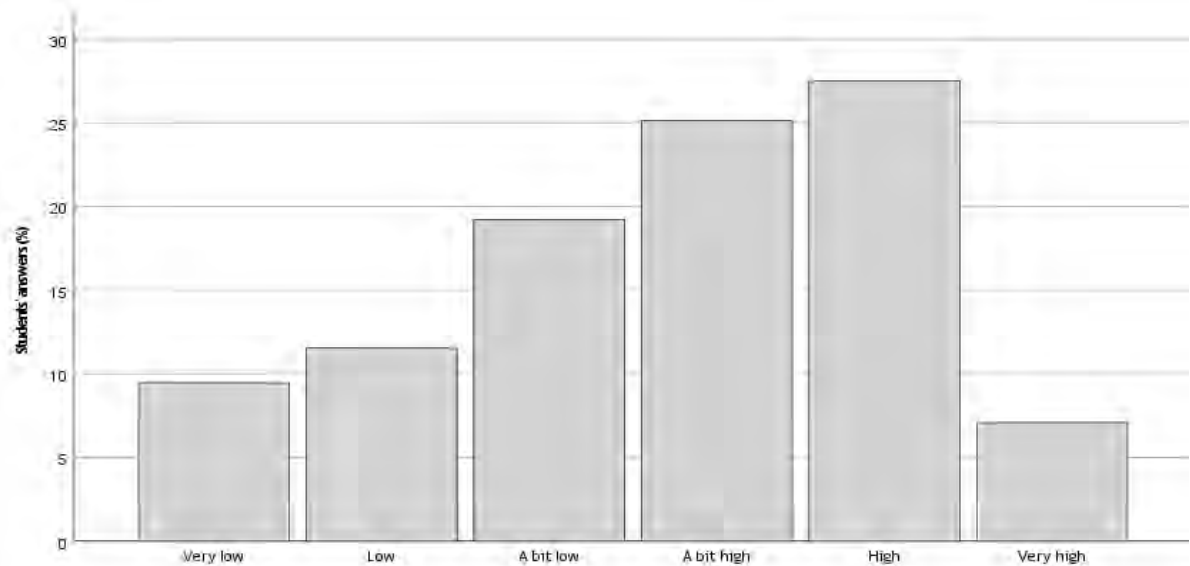


Figure 40: Students' responses to ST38. When I learn other subjects in English, my English skills develop...(N=338)

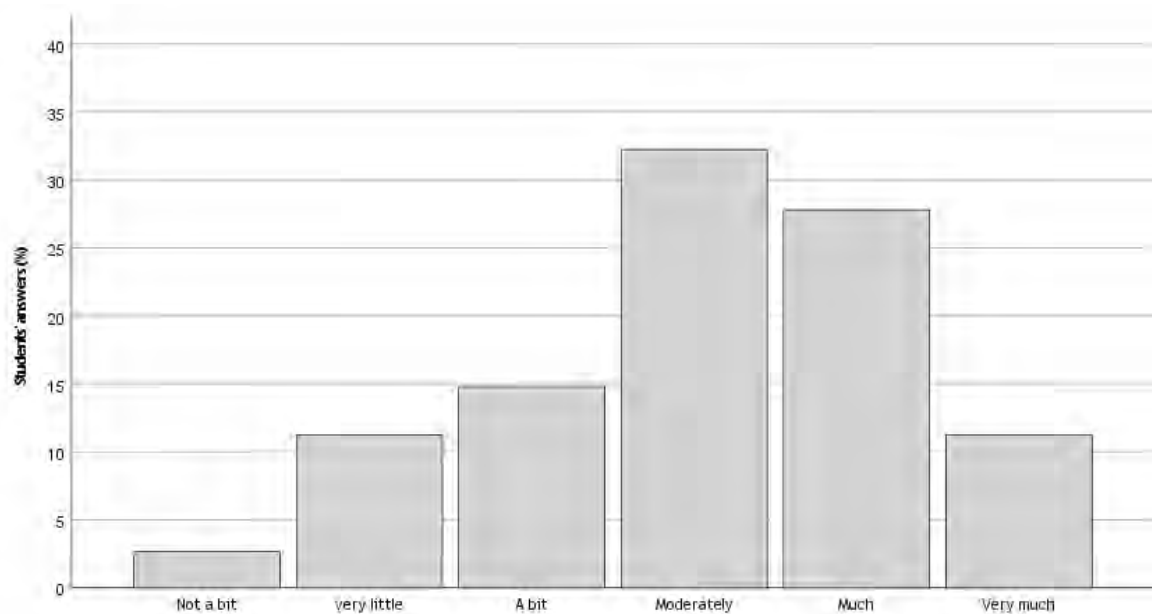
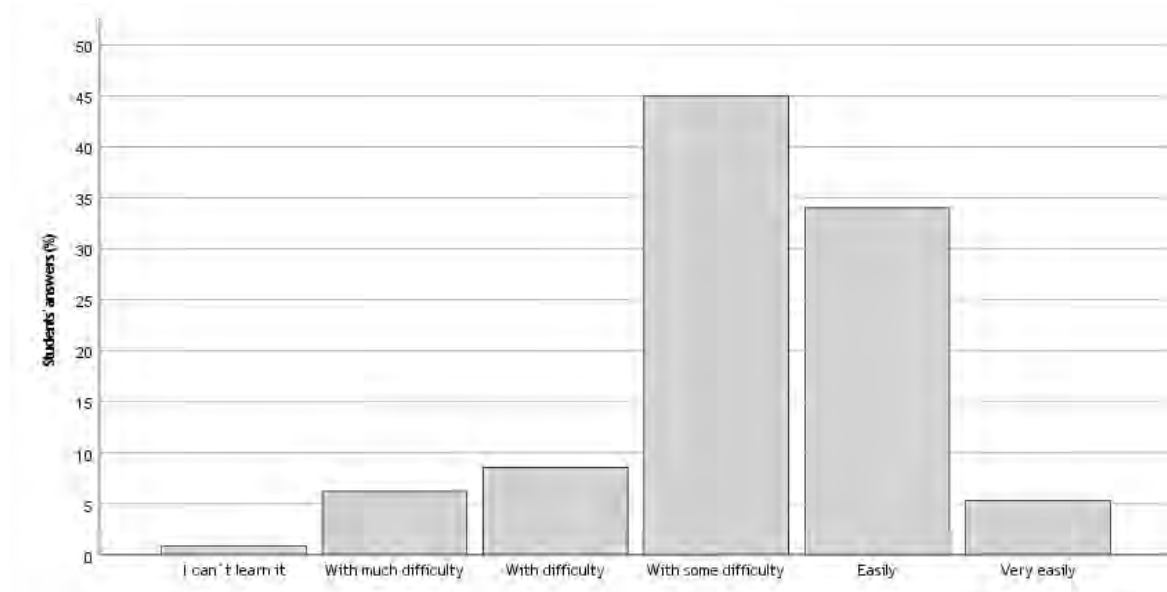


Figure 41: Students' responses to ST39. When I learn a subject in English, I learn the content of this subject... (N=338)



In this case, almost 60% (N=202) expressed satisfaction with this learning experience (ST37) and the two biggest groups within this approach were hesitant (42%, N=85) and decisive (46%, N=93) in their view. As regards the progress of their learning skills through this type of instruction (ST38), 71% of the respondents (N=241) acknowledged some progress; yet, the largest number of them (45%, N=109) claimed this growth to be moderate. A similar pattern of responses was produced for ST39, with 84% of the students (N=285) favoring the learning of different course contents through English. From these groups of supporters, 53% (N=152) were less convinced about their answers, whereas 40% (N=115) contributed a plain answer.

#### 4.2.2 Testing for students' belief differences about EMI courses at the USC

##### 4.2.2.1 Variable 1: The effects of the groups and the subgroups on beliefs about EMI at the USC

As regards the three main disciplinary fields and the eleven groups of academic courses, the three statements assessing the students' view on learning content through English yielded significant statistical differences, as shown in Table 21 below.

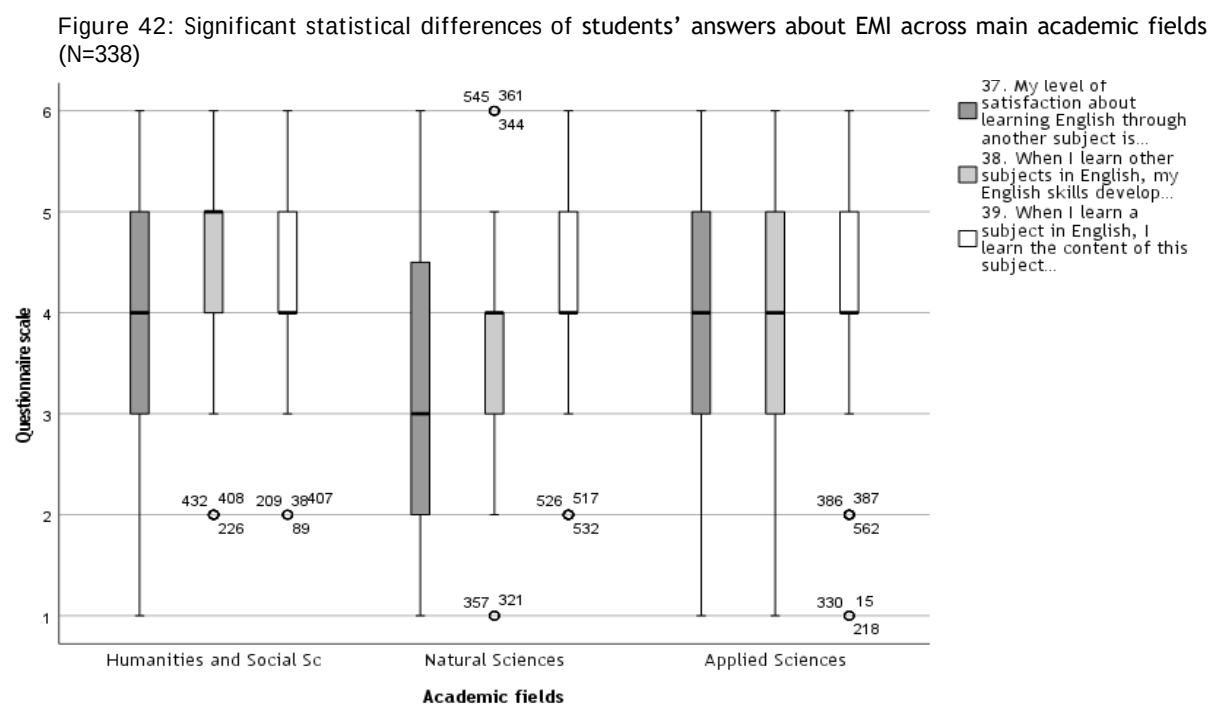
Table 21

*Significant statistical differences across the answers of groups and subgroups regarding EMI (N=338)*

| Variable  | ST37                        | ST38                         | ST39                        |
|-----------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Groups    | $F(2,335) = 8.42, p < .01$  | $F(2,335) = 14.85, p < .001$ | $F(2,335) = 8.08, p < .001$ |
| Subgroups | $F(10,327) = 3.69, p < .01$ | $F(10,327) = 4.90, p < .01$  | $F(10,327) = 2.59, p < .05$ |

Concerning the different groups (Fig 42 below), as expected, the answers to ST37 of the students enrolled in the disciplinary area of Humanities and Social Sciences contrasted with those of the other groups in all three items about EMI. They indicated a higher level of

satisfaction with learning subjects in English ( $M=4.0$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ) than the students in the field of Natural Sciences ( $M=3.28$ ,  $SD=1.47$ ), ( $p<.001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.32, 1.18]). Besides, their answers also differed from those of other respondents about the improvement of their English skills through the EMI subjects (ST38). They approved of this linguistic growth more ( $M=4.48$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ) than the students in Natural Sciences ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ), ( $p<.001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.48, 1.23]), and more than those learners in Applied Sciences ( $M=3.94$ ,  $SD=1.34$ ), ( $p<.001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.17, 0.91]). Lastly, learners in English Studies reported that they learn the content in English more effectively ( $M=4.47$ ,  $SD=0.85$ ) than the students in Natural Sciences ( $M=4.13$ ,  $SD=0.92$ ), ( $p=.01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.05, 0.64]), and than the students enrolled in Applied Sciences ( $M=3.99$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ), ( $p<.001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.19, 0.77]).



Other important disparities were also identified in the answers from respondents across the more specific academic degrees or courses. In the case of ST37 about the level of contentment with EMI programs, there were some contrasting reactions. As illustrated in Table 22 below, the learners enrolled in Chemistry studies as well as student teachers reported they were less satisfied about the EMI experience than students in English Studies, Journalism and Audiovisual Communication, and Odontology.

Table 22

Significant statistical differences across the subgroups regarding ST37

| Dependent Variable: 37. My level of satisfaction about learning English through another subject is... |                                   |                       |            |      |                         |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| (I) SUBGr                                                                                             | (J) SUBGr                         | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|                                                                                                       |                                   |                       |            |      | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| 2.1 Chemistry<br>(M=3.21 SD=1.48)                                                                     | 1-2 EngLang (M=4.03, SD=1.28)     | -,825*                | ,212       | ,007 | -1,52                   | -,13        |
|                                                                                                       | 3-2 JourAudVCom (M=4.33, SD=0.51) | -1,128*               | ,269       | ,028 | -2,16                   | -,09        |
|                                                                                                       | 3-4 Odontology (M=4.26, SD=1.25)  | -1,054*               | ,295       | ,028 | -2,04                   | -,06        |
| 3-5 EducSciences<br>(M=3.08, SD=1.59)                                                                 | 1-2 EngLang (M=4.33, SD=1.28)     | -,955*                | ,283       | ,046 | -1,90                   | -,01        |
|                                                                                                       | 3-2 JourAudVCom (M=4.33, SD=0.51) | -1,258*               | ,328       | ,027 | -2,42                   | -,09        |
|                                                                                                       | 3-4 Odontology (M=4.26, SD=1.25)  | -1,184*               | ,349       | ,044 | -2,35                   | -,02        |

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

However, fewer significant differences were disclosed by the statistical tests for statements 38 and 39 about EMI. As predicted, the English Language and Literature group acknowledged the growth of their English skills through this type of instruction ( $M=4.56$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ) more than those learners in Chemistry ( $M=3.64$ ,  $SD=1.23$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.33, 1.50]), and more than those enrolled in Physics ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ), ( $p = .03$ , 95% C.I. = [0.05, 1.94]). In addition, the answers of the learners in English Studies were more positive than those of student teachers ( $M=3.48$ ,  $SD=1.55$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.18, 1.98]). Finally, as regards ST39, which assessed the learning of the subject content through EMI, once again the learners in English Studies were more positive ( $M=4.53$ ,  $SD=0.26$ ) than the students in Chemistry ( $M=4.04$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.03, 0.95]), and they were also more optimistic than the group of student teachers ( $M=3.90$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ), ( $p = .01$ , 95% C.I. = [0.05, 1.20]). All in all, this data suggests that the students in this study, other than those in English Language and Literature, who were enrolled in EMI courses at the USC learned the content of the academic subjects relatively well, while the growth of their English skills via this instruction was limited or lacking.

#### 4.2.2.2 Variable 2: The effect of Language Learning Experience (LLE) on the beliefs about EMI courses at the USC

As regards the number of other languages apart from their mother tongue/s the students questioned knew, items 37 and 38 revealed significant differences with values at  $F(4,333) = 3.17$ ,  $p = .014$  and at  $F(4,333) = 5.19$ ,  $p < .001$  respectively. In the case of the former item, the generally mild positive experience about learning content in English was stronger for students with three extra languages ( $M=4.08$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ) than for those with one ( $M=3.37$ ,  $SD=1.41$ ), ( $p =$

.01, 95% C.I. = [0.10, 1.34]). In addition, the students who knew the highest number of extra languages shared a more positive opinion about developing their language skills through this type of academic instruction than their peers with fewer extra languages (ST38). For example, the learners with three extra languages found EMI more useful to learn English ( $M=4.61$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ) than the students with one extra language ( $M=3.72$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ), ( $p < .001$ , 95% C.I. = [0.35, 1.44]), and also more useful than the students with two additional foreign languages ( $M=4.04$ ,  $SD=1.30$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.06, 1.08]). Even so, no significant correlation was found for any of these variables. Considering the factor of foreign languages learnt, one main disparity was identified in the students' answers,  $F(3,334) = 3.19$ ,  $p = .02$ . Those who had studied three foreign languages expressed the highest level of satisfaction about content-language learning ( $M=4.36$ ,  $SD=0.92$ ) than the learners who had studied one foreign language ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=1.44$ ), ( $p = .02$ , 95% C.I. = [0.09, 1.63]). Although no important statistical differences were found for ST38 on language skills development through EMI, this item revealed a significant positive correlation [ $r(338) = .13$ ,  $p = .015$ ].

Furthermore, those students with SA experience reported a better development of their English skills when learning content in English ( $M=4.30$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ) than those learners without any SA experience ( $M=3.96$ ,  $SD=1.24$ ),  $t(336) = -2.28$ ,  $p = .02$ . A significant positive correlation [ $r(338) = .12$ ,  $p = .023$ ] between these two variables was also identified.

#### 4.2.2.3 Variable 3: The effect of gender on the beliefs about EMI courses at the USC

Regarding the effect of gender, the most notable differences were observed for STs 38, which assessed the improvement of the students' linguistic skills through EMI courses,  $t(336) = 2.40$ ,  $p = .01$ ., and ST39 about the effective learning of the content through this type of instruction,  $t(336) = 2.37$ ,  $p = .01$ . Female students reported more English linguistic growth ( $M=4.16$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ) through EMI lessons than male students ( $M=3.79$ ,  $SD=1.79$ ). In a similar fashion, the female group accounted for a more effective learning of the content in EMI subjects ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ) than their male counterparts ( $M=4.02$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ).

### 4.2.3 Descriptive statistics of teachers' responses about the EMI programs at the USC

Teachers' opinions about learning academic content through instruction in English was introduced in the questionnaire by statements 29 and 32 and explored in greater depth through the interviews. The last open question of the questionnaire was intended to elicit additional comments. Statement 29 referred to the level of language proficiency of the USC students upon starting university, a factor that has a direct impact on their learning at this new academic stage. In contrast, ST32 explored the teachers' stand towards the implementation of EMI courses at the USC. The wording and scales for these items were the following:

ST29. In Galicia students who start their university degree have a good level of English (a B1 at least).

- |                                            |                                   |                                            |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly agree    | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree    | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree    |

ST32. I think they should include more subjects in English as part of the university curriculum/programs.

- ☐ Yes, but only if they are optional subjects.

- Yes, either as optional, compulsory or core subjects.
- No (If you have chosen this answer, please use the option Other to comment briefly on the reasons.)

As regards the assessment of the students' proficiency level in English to begin their university studies, 80% of the teachers (N=28) concurred that it is below the required standard for higher education ( $M=2.57$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ). In this group 64% of the educators (N=18) expressed their plain disagreement with the statement while the other 36% (N=10) disagreed slightly with it. Concerning ST32 about the further implementation of EMI programs at the USC, more than half of the teachers (57%, N=20) expressed their support for the introduction of more courses of this type in the curriculum but only if these were offered as optional courses. A group of about 34% of the respondents (N=12) adopted a more radical supportive position about this point, while 9% of them (N=3) rejected the further implementation of this type of instruction.

#### 4.2.4 Testing for teachers' belief differences about content learning through English

When exploring the responses to these statements based on the variables of gender and years of experience, and type of English instruction, no significant statistical differences were found for statement 29. Yet, based on the type of instruction it seems that the EMI teachers support a little more the further implementation of content-language integrated courses ( $M=2.75$ ,  $SD=0.57$ ) than the GE teachers ( $M=2.26$ ,  $SD=0.65$ ),  $t(33) = -2.31$ ,  $p=.02$ .

#### 4.2.5 Interview data from students and teachers on EMI at the USC

As regards the proficiency level of novice students upon entering the USC, the data presented in Part A as well as questionnaire statement 29 evidence their insufficient level of preparation. This issue was further illustrated by the comments contributed by teachers about EMI programs:

There are many university students who are proficient at writing but when they have to speak, it is a different reality. (IntT2)

The problem is that those who take subjects in English should have a language level higher than what they have today. (IntT12)

Another problem is the uneven level of the students; for instance, some of them want an exam in English but some others don't. (IntT13)

According to the official regulations, students are expected to have a B2 level...but it is unrealistic. So...this means I'm forced to build basic language skills while trying to force the program as much as I can, but I still believe this is a fantasy world. The official regulations describe multilingual students, and they say their level is high when it is really low, so there's still a gap between theory and reality. (IntT16)

Two interview questions probed into the students and teachers' views about the implementation of EMI courses at the USC (Students' Qt15, Appendix D and teachers' Qt12, Appendix E). When asked if more EMI courses should be included in the university programs, about 89% of the students (N=50) supported this learning modality versus the remaining 11%



(N=6), who disapproved of it or stated that it should only be enforced in particular colleges, schools or degrees. The supportive group expressed different arguments showing the instrumentalist use of learning English through EMI: a good preparation for employment (8 ref), different social opportunities (6 ref), access to post-graduate studies and research materials and publications (7 ref) and enriched academic and language learning (2 ref). The detractors of the idea, however, explained that the students' level of English may have a negative impact on their performance in the specific academic subjects (4 ref), and two of the interviewees added that content learning is easier in the student's mother tongue while through EMI it could be more difficult or discouraging. Finally, two of the students interviewed claimed that EMI should not be imposed since there are other foreign languages to learn too.

Another group of students contributed arguments related to the implementation of this methodology. They concurred that the courses offered should be optional or not too many (9 ref) and that their proficiency level as well as that of the teachers' is not good enough for an effective learning through EMI (5 ref). This last argument was highlighted by the students from the Faculty of Education, who consider they receive very little training in English as future primary school teachers (2 ref). Moreover, some philology students stated that they would welcome more courses in English and that EMI should be made mandatory in other schools for the benefit of the students as many of them lack interest or motivation in learning the language (5 ref). Lastly, two respondents shared their view that more native teachers are needed to practice conversation since it is the weakest skill for students, and a third student voiced a call for the protection of Galician as a local language.

As regards the teachers interviewed, 68% of them (N=15) supported the implementation of more EMI subjects at the USC while the rest of the respondents were more skeptical about it. They contributed a series of arguments, some of which harmonized with those given by the group of students. As regards the advantages EMI offers, the teachers acknowledged the usefulness of the language as a professional tool not only for students but also for them (4 ref). In addition to being an added point in the students' academic file (1 ref), teachers are granted some advantages in terms of their teaching timetable, and it is a self-rewarding personal challenge and a good language practice for them (3 ref). The tree maps in Figures 43 and 44 on the following page show the word frequency counts retrieved from the answers from both groups. As we can see, words such as *yes / good / job / important* show the students' approval of EMI programs while the teachers used terms such as *advantages / preparation / disadvantages* to show their viewpoint about this type of instruction. On a more contending note, however, some teachers expressed their disapproval of EMI based on the challenge it poses for the students' learning which might cause them to show negative attitudes towards the language as they see it as an additional burden "to their hypothetical difficult subjects" [T1] (2 ref). A more ideological approach was conveyed by two interviewees, the first of whom wondered "Why do we have to give up Spanish as a LF and surrender to English?" (IntT3). Similarly, a second teacher explained that EMI subjects widen the gap between those students with a high proficiency level, even in those cases when their high level is not the direct result of the teaching process. "It harms, consequently, those students whose skills are not linguistic, or whose language knowledge is not at the service of English as such, mainly in an academic code." (IntT5).

Furthermore, several points referring to the implementation process of EMI at the USC were exposed. Most of the respondents (95%, N=21) made some reference to the lack of language preparation of students and teachers to deliver these programs. Only students who can certify a B2 level of English (CEFR) can enroll in EMI courses; however, the English level of the classes is, in general, below this standard and varies considerably from one student to

another (8 ref). As one instructor recommended, the students' enrollment process in these courses should be more effectively monitored. Moreover, despite the creation of professional development opportunities such as the LEDUS program [Foreign Languages in Teaching at the USC] at the USC, some teachers mentioned that their language and pedagogical training is not solid enough, especially in the case of many CLIL teachers at the lower educational levels (4 ref) and some teachers in HE (15 ref). In the case of the group of Philology teachers, they referred to the need for a better training in ESP as well as adequate materials to deliver EMI subjects in other faculties and schools (3 ref), while one EMI teacher demanded more control over the language training of teachers, and more professional development opportunities.

Figure 43: Word frequency students' answers to Qt 15: reasons to implement more EMI courses (N=56)

|        |          |        |            |           |             |          |          |               |            |            |
|--------|----------|--------|------------|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|---------------|------------|------------|
| yes    | good     | job    | university | offered   | preparation | event    | teachers | understand    | mandatory  | basic      |
|        |          |        |            |           |             |          | choose   | friends       | galician   | like       |
|        |          |        | graduate   | positive  | agree       | force    |          |               |            | linguistic |
|        |          | help   |            |           |             |          | easier   | maybe         | phd        | research   |
|        |          |        | important  | difficult | complicate  | publish  |          |               |            | three      |
| degree | optional |        |            |           |             |          | enough   | new           | vocabulary | extra      |
|        |          | taught |            |           |             |          |          |               | face       | hard       |
|        |          |        | include    | feel      | education   | specific | foreign  | opportunities | written    | problem    |
|        |          |        |            |           |             |          |          |               |            | specialize |
|        |          |        |            |           |             |          |          |               | right      | establish  |

Figure 44: Word frequency teachers' answers to Qt 12: reasons to implement more EMI courses (N=22)

|             |            |            |           |              |          |          |               |            |          |              |              |
|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|------------|----------|--------------|--------------|
| preparation | advantages | faculties  | idea      | disadvantage | law      | same     | implement     | experience | favor    | feel         | field        |
|             |            |            | philology | offer        | option   | specific | academic      | higher     | local    | process      | professional |
|             |            | linguistic |           |              |          |          | affect        | hours      | required | social       | timetable    |
| degree      | emi        |            | science   | areas        | problem  | taught   |               |            |          |              |              |
|             |            |            |           |              |          |          | certification | lessons    | research | availability | concept      |
|             |            | want       | still     | different    | programs | world    | choose        | lingua     | schools  | comfort      | enough       |
|             |            |            |           |              |          |          |               |            |          | erasmus      |              |

Other EMI implementation issues voiced by the teachers questioned referred to the placing of the EMI subjects in the most convenient academic years or levels along the degree. This seems to be a challenging decision since, on the one hand, if these subjects are offered in the last years of the degree, the students' language skills might be impaired by a lack of practice since high school (1 ref); on the other hand, when implementing EMI subjects during the first years of the degree, the students' knowledge and skills in their academic area and their competence in English are not well developed, and teachers are faced with a serious challenge to carry out their teaching (4 ref). The ideal solution to this issue would be to have students with a good level of English at the pre-university levels and to offer different EMI subjects along the degree levels more consistently. This proposal was made by two teachers with different profiles, a GE and an EMI teacher.

Additionally, a group of interviewees contributed a series of suggestions to consider for the implementation of EMI. In their view, this methodology should be gradually introduced, and its efficacy and efficiency should be monitored and researched on (7 ref), there should be effective decision-making and support by stakeholders and local authorities as well as enough academic, human and economic resources available for its implementation (7 ref), and it should not be made mandatory for students or prioritize internationalization over quality learning (2 ref). Lastly, one of the teachers interviewed claimed that it should be adjusted to the needs of the different schools and faculties with priority to the areas of experimental science and technical degrees (1 ref).

Finally, as regards the students' and teachers' variables, no important differences were identified based on the gender groups. Yet, across academic areas, the students in the Philology degrees were more supportive of the further implementation of EMI subjects than their peers in other academic fields. As regards the group of teachers, the most significant difference identified based on the type of instruction was their approach to the teaching of the language. While the GE teachers conveyed a high commitment to EFL teaching, the EMI teachers consider it a collateral or secondary element in their practice.

#### **4.2.6 General discussion about the responses on EMI instruction at the USC**

The data gathered through the questionnaire and the interviews indicate that the USC students and teachers who participated in this study shared a general positive view towards the implementation of EMI courses, which was mainly motivated by the strong instrumentalist character of English in this EFL learning environment. Consistent with the general pattern of beliefs discussed in Part A, the academic field of the students had a bearing on the answers, with the groups in the Humanities and Social Sciences supporting the use of English to learn content more than other groups of learners in other fields. In the same vein, the type of English instruction the teachers delivered also explained the different levels of motivation reported. For example, although all instructors seem to enjoy teaching English, EMI instructors feel it is a rewarding personal challenge, as was also found by Doiz & Lasagabaster (2018b) in their study about the L2 motivational self-system of EMI students and teachers at the University of the Basque Country.

In addition to the implementation issues of EFL programs in Secondary Education mentioned above in Part A of this report, the data gathered about the implementation of EMI programs at the USC also disclosed different problems which are similar to others previously identified in different studies in Spain and abroad (Tonkin & Reagan, 2003; Cots et al., 2012; Doiz et al., 2013a, 2013b; Jenkins, 2014; Tsuchiya & Perez Murillo, 2015; Sabaté-Dalmau,

2016; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Lasagabaster, 2017, to mention just a few). It is now well-established by research that despite being complex and influenced by different factors, the beliefs about EFL are progressively constructed and crystallized (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005, p. 13). For USC students, this crystallization process of their beliefs about learning English — and in English through CLIL programs — takes place uninterruptedly from the primary years and throughout the preuniversity stages. According to this study, language preparation during these years is insufficient and, as a consequence, demotivation and frustration arise. This means that upon reaching university, the students' level of proficiency in English does not meet the necessary standards to cope with the learning demands of EMI courses and GE programs in general.

Under the third category of beliefs about the nature of language learning previously reported in this study, the participating USC students and teachers agreed that learning English is different from learning other subjects. Based on this belief, it is then understandable that acquiring and teaching content through EMI is a very challenging process as students and teachers have to learn and instruct respectively through the combination of subjects that take different processes of learning. The effectiveness of both content and language preparation via EMI instruction has lately started to be scrutinized by researchers. Although the results of few studies conducted so far indicate that EMI instruction does not affect content learning negatively, the amount of research up to the present remains insufficient to totally confirm this point (Lasagabaster, 2022, p. 41). As expected, the main objective of learning the course content tends to prevail over the development of students' language skills. This may explain the results of the data obtained in this project which show that USC students do not seem to benefit greatly, linguistically speaking, from EMI programs. This was one of the first characteristics of this type of instruction identified by researchers,

[...] EMI is arguably an umbrella term for academic subjects taught through English, one making no direct reference to the aim of improving students' English. EMI makes no claim to a method nor is it... described anywhere as a method (Dearden & Macaro, 2016, p. 456).

