

# CLIL in Action



# CLIL in Action:

## *Voices from the Classroom*

Edited by

David Marsh, María Luisa Pérez Cañado  
and Juan Ráez Padilla

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

MARÍA LUISA PÉREZ CAÑADO  
AND JUAN RÁEZ PADILLA

### **Introduction**

If there is an acronym which has firmly embedded itself in the current language teaching scenario, gradually becoming an established teaching approach (Järvinen 2006), that is CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in English, AICLE (Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras) in Spanish, or EMILE (l'Enseignement de Matières par l'Intégration d'une Langue Étrangère) in French. At a time when teaching through a single language is increasingly regarded as “drip-feed” (Vez 2009, 8) or “second rate” (Lorenzo 2007, 35) education, CLIL has had an exponential uptake, particularly over the course of the past two decades, fast becoming a buzzword which, according to the *New York Times*, is “finger-snappingly with it” (*New York Times* 1998, in Richards and Rodgers 2001, 204). It has been embraced as a lever for change and success in language learning and as the potential lynchpin to counter Europe’s deficient language standards. In the specialized literature, it has been heralded as “awesome innovation” (Tobin and Abello-Contesse 2013, 224), “a major step forward” (Tobin and Abello-Contesse 2013, 224), or “the ultimate opportunity to practice and improve a foreign language” (Pérez-Vidal 2013, 59).

Thus, very high hopes have been pinned on CLIL and, roughly a decade into the implementation of this approach in most parts of our continent, we are at a “watershed” (Marsh 2002, 185) moment to step back and do some much-needed stocktaking into how it has been playing out and whether it has lived up to its initial promise. We otherwise run the risk of jeopardizing the effectiveness of CLIL or dissipating some of the expectations it has created, as Mehisto (2009, 9) puts it: “In communities

struggling with language issues, undisciplined thinking can generate myths that are presented as fact, backed up with skewed logic, with circumstantial evidence, with the use of false and unsupported assumptions, and by the agenda of power politics that smother real debate [...]”.

This is precisely the chief remit of the present volume: to explore where we stand and where we need to go on the three main fronts where CLIL is currently attracting attention in the specialized literature, namely, *implementation*, *research*, and *teacher training*. To this end, it presents evidence from national and international research projects, governmentally-financed pedagogical initiatives, grassroots experiences and investigations, and inter-institutional training programs which offer insight into how CLIL is working in action on the afore-mentioned three levels.

### **CLIL in action: Practical considerations**

The first of them—CLIL *implementation*—has sparked off heated debate particularly over the past couple of years. It is widely consensual that CLIL is a “well-recognized and useful construct for promoting L2/foreign language teaching” (Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013, 16). It is considered an “innovative form of education” (Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013, 12) in Europe and an “increasingly acknowledged trend in foreign language (FL) teaching” (Pérez Cañado 2012, 319), rather than a mere offshoot of other types of bilingual programs. The prototypical characteristics which differentiate it from the latter to it have been distilled by many authors (e.g., Pérez Cañado 2012; Pérez-Vidal 2013; Dalton-Puffer et al. 2014). These affect the languages taught through CLIL (mostly major international *linguae francae*, with English holding a hegemonic position), the methodology used (which involves the integration of language and content, with foreign language teaching and CLIL lessons being timetabled alongside each other), the language level targeted (a functional vs. native-like competence of the language studied), the linguistic command of teachers (which, in line with the foregoing, need no longer be native-like), the amount of exposure to the FL or L2 (lower, as age of onset of language learning tends to be pushed back in CLIL contexts), or the types of materials employed (adapted or originally designed, as opposed to authentic ones).

However, the conceptualization and pedagogical implementation of CLIL have of late started to be questioned. They are both considered to be hazy, according to authors such as Bruton (2011, 2012, 2013) or Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter (2013), something which “makes it difficult for CLIL



to evolve [...] in a pedagogically coherent fashion and for research to play a critical role in its evolution” (Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013, 5). Conceptually, CLIL is held to lack clarity, to be “internally ambiguous” (Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013, 2), or to have a “convenient vagueness” (Bruton 2013, 588). This is the case, according to the afore-mentioned authors, as it is excessively inclusive, encompassing too broad an array of possible program alternatives. Its limits are thus very difficult to pin down. This ties in with its pedagogical implementation, which is also held to pose problems. For some authors (e.g., Lasagabaster and Sierra 2009), CLIL is distinct from immersion, while for others (e.g., Somers and Surmont 2011; Dalton-Puffer et al. 2014; Llinares and Lyster 2014), it has more similarities than differences with immersion. The heterogeneity of CLIL implementation causes it to lack “a clear and coherent pedagogy” (Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013, 13) and pedagogical uniqueness. Thus, we stand in need of characterizing “representative pedagogical practices” (Bruton 2011, 5) of CLIL and of knowing exactly “what it looks like in practice” (Bruton 2012, 524).

