Trabajo Fin de Grado

The Pendulum Effect in CLIL Research: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward

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Abstract

This dissertation documents the appearance of the so-called “pendulum effect” for the first time in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) research. It begins by defining and characterizing this approach to language teaching and then goes on to present its chief assets and pitfalls. The main research conducted hereto on the effects of CLIL is subsequently canvassed, following a sieve-like structure and proceeding from the continental to the national and regional levels. The swings of the pendulum in CLIL research are then expounded on by critically summarizing both the positive and negative outlooks which have been harboured. A series of original suggestions, based on the lessons which prior investigations have allowed us to learn, are finally set forth on how to bring the pendulum to a standstill in order to continue pushing the CLIL research agenda forward.

Keywords: CLIL, research, debate, optimistic and pessimistic outlooks, pendulum effect, lacunae.

1. Introduction

The last two decades have been marked by the constant growth of a teaching approach in the area of languages in Europe. This approach has emerged as a result of a multicultural society which makes European citizens have the necessity of knowing their mother tongue and two other European languages, in order to reinforce our continent’s levels of multilingualism.

This approach is known as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in English, AICLE (Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras) in Spanish or EMILE (l’Enseignement d’une Matière par l’Intégration d’une Langue Étrangère) in French, and it has had an exponential uptake across the whole of Europe in the past two decades. Its rapid spread has been accompanied by increased attention and intense controversy in its characterization and research outcomes. In an initial phase of CLIL implementation and research, studies supporting it and highlighting its advantages and optimistic results proliferated (cf., for instance, Lorenzo et al. 2009). However, in the past half a decade, increasingly negative outlooks have begun to be harboured on CLIL (cf., most prominently, Bruton, 2011, 2012, 2013). Hence, we are currently living, for the first time, what some scholars (Pérez Cañado, in press) have termed “the pendulum effect” in CLIL research. Two clear-cut camps can thus be identified at present vis-à-vis the effects of CLIL on language learning: exceedingly positive outlooks and overly pessimistic views. In order to ensure the CLIL agenda...
continues to advance adequately, it is our firm belief that this pendulum needs to be brought to a standstill via future research which is balanced, disinterested, and methodologically sound.

This is precisely the aim of the present dissertation: to canvass the current CLIL research scenario by characterizing the two sides of the pendulum which can at present be identified and to provide new ways forward in order to stop the so-called pendulum effect. In doing so, this dissertation will be structured into seven chief sections. The first one will justify the reasons for choosing this topic, underscoring its relevance to continue pushing the CLIL agenda forward. The approach object of study – CLIL – will then be examined in depth, outlining its characteristics, advantages and disadvantages. After that, the CLIL research panorama will be summarized, following a sieve-like structure with an increasing level of specificity (Europe, Spain, and Andalusia, our specific context). Subsequently, a synopsis of the optimistic and pessimistic outlooks on CLIL research will be presented, commenting on their features and outcomes. And, finally, we will offer an innovative proposal for attaining a balanced perspective on CLIL and suggest new ways forward for future research on the topic. This dissertation will finish by foregrounding the most outstanding conclusions at which our overview of CLIL research has allowed us to arrive.

2. Justification

The importance of CLIL within the current language teaching scenario is uncontested. Numerous authors testify to this rapid and widespread adoption of CLIL in the European arena (Marsh, 2002; Coonan, 2005; Dalton-Puffer & Nikula, 2006; Smit, 2007; Coyle et al., 2010), assimilating it to a veritable “explosion of interest” (Coyle, 2006: 2). In the recent specialized literature, extremely high hopes have been pinned on CLIL. Indeed, it has been heralded as “the potential lynchpin to counter Europe’s deficient language standards” (Pérez Cañado & Ráez Padilla, 2015: 1), as “a major step forward” (Tobin & Abello-Contesse, 2013: 224), or as the “ultimate opportunity to practice and improve a foreign language” (Pérez-Vidal, 2013: 59).

If, as certain authors have maintained (Hughes, 2010), CLIL is expected to come to fruition in 20 years and in most European contexts (including our immediate one, Andalusia) it has been running for approximately ten, we have just reached what Marsh (2002: 185) terms “the watershed moment” of CLIL. It is thus the perfect time to stop and do some much-needed stocktaking in order to determine whether it is working
and whether all the effort, money, and commitment which have been put into the CLIL enterprise by the chief stakeholders have paid off.

This is precisely the aim of the present dissertation: to carry out an updated review of the research conducted into the effects of CLIL in our continent, country, and region, documenting the brand-new appearance of the so-called “pendulum effect” within it. In order to pave the way for a future research agenda, it will also provide an original account of the chief ways forwards for future CLIL investigation which could help bring the pendulum to a standstill and guarantee a success-prone implementation of this approach.

In order to attain these goals, let us begin by framing the dissertation against the broader backdrop of CLIL characterization and general research.

3. CLIL

3.1. Definition

In order to understand the object of our study, defining CLIL becomes a necessary starting point. As its name suggests, Content and Language Integrated Learning is “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (Coyle et al., 2010: 1).

What this definition entails is simple: two different objectives can be clearly identified in the classroom. We learn a second or foreign language through the content of a different subject (or the other way around, we learn the content of a subject like Science or Arts by means of a second or foreign language). That is why it is said that students learn the language naturally, as Marsh (2000: 6) highlights, because “they soon forget about the language and only focus on the learning topic”, with the result of learning the language in a natural way.

And this dual role of both content and language has been understood in several ways. According to Ting (2010: 3), “CLIL advocates a 50: 50 / Content: Language CLIL-equilibrium”, although this task is difficult to achieve, as has been demonstrated in different CLIL classrooms. In contrast, Marsh (2002) thinks that this dual role always has to be present in CLIL instruction, although the balance is disproportionate (even being 90: 10 / Content: Language). And Järvinen believes that the subject matter has to be used at least 20% of the time.

Moreover, as we can see in the previous definition of CLIL, it mentions an “additional” language. With “additional” it does not refer just to the second language, but to any language different from the mother tongue, including the second language,
but also foreign or minority languages. Nevertheless, English is unquestionably the hegemonic language of instruction in CLIL programmes across Europe. The difference between this approach and any other bilingual education approach is its “planned pedagogic integration of contextualized content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching and learning practice” (Coyle et al., 2010: 6).

It was a group of different experts (researchers, educational administrators, or practitioners) who coined it and, since then, it has been seen as a “pragmatic European solution to a European need” (Marsh, 2002: 11) and has been supported by the Council of Europe and the European Commission. CLIL arises as a solution different to prior bilingual or immersion education programmes. The European Union wanted to upgrade the language standards of European citizens, and that is why this method emerges as the best option for Europeans to learn foreign languages.

Instead of having a unique concept of CLIL, we find that it has several interpretations. Thus, the term CLIL “is not clearly defined when compared with other approaches that integrate content and language teaching for L2 learning” (Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter, 2013: 2). That is why it is usually considered an “umbrella” concept. Mehisto (2008: 12) considers it encompasses such different educational approaches as partial, total, two-way or double immersion, local or international projects, student exchanges, or work-study abroad; that is to say, it does not take place just in school contexts. However, all these different environments have to include, of course, the additional language. Coyle (2010: vii) states that “there are no set formula and methods for CLIL” and that “we know that there is neither one model which suits all CLIL contexts nor one approach to integrating content and language teaching”.

In order to delve deeper into Content and Language Integrated Learning, we also have to consider its characteristics, apart from the circumstances surrounding this approach, such as the teacher and the students, the goals, or the teaching materials. Let us proceed to outline and compare these traits with those of immersion programmes.

3.2. Characterization

In line with CLIL’s dual-focused nature, it is important to highlight that this is one of its innovative characteristics that distinguish it from other methods. As was mentioned before (cf. Definition of CLIL, page 5), the difference between CLIL and any other bilingual approach is its “planned pedagogic integration of contextualized content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching and learning practice” (Coyle et al., 2010: 6). Let us examine each of these aspects in greater detail.
To start with, language is considered as a means of communication in this method, something which should be used spontaneously. That is why it is so relevant to use it in real-life situations. An important thing to take into account is that the chief language of instruction which predominated in Europe for content teaching is English, whereas in immersion programmes there is a wider variety of languages. This is a bit contradictory, as we know that the term “additional” language (cf. Definition of CLIL, page 4) includes a second, a foreign or a minority (or regional) language.

Apart from this, regarding the language goal in immersion programmes, the objective is to achieve a native-like proficiency in the students, whereas that of CLIL does not normally go so far. A good example is the BAC (Basque Autonomous Community), where students ending secondary education need to have a C1/C2 level of Basque, but they are required to have just a B1 level of English. However, as with any rule, there are exceptions. Várkuti (2010: 68) claims that “bilingual schools in Hungary that use the CLIL approach are expected to produce ideal balanced bilinguals”.

The second part of this “dual-focused education” is content. Thus, it is a new way of studying the different subjects which have nothing to do with the additional language. What we achieve is that the student learns terminology which is specific of that subject (Pérez Cañado, 2013: 17), something that would not happen if they take the typical language class.