Some comments contributed by EMI students evidence this issue:

In any case, to have to study a subject in a language that you cannot use proficiently is always a challenge. (QtSt252)

To study subjects in English is useful to expand your vocabulary rather than to develop skills, as I see it from my own experience. (QtSt282)

My bilingual program in secondary school was in French but I don't think I have upgraded my foreign language skills either in French or now in English at the USC. I think my skills have improved very little compared to the level I had when I finished high school, which is disappointing (QtSt420)

This mismatch between effective content and language learning has been addressed in different studies (Shohamy, 2012; Cots, 2013; Doiz et al., 2013b; Pérez-Vidal, 2015; Agudo, 2014; Dafouz, 2014; An & Thomas, 2021) and it is one of the several challenges brought about by the implementation of EMI programs in HE. To bridge this gap Lasagabaster (2013) suggests two methodological alternatives: translanguaging (i.e. making sense of the message and

implementing supportive scaffolding practices by means of all the multilingual resources available) or team-teaching (i.e. the collaboration between content and language staff) [Doiz et al., 2013b, pp. 218-219]. The former seems to be attempted at the USC, as can be gathered by some comments made by EMI teachers:

In Chemical Engineering we split groups. Students can take the same subject in Spanish/Galician or in English. ...In the case of the materials, I give them out in English. Some materials in the Spanish group are also in English (no translation available) but via the forums they have access to the materials in Spanish..., we prepare materials in tandem, so they are practically the same. They could do without the English materials and use the Spanish ones, but I don't think they do because reading is one of their best skills. (IntT15)

Because the level of my students is not homogenous, I would usually use my presentation slides in Spanish for those low-level students so that they may have a better chance to follow the content but in fact there are more materials and bibliographical references in English than in Spanish. The language of my subject (Computational Physics) is in English by nature, so I give them terminology translated into Spanish (practically a literal translation). In a one-to-one interaction in class, I usually use Spanish if I see they don't understand the explanation in English or if they can't formulate questions clearly. But to address the whole class I usually use English. (IntT19)

While in the case of the first teacher the materials in Spanish or Galician are not consistently used or referred to as a learning resource in class, the second instructor makes a more consistent attempt at translanguaging. However, the compartmentalization of languages, i.e. the split English or Spanish rather than using the full language repertoire available, evidence what Lasagabaster refers to as “the hegemony of the monolingual mindset”. This monolingual approach is also detrimental to the use of Galician since it contributes to foster the use of the more dominant L1 (Spanish in this case) as a counterpart to the foreign language, and...”It is high time we gave preference to the multilingual mindset.” (Doiz et al., 2013b, p. 218).

With regard to the second alternative about team-teaching as a form of cohesive EMI instruction, the data gathered in this study contains little evidence, if any, of this practice. As described in Chapter 3, within the USC context, EMI programs are taught by teachers from the Faculty of Philology who mainly use an ESP approach, and content teachers in other faculties whose level of English allows them to deliver instruction in this language. Although no specific questions in this study were directed at team-teaching, some interview responses evidence a fragmentation between the work of English language and content teachers:

[...] they [teachers] need to prepare themselves to teach specific language, for instance, in a subject like English for Law, the new ESP teacher needs to become familiar with areas such as Civil Law and Criminal Law...General English teachers do not normally learn terms related to Law, Business or Science in their degrees and thus, it's necessary to spend time pre-preparing their lessons. (IntT2)



I do think there's a bit of a disconnect in bringing someone from the Faculty of Philology for one or two hours a week for one semester in four years... It's very



rewarding to be working in other faculties, but I think we're not working off a solid base... (IntT16)

Despite the fact that team-teaching might not be feasible at present at the USC due to a shortage of teaching staff, it is an alternative worth exploring in the future, specially at those schools and faculties where both English language and content teachers share instruction. In addition, as proposed by Dearden (2018, p. 331), an offer of professional development based on EMI training for English language teachers could also be a viable alternative to bring content and language learning closer through EMI. This academic highlights the importance that the role of language teachers acquires when they are trained for EMI as they could offer support to both EMI teachers and students in terms of “language knowledge, language awareness and interactive pedagogy skills.” (Ibid.).

Of particular interest in this study were also the views of the students in the degrees of Educational Sciences, who were more negative than expected about their level of language training to cope with EMI learning. This result is consistent with those reported by Huguet & Lasagabaster (2007, p. 236) where “less than 50% of student teachers perceived their language competence in English as high.” Apart from the issues related to the previous language learning experience these students have accumulated in Secondary Education, this stand could be explained by the different levels of exposure to learning in English at the university due to the uneven distribution of courses across the USC faculties and schools. At the beginning of this study, only four subjects were taught in English in the Faculties of Education versus 13 in the Faculty of Chemistry, for example. The importance of language exposure is also shown in the results of this study for the variable of LLE where the respondents with more experience in language learning reported more benefits from their instruction in English. An additional reason underlying the negative opinions of student teachers towards being taught in English seems to be connected with the quality of the teaching they experience, something that has already been identified by previous studies at other institutions (Vázquez-Alonso et al., 2013; Murashkina, 2021). This issue is illustrated in the students' answers when asked if more courses in English should be included in the curriculum at the USC:

What should be established is that if we have a good foundation at the secondary and high school levels, we can have courses taught in English at the university. (IntSt 18)

Yes, they [courses in English] should be included. We only had one subject over three months taught by three teachers, none of whom spoke in English. And they just focused on the basic grammar as usual. (IntSt 21)

Being responsible for teaching English and CLIL subjects to future pre-university generations, student teachers require a solid language instruction/competence and a good pedagogical training in their curriculum.

Other issues regarding EMI programs at the USC are those related to the approach of the teachers to this type of instruction and their perceived level of training. In the interviews, EMI teachers contributed different comments which evidenced a rather intuitive practice based on their beliefs about teaching in the foreign language. This reveals a lack of pedagogical cohesion across the faculties and schools when delivering these programs:



Another important aspect is that in (EMI) lessons the teacher should always speak in English, you have to avoid communication in other languages, almost pretend you are a native. (IntT13)

In terms of materials, I give my master students everything in English just as it is stipulated in the program. We are not allowed to give them any materials in Spanish or Galician... It is also true that sometimes if they come across a word they don't know, I translate it for them. (IntT12)

So, I make clear from day one that I don't teach English, but I won't assess their English either. ...In the case of the materials I give them out in English. (IntT15)

[...] we should always be clear about the content, for instance, in the use of PowerPoint slides I include illustrations to accompany the meaning of new words, we use a combination of materials in English and Spanish ... I don't assess their language skills but their technical knowledge, the assessment criteria do not include their language skills. What I don't do is to give them the translated word or to accept questions in Spanish or Galician. In the case of the latter languages, I don't answer the question immediately to force them to repeat it in English. So, it's a mutual understanding that it is not an English class, but we try to understand each other in English...(IntT18)

In addition, the teachers questioned also commented that they do not receive enough training and some of them perceived they were not in a position to deliver EMI programs,

As to the teachers... there should be more control of their preparation or perhaps they should allow us to take some lessons in English, for example, for a better preparation.” (IntT12)

The linguistic preparation of the teacher can be a problem. I have a C1 level and would like to continue learning to feel more comfortable when teaching. I think all the EMI teachers have language limitations...Some students are way better than me in English because they have lived abroad, or they are Erasmus students...” (IntT13)

...I don't think my level of English is good enough to correct others, I've had students whose level of English is better than mine...” (IntT15)

These results are consistent with the findings of other studies conducted in the field of EMI programs where content teachers tend to neglect their role as language teachers and feel unprepared to cope with this responsibility (Josep Maria Cots, 2013; Dafouz, 2014; Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Aguilar, 2017; Airey et al., 2017). Much debate has been generated with regard to the dual responsibility of HE academics about teaching both content and language. Moreover, there seems to be some inconsistency as regards the assessment criteria of the language within the EMI programs at the USC, despite the teachers' belief that these programs are beneficial from the linguistic point of view, e.g. “[f]or the students it [EMI instruction] is a very good option because they can improve their level of English even more” (IntT12). The fact that the students receive little, if any, feedback about their linguistic performance offsets the purpose of

EMI about developing or reinforcing their language skills and sets the learners into a ‘survival mode’ to learn the content just by means of the inadequate proficiency level they have been able to attain during the previous years. On the same line, the development of skills regarding the use of academic English for their future professions should also be another point addressed in monitoring EMI programs. Therefore, further exploration about these issues at the USC is necessary to find opportune and practical solutions.

Furthermore, the students bring to EMI classes the beliefs about language learning they have shaped up based on their previous learning experiences and the environments where this learning has taken place, along with other individual differences. On the one hand, they spend most of the pre-university stages learning general English before they are briefly exposed to the CLIL experience at the secondary and high school levels. On the other, they use those beliefs to approach the EMI experience, which does not necessarily have a positive outcome if their beliefs are based on previous negative experiences that have generated demotivation and frustration, as evidenced by some informants in this study, or if belief appropriation leads to the ineffective use of learning strategies. For instance, EMI students who focus mostly on learning vocabulary will have more difficulties to learn the use of the academic rhetoric specific to their field. On the same line, the lack of awareness of the EMI teachers and students about their own beliefs and the mis-correspondence between their beliefs further attempt against consistency in the implementation of these programs and against the academic results the students could obtain.

Despite the general positive stand towards the implementation of more EMI courses, some of the USC subjects questioned shared an opposite view about these programs as they consider that the hegemony of English is a threat to Galician, and they also see it as a form of imperialism. The questionnaire comments below support this stand:

I hope this questionnaire is not used to foster lessons in English at the university since I believe the ones to increase should be those in Galician, which are scarce or rather extinguished. (QtSt245)

Perhaps it would also be interesting to ask the respondents of this questionnaire if they know how to write or use Galician properly since the more languages you know, the easier it is to learn another. (QtSt454)

Although foreign languages are very important, I think it is more important to know your mother tongue very well. In the case of Galician people, it is sad when I hear them speak proficiently in English, Spanish, or other foreign languages but they aren't able to produce a full correct sentence in Galician, the language of our land. (QtSt238)

...being in Galicia, speaking the local language should be given priority over speaking English (QtT24)

Forced linguistic colonialism has a negative impact on the recipient cultures. The educational, personal, and developmental benefits deriving from the learning of a foreign language are present regardless of the language learned. The impossibility of choosing beyond the English language is inadequate, and it leads students to think they are not good at languages since they cannot achieve a high level of competence in English in particular. (QtT4)

On the contrary, some of the teachers questioned do not consider English as a threat to the local language:

English is not a threat for Galician. In bilingual communities like Galicia, we have a good linguistic awareness, and we know that the more languages we can learn, the better. A third or fourth language also helps to reinforce our mother tongues. This is different in other monolingual communities where people can be skeptical about English. (IntT9)

English is not a threat for Galician. I think English affects mostly the subjects in Spanish because these are the majority. The problem with Galician is different, but this is my opinion. (IntT15)

Different authors (Doiz et al., 2013b; Jenkins, 2014; Valcke & Wilkinson, 2017) have warned about this perception of English as having a concealed imperialist and nuisance character within the internationalization process in frictional bilingual scenarios, and point out the need to find a balance between the protagonist role given to English and the offer of other foreign languages along with the maintenance of the mother tongue/s taking steps towards a real high quality multilingual curriculum.

Finally, the data in this study also revealed a problem commonly found in other institutions: the limited support, chiefly in terms of human resources and financial provision, that the local authorities offer to these programs. As one teacher expressed:

We still need to gain a lot of consistency in terms of the teaching hours and the workload of the teachers, and there isn't much support from the top levels, or the decisions are not very appropriate, nor the resources... The local government wanted to implement EMI in an X% of degrees, but they gave us only 50.000 euros and that's it. So, this requires hiring more teachers... And this amount of money is not enough, just paying the contract of one teacher for one year and that's it. So, there should be right top-bottom decisions taken, and I think they don't see it clearly, they don't know much about EMI. So, they hear bells and try to reproduce them as they can, but it doesn't work unless they change the approach. So, this is an institutional issue and should be approached differently, it shouldn't be collateral. Its implementation so far has been possible due to the effort of the ones who believe in it and who have been the real executers." (IntT18)

Based on the organization of the educational system within the Galician context and the discussion of the theories regarding the need for good pedagogical as well as language training of educators for quality instruction, the data collected in this study suggest an imbalance between these levels of preparation in the USC. On the one hand, while GE teachers who mostly have an English Philology or English Studies background and possess a high linguistic level, they lack, however, solid preparation and training to teach in ESP areas. On the other hand, student teachers are given good pedagogical training but their linguistic training as part of their degree programs is lacking. As regards the EMI teachers, although they are specialists in their content area, they also seem to require more solid professional development both pedagogically and linguistically to deliver EMI instruction effectively. After all, "[t]o become consolidated, changes in the teaching practices require time, financial support, and training." (Doiz et al.,

2014, p. 357). These results evidence a need to conduct a thorough study about the implementation of EMI programs at the USC to monitor their effectiveness and introduce the necessary changes to improve their quality. This process should involve all stakeholders. i.e. it should not be limited to teachers and students only but also administrators and university as well as local authorities should take part in it.

#### 4.2.7 Data of students and teachers' beliefs about the connection of socio-economic conditions and language proficiency, and their final recommendations for improvement

As part of the contextual character of beliefs, this section examines the views of the students and teachers about the incidence that the financial resources learners count on have on their level of English proficiency. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2 when describing the research instruments used in this study, the questionnaire addressed to students as designed in the initial stages of the project did not include any item about this set of beliefs, unlike the teachers' questionnaire, which was devised later. In this case the learners' beliefs were explored in the interview, where the teachers' beliefs reported in the questionnaire were also expanded.

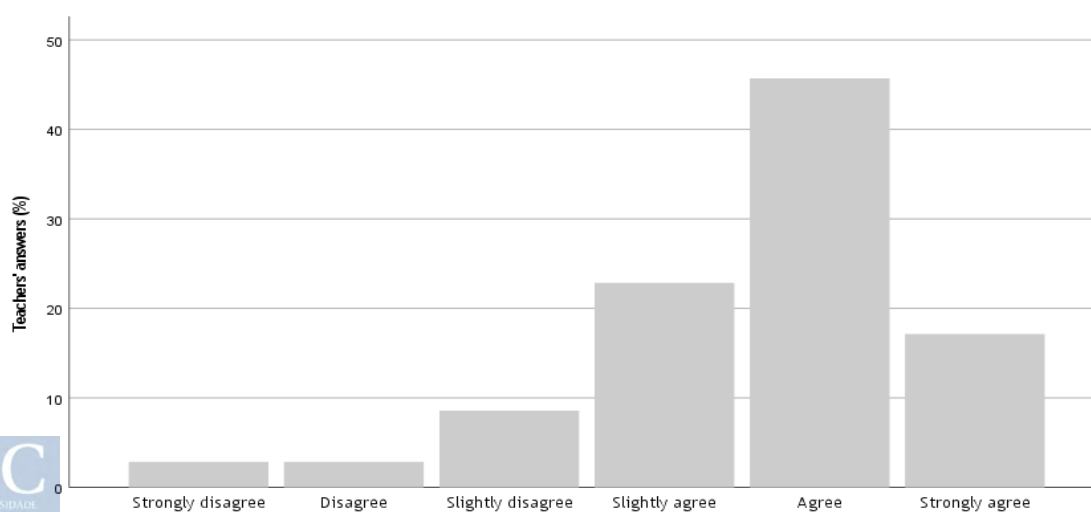
##### 4.2.7.1 Descriptive statistics of teachers' responses to the questionnaire about the connection of socio-economic conditions and language proficiency

Statement 28 was included in the teachers' questionnaire to survey their stand towards the existence of a correlation between the financial resources of the students and their level of English proficiency. This statement contained the same scale continuum *strongly agree - strongly disagree* used in the students' questionnaire and the first part of the teachers' questionnaire.

*ST28. In Galicia students with more financial resources can learn English better than the rest.*

The response pattern contributed by the teachers is shown on Figure 45 below.

Figure 45: Teachers responses to ST28. In Galicia students with more financial resources can learn English better than the rest (N=22)

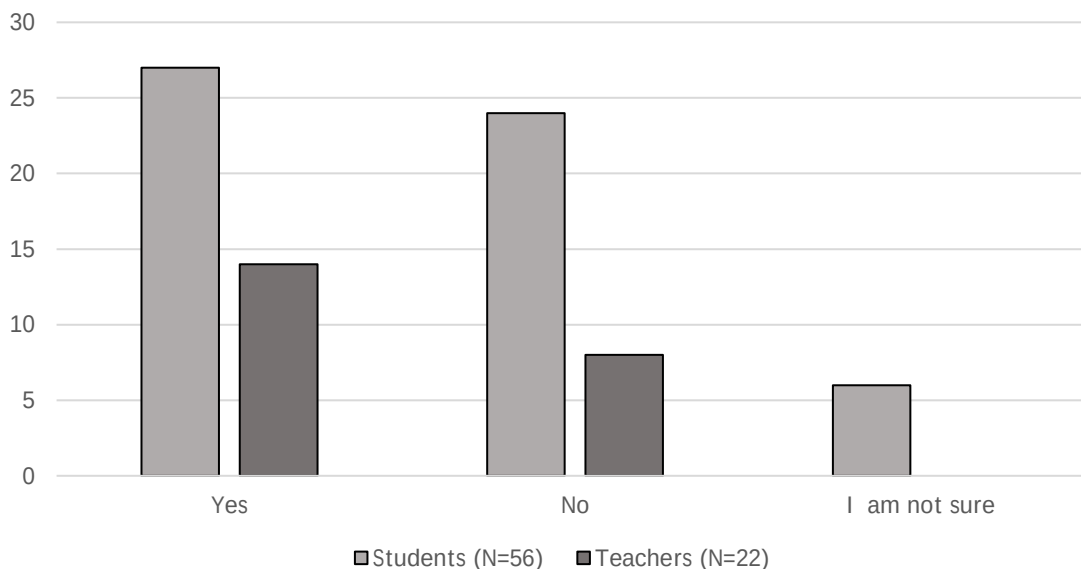


About 86% (N=30) of the teachers supported the idea that the students' financial resources play an important role in EFL learning concerning their language proficiency; in contrast, the remaining 14% (N=5) disagreed with this idea. Within the former group, most of the opinions (53%, N=16) were plainly expressed. When testing for possible significant statistical differences of the teachers' responses based on the three corresponding variables, i.e. gender, type of English instruction and years of teaching experience, no significant variations of any type were identified.

#### 4.2.7.2 Interview data from students and teachers on socio-economic factors

The interview questions 14 and 11 for students and teachers respectively (Appendixes D and E) probed into their perception about the effect that the economic status of a student may have on their EFL learning proficiency. As regards the answers contributed by the students and teachers questioned, most of them first acknowledged the stand-point opposing their view and then they even sustained a rebuttal with their arguments. That is, they provided arguments both in favor and against the statement, and in many cases they were indecisive about a final stand. This explains why the number of references does not match accurately the number of respondents. As depicted in Figure 46 below, about 47% of the students (N=27) and 64% of the teachers (N=14) agreed there is some form of impact of the economic status on the EFL learning process. In contrast, 42% of the students interviewed (N=24) and 36% of the teachers (N=8) dismissed such significance.

Figure 46: Students and teachers' perception on the relationship between EFL learning and economic status



As regards the group of students, they reported that having better economic resources allows you to enjoy additional learning opportunities such as private lessons in language academies (14 ref), access to bilingual schools (3 ref), traveling or enjoying stay-abroad periods (4 ref), and having (better) technological resources (2 ref). All these circumstances help the learner to develop better proficiency in English and mark a language difference between the students, e.g.

Definitively, I think that unless you are a constant learner in a public school, the only choice to learn English is attending private lessons and not everyone can afford it. I experienced this advantage over my classmates in secondary school. (IntSt 42)

In contrast, the group of students questioned who did not consider that the socio-economic level of a learner affects their language proficiency in English claimed that there are plenty of free resources and materials available to learn English today (13 ref). Within this group, one student claimed that there are other learning opportunities which students may have access i.e. the scholarships funded by the Amancio Ortega's foundation and the course offered by the schools of languages whose fees are affordable, and that many of the students do not know about. In addition, the students in this group also argued that all you need is hard work and motivation (11 ref) to use the wide range of resources available for your learning.

As regards the responses of the teachers questioned, those who supported a correlation between the socio-economic level of a learner and their English proficiency level argued that students with better economic resources can attend private lessons at language academies or access private education (13 ref), they can also participate in international school trips and SA projects (7 ref), in language practice camps (3 ref), and they can afford better technological resources such as computers, mobile phones and Internet service (4). In addition, four respondents in this group referred to the fact that not only the economic level of the families but also their cultural level may have an impact on students' learning of foreign languages. However, the group of teachers who did not agree with the impact of the socio-economic conditions of the learner on their English proficiency claimed that students need to make a better use of the resources available to learn (6 ref) and that motivation to learn is the most important factor in learning (7 ref). One of the instructors in this group highlighted the need to teach students how to use the resources available for learning to help bridging the gap between those who have more resources and those with less opportunities. In the same vein, two other teachers claimed that improving the level of training of teachers and the methodology used in state or public schools are the solutions to eliminate these differences in English learning. As we can see from the data, in general students and teachers share common beliefs about the influence that the socio-economic situation of students has on English proficiency. They believe that although an economic advantage can offer additional opportunities to improve one's language proficiency, a high level of motivation coupled with an effective use of the resources available may also be effective in bridging this social gap within the learning scenario.

The final interview question for the students as well as the last open question in the teachers' questionnaire retrieved the respondents' recommendations to improve EFL learning at the USC and Galicia in general. In this case, three main nodes of answers were identified: suggestions about the teaching process, about the educational programs and about extra-academic alternatives. The references for each of these nodes are illustrated in Table 23.



Table 23

*Students and teachers' recommendations to improve EFL learning at the USC and in Galicia*

| Answer node                 | Recommendations                                                                                                                                                        | Students | Teachers |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| The teaching process        | Lessons and teachers should be more motivating and dynamic.                                                                                                            | 6 ref    | 3 ref    |
|                             | Teaching should be more practical, fun and adapted to the students' level.                                                                                             | 8 ref    | 4 ref    |
|                             | Lessons should focus on the oral skills rather than on the written ones.                                                                                               | 13 ref   | 3 ref    |
|                             | Teaching quality should be higher, and teachers should deliver the lessons in English more consistently.                                                               | 4 ref    | 1 ref    |
|                             | Teachers should have a better pedagogical and linguistic preparation.                                                                                                  | 4 ref    | 1 ref    |
|                             | More support should be offered to students and class groups should be smaller.                                                                                         | 1 ref    | 2 ref    |
|                             | There should be more original resources, native or bilingual teachers and conversation assistants.                                                                     | 2 ref    | 2 ref    |
|                             | Resources should be readjusted to make them more attractive and challenging; assessment should be redesigned and teachers per subjects should be more stable.          | 5 ref    | 1 ref    |
| Educational programs        | Programs should include everyday English and learning should start at a very early age.                                                                                | 4 ref    | 1 ref    |
|                             | The educational system should be reorganised to foster the importance of learning English and to introduce exchange programs at early ages.                            | 4 ref    | 2 ref    |
|                             | More CLIL and EMI subjects should be implemented.                                                                                                                      | 2 ref    | 4 ref    |
|                             | EMI subjects should be introduced progressively and effectively so that English is not a barrier for content learning and there should be more in the English degrees. | 2 ref    | 1 ref    |
| Extra curricular activities | More activities in English should be offered such as non-academic courses and competitions.                                                                            | 4 ref    | 2 ref    |
|                             | They should broadcast TV series and films in the original version and reading in English should be promoted.                                                           | 3 ref    | 9 ref    |
|                             | English-culture knowledge should be fostered.                                                                                                                          | 4 ref    | 2 ref    |
|                             | More free opportunities to travel and study, immersion programs and courses should be offered to students.                                                             | 5 ref    | 3 ref    |

#### 4.2.7.3 General discussion of students' and teachers' answers on the relationship between EFL learning and economic status

The last element or social domain (Spolsky, 2007) regarding the impact of economic aspects on EFL learning works as a complement to better understand the contextual character of the beliefs of the USC students and teachers. Based on the data gathered, in Galicia the provision of quality English learning by the private sector in tandem with the deficiencies in the public sector creates an unbalanced scenario, which is detrimental to effective EFL learning, particularly for those learners with less economic resources. As exposed by some subjects:

Even though I have a good level of English, this is because I attended extracurricular classes (academy), since the level of English at secondary schools in Spain is very low. (QtSt28)

The teaching of English and other foreign languages in the public/state system is appalling, if you don't attend private lessons, it is very difficult to finish high school with a good level. (QtSt249)

My C2 level in English was the result of my own effort to attend lessons in an academy; in public education you only obtain a B1 at the most. (QtSt251)

I'd like to add that the public system doesn't teach foreign languages adequately, so you cannot obtain a high level of English by attending only school and lessons in English at the USC. (QtSt314)

With the current level you get at schools and high schools it is very difficult to be proficient in any foreign language without attending private lessons. (QtSt600)

Some authors have also addressed these issues ( Ellis, 1994; Spolsky, 2007; Akram & Ghani, 2013; Abbasian et al., 2019; R. Getie, 2020;). However, changing this domain presents a challenge for the USC because “schools reflect the ideological position of those who control them. Normally, their policy will be driven in part at least by the policy of the national government.” (Spolsky, 2007 p. 11).

#### 4.2.7.4 Brief summary regarding the contextual aspects relating to beliefs

The exploration of contextual factors relating to the beliefs of students and teachers has revealed significant issues about EFL learning at the USC. First, they welcome EMI instruction and acknowledge the various advantages it brings to both students and teachers. This was the view especially of students in the Humanities and Social Sciences; learners in Chemistry and Educational Sciences, however, confessed to being less comfortable with such an approach. Second, all participants claim that their linguistic skills can develop through this type of instruction, especially those learners with a richer LLE, and also female students, although in general they report limited development of these skills. Third, as regards content learning, they recognize they can manage learning the content of the subject in English relatively well, even though this is somewhat challenging for them. The teacher participants, especially EMI teachers, also agreed that students' levels of linguistic preparation on entering EMI courses is insufficient, and that more optional courses of this type should be provided. Other aspects, such as the pace and breadth of these programs across the curriculum, a need for

consistent pedagogical approaches, and more support and resources from stakeholders, were also raised by respondents. As regards the second contextual aspect reported, concerning the impact of the socio-economic level of learners on the development of their language proficiency, participants acknowledged the impact of this. However, they also consider that the wide range of resources and opportunities freely available today constitute a solution to the social gaps here towards offering more equal opportunities to all learners so they can successfully develop their skills in English.

Thus far, the data presented in this chapter indicate that this USC group of students and teachers hold similar beliefs about EFL learning, i.e., they share a homogenous culture of learning this foreign language. However, the statistical tests also revealed some variations within this general belief pattern. Tables 24 and 25 below summarize the significant statistical differences disclosed based on all the variables used in the analysis. As illustrated on Table 24, in the case of students the three main variables have an impact on their beliefs about EFL learning. More in particular, the academic area of the learner brings about important belief variations regarding the process of learning EFL. An exception, however, are the beliefs about the nature of language learning, where there is a stronger general consensus across all fields of study. The homogeneity of this belief set could possibly be rooted in the students' common previous experience of EFL learning in the academic context. To a lesser extent, the variables of LLE and gender also affect the similitudes of students' beliefs. As regards the teacher participants (Table 25), the type of English instruction was the variable from which most belief disparities originated in the data. This said, the academic field of students and teachers at the USC seem to be an important variable to take into consideration when revising, devising and implementing differentiated EFL learning programs more effectively. As discussed along the two parts of this chapter, there are different alternatives that can be considered to upgrade the quality of the teaching-learning process, not only at the university but also at the lower educational stages. These could help students to reach a higher proficiency level and reduce the impact of this unbalanced context on learning English as a foreign language. Many of these alternatives are illustrated in the suggestions made by students and teachers who participated in this study, whose beliefs are of essential importance to conduct a thorough assessment of the process of learning English as a foreign language in the USC and beyond.

