Master’s Dissertation/
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MIXED-ABILITY CLIL CLASSES

Student: Acosta Coronel, Bertha Mercedes

Supervisor: Dr. Diego Rascón

Department: English Philology

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ABSTRACT

A mixed-ability class is one in which students with different levels of English in particular and different abilities in general are mixed and taught together. Teachers must be very well trained and prepared in order to prevent weak students from frustration, which may affect their learning, and motivate the strong ones not to lose interest in the class.

Dealing with these special groups constitutes a challenge for content and language teachers. This MA Dissertation focuses on the perspectives of teachers about catering for diversity in content and language integrated learning (CLIL), mainly in relation to grade, age, gender, nationality, type of teacher, administrative situation, level in the foreign language they teach, subjects they teach in the foreign language, how much of each subject is taught in the foreign language, coordinators of the bilingual section in their schools, overall teaching experience and teaching experience in a bilingual program. Doing this will serve, at the same time, as the pilot process of the teacher questionnaire of the Erasmus+ 201 project “Attention to Diversity in Bilingual Education (ADiBE)”.

In this study, 49 CLIL teachers from Ecuador and Spain were surveyed. The respondents identified the main problems they face in their classes and they also highlighted their best practices and training needs. Taking this into consideration, the present work is intended to provide practitioners with practical ideas that will help them optimize their students’ learning abilities and improve their skills.

Key words: mixed-ability class, CLIL teachers, questionnaire, qualitative research, ADiBE.

RESUMEN

Una clase de habilidades mixtas es aquella en la que los/las estudiantes con diferentes niveles de inglés y diferentes habilidades se encuentran mezclados/as y reciben la clase juntos. El profesorado debe estar muy bien entrenado y preparado para evitar que el alumnado más débil se frustre, lo cual puede afectar su aprendizaje, y motivar a los/las más fuertes para que no pierdan interés en la clase.

Tratar con estos grupos especiales constituye un desafío para los y las docentes que enseñan contenido y lenguaje. Este trabajo de fin de Máster se enfoca en las perspectivas del profesorado sobre cómo atender la diversidad en el aprendizaje integrado de contenido y lenguaje (CLIL), principalmente en relación al grado escolar, edad, género, nacionalidad, tipo de maestro, situación
administrativa, nivel en el idioma extranjero que enseñan, asignaturas que imparten en el idioma extranjero, cantidad de enseñanza de cada asignatura en el idioma extranjero, coordinadores de la sección bilingüe en sus escuelas, experiencia docente en general y experiencia docente en un programa bilingüe. Esto servirá, al mismo tiempo, como el proceso piloto del cuestionario para docentes del proyecto Erasmus + 201 “Atención a la diversidad en la educación bilingüe (ADiBE)”

En este estudio, se encuestó a 49 docentes CLIL de Ecuador y España. Los encuestados identificaron los problemas principales a los que se enfrentan en sus clases y también destacaron sus mejores prácticas y necesidades de capacitación. Teniendo esto en cuenta, el presente trabajo tiene por objeto proporcionar a los/las profesionales ideas prácticas que les ayudarán a optimizar las habilidades de aprendizaje de su alumnado y mejorar sus habilidades lingüísticas.

Palabras clave: clase de habilidades mixtas, profesorado CLIL, cuestionario, investigación cualitativa, ADiBE.

1. INTRODUCTION

This MA Dissertation paper is focused on mixed-ability CLIL classes. As was stated before it is of high importance for content and language teachers to know exactly how to deal with this situation in order to get the best results in their lessons. In this introduction, the objectives, justification and relevance of this research and a description of the document sections are included.

1.1 Objectives

The main goal of this project is to carry out a small-scale investigation to evaluate teachers’ impressions in relation to linguistic aspects, methodology, assessment, training and collaboration of stakeholders in mixed-ability CLIL classes. The teachers who were part of this investigation belong to different countries but mainly to Ecuador and Spain. Two metaconcerns serve as the bases of this study.

Metaconcern 1 (Needs analysis)

1. To determine teachers’ perceptions regarding linguistic and academic skills when coping with diversity in the CLIL classroom.

2. To determine teachers’ perceptions pertaining to methodology and types of grouping implemented in order to cater for diversity in the CLIL classroom.
3. To determine teachers’ perceptions concerning the materials and resources employed in order to cater for diversity in the CLIL classroom.

4. To determine teachers’ perceptions vis-à-vis assessment in order to cater for diversity in the CLIL classroom.

5. To determine teachers’ perceptions in relation to coordination and development in order to cater for diversity in the CLIL classroom.

6. To determine teachers’ perceptions as regards the most important aspects in terms of their difficulties, best practices and teacher development needs when catering for diversity in the CLIL classroom.

   Metaconcern 2 (Within-cohort comparisons)

7. To determine whether there are any statistically significant differences among CLIL teachers from Ecuador and Spain in terms of age, gender, nationality, type of teacher, administrative situation, level of foreign language they have, subjects they teach and teaching experience.

   Metaconcern 3 (Practical suggestions)

8. To provide CLIL teachers with practical ideas to be used in their mixed-ability classes.

1.2 Justification and relevance

There is nothing easier than teaching a homogeneous class in terms of English proficiency level, personality, and abilities. The challenge comes when either the content or language teacher has to face a mixed-ability class with students who struggle with their language skills, students who have different intelligences, students that lack motivation and above all poor or insufficient training on the part of the teacher.

Elliott (as cited in Bailey and Bridges, 1983) states that “mixed-ability teaching takes place when a teacher tries to regulate his treatment of individual differences by the principle of equality” (1976, p. 4). Taking this into consideration, it must be clear that students need to be respected as individuals and each case treated according to its particular needs. Our aim as teachers is to create a classroom environment where students will feel confident, encouraged, motivated and safe. Planning effectively for a mixed ability class will provide
1.3 Overview

The present research work has different sections which start with the abstract and an introduction to this study. We start by stating the main objectives we want to accomplish by the end of this project and which are of great interest and relevance for CLIL teachers. Then, we continue with the justification and relevance which shows why the topic of mixed-ability classes is nowadays of high priority in CLIL contexts. The literature review will show previous research on the field and it will provide a theoretical framework to the main topic.

The methodology is divided into different parts that will carefully illustrate how our work is divided. Firstly, the research design which guides our process will detail how our investigation was developed. Secondly, information is given about the sample that took part in the study. -The variables that were controlled are also described. Thirdly, the instruments section will show what mechanisms we used to gather the data. After that, the methods used for collecting data will be reported. Finally, the data will be analyzed by figures.

The results and discussion section will take us to the findings of this research and to a link between them and the theoretical section. Also, a collection of the best ideas, tips, and methodologies used by teachers in mixed-ability classes will be provided. All studies have limitations; at this point of our dissertation the possible weaknesses of our project will be identified and, deriving from them, future research will be suggested.

In the conclusion, a recapitulation of our research will be done and right after the references, in the appendices section the survey made to our teachers will be shared.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A mixed-ability class is a class where diverse learners are grouped together with one single goal. This type of class is diverse in terms of age of students, background knowledge, interests, abilities, learning styles, personalities, strengths or motivation. It can also be said that this type of class has a variation of students in their abilities in grammar knowledge, fluency and accuracy, size of vocabulary, receptive and productive skills (Valentic, 2005). Very often we hear teachers
complaining because a number of students do not respond to the language as the teacher, parents or administrators expect. These characteristics regularly determine students’ level of understanding and learning, and teachers’ level of effort on teaching. Hedge (2000) noted that teaching in a mixed-ability classroom is a vital and genuine issue that instructors daily experience.