This is precisely what the initial section of the present volume (“*CLIL in action: Practical considerations*”) strives to do by providing a window into how CLIL implementation is unraveling at the grassroots level vis-à-vis key aspects for CLIL development, such as materials design, the use of ICT, or the importance of extramural exposure. In **chapter 2, Domingo Ángel Ruiz Gómez** fleshes out the needs analysis and methodology followed by a working group belonging to the Educational Administration of Andalusia (southern Spain), with a view to assisting CLIL practitioners on different fronts: agreeing on a full-fledged methodological model based on the CLIL approach; offering a practical reference for schools in Andalusia involved in materials design for the bilingual classroom; and creating a resource bank of materials integrating language and content for Primary and Secondary Education teachers to draw on. As for the use of computers and Internet technologies, **Isabel Pérez Torres** foregrounds in **chapter 3** the rich array of opportunities that ICT offers in favoring a more innovative methodology. She examines how CLIL can benefit in different ways from strategies such as WebQuests and Webtasks, which are based on task-based learning and the use of authentic resources on the Web. She analyzes the features of both strategies and, more specifically, WebQuests for second languages, as well as how CLIL can relate to all these models. A link is also made between CLIL and extramural English—learnt outside school, e.g., through TV, films, reading for pleasure, listening to music, the Internet or computer games—by **Liss Kerstin Sylvén and Pia Sundqvist** in **chapter 4**. In addition to showing how these

two paths to learning English resemble each other, their purpose is to report on a pilot study among young, non-CLIL learners of English in Sweden. The study explores the correlation between extramural English activities and achieved learning outcomes in school, as measured by two tests, one assessing language proficiency in general and the other focusing on the size of vocabulary. They craft a powerful argument in favor of the educational significance of extramural English in both CLIL and non-CLIL contexts.

### **The effects of CLIL on language learning: Research-based evidence**

*Research* on CLIL has recently been no less controversial. The interest generated by CLIL has spawned a very sizeable literature and the number of studies tapping into the implementation and effects of CLIL has been growing steadily (Seregély 2008). The overwhelming majority of the investigations carried out has provided unequivocal support for a CLIL route over traditional language-driven tuition (cf. Pérez Cañado 2012 for an overview of the empirical research conducted on CLIL in Europe). However, in the past half a decade, an increasing number of critical voices (e.g., Bruton 2011, 2012, 2013; Pérez Cañado 2011, 2012; Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013) have been raised in dissent to some of the research conducted, as it presents some potentially serious methodological flaws which could compromise the validity of the outcomes obtained. These caveats affect:

- *Variables*: The homogeneity of the samples has very rarely been guaranteed, moderating variables have not been factored in, and L1 and content knowledge have not been worked in as dependent variables.
- *Research design*: No post-tests or control groups have been considered, more longitudinal studies are required, and eclectic designs with multiple triangulation need to be favored.
- *Statistical methodology*: ANOVA and the t test, together with multivariate procedures such as factor and discriminant analyses need to be used in order to determine the existence of statistically significant differences between groups and whether CLIL is truly responsible for them.

In order to redress these lacunae, a new CLIL research agenda needs to be carved out for the future. According to the specialized literature, it should address five main niches:

1. To begin with, more stringent research is required on the heterogeneity and distinctiveness of CLIL (Admiraal, Westhoff and de Bot 2006; Lasagabaster 2008; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe 2010; Bruton 2011, 2012, 2013; García López and Bruton 2013; Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013; Dalton-Puffer et al. 2014). Through, for instance, qualitative case studies and classroom observation, on-the-ground praxis should be scrutinized and described in order to provide more comprehensive data and draw possible patterns on what CLIL looks like in practice.
2. Quantitatively, there is a consensus that research on the effects of CLIL in linguistic (L1, L2/FL) (Madrid Fernández 2006; Langé 2007; Lyster 2007; Pérez-Vidal 2007; Lasagabaster 2008; Ruiz de Zarobe 2008; Ruiz de Zarobe & Lasagabaster, 2010) and content knowledge (Hüttner and Rieder-Bünemann 2010; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe 2010; Sierra, Gallardo del Puerto and Ruiz de Zarobe 2011; Bruton 2012, 2013; Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013; Dalton-Puffer et al. 2014) needs to be stepped up. Reliable language and content tests should be designed, validated, and applied in pre-, post-, and delayed post-testing phases to CLIL (experimental) and non-CLIL (control) groups which have been previously matched for intervening variables in order to determine the effects of dual-education programs on these dependent variables.
3. It then needs to be determined whether CLIL is truly responsible for the possible differences ascertained or whether they can be ascribed to other variables (Bruton 2011, 2012, 2013; Pérez Cañado 2011, 2012; García López and Bruton 2013; Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013; Dalton-Puffer et al. 2014). Factor and discriminant analyses with the dependent and moderator variables considered will provide an answer to this question.
4. 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 (Bruton 2012,