Table 24

*Overview of students' belief differences as regards all variables*

| Belief category                        | Students' questionnaire item                                                                          | Variable 1<br>Academic field |            | Variable 2 (LLE)<br>Language Learning Experience |                      |               | Variable 3<br>Gender |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|
|                                        |                                                                                                       | Main groups                  | Sub groups | Extra languages                                  | Instructed languages | SA experience |                      |
| 1. The difficulty of language learning | 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.                                                    | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               | ✓                    |
|                                        | 5. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.                                 | ✓                            | ✓          | ✓                                                |                      | ✓             |                      |
|                                        | 21. It is easier to speak than to understand English.                                                 |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 25. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.                           |                              | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               | ✓                    |
|                                        | 34. Learning English is... (Very difficult...Very easy).                                              | ✓                            | ✓          | ✓                                                | ✓                    | ✓             |                      |
|                                        | 35. If someone spent an hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
| 2. Foreign language aptitude           | 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.                                 | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.             |                              | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 9. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.               |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               | ✓                    |
|                                        | 13. I have a natural aptitude for the learning of foreign languages.                                  | ✓                            | ✓          | ✓                                                | ✓                    | ✓             |                      |
|                                        | 19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.                                          | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 26. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.               | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  | ✓                    |               |                      |
|                                        | 29. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.                                |                              | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 30. In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.                                      | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  | ✓                    |               |                      |
| 3. The nature of language learning     | 31. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.                                                   |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 4. English is structured in the same way as my native language.                                       |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 7. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.                |                              |            | ✓                                                |                      | ✓             |                      |
|                                        | 10. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.                                  |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 14. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.                        |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 18. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules.                               |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                        | 22. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.                                       |                              | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |

| Belief category                          | Students' questionnaire item                                                                                   | Variable 1<br>Academic field |            | Variable 2 (LLE)<br>Language Learning Experience |                      |               | Variable 3<br>Gender |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|
|                                          |                                                                                                                | Main groups                  | Sub groups | Extra languages                                  | Instructed languages | SA experience |                      |
|                                          | 23. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from my native language.                                |                              | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
| 4. Motivations and expectations          | 20. If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.                                    | ✓                            |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                          | 24. If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job.                                      | ✓                            | ✓          | ✓                                                | ✓                    |               |                      |
|                                          | 27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.                                          | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  | ✓                    |               | ✓                    |
|                                          | 28. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.                               | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               | ✓                    |
| 5. Learning and communication strategies | 6. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.                                                  |                              | ✓          |                                                  |                      | ✓             |                      |
|                                          | 8. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.                                      |                              | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                          | 11. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language. |                              | ✓          |                                                  |                      | ✓             |                      |
|                                          | 12. It is okay to guess-if you do not know a word in English.                                                  |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                          | 15. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.                                                              |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               | ✓                    |
|                                          | 16. I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.                                                 |                              | ✓          | ✓                                                |                      | ✓             | ✓                    |
|                                          | 17. If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.         | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                          | 32. Participating in class is important to learn English.                                                      |                              |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                          | 33. Motivation is important to learn English.                                                                  | ✓                            |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
| Part B<br>EMI instruction                | 36. Do you have any experience in any bilingual or plurilingual program? ...                                   | Yes/No                       |            |                                                  |                      |               |                      |
|                                          | 37. My level of satisfaction about learning English through another subject is...                              | ✓                            | ✓          | ✓                                                | ✓                    |               |                      |
|                                          | 38. When I learn other subjects in English, my English skills develop...                                       | ✓                            | ✓          | ✓                                                |                      | ✓             |                      |
|                                          | 39. When I learn a subject in English, I learn the content of this subject...                                  | ✓                            | ✓          |                                                  |                      |               |                      |

Table 25

*Overview of teachers' belief differences as regards all variables*

| Belief category                          | Teachers' Questionnaire item                                                                                 | Variable 1 Professional experience | Variable 2 Type of English instruction (GE/EMI) | Variable 3 Gender |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. The difficulty of language learning   | 8. Some languages are easier to learn than others.                                                           |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 10. I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.                             |                                    |                                                 | ✓                 |
|                                          | 16. Learning English is easy for my students.                                                                |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 17. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.                                  |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 24. It is easier to speak than to understand English.                                                        |                                    | ✓                                               |                   |
| 2. Foreign language aptitude             | 6. It is easier for children than for adults to learn a foreign language.                                    |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 7. Some people are born with a special ability to learn a foreign language.                                  |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 14. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.                     |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 21. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.                                       |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 22. In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.                                             |                                    |                                                 |                   |
| 3. The nature of language learning       | 9. English is structured in the same way as my native language.                                              |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 12. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.                      |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 15. The best way to learn English is in an English-speaking country.                                         |                                    | ✓                                               |                   |
|                                          | 18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot to learn English.                                           |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 23. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.                                              |                                    |                                                 |                   |
| 4. Motivations and expectations          | 20. If a student speaks English very well, s(he) will have many opportunities to use it.                     |                                    |                                                 | ✓                 |
|                                          | 25. If my students learn to speak English very well, it will help them to get a good job.                    |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.                                        |                                    |                                                 |                   |
| 5. Learning and communication strategies | 11. It is important to speak English with a very good accent.                                                |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 13. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.                                   |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 19. ...if you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.    |                                    | ✓                                               |                   |
|                                          | 26. My students feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.                                     |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 30. I think that more extroverted students can learn English better than the rest.                           |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | 31. My students....a. If they hear someone speaking English, they get actively involved in the conversation. |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | b. When they don't know a word in English, they try to guess its meaning.                                    |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | c. They participate actively in class (in English).                                                          |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | d. They show good motivation and enthusiasm in most of the activities.                                       |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | e. They focus on learning a lot of vocabulary.                                                               |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | f. They use social networks (ex. WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) in English.                   |                                    |                                                 |                   |
|                                          | g. They watch films and TV series in original version (either with or without subtitles).                    |                                    | ✓                                               |                   |



| Belief category           | Teachers'<br>Questionnaire item                                                                             | Variable 1<br>Professional<br>experience | Variable 2<br>Type of English<br>instruction<br>(GE/EMI) | Variable 3<br>Gender |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|                           | h. They read books in English as leisure.                                                                   |                                          |                                                          |                      |
|                           | i. They constantly translate from their mother tongue.                                                      |                                          |                                                          |                      |
|                           | j. They listen to music in English to understand the lyrics of the songs.                                   |                                          |                                                          |                      |
|                           | k. They speak in English among themselves out of the classroom.                                             |                                          |                                                          |                      |
|                           | l. They focus on learning a lot of grammar.                                                                 |                                          |                                                          |                      |
|                           | m. They interact in English with friends overseas, Erasmus students and tourists.                           |                                          |                                                          |                      |
|                           | n. They use many resources like online dictionaries, translators, websites and specific apps...to practice. |                                          |                                                          |                      |
| Part B<br>EMI instruction | o. They ask questions in English and frequently request help to clarify doubts about the language.          |                                          |                                                          |                      |
|                           | 29. In Galicia students who start their university degree have a good level of English (a B1 at least).     |                                          |                                                          |                      |
|                           | 32. I think they should include more subjects in English as part of the university curriculum/programs.     |                                          | ✓                                                        |                      |
| Socio-econ<br>level       | 28. In Galicia students with more financial resources can learn English better than the rest.               |                                          |                                                          |                      |

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **5.1 CONCLUSIONS**

This study has sought to identify and characterize the beliefs that USC students and teachers hold about learning EFL. To that end, the beliefs of both teachers and students from that institution were compared to those beliefs identified in previous research based at other national and international institutions. In addition, data was gathered on how a number of contextual factors, chiefly EMI programs and the socio-economic level of the learner, have an impact on these belief systems and, as a consequence, on the teaching and learning of English at the USC. The present chapter will present a synthesis of the beliefs of students and teachers at the USC, as well as their expressed assessments of how the contextual factors previously mentioned might be connected to their beliefs about EFL learning. The pedagogical implications of these findings will also be discussed. The chapter closes with some notes on the limitations of this study, plus suggestions for future research.

#### **5.1.1 The pattern of beliefs of USC students and teachers**

Based on the results as described and discussed in previous chapters, it can be concluded that USC students and teachers share a common and general belief system, one which can be characterized as being stable and contradictory at the same time; this is in line with previous studies at the national and international levels (Horwitz, 1987; N.-D. Yang, 1999; Altan, 2006; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Paula Kalaja et al., 2015), where very similar beliefs were found. Teachers and students are in agreement as to the level of difficulty of the English language and the idiosyncratic nature of the learning process involved as compared to the process of learning that they experienced in other academic courses. However, students underestimate the level of difficulty of the language and the time needed to attain English proficiency. They claim that this is mainly due to exposure to the language having been mostly through instruction, while the group of teachers explained it by referring to language distance. The same argument, language distance, was also used by respondents to justify the structural differences that they perceive between English and their mother tongue(s). They also believe that age and language immersion experiences are of paramount importance in attaining language proficiency in a short period of time. Although the subjects in this study consider that everyone has the potential to learn English, which they can develop largely through hard work and motivation, they also believe that certain innate abilities in some learners can have an effect in terms of the rate of language acquisition. This is also consistent with their answers relating to the widely perceived issue that the population in general has a low level of perceived self-efficacy to learn English, which reflects the underlying cultural character of beliefs in broader society. Most respondents do not see English as a source of linguistic friction within the Galician bilingual scenario, that is, the teaching and impact of English is not presently regarded as a threat to the Spanish or Galician languages. Moreover, the position of respondents with regard to learning EFL is very positive. Students are confident about their future competence in the language, and they see English as having a strong instrumental role and a relatively important integrative one. This

enthusiasm for learning English is also shown by their use of certain learning strategies, such as taking risks to practice the language and guessing words in a text from the context, plus a general agreement about the importance of motivation and participation in class for learning the language.

In terms of the main language skills, the USC students surveyed acknowledge that their individual practice of English is very limited in general, and they assess listening as being the easiest and most practiced skill, especially to improve vocabulary and pronunciation. However, speaking is regarded as the most challenging and the least practiced skill in general, probably due to the high level of self-consciousness they feel when using the language. These beliefs about speaking are consistent with the fact that they restrict practicing this skill almost exclusively to the classroom and certain interactions with native speakers. Besides, USC students do not consider that having a main focus on grammar or on translation is effective for learning, and they seem to favor the learning of vocabulary instead. The data also show that, regarding the main language skills other than speaking, the most frequent learning strategies that students use are listening to and watching original material in English, while their reading and writing most often involves academic texts and documents. In the same vein, their knowledge and use of digital resources and materials to practice English is restricted mainly to social media and sources of entertainment. In this case teachers also report that students lack awareness of how to use more specialized digital resources and learning strategies effectively to practice the language on their own. Students are, on the whole, demanding more opportunities to learn independently and to develop their autonomy in the learning of English.

Some findings also indicate that, in line with recently observed attitudes among users of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), USC subjects do not consider that a native-like accent is of primary importance in interacting in English. However, they still regard it as a reliable indicator of a high level of proficiency. In addition, the data suggest that the USC students in this study lack autonomy in creating and managing their own learning opportunities outside the classroom. The responses of students and teachers to questions regarding students' lack of individual oral practice, learner autonomy, and the difficulties with learning English in general, are also indicative of the effect that internal factors such as motivation and anxiety, willingness to communicate, perceived self-efficacy, and previous learning experience may have on students' approaches to EFL learning. In addition, certain external factors also seem to affect the beliefs of USC students and teachers, chiefly the use of traditional pedagogical approaches and practices in the educational system, levels of language competence and the training of teachers, the implementation of English programs, and the use of specifically designed materials both at the secondary and tertiary educational levels, as well as the socioeconomic status of the learner.

In a similar way, the belief systems of students and teachers at the USC show evidence of a degree of dysfunctionality, in that some of the beliefs they hold do not correspond to the actions taken when implementing and managing the teaching-learning process. For example, students show a high level of confidence about their future levels of English proficiency and acknowledge the importance of practice for learning; yet, they do not practice English enough out of the classroom or with other NNSs. This indicates the lack of belief appropriation, i.e., the need to internalize beliefs which lead to successful agentic actions towards attaining a final goal. There is also some mis-correspondence between certain beliefs held by students and teachers. Regarding error correction, for example, students expect to be corrected more than they seem to be, or at least more than they are aware of, when this is compared to teachers' responses to questions about this issue. In terms of learning strategies, the teachers involved in

this study manifest a lack of awareness of many of the strategies that students use to practice English individually outside the classroom.

Furthermore, through the variables used in this study, some differences were detected regarding the systems of beliefs of participants. In general, certain differences were identified according to the subjects on which students were enrolled or the areas in which teachers were giving instruction. Of special interest here are the beliefs of student teachers, whose responses differ markedly in this respect from those of the other students. For example, they show the lowest level of perceived self-efficacy, and they seem to find learning English more difficult than do all the other groups of participating students. With regard to the teacher variables, the most important belief differences identified were based on the type of English instruction. Owing to the nature and demands of their professional practice, EMI teachers tend to share views and pedagogical approaches, and these contrast with those of GE teachers. As regards the variable of previous linguistic experience, those with a broader language background seem to maintain certain beliefs which differ from those of learners with more limited linguistic experience. In this case, the students with Study Abroad (SA) experience place greater value on the cultural dimension of English learning and feel more self-confident about their language skills. Finally, some differences across gender groups were identified. For instance, female students show a better overall predisposition for oral communication than male students, despite a consistent, general belief that gender has no relevance in EFL learning.

### 5.1.2 The interaction of contextual factors

As part of the contextual character of beliefs, two main factors pertaining to the teaching-learning context at the USC were briefly explored through this study: the implementation of EMI programs, and the impact that the socio-economic level of learners has on their developing English proficiency. Turning first to the implementation of EMI courses in many universities and colleges at the national and international level, students and teachers have expressed positive attitudes towards this type of instruction; this is reflected in the opinions of the USC subjects in the present study, especially in the Faculty of Chemistry. However, several issues have emerged as a result of the implementation of this practice worldwide, many of which were also evidenced by the data gathered at the USC. First, it is uncertain to what extent the dichotomy of *content vs. language learning* through EMI is effective for USC students, in that they report having difficulties in understanding the course content, while also reporting that such instruction does not significantly enhance their learning of English. Second, both students and teachers claim that students receive a very low level of preparation prior to enrolling in EMI courses, which poses a challenge for successful teaching and learning at the USC. Third, the subjects in this study also report there is insufficient language and pedagogical training to deliver EMI programs, including issues such as appropriate methodologies and assessment policies that are consistent across different academic areas. Fourth, the distribution and placement of these courses within curricular programs across different faculties and degrees also needs re-assessment, and possibly general reorganization. Last, respondents also claim that there is a need for more administrative and financial support on the part of other stakeholders at the USC, and a stronger commitment to the implementation process of EMI courses. Notwithstanding the fact that EMI programs are in general well-received by USC students and teachers, it is also the case that, as in any other type of learning environment, students' individual differences, and in particular their beliefs about language learning, also play an important part in this. As such, this further underlines the need to address a variety of issues relating to the implementation of EMI courses at the USC.

Turning to the socio-economic level of the students, the results of this study indicate that although differences here pose some challenges in terms of access to alternative learning opportunities that may sometimes generate unequal levels of English proficiency, different learning alternatives are available which are not fully taken advantage of at the USC. These mainly include the effective use of technological resources and digital tools to complement classroom learning and to enhance students' learner autonomy, as well as the use of valid learning and self-motivating strategies.

We cannot confirm in this study whether the variables under investigation were themselves instrumental in shaping the beliefs of participants, or whether, on the contrary, their beliefs were reflected in the performance of these variables. First, their contradictory character as seen in the dysfunctional beliefs identified in the data can be noted. In addition, of key importance is belief appropriation or internalization, which is core to the organization and consistency of the student's individual process of learning English, and which also affects their level of motivation and personal concept of investment. This study has also illustrated how the contextual conditions where learning occurs affect the formation of students' and teachers' beliefs and their agentic actions in managing their learning. Thus far, the results here confirm that the culture of learning EFL at the USC mirrors most of the features of belief profiles identified in previous research around the world. It is a pattern of beliefs typical of an EFL context whose most salient features are a positive attitude towards EFL learning that is founded on a strong instrumentalist use of the language. The USC culture of learning also shows a pattern of beliefs affected by different issues that emerge from flawed processes of implementation of educational programs.

On the whole, we can claim that the particular significance of this study lies in the usefulness of the concept of beliefs in understanding different aspects of the EFL learning-teaching process. The findings presented provide valuable insights for guiding and informing the different approaches and strategies used by participants at the USC to manage the process of English learning. These results highlight an overall need to make students and teachers aware of their belief systems. As students gain awareness of their beliefs, they may reassess them in light of different ideas, events or circumstances, and this may lead them to change and readjust such beliefs to take a more effective account of the process of EFL learning. This in turn may result in stronger agentic actions and an enhanced predisposition to the learning process itself. Likewise, the awareness of beliefs on the part of teachers may allow them to identify aspects of their practice within their professional identity that they might usefully readjust, update, or improve. The identification and comparison of the belief systems of students and teachers, then, opens up new opportunities not only for them to reflect on their own beliefs but also to find ways to harmonize their beliefs with those of others. Such a balance may result in a more stable, fluid learning process. As illustrated in this investigation, the contextual character of beliefs also enables both teachers and learners to uncover and express flaws within different educational processes, thus paving the way for the use of more differentiated and effective learning strategies and pedagogies, not only across the different academic areas and degrees but also in different educational levels and subjects. As regards the socio-cultural dimension, studies on beliefs are also a useful means of exploring how individuals are positioned with regard to local, regional and national issues, such as the socio-linguistic scenario, government policies, and the influence of socio-economic conditions on language learning. In the same vein, some beliefs reported in this study may also be applicable to subjects in other Galician and Spanish institutions due to their strong cultural character. That said, the results presented here may have a variety of pedagogical implications for the teaching-learning process at the USC, which are described in what follows.

## 5.2 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

As with the majority of educational studies, the findings of this empirical research have the potential to impact on the teaching-learning process. From a pedagogical perspective, the present results allow us to offer a number of suggestions and proposals. Various studies on beliefs about language learning (Wenden, 1991; Cotteral, 1995; Horwitz, 1999; Peacock, 1999; Barcelos, 2003; Altan, 2006; Aragão, 2011; Yang & Kim, 2011) have demonstrated the need for teachers to intervene towards making students aware of their own beliefs as a fundamental element in better tailoring their learning to their needs and in building their autonomy as regards learning skills. It is recommended that this process should comprise an open debate about beliefs in order to help students gain awareness about what Riley called their “subjective reality” or “their truth...because it is their beliefs more than anybody else’s that will influence their learning” (Riley, 2003 p. 8).

As noted above, the teachers in this study deliver instruction based on their own belief systems, and these beliefs are not necessarily aligned with those of their students. Such a mismatch has a negative effect on the learning process and may even reinforce erroneous beliefs on the part of students. Therefore, it seems crucial for USC teachers, first, to identify their own beliefs about EFL learning and then to explore those of their students and to compare them with their own. When identifying and openly discussing beliefs, not only could the teachers draw a more complete picture of the attitudes and learning strategies of their students, both in and beyond the classroom, but they could also align their beliefs more consistently with those of the students. This would allow them to direct their practice more effectively in terms of students’ interests and needs, towards a more consistent teaching-learning process. While holding conversations with the participants in this study, we have noted that the mere inclusion of interview questions about beliefs had an awareness-raising effect on some interviewees, this expressed in their reactions and comments when reflecting on these issues for the first time. So, the identification of the importance of beliefs would also offer an opportunity to expose students to the metacognitive component of learning, as well as to current theories and studies on important elements involved in the learning process, such as the influence of age, the effectiveness of language immersion experiences, and the implications of the growth of ILF. This would lead to the USC teaching-learning process entailing a stronger, more contemporary socio-linguistic approach, one which would effectively approximate more to the reality of learners.

Complementary to the process of raising awareness of beliefs should be the process of making explicit the purpose of methodologies and strategies used in the classroom, which in turn would foster the development of metacognition and learning, for instance, in identifying error correction strategies. Apart from granting students access to a wide range of high-quality original material in English and giving them further opportunities to use the language communicatively, it is also very important to make them aware of the positive evidence here; that is, what is accurate, possible and acceptable in the foreign language, as well as the negative evidence, i.e., what is incorrect and unacceptable in the TL (Pawlak, 2014, p. 39). Thus, the feedback given to students regarding their own production in English should be clear enough to provide positive reinforcement and to make them aware that their errors are being corrected. Although an awareness of beliefs does not necessarily guarantee that students and teachers will change or improve their beliefs, and indeed this should not be its main purpose, it would equip them with additional tools to approach the learning process. This may in turn might have a positive effect on factors such as teachers’ pedagogical practice and students’ choices of strategy and their motivation.



In this study, speaking in English has also been identified as the most challenging and the least practiced skill by USC students. These students limit conversation practice to the occasional opportunities of interaction with native speakers and to the confines of the classroom, where it is frequency reduced in quality by factors such as the type of activities and materials, the number of students in the class, and certain affective issues. Apart from the teacher, one of the core types of language-promoting support is peer assistance, where “in addition to helping their peers with language, students also help their peers by providing them with information, responding to their ideas, and giving them needed encouragement” (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p. 35). Therefore, not only might teachers make students aware of the importance of peer work for conversation practice beyond the classroom, but they could also create opportunities and train students in the use of feedback strategies to encourage this kind of practice, in line with recent trends in language teaching and learning such as cooperative learning (López Rúa, 2015; Ramos Ordoñez & Pavón Vázquez, 2015).

A recurrent issue arising from the data in this study, as noted above, was students’ lack of autonomous learning skills, this referred to by teachers as the limited capacity of students to take responsibility for the use of resources to enhance their learning. Various authors (Raya et al., 2007; Lamb & Reinders, 2008b, 2008a; Raya & Vieira, 2021) have highlighted the importance of nurturing this capacity in students. Therefore, it is reasonable that USC teachers should guide students in the use of adequate strategies and resources here, towards expanding their learning beyond the classroom context. A potential alternative might be to create a digital self-access center based on a framework which allows students to choose the most convenient learning strategies and resources from those which are freely available online to practice the language on their own and to reflect on this experience. This proposal, which is encompassed in a project currently in progress by the author of the present study, might also constitute a scheme able to partially compensate for the lack of direct immersion opportunities available to students, especially for more socially-disadvantaged learners, in that it allows for work with authentic materials in English and direct online contact with native speakers.

Closely related to the lack of autonomous learning skills is the lack of motivation, as expressed by most subjects in this study. Based on the L2 motivational Self-System (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009b), USC students show how they benefit from the first two components, i.e. the *ideal L2 self* and the *ought-to L2 self*; however, the *L2 learning experience* they acquire seems to have had a negative impact on the motivational system of some of these students. Hence, it is necessary to enhance this EFL learning experience at the pre-university levels, both for courses in general English and for CLIL courses in particular. A thorough revision of the implementation of these programs and better pedagogical and language training for staff delivering them is essential. Moreover, self-motivating strategies should also be fostered and modeled by teachers at the USC to guarantee a smoother transition of learners through each of the stages of motivation towards a more profitable learning experience. Not only is it vital to enhance the training of staff enrolled in English programs at the pre-university levels but also of student teachers and educators currently employed in Higher Education (HE). Therefore, the English programs at the Faculty of Educational Sciences would benefit from detailed revision and assessment to upgrade the quantity and quality of training in English offered to student teachers. In addition, current staff teaching at the USC could also benefit from further professional development on the use of technological resources and digital tools for both delivering lessons and creating materials, as well as to guide students in taking advantage of learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Similarly, EMI teachers should be offered more opportunities for professional development in terms of effective language pedagogy and individual language training to deliver instruction in English. This training of EMI teachers

should be one of the actions within a thorough monitoring process of EMI programs at the USC, one which would allow for the assessment of their effectiveness and the resolution of the various issues of implementation previously mentioned, such as the effectiveness of content and language learning, consistent teaching methodologies and assessment, teacher training, and student skill development in academic English. At present, there are a number of initiatives involving this monitoring process in other Spanish universities and colleges, such as the universities of Cantabria, Córdoba, Canarias, Oviedo and the UAM, which not only include methodological alternatives based on empirical studies but also the use of digital tools to support EMI teachers in their practice. These initiatives could be used as models or starting points to address issues of EMI implementation at the USC.

### 5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

By drawing on the beliefs of USC students and teachers about EFL learning, this study has presented a closer inspection of the opinions and approaches of these participants towards the learning of this foreign language within the context of internationalization at the USC. Nonetheless, the findings here must be interpreted with caution, and some limitations should be borne in mind, the most significant of which are as follows. First, as described in section 3.2.2. regarding the process of the identification of the population sample to be included in the study, the statistics and information accessed through the public channels of the USC were not updated at the time of data collection. In the description of the programs and other links regarding academic information available through the USC website, the language of instruction of some subjects was not clearly specified, and in other cases the information was outdated, as confirmed through direct contact with the teacher in charge of delivering the program. Moreover, contact details of instructors as well as academic and administrative responsibilities were outdated or simply unavailable.

Second, the fact that participation in this investigation was voluntary and that the researcher is not a teacher at the USC, recruiting participants was a rather complex and time-consuming process, despite the extensive support and positive predisposition of the USC community. These circumstances also made it difficult to draw a sample of interviewees exclusively from the group of subjects who had answered the questionnaire during the first part of the project, which may have affected to some degree the representativeness of the population sample. In addition, the sample size of the participants in this study, particularly that of the teachers, could possibly have affected the results, in as much as more belief differences based on the variables studied or different arguments and opinions might have been identified with a larger group of respondents.

Although the methodology adopted here is indeed a valid and acceptable one in the field of applied linguistics, collecting data through the use of questionnaires and interviews posed some challenges. As noted by some psychologists, the use of questionnaires and scales is about retrieving attitude judgements, i.e. “temporary constructions ...[that] may rest on long-standing evaluations...about a topic, but...must often be created in response to a question, sometimes quite quickly” (Tourangeau et al., 2000, p. 61). Such immediacy, as well as the orientation of the scale when completing the questionnaire, be it to the right or left (Fowler, 1995 p. 75) or vertically in our case, may have biased or trivialized the responses of the participants about the beliefs they hold. Additionally, some data retrieved through the questionnaire might not have been completely accurate. For example, in the demographic variable of Language Learning Experience, when students were asked about the number of extra languages they knew, they might have had different ideas about what knowing a language involved or they might have

become confused and included their mother tongue. Moreover, as regards the interviews, some responses were not as involved as expected. Despite the use of prompts, additional comments and what the researcher felt was a good rapport to make interviewees feel at ease, some students were rather shy and brief in their responses, this perhaps owing to cultural differences in that the researcher is not Galician. This factor, coupled with the relatively low number of interviews, might also have had a negative impact on the data collected. Finally, the fact that the beliefs of individuals are dynamic, this in light of the influence of various factors, may have affected the extrapolation of the results obtained to other areas.

In this study the identification of general beliefs about EFL learning at the USC in fact triggers more questions than answers and opens up a variety of avenues for future research. First, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate different aspects of the beliefs of students and teachers at the USC: how these beliefs change over time, the effects of a guided discussion to raise awareness about these beliefs, and the more specific links here to learning strategies and language proficiency. Issues surrounding variations in beliefs held by bilingual and multilingual individuals is also another possible line of related research. All these areas could be explored by teachers using different tools within and beyond a normative approach, such as case studies, focus groups, diaries, class observations, amongst others.

In addition to beliefs, EFL students and teachers at the USC might also benefit from an exploration of the affective factors that impact the learning-teaching process. As shown in many studies, affective factors such as anxiety are an important part of the learning process; for example, “shyness, embarrassment and self-esteem are emotions that interact with core beliefs and this relationship plays a fundamental role in the way students behave in their learning environment” (Aragão, 2011, p. 311). USC teachers are aware of the impact that these affective factors have on the performance of their students; however, gaining further knowledge about the ways students perceive such factors and the ways that they affect their learning may offer alternatives, including the adaptation of instruction and the management of classroom dynamics more satisfactorily. Closely linked to affective factors is a possible third line of research, that of looking more closely at motivation, in that “to learn a second language is influenced by group related and context related attitudes, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation, respectively” (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991, p. 58). An in-depth study to identify those motivational factors which are beyond the contextual elements already discussed in this project but are naturally related to the EFL learning process of USC students, and as such would be an interesting area to investigate within the Galician context.

In the same vein, further investigation about the level of learning autonomy of USC students as well as the strategies used by teachers to foster it could also enable changes in many of the practical dimensions of the learning process. “The control over learning and all the decision-making lie with the learner; the advisor supports and facilitates this process and has a crucial role to play in promoting learner autonomy” (Mynard, 2021, p. 46).

In addition to the potential lines of research identified above, the present study could also be extended to other Galician universities in order to compare the results, exchange ideas, and seek solutions to issues relating to the process of EFL learning from a more cohesive perspective within the community. Likewise, more studies on beliefs conducted in other educational centers and institutions around Spain would be useful towards enriching our knowledge of individual differences and beliefs held in learning English as a foreign language. It is our hope that the findings presented and discussed in this study will be useful in some way to students, teachers, and other stakeholders at the USC to enhance the EFL learning process at this institution.

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## Resumo en galego

Tomando como punto de partida a súa ampla experiencia como profesora de inglés e o seu interese nos procesos de ensino e adquisición de linguas,<sup>7</sup> e, en particular, do inglés, esta investigadora cursou o Programa de Mestrado Interuniversitario en Estudos Ingleses Avanzados e as súas Aplicacións (IMAES en inglés) na Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (USC). Como parte do seu traballo de fin de mestrado realizou observacións de clases e mantivo conversacións con estudantes e profesores sobre o modo en que se aproximaban ao proceso de ensino-aprendizaxe do inglés.<sup>8</sup> Esta experiencia motivou a realización dun estudo máis profundo e de maior envergadura, co obxectivo de entender as razóns que subxacen baixo as similitudes e diferenzas entre alumnado e profesorado a nivel individual na súa forma de xestionar o proceso de ensino-aprendizaxe deste idioma. Ao ser unha temática pouco explorada no nivel de ensino superior en Galicia, e insuficientemente tratada no ámbito xeográfico español, parecía oportuno indagar acerca do sistema de crenzas dos estudantes e profesores da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (USC) sobre a aprendizaxe do inglés como lingua estranxeira (ILE) e comparar este sistema cos resultados de estudos similares, previamente realizados en España e noutros países. É este, pois, o obxectivo principal da tese de doutoramento que aquí se presenta.

A partir dos anos 80, a investigación sobre a aprendizaxe de linguas dirixiu a súa atención, ata ese momento posta nas similitudes entre os aprendices, cara ás diferenzas individuais e o seu impacto no ritmo de adquisición do idioma. Unha das variables ou factores que dá lugar a importantes diferenzas individuais na aprendizaxe de idiomas é a das crenzas sobre a devandita aprendizaxe, polo que a súa importancia neste campo é incuestionable (Ellis, 1994).

Segundo a psicoloxía, as crenzas consisten nun sistema de significados que creamos sobre o mundo que nos arrodea (Dweck, 2000), polo que cada persoa actúa de forma diferente baixo situacións ou circunstancias similares. Expresado de maneira simple, as crenzas enténdense

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<sup>7</sup> Neste resumo utilízanse indistintamente os termos *adquisición* e *aprendizaxe* para referirse aos procesos de construción de competencia lingüística dun falante, <<https://www.dicenlen.eu/>>, última consulta 20/01/2023, 10.07 am.

<sup>8</sup> Class interactions in a multicultural learning environment (2017).

como criterios ou opinións acerca de algo, e xorden e desenvólvense xeralmente a partir da experiencia persoal dun individuo e as súas interaccións co medio. Isto tamén explica que moitas das crenzas estean profundamente arraigadas no seu comportamento.

As crenzas sobre a aprendizaxe dun idioma constitúen un elemento fundamental na xestión deste, en tanto que axudan a entender o comportamento dos individuos en todo o relacionado coa súa actitude cara ao idioma e o seu proceso de adquisición, a saber: as decisións que toman, o seu nivel de motivación, as estratexias de aprendizaxe que elixen e usan tanto na aula como fóra dela, o seu nivel de autonomía para aprender, por mencionar só algúns exemplos (Skehan, 1989, Barcelos & Kalaja, 2006). Así, por exemplo, se unha persoa considera que a aprendizaxe dun idioma se basea fundamentalmente en traducir desde e/ou cara á súa lingua materna, usará esta estratexia frecuentemente, con independencia de se lle resulta útil ou non para aprender. De igual modo, a identificación destas crenzas permite ao profesorado comprender mellor as ferramentas que usan os seus alumnos para aprender o idioma e suxerir-lles mellores e máis diversas técnicas e estratexias. Ademais, é importante que o profesorado sexa consciente das súas propias crenzas e observe a súa relación coas dos estudantes, como vía para previr e anticipar un axeitado tratamento de posibles contradicións e desacordos na clase. Se un docente, por exemplo, orienta na clase a lectura en voz alta dun texto no idioma de destino como estratexia para practicar a pronuncia, pero o alumno descoñece a utilidade desta actividade e non cre que sexa beneficiosa para aprender, isto pode levalo ao desánimo, a perder a súa posible motivación e mesmo a expresar o seu rexeitamento, o que podería afectar a calidade da actividade e da clase.

Con todo, o nivel de complexidade desta variable representa un desafío para os investigadores pois ata a data non se puido chegar a un consenso sobre un único termo ou denominación baixo a cal acordar unha definición sólida e convincente da mesma. Así pois, as crenzas téñense designado con diversos termos como, por exemplo, *preconceptos* ou *nocións* (Horwitz, 1985, 1988), *crenzas culturais* (Gardner, 1985), *cultura de aprendizaxe* (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996), *conceptos de aprendizaxe* (Benson & Lor, 1999), *filtros da realidade* (Arnold, 2000), entre moitos outros. Neste traballo o concepto de crenzas está baseado nunha combinación da terminoloxía utilizada por Horwitz (1985, 1987) e por Benson & Lor (1999), en cuxa proposta as crenzas son entendidas como nocións ou conceptos de aprendizaxe sobre o idioma inglés e o proceso de aprendizaxe, adquiridos e modelados a través da experiencia previa, tanto académica como social, do estudante.