Teaching in a mixed-ability class requires teachers to apply pedagogical practices that include methods, strategies, and styles that will provide learners with meaningful and supportive learning activities that will engage all students in the same degree. Not all classes have the same problems and not in all of them same solutions can be applied. Every case is different and teachers need to be supported and coordinated by academic advisors in order to find the best ways to cater for diversity, mainly because teachers often do not know on whom they should concentrate more. Should they focus their attention only on weaker or slower learners? Or should they prioritize on high achievers and forget about weak ones? In a multilevel class we can establish work climate which encourages students to help one another. Better students will help their peers, and shy students will ask for help. Peer teaching can develop a climate of cooperation (Valentic, 2005).

In this literature review section, I am going to focus on what experts have said about: coping with the problems a mixed-ability class presents and how to adapt activities into a mixed-ability class.

2.2 Benefits and difficulties of a mixed-ability class
Let us take a look at some advantages and disadvantages a mixed-ability class often presents. Among the benefits we have:

- Weaker students get the motivation they need to do better when they see strong students performing at their best.
- When a weak student interacts with a strong student, the weak one will try to do his best to prove himself he can do it.
- When weaker students interact, they feel more comfortable because they are sharing the same proficiency level.
- Weaker students will always be stronger in other academic fields, which will benefit the group in other ways.
- Strong students learn how to teach to other students and how to explain easy or difficult content using their own words.
- The strong student has more time to expand knowledge by developing extra activities.
- When stronger students help the weak ones, their self-esteem increases.
- Strong students can challenge one another when doing pair or group work.
- When working individually, students go at their own pace without feeling group pressure.
- All students learn to respect and value their classmates. They learn to be tolerant, patient, kind and to accept others for who they are. Hellman (2017) points out that students of all abilities are “forced to realize not everyone is like them but that they still need to be nice and treat others respectfully”.
- Competition among students is substituted by support and cooperation.
- Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2014) believe that “teachers develop new teaching skills” through adequate training and implementation of acquired knowledge.
- If the differences between high and low achievers are small, weak students will feel they can achieve a higher level if they put some extra effort.
- Teachers can always rely on the use of technology to support their teaching. The use of extended material digital books bring, will effectively help students with different abilities.

Certain difficulties or limitations we may encounter in a mixed-ability class are:
- Parents may tend to complain because they feel strong students are “wasting” their time in a class where weak students are superior in number.
- Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2014) believe that “parental demand for academic excellence” is a big disadvantage. They see schools competing for students.
- Weak students would take more of the teacher’s time and attention, discouraging strong students.
- Students respond to textbooks differently. Weak students may find them uninteresting, boring or difficult to understand while strong students will find them appealing, motivating and easy to follow.
- Strong students may feel demotivated if the teacher sets them apart from the group.
- Weak students would feel frustrated if the teacher does not take them seriously and lets others make fun of their weaknesses.
- Teachers are required to cover content in a specific time and as all students have different gaps to fill in, it may become stressful and frustrating for the teachers not having enough time in their planning to satisfy all students’ needs.

- When teachers’ classes are observed by the academic advisor, teachers may tend to make only strong students participate most of the time to create the idea that the group is excellent and that the tutor is doing his best.

- The teacher may feel overwhelmed because adapting materials for weak and strong students may take lots of extra time.

- The teacher may also feel frustrated if weak students do not progress in their learning and do not achieve the goal or unit objectives.

- Walters (2017) says that “weaker students are always asking for things in their own language and want everything explained in it”.

- Monitoring each of the students would be exhausting for teachers especially if the class has many students.

- The teacher’s desire and willingness to try to satisfy all students’ needs and not having sufficient academic preparation, would lead him/her to frustration.

- Usually, the textbooks are not developed for mixed-ability groups. The teacher will have to adapt the material for most sections in the book.

- Discipline problems may arise when strong students finish the tasks or activities before the weak ones do. As a consequence, they start misbehaving if they have nothing else to do.

- When English proficiency levels are too obvious and weak learners are aware of their limitations, they may become anxious and would feel uncomfortable with the group.

- Strong students would experience discomfort if they feel their knowledge and capacities are not being challenged because they are working to the level of the weak ones.

- The number of students per class is crucial. Having more than twenty students in a mixed-ability class will limit opportunities for participation, practice, and production.

- Assessment and evaluation will also be a problem for teachers especially if they are asked to prepare differentiated tests for proficient and non-proficient students in order to match their needs.
- Low achievers may become more passive if the teacher does not know how to interact with them.

2.3 How to cope with the difficulties of a mixed-ability class?

Most, if not all, language classes contain students of mixed abilities. This happens for a number of reasons, but mainly because of different learning styles, different learning speeds, variations in motivation and, very frequently, as a result of logistic decisions. Very often the English teacher is faced with a class with two or more distinct levels of ability and has to tackle the typical problem of how to meet the needs of everyone in the class. Naturally, this is not an easy problem to solve and it would be wrong to suggest that there are any simple solutions. This kind of class has to be tactfully organized so that no-one needs to feel they are wasting time waiting for the others or alternatively, that they are “out of their depth” in comparison to other members of the group. (Ansari, 2013, p. 110)

As teachers, we need to identify what problems our students present in class. Every person learns at his / her own pace and as individuals, we are different from each other. “It is necessary to support cooperation more than competition” (Valentic, 2005, p. 2). If students compete in the classroom, the less able students will find the experience frustrating while the strong students will feel more confident. If students cooperate among them, the learning experience will be meaningful and it will help them to perform better in everyday situations. Some differences have to do with: language learning ability, language knowledge, cultural background, learning style, attitude to the language, mother tongue, intelligence, world knowledge, learning experience, knowledge of other languages, age or maturity, gender, personality, confidence, motivation, interests, independence, self-discipline and/or educational level (Ur, 1996, p. 304). Once the teacher identifies the problems, it is time to start planning, adapting or changing the lessons to make them more effective for learners and to reach the content and language objectives.

Language learning ability may be understood as the capacity an individual has to understand how a language works and use this talent to develop his skills easily. Language knowledge refers to the understanding one has about the parts of the language. Grammar, lexis, syntax, vocabulary, etc. and the ability to employ all these rules correctly. Cultural background is where the individual comes from and what experiences have shaped his life such as Race, ethnicity,
socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, language, religion, and geographical area can be mentioned. Learning style refers to the individual’s particular way to acquire the language. Every student learns in a different way depending on intellectual or multiple intelligence factors. Attitude to the language is the opinion, the beliefs or the ideas a person has towards a foreign language. That is to say, the learner’s positive or negative attitude to learning the language. The role of mother tongue and its influence in foreign language learning has been widely discussed. The Spanish language system and spelling will interfere with English learning.

Internal factors like intelligence, personality, confidence, interests, independence, and self-discipline come from inside the individual, and brings them to his/her specific learning circumstance. External factors come from outside the learner, from the environment or the settings where the person develops. Learning experience, knowledge of other languages, motivation, world knowledge and educational level.

In order to cope or deal with the problems, our teaching must be meaningful, interesting and fun for learners. Effective planning is crucial at this point and the teacher’s role changes “from seeing themselves as keepers and dispensers of knowledge and move toward seeing themselves as organizers of learning opportunities”. (Tomlinson, 2001, p.16). These learning opportunities may vary from simple to more complex activities aimed at the objectives and differentiated for learners.

Careful planning for a mixed-ability CLIL class is essential. Materials must be adapted according to students’ needs. Frequent solo, pair and group work is always healthy and helps shy students gain confidence and feel less nervous when talking in public. Having a variety of motivating extension activities will help fast finishers keep concentrated in the tasks while the rest of the class has enough time to complete theirs.

In addition, teachers are given large classes where all students have different interests and different English proficiency levels and they feel the pressure from administrators to obtain optimum results from their pupils. Even if classes are divided and groups become smaller in number, there will always be diverse intelligences, abilities or talents. Then, “Teachers in mixed-ability classroom settings need to be afforded continuous and multiple opportunities for advanced training to better meet the challenges of their diverse student populations” (Butterworth, 2010, p. 8).