2013; García López and Bruton 2013; Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter 2013; Dalton-Puffer et al. 2014).

5. Finally, from a qualitative perspective, stakeholder perceptions on training needs and the way CLIL programs are playing out should equally continue to be canvassed (Fernández Fernández et al. 2005; Pena Díaz and Porto Requejo 2008; Czura, Papaja and Urbaniak 2009; Infante, Benvenuto and Lastrucci 2009; Rubio Mostacero 2009; Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe 2010; Fernández and Halbach 2011; Pérez Cañado 2014). Methodological triangulation through the use of questionnaires, interviews, and observation can greatly assist in attaining this objective.

The second part of the volume (“*The effects of CLIL on language learning: Research-based evidence*”) already explores some of these avenues for future research, showcasing how engaging in research as a device that drives reflection is the best possible way to continue moving the CLIL agenda forward. In an immersion context, **Laura Sánchez Pérez** looks in **chapter 5** into the development of L3 English written competence by Spanish/Catalan learners with prior knowledge of L2 German. Her study deepens into the correlations between and across different analytical measures in a multilingual acquisition setting, which prove the importance of the interaction between two non-native languages for the adoption of relevant pedagogical practices and the development of appropriate language policies in a multilingual society. In **chapter 6**, **Rosa María Jiménez Catalán and Almudena Fernández Fontecha** address the relationship between type of instruction (CLIL compared to non-CLIL) and use of lexical phrases in written compositions, with a view to ascertaining whether there are differences between both groups as regards language level and production of lexical phrases and whether the use of lexical phrases is associated with learners’ language level, irrespectively of the type of instruction. Also within the context of written production, **Stephen Hughes and Daniel Madrid** evince in **chapter 7** that bilingual education in Andalusia, which incorporates teaching the foreign language as a subject in addition to CLIL in non-linguistic subjects, enables students to deal with writing tasks at much higher levels of fluency and accuracy than by learning the language in the FL class alone. Bilingual students are thus better prepared to meet official targets for written expression and, hence, to communicate more effectively in the foreign language.

## Preparing teachers for CLIL: Practical proposals

A third priority on this CLIL agenda is undoubtedly *teacher training*. The key to any future vision for bilingual education is teacher development; as Coyle (2011) puts it, it is “where CLIL will stand or fall in terms of sustainability.” Teacher training provision acquires a particularly sharp relief at present due to its widespread relevance. As Wolff (2012, 107; in Marsh 2013, 135) underscores, “CLIL teacher education, if taken seriously, constitutes a fundamental part of all teacher education, that every teacher should be educated, in fact, as a CLIL teacher.”

Vast amounts of funding have been allocated to teacher training actions, which have been considerably stepped up across the continent. Linguistic and methodological training, classroom observation and job-shadowing, immersion programs and university conferences, or heightened pre-service education have all been provided by teacher training centers, official language schools and academies, universities, or regional and national governments (for a full overview of these types of teacher training actions, cf. Salaberri Ramiro 2010 and Pérez Cañado this volume).

The growing body of research in this area has evinced, however, that these actions have been insufficient to prepare practitioners to step up confidently to the CLIL challenge (for a summary of this research, cf. Pérez Cañado this volume). A pan-European study (Pérez Cañado 2014) has recently diagnosed the most pressing needs of both pre- and in-service teachers, which cluster around linguistic and intercultural competence, the theoretical underpinnings of CLIL, materials and resources, student-centered methodologies, and ongoing professional development. The need has also recently been voiced to debunk certain false myths which are largely misguiding the CLIL implementation process and to ensure that teacher training efforts are actually trickling down to on-the-ground practice (García Lázaro 2014).

