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## **Discussion: towards an educational perspective in CLIL language policy and pedagogical practice**

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This issue includes eight studies on different aspects of language policy, pedagogical practices, and teacher training in school contexts where a foreign language is used to teach curricular content (CLIL). This is a very welcome contribution because it provides additional perspectives to former studies that had focused on the linguistic outcomes of CLIL as compared to non-CLIL students. Successful language learning as well as successful content learning is necessarily linked to good pedagogical practices by well-trained teachers who use appropriate materials. This issue also provides the opportunity to hear the voices of the stakeholders involved in CLIL.

Even though one of the main features of CLIL is the balance between language and content and *advocates a 50:50/Content:Language CLIL-equilibrium* (Ting 2010, 3), this issue approaches CLIL from a language rather than from a content perspective. The main idea is to teach foreign languages efficiently and less attention is paid to the way content is learned. This attention to language rather than content reflects the general trend in Europe where CLIL has attracted mainly scholars in Applied Linguistics, English language teacher educators and practitioners. This does not have to be seen as a problem because research is needed from different perspectives and the language learning perspective is very relevant in an increasing multilingual and multicultural world. However, as we will see later there are potential risks when CLIL is considered just an English/foreign language teaching approach.

This issue brings together CLIL studies in nine European Union states (Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and UK) and with the exception of the UK, all the other situations involve English as the target language. French, Spanish, and German are also discussed in the article by Czura and Papaja (this issue) on CLIL education in Poland and minority languages (Gaelic, Kashubian, and Catalan) are mentioned but not discussed in other articles. Immigrant languages, which are not usually part of the school curriculum, are not addressed in this issue either. There is an interesting point when comparing the UK to the rest of the countries which clearly reflects the strength of English. While the need to learn English is taken for granted and reinforced by language policies in most countries in Continental Europe, in the UK the issue is to study or not to study a foreign language. As Coyle (this issue) reports, foreign language learning is in decline

in England and Scotland. Other differences that can be seen in the CLIL contexts in this issue are the level of exposure to English in different countries (Sylvén, this issue) and the level of language competence achieved by students in different European Union countries (European Commission 2012). English is more a second than a foreign language in countries like Sweden or the Netherlands as compared to countries such as Spain or Italy where exposure to English is more limited and the level of English proficiency is lower.

All the articles in this issue are on CLIL in Europe. However, it can be seen that CLIL refers to a wide diversity of situations. Coyle (this issue) refers to CLIL when *thematic or subject content and foreign languages are integrated* and this includes *thematic study in language classes*, which is quite different from the context of the other articles using a foreign language as the language of instruction for teaching one or more content subjects.

The diversity of CLIL situations can be most clearly seen in the article by Czura and Papaja who identify four curricular models in CLIL and several types within each model in a single country, Poland. These models and types are arranged according to the amount of L2 used in the classroom, the focus on language or content, and classroom didactics. The diversity of situations can also be seen in the article by Sylvén who discusses the poor results of CLIL in Sweden by comparing the CLIL situations to that of three other countries: Finland, Germany, and Spain. She analyses the differences regarding the amount of research carried out, teacher education, age of onset, and exposure to English outside school. The comparison is somehow problematic because the information about the countries is very superficial and does not reflect the diversity of situations within each of the countries but it does show that CLIL can refer to quite different teaching and learning contexts.

Some of the articles in this issue (Coyle; Escobar Urmeneta; Grandinetti, Langellotti, and Ting) focus on good pedagogical practices so as to identify teaching and learning practices that are considered effective. The findings of these studies can be very useful for CLIL teachers in different contexts and this is certainly an area that needs further development. These good practices are necessarily linked to specific pre- and in-service training for teachers and the development of appropriate materials (see Lorenzo, this issue). An interesting point is to see to what extent the good CLIL practices identified in this issue are necessarily linked to CLIL or just good practices for language teaching independently of the approach used. For example, Grandinetti, Langellotti, and Ting explain the need to insert language-focusing moments to provide effective scaffolds into new content. This teaching strategy is not new and has a long tradition in non-CLIL second language classes (Doughty and Williams 1998).

