

Article

The Keys to Developing Communicative Competence as a School Project: A Qualitative View from Teachers' Beliefs

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Abstract: Educational systems have the common objective of coordinating efforts to improve students' communicative competence and facilitate the development of their oral and written language skills for personal, social, academic, and professional purposes. The work on communicative competence from a school perspective has various antecedents in the international educational context. In Spain, the improvement of students' linguistic communication competence in all the languages spoken in the schools (mother languages and second languages) has been addressed through different initiatives, among which the SLP (School Language Project) programme, better known in Spanish as Proyecto Lingüístico de Centro (PLC), which has been implemented in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia since the 2013–2014 academic year, stands out. The aim of this paper is to examine the opinions of the teacher coordinators involved in the implementation of SLP in their schools as well as their perceptions about the impact of external factors in the process and, lastly, to highlight the main implications emerging from this global vision for the implementation of interdisciplinary projects to improve LCC (Linguistic Communication Competence) schools. This study is based on the feedback provided by the coordinators of the SLP initiative in Andalusian institutions over five academic years. The findings have been studied utilising a qualitative methodology and assessed using the Atlas Ti 6.0 software, then grouped into five diverse categories. The results indicate that, despite the programme's strengths, specific improvement measures are necessary in both external and internal aspects related to SLP.

Keywords: communicative competence; improvement plans; School Language Project; teacher's beliefs; language education



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1. Introduction

The concept of Communicative Competence, in its current conception, originates from the works of Gumperz and Hymes [1]. It is closely linked to a view of language as usage and social experience. Consequently, a competent speaker can effectively communicate in culturally significant contexts. In education, Linguistic Communication Competence (LCC) is understood as the result of communicative action and allows students to interact through orality or writing, signed or multimodal, in a coherent and appropriate way in diverse environments and contexts for various purposes [2]. This perspective of language as an activity is at the base of the current competency framework promoted by different international organizations, including the OECD and the Council of Europe.

In this sense, one of the main objectives shared by various educational systems consists of articulating reading, writing, and lecture programmes, which allow for the development of students' personal and social potential [3,4]. The aim is to promote a treatment of language in use that overcomes a merely descriptive approach to the linguistic systems—still predominant among some teachers—and that favours the acquisition of basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and the gradual development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) [5–7].

The focus on literacy and developing students' oral abilities has a long history in educational research and interventions, which have culminated in movements such as *Writing across the curriculum* (WAC) that underlines the need to integrate literacy work across different areas of knowledge, both in the framework of higher education and at non-university levels of education [3]. There are other movements associated with WAC, such as *Writing to Learn* (WTL), which focuses on the cognitive benefits of the writing process to students, or *Writing in the disciplines* (WID), which focuses on using the specialized language in each scientific discipline.

These movements have resulted in numerous programmes and institutional reforms concerning writing competencies in multiple English-speaking countries since the 1960s. All of these reforms and programmes advocated for the inclusion of writing instruction in all curriculum areas [3,8].

This integrated treatment of writing and communicative competence across various disciplines faces challenges concerning the structure of the subjects in secondary schools, as well as the weak collaborative and interdisciplinary culture that still exists among some teachers [3,9,10]. For this reason, the actions related to the improvement of students' oral and written skills are much more effective when they are not proposed in isolation and are integrated into the framework of an institutional project involving the school as a unit [9,11–13].

As Trujillo claims [11], from these and other antecedents, like the work on communicative competence based on discursive genres [14–16], the *Whole-language* movement [17], or different proposals for the integration of communicative skills in curricular areas [18,19], the idea that the improvement of linguistic communication of the students should be approached from a centre perspective has gradually gained strength. Thus, in its current form, the concept of the School Language Project (SLP) is conceived as a space for coordinating all initiatives that promote the work of LCC in a specific educational institution [20].

In the context of the Spanish education system, within which this study is framed, the SLP has several antecedents related to linguistic standardization processes that lead to a more inclusive understanding of LCC work [21–23]. Currently, multiple Spanish administrations are supporting programmes aimed at improving LCC that respond to an interdisciplinary conception of the work of communicative competence and involve the educational institution as a whole [20]. In this context, *Programme for Educational Innovation School Language Project (SLP)*, developed in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, stands out.

The educational innovation programme School Language Project (SLP) is an institutional initiative promoted and developed by the Ministry of Education of Andalusia from the 2013–2014 academic year to the current 2022–2023 year. The SLP aims to improve students' linguistic communication skills, both in their mother language and in foreign languages, as a school movement. It is carried out over three complete academic years in preschool, primary, compulsory secondary, and baccalaureate schools. In order to access it, schools interested in the project must accredit the participation of a minimum of 50% of their teaching staff and submit an initial project for evaluation and approval by an external commission [22].

As explained above, the period of permanence in the programme is three academic years. Schools have at their disposal external advice and tailored training during this time. Objectives and final products are determined for each year in accordance with the programme's various lines of work (Table 1) [24].

In each school, there is a coordinator who promotes actions to achieve the targets of the programme [25]. The development over time of the SLP programme, which celebrates its 10th anniversary in the 2023–2024 academic year, as well as the breadth and diversity of its potential beneficiaries—non-university educational centres in Andalusia supported with public funds in which compulsory and non-compulsory education is taught—has enabled this initiative to achieve a high educational impact. It has been demonstrated, based on

various indicators, including the total number of class groups that have taken part in the SLP programme from 2016–2017 to the present.

Table 1. Lines of work of a SLP.

Line of work	Description
Standardisation	Regulation of the languages present in the school: formal uses of language in its classroom and social dimension.
Reading plan	Actions at the school linked to reading in its curricular dimension and families and environmental areas.
Oral skills plan	Planning of work on oral comprehension and expression skills and different oral discursive genres.
Writing across curriculum	General guidelines for working on writing and different genres of written discourses.
ILC and CLIL	Development of the Integrated Language Curriculum (ILC) and the Content and Language-Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology.
Attention to linguistic diversity	Special measures for pupils whose mother languages are different from the official language and pupils with specific educational needs in relation to language.
School library plan	Actions aimed at the implementation and dynamization of the school library. Development of information literacy (ALFIN).

Prepared by the authors on the basis of Department of Educational Development and Vocational Training [24] and Fabregat [10].

This institutional initiative to improve the LCC, like other school projects, requires, in its practical dimension, the active and coordinated participation of the teaching team. For this reason, it is quite important to listen to teachers' viewpoints and align closer with their beliefs about the implementation of SLP in a real context [20,26].

Teachers' beliefs constitute a research field widely explored from different perspectives, which connect with different areas of the curriculum: music education [27]; natural sciences and social sciences [28–30]; and mathematics [31].

In the specific field of language education and the development of communicative competence, educators' viewpoints have been assessed regarding the teaching grammar and writing [32,33], oral proficiency [34], language teaching and multilingualism [35,36], oral language in class [37,38], initial training [39], literary education [40] and the creation and implementation of school language programmes [10,26].

In general, different studies have highlighted the significant impact of teachers' beliefs on conceptual change, a complex process that relies on cognitive conflict—with other motivational and contextual aspects—as a mechanism to develop self-awareness around mental constructs and enables their reformulation and reintegration in specific educational situations [41,42].

