Universidad de Valladolid

Facultad de Educación y Trabajo Social

DEPARTAMENTO DE DIDÁCTICA DE LA LENGUA Y LA LITERATURA

Máster en Profesor de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanza de Idiomas

TRABAJO FIN DE MÁSTER

Professional skills of Foreign Language Teachers. An analysis in Secondary Education

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Valladolid, 2021

ABSTRACT

The present paper focuses on the foreign language teacher, as the main teaching agent in the education process. Particularly, we address contents related to the teaching profession, the linguistic and education policies, and the foreign language teachers' professional profile and skills. All this information is the conceptual basis for the study performed in the second part of this paper, consisting of an analysis of the professional skills of foreign language teachers, who perform their teaching practice in Secondary Education in a specific school centre. Such study is appropriately characterised and, by being inscribed in the qualitative paradigm, presents the results in a descriptive and interpretive way. Lastly, those hypotheses that are confirmed or rejected are presented in the conclusions, where the initial research questions are also answered.

Key words: foreign language teachers, professional profile, teaching professional skills, Compulsory Secondary Education, qualitative research.

RESUMEN

El presente Trabajo se centra en el docente de lenguas extranjeras, como principal agente didáctico en el proceso de enseñanza. En particular, se abordan contenidos relativos a la profesión docente, a las políticas educativas y lingüísticas, al perfil profesional de los docentes de lenguas extranjeras y a sus propias competencias. Todo ello supone la base conceptual para el estudio que se presenta en la segunda parte del Trabajo, consistente en un análisis de las competencias profesionales de profesorado de lenguas extranjeras que desempeña su actividad en la etapa de Educación Secundaria de un contexto escolar específico. Dicho estudio se caracteriza debidamente y, al estar inscrito en el paradigma de investigación cualitativa, presenta los resultados de manera descriptiva e interpretativa. Finalmente, se presentan en las conclusiones aquellas hipótesis que se confirman o se rechazan, respondiendo igualmente a los interrogantes de partida.

Palabras clave: Docente de lenguas extranjeras, perfil profesional, competencias profesionales docentes, Educación secundaria Obligatoria, Investigación cualitativa.

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INTRODUCTION

The present research work's main purpose is the study of the professional skills of foreign language teachers in Compulsory Education in Spain. The content is divided into two general parts: the theoretical framework and the methodological aspects. These chapters are followed by the conclusions, the references and the annexes.

In the theoretical framework, we deal with the teaching profession as a whole, describing teachers' functions and roles; drawing a brief outlook of the language teaching quality in Europe; and explaining both the international linguistic and education policies, and the national guidelines to teach a foreign language. Finally, we exclusively tackle the figure of foreign language teachers, presenting their professional profile and skills, and the different training paths they could accomplish so that they can improve their teaching practice and become effective foreign language teachers.

In the methodological aspects, we encompass the information related to the investigation that we have undertaken in an educational centre in Valladolid. Specifically, we have included information about the educational context, the study nature, and the approach adopted. Besides, this section also contains information associated with the object of the study, the research questions and the objectives, as well as the hypotheses posed by the investigator. Following these details, we describe and characterise the sample, and the instrument of data collection, and we present the data register. Lastly, after having detailed all this information, we interpret and analyse the results through graphics and numerical percentages, with the purpose of drawing some conclusions.

Justification

We have witnessed a huge change in education that has transformed the structure of our societies during the last 20 years (Esteve, 2000), giving birth to the so-called knowledge society. Consequently, these changes "are restructuring the ways of practicing education and, at the same time, forcing the reconstruction of teachers' identity" (Bolivar, Domingo and Pérez-García, 2014, p. 107).

In this new educational scene, teachers are continuously required to acquire and have a good domain of professional skills and competences so as to adapt themselves to the new educational challenges of the XXI century. In compliance with the European Commission

(2013), "the complexities of the teaching profession require a lifelong learning perspective so that they can adapt to changes, evolving constraints or needs" (p. 38). At national level, the Organic Law 2/2006 on 3rd May, of Education, in its article 102, establishes that teachers permanent training is a right and an obligation of all teachers, and an accountability of the Spanish educational administrations and centres, which must plan and guarantee training activities for teachers. As a result, it is fundamental to guarantee teachers with lifelong training so that they can adapt to the new challenges of education and keep up updated in the knowledge society.

In this regard, in accordance to the article 21 of the Order Edu 1056/2014, the planification of the permanent teacher training will be based on teachers' necessities, and on the analysis of the educative centres' real situations. As a result, the training plans will be systematically developed so as to respond to these necessities, as the European Commission (2013) determines when claiming that one way to stimulate teachers' engagement in competence development can be achieved through "matching needs and demands at all levels (p. 35).

It is for all these reasons that the present research work is conducted in an educational centre of Valladolid. Foreign language teachers do need to acquire and grasp new skills but, firstly, it is important to know their level of dominance on certain professional competences. This information is required in order to plan and organise a teaching training modality that directly satisfies their necessities and motivates them to perform such training action.

Objectives

The present research work has as general objective *to study the professional skills of foreign language teachers in Compulsory Secondary Education in Spain*. This general objective is made up of three aims, as follows:

- Present the main assumptions regarding the teaching profession, linguistic and education policies and the professional skills of the foreign language teacher.
- Analyse the professional skills of some foreign language teachers of Secondary Education from a qualitative perspective.
- Provide significant conclusions, which shed light towards the improvement of professional skills of foreign language teachers in Secondary Education.

PART I

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. The teaching profession

A huge change in education has taken place due to "social, political and economic changes that have transformed the structure of our societies during the last 20 years" (Esteve, 2000, p. 197), and have given birth to the so-called knowledge society. Consequently, these changes have also driven to transformations in the teaching profession, requiring from teachers new ways of conceiving and practicing their occupation. In this new educational scene, teachers are demanded to acquire and have a good domain of professional skills and competences so as to adapt themselves to the new educational challenges. In addition, teachers have to change their roles in the teaching and learning process. As Bolivar, Domingo and Pérez-García (2014) point out, "the information or knowledge society has many dimensions and faces which are restructuring the ways of practicing education and, at the same time, forcing the reconstruction of teacher identity" (p. 107).

The European Parliament and the European Council (2006) expound eight key competences that all Member States must integrate in their educational systems with the purpose of making students able to successfully adapt themselves to the knowledge society's changes. The goal of education is not just teaching literacy and numeracy as occurred in the past, when a brief education training was useful. But to teach students "how to learn to learn, how to become independent thinkers and learners, solve problems, work as a team, and know reality, and how to adapt in a global world of technologies, conflict and complexity" (Marina, 2015, p. 7). This new way of grasping education and teaching implies that society demands much from teachers, being they the ones responsible for the accomplishment of the new educational challenges.

As teachers need to acquire new knowledge and competences, different from the ones they should learn in the past, teacher's roles have completely changed. Nowadays, teachers need to be able to develop different skills to their students with a different methodology, which has also driven them to a situation where they are also compelled to acquire and grasp new ones. Moreover, Delors (1996) claims that the knowledge society has compelled schools to be more appealing and attractive to scholars because of the easy access to any kind of information that students do have nowadays. Students can access it through different means, mainly, the Internet.

The demands teachers must deal with are increasing due to the fact that the environments where they work are more and more challenging, as highlighted by the European Commission (2007). According to the European Council (2020), "the world of education and training is changing, and so is the occupation of teachers […], with increasing demands, responsibilities, and expectations" (p. 11). As a result, teachers' roles need to be changeable and, additionally, they need to acquire new professional competences and skills so as to adapt themselves to the current educational and social fluctuations.

1.1.1.   Functions and tasks of teachers at compulsory education

As specified by the European Commission (2007), teachers play a fundamental role in the socialization of European individuals. They are the ones in charge of helping students develop their personal growth and well-being, and, additionally, acquire the necessary knowledge and competences that they will need as citizens and workers of the future in the knowledge-based economy. In line with Bolivar, Domingo and Pérez-García (2014, p. 106) "the professional is armed with [...] a sense of socialization and liberation for students". Furthermore, the European Council (2020) proclaims that teachers are the key force of education since they have an essential role in preparing and teaching students not only to learn, but also to live and work in the globalised world.

In addition to their ability to socialise individuals, and as The European Commission (2007) expounds, teachers need to fulfil the following functions and tasks so that they can be effective professionals. Firstly, they ought to help students become autonomous learners by helping them acquire autonomously key skills and the content-based knowledge on a specific subject. Teachers' main goal is not anymore to lead students to memorise information that they have previously taught to them. However, they are now facilitators of the learning process. Secondly, teachers should develop and bring into the classroom more collaborative and constructive approaches to learning so that students can acquire teamwork abilities.

These days classrooms are characterised by a heterogeneous mix of young people from different social and economic backgrounds, and are made up of people with different levels of ability and disability. As Steve suggests, "education in the last two decades is characterised mainly by the compulsory schooling of all our children in primary schools and by unprecedented pupil populations in secondary education" (p. 197). Therefore, teachers must know how to effectively manage these classrooms' environments. Another different task that

teachers must accomplish is to utilise the Information and Communication Technologies so as to carry out both inside and outside classroom's activities associated with both the teaching and the learning process. Additionally, teachers are required to base their profession on partnership by working collaboratively with colleges, families, students, institutions, administrations, non-teaching staff, and other education stakeholders. Nevertheless, not only are teachers required to acquire these skills through initial training and their first years of experience, but they also ought to develop them continuously in a lifelong permanent training.

The domain of these five functions and tasks along with their permanent development will ensure the quality and the effectiveness of teachers on their teaching practice, according to the European Commission (2007). Being the teaching quality one key factor in determining the effectiveness of education (European Commission, 2007).

Below, a brief approximation to the teachers' functions in Europe is drawn:

Develop students' autonomy and motivate them to carry out a lifelong learning.
Help students to acquire the key competences listed in the European Reference Framework of Key Competences (2006).
Work in multicultural and multilingual settings, building a supportive and constructive atmosphere in the classroom.
Identify the specific needs of each individual learner, and respond to them by deploying a wide range of teaching strategies.
Work in collaboration with colleges, families, and the educational community.
Appropriately and effectively use the Information and Communication Technologies in the classroom.
Deal with classroom behaviour management and potentially prevent different types of violence.
Integrate students with special needs.
Choose appropriate assessment tools, criteria and methods in order to provide feedback to each learner.
Develop new knowledge and skills continuously in a lifelong learning.

Table 1. Teachers' role and skills (Taken and adapted from expert sources)

At a Spanish level, the teachers' functions are established by the Article 91 "Functions of teachers" of the Organic Law 2/2006 on 3rd May, of Education (p. 60). Among others, they are the ones that follow below:

a) The programming and teaching of the subjects

b) The assessment of the teaching and learning process.

c) The tutoring of students, the management of their learning and the support in their educational process, in collaboration with families.

d) The educational, academic and professional orientation to students, in collaboration with specialised services.

e) Attention to the intellectual, affective, psychomotor, social and moral development of the student body.

f) The promotion, organisation and participation in complementary activities.

g) The contribution to the centre's activities so as to promote in students the values of the democratic citizenship and the culture of peace.

h) Periodic information to families about the learning process as well as guidance for their cooperation in it.

i) The coordination of the teaching activities, of management and direction.

j) Participation in the general activity of the centre.

k) Involvement in the assessment plans.

l) Research, experimentation and continuous enhancement of the teaching process.

Teachers will perform these tasks and functions expressed above under the principle of collaboration and teamwork, as the European Commission (2007) also indicates in *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education*.