These concerns are explored in the third section (“*Preparing teachers for CLIL: Practical proposals*”), where the interface of research and pedagogy is patent, as the former informs the latter in a clear instantiation of what Coyle (2011) terms “evidence-based practice” in setting necessary teacher training actions in place. To this end, **Guadalupe de la Maya Retamar and Rosa Luengo González** analyze in **chapter 8** the new Bologna-adapted teacher training programs in Spanish universities—especially the new Degree in Primary Education, both in public and private universities—and to what extent they can be expected to respond

to the demands of the new European Higher Education Area linguistic policies, in which CLIL plays an essential role. Vis-à-vis Secondary Education, **María Elena García Sánchez and María del Mar Rodríguez Collado** examine, in **chapter 9**, the extent, use and effectiveness of the implementation of the competence-based education model in the bilingual programs of a selection of Secondary Schools in Andalusia, in terms of facilitating learning and achieving academic success. Their findings, as per the qualitative and quantitative data collected, support the conclusion that the teachers' application of such a model in bilingual classrooms, as opposed to monolingual groups, is likely to have a positive effect on the students' level of success, especially if teachers and students alike are motivated. In **chapter 10**, **Mónica Olivares Leyva and Carmen Pena Díaz** describe and analyze the teaching experiences derived from the English language courses aimed at in-service Secondary Education teachers who plan to enroll in the CLIL program in Madrid, with a view to helping future teachers when planning similar courses. And in **chapter 11**, **María Luisa Pérez Cañado** aims to counter the current dearth of teacher training actions to prepare practitioners for plurilingual education in Spain, a country which has traditionally presented a serious foreign language deficit. To this end, her article unpacks four steps which are being undertaken to set up the first CLIL Master's in Spain and which can be followed in developing similar programs in other European countries.

## Conclusion

The volume thus addresses three burning issues in the CLIL scenario through practical and research-based proposals of tried-and-true CLIL development. If all three strands—implementation, research, and training—dovetail and progress in harmony, a solid template will be built for the future and the CLIL agenda will hopefully be pushed forward. By pooling the insights of a set of researchers, teacher trainers, policy makers, and grassroots practitioners, we hope this volume can contribute to this much-needed endeavor.

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**PART I:**

**CLIL IN ACTION:  
PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

## CHAPTER TWO

# A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO CLIL IN L2 CONTENT-BASED COURSES: METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE ANDALUSIAN BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

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### **Introduction**

This chapter looks into a project carried out from January 2010 to March 2011 by the Educational Administration of the Southern European Region of Andalusia. Drawing on a newly-passed policy and the subsequent legal framework on Plurilingualism in Education in this region, this project was designed in order to: (1) agree on a full-fledged methodological model based on the CLIL approach; (2) offer a practical reference for schools in Andalusia involved in materials design for the bilingual classroom on account of this new integration pattern; and (3) create a resource bank of materials integrating language and content for Primary and Secondary Education teachers to draw on.

This project was born in the light of a widespread demand for far-reaching improvements of second language (L2) learning standards in the region. The response proposed was twofold: increasing the time devoted to language alongside improving the quality of teaching practice. In this context, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is recognised as having emerged as a key tool in mainstream European education encompassing both criteria with little adaptation of the official curriculum (Marsh 2002). The success derived from this approach in many private schools in European and North American countries was decisive for its adoption by the Andalusian Educational Administration.

## **Assessing Andalusian bilingual schools**

In 2006, the educational administration in Andalusia passed a law designed to create an expanding network of Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary schools incorporating immersion methods in a second language—and even a third language, in some cases—under the CLIL methodology umbrella. This new law was passed with a straightforward purpose: to put an end to a long list of widely reported fruitless efforts in L2 teaching processes in our region. Since 2006, more than a thousand bilingual projects have been developed, Andalusia being at present the Spanish region running the largest number of schools adopting this dual-focused educational approach, which currently involves 3,074 teachers and 82,560 students (48,025 in Pre-Primary and Primary Education; 31,740 in Secondary Education; 1,295 in Baccalaureate; and 1,500 in Vocational Training).

Four years after the first experimental bilingual schools were inaugurated, a general assessment process of this multi-faceted programme was launched due to a firm decision to provide appropriate support to teachers adopting CLIL in their teaching practice. As this process was intended to assess the whole succession of ambitious measures stemming from the new language policy in the light of academic outcomes, we opted for a comprehensive assessment process—which also included a recent report directed by Lorenzo, Casal and Moore (2010)—, which focused on materials, basic methodology, use of language, schedules, staff coordination and, of course, assessment of pupils' final linguistic competence (bilingual versus monolingual schools), in order to test the real efficiency of L2 and content integration in our education system. Our primary purpose was to gather a complete account of the actual performance of bilingual schools, assess the teaching processes, reflect on the forthcoming results and, finally, to act on any possible shortcomings.