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the previously unexplored views of the coordinators involved in the implementation of SLP in their schools (1) as well as their perceptions about the impact of external factors in the process (2) and, lastly, to highlight the main implications emerging from this global vision for the implementation of interdisciplinary projects to improve LCC in schools (3).

Research Questions

As mentioned above, the current research focuses on three interrelated questions:

1. What are the prevalent beliefs of teachers involved in the coordination of an SLP concerning the development of this initiative in schools?
2. What role do extra-curricular factors play in the design and implementation of a SLP, according to the participants?
3. What are the implications of this study for designing and implementing interdisciplinary CLIL improvement initiatives from a school perspective?

2. Materials and Methods

The SLP is a large-scale educational programme involving a total of 1928 groups of students at all non-university educational levels. The data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Class groups by educational levels and academic year participation in the SLP programme.

Educational Level	Preschool	Primary School	Special Education	Compulsory Secondary Education	High School	Vocational Training	Continuing Education	Other	Total Groups
2016–2017	143	154	67	103	46	35	5	5	558
2017–2018	110	122	58	70	32	22	4	4	422
2018–2019	100	112	56	75	28	26	2	5	404
2020–2021	69	76	0	58	21	21	2	11	258
2021–2022	74	77	0	68	34	28	0	5	286
Total	496	541	181	374	161	132	13	30	1928

We do not have data for 2019–2020 academic year due to COVID-19. In this year, the SLP was cancelled. The monitoring reports for 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 do not refer to Special Education groups. Prepared by the authors on the basis of private data provided to coordinators by the Andalusian Ministry of Education. Although the reports are not public, the final document produced by the Ministry of Education of Andalusia can be consulted [24].

This research employs a qualitative, non-experimental and descriptive methodology [43,44] based on the open-ended responses collected in the annual monitoring report of the SLP programme prepared by the Plans and Programmes Service of the Department of Educational Development and Vocational Training of the Andalusian Regional Government. The project coordinators provided these open-ended responses voluntarily. The analysis of open-ended responses allows us to collect reflections, arguments, and explanations anonymously and gives a voice to the coordinators as privileged agents and observers in the process [45].

The data collected correspond to five academic years: 2016–2017; 2017–2018; 2018–2019; 2020–2021; and 2021–2022. As previously mentioned, the monitoring report for 2019–2020 has not been published due to the exceptional situation resulting from COVID-19.

2.1. Participants

The participants are practising teachers coordinating an SLP in their respective schools across the eight Andalusian provinces. These publicly funded schools provide compulsory and post-compulsory education for various educational stages, as shown in Table 2. More information on participation is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Centres participating in the SLP Programme and report completion data.

Academic Year	Participating Schools	Completed the Report	Did Not Complete the Report
2016–2017	269	241	28
2017–2018	181	178	3
2018–2019	181	173	8
2020–2021	122	122	0
2021–2022	134	128	6
Total	887	842	85

Schools participating in the SLP Programme (from 2016–2017 to 2020–2021) and report completion data.

The SLP coordinators provided a total number of 322 open-ended written responses (see Table 4). Accordingly, 38.24% of the coordinators who filled out the form responded to this field, while the rest did not provide any answers.

The data collection instrument used is the SLP Programme *Informe Anual de Seguimiento* or *Annual Monitoring Report* (referred to as AMR in this document), an institutional private form that has not been analyzed before in any research and created by the Educational Plans and Programmes Service (a specific section of the Ministry of Education of Andalusia) consisting of several sections: programme development (1); centre actions for programme development (2); dissemination (3); overall assessment (4); and other observations, such as challenges and demands (5). The coordinators, using closed and semi-open multiple-choice questions, evaluate Section 1, Section 2, Section 3, and Section 4 quantitatively. Meanwhile,

Section 5, which serves as the source for this work, is qualitative and requests from the informants a written response to an open question that the coordinators answer with a brief text.

Table 4. Number of open-ended responses issued by coordinators. Academic years from 2016–2017 to 2021–2022.

Academic Year	Number of Open-Ended Responses
2016–2017	85
2017–2018	69
2018–2019	74
2020–2021	48
2021–2022	46
Total	322

It is not an instrument specifically designed for the present research—with its consequent limitations—but rather a document focused on the monitoring of the SLP programme developed by the Andalusian educational administration. This document has also been validated by technicians and managers of the central services in this administration. The AMR data are gathered via an online form available to coordinators for a period of 30 days every year. The authors of this paper have access to the AMR information as members of the teaching coordination team of the SLP Programme.

The main advantage of AMR is the origin of its informants, all of whom are SLP Programme coordinators in their respective reference schools.

2.2. Procedures and Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis process were carried out in accordance with the following phases:

1. The Educational Plans and Programs Service developed and validated the virtual form, which has been distributed to all participating centres of the SLP Program;
2. Completion of the form by the SLP coordinators in the centres;
3. Elaboration of the AMR, by the section of Educational Plans and Programmes Service of the Department of Educational Development and Vocational Training (Ministry of Education of Andalusia), and forwarding it to the Pedagogical Coordination of the SLP Programme;
4. Initial content analysis of the responses and establishment of four categories grouped based on a SWOT matrix [46,47]. Subsequently, a fifth category was added, corresponding to general aspects related to the development of the programme (see Table 4);
5. Quantitative–lexical analysis grouped by categories of Section 5 of the AMR, corresponding to *Observations: difficulties and demands* (open response);
6. Delimitation of the productive base of words;
7. Grouping by lexical families of the productive base (see Table 5);
8. Results presentation.

Table 5. Categories of analysis used to group responses and abbreviations.

Categories	Abbreviation
Internal factors against the SLP design and implementation	C1
Internal factors in favour of the SLP design and implementation	C2
External factors against the SLP design and implementation	C3
External factors in favour of the SLP design and implementation	C4
Descriptive aspects related to the development of the SLP	C5

3. Results

The qualitative information analysis was elaborated with the support of the Atlas.ti 6.0 software, which enables efficient textual data processing and interpretation. The production base includes 1562 words distributed by category and academic year (see Table 6).

Table 6. Distribution of the words of the productive base by categories.

Category	Academic Year					Total
	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2020/2021	2021/2022	
C1	144	177	41	71	84	517
C2	8	46	44	26	58	182
C3	84	88	30	207	54	463
C4	20	14	20	22	26	102
C5	21	47	33	54	173	328
Total	277	372	168	380	395	1562

Once the words of the productive base have been categorised, the words belonging to the same lexical family (e.g., coordinate, coordination, coordinator) have been grouped together to ensure meaningful clusters. The data on the frequency of occurrence of each word family are then presented in the subsequent graphs (see Figures 1–5).

