



# The Impact of Bilingual Education

Students' Plurilingual Competence, Language Accreditation and Mobility

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# Introduction

## Why bilingual education?



### European expansion

Bilingual education programmes have spread across Europe.



### Content & language

Content learning and language learning are integrated in CLIL.



### International experiences

support academic pathways and life-changing opportunities.



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# Theoretical Background (I)

## CLIL as a language-sensitive approach

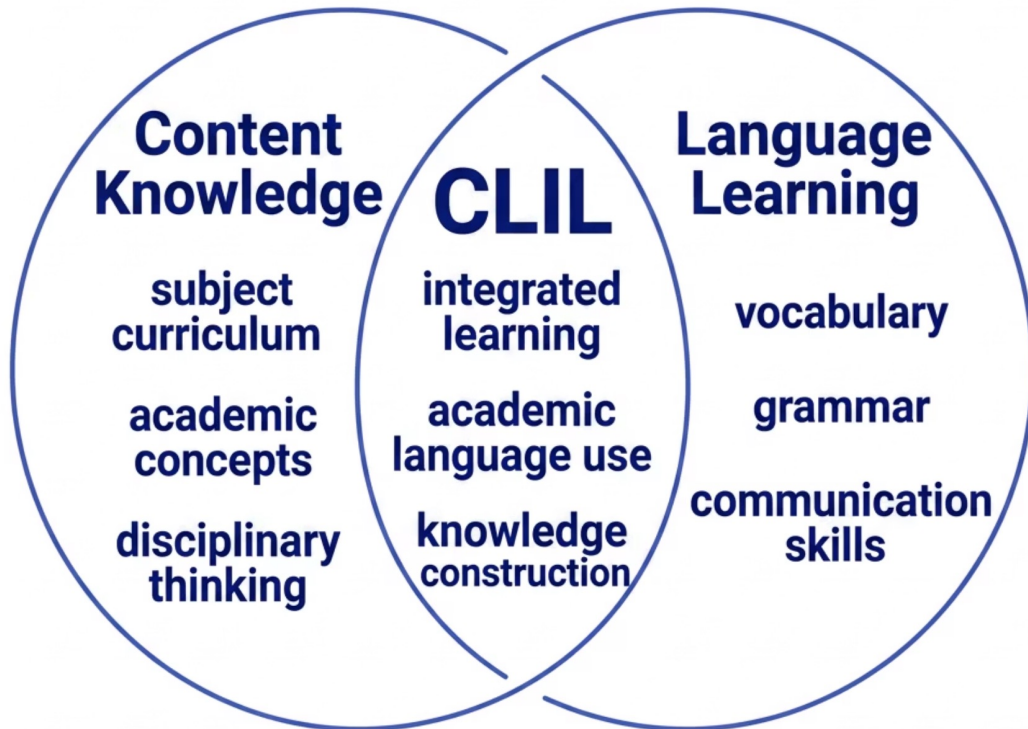
### Interweaving content and language learning

Language becomes a tool for communication, classroom management and knowledge co-construction in CLIL settings (Coyle et al., 2010).

Students learn curriculum content through an additional language: learning to use language and using language to learn. Learning by construction, rather than learning by instruction (Mehisto et al., 2008): learner-centred methodologies; dialogic & cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

CLIL supports increasingly sophisticated academic language use & academic literacy (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006; Llinares & Whittaker, 2012; Llinares 2024), pluriliteracies (Meyer et al., 2015) and deeper learning (Coyle & Meyer, 2021, 2023).

Enhancing students' plurilingual & pluricultural competence (Byram, 1997).



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# Theoretical Background (II)

## Plurilingual competence

### Not isolated systems

Languages form a dynamic, interconnected repertoire; common underlying proficiency (Cummins, 1979a, 1979b, 1981).

### Transfer across languages & translanguaging

Learning one language can support the learning of others and expand learners' linguistic repertoire (García, 2009, García & Otheguy, 2020).

### Develops across communicative contexts

Plurilingual competence grows beyond formal education.



# Theoretical Background (III)

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## Beyond language learning

Bilingual education may influence three key dimensions:



### Additional language learning

Foreign languages studied and acquired beyond bilingual education programmes.



### Official language accreditation

Certification of language proficiency at recognised *CEFR* levels.



### International mobility

Participation in international exchange programmes and experiences (Erasmus+)

See Gómez-Parra et al., 2021 & Arnaiz Castro et al., 2022 on the impact of bilingual education on mobility, employability and intercultural competence.