Regarding the way of teaching, CLIL is an innovative method which includes new pedagogical practices and methodologies. It emphasizes the importance of real-life situations, including the cooperation of all the learners, and favours student-centred (vs. teacher-fronted) learning. And it can be used at any level of the education (Pérez Cañado, 2013: 17).

The role of the teacher is determining too. In line with the foregoing, they now act as facilitators, as the lessons are learner-centred. Teachers need to be proficient in the additional language, at the same time as they master the content subject; that is, they require an enhanced preparation. The majority of teachers in immersion programmes are native speakers with an adequate university preparation for a programme like this. This does not happen with CLIL. Teachers need to be trained in the different subjects and their methodology, although European universities are being prepared for the future with some measures that Lasagabaster (2010: 371) mentions: “promoting the mobility of citizens, designing joint study programmes, establishing networks, exchanging information, or teaching the languages of the European Union”. The negative part for
teachers who are not used to CLIL is that they are influenced by the way they learnt the additional language (mainly English), and this can be a problem when teaching it, since making the necessary paradigm shift towards student-centredness can sometimes be a tall order.

With respect to the learning conditions, by using CLIL we avoid that forced learning in which the student did not experiment the language, but was just thinking about not making mistakes, as it promotes real communication, as well as the negotiation of meaning between the learners and the teacher. As Pérez Cañado (2013: 17) points out, “CLIL creates the conditions for naturalistic, implicit or incidental language learning, as it is based on acquisition”. Precisely Pérez Cañado (2013: 17) reminds us that CLIL provides cognitive engagement, developing a “wider range of skills: not only communicative ones, but also problem-solving, risk-taking, pragmatic and interpersonal abilities”.

It is also important to underscore that CLIL has been considered an egalitarian method, without paying attention to the personal or economic situation of students, as everyone has the opportunity to participate and learn. That is to say, there is no discrimination. This is rather different from what happened in the past, when learning an additional language was related to private schools and to the elite society. However, Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter (2013: 7-8) remind us that:

Such claims ignore European immersion programs that use a minority language as the language of instruction for all and any speakers of the majority language. For example, in the Basque Autonomous Community, where the main language of instruction can be either Basque or Spanish, more than 90 per cent of school children have Basque as a language of instruction even though the percentage of Basque speakers in the region is approximately 30 per cent. These programs are open to the whole school population, and schools teaching through Basque (which is an L2 for a large number of students) serve children from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

However, CLIL is starting to be considered elitist in the case of immigrant students. While these learners tend to participate and to take an active part in immersion programmes, they are not usually enrolled in CLIL programmes. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010: 372-3) give one example: “in the BAC, immigrant students have not been able to take part in experimental CLIL programmes implemented in some schools and are therefore excluded from these experiences and their purported benefits”. The reason of this problem is that immigrant students have to take two different exams, which is
more difficult for them: the one of the regional language, Basque, and the English test. Most of them are not able to acquire the appropriate level of competence in the regional language and, consequently, do not have the same opportunities as the rest of the students. Nevertheless, considering all opinions, there is no theoretical basis for affirming that CLIL is a less elitist method than immersion.

Even so, it is also true that CLIL encourages intercultural communicative competence among the students. This approach seeks to increase learners’ knowledge about the international cultures surrounding them, developing different communicative skills (Pérez Cañado, 2013: 18). As a consequence, CLIL makes the learners finish their education with a greater knowledge of the world and of the language used to communicate with any European citizen. The result of this is an increase in their employment opportunities, with greater mobility in this “new” Europe based on integration.

That is why motivation is so important here. Learners become involved in this dual-focused education, and their interest increases as they see the usefulness of language by means of real-life situations. The consequence of this is their heightened confidence.

The starting age of the learners is another circumstance to take into consideration. While we find an early starting age on the part of students in immersion programmes, we see some resemblance between CLIL and the late immersion programmes implemented in secondary education in Canada, as pointed out by Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010).

As regards the teaching materials of both methods, on the one hand, CLIL sometimes needs a pedagogical adaptation for the learner, particularly in initial stages, so that the materials used by the teachers tend to be abridged or adapted versions. Teachers usually “devise their own instructional methods, design their own material, and highlight the role of language” (Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter, 2013: 11). On the other hand, the teaching materials of immersion programmes are authentic ones prepared for native speakers.

Finally, the last circumstance which is worthy of mention is the difference between the research on CLIL and that on immersion programmes. As we know, CLIL is a relatively novel approach, and there is not much information about it. We could say that it is in its initial stages, that it is in some way experimental, and we need more research. On the contrary, there is a substantial body of empirical data on immersion
programmes, including their different effects, their characteristics, or their positive and negative points.

Apart from the different characteristics that CLIL presents, some advantages and disadvantages can be found in the approach, which can serve to have a general overview of CLIL strengths and weaknesses that still have to be addressed. It is to these assets and pitfalls that we now turn.

3.3. Advantages and disadvantages

CLIL appears to have a considerable number of advantages, but it has its weak points as well. We are going to focus on both, the advantages and disadvantages of CLIL, basing ourselves on Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter (2013).

On the one hand, we can find three prominent assets associated to this method: its spread, its research and the insertion of second or foreign languages in the school curriculum.

First of all, the spread of CLIL has been outstanding. Europe’s wish and objective of having a plurilingual society (able to speak their mother tongue and two other European languages) has made CLIL the centre of attention and interest. Their aim is the integration of the European Union. As Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter (2013: 13-14) mention, “providing students with enhanced opportunities in school to acquire competence in additional languages will better prepare them for globalization, whether they are educated in the European community or in communities elsewhere”.

Consequently, we find that there has been an increase in the research on language learning, but particularly on integrating the learning of content and language. That is, learning languages in the school context, but developing the students’ skills (above all, the communicative ones) in real-life situations and by means of content subjects.

Finally, the third notable advantage is the fact that CLIL has advanced and expanded considerably across Europe (and in the rest of the world as well), which has resulted in the insertion of second or foreign languages in the school curricula. CLIL combines the teaching of the additional language with the instruction of a subject (or some subjects). As Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter (2013: 14) highlight, “CLIL programs provide more hours of contact with the L2/foreign language, and CLIL has made learning an L2/foreign language in school more important throughout Europe and beyond”.

On the other hand, there are three main weak points of CLIL that it is necessary to mention: the bandwagon effect, the shortage of research and the lack of conceptual clarity.

In the first place, we find what is known as the bandwagon effect (Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter, 2013: 14). This has to do with the fact of CLIL being viewed as a perfect method with very few problems (or even none). As it is a more or less recent approach, more investigation is needed in order to cover the different deficiencies that may appear in its implementation. In this way, more research into the possible problems of CLIL will allow us to identify them clearly, as well as to address them.

This connects to the second disadvantage, the shortage of research. Although it is thought that this type of learning (integrating language and content) in which the contact with the additional language is higher increases the learner’s motivation, we might find that it is the opposite that happens. For instance, in lower levels, the student can feel a lack of self-confidence when having to talk or read (that is, to be able to communicate) in a language (s)he does not know. However, these are just assumptions, as we do not have empirical data to confirm them yet. Nonetheless, because of the enormous interest that CLIL has generated, the research on it is increasing in order to fill in its gaps (Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter, 2013: 14-5). Another of these lacunae is the lack of knowledge (and research) about the study of the content subject. We do not know if students learn it better in their mother tongue or in the additional language. It could happen that it is harder for them to understand the content of the subject in the other language.

Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter (2013:15) affirm that “research on CLIL has been conducted by ESL/EFL scholars who have compared CLIL and non-CLIL groups of learners and reported higher achievement in English for CLIL learners”, but, again, as there is not enough investigation, the reasons are unknown. It seems that the cause could be the greater contact with the language in CLIL programmes through the content subject, although we do not know what could happen if we increase the number of hours we dedicate to the language, but with the usual language classes (that is, without integrating language and content).

Consequently, the scarcity of research on CLIL is notorious, as there are more gaps than certainties. We need clearer investigations and descriptions on the different formats of CLIL. And this leads us to the last disadvantage of CLIL, the lack of conceptual clarity. The problem here is the number of versions of CLIL, or the number
of definitions or formats. It can be observed that one of the main aims of CLIL is to be differentiated from the rest of CBI (Content Based Instruction) programmes, and the result of this is the exaggerated amount of distinct versions (Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter, 2013: 15-6).

The characteristics, practices and methodology of one version are not likely to be the same as those of another version, and here is where clarity is needed. CLIL advocates defend the various formats of the programme, while those who are critical with CLIL ask for the polishing of one definition, including the different formats as part of it. It is time and research that will provide the responses needed for the different questions.

Let us now examine the research that we do have on the effects of CLIL, proceeding from the more general European context, to the more specific one of Spain, to the more concrete one of Andalusia.

4. Research on CLIL

4.1. Europe

The European Union is characterized by having a plurality of languages. That is why they want their citizens to be able to communicate in their mother tongue and two other European languages. That is to say, they want the European people to be plurilingual.