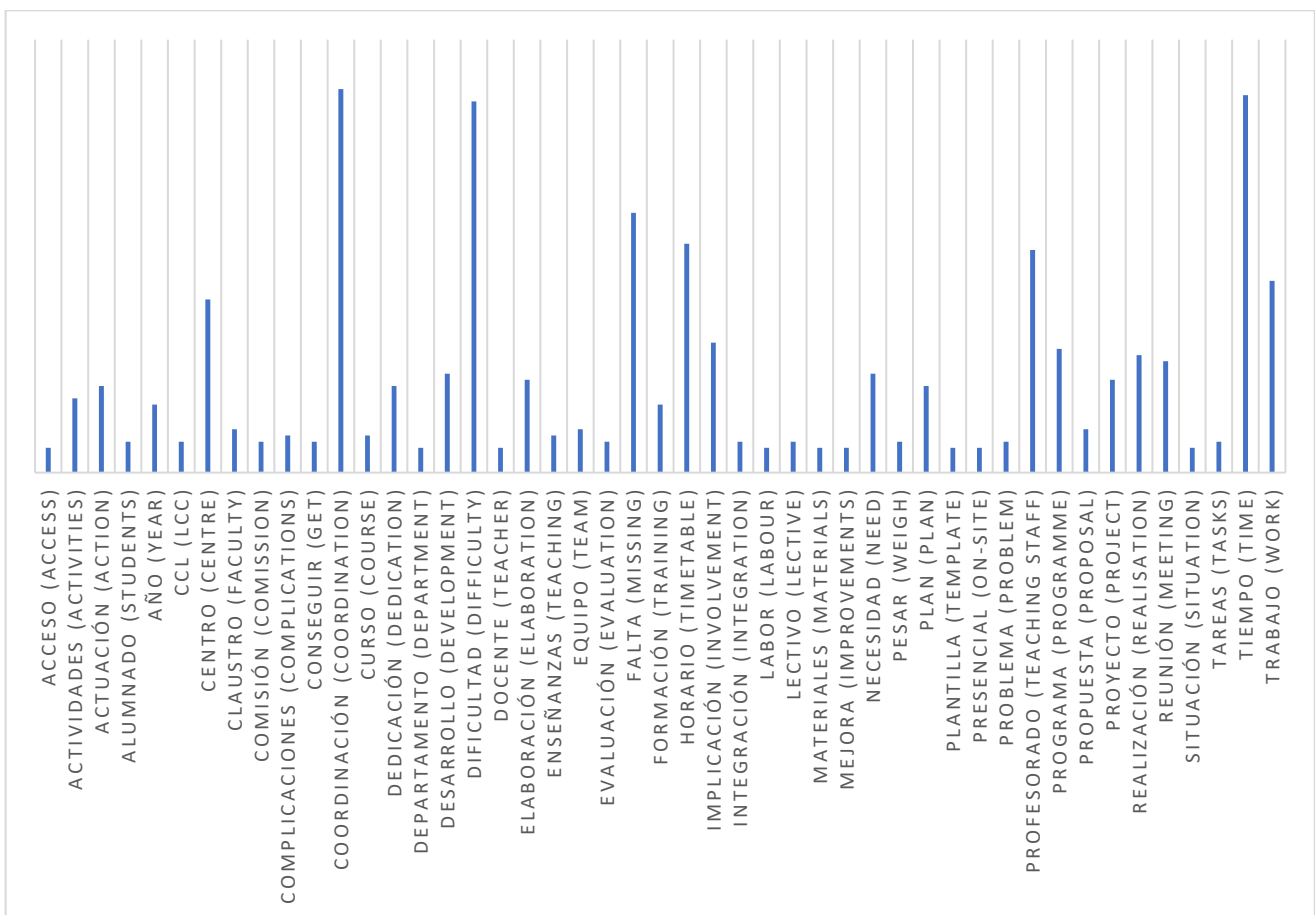


Figure 1. Internal factors against the SLP design and implementation (C1).

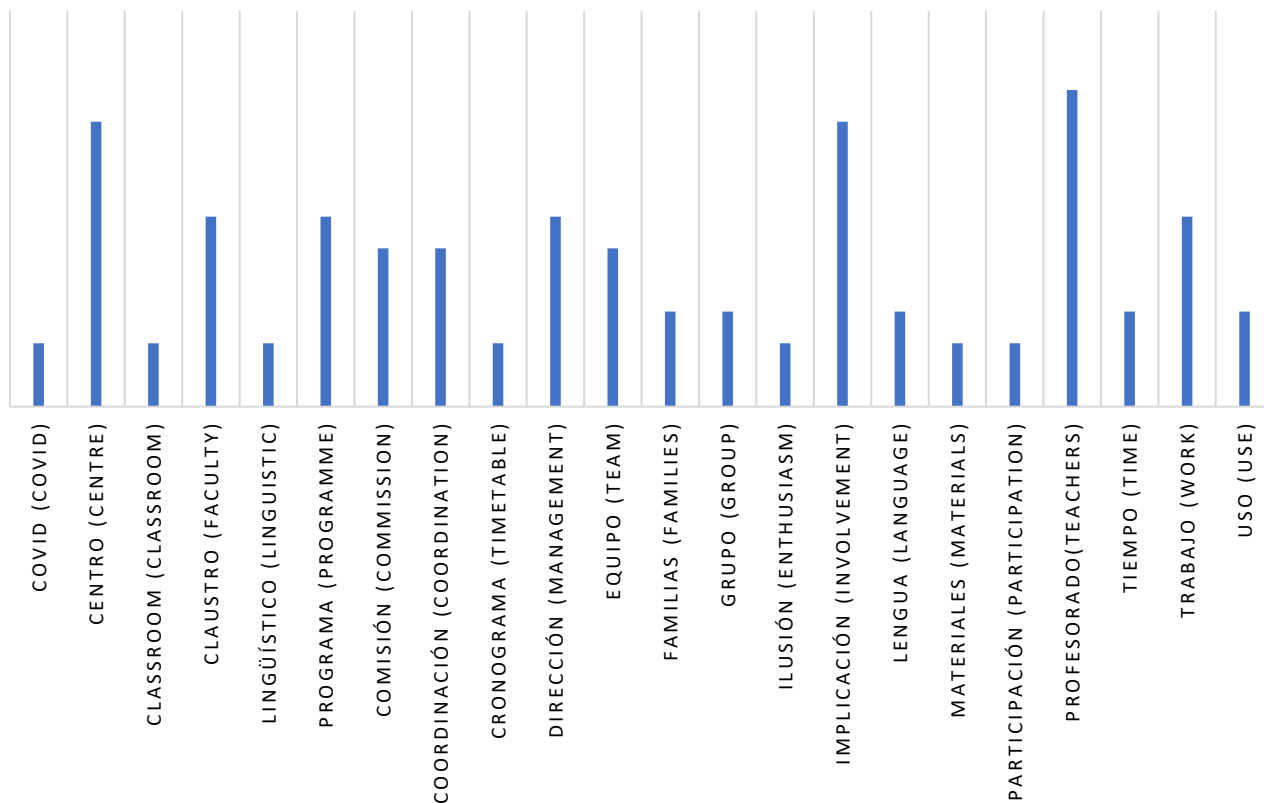


Figure 2. Internal factors in favour of the SLP design and implementation (C2).