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# Aim of the study

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## Research focus

To examine students' perceived outcomes after participating in bilingual education programmes.

Plurilingual competence

Language accreditation

International mobility

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# Research questions

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1

## Additional languages

Do students learn additional languages?

2

## Official accreditation

Do they obtain official language certification?

3

## International mobility

Do they participate in international programmes?

4

## Future mobility interest

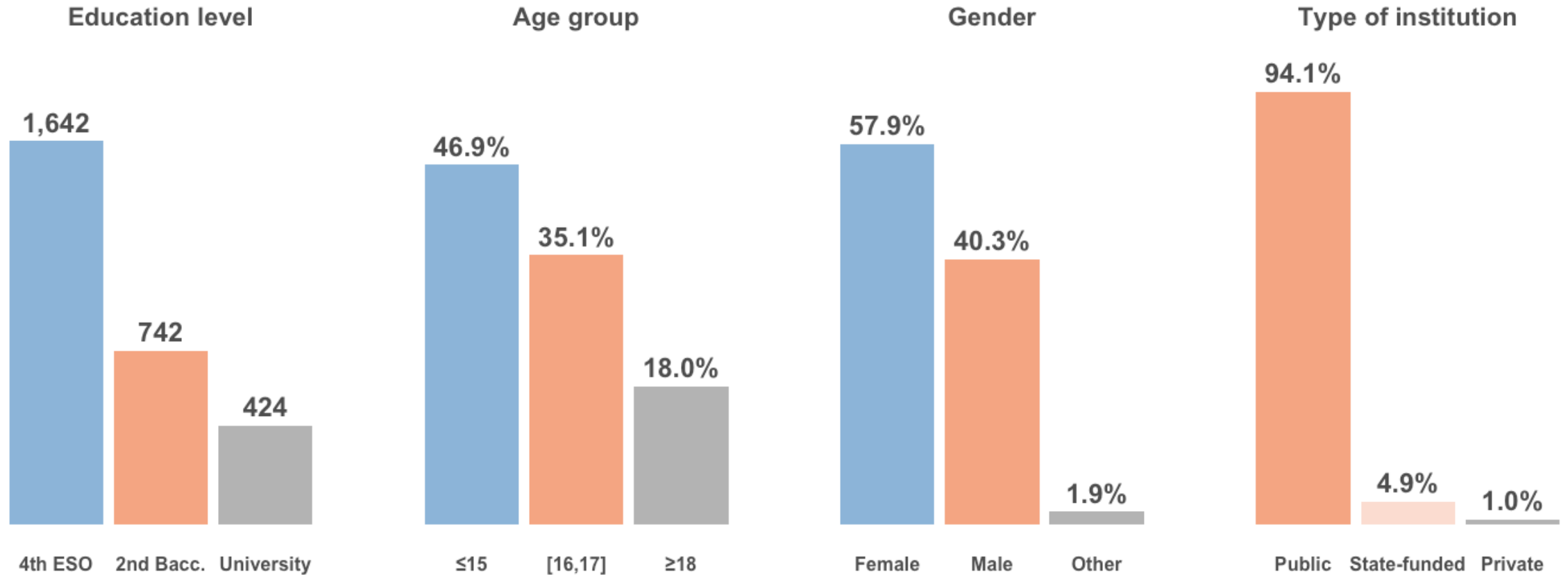
Do they wish to participate again?

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# Methodology: participants

Students in bilingual programmes ( $n = 2,808$ )



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# Methodology: data collection & instrument

## FoBE (Future of Bilingual Education) Project

Validated questionnaire designed within the state-funded research project FoBE (Espejo-Mohedano, 2025; Espejo Mohedano et al., 2026).

### Online survey

Administered via Typeform platform.  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18375688>



FUTURE OF BILINGUAL  
EDUCATION - FoBE  
Futuro de la educación bilingüe - FoBE

Start press Enter



### Bilingual version

Questionnaire available in Spanish and English.

### Feb 2023 – Mar 2025

Data collection period across two academic years.

