

Presentation
Bilingual education in Spain: A critical look at current trends

Presentación
La educación bilingüe en España: Una mirada crítica acerca de las tendencias actuales

Guest editors

Ana Otto

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3058-1067>

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Diego Rascón-Moreno

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4181-9568>

Universidad de Jaén

Elena Alcalde-Peñalver

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1606-4792>

Universidad de Alcalá

Jesús García-Laborda

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0125-4611>

Instituto Franklin Universidad de Alcalá

Bilingual education in Spain, also called CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), has become a revolution in recent decades. Since the term was coined in the 1990s, CLIL has gone from being a way of increasing students' exposure to foreign or additional languages to becoming a social phenomenon based on a pragmatic approach that renews classroom practice (Ting, 2011). CLIL-based Bilingual programs are based on a new

conception of language teaching and learning that offers significant linguistic exposure through real curricular contexts, and that has reported numerous pedagogical benefits such as improvement at the linguistic level in both the foreign language (Pérez Cañado, 2018a & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2008) and in the mother tongue (Navarro Pablo & López Gándara, 2020). This approach can even act as a leveler of the socio-economic level (Halbach & Iwaniec, 2022, Rascón Moreno & Bretones Callejas, 2018). Today CLIL is present in almost all European countries (European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2023) and has also spread to Asia and Latin America (Morton, 2016). In Spain, CLIL programs have also become widespread since the implementation of the MEC-British Council Bilingual and Bicultural Project, which paved the way for other models such as the *Plan de Fomento del Plurilingüismo en Andalucía* and the Bilingual Project of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, to mention just two. Since 2010, Spain has been ahead of the European countries in their journey in bilingual education, as Coyle pointed out in the preface of Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe (2010):

Spain is rapidly becoming one of the European leaders in CLIL practice and research. The richness of its cultural and linguistic diversity has led to a wide variety of CLIL policies and practices which provide us with many examples of CLIL in different stages of development that are applicable to contexts both within and beyond Spain. (Coyle, 2010, p. viii)

As in other bilingual programs in Europe, the CLIL approach was adopted to teach non-linguistic subjects, except Spanish Language, mostly using English as the vehicular language. Although the beginnings of these programs are in primary education, they would later be extended to the secondary stage, timidly advancing to vocational training and higher education (being better known in the latter as *EMI –English as a Medium of Instruction*). Furthermore, there are currently several autonomous communities that have implemented bilingualism in pre-school, just like in other international educational contexts (Otto & Cortina Pérez, 2023). In the words of the President of the National Association for “Bilingual Education”, there are around one and a half million students who participate in programs of this type taught in more than 4,000 Primary or Secondary schools (Gisbert, 2022).

Bilingual and multilingual teaching is an approach that goes beyond the simple learning of a foreign language or using it to teach content.

It also requires methodological, curricular and organizational changes. In this sense, and in order to respond to the growing demand for fully trained professionals, various initiatives and programs have been developed. On the one hand, education degrees are becoming more international and on the other, there are already a large number of postgraduate degrees that have been created in response to the need to have professionals trained in bilingual and multilingual pedagogies. Likewise, education departments have intensified their efforts to offer quality training to graduates from various universities, primarily in language or foreign language training, and more gradually, at the methodological level in the area of CLIL. In relation to the educational centers, there is an increasing number of proposals aimed at providing teachers with the necessary tools and promote a work atmosphere that favors curricular integration due the importance of school policy in CLIL practice (Ortega et al., 2018). The studies coordinated by Pérez Cañado within the framework of two R&D projects (MON-CLIL, 2013-2017) have also been essential. They both evaluated bilingual programs from an empirical approach away from any political bias, and concluded that bilingual education implementation does not have to imply a decrease in the acquisition of knowledge or content despite what their detractors claim.

In *CLIL in Spain: Implementation, results and teacher training* (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010) the emergence of bilingual programs looked at the following areas of improvement: Firstly, in relation to the supremacy of the English language, the consideration of other languages of instruction and not focusing exclusively on it; secondly, the need to carry out more studies – preferably longitudinal – that account for the results of such programs; thirdly, the urgency of initially training teachers in the CLIL methodology; and last but not least, adequate and sufficient linguistic training for teachers involved in bilingual programs, which is vital.