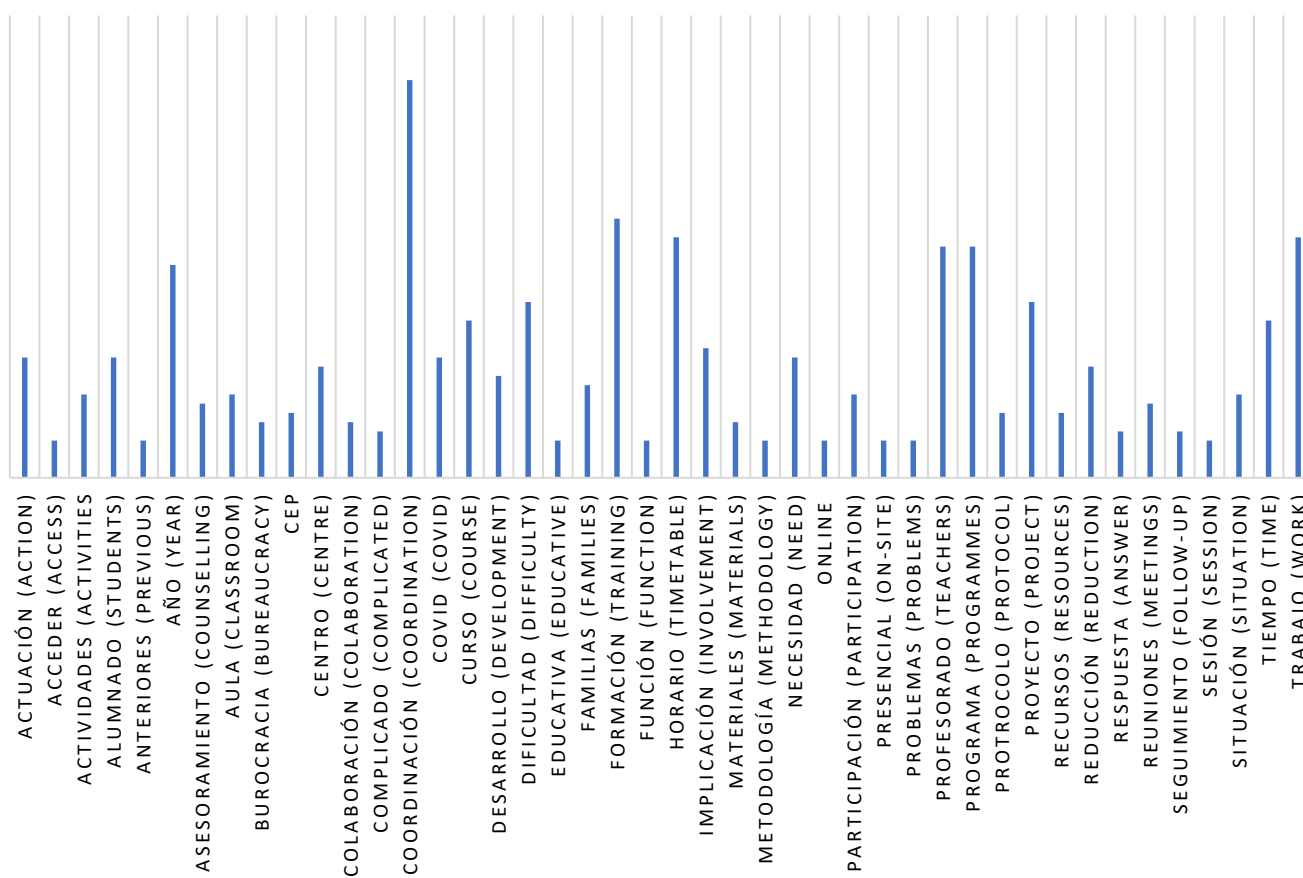


Figure 3. External factors against the SLP design and implementation (C3).

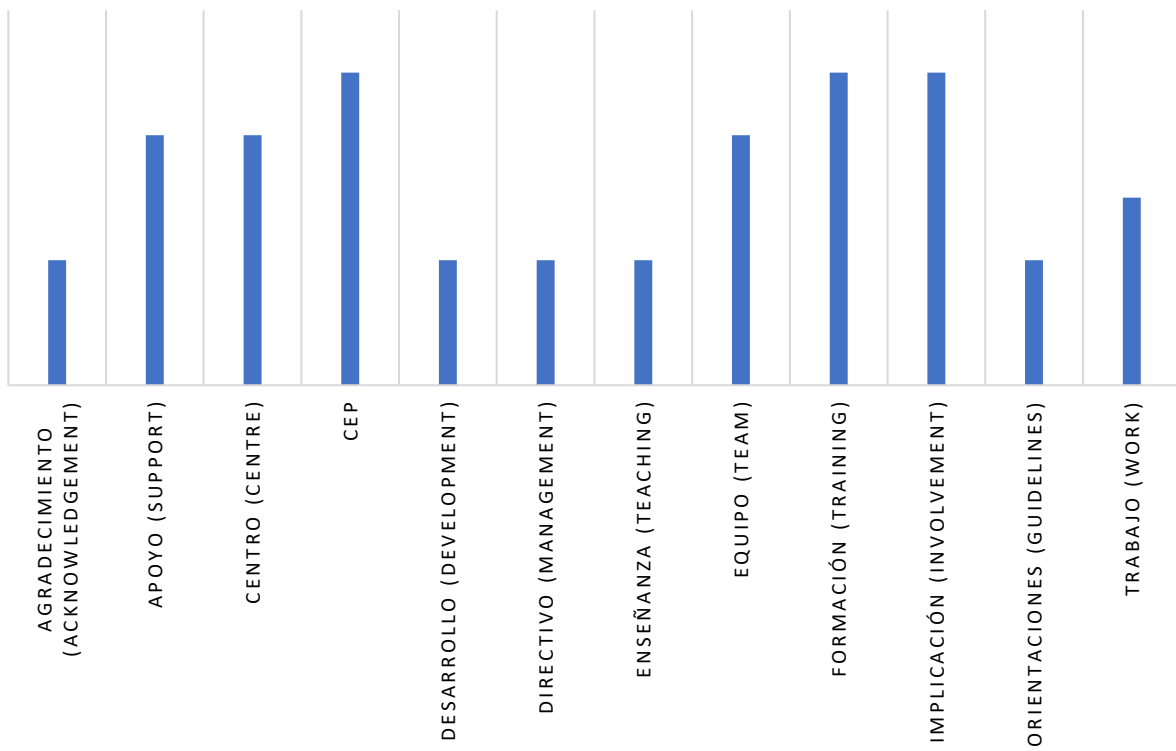


Figure 4. External factors in favour of the SLP design and implementation (C4).