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# Methodology: statistical analysis

Descriptive and inferential analysis of selected questionnaire items

1

## Selected items

- Language learning
- Official accreditation
- International mobility

2

## Descriptive analysis

- Frequencies
- Percentages
- Graphical summaries

3

## Group comparisons

- Z-tests for proportions
- Homogeneity tests
- Gender · educational stage

Analysis conducted with SPSS v.29.2

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# Results

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**R1. Additional language learning**



**R2. Official language accreditation**

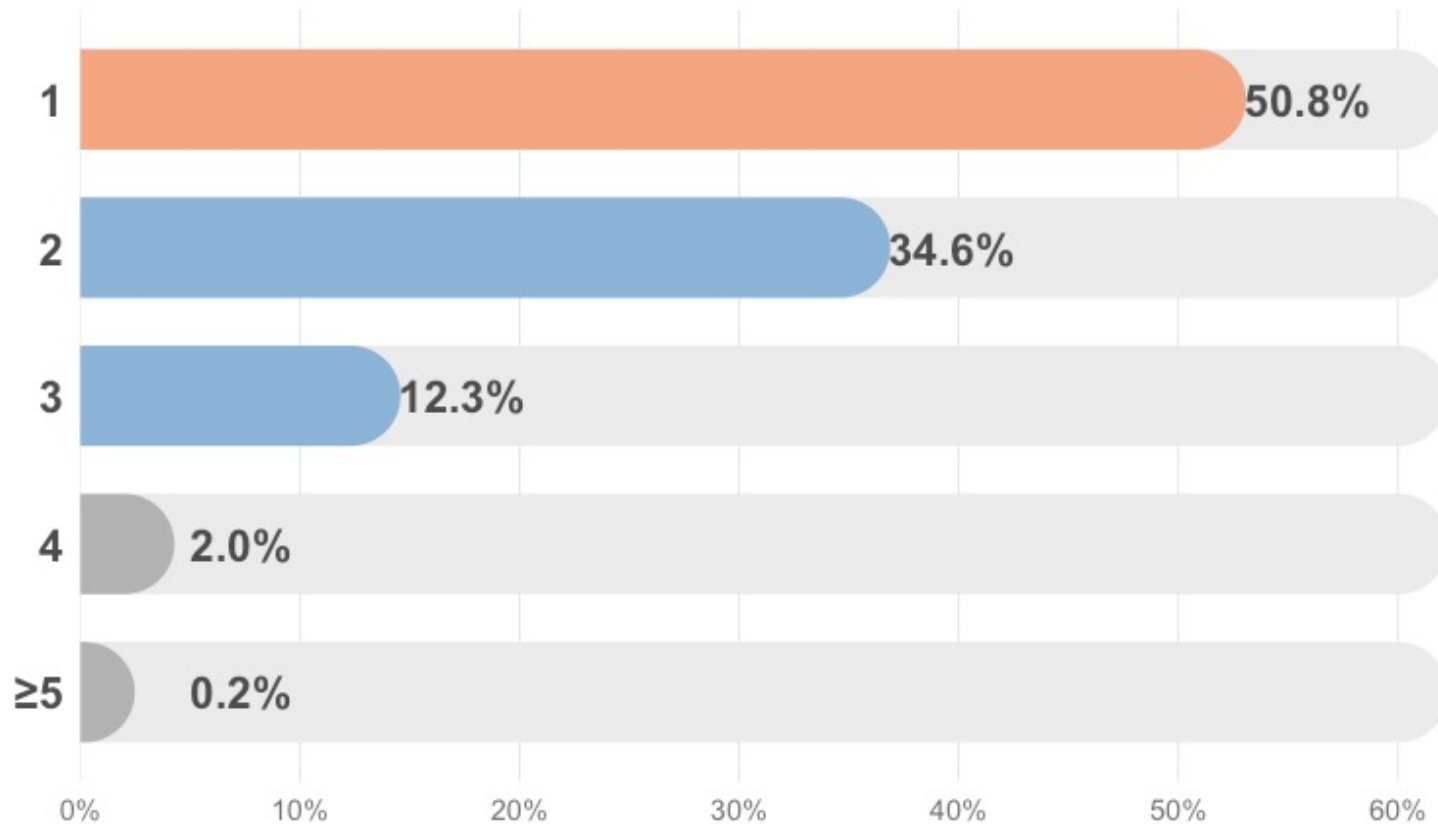


**R3. International mobility**

# R1: Additional language learning

## Foreign languages spoken with some fluency

Percentage of students by number of foreign languages



## A strong plurilingual profile

All students reported fluency in at least one foreign language.