More than a decade after the publication of this volume, which unlocked the gap for future research, with English being the preferred language to access knowledge, an increasing number of studies have been devoted to this matter. Little by little, teacher education is progressing, although significant differences can be observed according to the different autonomous communities. One of the priorities is to change the discourse to talk about multilingual education and *not just bilingual* and thus welcome and represent communities that are bilingual *per se* and show that societies are increasingly diverse and multilingual,

as evidenced by the presence of students of various origins and cultures in our classrooms. Among other challenges to account for, without a doubt, are the need to begin the training of teachers in *pluriliteracies* (Coyle & Meyer, 2021) and pedagogies related to the CLIL approach, promote collaborative work among teachers (Pavón Vázquez & Ellison, 2018) and reach a full integration at the curricular level. In this sense, it is interesting to highlight that the current legislation clearly supports the integration of the various areas of the curriculum through the so-called learning situations and a formative and competence-based evaluation, which measures the progress of students as part of the learning process and that is aimed at ensuring that students are aware of their real learning. Finally, to ensure that bilingual programs have the quality they promote, it is essential that they be aimed at all types of students, regardless of their academic level and language proficiency. That is, they are capable of addressing the diversity of the classroom. It is worth mentioning here the ADiBE (*Attention to Diversity in Bilingual Education*) research projects and their various lines of action: collecting the satisfaction of the stakeholders involved, creating materials, organizing training courses, making videos with useful ideas or pills CLIL (“*CLIL pills*”) and study of the academic results of students according to their performance. For more information about them, consult, for example, the outputs (products) in ADiBE (2019-2022), the website of one of the four R&D projects, Erasmus+ KA201, also coordinated by Pérez Cañado from the University of Jaén (cf. Diario Jaén, 2020).

This volume aims at becoming an outstanding and long-awaited publication due to the rigor and scientific strength of its various papers when analyzing a topic that is often echoed by national newspapers. After more than 25 years since the first bilingual program in our country, it is time to examine bilingual education considering its historical evolution, the methodological training that teachers receive, the pedagogical renewal that it entails, the opinions of the participants in the mentioned programs and complex areas to get a critical vision of such as diversity and evaluation, among others.

This special issue begins with an article by Gonzalo Jover, Diana Paola Ponce and Rosa González García that thoroughly addresses the historical-political background of bilingual programs in Spain. The British Council-MEC agreement, which was signed in 1996, was based on an integrated curriculum for the teaching of language and culture. It opened

the doors to a new way of teaching English in Spain that until then had been reserved for the elite and which had a great impact on the design of subsequent programs.

After, Noelia Galán Rodríguez, Lucía Fraga Viñas, María Bobadilla Pérez, Tania F. Gómez Sánchez and Begoña Rumbo Arcas deal with the initial training of general teachers who teach in CLIL programs. Starting from the six competencies indicated by Pérez Cañado (2018b) that are essential to develop teaching work in non-linguistic areas, the teaching guides present in the public degrees of Spanish universities in primary education are analyzed to draw conclusions about the suitability of these degrees to prepare future teachers of bilingual contexts.

Without a doubt, one of the most interesting aspects of looking at bilingual programs is their evolution and the impact they have had on language teaching methodologies. The following article by Ana Halbach and Manuel Aenlle deals with how the so-called “Literacy approach”, an approach to teaching English developed in CLIL contexts, based on the “Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning” model (Coyle & Meyer, 2021) and textual analysis, can significantly increase the motivation of students in these programs who access content through a foreign language.

Another aspect worth the reader’s attention which have brought a lot of criticism in Spain in our country is the supposed elitist nature of bilingual education, or that it may be oriented towards those students who have a better academic level, and more specifically, high levels in the language of instruction in which the subjects are usually taught. In this sense, Víctor Pavón Vázquez and Virginia Vinuesa Benítez offer a qualitative study on the critical vision of education professionals regarding egalitarianism and diversity in monolingual communities. Their research questions focus on the impact that socio-economic status and intellectual abilities have on academic achievement, and provides some potential considerations for perspective teachers.

In a similar vein, María Luisa Pérez Cañado presents a pioneering study in its field on the success factors involved in addressing diversity in bilingual programs in Spain. Through a cross-sectional study of mixed methods and concurrent triangulation, the opinions of the main groups in the programs (teachers and students) are analyzed to subsequently establish an original framework of key factors for the success of CLIL programs, which will predictably have an extraordinary impact on future results and programs.

The following article by Inmaculada Senra Silva and Diego Ardura deals with the impact of compulsory bilingual programs. Based on variables such as the attitude towards bilingual education, satisfaction with the job position and the perception of the academic results of the students, and following an ex-post-facto research design, the paper analyzes and contrasts the opinions of teachers of content subjects in secondary schools where the bilingual program is carried out optionally and also in those where it is mandatory.

The article by Raquel Fernández Fernández and Ana Virginia López Fuentes looks at the development of positive attitudes towards literature. This is a longitudinal empirical study that examines the impact of a 15-week pedagogical intervention on the attitudes of Teaching students towards the use of literature in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL – English as a Foreign Language)/CLIL classroom. To do this, three data collection tools were used: a questionnaire, a final written reflection on the course, and focus group meetings with each cohort and used the statistical software SPSS and NVivo for their rigorous analyses.