1.1.2.   Roles of teachers in compulsory education

The term most used by scholars in the literature consulted about the teaching profession is the new role of teachers for the XXI century. At national level, Marina (2015) and Delors (1996) determine the roles Spanish teachers must execute in order to make possible the change in Spanish education in the XXI century. Next, we are going to highlight the roles teachers must perform according to the two authors mentioned above.

Teachers must know how to create and organise learning situations so that students can reach meaningful learning by engaging them in projects, real problems, and activities. This

idea is in relation with the Article 26 of the Organic Law 2/2006 on 3rd May, of Education, which ascertains that teachers will devote time of the school schedule to the accomplishment of meaningful and relevant projects and to the collaborative resolution of problems, reinforcing the students' self-esteem, autonomy, reflection and responsibility. Being the main purpose the integration of competences.

The teaching profession was widely considered as an isolated activity, but this situation belongs to a former school conception. Nowadays, teachers must know how to work in teams alongside the rest of the faculty members in the school's management, in shared objectives, in collaborative projects, in coexistence with other schools, and so on. This same idea is provided by the Organic Law 2/2006 on 3rd May, of Education, when addressing teachers' functions. Since it accentuates that teachers will perform their tasks and functions under the principle of collaboration and teamwork.

Teachers must have a good command of digital competence so that they can bring it into the classroom, as stated by the Organic Law 8/2013, on December 9th, for the improvement of educational quality, in its article XI. This article establishes that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) will be a fundamental piece to provoke the methodological change that leads to the improvement of the education quality, as well as a key tool in the permanent training of teachers. Moreover, the Organic Law 8/2013, on December 9th, for the improvement of educational quality, in its article 111, asserts that a common framework of reference for teaching digital competence that guides the permanent training of teachers and facilitates the development of a digital culture in the classroom, will be elaborated.

Teachers must be willing to perform lifelong learning and training throughout their lives since their initial knowledge and skills will not be enough for a lifetime teaching (European Commission, 2007). Besides, we find that the article 102 of the Organic Law 2/2006 on 3rd May, of Education, states that lifelong learning constitutes a right and an obligation of all teachers. The European Council (2020) also recognises the value of continuous professional development as a building block of teachers' careers progression.

Moreover, teachers must accomplish a new role by establishing a new relationship with the students. Teachers' labour does not consist just of conveying information and/or content-

knowledge, but on displaying these two in a problematic way, and placing them in real situations so that students can apply the theoretical information into practice.

Agudo and Saballs (2012) also suggest 10 professional competences that teachers must dominate if they do not want to be left behind in the education of the XXI century.

Firstly, teachers ought to develop new learnings in the students, contributing to their shaping as citizens by teaching them to live in a multicultural, inclusive and tolerant society. Besides, teachers must educate students so that they can execute basic competences that make them able to learn in accordance with the knowledge society and the lifelong learning. Secondly, teachers must know how to carry out a proper and coherent planning of the teaching and learning processes.

Thirdly, they must know how to collaborate and cooperate with other colleges and educational institutions. This competence involves pursuing a common objective and trying to reach that one with the help of the others, working as a group. This competence leads to the fourth one stated by Agudo and Saballs (2012), teachers ought to have communicative competence so that they can properly interact, both orally and in writing, with all the individuals that have an important part in education. Following the communicative competence, the fifth competence is related to the ability of teachers to treat and to interact with others. This competence is important owing to the fact that the relationship between teachers and students, and the relationship between teachers and colleges, non-teaching staff, institutions, and administrations is decisive to the correct development of the teaching action.

Teachers must know how to deal with conflicts and coexisting problems through different strategies. The seventh competence that teachers have to have a good command of is the competence on Information and Communication Technologies. This basic competence is considered an indispensable learning for the shaping of current generations

Besides, the eighth competence indicates that they must be involved not only in the management of their classroom but also in the centre as a whole, where everyone needs to be involved so that the teaching action be successful. This competence brings us to the ninth competence stated by Agudo and Saballs (2012), the ability of teachers to lead groups of students to the accomplishment of planned objectives and expected results. Finally, the last competence is the ability of teachers to deal with ethical dilemmas that will conditionate their performances. Teachers must have moral compromise with their positions.

To sum up, the role that teachers must follow in education for the XXI century is the following one.

> La referencia va a ser siempre un profesor mediador en el aprendizaje, que conoce suficientemente su disciplina, que está siempre abierto y dispuesto a acompañar a los alumnos en su aprendizaje, [...] trabajando en equipo, involucrándose en el centro y en el contexto, desarrollando competencias comunicativas y estableciendo relaciones interpersonales positivas, [...] y afrontando positivamente los dilemas éticos de la profesión. (Agudo, Saballs, 2012, p. 60).

1.2. Indicators for language teaching quality

In this section, we will write about some indicators that tackle the teaching quality in Europe, focusing the information on language teaching. We have searched for some European documents: such as the *First European Survey on Language Competence* (2012), *Key data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe* (2012)*, Key data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe* (2017), an OECD survey from TALIS (2018), and TALIS (2009) in order to gather the necessary information on teachers' quality that enables us to write an approximation of the language teaching' reality in Europe and in the OECD countries.

The European Commission (2012) affirmed that in all educational systems, at least 75% of teachers have received initial or in-service training in teaching the target language as a foreign language. The two educational systems with the least teachers trained are France and Sweden.

In accordance with data provided by Eurydice (2012) in most Member States, languages are taught by specialist teachers. Although specialist foreign language teachers were only trained to teach foreign languages in 11 European educational systems, the general picture is that they are given the option to teach and be trained on not only a foreign language, but also on another subject in the majority of the Member States. This may be seen as a favourable condition for the implementation of *Content and Language Integrated Learning*. However, a small number of schools are provided with this model (Eurydice, 2012).

A university degree is needed to teach foreign languages in around half of all European countries, while in the remaining countries a Master's degree is needed. Within the *European*

Survey on Language Competence, data covering 15 education systems show that more than 80% of teachers self-reported that they were fully qualified to teach the language (Eurydice, 2012). From these data we can deduce that, in general, the European language teachers are well-trained in the teaching of foreign languages.

As to the language teachers' mastery of the target language, we have discovered that differences exist among the proportion of foreign teachers that have the target language as a first language. The European Commission (2012) reported that, for example, in the German community of Belgium, 92% of the teachers of French, have this language as their first language, and in Malta, 54% of the teachers of English, have it as their mother tongue. Meanwhile, in other countries such as Estonia and Poland less than 10% of teachers of English and French have these target languages as their first language. Nevertheless, not having the target language as a first language does not hinder teachers' effectiveness to teach it appropriately. In fact, teaching training is always necessary no matter what level of command language teachers have of the foreign language, as long as they can appropriately and effectively communicate in the language of study.

In this line, only a little more than a half of foreign language teachers (56,9%) at lower secondary level, in the 19 countries/regions participating in the survey, reported having been abroad at least once for professional purposes, according to Eurydice (2017). According to data from TALIS (2009), this percentage varies a great deal between countries: just over 70% of foreign language teachers do so in Spain and Iceland while it is below 40 % in Croatia (37.4 %), Portugal (35.1 %), Romania (30.0 %) and Slovakia (39.6 %). This is related to the widespread idea that language teachers must be proficient in the target language. These data show that European teachers take this idea seriously and try to develop their language competence by living abroad.

With regards to the use of the target language in the classroom, clear divergences exist among Member States' educational systems. In the *First European survey on language competence* (2012), teachers described that they usually use the target language during their lessons (between 2.0 and 3.6 on a scale from 0 to 4). However, students' reports of teachers using the target language are slower (means between 1.7 and 3.3). Therefore, it is not possible to draw conclusions about this issue.

As to the teaching's means that European teachers use in the classroom, as the European Commission (2012) has stated, overall, teachers of all educational systems, on average, tend to use the computer quite often for teaching. Specifically, teachers use ICT for checking students' homework, preparing lessons, and for administrative tasks related to their classes (means between 1.7 and 2.9 on scale from 0 to 4). However, they do not frequently use ICT during their lessons (means between 0.3 and 2.1). Additionally, teachers declared little usage of web content for their classes (means between 0.6 and 1.2). Consequently, it is possible to state that teachers tend to use ICT more often outside than inside the classroom.

An OECD survey from TALIS (2018), reported that 96% teachers believe that they have the control over the selection of the teaching methods they use; 94% over the assessment of the students learning; 92% of them over the discipline of students; 91% over the decisions about the amount of homework; and 84% over the determination of the course content.

Teaching is not the isolated profession it was once, but a collaborative one. However, according to the data from TALIS (2018), professional collaboration is not prevalent yet due to the fact that this collaboration is simply related to exchanges and coordination between teachers.

In relation to the creation of a European Education Area, teachers of all Member States' education systems declare that they are not frequently involved in organising exchange visits, being, generally, a low participation.

With regards to the use of the European language assessment tools, considerable differences exist among Member States' educational systems as to what extent teachers have received training in the successful integration of the Common *European Framework of Referenc*e (Council of Europe, 2002) into their classrooms. According to the European Commission (2012), the number of teachers who received training in the use of the *CEFR* varies between 22% and 84%. Nevertheless, in general, teachers do not frequently use the *CEFR*. Additionally, less than 25% of teachers reported having used the Language Portfolio (Council of Europe, 2001).

Although recent and comparable data at European level on the quality of foreign language teaching and the attainment levels reached by students is scarce, we were able to draw a brief outlook of the language teaching quality in Europe. All in all, European language teachers are well -trained in the teaching of foreign languages, as well as they, in

general, worry about their language competence and try to improve it by living abroad in a country where the target language is spoken. Despite the fact that the majority of them do not have the foreign language as their mother tongue, they tend to use it in the teaching and learning process inside their classrooms. Additionally, teachers do not tend to use much ICT inside the classrooms in comparison to the use they give to them outside their classrooms. Finally, the teaching profession is still an occupation not as collaborative as it is supposed to be, and European teachers should be more open to other educational centres in Europe.

1.2.1. International linguistic and education policies

Linguistic diversity is part of the European identity due to the fact that the European Union is made up of different countries where different languages are spoken: from official languages, minority and/or regional, to the languages of those individuals who come to Europe speaking their own mother tongues. According to the European Council (2014), linguistic diversity is a fundamental component of the European culture and intercultural dialogue. In fact, the European heads of State and Government (2002), *in the Conclusions from the European Council meeting* in Barcelona, ascertained that education ought to embrace the mastery of basic skills by teaching, at least, two foreign languages from a very early age. Furthermore, literacy and multilingual competences can be found among the eight key competences in the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* determined by the European Parliament and the European Council (2006).

In this regard, we find the *Council Conclusions of 22 May 2008 on Multilingualism*, which determined that multilingualism is another step that European citizens should acquire. As a result, schools and training institutions ought to adopt a holistic approach to the teaching of languages. This holistic approach would be characterised by establishing links between the teaching of the mother tongue, some foreign languages, the mother of instruction, and the languages of migrant communities. Being the purpose to highlight the existing language diversity inside Europe.

Following multilingualism, the European Council in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2002) advocated the acquisition of the plurilingual competence, as a further step to accomplish the cultural awareness, mutual understanding and social cohesion of European societies. Furthermore, in the *CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2002) there is also a space for intercultural competence, which is connected to the

plurilingual competence. They both have been defined as "the ability to use a plural repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources to meet communication needs or interact with other people, and enrich that repertoire while doing so" (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 10).