In general terms, all indicators demonstrated a clear gap between the outcomes of students in bilingual schools in comparison to those in monolingual ones as regards L2 competence, which offered us encouraging reasons to be optimistic about the desired effects achieved by the new methodological approach. Notwithstanding data support, a thorough analysis of the process showed highly heterogeneous results among different bilingual schools mainly due to what might be considered a great variety of interpretations of CLIL—some of which were clearly not effective—, which suggested a series of improvements to be implemented forthwith in order to make the most of the full potential of the bilingual

classroom, as well as to raise the quality standards in those bilingual settings still proving inefficient.

Organizational issues aside, our main concern in this chapter is CLIL methodology as the main backbone of the new linguistic policy developed in our autonomous region.

### **Relevant conclusions**

It goes without saying that the advantages of the greater exposure to the L2 in our bilingual schools have been immediate and obvious. Nonetheless, as was previously mentioned, our assessment process yielded a curious heterogeneity which made us consider an aspect already described by Marsh (2002): the risk of obtaining inadequate outcomes if an increased exposure to the L2 is deemed to be methodologically insensitive. The key point was that, in general, all our teachers considered their performance appropriate as far as methodology was concerned. Thus, the ensuing question that emerged was: what do our teachers perceive as *appropriate*? Can we rely on a consensus for a homogeneous methodological approach under the wide-ranging CLIL umbrella? At that point of our reflection process we acknowledged the absence of a solid teacher training programme for our bilingual teaching staff centred on a sound set of methodologies which would also enable them to put theory into practice. This conclusion was highly revealing and, to a great extent, offered us a viable explanation for the uneven levels of students' communicative competence after learning English, French or German in a bilingual school. It was clear that not all the teaching actions experimented with so far had proved effective.

Heterogeneous as they were, we could nonetheless infer that most approaches to CLIL—from highly to less appropriate—could be framed within one of these 2 particular situations:

1. The L2 teaching objectives were exclusively limited to the active use of the language as an instrumental tool to transmit the content of the non-language discipline; in this way, the acquisition of the L2 was assumed to take place automatically due to repetitive *language showers* which excluded any special attention to language exploration, since the whole classroom time was devoted to transmission of the subject matter content. In this context, many CLIL practitioners conceive of their role simply as the driving force in increasing exposure time to the L2. This version of language and content integration seems to be the most appropriate in schools where the teaching staff are suspicious of the

assimilation of L2 objectives within their non-language subjects, since the added exposure to the second language is provided without allocation of extra time within the curriculum. Teachers involved in this teaching procedure quite often rely on materials translated *ad hoc* from Spanish or, in other cases, borrow them from the official curricula of any of the countries speaking English, French or German as an official language. In short, our intended improvement of the L2 teaching practice relies exclusively on an increased exposure to the L2 adopting an instrumental role with minimum or no adaptation at all.

2. A radically different interpretation stems from a consideration of CLIL beyond a simple pretext to increase exposure to the L2, towards an approach which consciously integrates specific L2 acquisition objectives together with the specific subject-matter content. It was noteworthy for us to discover that this interpretation, far from producing homogeneous and successful outcomes—as might be supposed—, also generated a great variety of versions concerning the way the interface between language and content was managed in a common teaching agenda.

Out of such a variety of different situations, a positive conclusion could be drawn: it was only right to admit the existence of certain schools that had managed to succeed, as demonstrated by the excellent communicative competences their students attained in the L2. A close analysis of the teaching performance enabled us to identify a series of circumstances common to each of these schools, the most outstanding being the elaboration of an integrated curriculum which kept both language and non-language objectives in a balanced way. This process was usually carried out by means of a thorough analysis and selection of objectives, contents and materials, as well as an adequate integration process which considered effective L2 acquisition processes. Some other influential circumstances were related to the teaching staff, usually characterized by the following features: (1) ability to successfully blend language and non-language aims; (2) a medium-high mastery of the L2 (usually B2 or higher) that let them manipulate the language with ease; (3) readiness to accept new educational proposals; and (4) working in permanent cooperation with the L2 teacher. This being the case, the concept of *language shower* seems to be highly improved and complemented by a carefully planned strategy based on the interaction of two different domains judiciously intermingled in a single syllabus.