Apart from these aspects, it is particularly important to consider other additional characteristics related to diversity and equal opportunities in the classroom.
Equal opportunity is usually linked to the law and focuses on legislating against unjustified discrimination. In ELT, this means that we treat our colleagues and learners fairly, remove barriers to equal opportunity and redress any imbalances in the classroom and staffroom. Diversity is about visible and invisible differences, accepting them, and harnessing and maximizing the potential they bring. This means that as teachers we recognize that people are different in many visible and invisible ways and by understanding, valuing and managing these differences effectively, our colleagues and learners will benefit. In ELT, equal opportunity and diversity are strongly interconnected: we need both (Valente, 2009, p. 7).

Bearing this in mind, providing equal opportunities for learners becomes the teacher’s aim during a lesson and a whole school year in a safe classroom environment. Disabilities, sexual orientations, socio-economic background, race or family background are characteristics that should not make a difference among students and should not separate them. We as teachers have the power to control and direct our students’ attitudes toward learning and classmates.

The teacher must never lose control of the classroom and students. Good classroom organization will help the teacher keep students under control. Students need to know their teacher’s expectations towards them. Group and personal feedback are also important for students to know about their strengths and weaknesses.

Students’ motivation plays also an important role in a mixed-ability class. Different reasons move students to join an English class. They bring their own beliefs and expectations. Some may see learning a new language as something difficult to achieve while others may find it easy and enjoyable. It is the teacher’s role to help students create a positive attitude toward the foreign language. A variety of good teaching-learning strategies will always be helpful. There are strategies that “can turn a struggle into a challenging trial” (Hess, 2001, p. 7). Every teacher can have a lesson that goes bad but we can always fix it and turn it into an exciting one through the use of adequate strategies.

Working with mixed-ability students will never be boring for teachers because it forces them to think and create new ways to approach their students and to create knowledge.

2.4 Adaptation of materials in a mixed-ability class
The success of a mixed-ability classroom greatly depends on the variety of materials the teacher has prepared in order to motivate, encourage and stimulate students’ learning. Instructional resources include textbooks, diaries, journals, posters, flashcards, worksheets, videos, audios, and online platforms. This material must be divided into levels of difficulty to be used either by weaker and stronger students. Janney and Snell (2004) cited in (Westwood, Inclusive and Adaptive Teaching Meeting the challenge of diversity in the classroom, 2013) recommend that “teachers build up large collections of pictures related to all curriculum topics”. (p.57). The use of pictures is always stimulating for visual and nonvisual learners. They can be used to introduce a new topic, to prompt conversations, to predict content, to keep their attention and avoid distraction.

The impact of visual aids on learners is immediate. Not only they bring variety to the classroom, encourage participation and improve learning, they also help students understand what the unit or lesson is going to be about and what objectives will be developed.

Another imperative issue is the adequate use of visuals. Images must be appropriate and always according to students’ age. They must be clear because they help students associate information such as language-picture, vocabulary-picture, content-picture or objective-picture. The use of precise visual aids save time on explanations, increase retention, provide extra information and stimulate critical thinking. Images can also motivate students for writing. Visual and kinesthetic learners will highly benefit from the use of visual aids. There are numerous ways an image, a flash card, a video, a word card or a real item can be used in class. Manipulating the item will also help the students feel more confident with the language.

Providing each learner in a mixed-ability class with materials tailor-made to suit their individual level is not a practical option: it would require far too much preparation and would be extremely difficult to manage. Instead, one of the ways that we can provide multi-level input is by preparing differentiated language-learning activities which share the same common core. Differentiated materials do not require excessive amounts of preparation; in any case, the additional time required in the preparation phase is often repaid in terms of time saved in the classroom. (Dudley & Osváth, 2016)

Apart from that, there are a number of strategies, tips, methodologies, and techniques that can be used by teachers to support their students and help them accomplish their academic achievement. What some experts suggest is “differentiation”.

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At its most basic level, differentiating instruction means “shaking up” what goes on in the classroom so that students have multiple options for taking in information, making sense of ideas, and expressing what they learn. In other words, a differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas, and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively. (Tomlinson, 1995, p. 1)

This differentiation integrates student-centered methods that motivate pupils to learning and give them meaningful learning experiences. Some of these methods include: small group work with different tasks to individuals, individual or pair presentations, brainstorming to think creatively, recording videos, pair and group discussions, rotate activities around the classroom, individual, pair or small group experiments, role-plays, in-class projects, personal foldables, problem-solving situations, games, use of portfolios, homework, and competitions.

Creating different tasks for different levels of students brings variety to the class. Different tasks will keep students busy and focused. “Activities should be adapted to the pace accepted by the class” (Valentic, 2005, p. 3). The teacher should use time wisely and set a limit for each one of the activities. They shouldn’t go too fast or too slow because it may either block students’ learning or cause frustration. Some useful ideas to keep students curious and interested in the lesson are: use of catchy flashcards, interesting online games, problem-solving activities and role-plays.

Mixed-ability and integration in the CLIL classroom are concepts that cannot be treated separately. Students with different needs, interests or L2 proficiency level must play an active role in class but always attending to their diverse learning styles and without exclusion. Collaboration and cooperation will keep students involved and actively participating in class.

2.5 Continuous professional development and the ADiBE project
In mixed-ability classes, it is usually hard for teachers to find the adequate material, methodology or learning activity to suit their students’ needs. Not all classes have the same problems and not all students learn in the same way.

What becomes imperative is the involvement of content and language teachers into continuous professional development plans. Teachers need to have adequate training that will provide them with enough confidence and sufficient knowledge to overcome any difficult or challenging situation their classes may face. To further empower them, they should be equipped
with the relevant knowledge to better their understanding of the different abilities and needs of their students (Boaler, 2008). This knowledge will help teachers create the perfect learning environment for their pupils through the use of effective strategies and valid planning which will give their students meaningful and memorable learning experiences.

Increasingly it is appreciated that teaching, like other professions, is a “learning” occupation in which the practitioners need to have opportunities throughout their careers for periodically updating their knowledge, skills and capabilities. The classroom and school, it is realized, are relatively small worlds which do not in themselves provide opportunities for teachers to share in the broader educational community’s growing and constantly changing body of knowledge and experience of teaching. (World Education Report, 1998)

The University of Jaén started in September 2018 a project called “Attention to Diversity in Bilingual Education” (ADiBE). This project aims to fill a much-needed niche affecting catering to diversity within CLIL programs across Europe and to work towards an inclusive, innovative, and reflective society by offering research-based evidence and concrete resources to improve language learning and make bilingual education a more inclusive reality for all (ADiBE, 2018).

The effect of teachers’ continuous professional development on their daily practice has high expectations among stakeholders. Teachers expect that their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training will make a difference in their classes. The following concept indicates the importance of teachers’ own everyday learning and research, and formal academic studies. CPD should not only be limited to teachers attending to workshops, seminars or conferences. It goes farther, it is a combination of the previous and their own interest for knowledge and improvement.

Professional development consists of all-natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school, which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives. (Day, 1999, p. 4)
CPD will always be indispensable for teachers who work in a school in a mixed-ability scenario because of changes in curriculum, teaching methodologies, working conditions, students’ level, school approach or cultural aspects. According to the HCPC health & care professions council different types of learning count as CPD activities: Work-based learning, when the professional reflects on experiences at work. Professional activity, when the person acts as a lecturer in a conference. Formal education, when the practitioner is involved in research or formal studies. Self-directed learning, refers to personal training for instance reading articles or literature related to the subject matter.

Teaching is a profession that implies learning, investigation and knowledge. Continuing professional development is a must, and every institution should promote at least twenty hours of high-quality accredited CPD training for teachers per year.