From this perspective, the purpose of education is not anymore, the dominance of two or more languages, each one considered in isolation, and the command of them as a native speaker. But the development of a linguistic repertoire in which the individual can make use of all linguistics capacities they manage in more than one language.

In this regard, in the *European Language Portfolio* (Council of Europe, 2001) students can provide information about the proficiency level of language and cultural knowledge they possess in different languages. This tool was created so as to allow students to identify their plurilingual and intercultural competences. *The CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2001) has been also elaborated to support and unify the language teaching in the diverse European education systems so as to create European coherence as to the teaching of foreign languages. And *the Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (Beacco at al., 2016) was published so as to integrate the plurilingual and intercultural competence in the European curricula and the schooling processes.

In order to promote language competence, The Commission's Communication *Promoting Language Learning and Language Diversity: An Action Plan 2004 – 2006* (2003), determines recommendations so as to improve language teaching, create a more language-friendly environment, and promote lifelong language learning to all citizens. Additionally, this Commission states that *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010) is the teaching method that will contribute to a larger extent to the accomplishment of the European's goals (European Commission, 2008).

1.2.2. National guidelines to teach a foreign language

The Organic Law 2/2006, the Organic Law 8/2013, the Order Edu 362/2015, and the Royal Decree 1105/2014, prescribe the command of a first foreign language or, even, a second foreign language as one of the objectives of education, following this way the guidelines established by the European Council. In this line, the Organic Law 8/2013, in its article XII, and the Order Edu 362/2015, decidedly support the promotion of plurilingualism in education.

The Organic Law 2/2006, in its articles 24 and 25, and the Royal Decree 1105/2014, determine the ordering of the school years from first to fourth of Compulsory Secondary Education. In every school year, we find that students have to obligatorily study a first foreign language, whereas, the selection of a second foreign language remains optional. Although it is true that the Organic Law 2/2006 clarifies that the study of a second foreign language is ensured in every school year. In this regard, the Organic Law 8/2013 just changed the composition of these two articles, but it did not modify the ordering, and the Order Edu 362/2015 determines the same curriculum regarding the teaching and learning of second and/or foreign languages in Castile and Leon.

The pedagogical principles of education in Spain are prescribed in article 26 of the Organic Law 2/2006, and in the Organic Law 8/2013, where the former is modified. They ascertain that the Spanish and the co-official languages will be used only as a support in the teaching and learning process of foreign languages. This way the foreign language should become the most spoken language in the classroom. The Order Edu 362/2015 supports the idea of using the foreign language to teach the classes. Furthermore, the written and oral comprehension will be prioritised. In this regard, it is also established that teachers can modify and adequate their methodologies to the necessities of those students with special needs.

The Order Edu 362/2015 determines that, with regards to the first foreign language, students ought to be able to utilise it so as to communicate and comprehend real situations, both orally or written. And with regards to the second foreign language, students should be able to manage, in a simple, but sufficient way, common situations. This Order also establishes that students have to acquire the first and the second foreign language naturally as they have acquired their mother language. Additionally, this Order considers that the culture of the target country is important, too. Hence, the usage of songs, films, and stories in the foreign language is seen as something useful so that students can acquire part of the culture of the target language's country.

It also tackles the role of grammar by claiming that it has to be always at the service of communication. Besides, the oral production is determined as one of the linguistic skills to prioritise due to the fact that it is the one which provokes more problems in students in Spain. Furthermore, this Order specifies that teachers have to avoid the excess of corrections, facilitating this way students' fluency in communication, as well as that digital competence is

an essential part of students' communicative competence. Lastly, it prescribes that students' self-evaluation must be part of the teaching and learning process.

This Order Edu 362/2015 follows the guidelines of the *CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2001) as the framework that leads the teaching and learning process of foreign languages. For this reason, the curriculum of both first and second foreign language in Castile and Leon is organised following the communication skills that it describes.

When it comes to key competences, the Order ECD/65/2015 rules the seven key competences for the Spanish education system, following the European guidelines. The competence that interests us the most is the competence in linguistic communication. This Order puts forward that this communication can be in a foreign language too, for which individuals can use their plurilingual repertoire. Besides, linguistic communication competence is linked with cultural knowledge, as a result, an intercultural approach to the teaching and learning of foreign languages is essential. Finally, it specifies that the learning of foreign languages must be lifelong so that individuals can improve and polish their linguistic communicative competence throughout their lives.

1.3. The foreign language teacher

Foreign language teachers have a great accountability so as to achieve the transformation of Europe into a more unified state. As we have seen above, Europe is working towards this unification since the past decade through different initiatives related to the teaching and the acquisition of linguistic skills, such as the Barcelona objectives (2002), The Action Plan 2004 – 2006, the promotion of multilingualism, plurilingualism and the intercultural competence, as well as, the establishment of the linguistic competence as one of the eight lifelong competences. Furthermore, the creation and development of tools such as The *CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2001) or the *European Language Portfolio* (Council of Europe, 2001) were thought of as an aid for the teaching of foreign languages.

As a result, "language foreign teachers play a major part in achieving the European Union's objectives that all European citizens should have linguistic competence in their own mother tongue and two other languages" (Kelly et al., 2004, p. 11). Besides, foreign language teachers help "safeguard Europe's plurilingual and pluricultural heritage" (Kelly et al., 2004, p. 10).

1.3.1. Professional profile of the Foreign Language teacher

We have used a European framework of reference (Kelly et al., 2004) built, specifically, by the European Commission, whose main objective is to enhance the foreign language teaching education for the XXI century, in order to deal with the professional profile of the foreign language teachers. This European framework was thought as a "voluntary frame of reference" (Kelly et al., 2004, p. 19) that deals with three types of items: those related to what language teachers need to know and understand (knowledge and understanding); those related to what language teachers have to know how to do (strategies and skills); and those related to the values that language teachers ought to have so that the teaching process be successful (values).

As to the knowledge and understanding that foreign language teachers ought to be in possession of, we found that teachers must critically know different language teaching methodologies and approaches to teaching and learning, which meet learners' needs; various ways of accomplishing learning outcomes; and diverse techniques for teaching the four linguistic skills (oral and written production and comprehension). Teachers also need to have knowledge of classroom techniques and activities that promote the interaction, the group work and the peer-assisted learning in the classroom. Additionally, teachers ought to be able to critically assess their knowledge on these issues. Therefore, they need to acquire autonomy so as to enhance their own abilities and competences autonomously throughout their careers.

They must be competent in the target language they will be teaching. Their linguistic and communicative competences have to be in correspondence with the *CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2001) levels of proficiency. In this regard, they need to be fluent in writing, reading, speaking, and listening in the foreign language. Not only should they be linguistically and communicatively fluent in the foreign language, but they also ought to hold cultural competence as to the country of the foreign language they will be teaching.

In addition, teachers ought to be competent in the effective use of Information and Communication Technologies so as to be able to integrate them in the teaching of the foreign languages, considering that ICT are an integral part of the teaching and learning process. In this regard, teachers need to be aware of the numerous tasks they can perform through them such as "organising their work; creating and achieving lesson plans; tracking progress within a framework of reflective practice; and communicating and exchanging ideas with colleagues" (Kelly et al., 2004, p. 53), among others.

The assessment is a crucial part of the teaching process and, as a result, teachers need to be aware of various appropriate methods of assessments, the criteria that affect them, and also the procedures surrounding them. Teachers ought to be able to consider the advantages and disadvantages of various assessment methods and use them in accordance with both the learners' needs and expectations and the educational centre's assessment procedures. Furthermore, the assessment methods they use have to integrate the scales of the *CEFR* (Council of Europe, 2001).

There are national guidelines in each Member States, apart from the European ones, that determine the course of the teaching process. Consequently, teachers need to adopt their teaching materials to the national or regional curricula "in terms of aims, objectives and outcomes" (Kelly et al., 2004, p. 56). Additionally, they must be capable of assessing the teaching materials according to the curriculum, to the age, and to the learning stage of learners, as well as, to their social and cultural context. Lastly, teachers ought to have knowledge of the procedures that involve the programme evaluation, both internal and external, so that they can promote quality assurance and quality enhancement to their courses.

Concerning the strategies and skills that foreign language teachers must master, we find that teachers are responsible for adapting their teaching approaches and their teaching materials and resources to an educational context and to their learners' needs. Above all, teachers have to be capable of adapting these two to learners with special needs, knowing how to efficiently apply curricula and syllabi to different learning contexts.

In addition, foreign language teachers are responsible for self-assessing the effectiveness of their teaching, as well as for evaluating their peers' teaching skills. Regarding this idea, teachers ought to develop abilities to carry out peer observation and peer review. By doing this, teachers will expand skills such as "team-working, communicative ability, cooperation and practical analysis" (Kelly et al., 2004, p. 71).

Moreover, foreign language teachers need to develop autonomous language learning strategies so that they can improve their language competence, assess their own practice, and foster lifelong language learning. Another skill that teachers need to dominate is the ability to execute an action research while teaching, and to incorporate this new knowledge into their teaching practice. Lastly, foreign language teachers should have knowledge of how to teach another subject through the medium of a foreign language; and how to use the *European Language Portfolio* (Council of Europe, 2001) for self-evaluation.

As for the values and principles foreign language teachers have to be able to convey, we find that they must teach about social diversity, cultural plurality, and language diversity so that they can promote social and cultural values in their students. Additionally, teachers have to convey the idea that the learning of foreign languages and cultures is important so that individuals are able to see different languages and cultures as advantages in order to respect and understand others. In other words, teachers need to be able to introduce learners to the notion of pluriculturalism. In this regard, teachers ought to be able to convey European values and beliefs such as democracy, a shared cultural heritage, and so on. Ultimately, teachers need to understand the benefits of team-work, collaboration, and networking, both inside and outside the school context, and also the benefits of lifelong learning.

Additionally, Sanz Trigueros (2018) expounds that the professional profile of the foreign language teachers is made up of professional entity and professional identity, as "una estructura en construcción permanente" (p. 8). This author transposes these ideas from Guillén Díaz (2012), who initially apply them for the language teaching area in general. Both of them, Sanz Trigueros & Guillén Díaz (2021) have recently updated the information of professional entity and professional identity of foreign language teachers.

When describing the concepts of professional identity and entity, this author states that the former is configured through extrinsic factors such as the requirements and requests that characterise teachers' professional situations, as well as, social, institutional and educational factors. All of these extrinsic factors demand them to acquire professional competences so as to be effective. As a result, these professional competences shape their professional identity and enable the objectivization of their profession.

As to the latter, the professional entity, this author describes it as configured through intrinsic factors, namely, the systems of values and beliefs that teachers hold and shape their professional entity. These intrinsic factors also demand them to acquire competences and qualities. However, the acquisition of these competences and qualities will only depend on the subjectivity of each teacher.

Consequently, following Sanz Trigueros (2018), both the knowledge and understanding, and the strategies and skills that teachers should master, are the ones responsible that will shape to a greater extent teachers' professional identity. Meanwhile, the last item, the teachers' system of values and beliefs is the one responsible for shaping their professional entity.

1.3.2. Professional skills of the Foreign Language teacher

When encompassing the professional skills of the foreign language teachers, we have based our findings on three works. One of them is a national guideline named *Las competencias clave del profesorado de lenguas segundas y extranjeras* (Instituto Cervantes, 2012). This article has as a main objective to define foreign language teachers' skills. It describes eight general competences that an effective language teacher needs to develop throughout their professional careers. According to an empirical research conducted by the Instituto Cervantes, the eight general competences that teachers ought to have are the ones below:

- Ability to organise learning situations.