Ata a data, os investigadores interesados nesta cuestión puxeron ao descuberto varios aspectos importantes acerca das crenzas de estudantes e profesores sobre os procesos de aprendizaxe de linguas, o que demostra o alto grao de complexidade desta variable. Un dos achados de interese foi o carácter á vez estable e cambiante das crenzas, pois a pesar de que se poden identificar patróns comúns en todos ou a maioría dos individuos dun grupo, en grupos máis reducidos ou a nivel individual polo menos algunhas destas poden mutar tanto a curto como a longo prazo durante o proceso de aprendizaxe. Igualmente significativa resulta a demostración de que as crenzas teñen un carácter contextual, xa que as circunstancias da contorna de aprendizaxe tales como actividades, sucesos ou “significant others” [persoas importantes] (Arnold, 2000) como profesores e amigos, teñen un gran efecto sobre elas. Varios estudos tamén demostraron que as accións e actitudes dos estudantes e profesores non necesariamente reflicten as súas crenzas sobre o proceso de aprendizaxe. Un estudante pode crer que a lectura é importante para o desenvolvemento das destrezas escritas, pero non ler máis do que o profesor lle esixe na clase. Por iso considérase que as crenzas teñen unha función de ferramenta mediadora dentro da aprendizaxe de idiomas só en tanto os aprendices ou os profesores teñan internalizado ou executado accións concretas baseadas nesas crenzas. Por outra banda, a estreita relación das crenzas co compoñente afectivo da aprendizaxe tamén quedou confirmada en varias investigacións. Os estudantes que mostran maiores niveis de autoeficacia e que se senten motivados, por exemplo, responden con maior efectividade ao proceso de aprendizaxe e xeralmente poden alcanzar un maior grao de competencia lingüística nun período de tempo máis curto que os demais. Dito isto, a pesar de que as crenzas son unha variable que entraña dificultade na súa definición e estudo, a súa importancia para entender a forma en que os estudantes e profesores executan o proceso de ensino-aprendizaxe supera o seu grao de complexidade.

Os estudos realizados ata o momento acerca das crenzas sobre a adquisición de idiomas agrúpanse en tres enfoques de investigación, en función do enfoque metodolóxico adoptado (Barcelos, 2000). En primeiro lugar, o *enfoque normativo* agrupa as investigacións nas que se utilizan cuestionarios. O modelo BALLI (*Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* – Inventario das crenzas sobre a aprendizaxe de linguas), deseñado por Elaine Horwitz (Universidade de Texas en Austin, Estados Unidos) en 1985, constitúe unha icona do enfoque normativo. A súa creadora deseñou máis tarde dúas versións deste cuestionario (1987, 1988), a segunda dirixida a estudantes de linguas estranxeiras, que é precisamente a que se utilizou nesta

investigación. O segundo enfoque é o *metacognitivo* (Wenden, 1986, 1991, 1999); nel úsanse principalmente entrevistas e autoavaliacións como ferramentas co fin de obter información. E o terceiro enfoque, o *contextual* (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2011), combina unha ampla variedade de ferramentas, tales como entrevistas informais, estudos de caso, análise de contido, vídeos, conversacións en liña, etc.

O presente estudo reúne características destes tres enfoques metodolóxicos. Toma como ferramenta inicial o modelo BALLI (Horwitz, 1988). O cuestionario orixinal agrupa 34 enunciados en cinco categorías de crenzas diferentes, na seguinte orde: *o nivel de dificultade dos idiomas, a aptitude para a aprendizaxe de idiomas, a natureza da aprendizaxe de idiomas, as estratexias de aprendizaxe e comunicación, e a motivación e expectativas na aprendizaxe de idiomas*. Para complementar os datos do cuestionario, tamén se utilizou unha entrevista semiestruturada que permitiu afondar nas nocións e puntos de vista dos participantes acerca da aprendizaxe do inglés como lingua estranxeira (ILE). Por outra banda, a sondaxe dos aspectos relacionados co contexto de aprendizaxe que se levou a cabo na segunda parte deste proxecto tamén sitúa este traballo dentro do enfoque contextual. Os datos desta investigación recolléronse durante os anos 2018 e 2019 nos diferentes centros e facultades da USC onde se ofertaban materias e programas en inglés nese momento. Un total de 614 estudantes e 35 profesores formaron parte da mostra.

O estudo consta de dúas partes fundamentais. A primeira e máis extensa explora todos os aspectos teóricos concernentes ás crenzas dos alumnos e profesores. A segunda parte inclúe unha breve investigación acerca de dous elementos pertinentes ao contexto de aprendizaxe: a implementación dos programas en inglés en graos de estudos non lingüísticos, e a conexión entre o nivel socioeconómico dos estudantes e o seu nivel de competencia lingüística. Estes dous aspectos incluíronse sobre o traballo orixinal a raíz da súa mención reiterada en conversacións informais desta investigadora con algúns estudantes e profesores da USC durante a primeira fase do proxecto.

A tese estrutúrase en cinco capítulos que se resumen a continuación. O primeiro capítulo presenta o contexto xeral do estudo e o resto corresponde ás dúas partes mencionadas anteriormente. Debido á importancia que ten a situación lingüística da área xeográfica onde se enmarca a presente investigación, dado que nos atopamos nunha comunidade bilingüe, o capítulo 1 recolle tres puntos principais referidos ao panorama lingüístico xurdido como resultado das políticas adoptadas a nivel rexional pola Unión Europea, a nivel nacional polo

gobierno español e a nivel autonómico pola Xunta de Galicia. O terceiro punto deste capítulo refírese en concreto á coexistencia das linguas oficiais en Galicia e a algunhas cuestións relacionadas coa transición dunha contorna académica bilingüe a unha contorna plurilingüe como resultado da introdución do estudo obrigatorio de idiomas estranxeiros no currículo. Seguidamente descríbense brevemente as accións principais de cada unha das tres universidades galegas na implementación das políticas lingüísticas adoptadas como parte do proceso de internacionalización da universidade a nivel comunitario, con especial énfase na Universidade de Santiago de Compostela.

No capítulo 2 preséntase unha discusión dos conceptos e teorías fundamentais que serven de marco teórico a esta investigación. En congruencia coa estrutura xeral do estudo, este capítulo desenvólvese en dúas partes. A primeira recolle as bases teóricas pertinentes ás crenzas dos estudantes e contén cinco epígrafes fundamentais. O primeiro sitúa o concepto de crenzas dentro do ámbito da adquisición de linguas e, máis concretamente, dentro dos procesos de aprendizaxe do inglés como lingua estranxeira (ILE). No segundo punto preséntanse as definicións de crenzas fundamentais establecidas polos investigadores deste tema, algunhas das cales se mencionaron anteriormente neste resumo. O terceiro epígrafe destaca a importancia das crenzas tanto dos estudantes como dos profesores nos procesos de ensino-aprendizaxe de idiomas e a continuación o cuarto epígrafe céntrase sobre os compoñentes do concepto de crenza que foron desvelados nos diferentes estudos. O último epígrafe desta primeira parte aborda unha serie de variables ou conceptos do campo da adquisición de segundas linguas que complementan o concepto de crenzas e que están estreitamente relacionados con el. Trátanse aí as bases teóricas de conceptos como *aptitude*, *idade*, *motivación*, *corrección de erros* e *uso de medios tecnolóxicos*, por mencionar algúns. A segunda parte deste capítulo recolle os estudos realizados ao redor dos dous aspectos contextuais que se inclúen nesta investigación, a saber, a implementación dos programas con instrución en inglés no ensino universitario e o impacto do nivel socioeconómico dos estudantes no desenvolvemento do seu nivel de competencia lingüística na aprendizaxe dun idioma estranxeiro.

A continuación, no capítulo 3, establécense os dous obxectivos principais do estudo e descríbense os aspectos relacionados co deseño e a metodoloxía. O primeiro obxectivo desenvólvese en tres preguntas de investigación mentres que o segundo fórmulase en dúas preguntas. Como se mencionou anteriormente, a primeira finalidade deste proxecto consiste na descrición diferenciada dos sistemas de crenzas sobre a aprendizaxe de ILE dos estudantes e os

profesores da USC. Ademais de identificalas, compáranse as crenzas dos estudantes coas dos profesores, e tamén se contrastan cos resultados descritos en estudos similares en España e noutros países. O segundo obxectivo deste proxecto consiste en identificar algúns aspectos contextuais da aprendizaxe do inglés que son relevantes para os participantes afondando nas súas opinións e puntos de vista acerca destas cuestións.

En canto ao deseño da investigación, como xa se mencionou, utilizáronse cuestionarios e entrevistas como instrumentos para a recollida de datos. Os cuestionarios baséanse no modelo BALLI de Horwitz (1988) e na adaptación do cuestionario a este modelo realizáronse varios cambios. Por exemplo, o número de ítems do cuestionario dos estudantes ampliouse de 34 a 39 e para as respostas utilizouse unha escala de Likert de seis niveis co fin de evitar un nivel intermedio que puidese favorecer unha opinión totalmente imparcial coa consabida dificultade á hora da súa interpretación. Ofrecéronse versións dos cuestionarios en liña nos tres idiomas (inglés, español e galego) e nalgúns ocasións distribuíronse copias impresas. Por outra banda, nos protocolos de entrevista incluíronse preguntas abertas en todos os casos, con estímulos para que os entrevistados puidesen elaborar as súas opinións e argumentos. A entrevista dos estudantes constaba de 16 preguntas e a dos profesores, de 12, e en ámbolos dous casos combináronse as modalidades in situ ou presencial e en liña. Ademais, para analizar a información recompilada realizáronse probas estatísticas co programa SPSS. Nestas probas tomáronse en conta tres variables demográficas dos estudantes: o efecto da área académica xeral (ramas) e específica (graos) dos enquisados, a experiencia na aprendizaxe de linguas, que incluía tres niveis: as segundas linguas que os alumnos sabían ademais do/s seu/s idioma/s materno/s, os idiomas que aprenderan mediante instrución formal en centros educativos, e a súa experiencia de inmersión lingüística noutros países. Por último, tomouse o xénero como terceira variable demográfica. No caso dos profesores, as tres variables que se consideraron para analizar os datos foron: o tipo de instrución en inglés que impartían (xeral ou con fins específicos), os anos de experiencia na súa profesión e o xénero. No caso das entrevistas usouse o software NVivo para examinar as respostas dos 78 participantes entrevistados no estudo.

Máis adiante, no capítulo 4, preséntanse e discútnense os resultados de ambas as partes do estudo. Na primeira preséntanse os datos recollidos por categoría de crenzas tanto do cuestionario como das entrevistas. Baixo cada categoría inclúense os datos descritivos do patrón xeral de crenzas, primeiro dos estudantes e logo dos profesores, seguidos das diferenzas estatísticas significativas. A continuación, móstranse os datos das entrevistas de ambos os



grupos, seguidos dunha discusión xeral dos resultados e un breve resumo para a categoría en cuestión. A información da segunda parte ao redor dos aspectos contextuais mencionados máis arriba preséntase seguindo unha estrutura similar á da primeira parte.

De forma sucinta, os resultados principais sobre as crenzas indicannos que na categoría 1 os estudantes e os profesores comparten a idea de que a aprendizaxe do ILE presenta un grao medio de dificultade. Con todo, os profesores xustifican a súa opinión baseándose no concepto de distancia lingüística, é dicir, o grao de intelixibilidade mutua entre o inglés, o español e o galego, mentres que os estudantes argumentan que o alto grao de familiaridade coa aprendizaxe do inglés desde idades temperás é o que lles permite considerar a súa dificultade como media ou baixa. Os datos mostran o efecto que ten a área de estudos e a experiencia de inmersión lingüística nas crenzas dos estudantes. Como era de esperar, os alumnos que cursan estudos na área académica de humanidades e ciencias sociais, e aqueles que realizaron estadias lingüísticas no estranxeiro opinan que o inglés é unha lingua fácil e mostran un maior nivel de confianza nas súas competencias para usar este idioma. Porén, os estudantes con menos experiencia e aqueles de certas áreas académicas, como, por exemplo, os de Ciencias da Educación, opinan que o inglés é un idioma difícil e son escépticos no que se refire ao seu nivel de competencia lingüística.

No caso da segunda categoría de crenzas ao redor da aptitude para a aprendizaxe de ILE, a maioría dos estudantes e profesores estiman que existen algunhas propiedades ou atributos innatos nas persoas que lles permiten aprender un idioma mellor, aínda que tamén recoñecen que o esforzo, a motivación e o traballo constante son factores determinantes para aprender. A pesar de asegurar que a destreza de expresión oral en inglés é a máis difícil, os participantes recoñeceron que non buscan estratexias alternativas para practicar esta habilidade frecuentemente, o que pode estar relacionado cun nivel baixo de autonomía da aprendizaxe. Por outra banda, os datos mostran un impacto negativo dos enfoques tradicionais de ensino na educación preuniversitaria sobre o nivel de motivación dos estudantes cara á aprendizaxe de inglés no ámbito universitario.

Na terceira categoría sobre a natureza da aprendizaxe de inglés, os estudantes e a maioría dos profesores coinciden en que a mellor forma de aprender inglés é nun país de fala inglesa, aínda que os profesores chaman a atención sobre a necesidade de que o alumnado aproveite ao máximo as oportunidades de práctica que ofrecen as contornas locais. En canto a outras formas de aprendizaxe, o alumnado opina que as actividades de comprensión oral son a mellor forma

de aprender inglés na casa e é a que máis practican individualmente, en especial para mellorar a pronuncia e o vocabulario. Así mesmo, aínda que en xeral rexeitan o uso da tradución directa desde ou cara á/s lingua/s materna/s para aprender, os estudantes nos graos de enxeñería parecen usar a tradución con máis frecuencia que o resto do alumnado. Os datos para esta categoría tamén mostran a indecisión do alumnado en canto á importancia que ten o coñecemento da cultura meta na aprendizaxe dunha lingua, excepto no caso daqueles con experiencia de inmersión lingüística no estranxeiro.

Dentro da cuarta categoría de crenzas, que versa sobre as motivacións e expectativas na aprendizaxe de ILE, detectouse que os participantes neste estudo confiren ao idioma un alto grao de utilidade práctica, aínda que tamén, en menor medida, un uso integrador. Noutras palabras, a súa motivación principal para estudar inglés enfócase na obtención de mellores oportunidades no mercado laboral, en poderse comunicarse para viaxar, para estudar, facer investigacións e para socializar con outros falantes desta lingua, en lugar de estudalo para coñecer a lingua en si e a súa cultura. Estas motivacións responden ao alto valor utilitario que adquiriu o ILE na educación superior a nivel internacional.

Os datos da quinta categoría sobre as estratexias de aprendizaxe e comunicación mostran que, aínda que os participantes consideran o acento nativo na lingua meta como un indicador de alta competencia lingüística, non pensan que sexa indispensable para a comunicación oral en inglés. Ademais, os estudantes, en xeral, conceden maior relevancia á corrección de erros nas etapas iniciais da aprendizaxe do idioma que o profesorado. Nesta categoría tamén se detectou que os profesores non son conscientes dalgunhas das estratexias que os alumnos utilizan para aprender e practicar o idioma, e que os estudantes non explotan ao máximo os recursos tecnolóxicos que teñen ao seu alcance para practicar inglés.

En relación á segunda parte do estudo, no primeiro punto, que se centra no ensino de contidos en inglés, detectouse unha predisposición xeral positiva cara a estes programas, aínda que se identificaron unha serie de dificultades na súa implementación, a saber: a distribución e ritmo dentro do currículo, a coherencia que debe reinar entre a práctica pedagóxica e os sistemas de avaliación, o nivel previo de competencia lingüística do alumnado, e o apoio que reciben todas as partes implicadas no proceso. Os datos tamén mostran que estas dificultades inciden nas crenzas e na maneira en que os estudantes e o profesorado abordan os procesos de ensino e aprendizaxe do inglés. En canto ao segundo punto desta segunda parte, os participantes recoñecen o efecto do nivel socioeconómico dun estudante na súa competencia lingüística,

aínda que admiten que non é tan marcado como en décadas pasadas pois a dispoñibilidade de recursos gratuítos para a aprendizaxe de idiomas hoxe en día pode mitigar tales carencias. A pesar diso, os datos indican unha posible incidencia destas condicións na aprendizaxe de inglés.

No capítulo 5 preséntanse as conclusións e as implicacións pedagóxicas da investigación realizada, xunto coas súas limitacións e algunhas recomendacións para futuros proxectos. En vista destes resultados, pódese dicir que os participantes neste estudo mostran un sistema de crenzas sobre a aprendizaxe de ILE xeralmente uniforme e moi similar aos que se identificaron noutros estudos previos. Con todo, existen algunhas diferenzas relacionadas coa área concreta de estudo ou de instrución, e coa experiencia previa de aprendizaxe ou ensino de idiomas. Tamén existe unha asimetría entre algunhas crenzas dos estudantes e profesores, do mesmo xeito que se observa unha conexión directa entre elas e a contorna onde ten lugar o proceso educativo.

En canto ás achegas deste traballo, queda demostrada a importancia de investigar as crenzas nos procesos de ensino-aprendizaxe de idiomas, en tanto que poden desvelar diferentes aspectos subxacentes a estes procesos con importantes implicacións didácticas. A identificación do enfoque ou aproximación que utiliza o alumnado para xestionar a súa aprendizaxe e o que usa o profesorado na súa práctica docente en función das súas crenzas senta as bases para o uso de estratexias de aprendizaxe e pedagogías máis diferenciadas e efectivas, tanto nas distintas áreas académicas e graos como en diferentes niveis educativos ou materias. Ademais, ao facerse conscientes das súas crenzas individuais e discutilas entre eles, os estudantes e os profesores poden atopar vías para conciliar os comportamentos e expectativas disonantes para unha maior comprensión e cohesión dos procesos de ensino-aprendizaxe. Como se demostrou neste traballo, ao estar estreitamente relacionadas coa experiencia previa de aprendizaxe do alumnado, as crenzas poden axudar a identificar nichos de investigación nos niveis educativos anteriores para mellorar a transición entre as sucesivas etapas do proceso de aprendizaxe. A súa estreita relación coas circunstancias do contexto de aprendizaxe pode axudar ás institucións a identificar dificultades no funcionamento da súa contorna académica e a tomar decisións para palialas ou resolvelas. Unha vez establecidas as similitudes entre as crenzas deste grupo de participantes da USC con aquelas identificadas noutros estudos, é moi posible que moitas delas tamén sexan comúns a estudantes universitarios noutras comunidades españolas, co que os resultados obtidos nesta tese de doutoramento transcenderían á propia Universidade de Santiago.

Así e todo, os resultados deste estudo deben interpretarse con cautela pois poden estar influenciados principalmente por deficiencias na metodoloxía como o tamaño e a representatividade da mostra poboacional e a efectividade dos instrumentos usados na recollida de datos. Por outra banda, a pesar da súa utilidade na identificación do sistema de crenzas a nivel colectivo, as discrepancias entre estas a nivel individual poden afectar o grao de adaptabilidade dos resultados que aquí se reportan a investigacións semellantes que se poidan realizar no futuro. Dito isto, faise necesario realizar un estudo similar preferentemente lonxitudinal, de maior envergadura e cunha metodoloxía máis variada noutras áreas de Galicia e de España.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Students' questionnaire

Code: (\*to be filled by the researcher)

### English Learner Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of my PhD thesis whose main purpose is to have a better understanding of the beliefs of the students of English at the USC about the learning of this foreign language. The results of this survey will only be used for this investigation. This 15-minute questionnaire is anonymous and since there are not correct or incorrect answers to the questions, I will appreciate your sincerity when completing it. Thank you very much for your support!

#### SECTION I

*In this section, you should indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by circling a number from 1 to 6.*

| Strongly disagree                                                               | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1                                                                               | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |
| For instance, if you strongly agree with the statement below, answer like this: |          |                   |                |       |                |
| Listening to music is very relaxing.                                            |          |                   |                | 1     | 2              |
|                                                                                 |          |                   |                | 4     | 5              |
|                                                                                 |          |                   |                |       | 6              |

|                                                                                                                |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.                                                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4. English is structured in the same way as my native language.                                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.                                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 8. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 10. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 11. If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12. It is okay to guess-if you do not know a word in English.                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13. I have a natural aptitude for the learning of foreign languages.                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 1                 | 2        | 3                 | 4              | 5     | 6              |

|                                                                                                        |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.                                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 16. I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.                                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 17. If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 18. Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules.                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.                                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 20. If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 21. It is easier to speak than to understand English.                                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 22. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.                                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 23. Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from my native language.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 24. If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 25. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 26. People who are good at maths and science are not good at learning foreign languages.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 28. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speakers better.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 29. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 30. In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 31. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.                                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 32. Participating in class is important to learn English.                                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 33. Motivation is important in the study of English.                                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

#### SECTION II

*In this section, you should answer in the same way as in the previous section, except for item 36. Please notice, all scales have six items but they contain different words.*

|                                                                                                            |                  |           |                    |               |                |                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 34. Learning English is...                                                                                 | Very difficult   | Difficult | Somewhat difficult | Somewhat easy | Easy           | Very easy                                   |
| 35. If someone spent one hour every day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? | Less than a year | 1-2 years | 3-5 years          | 6-8 years     | About 10 years | You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day. |

36. Do you have any experience in any bilingual or plurilingual programme? This question refers to learning content subjects like biology, history or P.E. in English at any school level (Secondary, High School...) including your present studies at the USC.

☐ Yes

☐ No



If your answer to question 36 was Yes, please complete questions 37-39.

|                                                                                   |                      |                      |                 |                      |        |             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------|-------------|
| 37. My level of satisfaction about learning English through another subject is... | very low             | low                  | A bit low       | A bit high           | High   | Very high   |
| 38. When I learn other subjects in English, my English skills develop...          | not a bit            | very little          | a bit           | moderately           | much   | very much   |
| 39. When I learn a subject in English, I learn the content of this subject...     | 0 (I can't learn it) | with much difficulty | with difficulty | with some difficulty | easily | very easily |

### SECTION III

Please, provide the following information by ticking the box ☒ or by writing your response in the space provided:

a. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ years      b. Gender: ☐ male      ☐ female      ☐ non-binary

c. Your nationality/ies: ☐ Spanish      ☐ Other/s, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

d. Please, indicate which is/are your mother tongue/s. \_\_\_\_\_

e. Besides your mother tongue/s, how many other languages do you know?

☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5 or more.

f. From the languages you know, which one/s did you learn as a foreign language at school?

☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☐ 5 or more.

g. Have you ever lived in any country where they speak the foreign language/s you know?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

h. If your answer to question g was Yes, how long did you live in this/these country/ies? \_\_\_\_\_

i. Details of your present studies at the USC:

i.1. Your level: ☐ Undergraduate      ☐ Master      ☐ PhD

i.2. The name of your degree or program: \_\_\_\_\_

i.3. Your year of study: ☐ 1<sup>st</sup>      ☐ 2<sup>nd</sup>      ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup>      ☐ 4<sup>th</sup>      ☐ 5<sup>th</sup>

j. If there is anything else you want to add in connection with the topic of this questionnaire, you can write it in the space provided below. \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix A 1: The students' questionnaire was sent in English, Spanish and Galician via Google forms.

English learner questionnaire

Questions Responses Settings



Section 1 of 4

### English Learner Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of my PhD thesis whose main purpose is to have a better understanding of the beliefs of the students of English at the USC about the learning of this foreign language. The results of this survey will only be used for this investigation. This 15 minute questionnaire is anonymous and since there are not any correct or incorrect answers to the questions, I will appreciate your sincerity when completing it. Thank you very much for your support!

English learner questionnaire (Responses)

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Extensions Help Last edit was 11 minutes ago

| Timestamp           | 1. It is easier for children | 2. Some people are born | 3. Some languages are e | 4. English is structured in 5 | 5. I believe that I will ultin 6 | 6. It is importa  |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 11/27/2018 20:28:23 | Strongly agree               | Slightly agree          | Agree                   | Slightly agree                | Strongly agree                   | Slightly agree    |
| 11/27/2018 21:20:30 | Slightly agree               | Slightly agree          | Strongly agree          | Slightly disagree             | Agree                            | Slightly agree    |
| 11/27/2018 21:26:19 | Strongly agree               | Agree                   | Slightly disagree       | Slightly agree                | Strongly agree                   | Disagree          |
| 12/2/2018 23:22:11  | Agree                        | Agree                   | Strongly agree          | Agree                         | Strongly agree                   | Agree             |
| 12/4/2018 0:13:31   | Agree                        | Slightly agree          | Disagree                | Disagree                      | Strongly agree                   | Slightly disagree |
| 12/8/2018 18:28:25  | Agree                        | Agree                   | Agree                   | Disagree                      | Agree                            | Agree             |
| 12/13/2018 16:17:59 | Strongly agree               | Agree                   | Strongly agree          | Disagree                      | Agree                            | Agree             |
| 1/30/2019 23:36:17  | Slightly agree               | Strongly disagree       | Slightly agree          | Slightly agree                | Strongly agree                   | Disagree          |
| 1/31/2019 19:33:44  | Strongly agree               | Slightly disagree       | Strongly agree          | Disagree                      | Strongly agree                   | Agree             |
| 2/3/2019 21:16:37   | Strongly agree               | Agree                   | Slightly agree          | Slightly agree                | Strongly agree                   | Agree             |
| 2/4/2019 18:48:52   | Agree                        | Slightly disagree       | Agree                   | Disagree                      | Agree                            | Strongly agree    |
| 01/22/2019          | Agree                        | Agree                   | Strongly agree          | Slightly agree                | Agree                            | Disagree          |
| 01/22/2019          | Agree                        | Strongly agree          | Strongly agree          | Slightly agree                | Strongly agree                   | Strongly disagree |
| 01/22/2019          | Strongly agree               | Agree                   | Slightly agree          | Disagree                      | Agree                            | Strongly disagree |

Form Responses 1

Cuestionario para o estudante de inglés

Questions Responses Settings



Section 1 of 4

### Cuestionario para o estudante de inglés

Esta enquisa forma parte da miña tese de doutoramento cuxo obxectivo principal é comprender mellor as creencias dos estudantes de inglés da USC sobre a aprendizaxe deste idioma estranxeiro. Este cuestionario é anónimo, completalo so che levará uns 15 minutos e os datos recollidos serán utilizados soamente para esta investigación. Non hai respostas correctas para as preguntas polo que agradezo que respondas o máis sinceramente posible baseándote na túa experiencia persoal. Moitas grazas pola túa colaboración!

Cuestionario para o estudante de inglés (Responses)

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Extensions Help

| Timestamp           | 1. Aprender un idioma es | 2. Algunhas persoas nac | 3. Algúns idiomas son m | 4. A gramática do inglés | 5. Penso que terminarei | 6. É importante falar inglés | 7. É necesario coñecer a 8. É m |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 11/29/2018 9:30:17  | De acordo                | Máis ou menos de acord  | Totalmente de acordo    | Lixeiramente en desacor  | De acordo               | Máis ou menos de acord       | En total                        |
| 12/1/2018 11:57:24  | Totalmente de acordo     | Totalmente de acordo    | Totalmente de acordo    | En desacordo             | Lixeiramente en desacor | Lixeiramente en desacor      | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 12/2/2018 0:04:06   | Totalmente de acordo     | Máis ou menos de acord  | En desacordo            | En desacordo             | De acordo               | Lixeiramente en desacor      | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 12/9/2018 14:23:41  | De acordo                | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo               | Lixeiramente en desacor  | Totalmente de acordo    | De acordo                    | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 12/14/2018 23:09:17 | Totalmente de acordo     | Máis ou menos de acord  | Totalmente de acordo    | Máis ou menos de acord   | De acordo               | Totalmente de acordo         | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 12/15/2018 18:13:35 | Totalmente de acordo     | De acordo               | En total desacordo      | Totalmente de acordo     | De acordo               | De acordo                    | En total                        |
| 12/16/2018 16:56:52 | De acordo                | Máis ou menos de acord  | Máis ou menos de acord  | Lixeiramente en desacor  | De acordo               | Lixeiramente en desacor      | En desacordo                    |
| 12/16/2018 17:15:23 | Totalmente de acordo     | De acordo               | Lixeiramente en desacor | En desacordo             | Máis ou menos de acord  | Totalmente de acordo         | Lixeira                         |
| 12/17/2018 11:49:58 | Totalmente de acordo     | De acordo               | De acordo               | Máis ou menos de acord   | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo                    | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 1/29/2019 14:25:37  | De acordo                | Lixeiramente en desacor | De acordo               | Lixeiramente en desacor  | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo                    | En total                        |
| 1/30/2019 12:42:42  | De acordo                | De acordo               | Totalmente de acordo    | De acordo                | De acordo               | Máis ou menos de acord       | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 1/30/2019 13:03:23  | De acordo                | En desacordo            | De acordo               | Lixeiramente en desacor  | Máis ou menos de acord  | Máis ou menos de acord       | En desacordo                    |
| 1/30/2019 15:19:18  | De acordo                | En desacordo            | Máis ou menos de acord  | En desacordo             | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo                    | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 1/30/2019 15:38:32  | De acordo                | En desacordo            | De acordo               | De acordo                | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo                    | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 1/30/2019 16:54:05  | Totalmente de acordo     | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo               | En desacordo             | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo                    | Máis ou menos de acord          |
| 1/30/2019 16:54:30  | De acordo                | En total desacordo      | Totalmente de acordo    | Lixeiramente en desacor  | Lixeiramente en desacor | Máis ou menos de acord       | Lixeiramente en desacor         |
| 1/30/2019 17:37:48  | Totalmente de acordo     | De acordo               | Totalmente de acordo    | En desacordo             | Máis ou menos de acord  | En total desacordo           | En desacordo                    |
| 1/30/2019 18:59:43  | Totalmente de acordo     | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo               | En total desacordo       | En desacordo            | Lixeiramente en desacor      | En desacordo                    |
| 1/30/2019 21:48:58  | Totalmente de acordo     | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo               | Máis ou menos de acord   | De acordo               | De acordo                    | Máis ou menos de acord          |

Form Responses 1

## Appendix B: Teachers' questionnaire

### Questionnaire for the teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the USC

This questionnaire is part of my PhD thesis whose main purpose is to have a better understanding of the beliefs of the USC students and teachers of English, as well as of those who teach subjects in English, about the learning of this foreign language. It is anonymous, it takes about 10 minutes to complete it, and the data collected will be used only for this investigation. Thank you very much in advance for your support!