## Formal education remains central

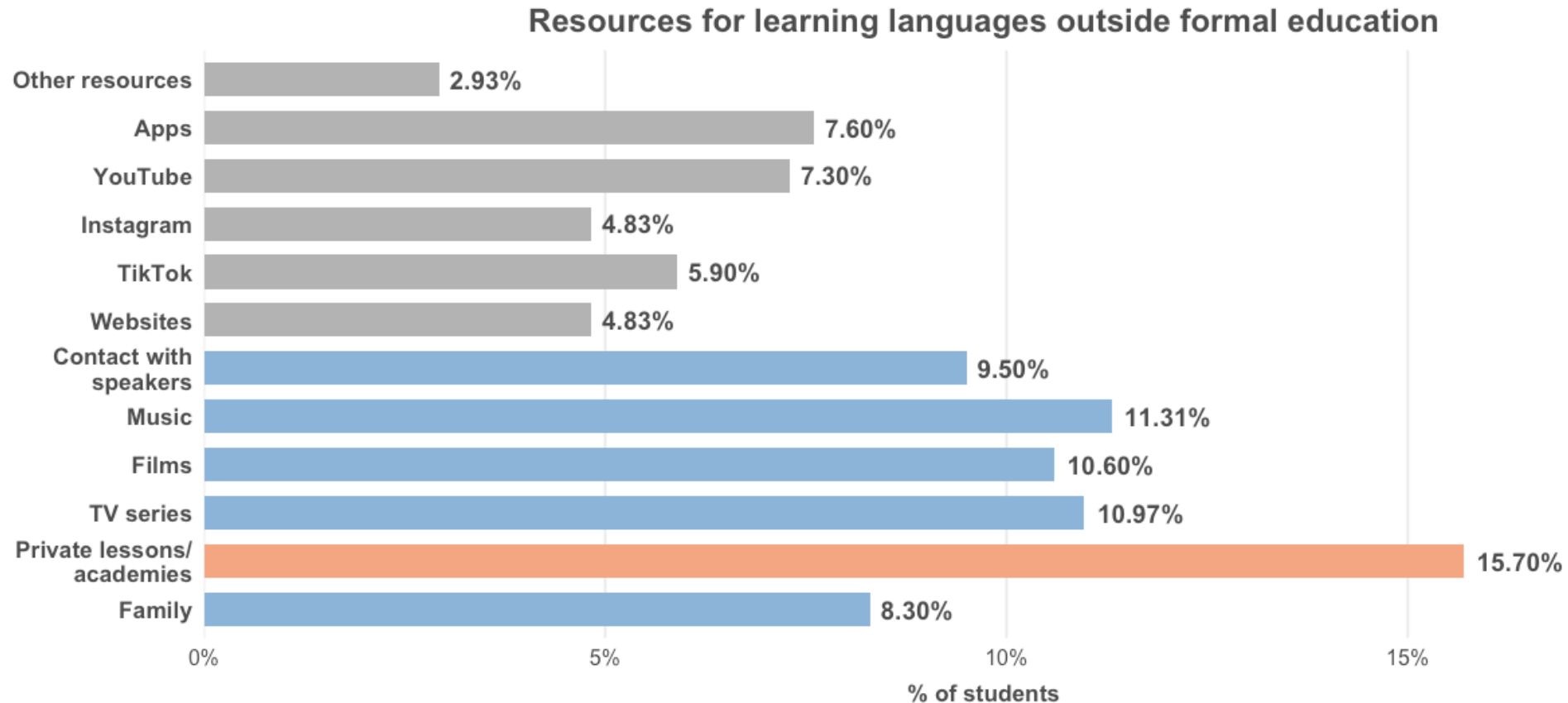
- 60.5% reported no foreign language learning outside formal education.
- 28.4% learned one language
- 7.5% learned two languages
- 3.5% learned more than two languages

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# R1: Additional language learning

