

## INTRODUCTION

---

### KEY VARIABLES IN CLIL IMPLEMENTATION AND RESEARCH: RECENT PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEXTUAL, COGNITIVE, AND AFFECTIVE VARIATION IN CLIL

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has enjoyed a massive uptake over the past two decades in very diverse educational settings. This approach to language education has been steadily gaining ground both in Europe and in Latin America since it appeared in the 1990s, accompanied by an increasingly growing body of research into its effectiveness. However, this research has primarily been directed towards the effects of CLIL on learning, particularly on target language learning (Nikula *et al.*, 2016), and has straightforwardly compared CLIL and non-CLIL groups, without always guaranteeing their homogeneity, factoring in moderating variables, considering the long-term effects of CLIL, or determining the true causes for the potential differences detected between treatment and comparison groups (cf. Pérez Cañado, 2012 for an overview of CLIL research in Europe).

It is thus largely consensual that we stand in need of more stringent research in empirically sound conditions. Many experts in the field (see below) underscore the need for investigations into the effects of CLIL on L2/FL learning with experimental and control groups whose homogeneity has been previously guaranteed (Madrid Fernández, 2006; Langé, 2007; Lyster, 2007; Pérez-Vidal, 2007; Lasagabaster, 2008; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2008; Ruiz de Zarobe & Lasagabaster, 2010), as well as on the impact of CLIL on L1 and content knowledge (Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Sierra *et al.*, 2011; Cenoz *et al.*, 2013; Dalton-Puffer *et al.*, 2014). It also needs to be determined whether CLIL is truly responsible for the possible differences ascertained or whether they can be ascribed to other variables (Pérez Cañado, 2011, 2012; Cenoz *et al.*, 2013; Dalton-Puffer *et al.*, 2014). In line with the foregoing, variation within CLIL related to individual learner characteristics needs to be explored in greater depth. With CLIL increasingly being applied program-wide to all types of students, catering to diversity and singling out the individual learner variables which impinge on successful learning should become a preferential area of research (Cenoz *et al.*, 2013; Dalton-Puffer *et al.*, 2014). Finally, as longitudinal studies are also thin on the ground, they should be given top priority (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010), in order to determine whether the effects of CLIL pervade when this type of program is discontinued (cf. Pérez Cañado, 2016 for a detailed proposal of the research agenda which needs to be carved out in order to address these niches).

The aim of this special issue is precisely to focus on all these aspects which have not as yet received attention in the CLIL research scenario. It presents the outcomes of two governmentally-funded research projects (cf. Acknowledgements) into the effects of CLIL on the English language competence, Spanish language competence, and content knowledge of those subjects taught through the foreign language (FL) of Primary (6th grade) and Secondary (4th grade of CSE) Education students in 12 different provinces of Spain, considered to be a representative microcosm of the multifaceted CLIL landscape. It has matched the CLIL and non-CLIL students of 53 Primary and Secondary schools in

terms of verbal intelligence, motivation, and extramural exposure to English and worked with a total of 2,245 students, 333 teachers, and 595 parents (3,173 subjects in all). It has employed 11 different types of tests (verbal intelligence, motivation, Spanish Language and Literature, two content tests corresponding to the subjects taught through CLIL, and English grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking tests) in order to investigate the impact of CLIL on eight different cognitive, contextual, and affective variables: context (rural-urban), type of school (public, private, charter), educational level (Primary, Secondary, Baccalaurate), motivation, verbal intelligence, extramural exposure to English, and socioeconomic status. It has furthermore done so from a longitudinal perspective, as pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests have been administered to Primary, Compulsory Secondary, and non-compulsory Secondary Education students. Finally, factor and discriminant analyses have been performed to determine the interaction among all these variables and ascertain whether CLIL is truly responsible for the potential differences observed. In turn, from a qualitative standpoint, it has probed students', teachers', and parents' satisfaction with all the curricular and organizational aspects of CLIL schemes and carried out a detailed SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the way in which they are functioning, employing questionnaires, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews, and direct behavior observation.