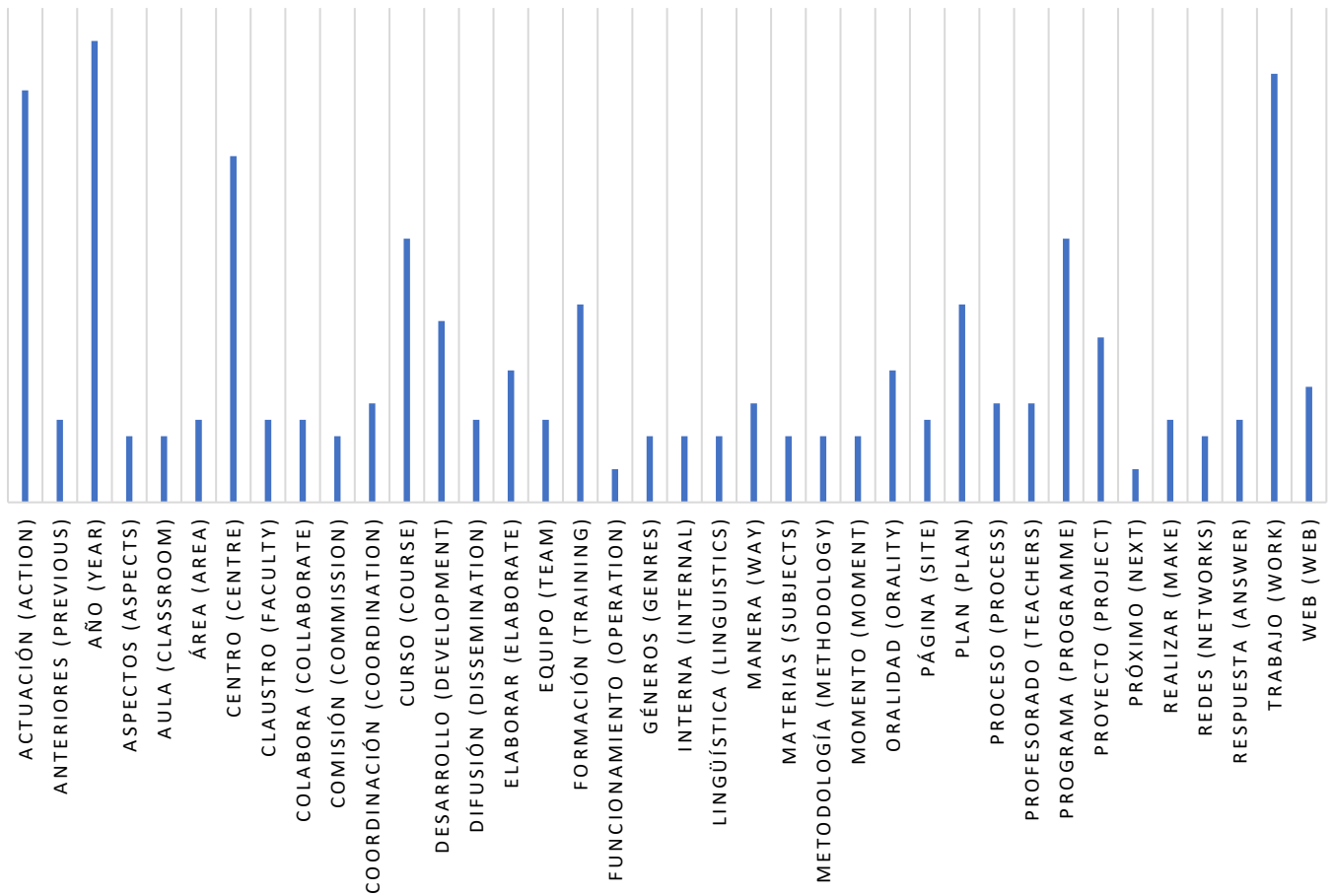


Figure 5. Descriptive aspects related to the development of the SLP (C5).

Although the answers analysed in this paper pertain to the section *Observations: difficulties and demands*, many coordinators have made positive comments, as illustrated in Figures 2 and 4. Other teachers focus more on describing the development of the programme in their centres, as Figure 5 represents. Consequently, although there are more words related to categories 1 and 3, coordinators report both aspects in favour of the project and challenges around the implementation of the project.

4. Discussion

4.1. Internal Factors against the SLP Design and Implementation (C1)

The lack of time in the teachers' timetable to facilitate the horizontal coordination of the SLP stands out on the line of internal difficulties (C1), as we can deduce from the three most frequent word families in Figure 1 ("time", "coordination", and "difficulty"). This lack of time and the interference with other tasks (teaching, tutoring, coordinating, and participating in other plans and programmes, as can be deduced from the results presented in Figure 1) add to the complexity of the work to be coordinated.

The uneven involvement of teachers, especially those in non-language areas (NLAs), who feel less identified with the SLP, is combined with other specific conditions and beliefs about the development of the programme, such as the complexity and diversity of large schools and the presence of a significant percentage of newly recruited teachers (see Table 7).

Table 7. Internal factors against the SLP design and implementation (C1).

Internal Factors against the SLP (C1)	
Number of answers related to C1 in 2016/2017 academic year	43
Number of answers related to C1 in 2017/2018 academic year	32
Number of answers related to C1 in 2018/2019 academic year	24
Number of answers related to C1 in 2020/2021 academic year	14
Number of answers related to C1 in 2021/2022 academic year	10
Subcategory	Exemplary answers
C1/S1. Shortage of time dedicated to coordination in the timetable of the school.	R.37-17/18. "La no disposición de un horario específico para la elaboración de material y organización de actividades dificulta mi actuación". Translation: "The lack of a specific timetable for the preparation of material and the organisation of activities makes it difficult for me to act". R.21-21/22. "Necesidad de contar en el horario regular con horas específicas tanto para la coordinación del Proyecto, como para las sesiones de trabajo en equipo". Translation: "Need for specific hours in the regular timetable for the coordination of the project and for the team work sessions".
C1/S2. Complexity and diversity of tasks associated with coordination.	R.75-16/17. "Es un trabajo que requiere mucha dedicación. Al ser la coordinadora también tutora y coordinadora del PLB supone un esfuerzo adicional". Translation: "It is a job that requires a lot of dedication. As the coordinator is also a tutor and coordinator of the RLP (Reading and Libraries Project), it is an extra effort". R.3-21/22. "Se trata de una coordinación ardua y trabajosa, en constante evaluación y redefinición. Mis conclusiones hasta el momento es que hay que dar pequeños pasos, pero asentarlos bien, y que se van a necesitar los tres años exclusivamente para diseñar el programa. Combinar las labores de coordinación con el trabajo diario docente tiene como consecuencia un progreso lento y a veces frustrante". Translation: "It is an arduous and time-consuming process of coordination, constantly evaluated and redefined. My conclusions so far are that small steps need to be taken, but they need to be well established, and that the three years will be just needed to design the programme. Combining the coordination work with the day-to-day work of teaching makes for slow and sometimes frustrating progress".
C1/S3. Disparate involvement of the school's teaching staff.	R.13-20/21. "La implicación del profesorado es muy dispar, de ahí la dificultad encontrada". Translation: "The involvement of teachers is very disparate, which explains the difficulty encountered". R.14-21/22. "Se necesita mucho tiempo para conciliar programación, actividades, seguimiento, formación... El profesorado de áreas lingüísticas, en general, asume este programa como necesario para la mejora de la CCL. El profesorado de áreas no lingüísticas participa muy forzado". Translation: "Too much time is needed to reconcile programming, activities, monitoring, training... Teachers of language areas, in general, accept this programme as necessary for the improvement of LCC. Teachers of non-language areas take part in the programme in a very forced way".
C1/S4. Characteristics and dynamics of the centre.	R.39-16/17. "Centro muy grande y heterogéneo. Funciona en horario de mañana y tarde. Muy diversas enseñanzas de FP, a las que pertenece la mayoría del alumnado. Dificultad de implicar a gente tan diversa". Translation: "A very large and heterogeneous centre. It operates in the mornings and afternoons. Very diverse vocational courses to which most of the students belong. Difficult to involve such a diverse group of people". R.65-17/18. "El número de profesores nuevos en la plantilla del centro dificulta la continuidad con el proceso que habíamos comenzado ya hace varios años". Translation: "The number of new teachers in the school makes it difficult to continue the process we started several years ago".