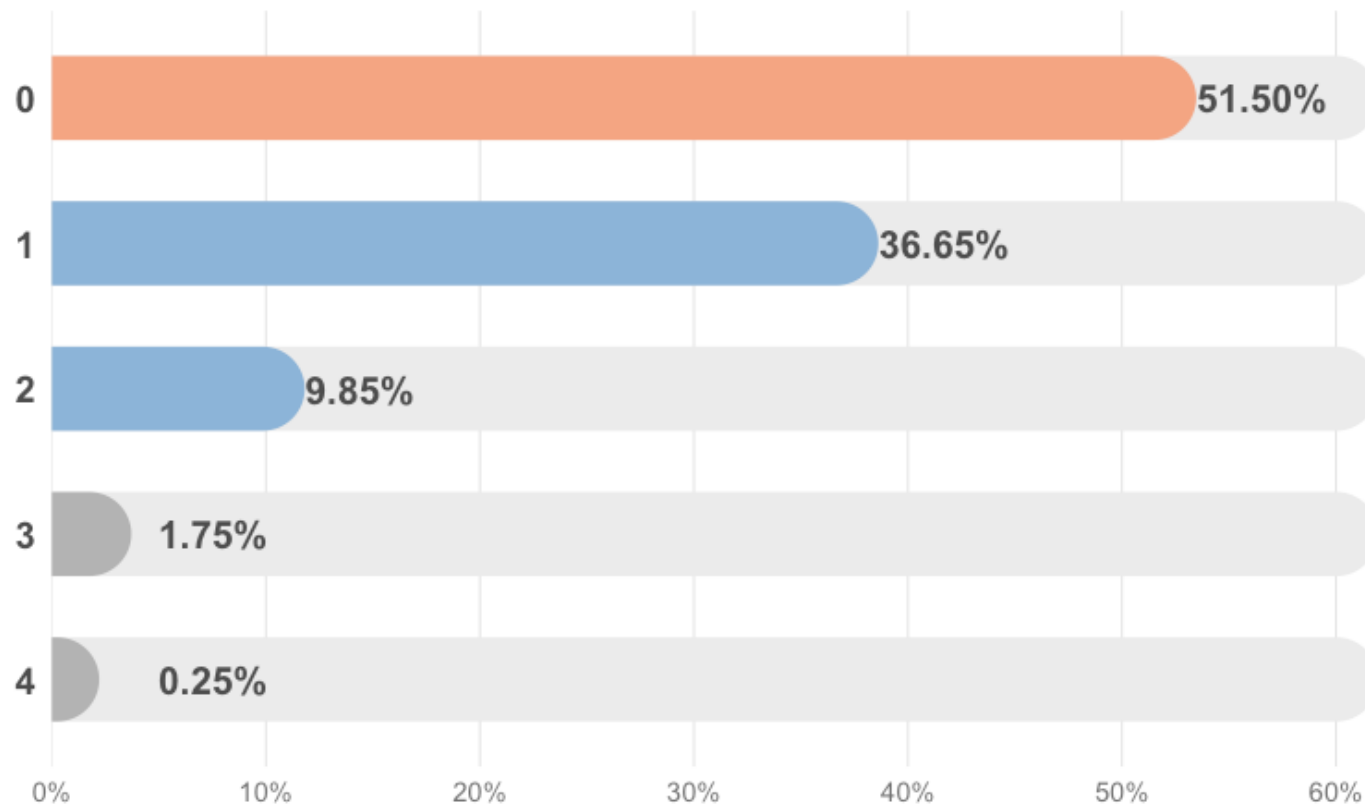
## Learning beyond formal education



# R2: Official language accreditation

## Additional language learning

Percentage of students by category



**Almost one half of the sample students hold at least one official language certificate.**

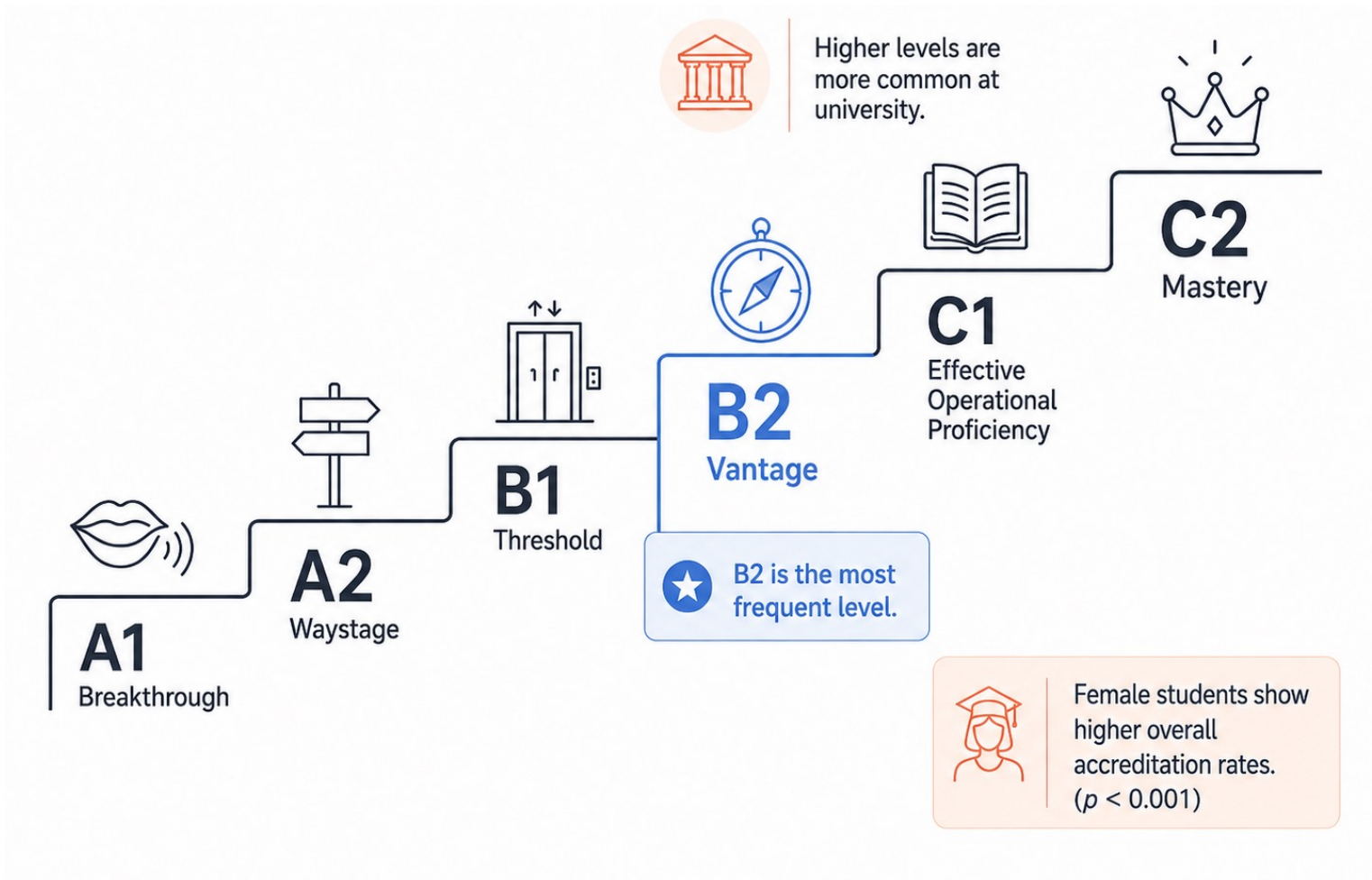
- 48.5% hold at least one official certificate.
- Female students show higher accreditation rates than male students (53.9% vs 47.3%,  $p < 0.05$ ).

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# R2: Official language accreditation