There is no doubt that, since the inception of bilingual programs, they have been the center of different type of criticism that tend to agitate public opinion for the mentioned reasons and some of them, such as the case of the Community of Madrid, have been a, easy-to-attack target under certain political postulates. Next, Elisa Hidalgo McCabe and Leah Tompkins analyze the media, articulating the points of controversy that affect that program to finally suggest some considerations about its sustainability.

In relation to another of the most frequent sources of criticism of bilingual programs, for instance that students learn less academic content by studying in a foreign language, Elena del Pozo brings us closer to the issue of assessment in CLIL, which she correctly refers to as “the pending subject” of bilingual education. Her longitudinal and exploratory experimental study focuses on comparing the written production of a group of 45 students of Social Sciences, Geography and History in 1st year and, two years later, in 3rd year of ESO (compulsory secondary education), to conclude that they satisfactorily acquire the contents of the curricular subjects.

In the last article, Alberto Fernández Costales and David Lasagabaster offer a systematic review of the teaching of content in English in universities (EMI) in Spain in the last decade (2013-2022) based on the

studies indexed in the three most prestigious databases. Therefore, this is an original work that also identifies themes and lines that need further research.

We, the editors, hope that this work will be most useful to the educational community, since it offers an informed perspective that helps debunk myths and unfounded beliefs, and it encourages critical reflection about bilingual and multilingual education in our country.

Bibliographic References

- ADiBE (2019-2022). *CLIL for All: Attention to Diversity in Bilingual Education*. <https://adibeproject.com/>
- Coyle, D. (2010). Foreword. In D. Lasagabaster & Y. Ruiz de Zarobe (eds.), *CLIL in Spain: Implementation, results and teacher training* (pp. vii-viii). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Coyle, D., & Meyer, O. (2021). *Beyond CLIL: Pluriliteracies teaching for deeper learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Diario Jaén (2020, March 3), Cuatro proyectos de I+D para la educación bilingüe. <https://www.diariojaen.es/jaen/cuatro-proyectos-de-i-d-para-la-educacion-bilingue-IG6844695>
- European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency (2023). *Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/529032>
- Gisbert, X. (2022, October 21). *Discurso en la ceremonia inaugural*. VIII Congreso Internacional de Educación Bilingüe, University of Jaén, Jaén.
- Halbach, A., & Iwaniec, J. (2022). Responsible, competent and with a sense of belonging: an explanation for the purported levelling effect of CLIL. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(5), 1609-1623.
- Lasagabaster, D., & Ruiz de Zarobe, Y. (eds.). (2010). *CLIL in Spain: Implementation, results and teacher training*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- MON-CLIL (2013-2017). *Content and Language Integrated Learning in Monolingual Contexts*. <http://monclil.com/index/>

- Morton, T. (2016). Content and language integrated learning. In G. Hall (ed.), *The Routledge handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 252-264). Routledge.
- Navarro Pablo, M. & López Gándara, Y. (2020). The effects of CLIL on L1 competence development in monolingual contexts. *The Language Learning Journal*, 48(1), 18-35.
- Ortega Martín, J. L. Hughes, S. & Madrid, D. (2018). Influencia de la política educativa de centro en la enseñanza bilingüe en España. Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Deporte.
- Otto, A. & Cortina Pérez, B. (eds.). (2023). *Handbook of CLIL in pre-primary education*. Springer Nature.
- Pavón Vázquez, V. & Ellison, M. (2018). Examining teacher roles and competences in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). *Linguarum Arena: Revista de Estudos em Didática de Línguas da Universidade do Porto*, 4, 65-78.
- Pérez Cañado, M. L. (2018a). CLIL and educational level: A longitudinal study on the impact of CLIL on language outcomes. *Porta Linguarum*, 29, 51-70.
- Pérez Cañado, M. L. (2018b). Innovations and challenges in CLIL teacher training. *Theory into Practice*, 57(3), 212-221.
- Rascón Moreno, D. & Bretones Callejas, C. M. (2018). Socioeconomic status and its impact on language and content attainment in CLIL contexts. *Porta Linguarum*, 29, 115-135. http://www.ugr.es/~portalin/articulos/PL_numero29/6_DIEGO%20J%20RASCON.pdf
- Ruiz de Zarobe, Y. (2008). Aprendizaje integrado de contenidos curriculares en inglés lengua extranjera: Diferencias con el aprendizaje del inglés como asignatura. In R. Monroy, R. & A. Sánchez (eds.), *25 años de lingüística en España: Hitos y retos / 25 years of applied linguistics in Spain: Milestones and challenges* (pp. 413-419).
- Ting, Y-L. T. (2011). CLIL... not only not immersion but also more than the sum of its parts. *ELT Journal*, 65(3), 314-317.