3. METHODOLOGY
The following section of this work is divided into different headings that will let the reader discover the various steps that were taken in order to investigate the problem, analyze the obtained information and provide several ideas or solutions. It will also allow the reader to critically evaluate our work.

3.1 Research design
The present work can be described as a small-scale investigation where the main problem is “teaching in a mixed-ability CLIL class”. It is a Practical research because it is mainly a classroom-centered study. Regarding the source of information, it was obtained from primary research because it extracted the information from teachers’ knowledge, beliefs, and opinions.

The method used for data collection was quasi-experimental because the subjects were not chosen randomly, the study was directed to a specific group of content and language CLIL teachers from Ecuador and Spain. The approach of our work is analytical due to the fact that it involves the evaluation of evidence and information relative to the research work. Moving on to the purpose of our research we can establish it as a heuristic or inductive research because it moves from the particular to the general. It may allow us to create new concepts or principles.
Regarding the form of the data, we can say this work is quantitative research or “hard” research because it is controlled, objective and factual. The statistical, mathematical and numerical analysis of data was made through a controlled survey on 49 individuals, which makes this project statistical research.

To conclude with this part, we have to point out that concerning the time of collection, our study is a cross-sectional research. It took place at a single point in time where data was collected at a specific moment with a selected group of CLIL teachers.

3.2 Sample
In this section we are going to present the people who were involved in this research for measurement. It is important to point out that 49 CLIL teachers were given a survey in which different aspects were covered. In the first part we are going to analyze: age, gender and nationality. Secondly, we are going to examine: grade, type of teacher, administrative situation and teaching experience. Finally, in a third part we are going to describe aspects like: subjects taught in the foreign language, percentage of English used in teaching and teachers’ English level.

The diverse teachers who were interviewed and the fact that they belong to different countries give us important results that show that we face similar problems and work towards same goals.

Let us check the first results that reflect the age, gender and nationality of the participants in a numerical summary that is shown in the diagrams. In the first diagram we can observe that the participants’ ages range from 21 to more than 50 with 63% identified as female, 35% male and 2% reported other gender. The research found out varied participants’ nationalities, having a 50% of Spanish teachers, 40% of Ecuadorian teachers and a 10% distributed among teachers from the USA, Cuba and Ghana.
Chart 1. Breakdown of the overall sample in terms of age of the participants

Chart 2. Breakdown of the overall sample in terms of gender of the participants
Chart 3. Participants’ nationalities

In the second part, grade, type of teacher, administrative situation and teaching experience are analyzed. In chart four we can see that the grades teachers teach vary. 37% teach in primary school, 28% teach in secondary school, an important 31% teach at other places and a 4% are not currently teaching.

![Chart 4. Grade](image)

Regarding the type of teachers surveyed, it is shown that 45% are foreign language teachers, 50% are content teachers, and less than 5% are of other type, mainly teaching assistants.
The results on the administrative situation of our teachers show that 50% are civil servants with a permanent post and a 16% are civil servants with a provisional post. 12% are temporary teachers, 4.08% work in a private school, 4.08% are university professors, 6.12% are indefinite and less than 10% of the teachers are charter school teachers, English teachers or freelancers.
Another analysis in this second part has to do with teaching experience. In the chart we see that 41% of the teachers have from 1 to 10 years of teaching experience, 37% have between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience, 14% have 21 to 30 years of teaching experience, only 4% are over 30 years of teaching experience and 4% have less than one year of experience.

Chart 7. Teaching experience

Chart 8 reports on the question “Are you the coordinator?”, which shows that 72% of the teachers are not coordinators of the area, 18% are coordinators and 10% of them did not provide a valid answer.
Finally, in chart 9, we can see the teaching experience in a bilingual program our teachers have, mainly that only 2% have more than 20 years in the field. 45% have from 1 to 5 years of experience and 18.4% have less than 1 year of teaching in a bilingual program.
Finally, we are now going to refer to important aspects such as: subjects taught in the foreign language, percentage of English used in teaching and teachers’ English level. In chart 10 the amount of subjects taught in the foreign language are: 38% Science, 13% English, 21% Social Science, 10% Math, 5% Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and 13% teach other subjects.

![Subjects Chart](image)

Chart 10. Subjects

The percentage of English used in teaching is shown in chart 11. Only 22.45% of the teachers teach their subjects completely in English, which corresponds to 11 teachers. 12.24% use English 90% of the time. 10.20% use English 80% of the time. 2.04% use English 70% of the time. 4.08% use English 60% of the time. 12.24% use English 50% of the time. 10.20% use English 40% of the time. 14.29% use English 30% of the time and 2.04% never use English.
Last but not least, information about the teachers’ English level will be provided. In the last graph we can see that 8% of the teachers have a C2 (proficient) level of English. 23% have a C1 (advanced) level. 20% have a B2 (upper-intermediate) level. 18% have a B1 (intermediate) level. 21% have an A2 (elementary) level and 10% have an A1 (beginner) level.
3.3 Variables
A few identification (subject) variables have been considered, adapted to fit the features of the three different cohorts who take part in this study: NLA teachers, English teachers, and language assistants. The variables examined are enumerated below:

- Type of school
- Age
- Gender
- Nationality
- Type of teacher
- Administrative situation
- Level of English
- Subjects taught in English
- Overall teaching experience
- Teaching experience in a bilingual school

3.4 Instruments
In this section, we are going to describe the types of instruments we used to collect the necessary information needed to develop our project. We are also going to describe the preparation of the instruments as well as their characteristics.

When planning this MA Dissertation and after a careful study of the different objectives we wanted to achieve, it was decided to use questionnaires since the teachers to be surveyed belonged to different countries and a face-to-face interview was hard to establish. The literature review which was presented before was also a great way to gather and analyze relevant information from different authors. We believe applying questionnaires was the most appropriate measurement tool option because teachers were asked to think critically and analytically about their schools, their peers, their students and most importantly their own practices.

It is important to point out that designing a questionnaire involves asking the right questions in a precise way in order to collect factual data for the research. We are going to start analyzing the three basic steps followed to develop the questionnaire: instrument design, instrument validation, and instrument implementation.
Instrument design: the instrument is the name researchers assign to questionnaires, surveys, tests, diaries, etc. that help them collect, measure and monitor the information for the research. To design the questionnaire, some fundamental steps were followed. The questions are consistent and the objectives clear. Only two or three answer methods were used not to make it too long and boring. This instrument was designed by the members of the Attention to Diversity in Bilingual Education (ADiBE) project, starting in their transnational meeting in Córdoba at the end of January and finishing at the beginning of April (2019).

Instrument validation: validity and reliability of the instrument used are crucial to make the questionnaire consistent and accurate. This validation was done following a two-fold process. First, a group of experts external to the aforementioned ADiBE project who rated it item by item in terms of clarity, precision and relevance, and added information concerning items that they would add, delete, or modify, general appraisal of the questionnaire, and observations and final recommendations. Five experts (three CLIL teachers and two CLIL university researchers/teacher educators) in each of the six participating countries in the project evaluated the survey.

Instrument administration: in our case this will work as the second stage of the validation of the ADiBE teacher questionnaire: the pilot study. Taking into consideration that this is an online Master and the teachers involved were in different countries, the questionnaire was administered online in a digital format.

3.5 Data collection

In this section, we are going to illustrate the process we followed for data collection. We are going to use a timeline chart in which you will observe the sequence of our process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>MONTHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a study protocol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making a list of the needed</td>
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<td>information</td>
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<td>Designing the different parts of</td>
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<tr>
<td>the questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing the questions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 3.6 Data analysis

The data obtained on the surveys has been statistically analyzed employing the SPSS program, version 21.0. For Metaconcern 1 (needs analysis, objectives 1 to 5), descriptive statistics have been used. Therefore, both central tendency (mean, median and mode) and dispersion measures (range, low-high, and standard deviation) have been calculated. In turn, for Metaconcern 2 (within-cohort comparisons, objective 6) several statistical tests have been employed; namely the ANOVA and t-test, with the aim of finding statistically significant differences within groups, bearing in mind the identification variables considered in the study.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding Metaconcern 1 (objectives 1 – 5), this study has allowed us to analyze the teachers’ perspectives on mixed-ability CLIL classes with regard to the six main fields of interest: linguistic and academic skills (objective 1), methodology and types of grouping (objective 2), materials and resources (objective 3), assessment (objective 4), and coordination and development (objective 5).