Madrid Fernández (2006: 181) summarizes some actions which should be carried out by both European institutions and citizens:

It is also important to combat certain misconceptions about language learning and plurilingualism and increase the forms in which languages are present in the media, government services, public spaces, television programmes, the cinema, etc. It would be necessary to show plurilingual notices in official buildings, to use texts and announcements in stations and shopping centers, or include news reports on the radio and TV in several languages, to distribute and show movies in the original version, with subtitles in the different regional languages and include modern languages in the professional profile of civil servants, policemen and the employees who work in contact with people of different linguistic varieties (languages) (e.g.: taxi drivers, clerks, waiters, shop keepers, etc.).

Schools and teachers cannot be forgotten, as they also have to be aware of the importance of bilingualism and plurilingualism, making learners conscious as well. As Madrid Fernández (2006: 181) states, “The Council of Europe, through Beacco and
Byram’s publication (2003), recommends a variety of principles, language curricula, teaching methods and assessment techniques”.

CLIL is the chosen method to achieve a bilingual or plurilingual Europe. North American and French immersion and bilingual education programmes, as well as European international schools, are considered the predecessors of this approach. CLIL was launched in 1996 by UNICOM, the European Platform for Dutch education and the University of Jyväskyla (Finland), although the term was coined in 1994. It is noticeable that since then it has not stopped growing, being the centre of many investigations. The widespread implementation of CLIL has become a fact over the past two decades.

In our continent, the main investigations revolve around the L1, the acquisition of the additional language, the content subject and the evaluation of dual focused education which is made by teachers and students. Pérez Cañado (2012: 319) points out that “CLIL practice has spread rapidly in the past 10 years, currently spanning the continent from North (Finland) to South (Italy), and from East (Bulgaria) to West (Spain)”. In 2006, CLIL was being implemented in 30 European countries, be it as part of the education or as pilot studies, according to the Eurydice survey CLIL at School in Europe. Portugal, Greece, Denmark, Cyprus, Iceland and Liechtenstein were the exception.

Looking in depth at CLIL’s characteristics in Europe, the first thing that is identified is the amount of existing approaches of this method in the different countries, which are due to the variety of educational backgrounds characteristic of each country (apart from other reasons). Pérez Cañado (2012: 319) reminds us that Coyle in 2007 documented “216 different types of CLIL programs based on such variables as compulsory status, intensity, age of onset, starting linguistic level, or duration”. Nevertheless, some common features can be found in CLIL implementation in Europe.

The most usual characteristics are the appearance of the target language in the curriculum and the fact that a number of content subjects have to be taught in this language for at least four years. It is usual as well to find the foreign language combined with a regional one. English tends to be this target language, although we can find French, Spanish and German too. Trilingual CLIL programmes can be identified in some parts of Spain, Austria or the Netherlands, among others.

Some countries do not have conditions or admission criteria for CLIL, like Germany or Spain (also in the latter case due to its de-centralized system), while others do, such as Bulgaria (it considers the students’ subject knowledge), France (where the
target language level is taken into account) or the Netherlands (where both things are considered). In contrast to Spain, Austria and France present a centralized system.

The most typical subjects to be taught through CLIL are History, Science, Geography and Social Sciences and the materials tend to be native-like ones, either authentic or originally designed ones. The evaluation of CLIL implementation in schools is almost non-existent. This same lack of research can be ascertained in Higher Education, which entails still embryonic investigation into the different CLIL approaches in the universities of Europe. Some cases can, however, be found in Austria, Italy, Germany, Poland, Belgium, or Spain.

If we focus on specific studies carried out in different European countries, there are several seminal ones worthy of mention. For example, Merisuo-Storm (2006, 2007), in Finland, compared the L1 literacy skills of CLIL and non-CLIL students at the beginning of Primary Education, with no significant differences in the results. However, it is true that a more positive attitude was observed in the CLIL group. This study is longitudinal, as it was administered at the beginning of the 1st grade and at the end of the 2nd grade. It is considered an interesting investigation because it takes into account gender and school readiness. And regarding school readiness, again no significant differences were detected. However, when considering the gender, these differences were not sustained: in CLIL groups, they levelled out, but, in non-CLIL ones, significant differences appeared in favour of girls (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 321).

In Sweden, Airey (2004) speaks about the studies carried out by Knight (1990) and Washburn (1997), which measured general FL competence and “matched students for intelligence, motivation, and sociocultural variables but detected no statistically significant differences between both groups” (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 321). However, those differences appear in reading proficiency (Norway, Hellekjaer, 2004) and in incidental vocabulary acquisition (Sweden, Sylvén, 2004), where CLIL learners of a Swedish upper Secondary school surpassed the non-CLIL ones “in all the vocabulary areas tested over the course of two years with three separate test rounds” (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 321-2). Sylvén, in turn, carried out another investigation in 2006, where she compared the extracurricular exposure of the CLIL and non-CLIL learners at upper Secondary Education and her outcomes were a similar extramural exposure for both groups, but with the CLIL section being more exposed to their mother tongue, Swedish (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 321-2).
The UK is of course a special case, as its language, English, is the most used in the rest of Europe. Wiesemes carried out a study in 2009 with positive outcomes. The CLIP (Content and Language Integration Project) was assessed, which “recruited eight successful Secondary schools to teach certain subjects through the medium of French, German, or Spanish” (Coyle, 2006, in Pérez Cañado, 2012: 323). Teachers and students, by means of interviews and observation, expressed that CLIL improves motivation and breaks the traditional departmental barriers, reconceptualising classroom pedagogy. Wiesemes also affirms that CLIL increases learners’ achievement (even in less able students), has “no negative effects on subject learning, and develops better thinking, strategic, comprehension and speaking skills”, although these affirmations were not corroborated by the research methodology he employed.

Turning now to central Europe, De Graaff, Koopman, and Westhoff (2007) carried out a qualitative investigation in the Netherlands with the aim of identifying effective L2 pedagogy in CLIL settings by means of an original observation instrument consisting of five basic assumptions. These are that “the teacher facilitates exposure to input at a challenging level, both meaning-focused and form-focused processing, opportunities for output production, and strategy use” and they are related to effective language teaching (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 324). These researchers videotaped, observed and analysed nine lessons across six CLIL subjects with this tool, and their conclusion was that “the whole range of teaching performance indicators can be observed in Dutch teaching practice, thereby resulting in what they consider effective CLIL pedagogy” (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 324).

Another study worthy of attention is that by Stotz and Meuter (2003) in Switzerland about the English speaking and listening skills of Primary Education CLIL students in the Canton of Zurich by means of classroom observation, lesson excerpts, the analysis of narratives and questionnaires. The results showed that teachers mainly followed “implicit, embedded use of English in CLIL sequences and that few productive opportunities for classroom discourse were provided for the learners, with interaction patterns largely resembling those of most frontal classrooms” (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 324). It was decided to introduce the English language in Secondary Education because of the outcomes of the two oral competence tests that students took, where CLIL students outperformed non-CLIL ones. Nevertheless, the results obtained for the interaction and language production were “more inconclusive” (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 324).
On the contrary, Gassner and Maillat in 2006 carried out a study in Geneva, with 11th-grade students studying French with CLIL. They used three excerpts from a Biology course and their results were that CLIL “led to considerable advances in terms of pragmatic and discursive competence”.

Hüttner and Rieder-Bünemann (2007, 2010) investigated the effects of CLIL in Austria with 7th-grade students using a picture story. The results showed that the learners had “a more advanced command over micro-level features (linguistic cohesion) and some macro-level features (thematic coherence) of the narrative” (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 325). Jexenflicker and Dalton-Puffer (2010) carried out another investigation in Austria as well. They studied the effects of CLIL on English language skills in upper-secondary engineering schools. CLIL students surpassed the EFL learners on writing and general language skills. The outcomes demonstrated that the effects of CLIL were more marked in vocabulary, spelling, accuracy and task fulfilment, but less so in the field of structure and organization.

One of the few qualitative studies in Eastern Europe was carried out by Bognár (1999) in Hungary. She emphasizes the lack of actual research, but informs about the fact that “65% – 100% of CLIL students are accepted by Higher Education Institutions and that the most prestigious universities have recognized the value of bilingual projects by awarding extra exam points” (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 326).

Finally, in Italy, in 2009, Infante et al. interviewed 11 experienced CLIL teachers by means of questionnaires and follow-up telephone conversations about their trajectory with this approach. They view CLIL as effective (improving their teaching and making them see the subject in a different way) and their experience as extremely satisfactory. Regarding methodology, fluency and oral communication receive more attention than accuracy: “activities which develop thinking skills are favoured; cooperative learning techniques are adopted; and active participation is fostered”, increasing the students’ motivation (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 326). They also consider that the lack of materials and the increased workload are its two main disadvantages. However, the general overview is positive.

Hence, the general conclusion which can be drawn is that CLIL is still in its infancy in Europe, and nothing can be taken for granted, as much more investigation is needed in order to be able to improve and implement it correctly. There are lots of opinions and discussions about CLIL implementation, its features and effects, but much more is needed to characterize it in an accurate way. As Navés underscores in 2010 (in
Pérez Cañado, 2012: 329), “in the last two decades, whereas North America has been busy researching the features and effects of successful bilingual programs, Europe has merely been occupied describing their benefits”. This basically sums up what has been happening in Europe, where the wish of implementing something new and common for all Europeans has made all the investigations be almost exclusively positive and supportive of it.