### Challenges and future directions

After highlighting some of the trends that can be found in this issue the next step is to look at some challenges of CLIL and directions for future research from a broader perspective. CLIL is usually linked to educational contexts although Mehisto, Marsh, and Frigols (2008, chapter 1) consider that CLIL also includes CLIL camps, student exchanges, local projects, international projects, family stays, modules or work-study abroad. In this issue, CLIL is part of regular education. Within this context, a clear distinction can be made between conceptualizing CLIL as a language teaching approach or as an educational approach.

### ***CLIL as a language teaching approach***

As it has already been said CLIL has attracted language teaching scholars, teacher educators, and practitioners, particularly those in the field of English as a second/foreign language. Traditionally, curricular content has not been taught in English language classes. However, this does not mean that content has not been included in foreign language classes. In fact, it is almost unavoidable to do so because the readings, audiovisual materials and discussions that are used as teaching resources in non-CLIL language classes can also be considered content and can be related to other subjects in the curriculum. A unit with readings and audiovisual material on hunger in Africa in an English language textbook in a non-CLIL class can provide as much content as a unit on the solar system in a CLIL program based on thematic study in the English language class. The possibility to integrate language and content and to develop efficient teaching and learning strategies and good practices is available in both cases. The main difference, which is quite important from a curricular perspective, is that if the solar system is part of the syllabus of the Science class it is more likely that there is coordination between the teaching of the two subjects than in the case of the non-CLIL EFL class. In non-CLIL classes, content is just a resource to teach and learn language, while content is expected to be an integral part of the learning process in CLIL classes.

Most CLIL experiences reported in this issue go beyond teaching subject content in the EFL class into teaching non-language subjects in a foreign language. This situation is quite different from the traditional EFL class and is often considered an innovative approach (Eurydice 2006). However, using a second/foreign language as the language of instruction for non-language subjects is not only the main characteristic of Canadian immersion programs but also has a long tradition in European bilingual programs (Baetens-Beardsmore 1993). For example, the bilingual/partial immersion program aimed at Spanish L1 students in the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain (model B) has several subjects of the school curriculum taught through the medium of Basque, the L2. This program has existed for over 30 years and has been systematically evaluated for outcomes in the L1, L2, and content subjects (see Cenoz 2009). Basque is not a foreign language in the Basque Country but its minority status implies that many students in this program have almost no exposure to Basque outside school. It is likely that students in CLIL programs in some of the countries reported in this issue have more contact with English outside school than Spanish L1 students with Basque outside school. Similar programs exist in other regions with minority languages in different European countries but they are not always considered as examples of CLIL. As Cenoz, Genesee, and Gorter (forthcoming) point out it is still difficult to distinguish CLIL learning environments from non-CLIL learning environments because of its diversity and its close relationship to other content and language-integrated programs such as immersion. It is therefore urgent to develop a clear definition of CLIL and to devise a taxonomy of its major forms. Some attempts are made in this issue (Sylvén; Czura and Papaja) and they need further development.

Even though most of the articles in this issue report studies on the teaching and learning of English, there are also references to work with other European languages. Identifying language policies and good practices can work across languages. CLIL programs and research need to exchange their experience and their findings with long

established bilingual/immersion programs so that they learn from each other and they identify their strong and weak points.

This issue provides examples of classroom-based research, on strategies to integrate language and content and on specific teaching training to integrate language and content. This research line is crucial because any language teaching program, CLIL or not, needs effective pedagogies to be successful. At the same time, there is a need for theoretical and empirical development so as to contribute to better language and content teaching for different second and foreign languages in Europe and elsewhere.