It is important to mention that, keeping in mind the use of a 1 to 4 Likert scale (1 meaning “Totally disagree”, and 4, “Totally agree”), the average marks in most cases are high. Such is the case in 43 out of 60 items, which shows highly positive results, in general.

With regard to the teachers’ perceptions concerning linguistic and academic skills when coping with diversity in the CLIL classroom, the results show that in most cases (6 out of 10) they have a positive impression. They find it challenging to teach CLIL classes with learners who are diverse in their target language proficiency, and in their academic achievement. They say, they use scaffolding with respect to language and content as a useful technique to cater to diversity in their CLIL classrooms. They also believe, that their communication skills and specialized academic
language are sufficient to cope with diversity in their CLIL classrooms. Teachers’ perceptions are
to some extent less positive (between 3.6 and 3.9) when teaching CLIL and non-CLIL learners who
are diverse in their foreign language proficiency and in their academic achievement. The item with
the lowest average (3.32) has to do with the designing of a CLIL lesson that caters for all students.
On the other hand, the item with the highest average (4.93) is found when teachers agree that they
use scaffolding with respect to content as a useful technique to cater to diversity in their CLIL
classrooms.

In relation to teachers’ perceptions pertaining the methodology and types of grouping
implemented in order to cater for diversity in the CLIL classroom, they are really positive since
most of them have an average above 4. Therefore, all teachers state that when organizing pair and
group work in their CLIL classrooms, they take into account student diversity, and provide more
personalized attention (individual or in smaller groups) to learners who need additional support.
Teachers’ perceptions are also very positive (between 4.60 and 4.67) when asked about classroom
work. They say it is student-centered and based on cooperative learning principles in order to cater
do diversity in CLIL. Teachers are less positive (between 3.8 and 4.3), find preparing CLIL lessons
which are sensitive to students with diverse needs time-consuming, they say CLIL teaching does
not allow enough time to attend to different achievers but 4.1 think they have adequate repertoire
of methods at their disposal to address diversity in their CLIL classrooms. Other teachers’
impressions are positive (between 3.3 and 4.3) say they appeal to multiple intelligences, use task-
/project-based classroom work, use heterogeneous achievement-based groups and teacher-led work
in their classrooms in order to cater to diversity in CLIL. Regarding strategies (between 3.7 and
4.4) say they use peer mentoring and assistant strategies to support attention to diversity in CLIL,
yet they also set up different types of work spaces to facilitate catering to diversity in CLIL and they
mention they have access to materials and resources that already take into account different
levels of achievement among students. The lowest average (2.7) is given to teachers stating that at their
schools, they have newcomer classes with a special curriculum for part of the day to support the
integration of these learners. The highest score (5.1) is for teachers who provide more personalized
attention to learners who need additional support.

In addition, teachers’ perceptions vis-à-vis the materials and resources employed in order
to cater for diversity in the CLIL classroom are quite positive since 5 out of 7 items show an average
over 4. Thus, teachers say they normally adapt and create materials to take into account different
levels of achievement among students. They find ICT useful and use multimodal instructional materials (with a combination of visual, textual and/or numeric input) in order to cater to diversity in their CLIL classrooms but they find it difficult to assess diverse students fairly with the established assessment criteria. Still, the items with the lowest average (3.5 and 3.8) point out that teachers find it easy to adapt and create materials for an academically diverse student group.

Furthermore, teachers’ perceptions regarding assessment in order to cater for diversity in the CLIL classroom are highly positive since 11 out of 11 items show an average over 4. The highest average (4.9) shows that in their final (summative) evaluation teachers attend to diversity while the lowest average (4) is given to teachers who in their final (summative) evaluation, provide different versions of the same exam and allow more time to carry them out in order to cater to diversity. Teachers also state that in their evaluation/assessment, they take into account different levels of achievement among students. In their continuous (formative) evaluation they attend to diversity, provide more detailed guidelines as extra support, more personalized and regular feedback in terms of the different types of achievers, they attune the level of the activities and homework they ask their students to do in class to their level of achievement in order to cater to diversity. It is quite important to mention that teachers say they use grading rubrics which take into account diversity and that they find their students’ performance improves as a result of taking into account attention to diversity. Lastly, teachers say in their final (summative) evaluation, they highlight key words in the exam and adapt its vocabulary to cater to diversity.

With regard to teachers’ perceptions about coordination and development in order to cater for diversity in the CLIL classroom, the results are very optimistic since 12 out of 16 items have an average over 4. Teachers recognize that the support of multi-professional teams (special education needs support staff, psychologists, social workers) is essential to cater to diversity in their CLIL classrooms (4.9). Teachers coordinate/collaborate with their language/content/support colleagues in order to cater to diversity (4.6). Teachers’ opinions are quite important (between 3.9 and 4.6) need further education in linguistic scaffolding techniques, student-centered methodologies, using different classroom organizations, how to design and adapt materials, how to collaborate/coordinate with their colleagues in order to cater to diversity in their CLIL classroom. And also, in how to engage with parents in order to serve all type of learners, how to evaluate their students taking into account diversity and how to critically analyze their own teaching practices. The results are also high when teachers say that at their schools, they encourage
parental support and engagement in order to serve all types of learners (4.5), but they believe that a more adequate multi-tiered support system needs to be set in place at their schools to cater to diversity in CLIL and promote the success of more vulnerable and underserved learners. The lowest average (from 3.2 to 3.9) were given to the statements where teachers find the language assistant has sufficient education to cater to diversity in the CLIL classroom, teachers who considers in their schools, they have a guidance counsellor trained in the needs of diverse learners and their families and teachers who said they are satisfied with the support system which their school currently has in place to cater to diversity in CLIL. Finally, teachers say they need to have access to more materials which allow them to cater to diversity in their CLIL classroom (4.6).

Pertaining the analysis of the difficulties, best practices, and teacher development needs of content and language teachers in relation to bilingual teaching and attention to diversity. Assessment in mixed-ability classes is one of the greatest challenges teachers face. For administrative and academic requirements, students need to have grades that show their academic achievement which is normally measured through tests, exams, and continuous assessment. Some schools prepare differentiated evaluation according to students’ needs. Assessment results will vary because every individual responds to learning in a different way and very often these result will be unfair for most of them. We, teachers, need to find a way to evaluate objectively and keep our students motivated and avoid the frustration low grades often bring.

Continuous assessment is seen as testing “little and often” (Graham, 2019). Assigning students only one big test at the end of a unit or term would be ideal for the more able students but not fair for weak learners. The test becomes the most important testing element and hides all the continuous daily work made by pupils. Tests are also seen as unnatural or unreal because they do not test what the students really need to know in order to use in a real-life situation. Continuous Assessment is more flexible and provides immediate feedback and real onsite practice.

Content and Language teachers in a CLIL program need to be supported by different stakeholders such as school administrators, area coordinators, language assistants, and parents. Teamwork and administrative support are essential for the success of CLIL programs even though sometimes the stakeholders have different perceptions or opinions regarding CLIL implementation in their schools. They see the process from their own particular perspective. This is why continuous meetings, studies, and agreements are pivotal for optimum results.
The implementation of a CLIL program involves continuous professional development plans. This training is central for school administrators, content and language teachers, language assistants, and trainers. The topics may vary and go from curriculum planning to assessment of CLIL, yet no less important a deep study and understanding of CLIL theories and practical training on lesson planning, teaching and learning strategies, multiple intelligences, and learning styles.