At the opposite pole, we came across other bilingual settings which, after an average 3-year experience, showed clear flaws mainly due to the

non-existence of a reliable theoretical reference model in order to ease the burden which stems from the integration of both kinds of learning. This failure to comply with a successful integration under the CLIL umbrella usually triggered a great variety of inconsistent didactic assumptions which imposed a series of constraints on the learning process both of the language and the content aims proposed. Some examples of these identified methodological shortcomings are provided in the following list:

1. Didactic proposals defined by a very limited accomplishment of L2 objectives, sometimes reduced to the presentation of a group of new lexical items. The design of these activities varies depending on the educational level, but in general terms, they are usually presented at random with the help of flash-cards or images in Primary Education, whereas in Secondary Education they are usually less visual and increasingly based on rote-learning, quite often becoming mere lists of words with accompanying definitions to match. From our standpoint, the main problem derived from such an incomplete approach to CLIL stems from the use of these tasks in isolation as an aim in itself, without an appropriate context or further work around the selected vocabulary by means of a coherent integration action. This conception separates the content discipline from its valuable contextual role for the L2 teaching aims and consigns it to a simple pretext to make salient some specific lexis with little or no interrelation at all between both domains. Hence, we could conclude that the concept *integration* makes little sense in situations like these.

2. Language adaptation was also a question we took into consideration after scanning a range of materials. As regards this aspect, once again we were able to detect a vast heterogeneity of occurrences and, unfortunately, many inconsistencies mainly derived from the mixture of situations comprised in the following gradation: total adaptation to the students' level, adaptation of vocabulary but not syntax, and native language considering no adaptation at all. The most recurrent case we found was the use of materials allegedly adapted, but with such a high difficulty level that most of the time the materials were discouraging for the average student. The search for a consensus on this issue became of prime importance to us.

3. Another outstanding flaw detected in our research process was defined by an unsystematic and even neglected consideration of skills in many bilingual classrooms. On the one hand, we observed an



overwhelming bias towards written skills versus an obvious deficiency of the oral ones in the analysed materials, continuous written texts being the core (absence of discontinuous texts), and subsequent written comprehension questions the main strategy—sometimes the only one—to work through whole didactic units. On the other hand, we could confirm that another important percentage of these materials mixed reception and production skills at random without any pre-arranged order that could result in a more systematic and, consequently, profitable teaching process (Larsen-Freeman 2000). Therefore, many didactic units were headed by complex debates or writing tasks at the very beginning of the unit, despite a complete absence of the necessary previous input which, in the best of cases, was tackled in subsequent sessions. It proved highly discouraging for learners to be directly involved in complex productive tasks without being previously offered the specific tools to carry them out, allow them to practise in a relatively guided way, and finally urge them to develop fluent, free production, following the presentation/practice/production convention (Harmer 1991, 46-49).

4. We also have to mention a substantial portion of bilingual materials analysed which showed a deficient representation of discourse models and functions, most of the time being centred on description or narration, with little attention to paramount aspects of real daily communication such as discussion, debate, explanation or instruction.

In general terms, we could conclude that many professionals involved in teaching non-language disciplines quite often showed an outstanding concern for the content itself both in terms of quality and quantity, but in an unsystematic way. This absence of a coherent methodological model quite often resulted in an impoverished interpretation of CLIL as a simple use of the second language to transmit content, or, in some other cases, in materials which reflected a higher involvement with the study of language itself than with its use in real communication, which should be our main tenet. In short, we had to admit that many teaching practices were based more on intuition than on effective methodological references.

### **Our working group**

In the light of this general background, the Andalusian Educational Administration considered it of paramount importance to create a working group to agree on a full-fledged model based on a series of carefully selected methodological guidelines that could result in a more qualified

interpretation of CLIL. Such a methodological arrangement should primarily be aimed at achieving more productive content and language integration processes, in order to improve the L2 outcomes with little or no adverse effect on the quality of the content teaching process. Special instructions were given to foster adequate measures to raise the communicative competence of our learners, not only concerning the written skills, but with an increased emphasis on a proficient mastery of oral skills interaction and tasks implying explicit/implicit negotiation of meaning.