4.2. Internal Factors in Favour of the SLP Design and Implementation (C2)

Among the internal factors that favour the design and implementation of an SLP, the informants highlight the role of the teaching staff and the management team as agents of change [13]; the involvement of both sectors is strengthened by the actions aimed at improving internal coordination, strongly supported by the SLP commission and the staff agreements. These strengths (represented by the most frequent word families in Figure 2, “teachers”, “involvement”, and “centre”) translate into short-term results that feed back into the process and make the achievements visible (see Table 8).

Table 8. Internal factors in favour of the SLP design and implementation (C2).

Internal Factors in Favour of SLP (C2)	
Number of answers related to C2 in 2016/2017 academic year	2
Number of answers related to C2 in 2017/2018 academic year	5
Number of answers related to C2 in 2018/2019 academic year	12
Number of answers related to C2 in 2020/2021 academic year	2
Number of answers related to C2 in 2021/2022 academic year	5
Subcategory	Exemplary answers
C2/S1. General involvement of teachers in the development of the project.	R.7-17/18. “Hasta el momento, la participación y colaboración de todos los participantes en el Programa Lingüístico de Centro es muy buena. Nos esforzamos en nuestras aulas”. Translation: “So far, the participation and collaboration of all participants in the SLP is very good. We make an effort in our classrooms”. R.29-20/21. “Como aspecto positivo, la implicación de todo el profesorado en el plan de actuación on-line, mediante el uso de Classroom, Google Meet y Calendar”. Translation: “On the positive side, all the teachers were involved in the online action plan through the use of Classroom, Google Meet and Calendar”.
C2/S2. Promotion and support of the project by the management team.	R.17-18/19. “He de resaltar el apoyo e implicación del equipo directivo”. Translation: “I must highlight the support and commitment of the management team”. R45-21/22. “Conviene aclarar que el equipo directivo ha promovido la participación en el PLC, pero ya había un grupo de profesores interesados (...)”. Translation: “It should be clarified that the management team has promoted participation in the SLP, but there was already a group of teachers who expressed their interest in it”.
C2/S3. Internal coordination.	R.8-17/18. «La comisión del PLC se reúne sistemáticamente según nuestro cronograma. La dificultad es coordinarse con el resto del claustro por falta de tiempo, pero el trabajo del PLC es muy positivo». Translation: “The SLP committee convenes regularly as per the prescribed schedule. Although time constraints make it challenging to coordinate with the rest of the staff, the work of the SLP is exceedingly constructive.” R.15-18/19. “Abordamos, principalmente, en las reuniones, la coordinación de todo el claustro. Así, resultan muy útiles los acuerdos y, poco a poco, vamos cohesionando al grupo. Intercambiamos materiales via e-mail”. Translation: “We primarily manage staff coordination during meetings, utilizing agreements to enhance cohesiveness within the group. Material exchange is facilitated through email”.
C2/S4. Visibility of results and dissemination of the SLP.	R.29-21/22. “Estamos viendo unos resultados muy positivos de nuestro PLC, lo cual está motivando mucho tanto al claustro como al equipo”. Translation: “We are seeing very positive results from our SLP, which is very motivating for both the staff and the team”. R.15-16/17. “Estamos actualizando la página web del centro. En cuanto esté actualizado subimos todo lo relativo al PLC”. Translation: “We are in the process of updating the school website. As soon as it is updated, we will upload everything related to the SLP”.

4.3. External Factors against the SLP Design and Implementation (C3)

The external factors that complicate the development of the SLP programme are largely connected to the actions carried out by the Education Administration as the most common terms in Figure 3 show (“coordination”, “training”, “work”, “timetable”), specifically the Autonomous Community of Andalusia. This is based on the coordinators’ declarations and beliefs, as documented in the study.

These statements are supported by various grievances, with the notable absence of reduced working hours for carrying out SLP coordination in schools. The informants claim that commitment to the coordination of the SLP should be reflected in allocated time slots on coordinators’ schedules, much like other institutional programmes and initiatives.

In addition to the absence of reduced working hours, which is not accounted for in the SLP programme, the participants perceive an excessive bureaucratic burden stemming from the programme itself.

Other factors that affect LCC are not directly associated with the structure of the SLP programme and act as external threats. These include the instability of the teaching staff, which obstructs coordinated and sustained efforts to enhance LCC, as well as the inadequate attention and development of teacher training by external support services (see Table 9), specifically the Teacher Training Centres (better known as CEP in Spain).

Table 9. External factors against the SLP design and implementation (C3).

External Factors against the SLP (C3)	
Number of answers related to C3 in 2016/2017 academic year	30
Number of answers related to C3 in 2017/2018 academic year	16
Number of answers related to C3 in 2018/2019 academic year	18
Number of answers related to C3 in 2020/2021 academic year	20
Number of answers related to C3 in 2021/2022 academic year	10
Subcategory	Exemplary answers
C3/S1. Lack of recognition of reduced working hours for the coordinators of the SLP.	R.12-18/19. “La función de coordinación necesita horas de reducción horaria para poder llevar a cabo su función sin necesidad de hacerlo fuera del horario laboral”. Translation: “The coordination function needs reduced working hours in order to be able to carry out its function without the need to do so outside working hours”. R.40-21/22. “El coordinador del programa no disfruta de ningún tramo horario para ejercer las funciones de coordinación, como sí ocurre en otros programas de innovación educativa”. Translation: “The coordinator of the programme does not have any time slots for coordination functions, as is the case in other educational innovation programmes”.
C3/S2. Insufficient development of teacher training by external agents.	R.30-18/19. «Solo hemos recibido una sesión de formación en todo este tiempo. Necesitamos más seguimiento, colaboración y formación del CEP». Translation: “We have only received one training session in all this time. We need more follow-up, collaboration and training from the CEP”. R.3-16/17. “Sería necesario un mayor asesoramiento por personas expertas o que tengan experiencia previa en la elaboración y puesta en práctica del PLC, como elemento de mejora del éxito educativo de todo el alumnado”. Translation: “There is a need for more advice from experts or people with previous experience in the development and implementation of the SLP, as an element to improve the educational success of all pupils”.
C3/S3. Unstable staffing levels in schools.	R.30-16/17. “Falta de continuidad en el centro del profesorado implicado. Si no he trabajado el material es más difícil creer en él”. Translation: “Lack of continuity in the centre of the teachers involved. If I have not worked on the material it is more difficult to believe in it”. R.71-16/17. “Durante este curso ha cambiado el 70% de la plantilla del profesorado, por lo que el avance del PLC no es el esperado, a pesar de la implicación por parte del mismo”. Translation: “During this academic year, 70% of the Teachers’ Council staff have changed, so the progress of the SLP is not as expected, despite the involvement of the Teachers’ Council”.
C3/S4. Bureaucracy generated by the programme.	R.67-18/19. “El/la coordinador/a necesita mucho tiempo para cumplir con toda la burocracia demandada, teniendo que dedicar tiempo personal. Demasiada burocracia”. Translation: “The coordinator needs a lot of time to comply with all the required bureaucracy, having to devote personal time to it. Too much bureaucracy”. R.37-20/21. «Demasiada burocracia, en muchos casos repetitiva». Translation: “Too much bureaucracy, in many cases repetitive”.