#### Section 1: Personal data

1. Nationality/ies:  
☐ Spanish ☐ Other (please, specify) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mother tongue/s:  
☐ Spanish ☐ Galician ☐ Other (please, specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sex:  
☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Other
4. Faculty/ies where you teach English (or subjects in English):  
\*(S: Campus Santiago / L: Campus Lugo)  
☐ Chemistry (S) ☐ Physics (S) ☐ Law (S) ☐ Philology (S)  
☐ Odontology (S) ☐ HTES (ETSE) (S) ☐ Communication Science (S)  
☐ Education Sciences (S) ☐ Teacher Training (L)  
☐ Humanities (L) ☐ Veterinary (L) ☐ Psychology (S)  
☐ Other (please, specify) \_\_\_\_\_
5. Experience (in years) as an English teacher (or of subjects in English):  
☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ More than 20

#### Section 2: Questions 6-30

Please, indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

6. It is easier for children than for adults to learn a foreign language.  
☐ Strongly disagree  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Slightly disagree  
☐ Slightly agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Strongly agree
7. Some people are born with a special ability to learn a foreign language.  
☐ Strongly disagree  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Slightly disagree  
☐ Slightly agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Strongly agree
8. Some languages are easier to learn than others.  
☐ Strongly disagree  
☐ Disagree  
☐ Slightly disagree  
☐ Slightly agree  
☐ Agree  
☐ Strongly agree
9. English is structured in the same way as my native language.  
☐ Strongly disagree

- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

10. I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

11. It is important to speak English with a very good accent.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

12. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

13. You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

14. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

15. The best way to learn English is in an English-speaking country.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

16. Learning English is easy for my students.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

17. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree

- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot to learn English.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Strongly agree

19. While learning English, if you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

20. If a student speaks English very well, s(he) will have many opportunities to use it.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

21. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

22. In my country people are good at learning foreign languages.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

23. Learning English is different from learning other subjects.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

24. It is easier to speak than to understand English.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

25. If my students learn to speak English very well, it will help them to get a good job.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree

- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

26. My students feel shy when speaking English in front of other people.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

27. In my country people think that it is important to speak English.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

28. In Galicia students with more financial resources can learn English better than the rest.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

29. In Galicia students who start their university degree have a good level of English (a B1 at least).

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

30. I think that more extroverted students can learn English better than the rest.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Slightly disagree
- ☐ Slightly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

### Section 3: Questions 31-33

The questions in this section have a different scale of answers.

31. My students use the following strategies to learn and practice English:

a. If they hear someone speaking English, they get actively involved in the conversation.

- ☐ Very frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ I don't know

b. When they don't know a word in English, they try to guess its meaning.

- ☐ Very frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ I don't know

c. They participate actively in class (in English).

- ☐ Very frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ I don't know

d. They show good motivation and enthusiasm in most of the activities.

- ☐ Very frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ I don't know

e. They focus on learning a lot of vocabulary.

- ☐ Very frequently
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ I don't know



- f. They use social networks (ex. WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) in English.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- g. They watch films and TV series in original version (either with or without subtitles).  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- h. They read books in English as leisure.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- i. They constantly translate from their mother tongue.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- j. They listen to music in English to understand the lyrics of the songs.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- k. They speak in English among themselves out of the classroom.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- l. They focus on learning a lot of grammar.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- m. They interact in English with friends overseas, Erasmus students and tourists.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- n. They use many resources like online dictionaries, translators, websites and specific apps (e.g. OTranscribe, Grammarly, TruePhonetics, TED, etc) to practice.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
- o. They ask questions in English and frequently request help to clarify doubts about the language.  
☐ Very frequently   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ I don't know
32. I think they should include more subjects in English as part of the university curriculum/programs.  
☐ Only if they are optional subjects  
☐ Yes, either as optional, compulsory or core subjects.  
☐ No (If you chose this option, please comment briefly on the reasons.)

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33. What would you recommend to improve the learning and use of English at the USC, Galicia and Spain in general?

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THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION!

If necessary in the future, would you be available to participate in a short interview about the topic of this study?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

If your answer was YES, please write a contact e-mail address:

---

## Appendix B 1: *The teachers' questionnaire was sent in English, Spanish and Galician via Google forms.*

Teachers questionnaire

Questions Responses Settings

Section 1 of 5

### Questionnaire for the teachers of English (and/or those who teach subjects in English) at the USC

This questionnaire is part of my PhD thesis whose main purpose is to have a better understanding of the beliefs of the USC students and teachers of English, as well as of those who teach subjects in English, about the learning of this foreign language. It is anonymous, it takes about 10 minutes to complete it, and the data collected will be used only for this investigation. Thank you very much in advance for your support!

Teachers questionnaire (Responses)

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|   | A                  | G                            | H                       | I                       | J                           | K                          | L                |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Timestamp          | 6. It is easier for children | 7. Some people are born | 8. Some languages are e | 9. English is structured ii | 10. I believe that my stud | 11. It is import |
| 5 | 2/18/2020 13:13:31 | Agree                        | Strongly agree          | Agree                   | Strongly agree              | Slightly agree             | Agree            |
| 6 | 2/18/2020 15:16:30 | Agree                        | Disagree                | Agree                   | Slightly disagree           | Disagree                   | Slightly agree   |
| 7 |                    |                              |                         |                         |                             |                            |                  |
| 7 | 2/18/2020 15:31:33 | Strongly agree               | Slightly agree          | Slightly agree          | Slightly disagree           | Slightly agree             | Slightly agree   |
| 8 | 2/20/2020 13:15:48 | Agree                        | Agree                   | Slightly agree          | Strongly agree              | Agree                      | Strongly agree   |

Enquisa profesores

Questions Responses Settings

Section 1 of 5

### Enquisa sobre as crenzas dos profesores de inglés (e/ou que imparten materias en inglés) da USC sobre a aprendizaxe deste idioma

Esta enquisa forma parte da miña tese de doutoramento cuxo obxectivo principal é comprender mellor as crenzas e opinións dos estudantes e profesores de inglés (e/ou que imparten materias en inglés) da USC sobre a aprendizaxe deste idioma estranxeiro. É anónima, leva uns 10 minutos enche-la e os datos recollidos serán utilizados unicamente para esta investigación. Moitas grazas de antemán pola vosa colaboración!

Cuestionario profesores (Responses)

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|    | B                                                            | C                        | D       | E                        | F                        | G                       | H                       | I                       |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1  | Nacionalidad/es                                              | 2. Idioma/s do materno/s | 3 Sexo: | 4 Facultad (es) donde im | 5. Años de experiencia c | 6. Niveles que enséña   | 6. Aprender un idioma e | 7. Algunhas persoas nac |
| 20 |                                                              |                          |         |                          |                          | Agree                   | Agree                   | Slightly agree          |
| 21 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español, Galego (Si outr- Muller  |                          |         | ETSE (S), Química (S)    | 6-10                     | Programa/s de grao, Pro | De acordo               | De acor                 |
| 22 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español                           | Muller                   |         | Filoxia (S)              | Máis de 20               | Programa/s de grao, Pro | De acordo               | De acco                 |
| 23 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español                           | Muller                   |         | Filoxia (S)              | Máis de 20               | Programa/s de grao, Pro | De acordo               | De acco                 |
| 24 | Española (Si outra, por fi Galego (Si outro, por fav- Home   |                          |         | Química (S)              | 11-15                    | Programa/s de grao, Pro | Totalmente de acordo    | En desacordo            |
| 25 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español                           | Muller                   |         | Filoxia (S)              | 1-5                      | Programa/s de grao      | De acordo               | Máis ou menos de acord  |
| 26 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español, Galego (Si outr- Muller  |                          |         | Ciencias da Educación (! | 6-10                     | Programa/s de grao      | Totalmente de acordo    | Totalmente de acordo    |
| 27 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español, Galego (Si outr- Muller  |                          |         | Filoxia (S)              | Máis de 20               | Programa/s de grao, Pro | Máis ou menos de acord  | Totalmente de acordo    |
| 28 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español                           | Muller                   |         | Ciencias da Educación (! | Máis de 20               | Programa/s de grao, Pro | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo               |
| 29 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español                           | Home                     |         | Odontoloxía (S)          | 1-5                      | Programa/s de grao      | Totalmente de acordo    | Totalmente de acordo    |
| 30 | Española (Si outra, por fi Galego (Si outro, por fav- Home   |                          |         | ETSE (S)                 | 6-10                     | Programa/s de máster    | Totalmente de acordo    | De acordo               |
| 31 | Española (Si outra, por fi Galego (Si outro, por fav- Home   |                          |         | Filoxia (S)              | Máis de 20               | Programa/s de grao, Pro | Máis ou menos de acord  | De acordo               |
| 32 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español, Galego (Si outr- Home    |                          |         | Filoxia (S)              | 1-5                      | Programa/s de grao      | Totalmente de acordo    | De acordo               |
| 33 | Española (Si outra, por fi Galego (Si outro, por fav- Home   |                          |         | ETSE (S)                 | 6-10                     | Programa/s de grao      | De acordo               | Máis ou menos de acord  |
| 34 | Española (Si outra, por fi Galego (Si outro, por fav- Home   |                          |         | Filoxia (S)              | 11-15                    | Programa/s de grao      | De acordo               | Totalm                  |
| 35 | Española (Si outra, por fi Galego (Si outro, por fav- Muller |                          |         | Filoxia (S)              | 11-15                    |                         | De acordo               | De acordo               |
| 36 | Española (Si outra, por fi Español                           | Home                     |         | Ciencias da Educación (! | 1-5                      | Programa/s de grao      | De acordo               | Máis ou menos de acord  |

## Appendix C: Descriptive statistics for all belief categories

### Appendix C 1: Descriptive statistics for belief category 1 on the difficulty of language learning, students' answers (%)

Figure 47: General pattern of students' responses for ST3: Some languages are easier to learn than others (N=614).

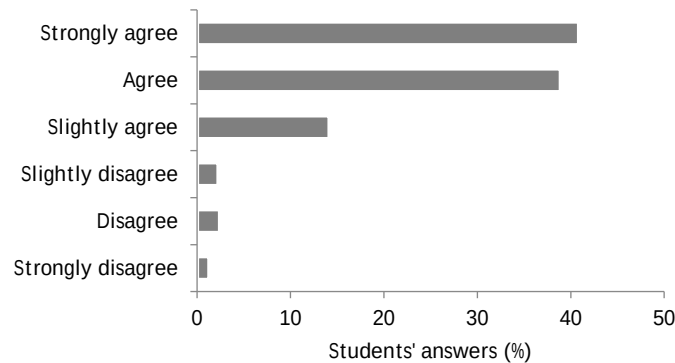


Figure 48: General pattern of students' responses to ST5: I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak English very well (N=614).

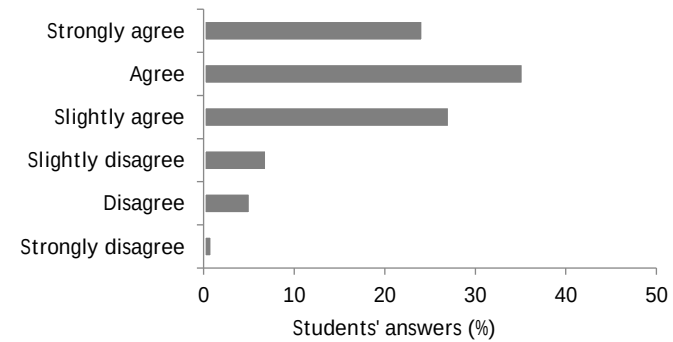


Figure 49: General pattern of students' responses to ST21: It is easier to speak than to understand English (N=614).

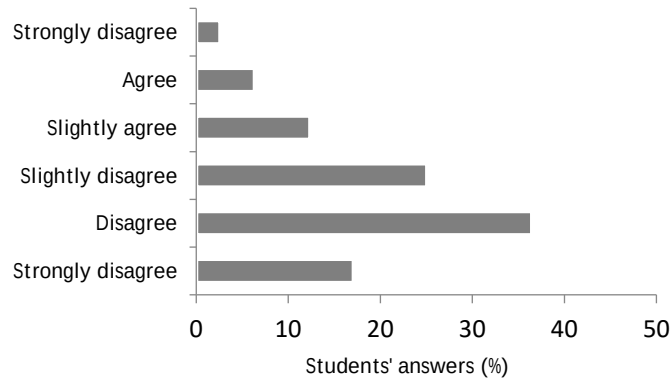


Figure 50: General pattern of students' responses to ST25 It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it (N=614).

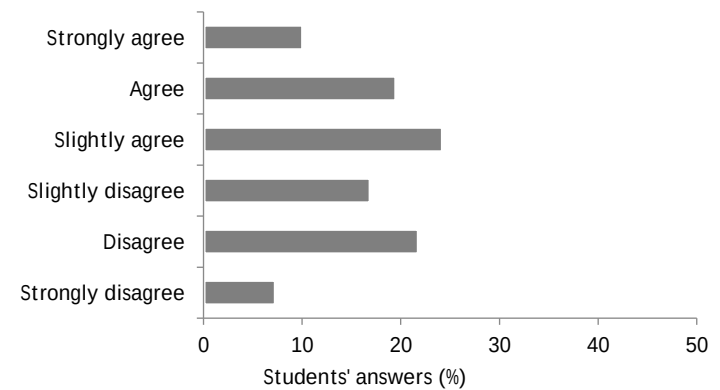


Figure 51: General pattern of students' responses to ST34: Learning English is...(N=614).

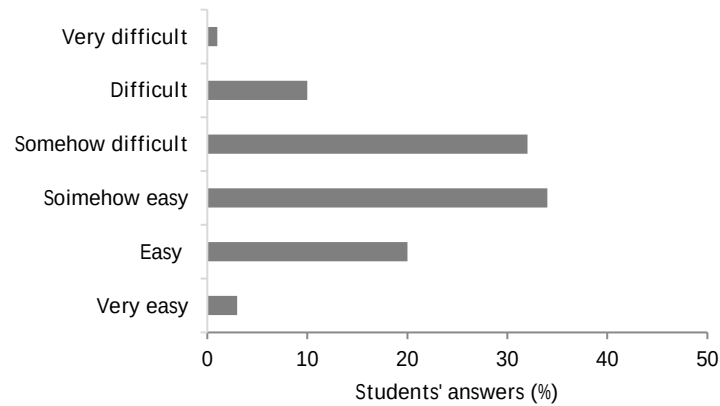
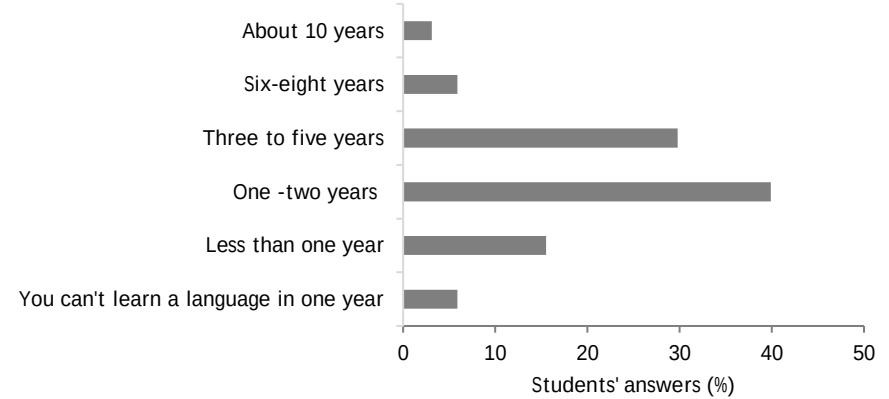


Figure 52: General pattern of students' responses to ST35 If someone spent one hour every day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? (N=614).



Appendix C 2: Descriptive statistics for belief category 1 on the difficulty of language learning, teachers' answers (%)

Figure 53: Distribution of teachers' responses to ST8: Some languages are easier to learn than others (N=35).

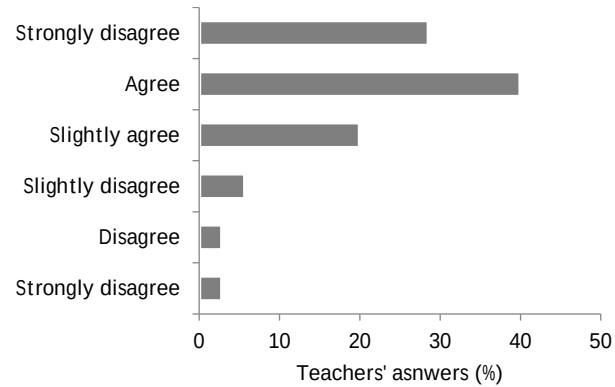


Figure 54: Distribution of teachers' responses to ST10: I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well (N=35).

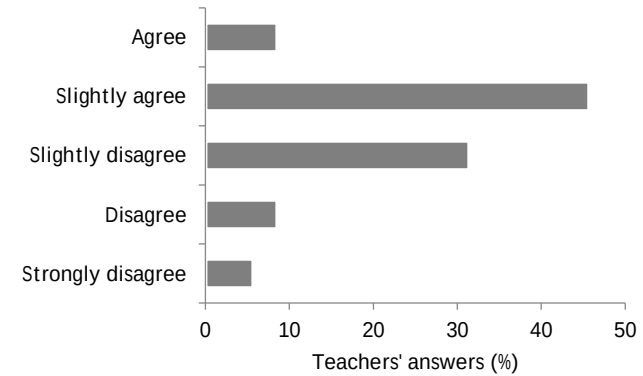


Figure 55: Distribution of teachers' responses to ST16: Learning English is easy for my students (N=35).

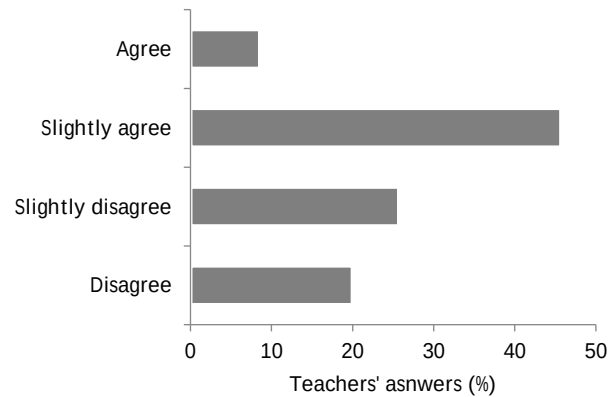


Figure 56: *Distribution of teachers' responses to ST17: It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it (N=35).*

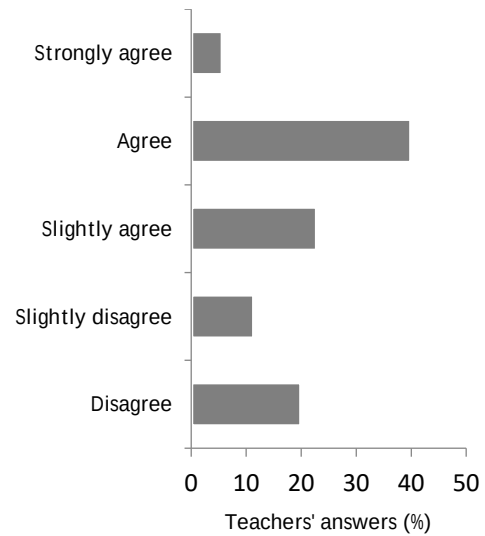
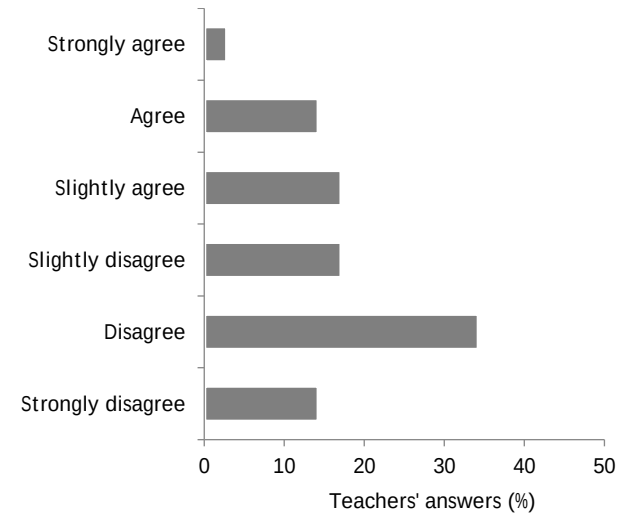


Figure 57: *Distribution of teachers' responses to ST24: It is easier to speak than to understand English (N=35).*





### Appendix C 3: Descriptive statistics for belief category 2 on foreign language aptitude, students' answers

Figure 58: Students' responses to ST1: It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language (N=614).

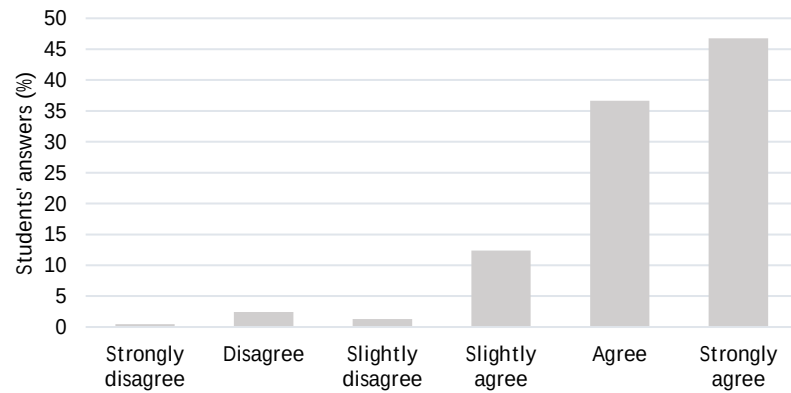


Figure 59: Students' responses to ST2: Some people are born with a special ability which helps them to learn a foreign language (N=614).

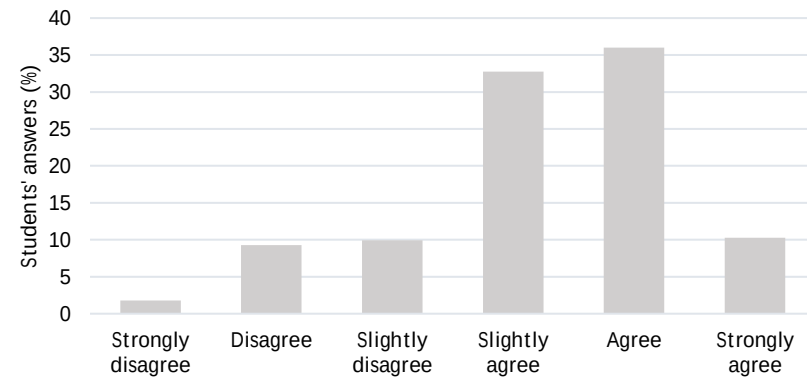


Figure 60: Students' responses to ST9: It is easier for someone who already speaks the foreign language to learn another one (N=614).

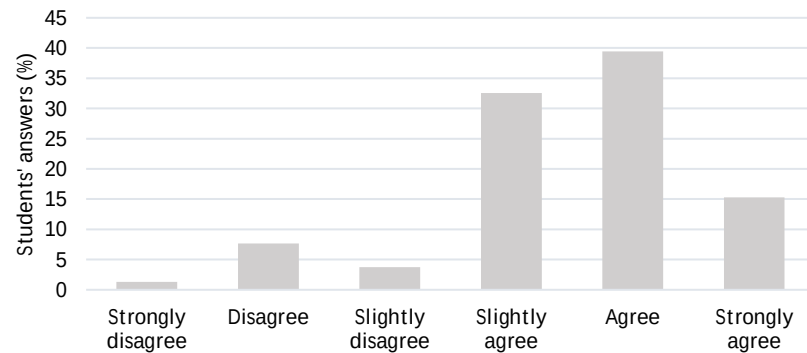


Figure 61: Students' responses to ST13: I have a natural aptitude for the learning of foreign languages (N=614).

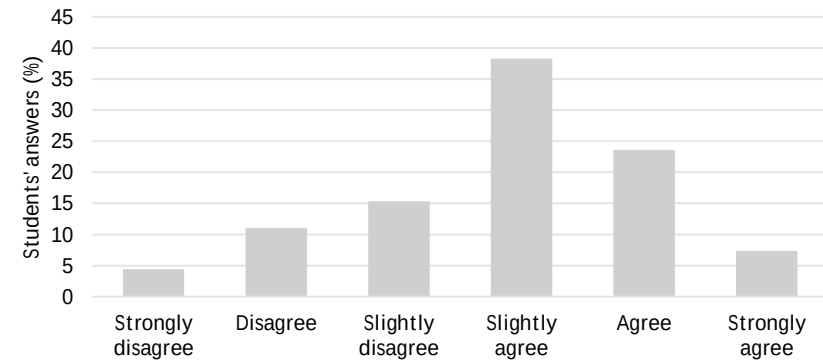


Figure 62: Students' responses to ST19: Women are better than men at learning foreign languages (N=614).

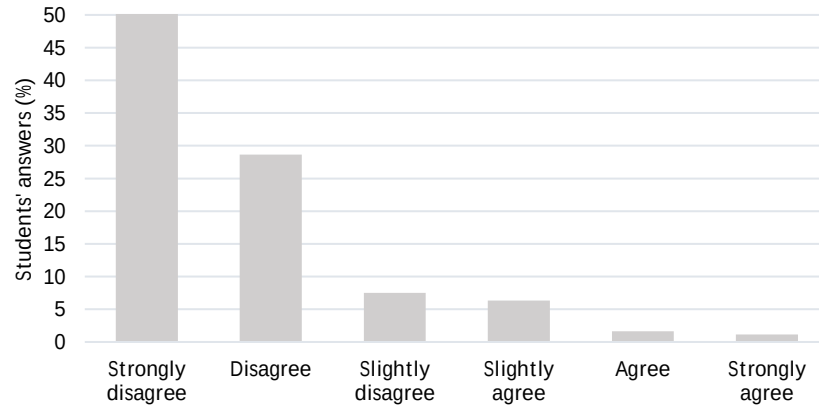


Figure 63: Students' responses to ST26: People who are good at math and sciences are not good at learning foreign languages (N=614).

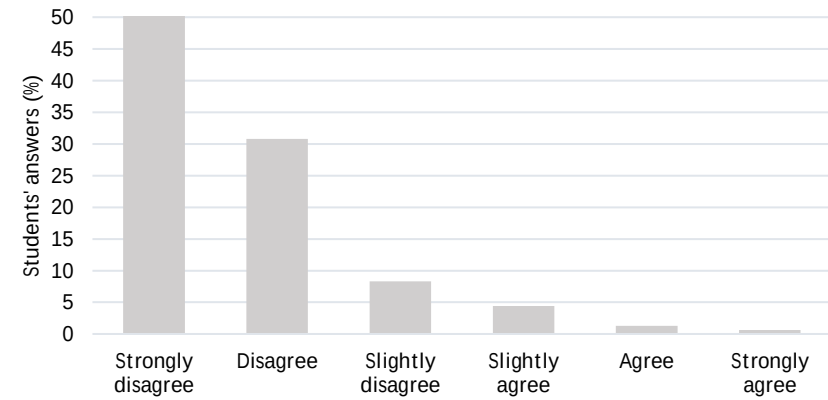


Figure 64: Students' responses to ST29: People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent (N=614).

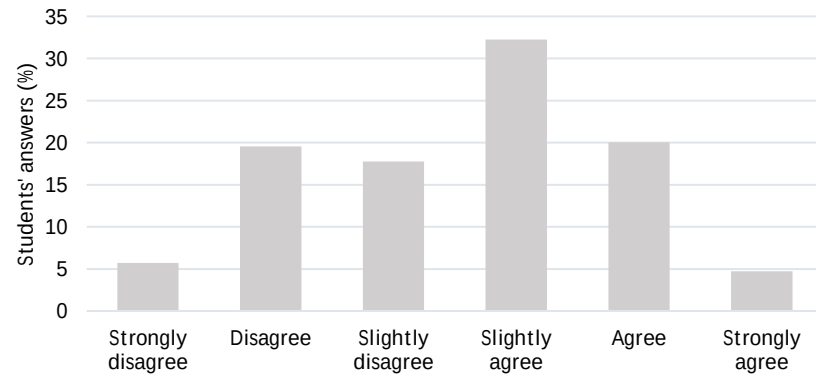


Figure 65: *Students' responses to ST30: In my country people are good at learning foreign languages (N=614).*

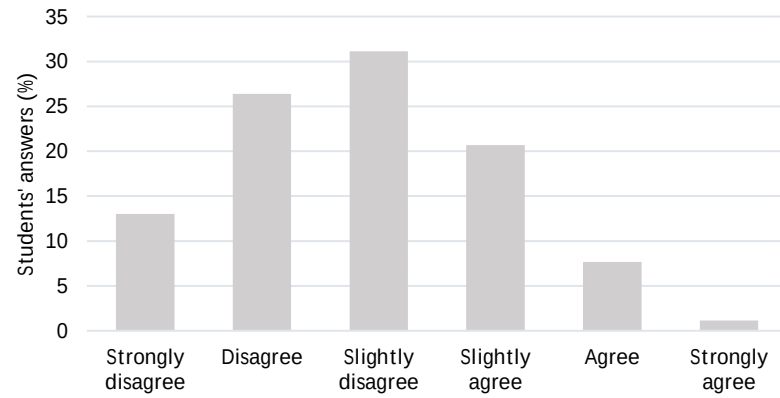
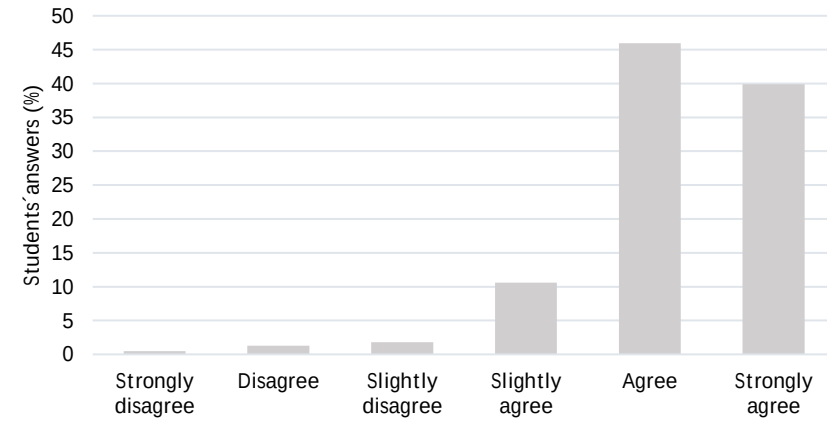


Figure 66: *Students' responses to ST31: Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language (N=614).*



#### Appendix C 4: Descriptive statistics for belief category 2 on foreign language aptitude, teachers' answers

Figure 67: Teachers' answers to ST6: It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language (N=35).

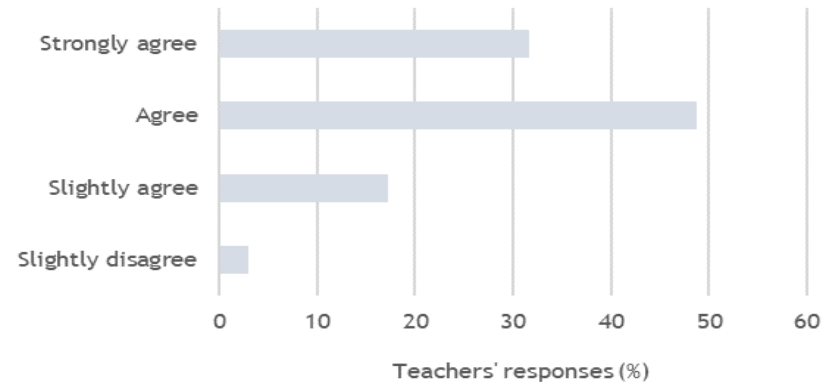


Figure 68: Teachers' answers to ST7: Some people are born with a special ability to learn a foreign language (N=35).