## English language accreditation

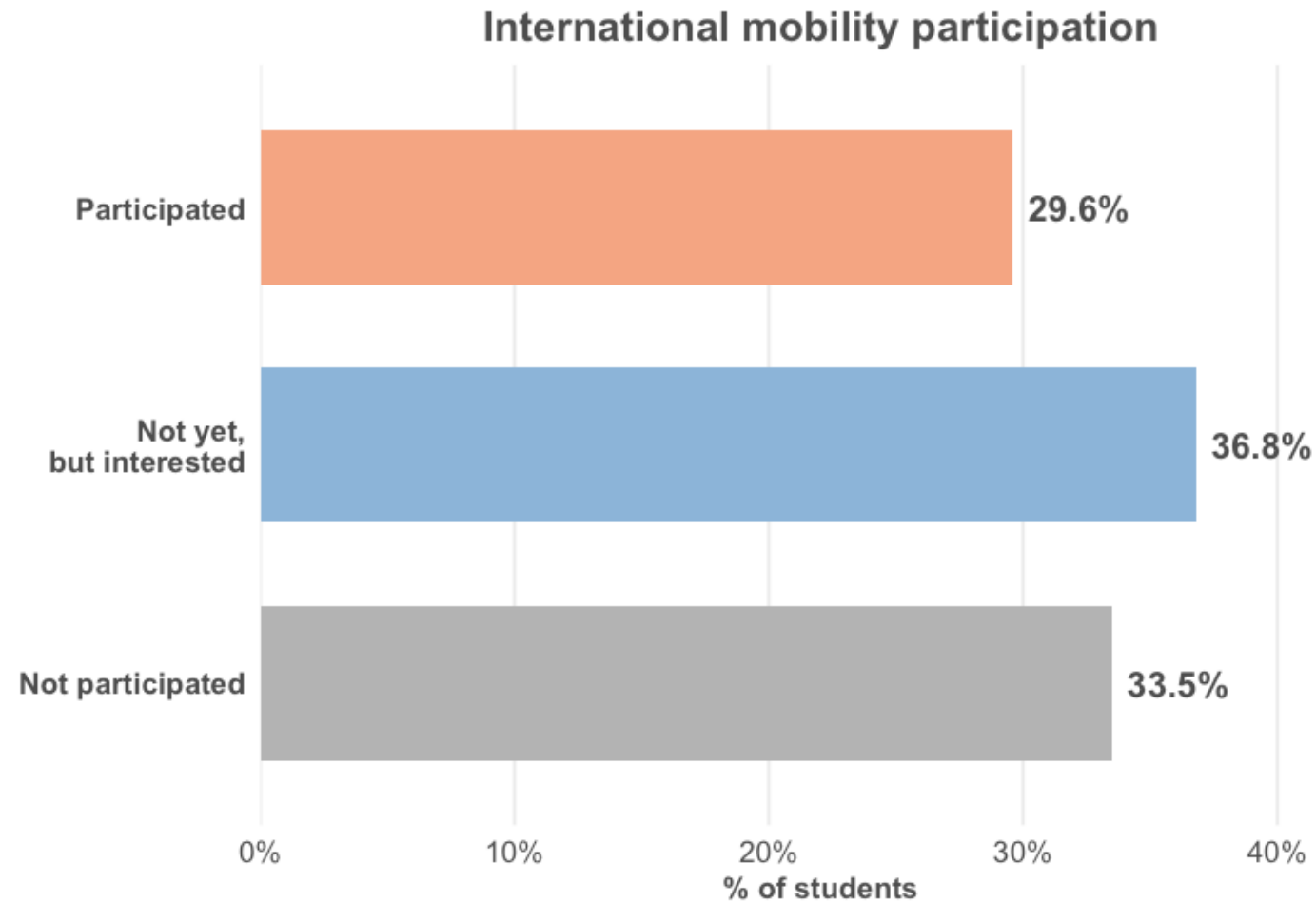


English is the most commonly accredited language: 43.8% of students hold an official certificate.

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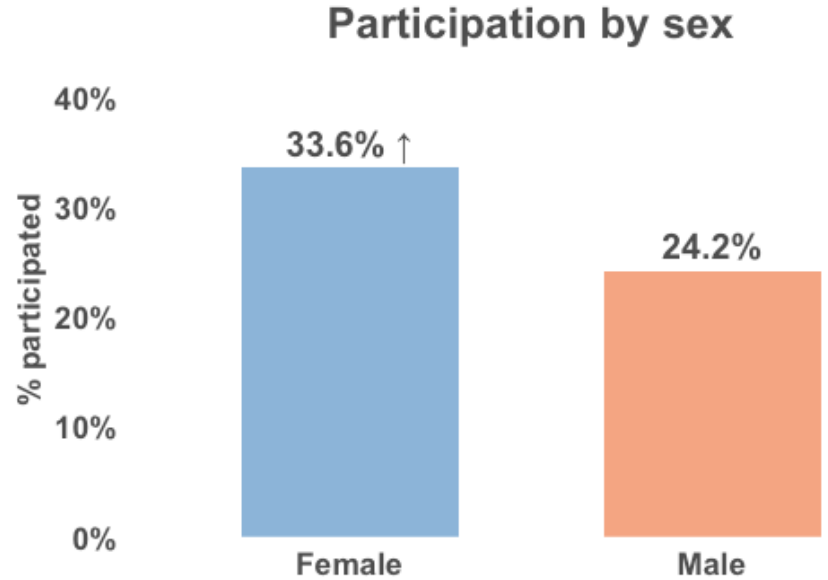


# R3: International mobility

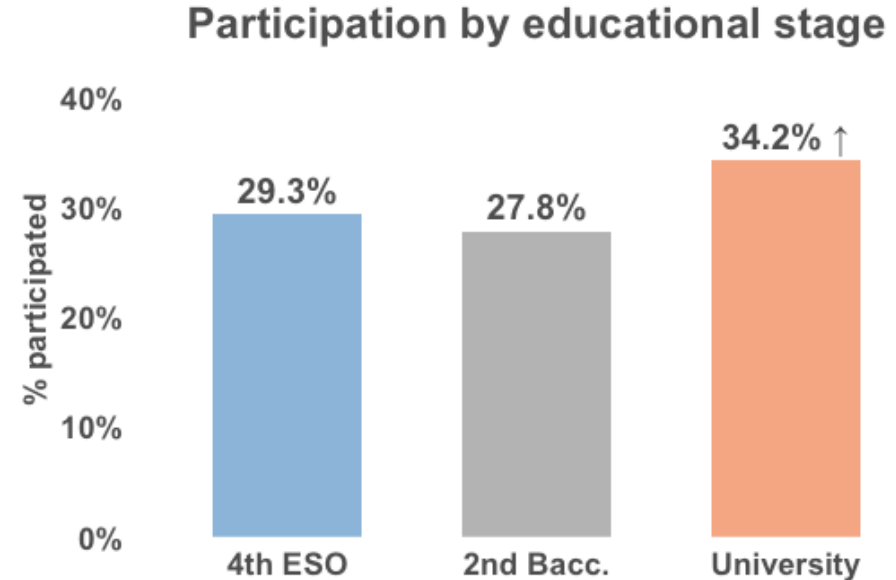


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# R3: International mobility