4.4. External Factors in Favour of the SLP Design and Implementation (C4)

Among the external factors that facilitate the design and implementation of SLP, teacher training and the monitoring of work projects by qualified external agents who respond to the specific needs of the schools stand out, as Figure 4 shows through the most common words (“involvement”, “training”, and “CEP”).

In the Andalusian educational context in which this work takes place, and in the specific case of the SLP programme, this support comes from the Teacher Training Centres (CEP) and the Pedagogical Coordination Team (better known as ECP in Spain) of the programme.

On another level, this study’s coordinators emphasise the involvement of the educational community, especially families, and the presence of coordination mechanisms

between internal and external agents involved in the process as potential opportunities (see Table 10).

Table 10. External factors in favour of the SLP design and implementation (C4).

External Factors in Favour of the SLP (C4)	
Number of answers related to C4 in 2016/2017 academic year	3
Number of answers related to C4 in 2017/2018 academic year	2
Number of answers related to C4 in 2018/2019 academic year	4
Number of answers related to C4 in 2020/2021 academic year	3
Number of answers related to C4 in 2021/2022 academic year	4
Subcategory	Exemplary answers
C4/S1. Training by external agents.	<p>R.42-21/22. "Las sesiones de formación que estamos recibiendo están resultando clarificadoras, además de resultar motivadoras para la reflexión y el debate sobre nuestro Plan de Actuación". Translation: "The training sessions we are receiving are proving to be clarifying, as well as motivating for reflection and debate on our Action Plan".</p> <p>R.39-20/21. "Quiero expresar nuestro agradecimiento al CEP de Osuna-Écija por la organización de un claustro formativo en oralidad realizado en el primer trimestre por los frutos que se están cosechando". Translation: "I would like to express our gratitude to the CEP of Osuna-Ecija for the organisation of a training course in oral skills held in the first quarter for the fruits that are being harvested".</p>
C4/S2. Involvement in the monitoring of projects by the Pedagogical Coordination Team (ECP) and the Teacher Training Centres (CEP).	<p>R.11-16/17. "Se considera especialmente relevante para el desarrollo del PLC el apoyo recibido por parte del CEP, desde la solicitud de participación. La formación específica está resultando de gran utilidad". Translation: "The support received from the CEP, since the application for participation, is considered particularly relevant for the development of the SLP. The specific training is proving to be very useful".</p> <p>R.34-21/22. "Quisiéramos expresar nuestro agradecimiento y reconocimiento al ejemplar apoyo del Equipo de Coordinación Pedagógica del Programa PLC por su respuesta constante para hacer de nuestro Centro una comunidad educadora para los demás". Translation: "We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the exemplary support of the SLP Pedagogical Coordination Team for their constant response to make our centre an educating community for others".</p>
C4/S3. Involvement of the educational community in the development of the project.	<p>R.27-18/19. "A la implicación de la Comunidad Educativa; me refiero a la implicación de las familias y determinados profesores". Translation: "The involvement of the educational community. I am referring to the involvement of families and certain teachers".</p> <p>R.30-21/22. "Nuestro centro es muy activo en cuanto a actividades extraescolares, talleres, charlas y exposiciones dirigidas a la comunidad educativa". Translation: "Our centre is very active in terms of extra-curricular activities, workshops, conferences and exhibitions for the educational community".</p>
C4/S4. Coordination between internal and external agents for the development of actions.	<p>R.12-16/17. "Estamos analizando el estado de la cuestión en el centro y esta labor está resultando compleja, pero contamos con el apoyo del CEP y la motivación del equipo directivo, el departamento de formación, innovación y evaluación y la comisión PLC". Translation: "We are analysing the state of play in the school and this work is proving complex, but we have the support of the CEP and the motivation of the management team, the training, innovation and evaluation department and the SLP committee".</p> <p>R.49-17/18. "La mayor dificultad de nuestro centro es la falta de tiempo para realizar todas las actuaciones previstas. Agradecemos la gran implicación de la asesora del CEP y sus orientaciones y formación". Translation: "The biggest difficulty for our centre is the lack of time to carry out all the planned actions. We are grateful for the great involvement of the CEP advisor and her guidance and training".</p>

4.5. Descriptive Aspects Related to the Development of the SLP (C5)

For its part, the AMR provides reports on various aspects linked to the development of the programme (see Table 11). These offer information on the specific content of the SLP, which aims to enhance communication skills. These aspects range from defining the particular lines of work, such as reading, writing, orality, discursive genres, and standardisation, to measures focused on horizontal coordination (see Figure 5). This includes creating and executing the action plan, along with actions to disseminate and raise awareness of the achievements of the SLP among the educational community, as we can deduce from the most common terms in Figure 5 (“year”, “work”, “action”, and “centre”).

Table 11. Descriptive aspects related to the development of the SLP (C5).

Descriptive Aspects Related to the Development of the SLP (C5)	
Number of answers related to C5 in 2016/2017 academic year	7
Number of answers related to C5 in 2017/2018 academic year	14
Number of answers related to C5 in 2018/2019 academic year	16
Number of answers related to C5 in 2020/2021 academic year	9
Number of answers related to C5 in 2021/2022 academic year	17
Subcategory	Exemplary answers
C5/S1. Delimitation of specific lines of work.	<p>R.21-20/21. “En mi centro durante estos tres años hemos elaborado el plan lector y el plan escritor. Ahora estamos estudiando el planteamiento para empezar nuestro plan de oralidad”.</p> <p>Translation: “In my school we have developed the reading plan and the writing plan during these three years. Now we are studying the approach to the oral plan”.</p> <p>R.14-17/18. “Al ser el primer año en este programa, nos van surgiendo dudas y algunas dificultades (como la colaboración con las familias), que vamos intentando solventar.</p> <p>Preferimos adoptar pocas metas, pero accesibles”.</p> <p>Translation: “As this is the inaugural year of the programme, we recognise that there are doubts and challenges, including working with families that we are trying to overcome. We prefer to adopt few but accessible goals”.</p>
C5/S2. Development of the Action Plan scheduled for each year.	<p>R.17-21/22. “Estamos inmersos y llevando a cabo el Plan, con el fin de mejorar nuestra actuación formativa del alumnado y como enriquecimiento de nuestra labor docente”.</p> <p>Translation: “We are immersed in and carrying out the Plan, in order to improve our educational performance of students and as an enrichment of our teaching work”.</p> <p>R.8-16/17. “No estamos trabajando la oralidad porque pretendemos abordar este trabajo en años posteriores. Y el mapa de géneros lo empezaremos en el tercer trimestre, según nuestro cronograma”.</p> <p>Translation: “We are not working on orality because we intend to tackle this work in later years. And we will start the genre mapping in the third term, according to our timetable”.</p>
C5/S3. Visibility of the SLP.	<p>R.19-16/17. “Estamos actualizando la página web del centro y la site. En cuanto esté actualizado, subimos todo lo del PLC”.</p> <p>Translation: “We are in the process of updating the centre’s website and the site. As soon as it is updated, we will upload everything about the SLP”.</p> <p>R.4-18/19. “Están previstas la creación de un blog y la difusión en las redes sociales”.</p> <p>Translation: “The creation of a blog and the dissemination on social networks are planned”.</p>
C5/S4. Coordinated work to improve communication skills.	<p>R.4-21/22. “Deseamos poner unas bases de documentos de normalización y una cultura de trabajo coordinado en el centro, en el que la competencia comunicativa esté presente en todas las materias”.</p> <p>Translation: “We wish to lay the foundations of standardisation documents and a culture of coordinated work in the school, in which communicative competence is present in all subjects”.</p> <p>R.18-21/22. “Este curso estamos trabajando la expresión escrita. Hemos tenido una formación interna en ella. Estamos inmersos en un curso de renovación metodológica, cuya duración es de tres años. Intentamos que las competencias trabajadas, oralidad y lectura, se vayan desarrollando en todos los ámbitos (...)”.</p> <p>Translation: “This year we are working on written expression. We have had internal training in it. We are immersed in a three-year course of methodological renewal. We are trying to ensure that the skills we are working on, orality and reading, are developed in all areas (...)”.</p>