- Ability to evaluate students' learning and performance.

- Ability to involve students in the control of their own learning process.

- Ability to facilitate and promote intercultural communication.

- Ability to professionally develop as teachers.

- Ability to handle feelings and emotions that arise consequently to their work performance.

- Ability to actively participate in the educational centre.

- Ability to effectively use Information and Communication technologies in the performance of their work.

In line with these eight competences, we also find 10 skills described by various authors in Celce-Murcia (2001). We are going to address only the ones that do not appear in The Instituto Cervantes (2012):

- Evaluating and analysing textbooks so as to effectively select and implement them in the teaching process.
- Successfully and effectively communicating in the foreign language.
- Performing action research, teacher research, and classroom research due to their usefulness to language teachers.
- Reflecting upon their teaching practice so as to be able to carry out long-term professional growth.

- Continuing improving as a foreign language professional through lifelong learning and training.

Another reference framework that has helped us to construct the foreign language teachers' professional skills is the British Council's *Continuing Professional Development framework for teachers* (British Council, 2015). This framework adds some details and more competences that teachers ought to master. Among the skills that do not appear in the other two frameworks of reference, we spot the following competences:

- Understanding learners' characteristics and needs so as to make decisions about the teaching and the assessment.
- Planning and managing the lessons in an efficient way.
- Being a good communicator of the foreign language, but also having deep knowledge on the subject (language proficiency; knowledge of language systems, of methodology and resources; knowledge of specific areas, and so on).
- Managing resources so as to develop, adapt and utilise them effectively in the classroom.
- Promoting inclusive education by recognising diversity among learners.
- Promoting XXI century skills, namely, "critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and communication, creativity and imagination, citizenship, digital literacy, and students' leadership and personal development" (British Council, 2015, p. 17).
- Understanding educational policies and practice at a national, regional and international level.

These three reference frameworks coincide when ascertaining the following foreign language teachers' skills: planning the lessons and courses; building awareness of cultural differences between speakers of the foreign languages object of study and the learners so as to facilitate intercultural communication; using the Information and Communication Technologies in order to enhance language teaching effectively; appropriately assessing second language; and taking responsibility for professional development.

1.3.3. Training paths for the improvement of language teaching

In compliance with the European Commission (2013), "the complexities of the teaching profession require a lifelong learning perspective so that they can adapt to changes, evolving constraints or needs" (p. 38). In this regard, Angrist and Lavy (2001), state that there are tight positive relations between teachers' continuous training and students' accomplishments. As a result, it is fundamental to guarantee teachers with lifelong training so that they can adapt to the new challenges of education and keep up updated in the knowledge society.

At European level, we find programmes that promote the continuous development of teacher's competences such as the Erasmus programme, the Socrates programme, the Leonardo da Vinci programme, and the Comenius programme. To these programmes, we add the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007 – 2013). However, the Member States' educational systems are the fundamental responsible ones who must ensure lifelong teacher training. Therefore, we will focus on Spanish guidelines for permanent teaching training.

At national level, the Organic Law 2/2006 on 3rd May, of Education, in its article 102, establishes that teachers permanent training is a right and an obligation of all teachers, and an accountability of the Spanish educational administrations and centres, which must plan and guarantee training activities for teachers. In line with Eurydice (2005), lifelong teachers training is optional, but necessary to promotion in Spain.

In Castile and Leon, lifelong teacher training will be carried out through a systematic and planned process, regulated by the Decree 51/2014, the Order Edu 1056/2014, and the Order Edu 1057/2014.

The Order EDU 1057/2014 determines the following forms of training activities that foreign language teachers can perform:

- *Courses*: these are training activities that promote scientific, didactic and methodological updating. They are exclusively programmed for teachers.

- *Seminars*: they arise with the objective of going in depth in the study of educational issues. The method of work is the debate and the exchange of both good practices and experiences from attendees.

- *Work groups*: they are organised due to the initiative of a group of teachers with three objectives: the elaboration of projects or didactic materials; the experimentation of them in the classroom; and the innovation and/or the investigation of the educational reality.

- *Conferences/congress*: these are training modalities whose purposes are the dissemination of contents about a monographic theme, and the exchange of good practices and experiences through the debate.

- *Training projects in educational centres*: it is a training modality whose main aim is to address more directly the teachers' needs of a given centre in order to plan and elaborate training activities that satisfy them.

- *Educational innovation projects*: their main purpose is to elaborate changes inside both the educational centres and the classrooms so as to produce improvements.

- *Educational research projects*: their main purpose is to create new knowledge which resolves a problem related to educational themes, along with methodologic criteria and in a systematic way.

- *Self-training processes*: it is a training modality where teachers individually take the initiative of their own permanent training, organising, planning and managing their own learning.

In accordance with the Decree 51/2014 and the Order Edu 1056/2014, the permanent teacher training network in Castile and Leon is made up of various centres: the educative centres, the general Centre for Teachers Training and Educational Innovation, the specific Centres for Teachers Training and Educational Innovation of regional scope, the regional guidelines on education, the competent department in education matters, and others, determined by competent departments, such as universities and private organisations. The general Centre for Teachers Training and Educational Innovation is the main reference for the educative centres and their teachers on permanent training (Decree 51/2014).

As specified by the article 1.3 from the Decree 51/2014, permanent training will be carried out through a systematic and planned process. Therefore, there are specific Centres for Teachers Training and Educational Innovation in Castile and Leon, ascertained by the Order Edu 1056/2014.

These centres are as follows: The Higher Teacher Training Centre, The Resource Centre and Teacher Training in Information and Communicative Technologies, and The Language Teacher Training Centre.

In line with the article 21 of the Order Edu 1056/2014, the planification of the permanent teacher training will be based on both the educational system's and teachers' necessities, and on the analysis of the educative centres' real situations. As a result, the training plans will be systematically developed so as to respond to these necessities, as the European Commission (2013) determines when claiming that one way to stimulate teachers' engagement in competence development can be achieved through "matching needs and demands at all levels" (p. 35).

PART II

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

2.1. Research design

This section deals with information exclusively related to the research that we have conducted in a particular educational centre in Valladolid. Specifically, we have included information about the educational context where the investigation was conducted, and about the study nature and the approach adopted. Besides, this section includes the object of the study and the research questions and objectives, and the hypotheses posed by the investigator. Following these details, we describe and characterise the sample of the research, and the instrument of data collection, which is a questionnaire made up of 10 items with a given purpose each one, created ad hoc. After having detailed all this information, the next point addresses the data register, where we have organised seven tables with the most relevant information gathered. Lastly, we interpret and analyse the results through graphics and numerical percentages, which have helped us both to comprehend the information and display it more directly and clearer to the reader.

2.1.1. Contextual remarks

The present investigation was carried out in a High School in Valladolid that belongs to the educational system of Castile and Leon. We will address the educational system of Castile and Leon, then the education of the city of Valladolid, to finally give way to the educational system of the High School in question.

The educational system of Castile and Leon is characterised for being one of the most efficient and effective educational systems of Spain. The data that prove this fact were provided by the regional minister on education, Rocío Lucas, in a public appearance in 2019. She states that the latest PISA results, published in 2015, expounded that Castile and Leon keeps in the lead of the other regional communities as to the degree of competence in reading, science and mathematics, with 516 points, above the national average (492 points), and the OECD average (also 492 points). Additionally, she utilised other indicators such as the graduation's rates in Compulsory Secondary Education (85,1%), and Baccalaureate (80,5%), or the decrease in the dropout rate, maintaining the rate in 13,6%. This percentage is lower than the national average of 17%. In this regard, the educational system of Castile and Leon is close to achieving one of the objectives determined by the Spanish Minister Council for the decade 2010 – 2020 (2010): lessening the dropout rate less than 10%.

The high school where we conducted the research is located in Valladolid, the administrative capital of Castile and Leon. As the capital of the community, according to the data provided by the Castile and Leon's School Council (2019) for the academic course 2017 - 2018, Valladolid has the largest number of educational centres (145), of teachers of Compulsory Secondary Education, and of English teachers (141). In addition, it is the region that assigns more public money to its educational system's development and the one where more educational inspections were carried out. As a result, its effectiveness and efficacy as an educational system is well tested.

Lastly, the high school is an English bilingual centre located in a particular neighbourhood. The subjects of English, French and German as foreign languages are taught and students can enrol in them as first and/or second language.

Its geographical location allows it to embrace students from diverse social and economic backgrounds. In accordance with its *Educational Project*, this diversity contributes to its enrichment, having 503 students enrolled just in E.S.O. Besides, in the same institutional document, they emphasise that the number of parents who choose it for the education of their children have increased. They assert that parents choose them because of various reasons: the academic results, the variety of languages taught, the exchanges with different countries, the attention to students, and its coexistence programme.

In this educational centre an English bilingual project is carried out during the four years of E.S.O, regulated by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science and by the British Council. The purpose of that project is to provide students with bilingual and bicultural education through an integrated curriculum, made up of both the Spanish and the British curriculum. The subjects taught in English are as follows: *English language*, *Science*, *Physics* and *Chemistry*, and *Geography* and *History*. As to the methodology they perform, teachers follow the guidelines of the *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). The method ascertained by the European Commission (2008) as the one which contributes to a larger extent to the accomplishment of the European's goals.

For the academic course 2020 – 2021, the High School has two teachers of German as foreign language; three of French; and nine of English. Seventeen teachers teach classes in English through the integrated Spanish and British curriculum. Furthermore, students have two native language assistants who help them in the acquisition of both the foreign languages

and their cultures. As we can see, students have a large number of teachers who can impart them classes in the three foreign languages so that they can develop competences in these languages.

One of the purposes established in the High School's *Educational Project* is to promote comprehension and expression (both orally and written) in students in one or more foreign languages, as the European guidelines and the national laws determine. Moreover, the educative materials promote students' critical thinking, develop their capacity to learn to learn and their autonomy, and integrate Information and Communication Technologies. In this regard, the institution has a significant supply of new technologies in each of its classrooms.

2.1.2. Study nature and approach adopted

The present research proposal has been performed in the educational centre mentioned above so as to shed light on the professional skills that teachers of foreign languages possess and the ones that they do not, by describing and quantifying them through a questionnaire. The finality of this investigation is to gather information that can be taken into account so as to pay attention to initial and ongoing teacher training that respond to the foreign language teachers' needs.

This investigation is part of the qualitative paradigm (Stake, 2010) since it aims to interpret and analyse the reality that has been observed so as to comprehend it. The researcher is the main mean to obtain information, and the one who will be able to build new knowledge. In addition, this research is contextualised in a centre of Secondary Compulsory Education in Valladolid, therefore, having been performed in the social scope where it naturally happens, it enables the investigator to provide a greater depth and interpretative richness of data (Bisquerra Alzina et al., 2009).

The approach adopted by the investigator corresponds to the descriptive and interpretative one. In this approach, the investigator is the person responsible for utilising the new information to answer, as properly as possible, the posed hypotheses and questions, by interpreting the data.

Furthermore, this work includes both graphics and numerical data in the form of percentages, which are able to display reality more directly. Hence, the application of these two research techniques positions the present investigation in an eclectic approach.

2.1.3. Object of study

The present paper's object of study is the analysis of those professional skills that the foreign language teachers are in possession of, and of the ones that they do not, in a Secondary educational centre in Valladolid, so that these data can be utilised to pay attention to initial and ongoing teacher training that respond to the foreign language teachers' needs.