Continuous professional training allows teachers to strengthen the skills each one needs to conduct students and themselves to a higher level and to increase the quality of the CLIL pedagogy implemented by teachers. Training and development are vital for any organization. Training expands the person’s knowledge of specific matters. It improves their job performance, gives wider understanding of content, and reinforces their confidence and satisfaction.

Turning now to Metaconcern 2 (objective 7), some statistically significant differences can be detected in terms of the identification variables considered (see 3.3). That is not the case of the variables of gender and type of teacher, which do not yield any significant differences in any of the items.

When analyzing the existing differences with respect to the administrative situation, differences are observed in item 2 (p value of 0.001). No differences are detected in any other item. In addition, it is important to note that the differences are given by the civil servant with a provisional post modality (a post hoc analysis by means of the Turkey test was made, where the p value associated with two-to-two comparisons is 0.001).

Chart 14. Administrative situation
If we analyze the items regarding the teacher’s level of English, there are no statistically significant differences in any item. The same happens when we analyze it regarding the years of experience of the teaching staff and the years of experience in bilingual education.

Regarding whether or not they are bilingual coordinators, significant differences in items 11 and 12 (p. value 0.041 and 0.047, respectively) are detected in section 2. These differences can be observed in the figure. However, in the other items studied, no differences were found.

![Chart 15. Are you the coordinator of the bilingual section in your school?](image)

5. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Last but not least, our master’s dissertation aims to provide CLIL teachers with practical ideas to work with mixed-ability classes.

This part will be divided into different sections that will cover the four language skills developed in every CLIL class which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each skill will be briefly described and a series of practical ideas will be shared. Apart from that, some effective tips and strategies will be specified.

Adapting materials for mixed-ability classes may become a big challenge for teachers. Teaching a class where stronger students always complete activities easily and fast and weaker students struggle to work on them will create stressful situations for both.
One of the purposes of working on this project was to provide teachers with practical ideas to be used in their mixed-ability classes and that will help them improve their teaching, make learning more meaningful, and cater to a diverse range of individual student needs. These ideas were separated into skills and can be adapted according to the content or language needed. Tasks are differentiated but the outcome remains the same. It is important to say that once the teacher knows his students’ levels of proficiency, the planning needs to be prepared in advance. In that way, the teacher will be better organized with the activities or materials for a successful class.

There are different ways the teacher can apply to pair and group students depending on the objective and the kind of task. One way is to pair a fast learner with a slow learner for controlled or limited activities. Stronger ones will help and mentor weak ones along the activities. You may also form groups of fast learners to solve a task or a given situation without the teachers’ help. Groups of slow learners instead will have more time to be monitored and supported by the teacher who will help and explain as necessary. One useful strategy is not to divide the class into groups but assign a particular role or task to every student to make them responsible for their learning. In this way, less able students will put some extra effort and therefore they will learn faster.

The main purpose of teaching English as a foreign language is the development of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, teaching these skills in a mixed-ability class is not free of problems. In the process of acquiring a language, learners will not understand every single word they hear or read and they will always tend to make mistakes when writing or speaking.

The following activities are thought to engage learners in speaking situations, higher-order thinking, collaboration, challenging readings, and personalized activities. They can be adapted to any context or teaching situation.

**Ideas for listening activities**

Listening is the ability to receive, understand and interpret a spoken message. Accurate listening will help the listener interact with the speaker and other language skills will be developed. It is seen as the most difficult skill to be developed perhaps because of the different accents, voices and manners of speaking the listener is exposed to or because the listening material used with the textbooks is far from reality. The following tips are useful before presenting any listening to your students.
- Prepare students for the listening: make sure they understand the vocabulary and language they are going to be using.
- Give clear instructions: weak and strong students must exactly understand what they are expected to do in each of the assigned tasks.
- Explain students that they do not need to understand every single word from the listening but the idea/context/message.
- Present the listening topic before you play it. This anticipation will help learners predict what the answers might be.
- Play the audio twice: explain in advance that they are going to hear the listening twice in order to give weak students an extra opportunity to perform the task successfully. Make pauses as necessary.
- Check the equipment before the class starts to avoid any technical issues.
- Find the appropriate time for the listening. Avoid outside noise or interruptions that can disturb concentration during the listening.
- For more difficult tasks, students can use their notebooks or a piece of paper for note taking.
- Monitor to check that all students are on task.
- Bring the real world to class: try to use movie trailers, songs, interviews, documentaries or comic sketches to show students how the language is managed in real everyday situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLOW LEARNERS</th>
<th>FAST LEARNERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Listen and complete simple vocabulary. Words are previously given by the teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Listen and match questions to answers, parts of sentences/expressions/commands.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Listen and order simple conversations or paragraphs.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Listen and follow simple instructions or commands.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Listen and color the words you hear.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Listen and choose the correct answer from different options.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Listen and infer information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Listen and answer questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Listen and predict what the conversation or story is going to be about.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Listen to the first part of the story and create an ending.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- Listen and circle the number of items you hear.
- Listen and draw the vocabulary words you hear.
- Listen and draw the sequence of the story.
- Listen and draw the part of the story you hear.
- Listen and choose the right answer according to the pictures.
- Listen and number the sequence of events according to pictures or simple sentences.
- Listen and answer yes/no – true/false.
- Listen and write at least five words you recognize.
- Listen and write a question for the passage.
- Listen and answer the questions the teacher prepared for (set A) you.
- Listen to the audio and match situations to speakers.
- Listen and number words or sentences.
- Teacher breaks up a long listening into small chunks. Students listen and draw what they understand from each piece.

- Listen and retell the story or conversation using your own words.
- Listen and complete sentences.
- Listen and take notes of the most relevant information.
- Listen and follow the transcript, find difficult words, discus the meaning of them with your group and report answers.
- Listen to tongue twisters and try to copy them.
- Listen and answer yes or no and give a reason for your answer.
- Listen and write at least four questions related to the passage.
- Listen and answer the questions the teacher prepared for you (set B).
- Listen and try to copy sentences.
- Listen to the audio, meet with your group and discuss possible answers to the teacher’s questions.

**Ideas for speaking activities**

Speaking is essential for human communication. Listening and speaking are inter-related, during interaction speakers become listeners and vice versa. Speaking is the ability to communicate ideas, feelings, perceptions, opinions and intentions successfully. Accurate speaking will help the speaker to be understood by the ones who are listening. Speaking in class can be fun if the selected activities
are used appropriately. The following tips will be of great help before, during or after assigning a speaking task to individual students.