Let us continue carrying out our overview of CLIL research and implementation by focusing on Spain, which is considered a microcosm for CLIL due to the variety of models and notoriety of research that can be observed in our country.

4.2. Spain

Half a decade ago, Coyle (2010: viii) stated that Spain was “rapidly becoming one of the European leaders in CLIL practice and research”, and this has indeed been the case. Spain has stood out throughout the last decade in the implementation and investigation of this approach.

There are two characteristic features of Spanish CLIL. The first one is the variety of CLIL approaches in line with the number of distinct regions existing in Spain due to the decentralization of the educational system. The second one is that Content and Language Integrated Learning has been developed in several contexts: in monolingual communities not used to foreign language teaching, such as Andalusia or Extremadura; and also in bilingual communities where English is taught as a third language, given the existence of a regional or minority language which is taught as the second one, for example in the BAC, in Galicia or in Catalonia. That is, in Spain, CLIL can be developed with an additional language, or with a second (regional or co-official) and a foreign (one which is European) languages. That is why Spain is the perfect example for the multiple models of CLIL. As Lasagabaster and Ruiz de Zarobe (2010: 284) explain, “drawing an uncomplicated, homogeneous picture of CLIL policy in Spain is an impossibility”.

The specific number of teaching institutions implementing CLIL is not known, but, what is clear, as Ruiz de Zarobe and Lasagabaster (2010) suggest, is that English is the most common additional language chosen in this country for Content and Language Integrated Learning and that this approach is no longer elitist.

Teaching a foreign language as a subject, as it had traditionally been done, did not work out as expected. The situation in Spain in 2012 was that 54% of the Spaniards were monolingual, and only 18% of the citizens were able to maintain a conversation in
two other languages according to the European Commission´s macro-survey (the Eurobaromter). The circumstances had to change. Hence, the solution embraced was CLIL (AICLE in Spanish), that is, teaching certain subjects (others than language lessons) of the curriculum in the additional language. And its implementation started to grow and spread rapidly.

Nevertheless, the most conspicuous weakness of CLIL appears again: lack of research, which is even greater in Spain, without being the only problem. The number of content subjects taught through CLIL, the number of hours in contact with the additional language, or the language level that teachers – and in some cases students too – need to have in each autonomous community can differ as well. Nonetheless, some general characteristics of CLIL in Spain can be discerned.

Firstly, the additional language in CLIL programmes tends to be a foreign language (English above all), and contact with it outside the classroom is of much help. However, in spite of this, the great majority of Spanish learners only have contact with the foreign language in formal instruction contexts. Moreover, the required level of the foreign language (as has been mentioned before, usually English) when finishing tertiary education is just a B1.

Apart from this, CLIL teachers are neither native speakers of the additional language (as they usually are in immersion programmes), nor do they have sufficient preparation for the conditions and needs of a programme like CLIL (as it happens in immersion) when they are preparing themselves at university to be future teachers. And that is one of the main aims in Content and Language Integrated Learning in Spain for the future: to train these pre-service teachers in the methodology of this programme and for the different content subjects that they may teach with several courses, conferences or seminars.

Thirdly, the materials that teachers employ are usually abridged materials. To give an example, in the BAC, textbooks are exactly the same in Spanish and Basque, that is, immersion materials are native-like materials. However, the materials used to teach English as the additional language are not the same as the ones used in English-speaking countries, which means that they are adapted for the learners.

Regarding immigrant students in Spain, they are in a difficult situation in the bilingual communities. An example was presented before (cf. Characterization of CLIL, page 8) about the Basque Autonomous Community, where they do not tend to take part
in CLIL programmes. That is why CLIL could be considered elitist in these bilingual regions.

Finally, it is important to mention that CLIL programmes are experimental in our country; there is not enough empirical data about CLIL, its characteristics, approaches, effects, or methodology, which would be very useful in order to improve it. Let us now examine bilingual and monolingual communities in order to understand better the differences that can be found among them.

Within bilingual communities, the most outstanding instance is the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC). It has already been mentioned as the remit of research because of its CLIL model, where two languages are taught, the regional one and a foreign one (normally English). This region has a long tradition in bilingual research and teaching. Some significant investigations have been carried out by very important researchers, such as Lasagabaster, Ruiz de Zarobe, García Mayo, Sierra, or Cenoz Iragui, as part of what is known as REAL research group (Research in English Applied Linguistics).

Several studies about the knowledge that learners have of the content subject and about language competence (that is, the impact of CLIL on oral and written production, pronunciation, syntax, tense and agreement morphology and receptive and productive vocabulary) show CLIL success, not only in bilingualism, but in trilingualism too. This is due to several facts: CLIL programmes are not detrimental for subject content learning, they affect language learning positively and they foster motivation and optimistic attitudes towards plurilingualism (cf. Alonso, Grisaleña & Campo, 2008; Gallardo del Puerto, Gómez Lacabex & García Lecumberri, 2009; Lasagabaster, 2008, 2009; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2007, 2008, 2010; Villareal Olazola & García Mayo, 2009 – in Pérez Cañado, 2012: 327-8).

The other prime example of multilingualism in Spain is Catalonia, where CLIL is implemented and investigated as well, although not as clearly as the BAC, because programmes here do not have the same continuity. The GRAL is the one that carries out the bulk of the investigation in Catalonia (Language Acquisition Research Group), which has focused on the effects of the beginning age on the acquisition of English as a Foreign Language, through a project called BAF (Barcelona Age Factor – Project). Carmen Muñoz is the person who leads this group.

Important figures in Catalonia are Cristina Escobar Urmeneta, Carmen Pérez-Vidal and Teresa Navés. The latter carried out two studies (Navés & Victorí, 2010;
Navés, 2011) conducted by the GRAL about the effects of CLIL on the learners’ language proficiency (the first one) and about their writing competence (the second study), both of them with favourable results for CLIL students.

The former (Navés & Victori, 2010) investigated 837 learners in 5th to 9th grade, and CLIL students outstripped the non-CLIL ones in all the four grades. The latter worked with 695 students from 5th to 12th grade and the results showed that CLIL learners significantly surpassed their non-CLIL counterparts on syntactic and lexical complexity, accuracy and fluency. Moreover, “when compared to superior grades, 7th- and 9th-grade CLIL learners tended to obtain similar results to those of foreign language students one or two grades ahead” (Pérez Cañado, 2012: 328).

Valencia is a curious case, as the attempt to implement CLIL was a complete failure because of the little preparation and research. There was a subject called Educación para la Ciudadanía (“Education for Citizenship”), and the Valencian Government decided to teach it in English. The problem was that teachers were not prepared for something like that yet: they knew how to teach the content subject, but did not know English. The solution they opted for was to have two teachers in the classroom: one who mastered the subject, and another one translating what the other teacher said into English. At the end, the result was a complete fiasco, although, at least, now they know that this is not the way for the future and for the implementation of CLIL.

In monolingual communities there is no bilingual studies tradition and CLIL research is much more recent and meagre. The community which stands out from the rest of the regions is Madrid. The local Universities are the ones which carry out research. The most important ones are the CLIL project led by Ana Halbach at the University of Alcalá de Henares (UAH), the UAM-CLIL Project led by Llinares and Whittaker at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and the UCM-CLUE Project (Content and Language in University Education) led by Emma Dafouz Milne at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Moving now to La Rioja, Jiménez Catalán, Agustín Llach or Ojeda Alba are part of the GLAUR research group (Grupo de Lingüística Aplicada de la Universidad de La Rioja). This group has carried out important studies together with the BAC, particularly about vocabulary acquisition (cf. Agustín Llach, 2009; Jiménez Catalán, Ruiz de Zarobe, & Cenoz Iragui, 2006; Jiménez Catalán & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2009; Ojeda Alba, 2009 – in Pérez Cañado, 2012: 329).
Spain is a country with scarce bilingual tradition in general (except the bilingual communities), something that is trying to be remedied with the help of CLIL. Andalusia is another community where CLIL is gaining great importance and it is thus significant to analyse it in depth.

4.3. Andalusia

The Autonomous Community of Andalusia has produced in the last decade very important research on CLIL via two projects led by Madrid Fernández in Granada and Lorenzo in Sevilla. Both of them have proved again better results with content and language integrated learning than with language-driven instruction.

Andalusia attaches much importance to the beneficial effects of bilingual education. This is why the local authorities are implementing the Andalusian Plan for the Promotion of Plurilingualism (APPP) in the context of the European language policy: to achieve these benefits in the learners, such as acquiring language proficiency in more than one language, as well as biliteracy or pluriliteracy, that is, being literate in more than one language.

This Plan was launched in 2005 by the Andalusian Education Department (Junta de Andalucía, 2005). Its aim was to make the Andalusian people be able to communicate in a language other than their mother tongue and have a minimum knowledge of the European culture, being at the same time a powerful tool against racism. Hence, other European languages would be used in the curricular instruction of non-linguistic curricular areas. Some initiatives have been taken since 1998 in order to improve Andalusian bilingual education, such as anticipating the age of the teaching of foreign languages to ages 4 or 5, or the introduction of a second foreign language in Secondary Education (Madrid Fernández, 2006: 181-2).