2.1.4. Research questions and hypotheses

So as to inquire about the four aspects of the foreign language teachers' skills analysed, we have designed a sequence of research questions:

- ✓ What teaching professional skills do foreign language teachers lack in relation to the teaching process?
- ✓ Are foreign language teachers aware of the professional skills that they should be in possession of?
- ✓ Do foreign language teachers believe in the advantages that self-assessment will provide to their teaching's effectiveness and enhancement?
- ✓ Are foreign language teachers qualified so as to design their own lifelong learning and training?

For the object of study that we have written above, we propose a sequence of hypotheses that we hope we can corroborate or refute once we have concluded this research.

- ✓ H1. Foreign language teachers still lack some essential skills that would guarantee an effective foreign language teaching.
- ✓ H2. Foreign language teachers are scarcely aware of the professional profile and skills that they ought to develop throughout their careers.
- ✓ H3. Foreign language teachers contemplate to a limited extent the self-assessment of their teaching practice so as to guarantee the improvement and enhancement of their professional skills.

✓ H4. Foreign language teachers do consider lifelong learning and training as an important step in their in-service career and they are able to design a personal plan to carry out a continuous training.

2.1.5. Objectives of the research

In view of the research questions and the hypotheses, this investigation proposal pursues the following objectives so as to appropriately address the object of study.

✓ Identify the level of development that foreign language teachers hold in various skills related to the teaching of a foreign language.

✓ Discover the knowledge that foreign language teachers have upon their professional profile.

✓ Ascertain whether foreign language teachers consider self-assessment as an important step in their in-service career.

✓ Determine the foreign language teachers' perceptions as to lifelong learning and training.

2.2. Sample

Ten foreign language teachers performed the questionnaire of our investigation. They teach classes to students of Compulsory Secondary Education in a bilingual High School in Valladolid. These teachers were selected to carry out the present questionnaire owing to the fact that I was doing my academic internship in the education institution where they conduct their in-service practice. They were chosen for this investigation because of their availability, their closeness, their willingness, and their expertise as teachers.

The first four items of the questionnaire deal with the nationality, the age of the teachers surveyed, with the educational centre where they work, and the educational stage where they teach classes of foreign languages.

As to the age of the surveyed teachers, the 30% of the sample was teachers aged between 20 and 30 years; 30% was teachers aged between 30 and 40 years, and the other 30% was aged between 40 and 50 years. Finally, only the 10% of the teachers surveyed were aged between 50 and 60. As the first graphic shows below:
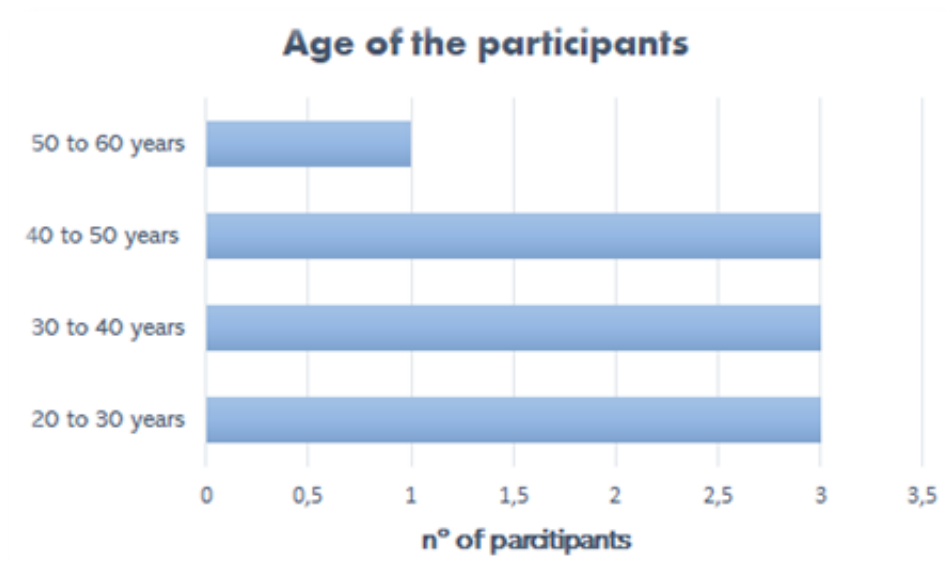
Graphic 1: age of participants

With regards to the type of centre where these teachers give classes of foreign languages, we find that 80% of the teachers have taught their classes in a public school, to a larger extent, whereas the other 20% do it in private schools.
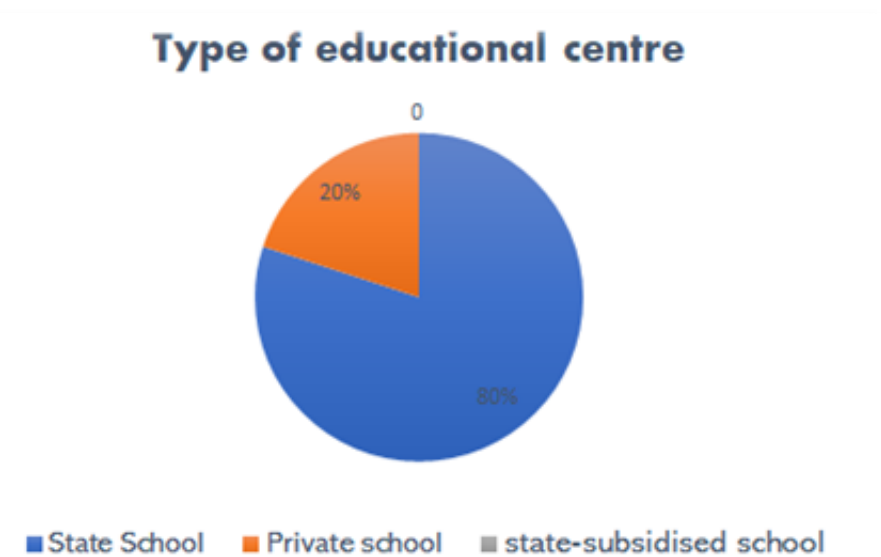
Graphic 2. Type of educational centre

Lastly, the fourth item of the questionnaire is related to the educational stage where these foreign language teachers impart classes. Their answers indicate that they all perform their teaching practice in Secondary Education.

2.3. Instrument of data collection

2.3.1 Characterising the questionnaire

The instrument of data collection is a questionnaire created by the researcher. This questionnaire is composed of a limited number of questions, altogether ten questions. The ten questions are characterised by being short, and plain, aiming that the teachers surveyed could easily understand and answer them. The variable "Other" was included within questions eight and ten so that the teachers can reply to them including the responses that most suit them, even if those answers are not within the possible ones that were thought at the time of creating the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is comprised of various types of questions: the question number one is characterised by being closed; the questions number five, six and seven are characterised by being open; the questions two, three, four and ten are of multiple choice; the question eight is of order of preference; and, finally, the question nine is characterised by being categorised. Moreover, the questionnaire only addresses relevant information to the investigation regarding the surveyed teachers (nationality, age, educational institution where they work), and also information related to the posed hypotheses and research questions: teachers' self-assessment; teachers' knowledge about the professional skills and competences they should possess in order to be effective; permanent teachers training; and the professional skills and competences they possess and to what extent, according to the scale provided: *excellent*, *good*, *not so good*, *I need to improve*.

The purpose of the present questionnaire is to collect information that makes the investigator able to interpret, analyse and comprehend the reality of the foreign language teachers who work in a particular centre of Compulsory Secondary Education in Valladolid.

In addition, the questionnaire includes a short introduction that explains its main purpose to the survey respondents, the teachers. It also explains to them that the results will be treated under the principles of anonymity and confidentiality. The short introduction was only written in Spanish and it can be read below:

> *Este cuestionario está dirigido a docentes de lenguas extranjeras. Tan solo le llevará entre 5 y 10 minutos responderlo. Los datos y resultados serán tratados bajo los principios de anonimato y confidencialidad. De antemano, muchas gracias por su tiempo y colaboración. Por favor, responda a las siguientes preguntas.*

2.3.2. Items and purpose

The questionnaire is composed of 10 items whose purpose for the present investigation is going to be explained below.

The first and the second items address the identification variables of the surveyed teachers. On the one hand, the first item has to do with their nationality. Knowing whether the foreign language teachers of this educational centre are native or, otherwise, they have learnt and acquired the target language as a second foreign language is essential for our research. Owing to the fact that it will determine the knowledge these teachers have upon the subject, in particular, upon the target language and its culture. On the other hand, the second item is associated with their age. It would be interesting to verify whether teachers display differences, regarding their age, with respect to the command of some professional skills or others. The ages teachers can choose are between: 20 to 30 years; 30 to 40 years; 40 to 50 years; and 50 to 60 years.

The third item is linked to the type of educational centre where they work. We have included three possible answers (state school, private school, and state-subsidised school), with the purpose of analysing whether the teachers' responses to the four topics analysed do change in relation to the educational centre where they work.

The fourth item is related to the educational stage where they teach classes. Teachers can choose between different educational stages, specifically, the ones that follow: Primary Education, Secondary Education, Vocational training, Higher Education, and/or Other. The purpose is to differentiate those teachers who impart classes in educational stages different from Secondary Education so as to select foreign language teachers who work just in this stage.

The fifth item *"¿Cree que es importante la autoevaluación del profesorado por competencias? Indique, al menos una razón que defienda su postura"* has to do with the third posed hypothesis, which is as namely as follows: "Foreign language teachers contemplate to a limited extent the self-assessment of their teaching practice so as to guarantee the improvement and enhancement of their professional skills". Additionally, it is related to this research question: "Do foreign language teachers believe in the advantages that self-assessment will provide to their teaching's effectiveness and enhancement?" The aim of this

item is to make the investigator able to comprehend and interpret whether the teachers of this educational centre do take into account the self-assessment.

The sixth item *"¿Podría decir una, dos, o más competencias del profesorado de Lenguas extranjeras?"* was thought so as to answer the following research question: "Are foreign language teachers aware of the professional skills that they ought to be in possession of?" Moreover, it is related to the second hypothesis "Foreign language teachers are scarcely aware of the professional profile and skills that they ought to develop throughout their careers" The aim of this item is to clarify whether these teachers are aware enough of the professional skills and competences they need to command so as to be effective.

Items number seven and eight are associated with the next research question: "Are foreign language teachers qualified so as to design their own lifelong learning and training?" Besides, they have to do with hypothesis number four: "Foreign language teachers do consider lifelong learning and training as an important step in their in-service career and they are able to design a personal plan to carry out a continuous training". The seventh item is *"¿Cree que es importante la formación permanente del profesorado? Indique, al menos, una razón que defienda su postura";* in the eighth item the surveyed teachers have to choose among five actions that foreign language teachers can perform so as to enhance and improve their professional skills and competences. Otherwise, they can write different actions from the ones written in the questionnaire in "Others".

The item number nine is related to the following research question: "What teaching professional skills do foreign language teachers lack in relation to the teaching process?" And it is also related to hypothesis number one: "Foreign language teachers still lack some essential skills that would guarantee an effective teaching". The aim is to analyse to what extent teachers command some professional skills and competences.

Lastly, in item number ten, the teachers have to select those forms of teacher training activities that they know in Castile and Leon and/or they can indicate different ones in Others. Therefore, this item is linked with the next research question: "Are foreign language teachers qualified so as to design their own lifelong learning and training?" And, also, it is related to the fourth hypothesis: "Foreign language teachers do consider lifelong learning and training as an important step in their in-service career and they are able to design a personal plan to carry out a continuous training".