- Give students a few seconds to relax, feel more comfortable and organize their ideas before a presentation, a pair work or answering questions.
- If you see the student is having a hard time trying to find the right words to express his/her thoughts, help by suggesting words or chunks.
- Motivate students to speak as natural as possible.
- Pronunciation of difficult words should be taught through the use of an online dictionary when the teacher is not a native speaker.
- Always teach the use of contracted forms and linking words. Students will sound more natural or native-like speakers.
- Activate students’ prior knowledge so they will have a purpose for speaking.
- Revise structures before speaking tasks.
- Always praise their work to motivate them.
- Try assigning a task where students have to record their voices.
- Ask students to cover their ears and speak all at the same time for a minute. They will feel happy and relaxed because nobody is listening.
- Simple daily repetition of songs, chants, poems, hand-clapping games and prayers are useful to internalize sounds, rhythms and intonations of the target language.
- It is good idea to let students speak without stopping them to correct their mistakes. Try writing down all errors and at the end of the activity make a general feedback.
- Always insist on full answers. Complete sentences make students think on their grammar and sentence structure.
- Keep pasted on the wall a variety of useful classroom language and expressions to be used by students when needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLOW LEARNERS</th>
<th>FAST LEARNERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Explore the picture and name the things you can see.</td>
<td>- Look and say what the people in the picture are doing.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- Work with a partner to practice a conversation from a text (pair weak and strong students).
- Work in a small group to create a short conversation or a simple story and act it out in front of the group. Give them extra time to rehearse.
- Interview a classmate.
- The teacher has different speaking topics and asks the students to choose the one they want to develop.
- Play jeopardy where students can choose the options, they feel more comfortable with.
- Conversation questions managed by the teacher at the beginning of every class.
- Online spinning wheel with simple instructions or easy questions.
- “Find someone who…” with simple questions.
- Students look at flashcards and describe them.
- Record a conversation that students in pairs have prepared.
- Students say three true and two false facts about themselves. The class guesses which are not true.
- Pair students (weak-weak/weak-strong), one describes a simple picture, the other draws.
- Look at the picture and predict what the unit or the story is going to be about.
- Work with a partner to create a conversation on your own.
- Group work to create a longer story to be acted out in front of the class.
- Interview a classmate or a teacher, fill a form and report answers.
- The teacher selects challenging speaking topics for students where they have to defend their opinions.
- Jeopardy with difficult options for strong students.
- Conversation topics to wrap up the unit.
- Conversation pictures where students choose a picture and develop a topic.
- Online spinning wheel with speaking topics.
- “Find someone who…” where students write their own options.
- Explain the meaning of new words.
- Ban use of simple words to force them to use challenging vocabulary.
- Record students’ participation and promote group corrections.
- Watch a video and narrate what you are seeing.
- Students create a story about themselves including three lies. Other students guess which are the lies and give reasons.
- Students work in small groups to create a set of questions for parents to answer.
- For a class project, students can make a fruit salad describing steps.
- Students describe the person they admire.
- Students are given a word and make a sentence with it.
- Teacher places some picture cards in a bag and students pick up three and make a small description of them.
- Students name different types of social media and say which one is their favorite.
- Question of the day: pupils line-up before leaving the classroom and instead of saying goodbye they answer a simple question. It can be also used instead of saying “present” when calling roll.
- Pair students (strong/strong), one memorizes a picture and describes it for the other to write the description.
- Students are given a pair of pictures where they have to find differences.
- Students interview their parents in Spanish and report answers in English.
- Ask the fastest student to “be the teacher” and direct activities.
- Students make a power point with important facts about a person they admire and present it to the class.
- Students are given the beginning of a sentence or situation and complete it.
- Students improvise a conversation using their mobile phones.
- In small groups students make a tv commercial advertising an electronic devise or any interesting item.
- Teacher places verb cards in an envelope, students pick up four and invent a short story using those verbs.
- Students describe their favorite type of social media and give reasons for their choices.
- Students summarize what other groups have said.
- Speaking panel: four students sit together and answer some hypothetical questions made by the class.
Ideas for reading activities

Reading is the ability a person has to understand written messages. It is said that if you read you know how to write. Reading helps increase vocabulary and internalize language as it is a receptive skill. Reading is vital in today’s society, understanding simple instructions in a manual or filling out job applications may become difficult tasks if reading skills have not been developed. It helps you learn and discover new things; it also develops creativity and imagination. The following tips and strategies will help the teacher create a healthy classroom environment for reading.

- Create a reading area in the classroom with colorful books and paced readings for different levels.
- Create a relaxed reading environment, avoiding noise and distractors before starting a reading task.
- Previously, present all the vocabulary you think students need to master for a successful reading activity.
- Show students a short video related to the reading. This will motivate them for work.
- Monitor to provide support in case they need it.
- Relate readings to holidays or celebrations to make them more meaningful.
- Let students re-read the text to clarify understanding.
- Books from the “reading area” can be taken home for the weekend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLOW LEARNERS</th>
<th>FAST LEARNERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Pre-teach new vocabulary.</td>
<td>- Read the story and re-write it using your own words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do pre-during-after reading activities.</td>
<td>- Read the story and re-write it in a different tense or presenting a new character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gap-filling exercise with a given bank of words.</td>
<td>- Read half of the story and write an ending in pairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- If the story is well-known, (for example: Cinderella) show a short video to motivate them for reading.</td>
<td>- Choose new words, find their meaning in the dictionary and make sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Break the story into short paragraphs. Group students to order the story or to draw what they understand from each one.</td>
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- Make silent reading before starting any activity.
- Running dictation: pair students and place a short story on the board. One student reads, memorizes and runs back to tell his partner what to write.
- After reading a text, the teacher writes some questions on the board and students choose which they want to answer.
- Reading corner: distribute simple reading books to individuals. Using a foldable, students illustrate the different parts of the story.
- Read silently and underline the most important parts of each paragraph.
- In small groups students work together to answer questions related to a text.
- Students have to find the person who has a matching vocabulary word card relate to the reading.
- Choose a new word and guess its meaning.
- Write your personal opinion about the text or story.
- Write questions or true/false sentences for the story.
- Act out the story.
- The teacher writes questions and asks students to choose one to be answered.
- Reading corner: students read a book of their preference and report using their own words.
- Students read and underline the most important words in a text and give synonyms for them.
- Students work individually to answer questions and explain the reason of their answers.
- Students’ prior knowledge can be activated through the use of a single picture that represents the reading. Students predict what it is going to be about.
- Students read an article from a newspaper and write a letter to the editor.
- Teacher distributes letters with various mistakes, students read, identify the errors and correct them.
- Students have to find the person who has the second half of a split sentence.
Ideas for writing activities

Writing is a form of communication that lets the writer put ideas, feelings or thoughts on paper. Good writing skills help organize knowledge into accurate paragraphs and give significant opinions. Knowing how to write is crucial for job and academic purposes. The following writing tips will be of great help for teachers and students.

- Provide more than one example of the writing you expect them to develop. Guide them and work together as a team to achieve the goal.
- Monitor to help and support if necessary.
- Be sensitive when correcting mistakes. Feedback should encourage them to continue writing.
- If possible, encourage students to find and correct their own mistakes.
- Ask pupils to decorate their works and display them on the classroom bulletin board.
- Choose familiar topics for writing.
- Use colorful writing templates to increase motivation.
- Use fill in the blank templates to show how the paragraph is organized and to make the writing flow.
- Writing should be done at the end of each unit once students have learned the grammar and vocabulary needed for the task.
- Extra bonus points can be assigned to those students who try harder and push themselves towards excellence.
- Vary writing topics. Try familiar topics, fiction and non-fiction stories, personal opinions, poems etc.

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<th>SLOW LEARNERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Students write the new words in a special section of their notebooks and illustrate their meaning.</td>
<td>- Students create their own stories according to their personal interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assign paragraphs with less word limit.</td>
<td>- Increase the word limit and number of paragraphs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher monitors and corrects mistakes before writing a final draft.</td>
<td>- Give a list of new phrases or expressions to be included in their writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students make their own diaries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Use a vocabulary/grammar foldable to simplify learning
- Students make a portfolio during the school year.
- Create a word puzzle according to the vocabulary learned.
- Individually or in pairs, students create a mini book using vocabulary learned.
- Using a poster, draw a Facebook page and ask students to post their messages.
- Write a WhatsApp message to a friend.
- Use small individual white boards where students can easily write words, sentences, answers, descriptions etc.
- Association: give students a word to make associations E.g., School: teacher-students-classrooms etc. then, they write sentences with each word.
- Use the “hamburger paragraph writing organizer” to start writing a short essay every week.
- Use a parallel text as a model to create their own short paragraph/story/e-mail etc.
- Write a funny story using words from a reading.
- Set time using an online stopwatch to let them write as much as they can about themselves or a given topic.
- Create a riddle or a crossword puzzle related to the contents studied.
- In groups students use a poster to write about a topic and present it to the class.
- Students write their own definitions for some important words.
- Write a tweet about a topic of interest.
- Write an e-mail to an imaginary friend.
- Teacher gives a series of pictures and students write a story (comic strips).
- Association: students associate words and write a short paragraph using them.
- Teacher places pictures of simple everyday objects. Students choose one and write the functioning/usage of the object.
- Give students a long text which they have to summarize.
- Write a short poem using rhyming words.
- Students write about a place they would like to visit in the future.
- Make a meme for a given situation or character.
- Students write a letter to an important person in their community expressing suggestions or complaints.
6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following potential limitations or weaknesses of this study can be specified:

- The restricted number of teachers involved in the survey. This project surveyed 49 teachers: 25 from Spain, 19 from Ecuador and 5 from other nationalities. A higher and equal number of teachers from both counties could have increased the validity of the instrument.