### ***CLIL as an educational approach***

As Coyle (this issue) points out *great care has to be exercised when making claims about the effectiveness of CLIL*. The ambiguity of the scope of CLIL and the diversity of CLIL contexts makes it difficult to identify the effect of CLIL on language and subject content learning. There is some evidence suggesting that CLIL learners obtain better results in English as a foreign language than non-CLIL learners but they often have more hours of instruction and students are also sometimes selected to take part in CLIL programs (Bruton 2011). The articles by Hüttner, Smit, and Dalton-Puffer and by Denman, Tanner, and Graaff are examples of CLIL programs implemented in contexts where students were not selected to take part in CLIL programs but they do not focus on the outcomes as compared to students in non-CLIL programs.

If we just focus on CLIL as a foreign language teaching approach and we control for the time of instruction allocated to the target language, there is no reason to believe that learning content matter through the foreign language produces better results than having the same amount of instruction in foreign language classes. Why should students learn more English in a history or biology class than in an English language class? Marsh (2008) explains that through drawing content from academic subjects, CLIL can develop higher order language skills but there is no reason to believe that these skills cannot be developed in language classes as well. In fact, a non-CLIL language teacher can use a wider variety of resources to develop higher order language skills. Good language learning practices can certainly take place in CLIL but they can also take place in foreign language classes.

The strength of CLIL emerges when we consider it as an educational program that takes into account the whole curriculum and not only the learning of a foreign language. By integrating language and content, CLIL provides the opportunity of having additional exposure to the foreign language without extending the school timetable. This exposure can be limited to the use of the target language as the language of instruction and result in incidental learning of the target language (see for example in this issue, Hüttner, Smit, and Dalton-Puffer and some types in Czura and Papaja). When teaching a subject through the medium of a foreign language there are also CLIL contexts in which specific instruction to integrate language and content takes place (see for example Grandinetti, Langellotti, and Ting, this issue).

There is robust evidence from bilingual/immersion programs in Canada and Europe showing that students achieve a higher level of proficiency in the second language when they use the second language as the language of instruction (see for example Genesee 2004; Cenoz 2009). This is to be expected, with or without systematic teaching strategies to integrate language and content, because of the

amount of exposure. The crucial findings of research on bilingual/immersion programs is that this improvement in second language proficiency is done at no cost for the development of the first language and the knowledge of content subjects. This does not mean that students would not have achieved even a higher level of proficiency in the target language if they had taken second/foreign language classes for the same amount of time. However, schools cannot usually afford having a large amount of language classes instead of subject classes and using a second/foreign language as the language of instruction can be an effective way to combine language and content. If we want to assess the effect of CLIL, it is necessary to adopt an educational perspective in the study of CLIL. This means considering CLIL as an approach that is related to the whole curriculum and not just limited to foreign language teaching. From a theoretical and empirical point, this perspective implies bringing together research traditions in bi/multilingualism and second language acquisition (Cenoz and Gorter 2011; Ortega forthcoming). Research on good practices in CLIL and on stakeholders' voices such as the studies reported in this issue is also useful because it can contribute to identify effective strategies in language and content integrated teaching. It is important to assess how effective some of these strategies are by conducting comparisons within CLIL contexts that share the same characteristics. It is also necessary to carry out studies to assess the impact of CLIL on content and all the languages in the curriculum taking into account the need to be very cautious about the cause-effect relationships.

Another point that deserves consideration in future research when we move away from the narrow perspective of CLIL as a foreign language teaching approach is the need to expand it to all the languages being learned and/or used by learners. CLIL learners are multilingual or in the process of becoming multilingual and have the potential to use their linguistic resources as a scaffold when learning and using languages. As Bialystok (2010) explains, bilingualism can have some general cognitive advantages related to metalinguistic awareness. If this is the case, it is desirable that these advantages are enhanced in CLIL classes. At the same time, it is important to look at the way multilinguals navigate between languages and are able to negotiate the multiple varieties of codes, modes, genres, registers, and discourses (Cenoz and Gorter 2011; Kramsch 2012). An educational perspective that goes beyond the foreign language teaching approach will give the opportunity for CLIL to integrate not only language and content but also all the languages in the students' multilingual repertoires.

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