From its very foundation, our working group assumed practice as the best procedure to transmit our preferred rendition of CLIL. Our purpose was to train teachers to use CLIL methodologies in an efficient way through practical models. The elaboration of our didactic proposal also allowed us to cope with a traditional complaint dating from the very creation of our bilingual schools: a conspicuous shortage of materials based on the Andalusian and Spanish official curriculum for the CLIL classroom, which obliged many teachers to devote themselves to designing and producing brand-new materials, quite often without a clear methodological reference to work on. The most immediate consequence was a recurrent resort to didactic resources from other countries, a practice which usually led teachers to use these materials unaware of specific language reflection devices, since attention was mainly absorbed by the information transfer process, in addition to a great number of inaccuracies and inconsistencies derived from the mixture of different syllabi and curricula.

In short, these various shortcomings spurred the Andalusian Educational Administration to create a substantial collection of materials<sup>1</sup> with a sharply defined twofold purpose: to present an efficient approach to CLIL that could act as a model for our teachers in their elaboration/adaptation processes of new materials and, on the other hand, to provide schools with a rich bank of CLIL units suitable for dealing with a great variety of their most immediate needs.

With this ambitious target in mind, a group of specialists was summoned to set up the core of the working group that would carry out the project, most of them teachers in different educational levels in Andalusian schools. This work group included the following participants:

- The Head of the International Educational Programmes Service (on behalf of the Andalusian Educational Administration), together with three experts in CLIL methodology, three of them experienced teachers and

researchers involved both at University and Primary/Secondary Education: Ana María Medrano, Francisco Lorenzo and Domingo Ángel Ruiz.

- A group of 20 prestigious CLIL practitioners, selected according to their excellent references as regards their performance in bilingual programmes and established qualified mastery of CLIL. In our selection process, we paid special attention to the skills they showed in designing content-based materials compatible with learner-friendly linguistic attention and organization. This group was exclusively composed of Primary and Secondary Education teachers, 16 of them qualified in English, 3 in French and 1 in German.

### **An effective methodological proposal**

Several meetings were required before agreeing on an appropriate set of theoretical and practical guidelines that would result in a homogeneous project based on effective CLIL principles. All in all, the chief tenet that guided our decisions was a significant improvement of the L2 communicative skills of our students without this becoming a burden for the content transfer process. With this objective as our primary tenet, the three experts proposed by the Educational Administration drew up a draft with a general outline for all our didactic proposals, as well as a series of basic conditions to be fulfilled by all of them. From this moment on, the whole working group embarked on a productive debate on this draft which incorporated many ideas and practical suggestions, eventually shaping a model that has been our baseline throughout the whole working process. This model could be defined as the result of a wide consensus reached from complementary perspectives contributed by the professionals involved in research at University, the teaching professionals at bilingual Andalusian schools, and the educational legislation in force.

We agreed to use the concept “didactic sequence” as the core element structuring our contents, as a sequence of activities to be tackled in a pre-arranged order. Our preference for this more functional concept in contrast with the more structural one known as “didactic unit” aimed to make clear our concern about the development of the activities proposed in a fixed order (Zabala 2000), according to the following principles: logical presentation of language content and skills selected—from reception to production—, logical order of activities implying different levels of difficulty—from less to more difficult—, and the intrinsic order imposed by the non-language content itself. Whatever the case, we consistently stressed this organization of materials through didactic sequences as our

particular proposal, always subject to transformation and manipulation by the target teacher according to the specific context to be exploited, as well as to his/her own specific needs.

The levels selected for our project were Primary and Secondary Education. Our challenge was to provide materials meeting most needs detected in the network of bilingual schools so far, so it was essential to gather professionals teaching a wide range of non-language subjects in English, French and German at both levels.

The next step to carry out was the selection of subjects and areas to be approached in our project. As regards this point, we sought to cover most non-language disciplines approached in the bilingual schools; hence, our final selection included the following disciplines: Social Sciences, Natural Sciences (both subjects integrated in Primary Education as “Discovering Sciences”), History, Mathematics, Physical Education, Music, Technology, Physics and Chemistry.

We have to highlight the widespread adoption of both Social Sciences and Natural Sciences for CLIL approaches in an obvious relation to the text-based character of both disciplines. This textual basis allows teachers to make use of a large amount of language input, take it as a pretext to highlight salient language aspects, and finally produce subsequent output modelled on this previous acquired input. The bulk of materials we devised was concerned with these two domains. Then, the ensuing question was related to the quantity of sequences that should be devoted to any of these disciplines; as to this point, we agreed to elaborate a number of didactic sequences per subject in close proportion to the adoption of those subjects in the network of Andalusian bilingual schools.