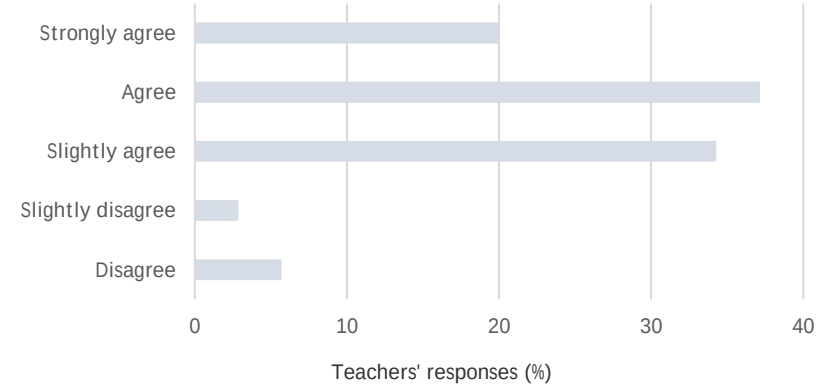


Figure 69: Teachers' answers to ST14: It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one (N=35).

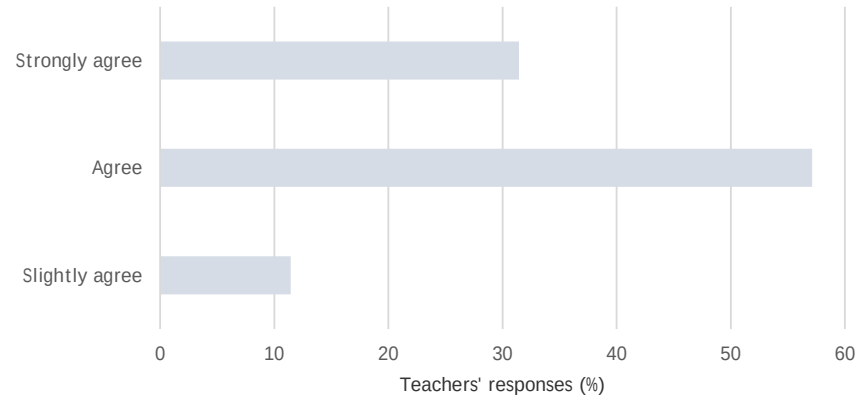


Figure 70: Teachers' answers to ST21: People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent (N=35).

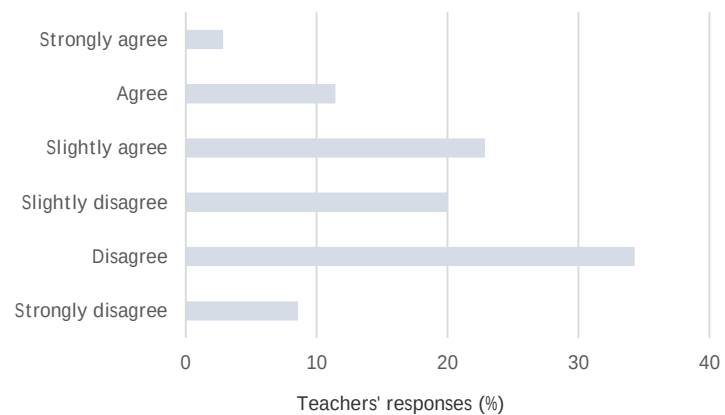
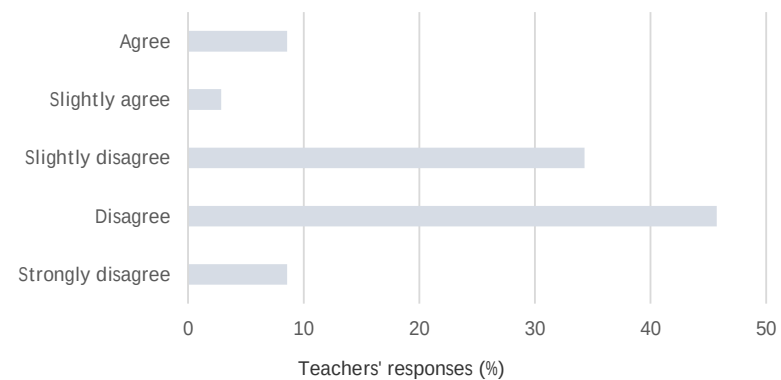


Figure 71: Teachers' answers to ST22: In my country people are good at learning foreign languages (N=35).



## Appendix C 5: Descriptive statistics for belief category 3 on the nature of language learning, students' answers

Figure 72: Student's responses to ST4: English is structured in the same way as my native language (N=614)

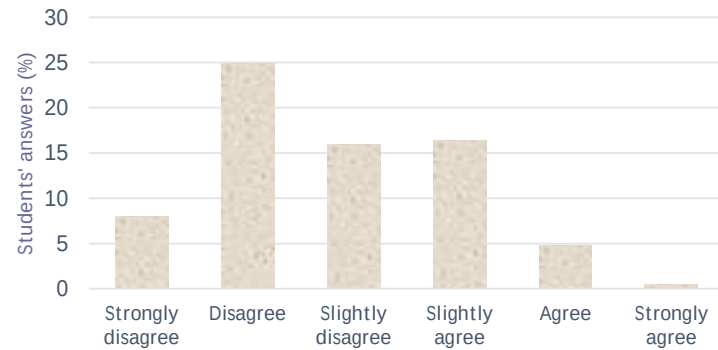


Figure 73: Student's responses to ST7: It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language. (N=614)

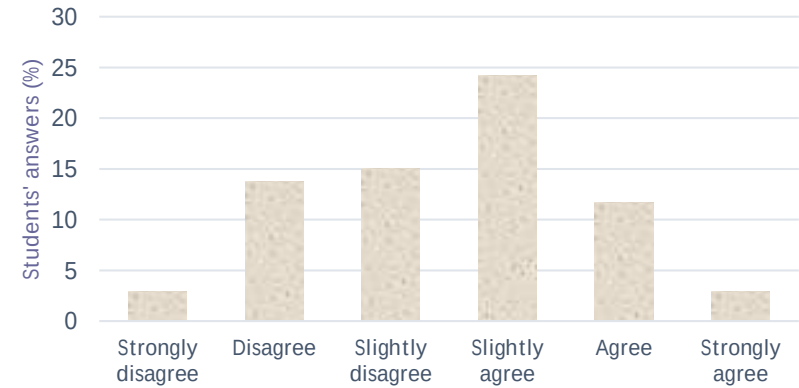


Figure 74: Student's responses to ST10: It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country (N=614)

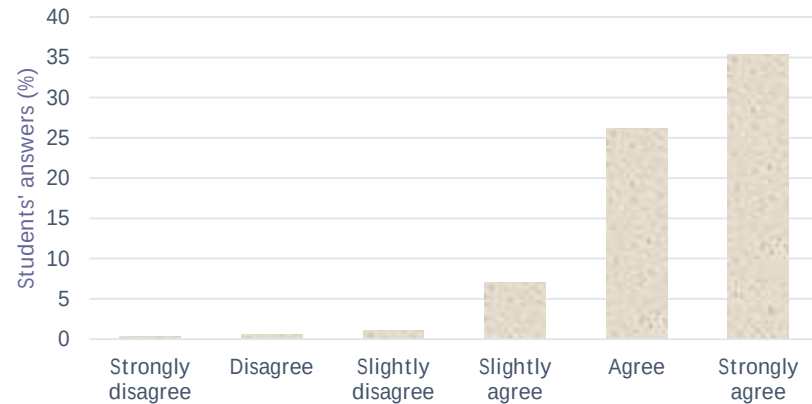


Figure 75: Student's responses to ST14: Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many new vocabulary words. (N=614)

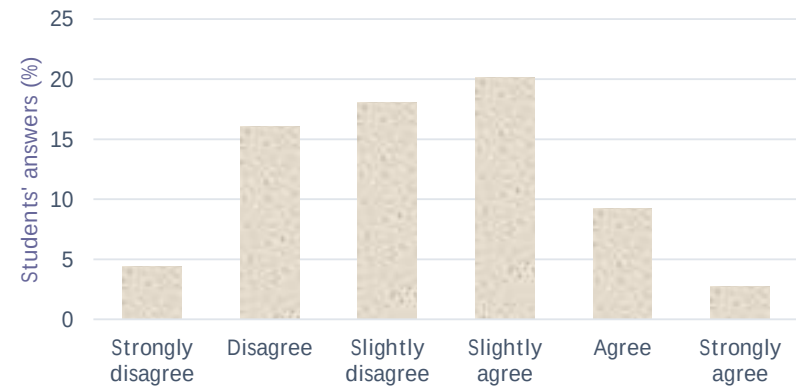




Figure 76: Student's responses to ST18: Learning English is mostly a matter of learning many grammar rules (N=614)

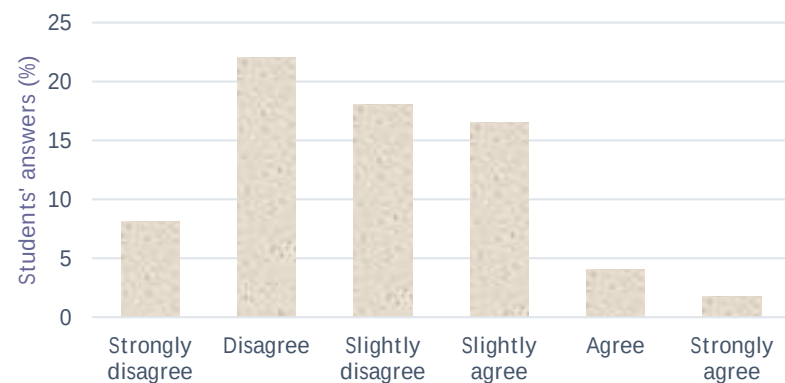


Figure 77: Student's responses to ST22: Learning English is different from learning other subjects (N=614)

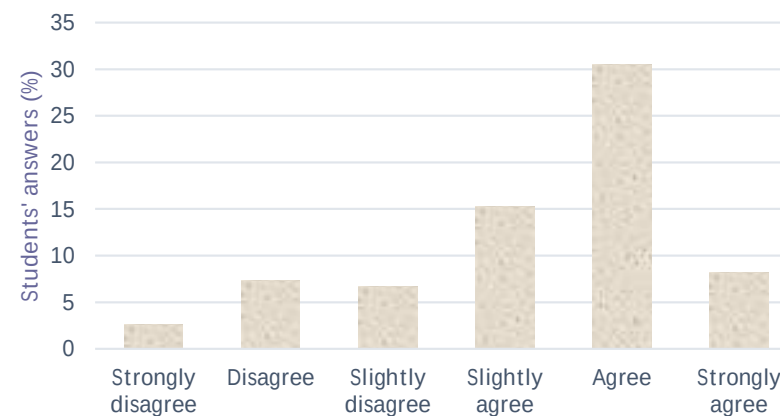


Figure 78: Student's responses to ST23: Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from my native language (N=614)



## Appendix C 6: Descriptive statistics for belief category 3 on the nature of language learning, teachers' answers

Figure 79: Teachers' reactions to ST9: English is structured in the same way as my native language (N=35)

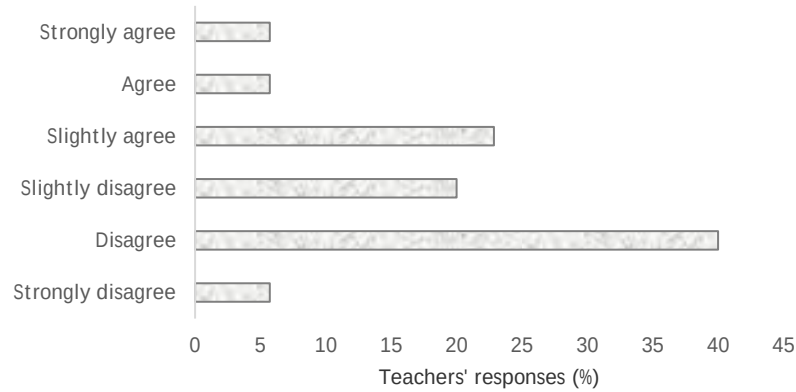


Figure 80: Teachers' reactions to ST12: It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak the foreign language (N=35)

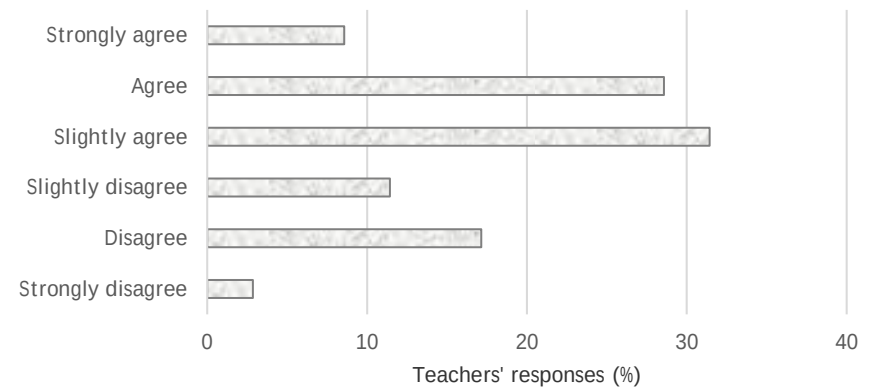


Figure 81: Teachers' reactions to ST15: The best way to learn English is in an English-speaking country (N=35)

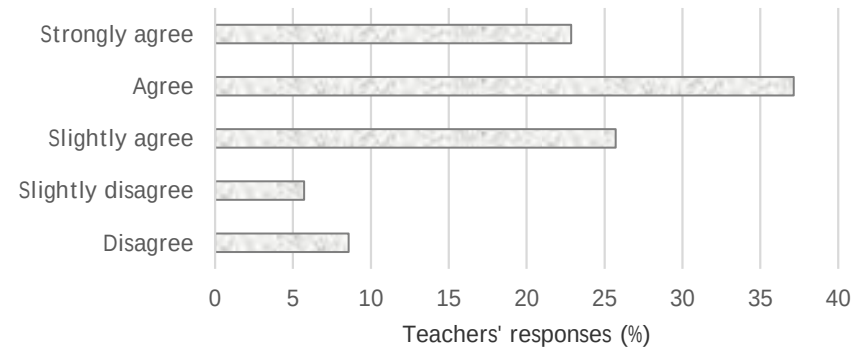


Figure 82: *Teachers' reactions to ST18: It is important to repeat and practice a lot to learn English (N=35)*

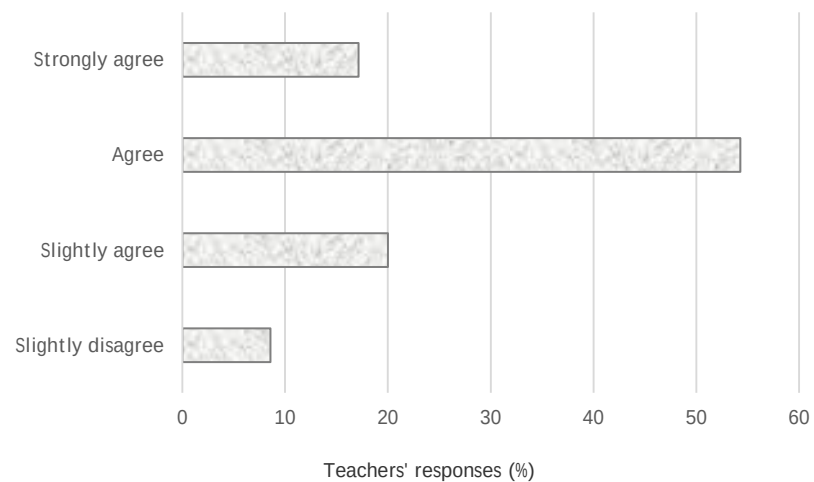
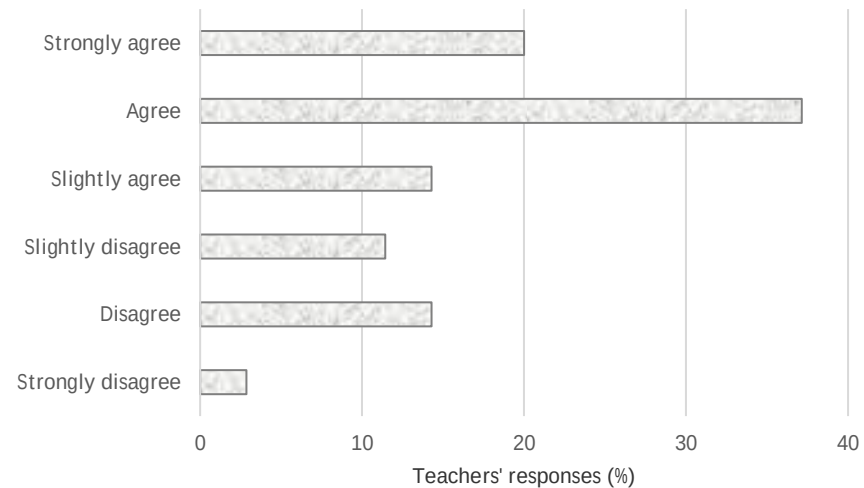


Figure 83: *Teachers' reactions to ST23: Learning English is different from learning other subjects (N=35)*



## Appendix C 7: Descriptive statistics for belief category 4 on motivations and expectations, students' answers (%)

Figure 84: Students' responses to ST20: If I speak English very well, I will have many opportunities to use it (N=614)

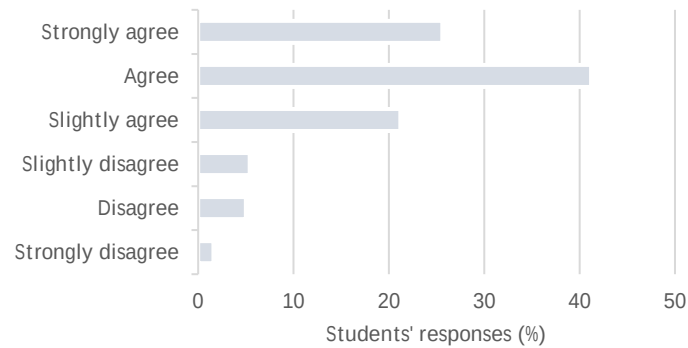


Figure 85: Students' responses to ST24: If I learn to speak English very well it will help me get a good job (N=614)

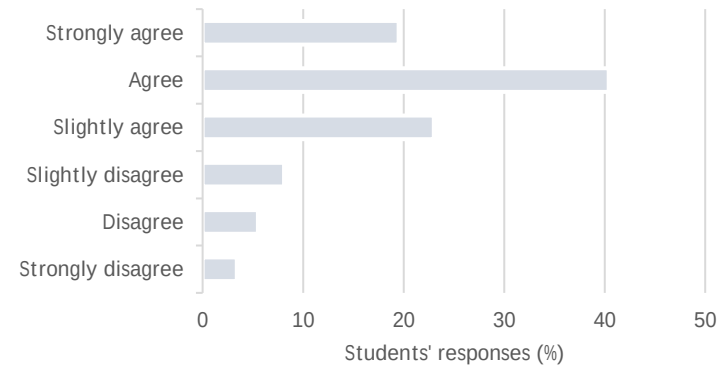


Figure 86: Students' responses to ST27: In my country people think that it is important to speak English (N=614)

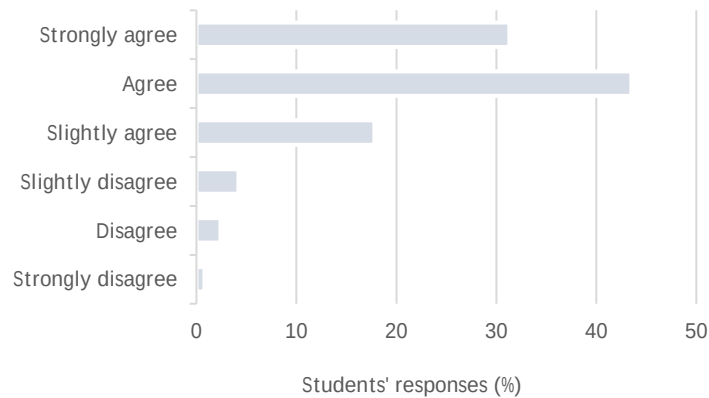
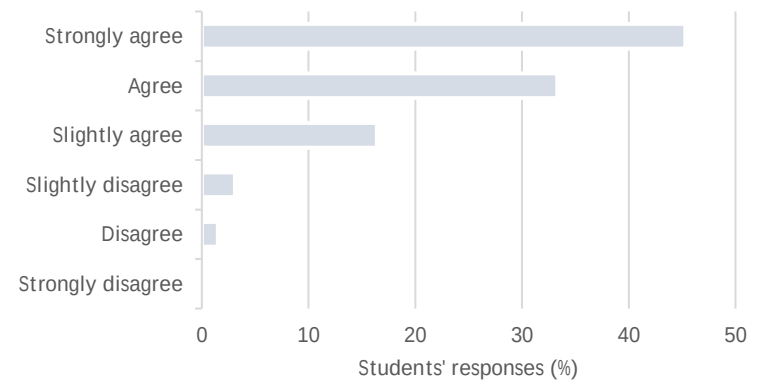


Figure 87: Students' responses to ST28: I would like to learn English so that I can get to know its speaker better (N=614)



Appendix C 8: Descriptive statistics for belief category 4 on motivations and expectations, teachers' answers

Figure 88: Teachers' responses to ST20 If a student speaks English very well, s(he) will have many opportunities to use it (N=35)

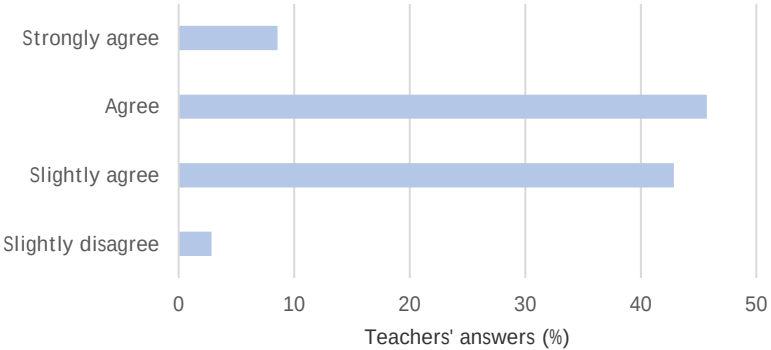


Figure 89: Teachers' responses to ST25 If my students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job (N=35)

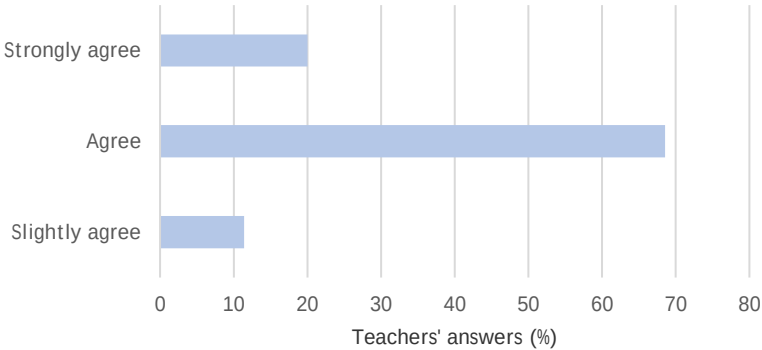
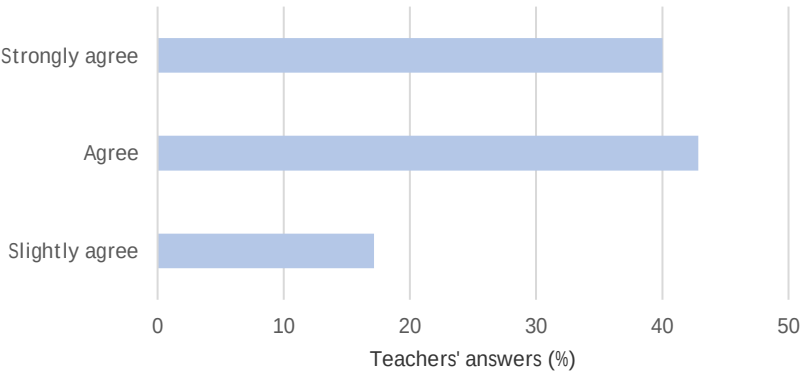


Figure 90: Teachers' responses to ST27 In my country people think that it is important to speak English (N=35)



## Appendix C 9: Descriptive statistics for belief category 5 on learning and communication strategies, students' answers

Figure 91: Students' answers to ST6: It is important to speak English with an excellent accent (N=614)

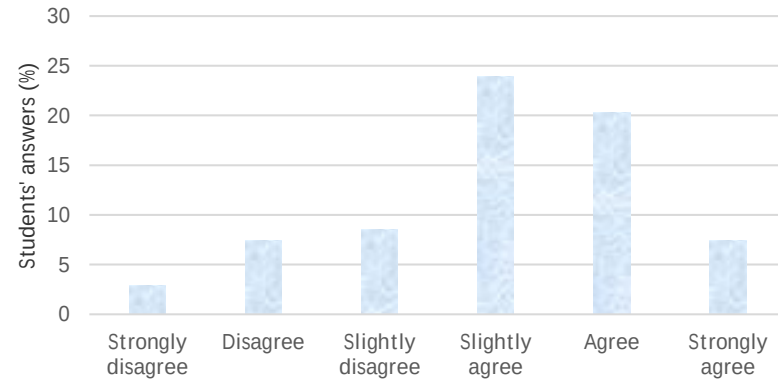


Figure 92: Students' answers to ST8: You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly (N=614)

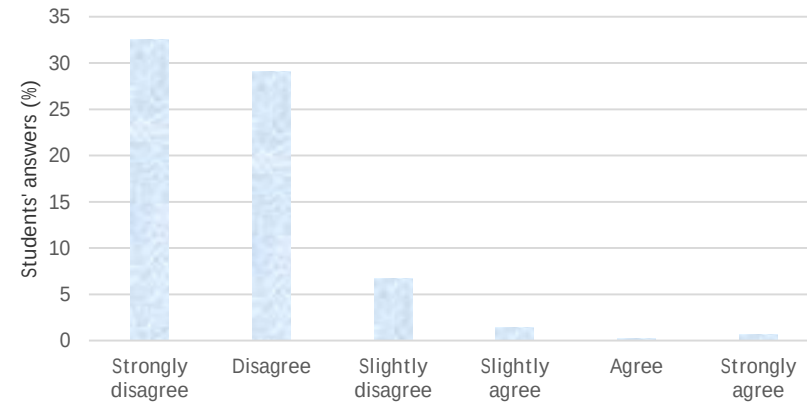


Figure 93: Students' answers to ST11: If I heard someone speaking English, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking the language (N=614)

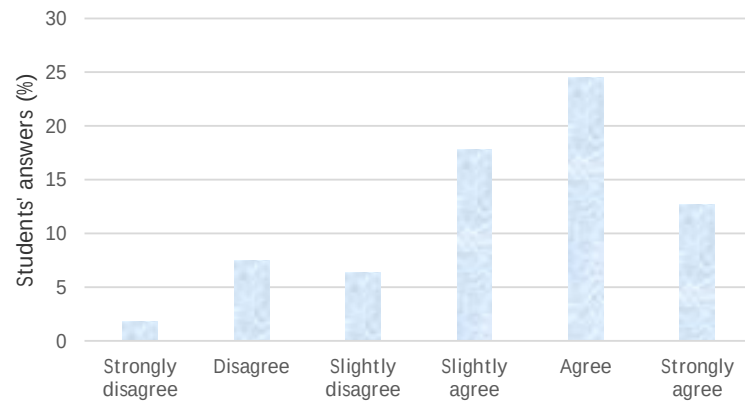


Figure 94: Students' answers to ST12: It is ok to guess if you do not know a word in English (N=614)

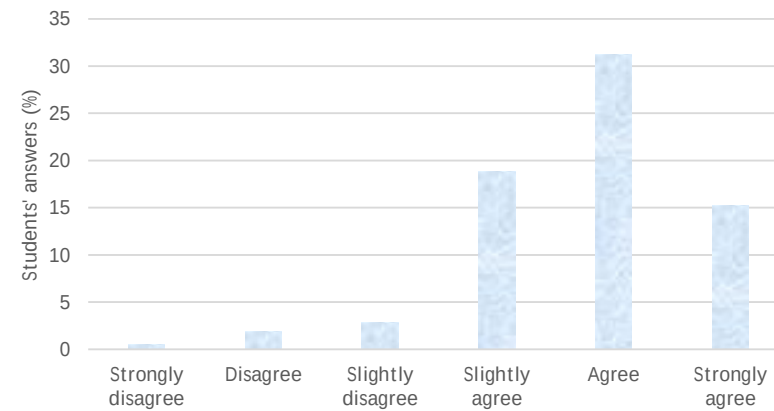




Figure 95: *Students' answers to ST15: It is important to repeat and practice a lot (N=614)*

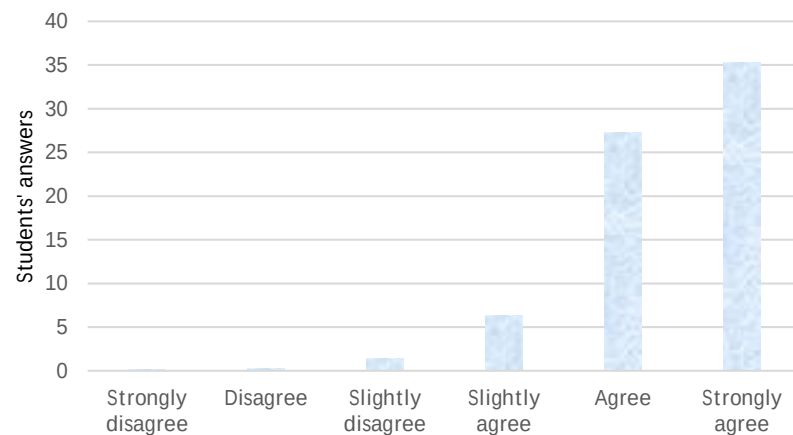


Figure 96: *Students' answers to ST16: I feel shy when speaking English in front of other people (N=614)*

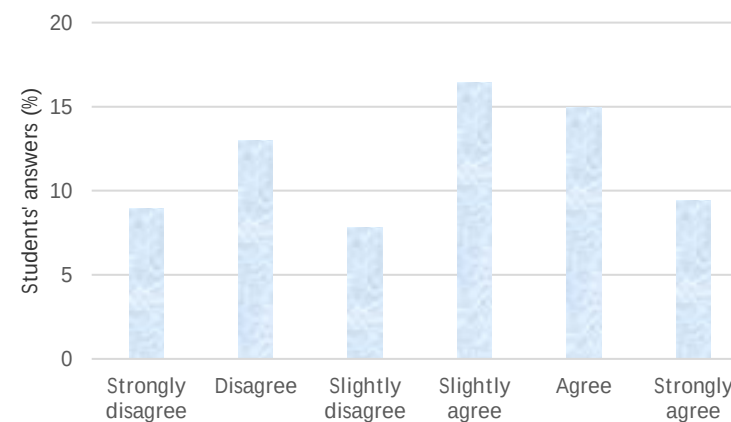


Figure 97: *Students' answers to ST17: If you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on (N=614)*