It would be convenient for the students to see the usefulness of language by means of real situations. Exchange programmes, extracurricular activities in the second language or contact through chatting or e-mail with foreign schools are promoted in order to achieve these realistic contexts. In addition, as in the rest of Spain and Europe, teachers need to be trained for the needs, techniques and characteristics of a programme like this with different seminars, conferences, courses or programmes abroad.

Madrid Fernández (2006: 182) states some political and pedagogical actions that need to be taken in Andalusia in order to facilitate such objectives, such as “promoting plurilingual and pluricultural competence […] so that oral and written skills are integrated in meaningful tasks and projects”; or, for example, “the time devoted to
the study of the FL will be increased”, as well as “the provision of modern language teaching ‘on line’”. Other actions will be to create a network of 400 bilingual schools, “where the LE will be used for the teaching of other curricular areas”; or to design a new integrated language curriculum for these schools (see Madrid Fernández, 2006 for more actions).

The three existing stages in Andalusian (and Spanish) Education, that is, Infant, Primary and Secondary Education, have been covered by this network of now over 1,000 bilingual schools, where some content subjects are taught in their mother tongue, and others in an additional language (usually English). They have been equipped with the necessary resources, and several cultural activities in the other language and exchanges have been organized (for both teachers and students). The European Portfolio has been introduced in these bilingual schools. There has been an increase of FL staff and a creation of a new figure, called the bilingual programme coordinator, who has taken “part in the coordination of the school linguistic project and the necessary integrated curriculum design” (Madrid Fernández, 2006: 183). Finally, parents cannot be forgotten. They have been prepared as well in order to be able to help their children in this new project.

The APPP was approved on March 22nd, 2005, with the aim of bolstering bilingual education in an autonomous community without bilingual tradition. Andalusia became the region with more CLIL schools than any other monolingual autonomous community in Spain, and won the European Language Label Award in 2006 because of its contribution to plurilingualism. The APPP appears as another option based on key European documents, which Pérez Cañado (2011: 392) explains:

The 1995 EC White Paper on Education and Training, which established the MT + 2 initiative; the Council of Europe’s encouragement of plurilingualism; the ECML’s (European Center of Modern Languages) support to implement innovative language teaching reforms across member states; the Lisbon Summit’s (2000) emphasis on the need to improve the quality and efficiency of educational systems; or the worrying outcomes of successive Eurobarometers in terms of Spaniards’ language competence.

The Plan is divided in 5 different subprograms: the Bilingual Schools Program, the Official Language Schools Program, the Teachers and Plurilingualism Program, the Plurilingualism and Society Program and the Plurilingualism and Cross-culturalism Program. To carry out the APPP, the most important thing to do is research, in order to
improve and implement it in the correct way. There are four quantitative and qualitative studies about CLIL in Andalusia which acquire a particularly sharp relief: the ones led by Francisco Lorenzo in Pablo Olavide University and by Daniel Madrid at the University of Granada, the investigations of Rubio Mostacero at the Universities of Portsmouth and Jaén and the one by Cabezas Cabello at the University of Málaga.

The study with the largest impact in Andalusia has been the one led by Francisco Lorenzo in 2006-2007, as it is the first investigation dealing with the effects of CLIL in Andalusia. That is why it is considered the point of reference (and the starting point) when speaking about CLIL research in Andalusia. Its results have been rendered in several publications and it is a quantitative and qualitative study.

The Consejería de Educación of the Junta de Andalucía commissioned Lorenzo (together with Casal, Moore, and others) to carry out the study and they administered specific exams to 1,768 students of 61 bilingual selected schools in English, French and German, testing language skills. The students belonging to the English section had only been receiving CLIL education for a year and a half, while the French and German cohort of students received it since Primary Education (as they belonged to the APPP). This could be a reason why they should have been analysed separately, and not together, as their circumstances are different. Moreover, it would have been desirable to study the learners’ subject content knowledge, not just the FL competence.

Pérez Cañado (2011: 394) states that this study was “an instance of cross-sectional research, as it applied these tests to 4th grade Primary students and 2nd grade CSE students.” SWOT analysis (a framework with the analysis of a plan’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), through interviews with coordinators and some questionnaires given to teachers, parents and students, served to complement the quantitative data of the study, whose results were positive.

CLIL students of Primary and Secondary Education outperformed non-CLIL learners in all the linguistic levels. These results are surprising in the case of English students, as they only received CLIL instruction for one year and a half, which made these authors think that the effects of CLIL are quick and that the correlation between competence and exposure is non-linear. While these students had higher scores in productive skills, French students evinced them in receptive ones (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 394).

Regarding the language that teachers use in the classroom, FL teachers use semi-immersion and focus on sentence-level grammar, Teaching Assistants (TAs) are
near to full immersion and promote conversational language and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), and, finally, non-linguistic area teachers (NLA) code-switch and work on Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Apart from this, about the educational effects of CLIL beyond the L2, Pérez Cañado (2011: 394) highlights that:

these authors find that this approach enhances cohesion within schools; steps up coordination between TAs, FL and NLA teachers, increases appreciation of the interface between content and language; and heightens awareness of the benefits of this type of program for L2 learning.

In relation to the qualitative characteristics that can be found in this study, first of all we observe in the teacher questionnaires (given to 398 of them) that CLIL teachers have a C2 level in the German and French sections, but in the English one a B2 is the maximum level, something that has to be improved in the future. However, in general, they are in favour of CLIL.

Teachers see CLIL as an integrative method, as something positive or very positive that increases the students’ learning of contents as well as generic competence acquisition. Pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences are more developed in Primary Education, while linguistic competence is developed throughout the process. They also like the innovative teaching and evaluation methods (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 394).

As regards the weaknesses of the programme, they stress the need for more research, more resources and more methodological and linguistic training, together with more native teachers for Primary Education. Coordinators coincide with teachers’ opinion about Andalusian CLIL’s weaknesses, but they also mention the insufficient time reduction and the excessive workload. They remark as well the motivation, the language contact, the increase of teamwork, the improved professional opportunities and the in-service training as very important advantages.

Students’ questionnaires had similar results. On the one hand, they see CLIL as something positive or very positive as well, which promotes motivation, competence and the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, they want more trips to countries where the L2 is spoken and to use more ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 395).

972 parents were also polled, with largely concurrent results: they claim that the experience with CLIL is positive or very positive. They valued with conviction the learners’ increase in language knowledge, as well as the teachers’ linguistic level and
second language use. However, as negative aspects, they asked for more native
speakers, trips abroad and oral practice for the students and better trained teachers.

Vis-à-vis the improvement of CLIL in Andalusia, Lorenzo (2007: 31) stated
that “innovation in education is normally successful if top-down and bottom-up
initiatives share the same goals in such a way that teachers and decision-makers
coordinate their actions in the same direction”.

Daniel Madrid led another study (Madrid & Hughes, 2011) which tried to
improve the gaps of the previous investigation. It developed over the course of three
years and was conducted by 6 researchers and 10 collaborators with the aim of
providing important information about the effects of CLIL in Primary and Secondary
Education on the subject matter and on the L1 and L2. The collection of data took place
on the academic year 2007-2008 in Granada, working with 314 students: 146 in 6th-
grade of Primary Education and 168 in 4th-grade of Secondary Education. They
compared CLIL and non-CLIL learners of bilingual public schools with a “private
school where 50% of instruction takes place in the L2 and with a semi-private
monolingual school” (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 396).

The results evince that the private bilingual groups surpassed all others in the
English language competence in Primary and Secondary Education, followed by the
public bilingual, the semi-private and the public monolingual. The public bilingual and
the private bilingual outstripped the other two schools in Primary Education in the L1
(Spanish) and the semi-private monolingual outperformed the rest in Secondary
Education. The public and private bilingual schools surpassed the other two as well in
the subject content (Natural and Social Sciences) in Primary Education, and the semi-
private monolingual outperformed the rest in Social Sciences in Secondary Education.
As can be observed, it is the public monolingual school that is the worst in all the
domains (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 396).

One of the most important things of this investigation is the fact that it
considers the effects of CLIL not only on the L2, but also on the L1 and on the subject
matter, as well as different types of schools, not just one. However, one disadvantage
that can be found is that the sample is very limited and local: although it is true that is
considers different types of schools, it just takes one example of each one, and all of
them are located in Granada.

A third investigation worthy of attention is the qualitative one carried out by
Rubio Mostacero (2009) in our city, Jaén. She conducted needs analysis through
interviews with 20 teachers in 4 different Secondary schools. The objective was to design a training course for NLA teachers based on the study’s results. She drew up an initial draft with a model based on her previous experience and, then, she corrected it in twice: firstly, after carrying out the study, and secondly, after the examination of the interviewees and the local TTC (Teacher Training Centre).