↑ Highest percentage; significantly higher than male students ( $p < 0.05$ ).



↑ Highest percentage; significantly higher than 4th ESO and 2nd Bacc. ( $p < 0.05$ ).

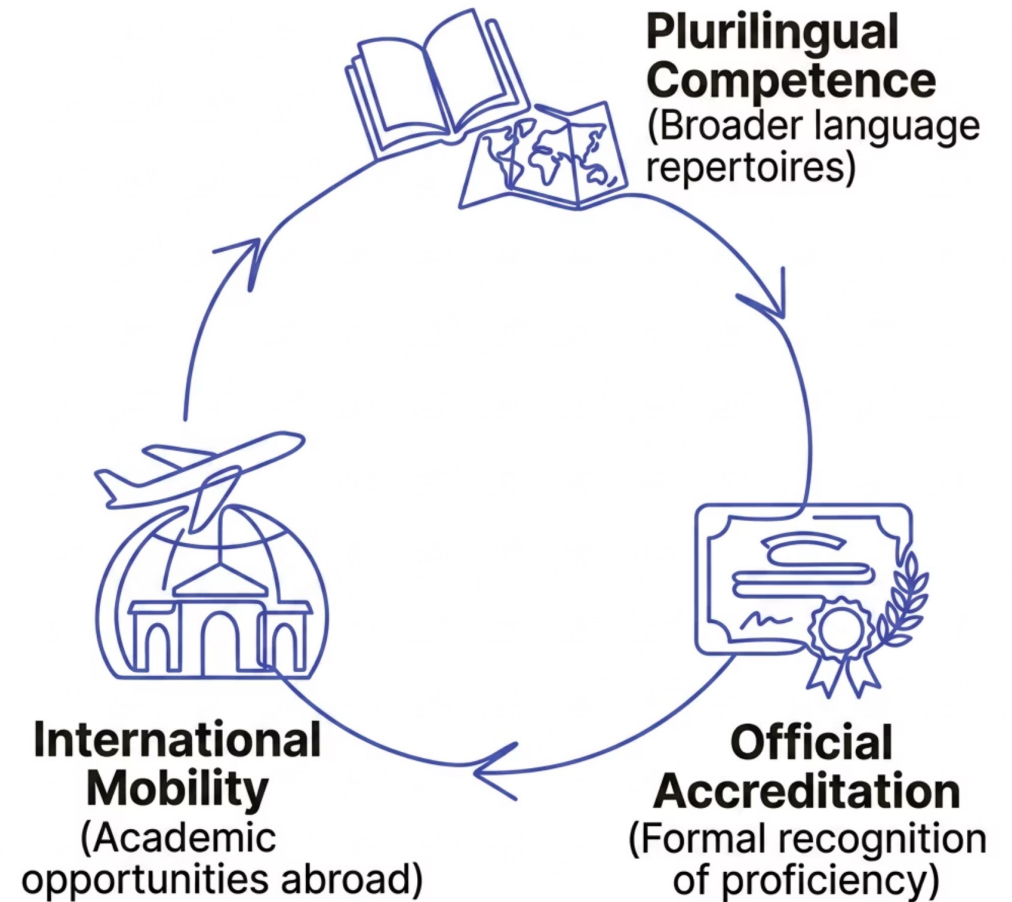
**99.8%**

would like to participate again  
in international programmes

# Three interconnected outcomes

Bilingual education is associated with three interrelated dimensions of plurilingual development.

- **Plurilingual competence** — broader language repertoires
- **Accreditation** — formal recognition of language proficiency
- **Mobility** — enhanced international academic opportunities



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# Conclusions

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## Languages

Bilingual programmes support the development of students' plurilingual competence.

## Accreditation

Formal certification gives visibility to students' language competence.

## Mobility

International experiences strengthen student's academic and professional opportunities.

Bilingual education should be assessed broadly — beyond language outcomes alone — for the kind of impact it may have on students' lives.



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