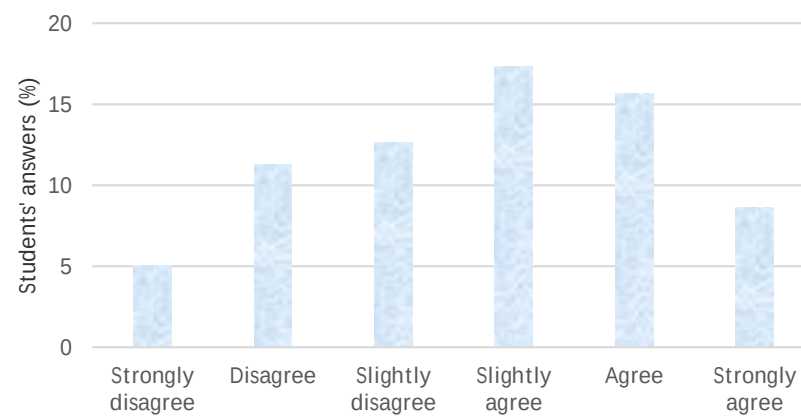


Figure 98: Students' answers to ST32: Participating in class is important to learn English (N=614)

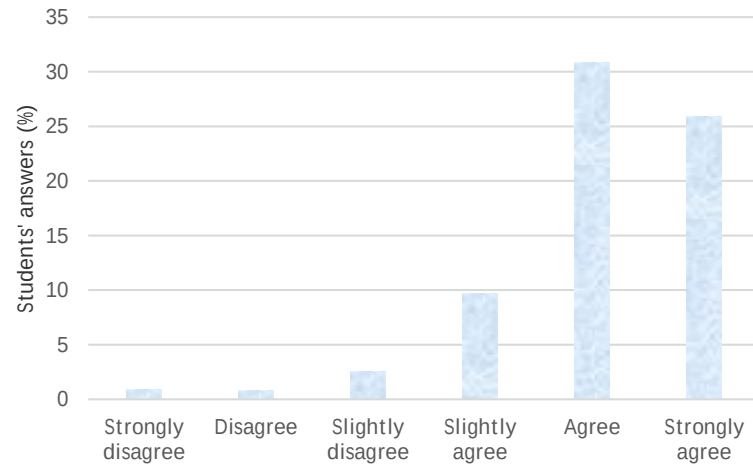
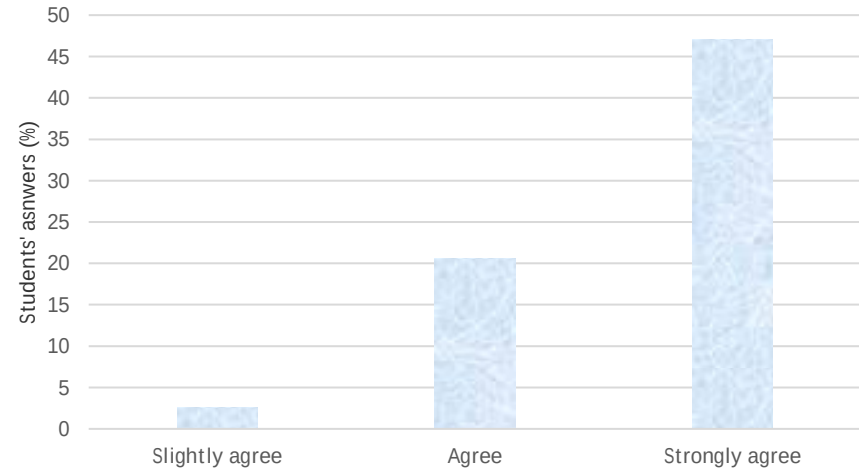


Figure 99: Students' answers to ST33: Motivation is important to learn English (N=614)



Appendix C 10: *Descriptive statistics for belief category 5 on learning and communication strategies, Part A, teachers' answers*

Figure 100: *Teachers' responses to ST11 It is important to speak English with a very good accent (N=35)*

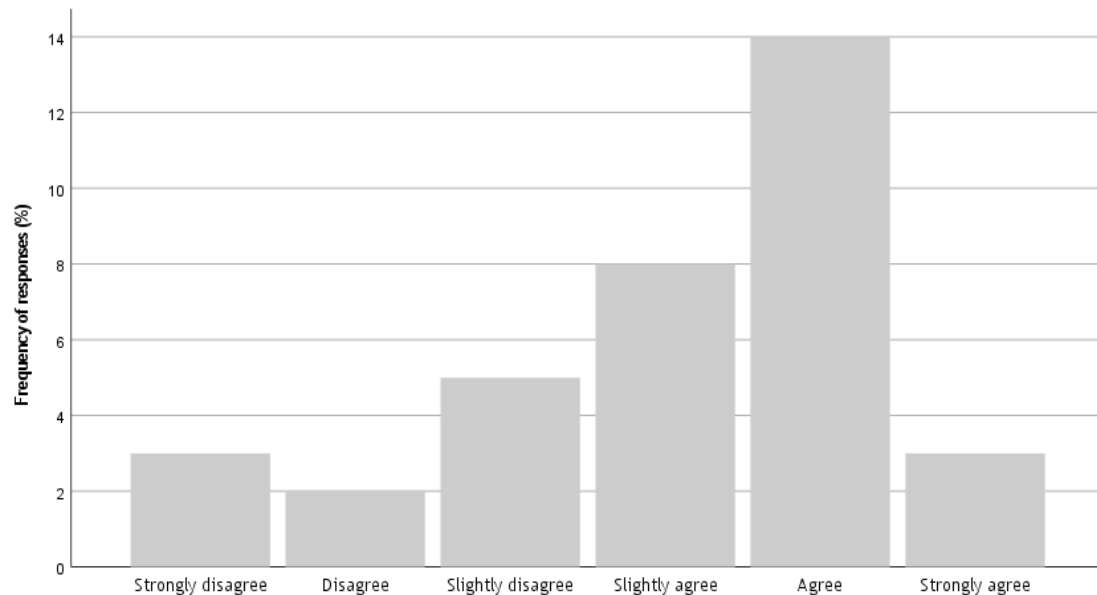


Figure 101: *Teachers' responses to ST13 You should not say anything in English until you can say it correctly (N=35)*

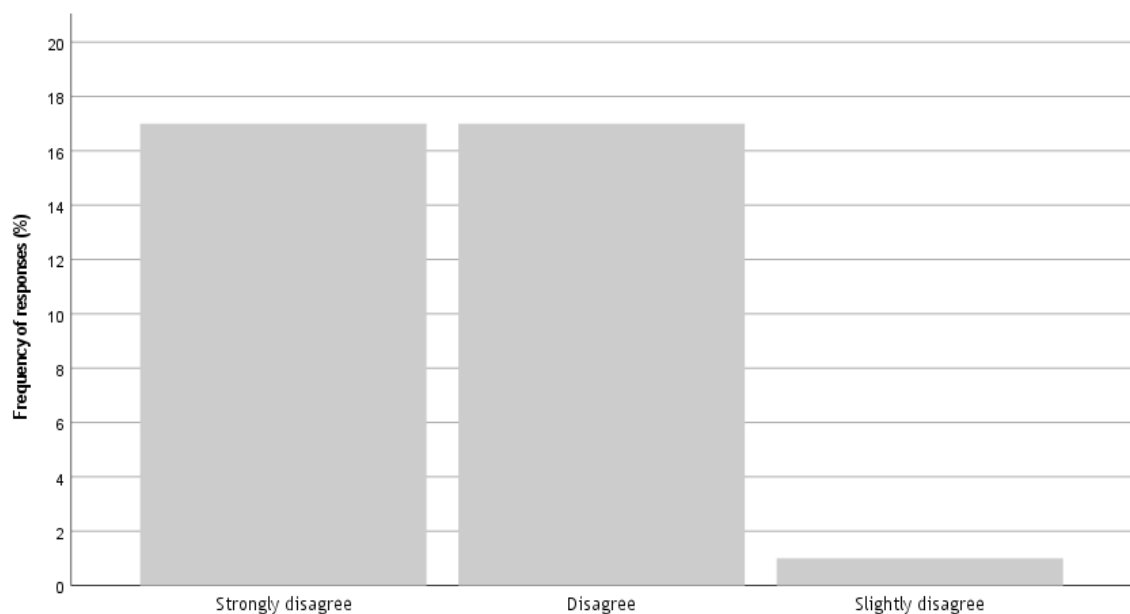


Figure 102: Teachers' responses to ST18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot to learn English (N=35)

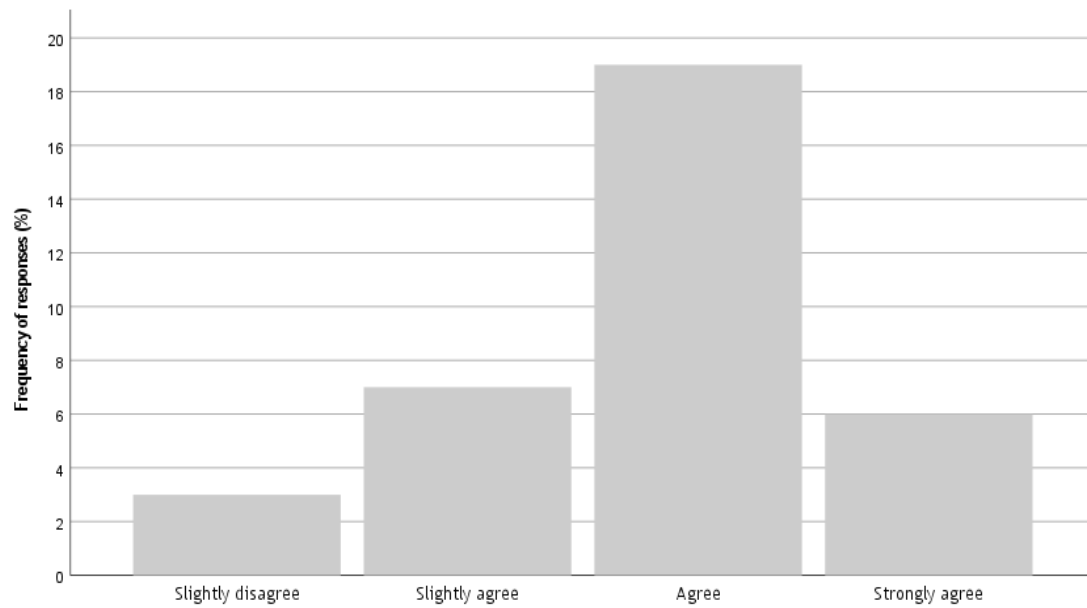


Figure 103: Teachers' responses to ST19. While learning English, if you are allowed to make mistakes at the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later on (N=35)

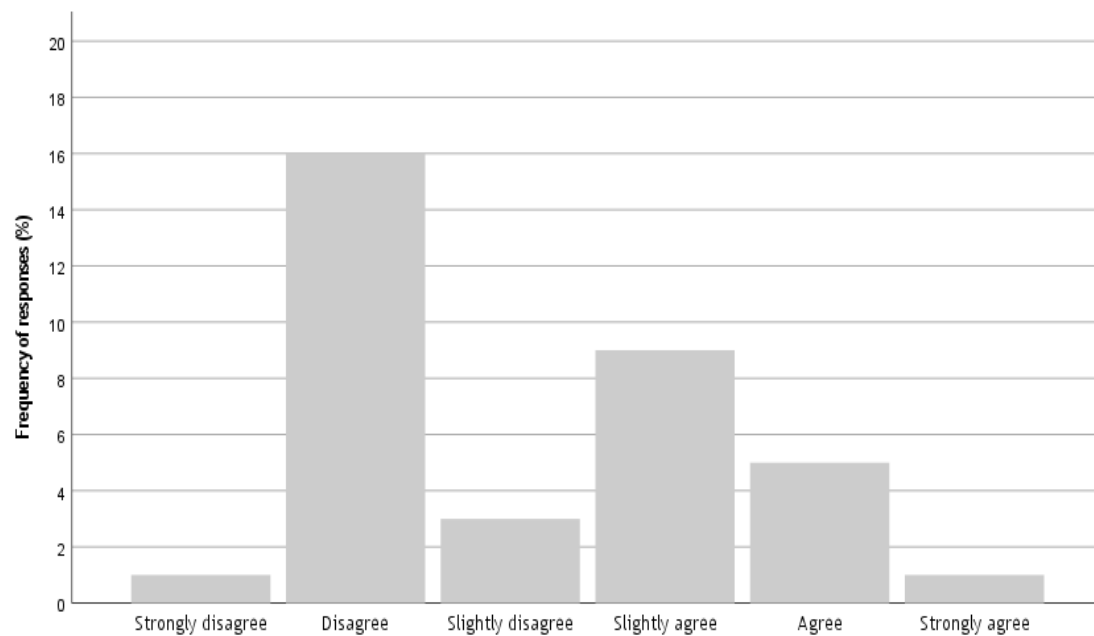


Figure 104: Teachers' responses to ST26. *My students feel shy when speaking English in front of other people* (N=35)

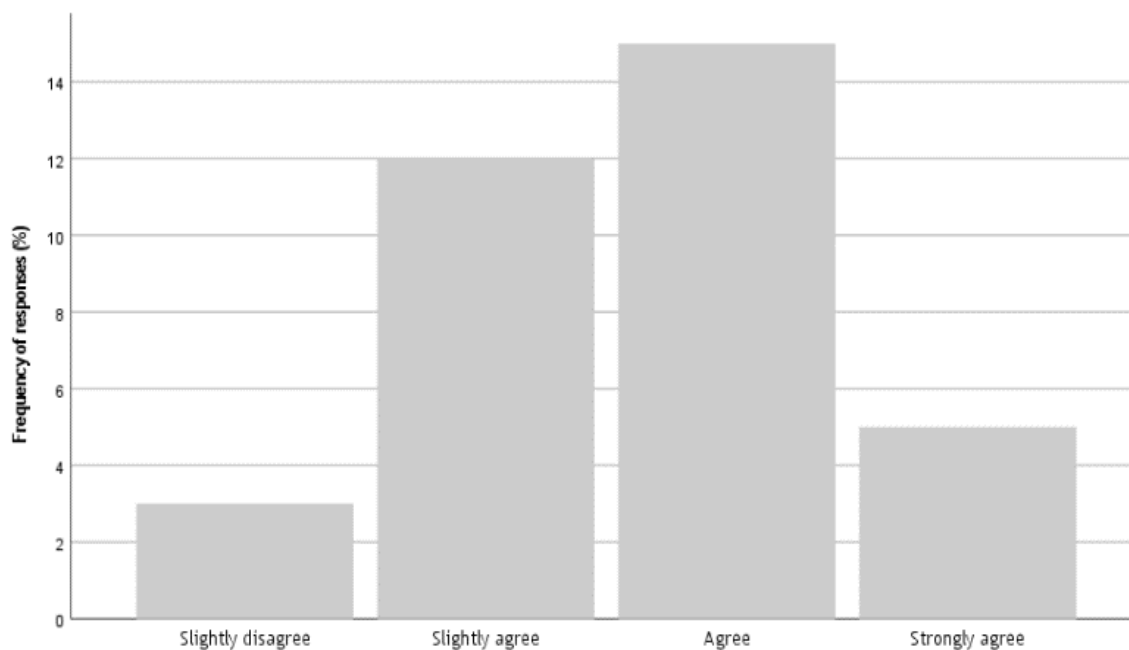
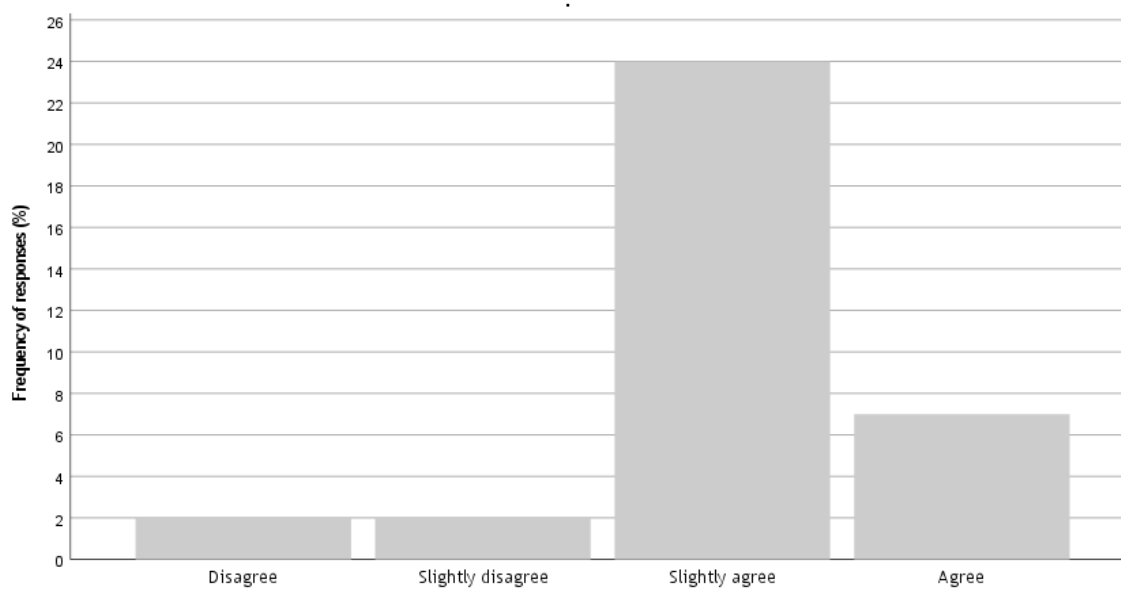
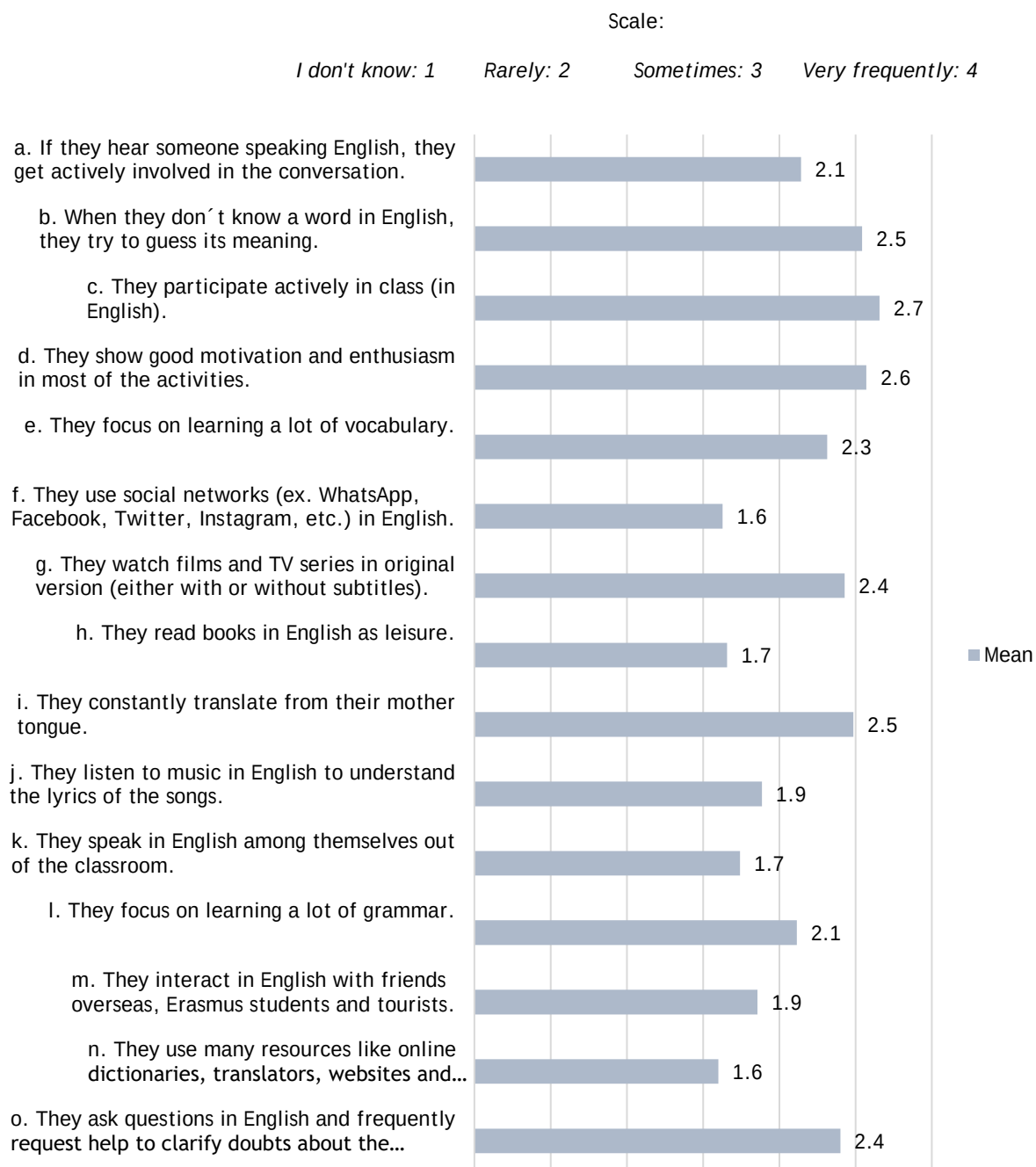


Figure 105: Teachers' responses to ST30. *I think that more extroverted students can learn English better than the rest* (N=35)



Appendix C 11: *Teachers' answers for belief category 5 on learning and communication strategies, Part B (ST31) on the teachers' assessment of the students' use of strategies (N=35)*





#### *Appendix D: Interview guide for students*

The following questions have the objective of exploring your ideas about learning EFL. Your answers will only be used for this study, and they will be kept confidential. No personal information other than your degree and year of study is needed. Do you consent to be interviewed and audio-recorded? Thank you very much for your support!

- 1) It is said that some languages are easier to learn than others. In general, do you consider English a difficult/easy language to learn? Why? / What makes it easy/difficult?
- 2) In your case, what advantages does knowing English have?
- 3) Many students think that the best way to learn a language is in the country where it is spoken. What do you think about this idea? Why?
- 4) It is said that you need a special aptitude to learn a language. In your opinion, what are the necessary abilities to learn English? What personality traits do you think could help a student to learn English better?
- 5) What other factors (apart from the student him/herself) are crucial to learn English? Why? / How?
- 6) Most of your classmates think that it is important to repeat and to practice English. What's the best way for you to learn English? How often do you practice it? How do you practice it?
- 7) What technological resources do you use to practice English?
- 8) Do you know any websites and apps that could be used to practice English? Could you give me some examples?
- 9) Do you use/have you used any of these apps to practice outside the classroom? How often do you use them? What parts/characteristics of these apps do you find most useful?
- 10) When you speak in English; do you mind being corrected? Why?
- 11) Sometimes we can guess the origin of a person based on the accent he/she speaks English with. In your opinion, how important it is to speak English without an accent? Why?
- 12) It is often said that Spanish people are not good at English. Do you agree with this statement? What are the reasons of this?
- 13) What do you think about the students who frequently speak in English outside the classroom as a form of practice?
- 14) In your opinion, is a higher/lower level of English of a student related to his/her economic and social level? Does this create differences between the students? Why?
- 15) Should more subjects in English be included in the university programs/curriculum? Why?
- 16) What do you recommend to improve the learning and use of English at the USC, Galicia and Spain in general?

*Appendix D 1: Distribution of interview questions as per category of beliefs of the questionnaire*

| Belief category                          | Questionnaire statements                | Interview questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING       | 7, 10, 14, 18, 22, 23, 4                | Q1: It is said that some languages are easier to learn than others. In general, do you consider English a difficult/easy language to learn?<br>Why? / What makes it easy/difficult?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2. FOREIGN LANGUAGE APTITUDE             | 1, 2, 9, 13, 19, 26, 29, 30, 31         | Q4: It is said that you need a special aptitude to learn a language. In your opinion, what are the necessary abilities to learn English? What personality traits do you think could help a student to learn English better?<br><br>Q5: What other factors (apart from the student him/herself) are crucial to learn English? Why? / How?<br><br>Q12: It is often said that Spanish people are not good at English. Do you agree with this statement? What are the reasons for this?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3. THE DIFFICULTY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING   | 3, 5, 21, 25, 34, 35                    | Q3: Many students think that the best way to learn a language is in the country where it is spoken. What do you think about this idea? Why?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 4. MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS          | 20, 24, 27, 28, 33                      | Q2: In your case, what advantages does knowing English have?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 5. LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES | 15, 6, 8, 11, 12, 16, 17, 32            | Q6: Most of your classmates think that it is important to repeat and to practice English. What's the best way for you to learn English? How often do you practice it? How do you practice it?<br><br>Q7: What technological resources do you use to practice English?<br><br>Q8: Do you know any websites and apps that could be used to practice English? Could you give me some examples?<br><br>Q9: Do you use/have you used any of these apps to practice outside the classroom? How often do you use them? What parts/characteristics of these apps do you find most useful?<br><br>Q10: When you speak in English; do you mind to be corrected? Why?<br><br>Q11: Sometimes we can guess the origin of a person based on the accent he/she speaks English with. In your opinion, how important it is to speak English without (and with) an accent? Why?<br><br>Q13: What do you think about the students who frequently speak in English outside the classroom as a form of practice? |
| 6. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS                | EMI instruction, learning opportunities | Q14: In your opinion, is a higher/lower level of English of a student related to his/her economic and social level? Does this create differences between the students? Why?<br><br>Q15: Should more subjects in English be included in the university programs/curriculum? Why?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| RECOMMENDATIONS                          |                                         | Q16: What do you recommend to improve the learning and use of English at the USC, Galicia and Spain in general?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

Appendix D 2: Fragments of transcripts - students' interviews

YRR: *It is said that some languages are easier to learn than others. In general, do you consider English a difficult/easy language to learn?*

IntSt28 (English Studies): I had always thought English was an easy language because it was really easy to study it since I began... learning English, and... since last year that I took German, I realized it's really easy... compared to other languages.

YRR: *Compared to German, you mean?*

IntSt28(English Studies): Yes...

YRR: *All right, what makes it easier for you...as compared to German?*

IntSt28(English Studies): It has...like...very simple structures...you have these five verbs...for example...and you have the nouns...some adjectives...and you don't have to learn declinations or things like that...you can know... think what the word in English could be...and you don't have to learn the word because sometimes they are from Latin, so you can always find like a way to express yourself.

IntSt41 (Audiovisual Communication): In my case it is difficult because I've been learning it since I was young...and I don't have a good level yet...mmm...specially in speaking. So, it is apparently easy because it's present at the social level but in practice the majority of people in Spain and Galicia don't have a good command of English.

YRR: *In your opinion, what advantages does knowing English have for you?*

IntSt28 (English Studies): I have made a lot of friends on the Internet...and last year one of my classmates was English so we used English to communicate...hmm...and it's a really good way to practice...so...it's really useful in that sense. I also use it for reading...instructions, texts, academic essays...so it's really useful.

YRR: *You do English Studies, right?*

IntSt28(English Studies): Yes...

YRR: *So, how useful will English be for your profession...your future working life?*

IntSt28(English Studies): My dream is to be a writer...so I could write in Spanish and in English...for example, or if we talk about to other things, for example, being a translator, it could be easier to find a job...

IntSt41(Audiovisual Communication): You move around the world...you can travel anywhere. Besides, today it is indispensable...for the employment market I believe it is indispensable.

YRR: *Ok, very well then... Many students think that the best way to learn a language is in the country where it is spoken. What do you think about this idea?*

IntSt28(English Studies): It's true...I've been to London, and I practiced a lot...but it's true that now with globalization in other countries they know how to speak Spanish, and for example, I went...when I went to London there was an English man who knew how to speak Galician because he had Galician friends, so maybe if you go to a place and you want to speak English but they know how to speak Spanish, they'll always want to try to practice, so it can be difficult to practice English.

Int41(Audiovisual Communication): Yes, I agree...I was in Canterbury for three weeks...stayed in a family house and I learned more than during the English course in high school.

IntSt52(Physics): Yes, I agree. In my personal experience, I attended an English course in Spain this summer and a course in English in Germany. I learned more English in Germany than in the English course because I had to communicate in English all the time with the rest of the class. However,...in the English course in Spain we spoke inside the classroom but outside people didn't want to continue practicing...

YRR: Why not?

IntSt52(Physics): ...because they were saturated, they thought this was only for the English class and since there was no teacher present, it was more relaxing for them to speak in Spanish... which was not my case...but for them it was completely like that. So, if I spoke in English they would ask, 'Are you a teacher? What's wrong with you?'

YRR: *It is said that you need a special aptitude to learn a language. In your opinion, what are the necessary abilities to learn English?*

IntSt31(Educational Sciences): No, any person can learn it...

YRR: *What about the student's personality...what personality traits do you think could help a student to learn English better?*

IntSt31(Educational Sciences): In terms of the student's personality, it depends more on the teacher because if the teacher motivates you and encourages you, you develop an interest for the language.

IntSt35(English Studies): No aptitudes are needed...curiosity is what you need and desire for learning. Even if you have many lessons, if you are not motivated and feel the need to look up things and practice, you don't learn well. Although there are people who can learn languages better. I think that the more languages you know, the easier it is to learn another one because your brain makes connections and compares ways to learn too. Some people link language learning to the area of the Arts and Humanities, and I disagree, I think it depends on the context you grow up in. If you were encouraged to feel curious about learning...about other people and cultures, you develop a desire to learn a language. In my case I did Science in high school and here I am... studying Philology, and I really like it.

YRR: *Apart from the student...his personality and motivation...What other factors do you consider important in learning English?*

IntSt14(Chemistry): Well...in general to learn any language... you need good quality material because if you want to be...to learn on your own, a lack of materials can be a big initial barrier. As to methodology, we need to replace the board and the workbooks with more interactive, conversational lessons to practice the language properly.

IntSt42(Law): Exposure, the more you practice the quicker you fix the language. Also, the methodology used by the teacher...let's see...it should give the students the opportunity to participate more. I think the teaching resources should be better exploited, and they should be based on the learning interest of the students.

YRR: *Most of your classmates think that it is important to repeat and to practice English. What's the best way for you to learn English? Do you have any special strategies or tricks to practice?*

IntSt17(Criminology): No...only watching films and series...

YRR: *And when you watch those films and series, do you turn the subtitles on?*

IntSt17(Criminology): Yes...in English

YRR: *And without subtitles...?*

IntSt17(Criminology): No hahaha...but I listen to music and sometimes...I write the lyrics...

IntSt8(Chemistry): I listen to music in English a lot and try to understand the lyrics... I think videogames are also useful... as are films, series, books and all material related to culture. My speaking skills are ok although I have difficulties sometimes because my vocabulary is not enough and also probably because of the lack of experience of talking with foreign speakers.