The results of the investigation were not positive. The instructors’ proficiency in the English language was much lower than she expected. And, apart from this, there was not enough information about CLIL, and they did not know much about it. They mentioned as well the economic and implementation problems, the opposition of the stakeholders and the lack of resources and training.

In spite of this, the perspective on the APPP was positive and optimistic and teachers saw CLIL as a professional (and also personal) challenge. Nevertheless, they mentioned some weaknesses as well: apart from the ones mentioned before, they were worried about the effect that the teachers’ low level of the language could have on the students.

Teachers precisely mentioned the students’ opinions, as well as that of their parents, in their interviews. Students were optimistic too, whereas their families were not: their opinion was completely negative. They both asked for urgent training and more courses, materials and ICT resources. Rubio Mostacero (2009: 58) concluded saying that “language is the basic need to teach through CLIL and only when this need is covered, others may emerge”.

The results could have been different changing some factors. First of all, a few people were polled and only in Jaén, that is, it was a reduced study. In addition, the researcher could have asked parents and students directly, not by means of the teachers. Finally, the informants were not familiar with the APPP, as it was something new that had just been launched (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 397-8).

Finally, Cabezas Cabello (2010) tried to overcome some of these deficiencies in another study he carried out during a 6-month leave of absence in 2009 (January to June). He interviewed over 100 teachers and 30 coordinators in 30 Primary and Secondary schools in the 8 provinces of Andalusia which where implementing the APPP in English, German and French bilingual sections. His aim was “to carry out a SWOT analysis of APPP implementation and to contrast top-down and bottom-up approaches to the Plan” (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 398). His results gather data about CLIL strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats.
“Greater cognitive, cultural, social, affective, and intellectual benefits for students, whose motivation and opportunities to travel and to experience multicultural contact also increase” is one of the APPP’s most significant strengths. Some others are “enhanced coordination, communication, recycling, enthusiasm, and stability for the teaching staff; more availability of ICT resources; and a more communicative, oral, and integrated methodology” (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 398).

Among the opportunities, we can find the increase of information for all the stakeholders about CLIL, the training of teachers methodologically and linguistically (especially the NLAs), or the active involvement of students and their families, facilitating the exposure to the language. Other ones involve “homogenizing the APPP across schools and assimilating language learning as much as possible to real bilingual environments,” as well as “carrying out a real external assessment of APPP schools” (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 398-9).

Regarding the weaknesses, the main one has to do with teacher training: NLA teachers lack linguistic and methodological grounding. Senior teachers also experience a lack of coordination and an increase in their workload. Parents are not able to help their children with their homework (as they did before) even in Primary Education. And, for students, CLIL supposes “a much greater cognitive demand, causing a 10% drop-out rate and good students in non-bilingual schools to outperform those in bilingual sections”. With respect to the materials, those which are originally designed become obsolete, and the ones prepared in haste “do not truly address students’ needs, and problems with ICT connections hinder the use of new technologies”. The lack of clear guidelines for coordination, the fragmentation of authority and the timetable difficulties, together with the lack of tangible milestones in the plan cause “serious discrepancies between education policies and real teaching contexts” (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 398).

Finally, in relation to the threats, Cabezas Cabello highlights that many studies about the positive effects and characteristics of the APPP have been published, which can make it “die of fictitious success” (2010: 89). That is why he states that the Plan is simply not viable. This would be one of the main threats, but others “have to do with the excessive teacher-student ratio,” or with “restoring the L2 teacher to his/her rightful place, without undermining his/her contribution” (Pérez Cañado, 2011: 399).

As we can see, there are several investigations (qualitative and quantitative, or both) about CLIL in Andalusia, but the most evident conclusion that can be drawn after
analysing Andalusian, Spanish and European CLIL is the need for more research. More practice and empirical data are required about the disadvantages, weak points and threats, as well as the advantages, features, conditions, effects and the different contexts of CLIL which will serve to improve and fine-tune the characteristics of the programme and to make it work more smoothly in the near future. The amount of opinions about CLIL is becoming more variegated. Indeed, this three-pronged overview of CLIL research has already allowed us to ascertain that the negative outlooks to CLIL have gradually increased, especially in the past five years, as a reaction to the initially almost exclusive optimistic views regarding CLIL research and implementation. Let us now, against this backdrop, expound in greater detail on each of these two sides of the CLIL research pendulum.

5. Optimistic outlooks on CLIL research

The prior overview has clearly allowed us to ascertain that the overwhelming majority of the studies conducted to date at the continental, national, and regional levels have documented almost exclusively positive results as regards their functioning. Lorenzo is perhaps the most remarkable advocate, together with Casal and Moore (2009).

It was a complete investigation, as they used several methods in order to collect data (questionnaires given to the teaching staff, the CLIL learners and their parents; interviews to the coordinators in order to facilitate a SWOT analysis; and a variety of diagnostic tests given to the bilingual and control learners of the different levels for the three L2s) (Lorenzo et al., 2009: 423-4). Let us now explore the more important outcomes.

First of all, the results of the linguistic evaluation were completely positive: CLIL learners outperformed their non-CLIL peers. Bilingual groups achieved 62.1% in the global average scores, whereas control groups achieved just 38%. There were 4 tests, one for each basic skill, and the results clearly showed the difference between bilingual and control groups regarding competence, something really surprising if we think about the fact that the difference between them is only that bilingual groups received CLIL instruction for just one year and a half. Hence, these results demonstrate a non-linear correlation between exposure and competence. This made Lorenzo et al. think that a theory of learning in CLIL scenarios was necessary, increasing the exposure, the real-life situations (what motivates the learners) and with in-depth processing of language stimuli for example.
The problem here is that the CLIL and non-CLIL groups were not matched, so their homogeneity cannot be guaranteed. Given the well-documented levels of self-selection in CLIL groups, it could well be the case that the bilingual group already had better marks before the study and, after it, this difference may have increased. The other possibility, according to the results of the study, is that CLIL works.

As regards the acquisitional routes and the individual differences in CLIL programmes, French learners achieved slightly higher scores in receptive skills, while English learners obtained higher scores in productive ones. Despite this, the average scores for the three languages (English, French and German) were equivalent within the diagnostic levels of the CEFR. The fact that French and German were taught since Primary Education and English only for one year and a half cannot be forgotten, which means for these authors that middle or late introduction can result in competences similar to those of early introduction. Lorenzo et al. (2009: 429) consider that “the quality and quantity of input/exposure be just as important as age (Muñoz, 2008), and CLIL implies both more and more meaningful L2”. If the potential of later introduction is finally demonstrated, it could be of great importance for CLIL research. Nevertheless, once more, there is a lack of previous information about these students, that is to say, their economic status or their prior marks are unknown. This means that the study’s outcomes are debatable.

The teacher questionnaires and the coordinator interviews of this section showed the collaboration between the three types of teachers, who are completely involved in CLIL planning. Lorenzo et al. expounded that they all agree about the benefits of CLIL for L2 learning. However, coordinators and L1 teachers think that CLIL could be “a competitor to L1 learning” (2009: 435), that is, it is only focused on improving L2 and not L1 development, which could be another negative point of their investigation (Lorenzo et al., 2009: 426-35).

Other research conducted in Europe (cf. Research on CLIL, Europe, 11-16) has also tended to sing the praises of CLIL. These investigations, however, also present conspicuous methodological lacunae.

For instance, in Merisuo-Storm’s study (2006, 2007), it is demonstrated that there was no interference of the L2 on the L1 in the case of CLIL students. However, why male non-CLIL learners obtained worst results than female ones is not ascertained.

In the case of Wiesemes (2009) in the UK, he carried out his study via interviews and observation, obtaining positive outcomes. However, he did not collect
empirical data to prove these results. In the same way, his belief that CLIL has “no negative effects on subject learning, and develops better thinking, strategic, comprehension and speaking skills” is not corroborated by the research methodology he employed, as explained before (cf. Research on CLIL, Europe, page 14). Similarly, De Graaff et al. (2007) tried to identify effective L2 pedagogy in CLIL settings by means of a tool already explained (cf. Research on CLIL, Europe, page 14). They videotaped, observed and analysed nine lessons with this instrument and, in their opinion, they achieved their goal. Nonetheless, it can be observed that they did not gather empirical data to demonstrate it either.

Gassner and Maillat (2006) simply employed the three excerpts of CLIL learners from a Biology course and their outcomes were optimistic regarding pragmatic and discursive competence. However, they did not worry about any other kind of information of these students, or about considering some other type of evaluation, as the excerpts seem insufficient.

Concerning the study carried out by Hüttner and Rieder-Bünemann (2007, 2010), they used a different technique to investigate about CLIL: a picture story. The results were positive for CLIL learners in linguistic cohesion and thematic coherence of the narrative. Nevertheless, this type of evaluation again does not seem enough; another one, containing pre-tests would have been desirable.

The method that Infante et al. (2009) followed was interviewing some teachers by means of questionnaires and follow-up telephone conversations. In this case, this investigation is useful for knowing the teachers’ opinions, as it is the only information that can be serviceable, but students have been left aside. They were neither evaluated, nor interviewed, which is the major deficiency of this study.