The next step to undertake was the selection of objectives and subsequent topics, content and assessment criteria provided in each didactic sequence. Our decision at this level was quite strict: our project could not interfere with the specific non-language objectives involved. The key notion for us was affinity with content, since to achieve a successful integration of language and non-language objectives, the contents and materials selected to carry them out should fulfil a series of sharply-defined features, namely: (1) to include as much text as possible—suitable to be transformed into continuous and discontinuous text, both oral and written—; (2) preference for concrete concepts versus abstract ones; (3) use of images and graphics to exemplify the concepts exposed; and (4) exploitation possibilities through pair/group oral activities such as debates, discussions or presentations.

According to the above-mentioned principles, the content selection process was straightforward for subjects such as Natural and Social

Sciences, but far more demanding for disciplines such as Maths or Chemistry, less adaptable from a communicative and interactive perspective, due to a smaller text-based support. Nevertheless, the working group proved highly skillful in singling out the most distinctive grammatical structures, vocabulary and communicative processes usually involved in any of these disciplines in order to develop materials fostering both a standard use of the language and a specific register linked to any of the disciplines. Working around key competences was our ideal ally in order to elicit appropriate communicative settings for all disciplines, since the contents tackled were finally contextualised in real settings and contexts close to our students, suitable for being worked on by means of tasks and projects connecting the newly acquired knowledge with familiar situations which placed them at the very centre of the process (Hutchinson and Waters 1987).

The next step we followed was the design of an informative introductory framework for each of our sequences, composed of a set of tags devoted to offering the potential user a general outline of the contents—both language and non-language—, as well as its potential for implementation according to didactic and practical criteria. We sought in this way to provide pragmatic and immediate information for users to be able to decide on the convenience of each of the sequences for their particular purposes according to a varied range of criteria.

The definitive model agreed on by the whole work group comprised two parts, the first one being a more informative area devoted to practical aspects of implementation: title, linguistic level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference), subject, general topic, brief description of the topic, format, curricular correspondence, author, approximate timing, key competences, and notes by the author. The second table, on the other hand, was devoted to more technical aspects related to objectives, contents, as well as the assessment criteria planned for each sequence. This second list comprised of the following items: stage objectives, cycle/year contents, topic/subtopics, discourse models, tasks, language content (functions, structures, lexis), and assessment criteria.

The adoption of this preliminary framework not only fulfilled a primary informative function, but also had a quite useful planning role for our designers, as it covered the major decisions involved in our elaboration processes, except for methodology which, to a certain extent, was conceived as homogeneous for our whole project.

The set of methodological guidelines we devised was influenced by a dominant concern to provide a balanced framework of language-content in an attempt to overcome a traditional lack of attention to language in non-

language disciplines, or mismatch between language and content in those cases in which language was tackled in the lesson plan. We could say that we seldom found systematic and integrated language monitoring by the CLIL teacher in the assessed bilingual classrooms, and changing this situation was our first task. In order to accomplish it, we opted for an active approach to language primarily aimed at improving our students' communicative skills, correcting their inter-language errors and, consequently, making the most of each sequence from the point of view of language. The subsequent question, then, was *how* to implement these changes.

The first aspect we considered as an answer to the *how-question* led us towards the primary role of language as an instrumental communicative tool, so we centred on L2 adaptation. Our recommendation for all the components of the group was to pursue the use of an L2 input finely tuned to the learners' previously acquired level and present guessing skills, but including structures at their next *stage*—structures that are a little beyond their current level of correspondence— in order to make language manageable and comprehensible and avoid a potential lack of motivation derived from a highly demanding linguistic level. The extra-linguistic context offered usually helps to understand if input is provided in just the right quantities (Krashen 1981). As regards this adaptation, a key agreement immediately put into practice was the selection of primary and secondary language items in each didactic sequence, the primary ones being those which created a strong barrier to content comprehension, and the secondary ones, a softer barrier not interfering with the key concepts presented. Once this division had been established, specific activities were planned to soften those stronger barriers imposed by the primary elements, such as vocabulary activities in context, or language usage tips including practice with new grammatical structures essential to master the subject matter content proposed. According to our professional experience, these activities would result in an actual relief for the often overwhelmed content teacher.

Another essential aspect for us was enabling reflection on our materials. We tried to ensure that all activities, tasks and projects proposed were based on effective learner reflection processes which included a conscious consideration of the L2 in each didactic sequence, and different tasks to cover them in meaningful use through a range of activities evolving from semi-guided to free production (Graeme 2003).

The nature of all these methodological recommendations progressively carried us towards the adoption of the so-called *task-based approach* as the most suitable proposal to satisfy all our demands in a systematic way.