YRR: *When you speak in English; do you mind being corrected? Why?*

IntSt33(Galician Studies): No, on the contrary, I like it because it's a good way to learn. Even in Galician, for example, if someone tells me, 'You're using many Spanish words' I prefer so. Yet, sometimes the form used to correct other people is not the best, and some people even laugh at those who make mistakes...so, socially, there is mockery.

IntSt44(Odontology): No, I don't mind being corrected because it's a way of learning. I think it also depends on who corrects your mistakes. A teacher is fine but someone on the street...if you're asking for directions, for example... is not nice.

YRR: *Sometimes we can guess the origin of a person based on the accent he/she speaks English with. In your opinion, how important is it to speak English without (or with) an accent?*

**IntSt38(English Master's):** Accent is not important as far as the pronunciation is good. Even if you try to imitate accent, in the end you won't produce an English or American accent as such. You end up mixing you accent, and this is inevitable.

IntSt46(Physics): I think that even when... for the ideal linguistic competence, you should have an accent close to the native, talking to people with different accents gives you more richness and complements your communication much better, so I see it as something positive for your language learning.

YRR: *What do you think about the students who frequently speak in English outside the classroom as a form of practice?*

IntSt14(Chemistry): Sometimes I've heard some classmates practicing English. It's not as frequent because the university in Spain is focused on the education in Spanish and in regional languages (like Galician). In this sense we're going in the opposite direction compared to other countries (e.g., Holland or Sweden) where at high school English grows exponentially. I think here we focus on learning many languages with low quality, rather than a few with better quality.

IntSt21(Educational Sciences): We only speak English if we travel or if we are asked to in class. I don't feel confident speaking in English... so I would never start a conversation in English, I feel shy, a feeling that becomes permanent and then you never try...we also have Galician and Spanish to communicate.

IntSt26(English Studies): I practice my English with my friends who are outside Spain. We speak on the phone or send audio files... I also talk to tourists in Santiago. I think my classmates don't practice outside the classroom because they feel shy...and...it's not considered strange to speak in English at the faculty, especially if you talk to Erasmus students.

YRR: *In your opinion, is a higher/lower level of English of a student related to his/her economic and social level? Does this create differences between the students? Why?*

**IntSt39(English Master's):** I don't think so, despite the economic factor there are more resources available for students who really want to learn. Now there are more scholarships (e.g., Amancio Ortega), the Language School has affordable prices for everyone. Yet, I think the problem is lack of information...it also depends on the personal interest of the students, the scholarships they apply for. I also think we live under the assumption that everyone likes learning languages. In my experience I have taught children and secondary students and not all of them are motivated, you have to explain the importance of learning English to them.

**IntSt44(Odontology):** Yes, because if you cannot afford a mobile, attending private lessons at an academy or you cannot travel your learning is not as good, I mean...many students learn well because they spend a year studying abroad and it makes a difference.

**YRR:** *Should more subjects in English be included in the university programs/curriculum? Why?*

**IntSt56(Spanish Studies):** Not only in English, in other languages as well...for instance, we have to defend Galician.

**IntSt42(Law):** I think so. There are degrees that have an international approach mmm...and you need to share and learn about opinions and content which is written in English, you need to submit projects in English or face an examining board in English... like in my case. So, I think that some subjects in English would be fine, mainly because of the vocabulary in many specific fields.

**IntSt21(Educational Sciences):** Yes, they should be included. We only had one subject over three months taught by three teachers, none of whom spoke in English. And they just focused on the basic grammar as usual...and for the ones specializing they only have four subjects in English, two in the 3rd year and two in the 4th year, and they have to present the final dissertation in English and do the practical period in English too...so it's not enough English preparation.



## Appendix E: *Interview guide for teachers*

The following questions seek to further explore some ideas expressed by teachers upon completing the questionnaire. Your answers will only be used for this study, and the interviewer commits herself to keeping the confidentiality of the data gathered as well as to removing the contact details of the interviewees once the collection process is finished. Do you consent to be audio-recorded? Thank you very much for your support!

1. It is said that some languages are easier to learn than others. In general, do you consider learning English a difficult or an easy process? Why? What makes it easy or difficult?
2. Many teachers think the best way to learn a language is in a country where it is spoken. What do you think about this idea? Why would this be (or not be) the best way?
3. It is frequently said that you need 'a talent' to learn a foreign language. In your opinion, what are the necessary abilities to learn English? What personality traits do you think could help a student to learn English better?
4. What other factors (apart from the student him/herself) are crucial to learn English? Why? / How important are they?
5. Most of the respondent teachers consider that practicing and repeating are important strategies to learn English. In your opinion:
  - a. How often should your students practice English?
  - b. Which skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) should they practice the most?
6. The answers in the student questionnaire show their use of apps and websites available to learn English is rather limited. In your view, why don't they use these resources more frequently and effectively?
7. Is it important to correct students' errors during the process of learning English? Why / Why not?
8. In your opinion, is it important that a student speaks English with a stronger or a weaker accent of her/his mother tongue? Why?
9. It is frequently said that Spanish people are not good at English. Do you agree with this statement? What's the reasoning behind this way of thinking?
10. Many teachers agree that the students speak very little English among themselves out of the classroom as a way of practice. In your opinion, what may be the reasons for this?
11. It is said that in Galicia a financially advantaged student might learn English better than others. What's your opinion regarding this matter?
12. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages for both students and teachers of having subjects taught in English at the different faculties and schools (i.e. English Mediated Instruction-EMI)?

## Appendix E 1: Samples of transcripts - teachers' interviews

YRR: *It is said that some languages are easier to learn than others. In general, do you consider learning English a difficult or an easy process?*

IntT2 (GE): I think it depends on the learner's L1(s). Broadly speaking, the more distant grammatically speaking and the less transparent at a phonological level a language is from another one, the more difficulties a particular learner of English may encounter. For instance, Spanish is a language in which there is a total correspondence between the way a word is written and pronounced (with some exceptions in foreign borrowings); on the other hand, this regular pattern does not occur in English since a combination of letters can be pronounced in many different ways (to exemplify, the ending -ough in *rough*, *cough*, *through* and *drought*.). Concerning the grammatical level, the English language can be regarded as being rather simple. For example, there are no declinations or special verbal endings except for the third person singular, the subjunctive is formed by other tenses, there is no distinction between gender when it comes to articles or demonstratives, etc. However, despite this simplicity, we must ask ourselves whether this fact makes it more difficult for people who are used to dealing with more complex structures in their native language (for example, in Spanish and Galician).

IntT13 (EMI): I think it is essentially easy, its grammar and constructions are easy to learn, I think that the biggest limitation is that in Spain we speak little English. If you don't listen to it daily, it complicates your learning progress. For example, in Portugal films are not dubbed, so at the cinema you see original versions subtitled in Portuguese which enables a better learning of the language.

YRR: *Many teachers think the best way to learn a language is in a country where it is spoken. What do you think about this idea?*

IntT1(GE): I think visiting an English-speaking country contributes to learning English (it is enriching) but is not the best way unless it is controlled, and you can check that English is used both actively and passively. It is common to find students who have been to these countries and have practiced very little or little English due to shyness or because they found speakers of his/her mother tongue. In addition, many people who go to English-speaking countries to work, don't practice English so much because they are in hack-work positions that don't require a high level of English.

IntT18(EMI): I think it is a wonderful opportunity to be immersed 24 hours in a native-speaking environment. Is it the only way to learn the language? No. And there are people who never visited an English-speaking country and they speak the language perfectly well... In my experience the years I lived in the UK and the USA boosted my capacity to use the language. It is not only about improving your pronunciation and vocabulary but also about understanding it in different contexts and within a hubbub of conversations, to use the different registers, lots of slang and particular uses which you don't get to learn as well in textbooks or academic learning. My background before staying abroad was high-school English and a course on technical English (Chemical Engineering). Then when I graduated I prepared an FCE in an academy, which I didn't pass with flying colors, but I got the certificate. I went to Belfast, and accent wasn't as BBC-like as you expected, I remember having difficulties to understand people as I only could get words and phrases, but it was difficult for me to understand; although, they understood me very well. So, for instance, the lab phone rang, and I would panic if there wasn't anyone around to answer. But in general, I think it was because of the accent, in the USA it was easier to understand.

YRR: *It is frequently said that you need ‘a talent’ to learn a foreign language. In your opinion, what are the necessary abilities to learn English? What personality traits do you think could help a student to learn English better?*

IntT3 (GE): It is important to have a good ear and also to be consistent and perseverant. Being curious about and fascinated by other languages and cultures is also important. You should also be able to speak unhesitantly. I do believe that some people have a special ability for languages just as others have it for math, for example.

IntT12(EMI): I think this is something inherent to each individual but not feeling embarrassed to talk is about enough to learn. Those with a lot of nerve learn faster. The most important thing to learn English is to talk regularly with a native.

YRR: *What other factors (apart from the student him/herself) are crucial to learn English? Why? / How important are they?*

IntT5 (GE): Teaching, which is many times standardized beyond its own possibilities. Each student seems to need specific stimuli which respond to their own learning style, something that is very difficult to identify and activate in pre-programmed lessons of 15-20 students. The circumstances also have an influence, even when these are dependable on the student, for instance the amount of culture he/she consumes in English, how much English he/she is surrounded by out of the classroom, etc.

IntT13 (EMI): To try to incorporate the language to your daily life as far as possible. For example, reading information in English, watching Netflix in streaming, trying to interact with natives...And the other aspect is self-study. In my case I have travelled abroad many times which has forced me to learn English. Today there are a lot of apps and resources to learn on your own...Another important aspect is that in lessons (EMI) the teacher should always speak in English, you have to avoid communication in other languages, almost pretend you are a native. You should also encourage students to participate. First year students are very shy, and their level of English is very low, and we need to encourage cooperative learning and participation.

YRR: *Most of the respondent teachers consider that practicing and repeating are important strategies to learn English. In your opinion, how often should your students practice English? And which skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) should they practice the most?*

IntT4 (GE): Some sources suggest 30 minutes per day on a constant basis but evidently the more practice, the better...In my view, a balance between all the skills is desirable, unless the student has a specific type of motivation. For instance, if his motivation is literary, reading will be the priority. If his motivation is to visit a native-speaking country, speaking and listening will prevail.

IntT15(EMI): I don't know where the boundaries are, I practice every day and I keep it active in this way. Yet, it is completely true that its use helps you to enhance your level and become more fluent. I don't if it necessary to practice every day. I think in Spain there is a lot of written work, so perhaps reading and writing are stronger than listening and speaking. I'm not sure if this is due to the way of teaching in Spain. I noticed this when I travelled to an English-speaking country for the first time, actually my grammar wasn't bad. I think that we've got the theory quite covered in primary and secondary. We're missing the practical part, speaking and listening, I think these two skills are the ones with most difficulties, in my personal opinion.

YRR: *The answers in the student questionnaire show their use of apps and websites available to learn English is rather limited. In your view, why don't they use these resources more frequently and effectively?*

IntT6 (GE): There could be two reasons. On one hand, the amount of information available online can be overwhelming. The role of the teacher is very important to enable an effective search based on the level and needs of each student. On the other, there is a lack of motivation along

with laziness. They don't use the networks simply because they don't want to and this applies not only to English but to other subjects too.

IntT18(EMI): Well, I don't know about other students, but physics students do not have time. I compare my son's timetable, who is studying political sciences, with that of my students' and there's a world of difference. I don't want to underestimate the other disciplines as they might be complicated in a different way... but my students have to do lab practices, report writing, formative assessment, exams...and the level of difficulty is high...so they don't have time. If they cannot profit from the inclusion of EMI in the curriculum, they don't have time to study English because their leisure time is already very little. Just as an example, when the students organize protests or strikes, the highest number of students who miss lessons are not in the hard sciences. They know that if they miss a lab practice session or lesson, they won't have time to make up for it.

YRR: *Is it important to correct students' errors during the process of learning English? Why / Why not?*

IntT8(GE): Not always...it is obvious that in an oral exercise if you interrupt the student several times, you get the opposite effect. But I do consider necessary to reinforce error correction mostly in writing. Even so, it can be done with a general approach to avoid individualizing and reduce shyness to use the language.

IntT19(EMI): So, if they are talking to me and they make a mistake I personally could tell them but in public, in the middle of the lesson I don't. In an exam or exercise they complete, I don't correct English...If they are in office hours, a close space, I do. But not otherwise because I think that many of them are afraid of ridicule, so I try to avoid this type of situation. First, because I don't think my level of English is good enough to correct others, I've had students whose level of English is better than mine and I've also seen students that I don't know what they're doing in an English class. But I don't kick them out, if they want to try their level of English, they're welcome. And the second reason is that I think for the majority of the students it would be counter-productive rather than beneficial because it can increase their shyness. It is also important to consider the context, the main objective in our faculty is to facilitate the learning of English through EMI, not to get them certified in English; these are not English lessons but lessons in English.

YRR: *In your opinion, is it important that a student speaks English with a stronger or a weaker accent of her/his mother tongue? Why?*

IntT22(GE): I insist that the most important aspect is a good pronunciation, i.e., that they know, for instance, to pronounce diphthongs and vowel correctly. And it also depends on the student, some of them can speak at a C2 level with a marked accent and just as it happens with Spanish speakers (you or me) whose accent makes a difference, a NNS can be perceived by others as bad due to the accent. And it happens in class, students who speak with a great accent and all structures misplaced. So, one thing is my opinion about accent being unimportant and the other is how it is seen by others. And now in terms of ELF the concept of the native accent is more diluted plus it depends on the context where you use the language. Despite the emergence of ELF / global English it's also true that the students still have the perception of the native teacher or speaker as the best level of proficiency. And sometimes it's not very clear for them who are native speakers. For instance, I ask my students about who they consider native teachers, and they say American, English, Australian but if I say South African or Indian, they are not sure or say no. So, it is complicated and mainly with English, which is nobody's heritage anymore. Yet, if I'm faced with two speakers whose grammar is at the same level and whose accent is different, I prefer to listen to the one with a native-like accent.

IntT12(EMI): Not too much. To work as a chemist, it is not too important. There are a lot of people whose English is very bad so.

YRR: *Many teachers agree that the students speak very little English among themselves out of the classroom as a way of practice. In your opinion, what may be the reasons for this?*

IntT21(GE): I think they do it or try to do it Erasmus students, but it also depends on the personality of the student. If they want to improve, they will normally look for the highest exposure. It is true that there's no interaction between those who share their mother tongue, I think because they feel ridiculous. You know it's something similar to a presentation or panel in a convention or congress, we feel ridiculous speaking among ourselves in a language other than our mother tongue. I guess that we are used to it as English teachers. Maybe it's also due to the difference of countries, sometimes abroad people is more self-disciplined and practice the language with each other.

IntT16 (EMI): It's something I found, well still find quite surprising. The easy answer is what we spoke about before, for them it's difficult, it's not nice to speak in another language, it's hard and embarrassing, and embarrassment is one of the main causes. I've found out that Spanish people have a high level of embarrassment and anxiety when it comes to speaking in English, so they think they're worse than any other country in the world. In my experience that's not true, and I have seen people from other countries whose English is not fantastic, but they're not embarrassed to use it. So, I think that it is a combination of laziness, embarrassment and a lack of opportunities in a certain way because other students for example can go to the cinema in English and they could, for example, simulate a conversation over a coffee afterwards. But even with Erasmus students they don't take much advantage to practice. I've heard many conversations with French or Italian Erasmus students but for some reason English is the traumatic language to practice.

YRR: *It is said that in Galicia a financially advantaged student might learn English better than others. What's your opinion regarding this matter?*

IntT3(GE): I fully agree. A financial advantage means more resources and opportunities to travel, private lessons, etc. And very frequently the economic level goes hand in hand with the cultural level of a family, which has an impact on the education parents instill in their children.

IntT13(EMI): Yes, it is true. Today children who attend a bilingual school get, for example, 70 % of the learning in English. So if you have more resources, you can travel more, you can have a stay-abroad period or go abroad to a camp in summer. In my case, my parents couldn't afford to send me anywhere. However, motivation is also important. It doesn't mean that someone who has no money cannot learn English.

*Appendix F: Summary of population sampling process from students in undergraduate programs*

| Faculty:<br>S (Santiago)<br>L (Lugo) | a. Total of programs with subjects in English: 22      | b. Total of subjects offered in English: 93                        | c. Total of students in all subjects: 5791                            |                                           |                                                 |                                        |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                      | Degree                                                 | Subject in English (code)                                          | Year / Semester                                                       | (Type: OP-Optional OB-Obligatory B-Basic) | Total students registered in subjects (2018-19) | Mean of students enrolled in subject/s | Student sample of 30 % for this study |
| Communication Sciences (S)           | Journalism                                             | English for Journalists (G3031446)                                 | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (OP)                                    | 29                                              | 29                                     | 9                                     |
|                                      | Audiovisual Communication                              | English for Audiovisual Communication (G3041444)                   | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1                                                   | 6(OP)                                     | 15                                              | 15                                     | 5                                     |
| Educational Sciences (S)             | Teacher Training in Early Childhood Education          | Foreign Language for Early Childhood Education: English (G3121451) | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2                                                   | 4.5 (OP)                                  | 11                                              | 66                                     | 20                                    |
|                                      | Teacher Training in Elementary Education               | English: Comprehension and Speaking (G3141457)                     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2                                                   | 4.5 (OP)                                  | 55                                              |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | English: Comprehension and Writing (G3141455)                      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2                                                   | 4.5 (OP)                                  | 56                                              |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        |                                                                    | Teaching and Learning of Communicative Competence: English (G3141223) | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2                       | 6(OB)                                           | 87                                     | 87                                    |
| Faculty of Law (S)                   | Criminology Transition Year -Criminology               | English for Criminologists (G3191103)                              | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (B)                                     | 100                                             | 100                                    | 30                                    |
|                                      | Law                                                    | Legal-Technical Foreign Language I: English (G3161446)             | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1                                                   | 4.5 (OP)                                  | 51                                              | 36                                     | 11                                    |
|                                      |                                                        |                                                                    | Legal-Technical Foreign Language II: English (G3161450)               | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2                       | 4.5 (OP)                                        |                                        |                                       |
| Faculty of Philology (S)             | -Classic Philology<br>-Modern Languages and Literature | English Language I (G5071105)                                      | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (B)                                     | 12                                              | 11                                     | 4                                     |
|                                      |                                                        | English Language II (G5071115)                                     | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (B)                                     | 11                                              |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | English Language III (G5071521)                                    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 0                                               |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | Introduction to English Literature (G5071522)                      | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 0                                               |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | Introduction to North American Literature (G5071523)               | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 0                                               | 1                                      | 1                                     |
|                                      |                                                        | Direct and Reverse Translation (English) (G5071524)                | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 0                                               |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | History and Culture of the English-Speaking Countries (G5071721)   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (OP)                                    | 0                                               |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | English Phonetics and Phonology (G5071722)                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (OP)                                    | 1                                               |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | English Writing Techniques(G5071723)                               | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (OP)                                    | 0                                               |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | English Literature (XVIII-XIX centuries) (G5071724)                | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (OP)                                    | 0                                               |                                        |                                       |
|                                      | English Studies                                        | English Language I (G5061102)                                      | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (B)                                     | 111                                             | 123                                    | 37                                    |
|                                      |                                                        | English Language II (G5061112)                                     | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (B)                                     | 133                                             |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | History and Culture of the English-Speaking Countries (G5061121)   | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 121                                             |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | Introduction to English Literature (G5061122)                      | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 2                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 127                                             |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | English Language III (G5061221)                                    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 120                                             | 117                                    | 35                                    |
|                                      |                                                        | Introduction to North American Literature (G5061222)               | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 112                                             |                                        |                                       |
|                                      |                                                        | Morphosyntax of the English Language (G5061223)                    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 1                                                   | 6 (OB)                                    | 126                                             |                                        |                                       |



| Faculty:<br>S (Santiago)<br>L (Lugo)      | Degree                                                             | Subject in English (code)                                        | Year /<br>Semester  | (Type:<br>OP-Optional<br>OB-<br>Obligatory<br>B-Basic) | Total<br>students<br>registered<br>in<br>subjects<br>(2018-19) | Mean of<br>students<br>enrolled in<br>subject/s | Student<br>sample of 30<br>% for this<br>study |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
|                                           |                                                                    | English Direct and Reverse Translation (G506122)                 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 107                                                            | 63                                              | 19                                             |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Literature 1 (XVIII-XIX centuries) (G5061225)            | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 103                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Phonetics and Phonology (G5061226)                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 134                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Writing Techniques (G5061321)                            | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 116                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | History of the English Language I (G5061322)                     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 97                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Literature 2 (XVI-XVII centuries) (G5061323)             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 95                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | North American Literature I (G5061324)                           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 117                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Syntax and Semantics of the English Language (G5061325)          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 117                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Literature 3 (XX-XXI centuries) (G5061326)               | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 91                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Introduction to English for Academic Purposes (G5061443)         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 19                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Literature and Other Artistic Expression (G5061342)      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 10                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Culture and Tradition of the British Isles (G5061343)            | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 24                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Introduction to English Teaching Methodology (G5061344)          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 28                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Varieties (G5061345)                                     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 18                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Culture and Tradition in the USA and the Commonwealth (G5061346) | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 17                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Speaking Techniques in the English Language (G506142)            | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 92                                                             | 56                                              | 17                                             |
|                                           |                                                                    | History of the English Language II (G5061422)                    | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 89                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Postcolonial Literature in English (G5061423)                    | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 88                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | North American Literature II (G5061424)                          | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 111                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Poetry (G5061425)                                        | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 100                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Grammar and Discourse in English (G5061426)                      | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 90                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Sociolinguistics (G5061341)                              | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 26                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Specialized Translation (G5061442)                       | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 26                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English and North American Brief Narrative (G5061441)            | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 13                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | Old and Middle English Text Analysis (G5061446)                  | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 12                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English and North American Romanticism (G5061444)                | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 7                                                              |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | English Theater (G5061445)                                       | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2 | 6 (OP)                                                 | 20                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
| Faculty of Physics (S)                    | -Degree in Physics<br>-Double Degree in<br>Physics and Chemistry   | Computational Physics (G1031329)                                 | 3 <sup>er</sup> / 2 | 4.5 (OB)                                               | 85                                                             | 85                                              | 26                                             |
| Faculty of Medicine<br>and Odontology (S) | -Degree in Odontology                                              | Dental Technical English (G2061122)                              | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 2 | 3 (OB)                                                 | 57                                                             | 57                                              | 17                                             |
| Faculty of Chemistry<br>(S)               | -Degree in Chemistry<br>-Double degree in<br>Physics and Chemistry | Physics I (G1041101)                                             | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1 | 6 (B)                                                  | 165                                                            | 141                                             | 42                                             |
|                                           |                                                                    | General Chemistry I (G1041103)                                   | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1 | 6 (B)                                                  | 134                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                           |                                                                    | General Chemistry II (G1041104)                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1 | 6 (B)                                                  | 138                                                            |                                                 |                                                |

| Faculty:<br>S (Santiago)<br>L (Lugo)               | Degree                                                                   | Subject in English (code)                                             | Year /<br>Semester  | (Type:<br>OP-Optional<br>OB-<br>Obligatory<br>B-Basic) | Total<br>students<br>registered<br>in<br>subjects<br>(2018-19) | Mean of<br>students<br>enrolled in<br>subject/s | Student<br>sample of 30<br>% for this<br>study |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
|                                                    | -Double degree in<br>Chemistry and Biology                               | Applied Statistics and Computer Science for Chemists (G1041105)       | 1 <sup>st</sup> /2  | 6 (B)                                                  | 157                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Physics II (G1041107)                                                 | 1 <sup>st</sup> /2  | 6 (B)                                                  | 127                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | General Chemistry III (G1041109)                                      | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 2 | 6 (B)                                                  | 134                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | General Chemistry IV (G1041110)                                       | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 2 | 6 (B)                                                  | 131                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Organic Chemistry I (G1041224)                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 136                                                            | 151                                             | 45                                             |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Organic Chemistry II (G1041229)                                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 166                                                            | 150                                             | 45                                             |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Inorganic Chemistry IV (G1041325)                                     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 150                                                            |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Industrial and Environmental Control and Analysis (G1041443)          | 4th / 1             | 4.5 (OP)                                               | 39                                                             | 39                                              | 12                                             |
| Superior Technical<br>School of<br>Engineering (S) | Degree in Chemical<br>Engineering                                        | Advanced Chemical Reactors (G4021328)                                 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 70                                                             | 58                                              | 17                                             |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Environmental Engineering (G4021325)                                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 4.5 (OB)                                               | 49                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Chemical Reactor Engineering (G4021324)                               | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 62                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Biochemical Engineering (G4021326)                                    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 4.5 (OB)                                               | 53                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Mass Transfer (G4021322)                                              | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 58                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Laboratory of Chemical Processes (G4021421)                           | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 61                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Project and Equipment Design (G4021422)                               | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 71                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Laboratory of Fluid Transport and Heat Transfer (G4021226)            | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 46                                                             | 59                                              | 18                                             |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Analytical Chemistry (G4021221)                                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 67                                                             | 77                                              | 23                                             |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Heat Transfer (G4021225)                                              | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 58                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Technical Drawing (G4021202)                                          | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (B)                                                  | 64                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Organic chemistry (G4021204)                                          | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (B)                                                  | 60                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Technical English (G4021122)                                          | 1 <sup>st</sup> /1  | 4.5 (OB)                                               | 69                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Fundamental Chemistry (G4021104)                                      | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1 | 6 (B)                                                  | 74                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Fundamentals of Chemical Processes (G4021121)                         | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1 | 6 (B)                                                  | 88                                                             | 6                                               | 2                                              |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Business English I (G3181121)                                         | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 6                                                              |                                                 |                                                |
| Business Administration (L)                        | Degree in Management<br>of Small and Medium-<br>sized Enterprises (SMEs) | Business English II (G3181221)                                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 7                                                              | 7                                               | 2                                              |
| Teacher Training<br>Faculty (L)                    | Teacher Training in<br>Early Childhood<br>Education                      | Foreign Language for Early Childhood Education: English (G3131451)    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 4.5 (OP)                                               | 30                                                             | 30                                              | 15                                             |
|                                                    | Teacher Training in<br>Elementary Education                              | English: Comprehension and Writing (G3151460)                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 4.5 (OP)                                               | 20                                                             | 20                                              |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | English: Comprehension and Speaking (G3151461)                        | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 4.5 (OP)                                               | 20                                                             |                                                 |                                                |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Teaching and Learning of Communicative Competence: English (G3151223) | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 74                                                             | 74                                              |                                                |
| Faculty of<br>Humanities (L)                       | Degree in Cultural<br>Sciences and Diffusion                             | Modern Language: English I (G5101106)                                 | 1 <sup>st</sup> / 1 | 6 (B)                                                  | 21                                                             | 21                                              | 6                                              |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Literature of Modern Languages: English (G5101226)                    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 1 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 21                                                             | 22                                              | 7                                              |
|                                                    |                                                                          | Modern Language: English II (G5101231)                                | 2 <sup>nd</sup> / 2 | 6 (OB)                                                 | 22                                                             |                                                 |                                                |

| Faculty:<br>S (Santiago)<br>L (Lugo) | Degree                          | Subject in English (code)                                          | Year /<br>Semester  | (Type:<br>OP-Optional<br>OB-<br>Obligatory<br>B-Basic) | Total<br>students<br>registered<br>in<br>subjects<br>(2018-19) | Mean of<br>students<br>enrolled in<br>subject/s | Student<br>sample of 30<br>% for this<br>study |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
|                                      |                                 | Modern Languages for Cultural Management: English<br>(G5101345)    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> / 2 | 4.5 (OP)                                               | 5                                                              | 5                                               | 2                                              |
|                                      |                                 | Contemporary Literature of Modern Languages: English<br>(G5101445) | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 1 | 4.5 (OP)                                               | 7                                                              | 7                                               | 2                                              |
| Faculty of Veterinary<br>Science (L) | Degree in Veterinary<br>Science | Veterinary Technical English G2091442                              | 4 <sup>th</sup> / 2 | 3 (OP)                                                 | 18                                                             | 18                                              | 5                                              |
| Total initial sample                 |                                 |                                                                    | 542                 |                                                        |                                                                |                                                 |                                                |

Appendix F 1 *Combination of students' questionnaires into subgroups for the process of data analysis*

| Academic field                                       | Degree                                       | Questionnaires | Grouping and coding for analysis                             |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Group 1<br>HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES<br>(N=187) | Classical Philology                          | 3              | Other Languages and Literature<br>(OthLLit)<br>(N=40)        |
|                                                      | Galician Philology                           | 6              |                                                              |
|                                                      | Modern Languages                             | 8              |                                                              |
|                                                      | Spanish Philology                            | 22             |                                                              |
|                                                      | Master Erasmus Mundus in Lexicography        | 1              |                                                              |
|                                                      | Advanced English Studies (IMAES)             | 7              | English Language (EngLang)<br>(N=134)                        |
|                                                      | English Studies                              | 127            |                                                              |
|                                                      | Urban Tourism                                | 1              | Cultural Studies (CultSt)<br>(N=13)                          |
|                                                      | Management of Education Nature-based Act.    | 2              |                                                              |
| Group 2<br>NATURAL SCIENCES<br>(N=213)               | Cultural Difussion Science                   | 10             |                                                              |
|                                                      | Chemistry                                    | 149            | Chemistry (Chem) (N=149)                                     |
|                                                      | Physics                                      | 46             | Physics (Phys) (N=46)                                        |
| Group 3<br>APPLIED SCIENCES<br>(N=214)               | Double degrees                               | 18             | Double Degrees (DDeg) (N=18)                                 |
|                                                      | Chemical Engineering                         | 28             | Engineering (Engr) (N=30)                                    |
|                                                      | Agricultural Engineering                     | 1              |                                                              |
|                                                      | Theoretical Chemistry and Computer Modelling | 1              |                                                              |
|                                                      | Audiovisual Communication                    | 10             | Journalism and Audiovisual<br>Communication<br>(JAdC) (N=17) |
|                                                      | Journalism                                   | 7              |                                                              |
|                                                      | Criminology                                  | 29             | Criminology and Law (CrLw)<br>(N=40)                         |
|                                                      | Law                                          | 11             |                                                              |
|                                                      | Odontology                                   | 41             | Odontology<br>(Odont) (N=41)                                 |
|                                                      | Educational Sciences                         | 80             | Educational Sciences<br>(EduSc) (N=86)                       |
|                                                      | Master Educational Sciences                  | 6              |                                                              |
| Total                                                |                                              | 614            |                                                              |





This dissertation explores the beliefs of a group of students and teachers about learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the University of Santiago de Compostela. The data gathered by means of questionnaires and interviews included items about the difficulty and nature of language learning, aptitude, motivations and learning strategies. Based on the contextual character of beliefs, a second part in the study briefly analyzes the beliefs of the participants about content learning in English, i.e., English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) and the connection between the socio-economic status of learners and language proficiency.