With reference to Spain, Navés and Victori (2010) investigated a great number of students, obtaining optimistic outcomes for the CLIL strand. However, there is no prior empirical data about how the CLIL and non-CLIL groups were formed and the patterns they followed, or about the students themselves, their economic status or their marks.

Regarding Andalusia, on the one hand, Madrid and Hughes’ study (2011) on the effects of CLIL on the L1, the L2 and the subject matter considered different types of schools (though one sample of each one), as was previously mentioned (cf. Research on CLIL, Andalusia, page 25). Their results were favourable for the bilingual schools, but the sample is so limited that they cannot be taken as evidence. On the other hand,
Cabezas Cabello (2010) and Rubio Mostacero (2009) did not previously validate the qualitative instruments they employed, nor did they factor in data or methodological triangulation, both of which would have been desirable in order to guarantee the validity and reliability of the results obtained.

As can be observed, although this side of the pendulum presents overwhelmingly positive outcomes, some methodological aspects of the investigations conducted can be refuted in a critical reading. However, the majority of these studies coincide in the areas where CLIL students tend to outstrip their non-CLIL counterparts, and these areas are not few.

Most outcomes usually show that CLIL has a very positive effect on vocabulary acquisition (either in its reception or its production), as well as on learners’ oral competence (speaking and listening skills). Fluency seems to be the most benefitted area, although certain authors also give some importance to accuracy, pronunciation, or spelling. Writing competence is another domain of much interest for a number of authors, together with the success in the learning of the content subject.

Grammar (and, above all, syntax) is another area normally specified when referring to optimistic effects. Moreover, the language contact and the greater language knowledge (L1 and L2) are greatly valued by different researchers. Finally, the increase of teamwork or the improved professional opportunities are another two of the most conspicuous benefits that, together with the ones cited before, validate and confirm, in these authors’ opinion, the positive effects that CLIL has on language and content learning.

The pendulum has, however, swung to the opposite extreme, especially in the last five years. Because of the afore-mentioned research flaws, initially positive studies have been interpreted from a more negative stance, casting doubt on the feasibility and desirability of CLIL. The most notorious representative of this other position is undoubtedly Bruton (2011, 2012, 2013). It is on his views that we now expound, characterising the other extreme of the pendulum.

6. Negative outlooks on CLIL research

Thus, it seems that CLIL initially made “all the right noises to the various stakeholders in the curriculum” (Rimmer, 2009: 5). However, these overly positive accounts of CLIL research have, of late, begun to be regarded with greater caution and skepticism. Several authors have forcefully voiced their concerns with the methodological problems posed by many of the investigations summarized in this
dissertation, and have interpreted them in very different ways. Bruton (2011, 2012, 2013) is undoubtedly the figure who most prominently embodies this position.

In 2011, this author replied to Lorenzo, Casal and Moore (2009), pointing out four major concerns with their study. The first one affects the overall language scores. Bruton (2011: 2) underscores that no information is provided on the previous scores of CLIL and non-CLIL learners. That is, if there are not pre-tests to see the students’ results, there is no point of departure to compare the differences between them (there is no way of knowing if the differences between both experimental and control groups existed before the implementation of CLIL) and to assure that there has been an improvement. That is why Bruton (2011: 2) sees pre-tests as fundamental.

This leads him to the second major question: the characteristics of the control and experimental groups. CLIL is supposed to be an egalitarian method, but Bruton voices a different opinion. The reason that Casal and Moore (2009) provide for the lack of pre-tests is that CLIL has no requirements and is open to everybody. However, as Bruton (2011: 2) cites, they state that “bilingual sections are, therefore, essentially egalitarian (although the possibilities of corollaries between social class and parental choice cannot be ignored)” (p.423). And here is where he finds the inequality. The majority of CLIL learners come from parents with a higher socio-economic status, although this cannot be admitted by the authorities.

Bruton (2011: 2-3) cites other studies to prove his points, such as that by Alonso et al. (2008), which showed that 65% of CLIL students’ parents had university education, and CLIL learners tended to be more motivated. In turn, Villareal Olaizola and García Mayo (2009) state in their study in Spain that 78% of CLIL students take extra English classes outside school as well, versus none in the non-CLIL group. Alonso et al. (2008) and San Isidro (2010) also demonstrate that CLIL students usually have higher proficiency in the FL than non-CLIL learners. This means for Bruton (2012: 3) that non-CLIL students would presumably be those who have “lower initial language proficiency scores, lower motivational levels, and probably lower content subject scores as well”. As a consequence, it is only logical that CLIL students surpass them.

Thirdly, Bruton (2011: 3-4) speaks about the extra support for CLIL groups. It is a fact that they have coordinators who are dedicated to them almost all the time, having their timetables reduced for this purpose. Consequently, they have more time to prepare better materials and better CLIL lessons. But, apart from this, they also have
language assistants who are native speakers of the additional language, which is an advantage, as they can speak and answer students more quickly and easily.

Finally, Bruton (2011: 4) considers the questionnaires on classroom FL use. He believes that these questionnaires are unreliable to quantify the use of the FL in the classroom, although Lorenzo et al. rely on them. Despite this, it seems that “native speaker assistants use the target language much more than the other teachers” and, possibly, even more than what these studies suggest. Bruton thinks that “the English of the content teachers is counterproductive, if it is limited or substandard, but this is compensated for by the language assistants”. But, again, as there is no empirical data, nothing is demonstrated and much more investigation is necessary.

Bruton (2012) continues questioning the validity of prior studies and, hence, of positive CLIL results, in subsequent publications. He notices “anomalies not only in the research, but in the analysis, and doubts about the conclusions” (2012: 523).

Bruton (2012: 523-4) believes that the usual definition of CLIL does not truly reflect CLIL in practice. He explains that there seem to be three possible variations of CLIL: the first one, where the FL is learnt separately, in order to learn the content through it; the second, where the FL is learnt through the content that has been learnt before in the L1; and the third variation, where students learn the FL and the content together, the most common one for different authors. However, Bruton mentions that Mehisto (2008) “found that it rarely occurred in practice”, so it is likely that the first or second ones “actually prevail”.

He also interprets prior studies as revealing negative – as opposed to positive – outcomes for CLIL learners (Bruton, 2012: 524). Marsh et al. (2000), for example, carried out a study in Hong Kong whose conclusions were that “Hong Kong high school students were very disadvantaged by instruction in English in geography, history, science, and, to a lesser extent, mathematics. The size of this disadvantage was reasonably consistent across the first three years of high school” (Marsh et al., 2000: 337). This means that those students who had higher levels of English were less disadvantaged than those with low levels. The levels of some teachers have also come under scrutiny. In spite of the results, parents still wanted this type of education for their children because of the importance of English for their future.

Similarly negative results can be interpreted for studies carried out in Spain (Bruton, 2012: 525). Ruiz de Zarobe (2007) carried out an investigation with 24 subjects and two distinct groups: CLIL (with 12 years of English) and non-CLIL ones.
The main difference between them was that CLIL students took two science courses in the 3rd and 4th years of Compulsory Secondary Education, apart from their English classes. The CLIL group received 210 more hours of English in the last 2 years, 105 hours more per year, which means doubling the hours per week in the last two years (Bruton, 2012: 525). The conclusion, then, was that there were no big differences between them in oral proficiency, although it is true that CLIL learners “performed better in most categories”. This could mean that the amount of hours of English is not enough to achieve better results. Nevertheless, as there was no pre-test, Bruton believes that there is “no assurance that there was any actual improvement in both groups”.

Similarly, in Villareal Olaizola and García Mayo’s study (2009) CLIL students again had 300 hours more of English instruction than non-CLIL learners. Bruton (2012: 526-7) also mentions that CLIL students received extra private English classes, which suggests that “these students tend to be of a higher socio-economic level than the non-CLIL ones.

It also seems that CLIL learners could be more motivated than non-CLIL ones and this could account for the differences ascertained between both groups’ results. Bruton (2012) interprets San Isidro’s (2010: 75) results in this light. Although it is true that there were differences between both groups in terms of language competence, CLIL students took part in the study voluntarily, so it is likely that their language competence and motivation were higher than those of the non-CLIL learners (Bruton, 2012: 527). Besides that, Navés and Victori (2010), as Bruton (2012: 528) highlights, admitted as much when they noted that “most CLIL groups, in Spain at least, are either overtly or covertly selective in terms of both initial proficiency and motivation”.

What Bruton (2012: 528-9) wanted to show by mentioning these different studies was that the results of these investigations can be interpreted in several ways (and it can depend on the personal researcher interests); that more research is needed, but including more observation, pre-testing, and sampling; that CLIL groups tend to be more proficient and motivated than non-CLIL learners; and that “both quantitative and qualitative results such as these are not very encouraging for CLIL, especially since the CLIL groups typically start off more motivated and with higher initial scores”.

Bruton continues to showcase how pro-CLIL arguments have their valid counterarguments as well in a final article worthy of mention (Bruton, 2013). For him (2013: 588), the apparent attraction of CLIL is that students get “two for the price of one (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010; Zydatiẞ, 2012): school-subject content and FL
development simultaneously, and interdependently”. However, there are some aspects of CLIL and of CLIL arguments that are “much more questionable, or at least debateable” (2013: 590), which will be explained, remarking the fact that the most widely additional language in Europe for CLIL is English. Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010) even referred to CLIL as CEIL: Content and English Integrated Learning.