2.4. Data register

The questionnaire will be analysed through a qualitative paradigm, in which the investigator mostly interprets and describes the reality by means of words, but also by means of graphics and numerical percentages that show the data more directly.

The data provided by the questionnaire has been organised in seven tables which displays the most relevant information gathered for research. They directly show the teachers' answers from item number five to item number ten. However, there are six tables instead of five since the information gathered in the ninth item had to be divided into two different tables so as to be clearer to the reader. With the aim of changing as little as possible the answer of the teachers, the information is displayed without having translated it, in Spanish. The tables are the ones below:

Table 1. Teachers' self-assessment

¿Crees que es importante la autoevaluación del profesorado por competencias? Indique, al menos, una razón que defienda su postura.
"Siempre es importante porque siempre hay que seguir mejorando"
"No, porque la autoevaluación no siempre abarca todo lo necesario para evaluar correctamente al alumno"
"Una autoevaluación siempre es necesaria, el hecho de que sea por competencias, en mi opinión, es algo secundario"
"Sí, porque es una buena manera de saber si estamos bien encaminados en nuestra labor como docentes y si tenemos aún campo de mejora"
"Es lo más razonable porque así es como mejor se llega a valorar a una persona. Sin embargo, puede ser en ocasiones poco fiable, debería haber más mediciones y algunos ítems que permitieran una aproximación a criterios más concretos. También se deberían establecer herramientas de mejora a lo largo del curso para que la persona mostrase sus habilidades de adaptación al cambio y evolución favorable hacia esos marcadores en los que no cumplieses con los mínimos"
"SÍ. Lo creo importante. Es una manera de ayudarnos a mejorar nuestra práctica profesional"
"Sí"
Sí, para implantar una medida primero hace falta que el profesorado sepa verdaderamente lo que es"

| "Sí, para mejorar" |
| "Sí, para corregir posibles deficiencias" |

Table 2. Professional competences and skills according to the surveyed teachers

¿Podría decir una, dos, o más competencias del profesorado de Lenguas extranjeras?	
"Competencia digital y aprender a aprender"	"La lingüística y la de aprender a aprender"
"Lingüística y digital"	"Preparar materiales de enseñanza adecuados para el nivel de nuestro alumnado; estar al tanto de técnicas de enseñanza innovadoras y de las TIC; diseñar herramientas de evaluación para nuestros alumnos; mantenerlos motivados; estar muy al corriente de los acontecimientos en los países de los idiomas que enseñamos…"
"Competencias de aprender a aprender, comunicativa y social, por encima de las restantes"	"Competencia oral"
"Enseñar el idioma y la cultura	"Implicar a los alumnos y evaluar su aprendizaje"
"Comunicativa, social y uso de las TICS"	"Comunicativa, cultural, social/cívica"

Table 3. Permanent training of teachers

¿Crees que es importante la formación permanente del profesorado? Indique, al menos, una razón que defienda su postura.
"Sí, porque el reciclaje es fundamental para poder adaptarse a las necesidades de los alumnos"
"Es esencial para seguir mejorando y estar al día de las últimas tendencias en metodología"

"Es muy importante siempre que los contenidos de la formación tengan que ver con la práctica docente, porque de otro modo es fácil perder el ánimo por seguir aprendiendo nosotros mismos, y además nos pone en la misma situación en la que se encuentran nuestros alumnos habitualmente, que es algo muy sano para no perder la perspectiva"

"La formación permanente es vital para mantenernos al tanto de los nuevos recursos pedagógicos"

Sí, para aprender nuevas herramientas de enseñanza al alumnado"

"Sí, para seguir mejorando"

"Sí, pero de una manera correcta y no solamente por tener puntos"

"Sí, pues hay que adaptarse a los tiempos en los que se vive, sobre todo tecnológicamente"

"Sí, la sociedad y las tecnologías cambian continuamente y el profesorado necesita conocer los últimos avances"

"El mundo cambia muy rápidamente, por lo cual es necesario actualizarse y a veces reaprender y retomar, incluso, cosas que ya sabíamos o que parecían olvidadas y que necesitan ser recordadas. Tratamos con personas, no con algoritmos ni máquinas. La metodología debe adaptarse al entorno, los tiempos, y a las personas que ocupan ese espacio temporal preciso"

Table 4. Training Actions for the development of professional competences and skills

De entre las siguientes acciones que un docente de Lenguas extranjeras puede llevar a cabo para mejorar sus propias competencias profesionales, señale la(s) que considere más importantes.	
"Tener ganas de mejorar y de seguir formándose a lo largo de la vida"	"Ser conscientes de nuestras carencias y de nuestras fortalezas"
"Tener ganas de mejorar y de seguir formándose a lo largo de la vida"	"Tener ganas de mejorar y de seguir formándose a lo largo de la vida"
"Ser conscientes de nuestras carencias y de nuestras fortalezas"	"Tener ganas de mejorar y de seguir formándose a lo largo de la vida"
"Tener ganas de mejorar y de seguir formándose a lo largo de la vida"	"Tener ganas de mejorar y de seguir formándose a lo largo de la vida"
"Tener ganas de mejorar y de seguir formándose a lo largo de la vida"	"Ser conscientes de nuestras carencias y de nuestras fortalezas"

Table 5. Participants' professional competences and skills

Marque el nivel de desarrollo que posee en cuanto a las siguientes competencias.					
	Participant A	**Participant B**	**Participant C**	**Participant D**	**Participant E**
Planificar el curso	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien
Planificar secuencias didácticas	Bien	Excelente	Bien	Bien	Bien
Diagnosticar y atender las necesidades de los alumnos	Regular	Excelente	Bien	Excelente	Bien
Gestionar el buen funcionamiento del aula	Excelente	Bien	Bien	Excelente	Bien
Implicar a los alumnos en el control de su propio aprendizaje	Regular	Bien	Bien	Bien	Regular
Analizar y reflexionar sobre la práctica docente	Bien	Bien	Bien	Regular	Bien
Definir un plan personal de formación continúa	Excelente	Bien	Bien	Regular	Regular
Promover que el alumno desarrolle su competencia intercultural	Regular	Bien	Bien	Bien	Regular
Gestionar las propias emociones	Excelente	Bien	Bien	Excelente	Bien
Motivarse en el trabajo	Excelente	Bien	Excelente	Bien	Bien
Participar activamente en la institución	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien	Regular
Servirse de las TIC para el desempeño de su trabajo	Excelente	Bien	Bien	Excelente	Bien
Servirse de herramientas y procedimientos de evaluación	Regular	Bien	Bien	Bien	Regular
Garantizar buenas prácticas en la evaluación	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien	Regular
Promover una retroalimentación constructiva	Excelente	Excelente	Bien	Excelente	Regular
Conocimiento en la materia	Bien	Bien	Bien	Excelente	Excelente

Table 6. Participants' professional competences and skills

Marque el nivel de desarrollo que posee en cuanto a las siguientes competencias.					
	Participant F	Participant G	Participant H	Participant I	Participant J
Planificar el curso	Bien	Excelente	Bien	Excelente	Bien
Planificar secuencias didácticas	Excelente	Excelente	Bien	Excelente	Bien
Diagnosticar y atender las necesidades de los alumnos	Bien	Necesito mejorar	Regular	Regular	Bien
Gestionar el buen funcionamiento del aula	Excelente	Bien	Regular	Excelente	Excelente
Implicar a los alumnos en el control de su propio aprendizaje	Bien	Bien	Regular	Bien	Bien
Analizar y reflexionar sobre la práctica docente	Excelente	Regular	Excelente	Bien	Excelente
Definir un plan personal de formación continúa	Excelente	Necesito mejorar	Regular	Necesito mejorar	Bien
Promover que el alumno desarrolle su competencia intercultural	Bien	Excelente	Bien	Bien	Bien
Gestionar las propias emociones	Bien	Bien	Regular	Regular	Bien
Motivarse en el trabajo	Bien	Bien	Excelente	Bien	Excelente
Participar activamente en la institución	Bien	Bien	Excelente	Bien	Bien
Servirse de las TIC para el desempeño de su trabajo	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien	Excelente
Servirse de herramientas y procedimientos de evaluación	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien
Garantizar buenas prácticas en la evaluación	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien
Promover una retroalimentación constructiva	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien	Bien
Conocimiento en la materia	Excelente	Bien	Bien	Excelente	Bien

Table 7. Training actions for the improvement of professional competences and skills

De entre las siguientes acciones que un docente de Lenguas extranjeras puede llevar a cabo para mejorar sus propias competencias profesionales, señale la(s) que considere más importantes.
Planes de Formación Permanente de Centros Docentes y Servicios de Apoyo Educativo: itinerarios formativos contextualizados al propio centro y programados a varios cursos
Participación individual en Cursos y Jornadas.
Grupos de profesores: Profesores que bajo distintas modalidades (Grupo de Trabajo, Seminario, Proyecto de Formación en Centros, Proyecto de Innovación Educativa…) realizan formación sobre distintas temáticas, con carácter anual.
Planes de Formación Permanente de Centros Docentes y Servicios de Apoyo Educativo: itinerarios formativos contextualizados al propio centro y programados a varios cursos
"La formación anual por sindicatos y de la propia junta, así como de la UVA"
Participación individual en Cursos y Jornadas.
Participación individual en Cursos y Jornadas.
Participación individual en Cursos y Jornadas.
Planes de Formación Permanente de Centros Docentes y Servicios de Apoyo Educativo: itinerarios formativos contextualizados al propio centro y programados a varios cursos.
Participación individual en Cursos y Jornadas.

2. 5. Results: presentation and interpretation

In this epigraph we are going to present the results of our investigation with the aid of six graphics that we have created following the data gathered through the questionnaire. We decided to analyse and interpret the information from question five to question ten. These five questions are the ones that provide the data that make us able to answer the research questions and hypotheses.

The graphic number 1 shows the data associated with question number five. The item "Yes" depicts the percentage of teachers that have answered that teachers' self-assessment is important. Otherwise, the item "No" depicts the percentage of those who have responded the opposite.

Graphic 1. Teachers' self-assessment

As shown in the graphic above, 90% of the language teachers surveyed answered that they did believe that self-assessment is essential for the development of their professional careers. Just 10% considered that it is not.

The graphic number two displays the information that corresponds to the teachers' answers in the sixth question. Specifically, teachers when asked to mention one, two, or more professional skills, they wrote the ones as follows: digital competence; linguistic competence; oral/communicative competence; civic competence; cultural competence; learning to learn; ability to plan teaching materials; ability to motivate students; ability to carry out permanent training; ability to involve students; ability to design assessment tools; and ability to adapt teaching materials to the students' needs.

Having answered the questionnaire in Spanish and freely, we had to decipher the information gathered to some extent. Therefore, we extrapolated their answers to the professional skills suggested in the theoretical framework. Consequently, the second graphic is made up of seven professional skills specified by The Instituto Cervantes (2012), two mentioned in Celce-Murcia (2001), and one suggested by the British Council (2015).