- It was difficult to find CLIL teachers willing to participate in the survey. Most of my classmates from the master did not want to take part in it and in my country it was a little hard to find real CLIL teachers.

- Absence of triangulation. The use of more than one method to collect data is always convenient to guarantee the validity of the research. Fortunately, this pilot study is part of a whole validation process of this tool that also consisted of a double-fold evaluation process (or “expert ratings approach”) led by the ADiBE research team. The joint consideration of both stages overcomes this limitation.

- Not enough studies about mixed-ability CLIL classes. That is the reason why not too many references were included in the literature review.

- This research must be combined with observing classes, reviewing teachers’ materials, interviewing teachers and administrators or seeing students perform in real situations. This particularly study is only based on teachers’ perspectives, opinions, beliefs, and experiences. Nonetheless, good news must also be mentioned in this respect as the ADiBE team is doing all this at the time of writing (once the questionnaires have been fully validated, partly thanks to this investigation, which serves as the pilot study of the teacher survey, as was mentioned at the beginning).

7. LINES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It would be important to consider some of the following ideas for future research.

- Apply the research in different contexts. For example, only with primary school teachers or with secondary school teachers.

- Make a comparison between private and public schools.
- Incorporate different types of triangulation to make it more reliable.
- Carry out a longitudinal study that would help analyze good teaching practices and compare satisfaction levels at the beginning and end of a school year.

Luckily, all these suggestions have just been implemented and their results are being analyzed at the moment, or will be soon when the creation of a series of materials catering for different levels of ability is finished, all by means of the European ADiBE project (www.adibeproject.com).

8. CONCLUSION
Every practitioner at a certain point will be faced with the challenge of teaching a class with students of different levels. A group of this type must be organized in a way that neither the teacher nor the students feel that they are wasting their time waiting for others to finish activities or feel frustrated for not accomplishing the tasks on time.

Organizing the classroom, making an effective lesson plan and choosing the appropriate activities for our diverse learners are responsibilities that cannot be taken lightly. To achieve this it is essential to have a suitable variety of materials at hand. These materials have to be prepared in advance according to the contents or vocabulary to be covered in class.

Teaching in a mixed-ability CLIL class can be demanding but gratifying at the same time. Since this kind of classes will always be part of our schools, teachers’ attitudes play a significant role when choosing the right strategies to work with diverse learners. Teachers’ sensitiveness to the different needs and abilities students have in a mixed-ability classroom will keep them attentive and focused on the goal.

I encourage teachers to use the various activities proposed here and experiment with them in their classrooms. I am convinced that they would be useful and would help improve teachers’ practices. Teaching a second or foreign language in a mixed-ability setting is challenging, but teachers’ creativity can make students’ learning more memorable and can make a difference in teaching.
REFERENCES

2u. (2019). Learning Styles - All Students are Created Equally (And Differently.). TEACH. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.


## APPENDICES

### Estadísticos

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1. I find it challenging to teach CLIL classes with learners who are diverse in their target language proficiency.

2. I find it challenging to teach CLIL classes with learners who are diverse in their academic achievement.

3. I find it equally challenging to teach CLIL and non-CLIL learners who are diverse in their foreign language proficiency.

4. I find it equally challenging to teach CLIL and non-CLIL learners who are diverse in their academic achievement.

5. I use scaffolding with respect to language as a useful technique to cater to diversity in my CLIL classroom.

6. I use scaffolding with respect to content as a useful technique to cater to diversity in my CLIL classroom.

7. I cover parts or the whole of a CLIL lesson in the L1 as a useful technique to cater to diversity in my CLIL classroom.

8. My communication skills in the target language are sufficient to cope with diversity in my CLIL classroom.

9. My specialized academic language is sufficient to cope with diversity in my CLIL classroom.

10. I find it easy to design a CLIL lesson that caters for all students.

11. I find preparing CLIL lessons which are sensitive to students with diverse needs time-consuming.

12. In my case, CLIL teaching does not allow enough time to attend to different achievers.

13. I have an adequate repertoire of methods at my disposal to address diversity in my CLIL classroom.

14. My classroom work is student-centered in order to cater to diversity in CLIL.

15. I base classroom work on cooperative learning principles in order to cater to diversity in CLIL.

16. I appeal to multiple intelligences in my classroom work in order to cater to diversity in CLIL.

17. I use task-/project-based classroom work in order to cater to diversity in CLIL.

18. My classroom work is teacher-led in order to cater to diversity in CLIL.

19. I use heterogeneous achievement-based groups in my CLIL class in order to cater to diversity.

20. When organizing pair work in my CLIL classroom, I take into account student diversity.

21. When organizing group work in my CLIL classroom, I take into account student diversity.

22. I provide more personalized attention (individual or in smaller groups) to learners who need additional support.
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<td><strong>26.</strong> I have access to materials and resources that already take into account different levels of achievement among students.</td>
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<td><strong>29.</strong> I find it easy to adapt materials for an academically diverse student group.</td>
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<td><strong>30.</strong> I find it easy to create materials for an academically diverse student group.</td>
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<td><strong>31.</strong> I find ICT useful in order to cater to diversity in my CLIL classroom.</td>
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<td><strong>32.</strong> I use multimodal instructional materials (with a combination of visual, textual, and/or numeric input) to cater to diversity in my CLIL classroom.</td>
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<td><strong>33.</strong> It is difficult to assess diverse students fairly with the established assessment criteria.</td>
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<td><strong>34.</strong> In my evaluation/assessment, I take into account different levels of achievement among students.</td>
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<td><strong>37.</strong> I use grading rubrics which take into account diversity in my CLIL classroom.</td>
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<td><strong>38.</strong> I find that my students’ performance improves as a result of taking into account attention to diversity.</td>
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<td><strong>39.</strong> In my continuous (formative) evaluation I provide more detailed guidelines as extra support to cater to diversity.</td>
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<td><strong>40.</strong> In my continuous (formative) evaluation I provide more personalized and regular feedback in terms of the different types of achievers.</td>
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<td><strong>41.</strong> In my continuous (formative) evaluation I attune the level of the activities I ask my students to do in class to their level of achievement.</td>
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<td>4,4048</td>
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<td><strong>42.</strong> In my continuous (formative) evaluation I attune the level of the homework I assign to my students to their level of achievement.</td>
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<td><strong>43.</strong> In my final (summative) evaluation, I highlight key words in the exam and adapt its vocabulary to cater to diversity.</td>
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<td><strong>44.</strong> In my final (summative) evaluation, I provide different versions of the same exam and allow more time to carry it out in order to cater to diversity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. I coordinate/collaborate with my language/content/support colleagues in order to cater to diversity.</td>
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<td>46. I find the support of multi-professional teams (special education needs support staff, psychologists, social workers) essential to cater to diversity in my CLIL classroom.</td>
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<td>48. At my school, we have a guidance counsellor trained in the needs of diverse learners and their families.</td>
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<td>51. I believe that a more adequate multi-tiered support system needs to be set in place at my school to cater to diversity in CLIL and promote the success of more vulnerable and underserved learners.</td>
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