First of all, both the learners’ immediate and specific needs will be analysed. The question that one has to ask is whether students need to learn language through history or science, for example, or to learn some content subject through an additional language, or whether this motivates them. Bruton (2013: 590-1) mentions the case of a student in Makropoulo’s (2010) Canadian French immersion who claimed that he was not going to “be speaking French to somebody about science or something like that”. Carrel and Wise (1998) add that, in academic contexts, knowledge and interests do not have to correlate.

One option could be to interview or to survey the students (not their parents or to the authorities), asking what content they would find more beneficial or they would prefer for learning the FL (Bruton, 2013: 591). He also mentions that “if the purpose in CLIL were more authentic, the goals should be somewhat clearer than in general CLT” (Communicative Language Teaching). Nevertheless, English is the language generally chosen by CLIL students and the election of the content subjects seems to be “very arbitrary” in different places. If needs were clearer as well, there would not be such variation. Normally, the predominant motivation is “the need to pass the course”.

CLIL students have to learn the FL and the content, but also the specific academic genres, and Bruton (2013: 591) questions whether it is adequate to initiate the learners into the new genres in a new language which is not their mother tongue and whether this will have any long-term relevance, something which is “very much an issue, since they are supposed to be given precedence over more general conversational ones (Lorenzo, 2007)”.

According to Gajo (2007), the learning of academic subject matter (apart from needs and relevance) will contribute to language development. Nonetheless, as far as Coonan (2007) and Tan (2011) are concerned, if the subject matter is difficult or unfamiliar for the learners, it may slow down language development instead of benefitting it. Smit (2010) believes that “the more technical the topic, the less interaction, and vice versa, since the teacher assumes the role of subject expert”. Thus, it can happen that language and content become problematic. Parents, for instance, will
find it difficult to help their children as they might not be familiar with the foreign language (Bruton, 2013: 592-3).

Teachers are, of course, very important for the success of CLIL. Bruton (2013: 593) speaks about their motivation, which is a key point. Some teachers become motivated because of the option of taking a new educational approach, and hence, embarking on a new experience. However, together with motivation, they have to be well prepared, not only in the foreign language, but also in the specific academic genre of the content subject, something that rarely happens, as can be seen for example in Dalton-Puffer’s study (2007), where they were basically English teachers with some training in the content subjects.

Bruton (2013: 593) also underscores the fact that CLIL cannot be considered an egalitarian method, something which has caused much controversy. As has been mentioned before, it happens that in schools where CLIL is optional, students with a higher socio-economic status are the ones who choose it (or their parents), and they tend to be more motivated students as well. And, apart from this, teachers are more motivated when teaching these CLIL groups, as they are “easier to manage” because of their higher level. Graddol (2005), for example, speaks about CLIL not increasing the equality of opportunity, but selecting learners and “the younger the better”.

Finally, the other factor that worries Bruton (2013: 594) is whether students learn more content in CLIL, being really a two for one. Langé (2005), Smith (2005) and Tsui (2005) are skeptical about subject matter learning being the same in the FL and in the L1. Kirkgoz (2007) gives the example of Anatolia (Turkey), where the authorities “stopped maths and science being given in English because of complaints about the university entrance results”.

With these three critical analyses, Bruton (2011, 2012, 2013) seeks to show that much more research is needed on CLIL, that positive outcomes cannot be taken for granted, and that, apart from the factors he has mentioned, more investigation is needed about some others, such as the number of hours, the formation of groups, or the materials and resources. That is why a balanced perspective on CLIL research is needed, that is, a view not focusing only on the positive effects of CLIL, or on the deficiencies presented by the investigations on the positive effects of CLIL. Balanced, disinterested, and methodologically sound studies are required in order to bring the pendulum to a standstill.

7. Stopping the pendulum: Towards a balanced perspective on CLIL research.
The so-called pendulum effect, which has been clearly documented in the previous sections, has characterized CLIL in the last few years. This has led to the conclusion that it is the time to bring it to a standstill. The question is: how to go about it? Let us now present an original proposal, based on Pérez Cañado and Ráez Padilla (2015), with concrete actions to attain the much-need balance in CLIL research and, by the same token, to push the CLIL research agenda forward.

First of all, the level of English, the verbal intelligence, the sociocultural level, the extramural exposure or the motivation of the learners are factors which should be taken into account to guarantee the homogeneity of CLIL and non-CLIL groups. Moreover, these factors, together with extramural exposure to the FL, the linguistic competence of the teacher, the gender, the type of school and province or rural or urban setting should also be considered. That is to say, we need to consider a series of intervening variables to guarantee the comparability of bilingual and non-bilingual groups in future studies.

Secondly, an aspect which should be improved is the research on the effects of CLIL on content and linguistic knowledge by means of pre-tests, as well as post-tests and delayed post-tests. These should be administered to both the experimental (CLIL) group and the control (non-CLIL) group in order to compare them, together with factor and discriminant analyses. In this way, it will be possible to know whether CLIL is truly responsible for the possible differences ascertained. Apart from this, classroom observation, questionnaires and interviews are of much help in qualitative investigations to gauge stakeholders’ opinions on how CLIL is functioning and on the training needs. However, it would also be so important to carry out mixed studies, that is to say, ones which are both qualitative and quantitative.

Finally, studies must be focused on individual learner needs, which means that if we want CLIL to be successful for all types of students, we have to investigate the characteristics and needs of all of them. Besides this, the investigations on the effects that CLIL has on the subject matter acquisition or on the mother tongue of the learners have to be based on empirical data, and not on the teachers’ opinions and appreciations.

8. Conclusion

The aim of the present dissertation has been to document a completely novel phenomenon, namely, the appearance of the so-called “pendulum effect” for the first time in CLIL research. While this pendulum has been previously documented in the
history of language teaching methodology (cf. Swan, 1985; and Pérez Cañado, in press), it is the first time that it can be identified in the CLIL research arena.

In order to document it thoroughly, we have begun by framing the topic against the broader backdrop of the concept of Content and Language Integrated Learning, which we have defined and characterized, outlining its chief assets and pitfalls, according to the most recent specialized bibliography. The most outstanding investigations conducted into the effects of CLIL have then been canvassed, classifying them geographically in a sieve-like way, proceeding from the overarching European context, to the more specific one of Spain (where both bilingual and monolingual communities have been examined), to the more concrete one of our autonomous community (Andalusia).

The chief arguments voiced both in favour of and against CLIL, embodied by numerous authors in the first case and primarily by Bruton (2011, 2012, 2013) in the second, have then been explicitly brought to the fore. The pendulum effect has thus been clearly documented in these two sections. In the final one, a series of concrete proposals have been set forth in order to bring the pendulum to a standstill. They comprise possible research strands for the CLIL research agenda to continue making headway in a balanced and empirically solid way. It is by exploring these possible avenues for future research and by overcoming the main deficiencies identified in prior studies that will build a solid template which will allow CLIL to continue advancing unfettered by partial – and contradictory – perspectives, an endeavour to which this dissertation hopes to have contributed.

9. Bibliography


Informe del Tutor/a del Trabajo Fin de Grado/Máster

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The Pendulum Effect in CLIL Research: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward

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Resumen Castellano (máx. 150 palabras)
Este trabajo documenta la aparición del llamado “efecto péndulo” por primera vez en la investigación de AICLE (Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras). Comienza definiendo y caracterizando este enfoque en la enseñanza de lenguas y luego continúa presentando sus principales ventajas e inconvenientes. Las investigaciones más importantes llevadas a cabo sobre los efectos de AICLE son a continuación debatidas, siguiendo una estructura con forma de “embudo”, es decir, dirigiéndonos desde el nivel continental hasta el nacional y regional. Las oscilaciones del péndulo en la investigación de AICLE son, posteriormente, expuestas, resumiendo de manera crítica tanto las perspectivas positivas, como las negativas, las cuales han sido albergadas. Finalmente, se presentan una serie de sugerencias originales, basadas en las lecciones que investigaciones previas nos han permitido aprender, sobre el modo en el que detener el péndulo para poder continuar avanzando en la investigación de AICLE.

Resumen Inglés (máx. 150 palabras)
This dissertation documents the appearance of the so-called “pendulum effect” for the first time in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) research. It begins by defining and characterizing this approach to language teaching and then goes on to present its chief assets and pitfalls. The main research conducted hereto on the effects of CLIL is subsequently canvassed, following a sieve-like structure and proceeding from the continental to the national and regional levels. The swings of the pendulum in CLIL research are then expounded on by critically summarizing both the positive and negative outlooks which have been harbered. A series of original suggestions, based on the lessons which prior investigations have allowed us to learn, are finally set forth on how to bring the pendulum to a standstill in order to continue pushing the CLIL research agenda forward.

Nomenclatura Internacional de Unesco para la Ciencia y Tecnología(https://skos.um.es/unesco6/)

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