Each article in this special issue will focus on one of these key variables in CLIL implementation and research, examining the impact of CLIL on these cognitive, contextual, and affective factors. The topic will be examined from a multiplicity of perspectives: quantitative and qualitative; from the point of view of teachers, parents, and students; comparing different provinces and autonomous communities; and employing data, methodological, investigator, and location triangulation. Key questions which have not received full-fledged attention in the official literature will be addressed and answered: Is CLIL is functioning equally well in rural and urban contexts and across diverse types of schools and educational levels? Are the effects of CLIL felt in the long term or do they gradually peter out? Are CLIL students truly more motivated? Does CLIL favor more extramural exposure and what kind of exposure works best: more CLIL or more formal instruction? Does socioeconomic status significantly impact language and content attainment in CLIL contexts? Is CLIL truly responsible for the possible differences between bilingual and monolingual streams or do other variables account for them? What are the teacher, student, and parent perspectives of CLIL functioning and how do they vary in terms of key identification variables? The answers to these queries will hopefully allow us to glean a deeper insight into whether, how, and under what conditions CLIL is truly effective, and which variables need to be addressed in the very near future in order to keep CLIL implementation on track.

## REFERENCES

- Cenoz, J., Genesee, F. and Gorter, D. (2013). "Critical analysis of CLIL: Taking stock and looking forward", in *Applied Linguistics*, 2013: 1-21.
- Dalton-Puffer, C., Llinares, A., Lorenzo, F. and Nikula, T. (2014). "You can stand under my umbrella. Immersion, CLIL and Bilingual Education. A response to Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter (2013)", in *Applied Linguistics*, 35, 2: 213-218.
- Langé, G. (2007). "Postscript to CLIL 2006 and future action", in D. Marsh and D. Wolff (eds.), *Diverse contexts, converging goals: CLIL in Europe*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 350-358.

- Lasagabaster, D. (2008). "Foreign language competence in Content and Language Integrated courses", in *The Open Applied Linguistics Journal*, 1: 31-42.
- Lasagabaster, D. and Ruiz de Zarobe, Y. (2010). "Ways forward in CLIL: Provision issues and future planning", in D. Lasagabaster and Y. Ruiz de Zarobe (eds.), *CLIL in Spain: Implementation, results and teacher training*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 278-295.
- Lasagabaster, D. and Sierra, J. M. (2010). "Immersion and CLIL in English: More differences than similarities", in *ELT Journal*, 64, 4: 367-375.
- Lyster, R. (2007). *Learning and teaching languages through content: A counterbalanced approach*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Madrid Fernández, D. (2006). "Bilingual and plurilingual education in the European and Andalusian context", in *International Journal of Learning*, 12, 4: 177-185.
- Nikula, T., Dafouz, E., Moore, P. and Smit, U. (eds.). (2016). *Conceptualising integration in CLIL and multilingual education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Pérez Cañado, M. L. (2011). "The effects of CLIL within the APPP: Lessons learned and ways forward", in R. Crespo and M. A. García de Sola (eds.), *Studies in honour of Ángeles Linde López*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 13-30.
- Pérez Cañado, M. L. (2012). "CLIL research in Europe: Past, present, and future", in *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 15, 3: 315-341.
- Pérez Cañado, M. L. (2016). "Stopping the 'pendulum effect' in CLIL research: Finding the balance between Pollyanna and Scrooge", in *Applied Linguistics Review*, DOI: 10.1515/applirev-2016-2001.
- Pérez-Vidal, C. (2007). "The need for focus on form (FoF) in content and language integrated approaches: An exploratory study", in *RESLA*, Vol. Extra 1: 39-54.
- Ruiz de Zarobe, Y. (2008). "CLIL and foreign language learning: A longitudinal study in the Basque Country", in *International CLIL Research Journal*, 1, 1: 60-73.
- Ruiz de Zarobe, Y. and Lasagabaster, D. (2010). "CLIL in a bilingual community: The Basque Autonomous Community", in D. Lasagabaster and Y. Ruiz de Zarobe (eds.), *CLIL in Spain: implementation, results and teacher training*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 12-29.
- Sierra, J. M., Gallardo del Puerto, F. and Ruiz de Zarobe, Y. (2011). "Good practices and future actions in CLIL: Learning and pedagogy", in Y. Ruiz de Zarobe, J. M. Sierra and F. Gallardo del Puerto (eds.), *Content and foreign language integrated learning. Contributions to multilingualism in European contexts*. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 317-338.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, under Grant FFI2012-32221, and by the Junta de Andalucía, under Grant P12-HUM-23480. We would also like to thank the school management and the students who participated in the study.

**María Luisa Pérez Cañado**  
*Universidad de Jaén*