In "knowledge of language systems" (British Council (2015), we have classified both "linguistic competence", and, namely, "la capacidad de enseñar el idioma"; in "ability to facilitate and promote intercultural communication" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012), we have included "cultural competence", and also "estar muy al corriente de los acontecimientos en los países de los idiomas que enseñamos"; in "the ability to involve students" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012), we have embraced the "ability to motivate" as well; in the "ability to handle feelings and emotions" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012), we have included "civic competence" and, lastly, in "the ability to professionally develop as teachers" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012) we have encompassed both "learning to learn" and this answer: "estar al tanto de las técnicas de enseñanza más innovadoras".
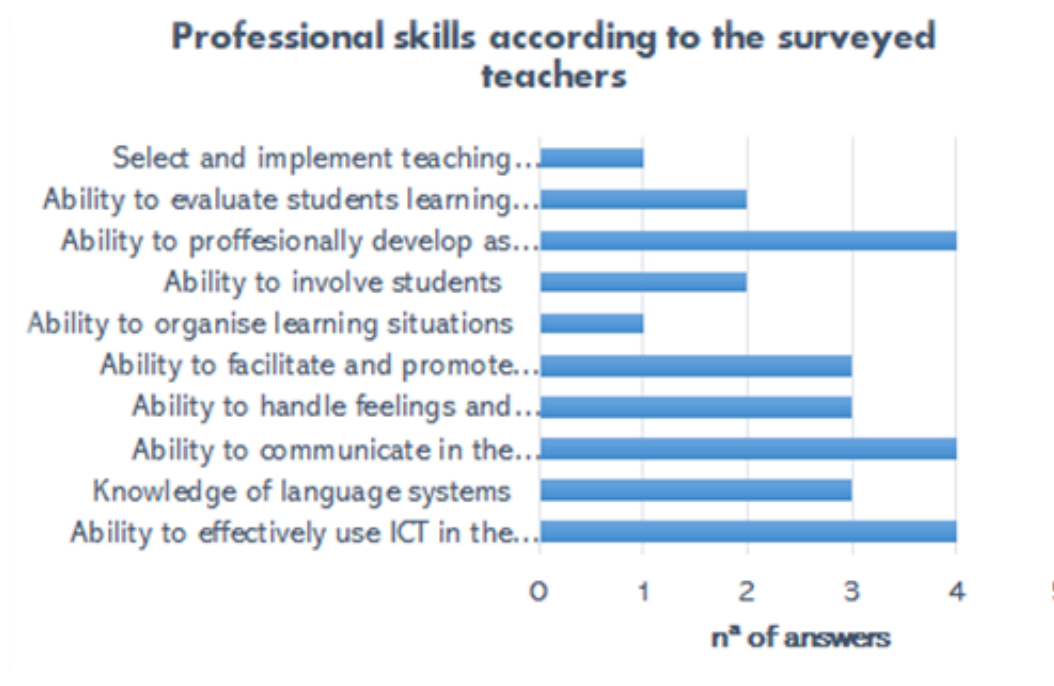

*Graphic 2. Professional skills according to the surveyed teachers*

As this graphic represents, not only did teachers mention 10 professional skills, but they also repeated the same ones most of the time: 40% of the teachers have suggested the "ability to effectively use ICT in the performance of their work" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012), the ability of communicate in the foreign language, successfully and effectively (Celce-Mucia, 2001), and the "ability to professionally develop as teachers" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012). Followed by the 30% of them, who have suggested the "ability to handle feelings and emotions", the "ability to facilitate and promote intercultural communication" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012), and the ability to have "knowledge of language systems" (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Next, the 20% pointed out the "ability to involve students", and the "ability to evaluate students' learning and performance" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012). Lastly, just 10% wrote about the "ability to organise learning situations" (The Instituto Cervantes, 2012), and the ability to "select and implement teaching materials in the teaching process" (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Graphics number three and four are linked with question number nine, which presents information upon the professional skills that these teachers possess in four different degrees: *Excellent, Good, Not so good, and I need to improve.*

We have divided the information into two graphics in such a way that the first graphic represents items from one to eight, and the second one from eight to sixteen. These sixteen items are related to the sixteen professional skills that formed the Likert scale used in the questionnaire. The sixteen items are the following ones in order: ability to plan a course; ability to plan didactic lessons; ability to identify and deal with students' needs; ability to manage the classroom; ability to involve students in the control of their own learning; ability to reflect upon their teaching practice; ability to design a continuous training plan; ability to promote intercultural communication in the classroom; ability to handle feelings and emotions; ability to motivate yourself at work; ability to actively participate in the educational centre; ability to effectively use Information and Communication Technologies in the performance of their work; ability to evaluate students learning and performance; ability to ensure good assessment practices; ability to promote constructive feedback; and knowledge upon the subject.
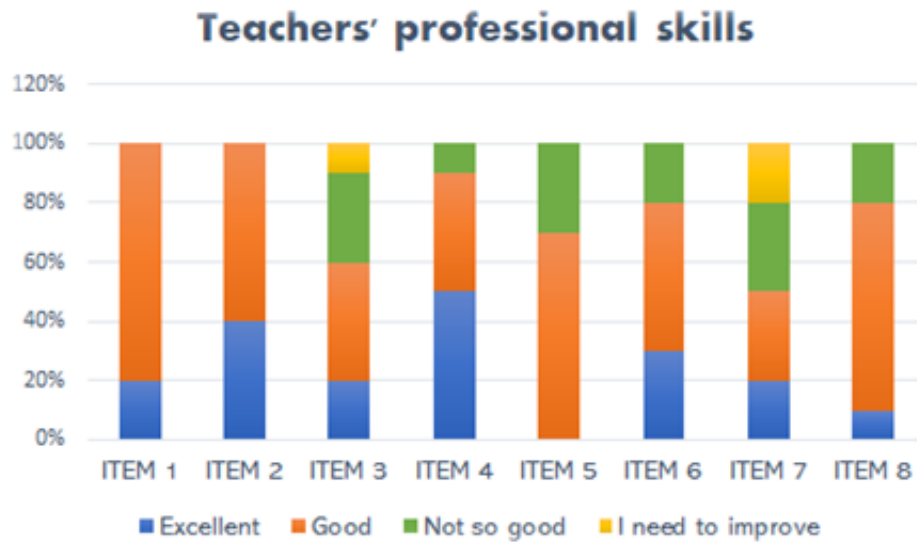
Graphic 3. Foreign language teachers' professional skills (Part 1)
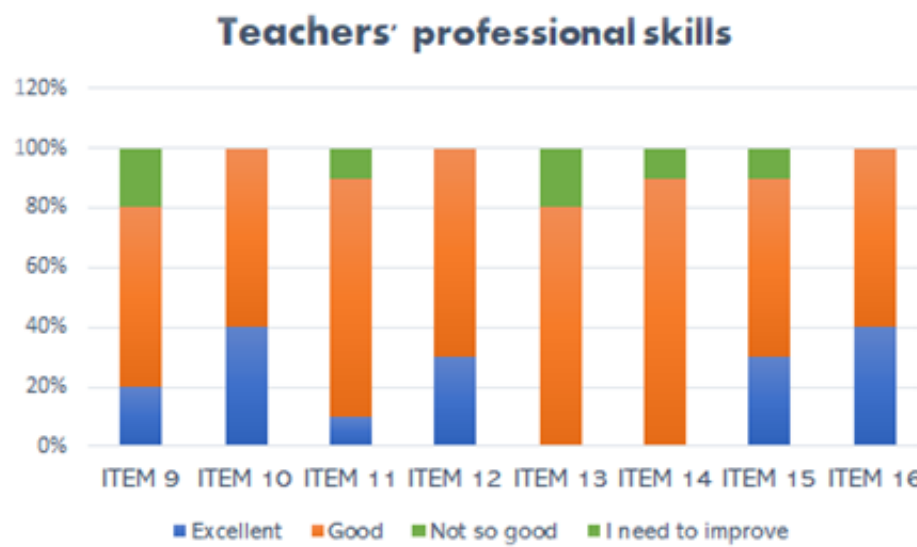
Graphic 4. Foreign language teachers' professional skills (Part 2)

The surveyed teachers are supposed to select the degree *I need to improve* when they do not have a good command of certain teaching professional skills. The greatest percentage of this degree is 20%. We just found it in item number 7. Following this percentage, 10% of teachers commented that they *need to improve* in item number 3. There are no more percentages of teachers selecting *I need to improve*. Furthermore, it is items number 3 and number 7 where we located the highest percentage of the degree *not so good,* being 30% the

teachers who have selected this degree in both items. In Item 5 we also discovered the highest percentages of the degree *not so good* (30%), although 70% have indicated that they have a *good* command of this skill. Furthermore, the next highest percentage of *not so good* is just 20% and we can find it in items number 6, 8, 9, and 13. Followed by items number 4, 11, 14 and 15, where 10 % of the teachers have chosen this degree.

In other items, teachers have selected the degrees *Excellent* and *Good* the most of the times, as displayed in graphics 3 and 4. With regards to the degree *Excellent*, 50% have selected it in item 4; 40% in items 2, 10, and 16; 30% in items 6, 12, and 15; 20% in items 1, 3, 7, and 9; finally, 10% in items 8 and 11. Lastly, 90% of the surveyed teachers indicated that they are Good in item 14; 80% in items 1, 11, and 13; 70% in items 5, 8, and 12; 60% in items 2, 9, 10, 15, and 16; 50% in item 6; 40% in items 3, and 4; and 30% in item 7.

The fifth graphic is related to the eighth question. In this one, teachers have to indicate the training actions they can perform so as to develop professional skills. This graphic simply illustrates the number of answers of the participants.

Training actions for the development of proffesional skills

	n° of answers
Be willing to improve and carry out a lifelong training	7
Be aware of our weaknesses and strenghts	3
peer-assessmment	0
Attend to two or more training courses per year	0
Attend to, at least, one training course per year	0
Others	0

Graphic 5. Training actions for the development of professional skills

As displayed in the graphic number 5, 70% of the surveyed language teachers have answered that the most important step in order to develop professional skills is to "be willing to improve and carry out a lifelong training." Besides, 30% of them have indicated "be aware of our weaknesses and strengths" as the second most important training option. They did not consider the other three as essential steps.

Lastly, the sixth graphic corresponds to the teachers' answers in question number ten. In this question, they have to choose among those training actions that they are familiar with. Otherwise, they can mention different ones in Others. With the purpose of making the data clearer to the reader, we have used five letters (A, B, C, D, E) that stand for the five training actions of the questionnaire. The letter A corresponds to the first question and, consequently, the letter E with the last one, namely, Others.

Graphic 6. Training actions for the improvement of professional skills

As it can be seen above, the final graphic shows that 50% of these teachers know item D (participación individual en cursos y jornadas), and that 30% of them has information about item A (Planes de Formación Permanente de Centros Docentes y Servicios de Apoyo Educativo: itinerarios formativos contextualizados al propio centro y programados a varios cursos). These two are the most known, followed by items E and C with 10% of teachers. Item E is Others and they have written "La formación anual por sindicatos y de la propia junta, así como de la UVA. Item C is "grupos de profesores: profesores que bajo distintas modalidades realizan formación sobre distintas temáticas, con carácter anual). Lastly, nobody is familiar with Item B (Planes de Formación de equipos de profesores: itinerarios formativos para equipos de profesores con intereses comunes, de varios centros y duración plurianual).

CONCLUSIONS

The present paper focuses on the professional skills of foreign language teachers. We have dealt with contents regarding the functions and roles of the teaching profession in general, and the education and linguistic policies, both at European and national level. Lastly, we have tackled the foreign language teachers' professional profile and skills, as well as, the training paths they can accomplish so as to become effective teachers. All this information is the theoretical framework of this research, whose main purpose is to interpret, analyse and comprehend the professional skills of the teachers who perform their teaching activity in Compulsory Secondary Education. The investigation is conducted under a holistic approach, which encompasses a qualitative paradigm, by analysing and interpreting the gathered data in a descriptive and interpretive way, with the aid of graphics and numerical percentages. Finally, we have provided the data gathered and the final results.