5. Conclusions

The current investigation compiles the viewpoints of the teachers who manage language initiatives in schools in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia for a duration of five full academic years, excluding those related to COVID-19 and its effects due to their temporary nature.

The scope of the sample and the analysis undertaken enables us to draw pertinent conclusions, not only regarding the specific progress of this type of project that concentrates on enhancing students' linguistic communication skills but also, generally speaking, to emphasise certain crucial elements correlated to executing interdisciplinary initiatives that engage the entire faculty of a school to realise shared goals.

Although the AMR section under examination, Observations: difficulties and demands, is focused on problems and demands, some of the coordinators' answers in the study indicate that the SLP is seen as a prosperous initiative as it promotes interdisciplinary efforts to enhance communicative competence, teamwork, and consensual decision-making by the teaching staff. This perspective is strengthened in situations where there is substantial teacher participation and a generally positive attitude towards transformation within the educational community [26].

In this sense, it is argued that the SLP is capable of addressing the challenge of linguistic communication competence across various curriculum areas [12]. However, despite its potential and comprehensive nature, the SLP is not immune to difficulties and possible threats [20]. The SLP programme is considered a valid and ambitious initiative, requiring both internal and external support. Internal support should come from teacher involvement, impetus from the management team, and shared leadership exercised through project coordination. Meanwhile, external support should include teacher training, administrative recognition, and staffing stability.

Regarding research question 1 ("What are the prevailing beliefs and representations of the teaching staff involved in the coordination of an SLP with regard to the development of this initiative in schools?"), as previously mentioned, the coordinators emphasise several challenges related to the internal organisation of schools and the tasks associated with coordination. In this regard, the authors emphasise the intricacy linked to the role of the coordinator as a proactive agent who has to motivate all educators, even those beyond the language department, who frequently view the mission of the LCC as extraneous. In this context, the coordination of an SLP is considered a challenging task that requires time and space that are not always accommodated in school timetables and internal organisation processes, particularly in schools with high levels of structural complexity or frequent changes in teaching staff.

These are challenges which, according to the findings and statements gathered in the research, can be mitigated by promoting the cooperation and participation of the teaching faculty, with substantial support from the management team, team collaboration in intermediate coordinating bodies, such as the SLP commission [13], utilising digital tools and spaces focused on collaborative work, and promoting and sharing the accomplishments of the SLP.

These representations suggest the need for proposing new organisational models in centres, which promote teamwork and coordinated work towards achieving common goals [25,48], in short, the creation of structures that allow for the adequate development of coordination tasks and prevent the responsibility for the design and implementation of the language project from falling on a single person.

With regards to research question 2 ("How do factors external to the school influence the design and implementation of an SLP, as stated by the participants?"), the participants positively highlight the presence of consistent educational support structures for teachers, which offer schools assistance that is customized to their specific training requirements [49]. Among these structures, the Andalusian Teacher Training Network and the various Teacher Training Centres (CEP) that are part of it stand out [21]. In this regard, as reported by the respondents, support training for an SLP is more highly regarded when external agents

involved in the process have direct knowledge of the educational centre's needs and respond to them from a solid theoretical and practical basis.

External training is considered a fundamental factor in the success of interdisciplinary initiatives for enhancing LCC, according to the coordinators' expressed beliefs. To achieve success, the informants emphasise the need for coordinated action between internal and external agents. The involvement of families and the educational community as a whole is particularly positive, as highlighted by the informants.

On the other hand, the beliefs expressed by the teachers highlight the existence of various factors that have a negative impact on the design and implementation of an SLP, ranging from the scarce external training of teachers unrelated to the improvement of communication skills and the needs of the centres to the existence of unstable teaching staff, which prevents the creation of consolidated working teams capable of defining and achieving common objectives.

Among these negative external factors, which in this case are directly related to the structure of the SLP programme, the coordinators highlight the bureaucracy generated by the programme itself and, in particular, the lack of recognition of the timetable and the reduction in the teaching load of the people in charge of coordinating the language project of the centre.

Finally, in relation to the third and final research question ("What are the implications of this study for the design and implementation of interdisciplinary initiatives to enhance LCC from a school perspective?"), the findings of this study, which are derived from the analysis of responses from SLP coordinators, provide valuable information that has direct implications for guiding the processes to improve communicative competence from a school perspective (see Table 12). In this sense, the testimonies of the participants offer various internal and external factors to consider when developing and executing a programmable logic controller (SLP).

Table 12. Implications related to SLP implementation.

Internal Implications of the Educative Centre (I)	External Implications of the Educative Centre (E)
I1. Encourage teamwork among the teaching staff based on organisational structures of a horizontal type; I2. Provide centralised spaces and times for coordination, training and teamwork; I3. Promote a model of shared leadership, supported by the figure of the coordinator and the effective functioning of a committee of teachers involved in the SLP; I4. Strong leadership support for the design and implementation of the project; I5. Effectively identify the training needs of the teachers involved in the SLP; I6. Identify and encourage the development of specific project work streams; I7. Design and implement an annual action plan to achieve medium-term objectives;	E1. Provide external support for the development of SLP in schools through specialised training and mentoring; E2. To design training proposals to improve SLP based on the real needs of schools; E3. Promote measures to encourage the involvement and participation of families and to publicise the aims and achievements of the SLP among the different sectors of the educational community; E4. Avoid over-bureaucratisation of SLP monitoring processes; E5. Recognise the work of coordinators and provide time off in their schedules to carry out their duties; E6. Create external networks that facilitate communication between the centres and give social visibility to the projects; E7. Encourage educational administrations to promote the stability of teaching staff and the consolidation of working teams oriented towards the achievement of common medium and long-term objectives.

These are the keys to building solid projects for improving communicative competence that ensure the progress of students in the acquisition of basic communicative skills and the future and gradual development of cognitive academic linguistic competence, lines of action that are not only applicable in the case of SLP but are exportable to different types of improvement processes that involve the school as a whole and set medium- and long-term work objectives.

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