It is these data gathered through the questionnaire that makes us able to answer the four posed research questions.

The **first research question** is "What teaching professional skills do foreign language teachers lack in relation to the teaching process?" We have concluded that these teachers lack only two essential professional skills, namely, the ability to identify and deal with students' needs and the ability to design a continuous training plan. Regarding the rest of the competences, most of the time, these surveyed teachers indicated that they are to a large extent *Excellent* or *Good* at them. These findings are in relation to the *European Survey on Language Competence* (Eurydice, 2012), which states that more than 80% of teachers self-reported that they are fully qualified to teach the foreign language.

It is true that regarding professional skills, the experience of teachers plays an important role. In item 3, we find that the majority of the teachers who have answered *I need to improve* or not so good are between the ages of 20 and 30. Meanwhile, in item 7 the majority is between the ages of 30 - 40 and 40 - 50. In fact, the continuous training of teachers has been recently seen as fundamental. For that reason, those teachers who are older may not have the same tools as the younger ones possess because of their recent teacher training.

These data prove that **hypothesis number 1 is untrue** since these foreign language teachers do possess the professional skills that would guarantee an effective teaching. As a result, the planned course must be about the training paths teachers can perform for the development of their professional skills, as well as, about how to discover, evaluate and manage students' needs. However, this second ability is more related to the experience of teachers and more difficult to train.

The second research question is "Are foreign language teachers aware of the professional skills that they should be in possession of?" Teachers could only mention half of the nineteen professional skills that we suggested in the theoretical framework, concretely, 10. Besides, they tended to repeat most of them. As a consequence, the data provided bring us to consider that these teachers are not totally aware of all the professional skills they should have command of. Therefore, **hypothesis number 2 is correct**.

Surprisingly, the most repeated competences are these following ones: the "ability to effectively use ICT in the performance of their work"; the ability of "successfully and effectively communicating in the foreign language"; and "the ability to professionally develop as teachers."

As to the first skill, according to the European Council (2012), teachers do not frequently use ICT during their lessons. Hence these data prove that teachers are nowadays more concerned about the digital competence as a professional skill. Regarding the second ability, even though the teachers surveyed are all Spanish, they have an excellent (40%) and a good level (60%) of knowledge on the subject. As a result, this fact leads us to consider that for these teachers to communicate in the foreign language is an essential step to perform an effective teaching. Besides, in line with the European Council (2012), teachers usually use the target language during their lessons.

Lastly, these teachers have also repeated most of the time the ability related to the continuous training. In fact, it is one of the abilities that the surveyed teachers have less command of. This fact brings us to consider that for these teachers the continuous development is important. Consequently, the planning of a course, where they can learn about different training paths for their professional development and improvement, is more and more evident in this educational centre.

Despite these three professional skills, there are many others that foreign language teachers should consider for their professional profile. However, as observed in the results, they seem to be unaware of this necessity.

The **third research question** is "Do foreign language teachers believe in the advantages that self-assessment will provide to their teaching's effectiveness and enhancement?" We can conclude that the foreign language teachers of this educational centre do consider teachers' self-assessment as a crucial step that they have to accomplish first in order to improve their professional skills later. In consequence, **hypothesis number 3 is false** due to the fact that these teachers contemplate to a large extent the importance of their self-assessment. It is important to highlight that 10% of them had understood that we referred to the students' self-assessment, and not to the teachers'.

Moreover, they added to their answers that the self-assessment is "importante para seguir mejorando"; "para corregir las deficiencias y saber si estamos bien encaminados" and "para implantar una medida, primero hace falta que el profesorado sepa verdaderamente lo que es". Nevertheless, they have also suggested that "puede ser en ocasiones poco fiable, debería haber más mediciones y algunos ítems que permitieran una aproximación a criterios más concretos".

Lastly, the **fourth research question** is "Are foreign language teachers qualified so as to design their own lifelong learning training? On the one hand, it is true that the surveyed teachers give much importance to the" ability to professionally develop as teachers", since 70% of them marked this as one of the most important training actions for the development of their skills. Besides, they indicated "be aware of our weaknesses and strengths" as the second most important one, reaffirming this way that they do trust in the teachers' self-assessment. Hence, the first part of **hypothesis number 4 is valid** since these teachers do believe that performing a lifelong training is important for their in-service career.

On the other hand, the data provided through the graphics make us consider that these teachers are not capable of designing and programming their own learning training, as result, the second part of hypothesis number 4 is not correct. Moreover, even though they have knowledge on the majority of the training actions that the Castile and Leon government offers them, we cannot conclude to what extent these teachers have participated in them.

In consequence, further research is needed so as to know to what extent they have knowledge and have participated in different training paths sufficiently so as to design their own continuous teaching training.

All in all, in view of the results, we assert that there is a great concern between foreign language teachers about their continuous training, without any difference between the teachers who work in a state school from the ones working in a private school. As we commented in the theoretical framework, the demands teachers must deal with are increasing and more and more challenging, as a result, teachers must adapt themselves to the changes.

They can only survive in this new educational panorama through continuous training. Fortunately, they are aware that they need to continue learning if they do not want to be left behind in the education of the XXI century. However, these teachers are not capable of designing and planning their lifelong learning. It is necessary to train them how to autonomously perform it.

The European Commission (2007) and the Organic Law 8/2013, in its article 11, also state that lifelong learning constitutes a right and an obligation of teachers. Maybe more than addressing the teachers' lifelong learning as an imposition, they should regulate teachers' work schedules. This way teachers would have time enough to dedicate it to their own learning and training. Besides, those teachers, who are actually concerned about and work upon their professional development, ought to be also provided with economic incentives in order to boost their motivation.

Their motivation is important since, in the words of Kelly et al (2004), foreign language teachers hold an important role in achieving the European Union's objectives and helping safeguard Europe's plurilingual and pluricultural heritage. Moreover, as specified by the European Commission (2007), teachers play a fundamental role in the socialization of European individuals.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Authorisation letter for the School Principal

A la att. de la directora Dª. ******** del IES ********:

En Valladolid, a 22 de marzo de 2021

Yo, Alexandra Gallego Echeverry, alumna en prácticas del instituto en el que usted es directora, tengo a bien solicitarle respetuosamente autorización para administrar un breve cuestionario sobre competencias del profesorado de Lenguas extranjeras. Adjunto el enlace que lleva al mismo (https://forms.office.com/r/rigsKgsU0a).

El cuestionario está dirigido a los docentes de Lenguas extranjeras que imparten asignaturas de inglés/francés/alemán en el centro. El objetivo del mismo es conocer la opinión que tienen estos profesores sobre las competencias del profesorado, y la formación continua.

Se trata de una línea de investigación del Departamento de Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura de la Universidad de Valladolid, en donde me hallo cursando el Máster en Profesor de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanza de idiomas. Así pues, las generosas aportaciones de los participantes serán de gran utilidad para poder llevar a cabo un estudio de campo, como parte de mi Trabajo Fin de Máster, tutelado por el Dr. Francisco Javier Sanz Trigueros.

Desde luego, las informaciones recabadas en el cuestionario serán tratadas bajo los principios de anonimato y confidencialidad, sin comprometer en ningún caso la privacidad del profesorado.

Agradeciendo enormemente su atención, quedo atenta a su gentil respuesta.

Atentamente,

Alexandra Gallego Echeverry

Annex 2. The questionnaire

The full version of the questionnaire is available at the following link: https://forms.office.com/r/rigsKgsU0a. It is presented as follows:

COMPETENCIAS CLAVE DEL PROFESORADO DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

Este cuestionario está dirigido a docentes de lenguas extranjeras. Tan solo le llevará entre 5 y 10 minutos responderlo. Los datos y resultados serán tratados bajo los principios de anonimato y confidencialidad. De antemano, muchas gracias por su tiempo y colaboración.

Por favor, responda a las siguientes preguntas.

* Obligatorio

1. Nacionalidad

2. Indique su edad

   ◯ Entre 20 y 30 años

   ◯ Entre 30 y 40 años

   ◯ Entre 40 y 50 años

   ◯ Entre 60 y 70 años

3. Indique el tipo de centro en el que trabaja *

   ◯ Público

   ◯ Concertado

   ◯ Privado

7/1/2021

4. Marque la opción educativa/formativa en la que imparte la mayor parte de la docencia. *

○ Educación infantil y/o primaria

○ Educación secundaria

○ Formación profesional

○ Educación universitaria

○ [   ]
   Otras

5. ¿Cree que es importante la autoevaluación del profesorado por competencias? Indique, al menos, una razón que defienda su postura. *

6. ¿Podría decir una, dos, o más competencias del profesorado de Lenguas extranjeras? *

7/1/2021

7. ¿Cree que es importante la formación permanente del profesorado? Indique, al menos, una razón que defienda su postura. *

8. De entre las siguientes acciones que un docente de Lenguas extranjeras puede llevar a cabo para mejorar sus propias competencias profesionales, señale la(s) que considere más importante(s) *

○ Tener ganas de mejorar y de seguir formándose a lo largo de toda la vida

○ Ser conscientes de nuestras carencias y de nuestras fortalezas

○ La coevaluación entre compañeros

○ Asistir, al menos, a 1 curso al año.

○ Asistir a 2 o más cursos al año.

○
Otras

7/1/2021

9. Marque el nivel de desarrollo que posee en cuanto a las siguientes competencias. *

	Excelente	Bien	Regular	Necesito mejorar
Planificar el curso	○	○	○	○
Planificar secuencias didácticas	○	○	○	○
Diagnosticar y atender las necesidades de los alumnos	○	○	○	○
Gestionar el buen funcionamiento del aula	○	○	○	○
Implicar a los alumnos en el control de su propio aprendizaje	○	○	○	○
Analizar y reflexionar sobre la práctica docente	○	○	○	○
Definir un plan personal de formación continúa	○	○	○	○
Promover que el alumno desarrolle su competencia intercultural	○	○	○	○
Gestionar las propias emociones	○	○	○	○
Motivarse en el trabajo	○	○	○	○
Participar activamente en la institución	○	○	○	○
Servirse de las TIC para el desempeño de su trabajo	○	○	○	○
Servirse de herramientas y procedimientos de evaluación	○	○	○	○

7/1/2021

	Excelente	Bien	Regular	Necesito mejorar
Garantizar buenas prácticas en al evaluación	○	○	○	○
Promover una retroalimentación constructiva	○	○	○	○
Conocimiento en la materia	○	○	○	○

10. ¿Conoce los siguientes cauces donde el profesorado de Castilla y León puede participar en la formación permanente? Indique los que sí conozca. *

○ Planes de Formación Permanente de Centros Docentes y Servicios de Apoyo Educativo: itinerarios formativos contextualizados al propio centro y programados a varios cursos.

○ Planes de Formación de equipos de profesores: itinerarios formativos para equipos de profesores con intereses comunes, de varios centros y duración plurianual.

○ Grupos de profesores: Profesores que bajo distintas modalidades (Grupo de Trabajo, Seminario, Proyecto de Formación en Centros, Proyecto de Innovación Educativa…) realizan formación sobre distintas temáticas, con carácter anual.

○ Participación individual en Cursos y Jornadas.

○
Otras

7/1/2021