



# OSCE POSITION PAPER



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present position paper is the first document produced within the “One Stop CLIL Europe” project, whose overarching aim is to ensure high-quality Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) education through the whole-school approach in Primary (8-12 years) and Secondary (12-15 years) schools that are organizing CLIL or are actively planning to do so. This position paper is an empirically grounded piece which examines the main concerns which have surfaced regarding CLIL implementation and provides an updated state-of-the-art account on where CLIL stands and where it should be going.



In doing so, it offers pointers for evidence-based practice and pedagogical decisions which can be implemented both at the institutional (top-down) and grassroots (bottom-up) levels in order to allow CLIL to continue unlocking its full potential as it advances into the next decades of implementation.

In order to attain this goal, it presents the main *concerns* which have been voiced vis-à-vis CLIL implementation, outlines the *empirical findings* which we have for each one, extracts the chief

*take-aways*, and signposts *ways forward* in the field. A summary of the foregoing is presented below:

**1. Concern:** A first area where concerns have been voiced affects the *syllabus* of those subjects taught through the foreign language. It has been held that, although CLIL might improve target language competence, it would do so *at the expense of content*, which is then ‘inevitably’ watered down. Syllabi have to be reduced, it is held, given the increased cognitive load inherent in teaching them in a different language, which precludes advancing at the same pace as if they were taught in the mother tongue.

**Findings:** Studies into the effects of CLIL on content learning have zoned in on History & Geography, Mathematics, and Science and have revealed mixed and, hence, inconclusive results for the end of Primary Education. However, at the end of Secondary bilingual students significantly outperform their non-CLIL counterparts in content learning or are at least at a comparable level. Thus, *any strong misgivings regarding content learning should be dismissed*, especially in the *long term*.

**Take-away:** It takes *time* for CLIL to take root: its effects are more intensely felt with time, as contents are recycled as students progress along the different grades and as their general, academic, and subject-specific language proficiency further develops, thus

becoming deeply rooted with more years of participation in CLIL programs.

**Ways forward:** Learning a subject in CLIL is about more than simply learning content: academic, disciplinary, or subject-related literacies are required, together with target language skills. The obligation is thus now on adequately integrating content and language learning in the CLIL classroom by following a *pluriliteracies approach* which reinforces the link between the conceptual and communicative continua.



**2. Concern:** A second aspect which has been regarded with caution is the actual *foreign language level*. Some skeptics have questioned whether bilingual education initiatives truly yield better L2-level results than other language teaching alternatives. In this sense, it has been propounded that increasing the amount of formal foreign language teaching rather than teaching content through that language might be as or even more effective to increase target language competence levels.

**Findings:** Three key outcomes emerge from the latest investigations. First, robust

empirical research (with a longitudinal perspective) without any doubt points to the fact that CLIL *positively develops L2 competence* and is a clear success story on this front. Second, the importance of *students' and teachers' language levels* has transpired as a key factor to guarantee the successful functioning of CLIL programs for all. And third, the crucial nature of *extramural exposure* has also been pinpointed by the latest empirical evidence: more meaningful CLIL exposure has more impact than more form-focused EFL teaching.

**Take-aways:** Thus, we can rest assured that CLIL results in *enhanced language competence* for participating students and thereby helps to counter deficient language learning standards.



**Ways forward:** *Language training* for teachers should continue to be prioritized on the CLIL agenda, especially for Infant, Primary, and content teachers. Measures to *maximize exposure to the target language*, especially in countries with a firmly entrenched monolingual tradition where dubbing is the norm, should become commonplace.

**3. Concern:** Also controversial is the impact of CLIL on *students' mother tongue*. Since the number of subjects taught in the L1 is reduced in CLIL programs, certain critics consider this language can be detrimentally impacted in its development and specific academic terminology, not mastered.

**Findings:** Studies comparing bilingual and non-bilingual branches have found *that CLIL students' mother tongue is not detrimentally impacted* by these programs. The *role of L1 in the CLIL classroom* is also being drastically reconfigured. Studies have revealed that L1 use can actually be enriching for low-proficiency students, its use does not negatively affect the learning of content, and if used strategically and purposefully, it can be a real lifeline for achievers needing help.

**Take-aways:** *There is, thus, a lot to be said for the pedagogical use of translanguaging and for the principled deployment of L1 as a support strategy.*

**Ways forward:** It is interesting to explore the *effects of translanguaging in the CLIL classroom* in order to identify the *most successful types of techniques* which can be productively incorporated in this sense.

**4. Concern:** Another oft-cited reservation pertains to the *pedagogical traits of CLIL*. This approach is considered to be social-

constructivist, interactive, and student-centered, but skepticism has been voiced as regards the actual practical application of CLIL's innovative potential at the grassroots level.

**Findings:** CLIL is a bid to bring innovation into the language classroom, as it is entailing a modernization of grassroots pedagogy and a diversification of methodologies and pedagogical practices.

**Take-aways:** The *pedagogical innovation* associated theoretically with CLIL is actually *trickling down to on-the-ground practice*.



**Ways forward:** It would be desirable to distil those factors which shape the effectiveness of bilingual education in order to determine what good CLIL practice should look

like and to identify successful and representative pedagogical strategies, *both in bilingual education contexts and in other whole-school approaches.*

**5. Concern:** Finally, an increasing cause for which CLIL has been decried in certain countries is its *elitist and segregative nature.*

**Findings:** Recent research has identified the following patterns:

- Most CLIL groups no longer consist particularly of the most intelligent, motivated, and linguistically proficient students; they *are far more diverse.*
- CLIL is acting as a *leveler* (cancelling out differences) across diverse settings and contexts.
- CLIL has the *potential to work also in less enfranchised settings:* rural, with low SES, with diverse language backgrounds, and minority groups.
- Attention to diversity is *not a deal-breaker, but a game-changer,* and it is increasingly embedded in our bilingual education system.

**Take-aways:** Although an element of *elitism* tends to run through CLIL programs at their outset in certain countries, it is *increasingly watered down with time.* Indeed, it takes time and patience for CLIL programs to become truly accessible to all.

**Ways forward:** Headway still needs to be made in drawing up *materials* and *specific training* is required for teachers to step up confidently to the challenge of diversity.



These outcomes allow us to extricate a series of relevant pedagogical considerations, which can be classified in terms of *good practices, challenges, success factors,* and *ways forward* for high-quality CLIL, all of which are presented in detail in the position paper. The latter hinge on three main fronts:

- It is desirable to draw up a clear-cut set of *guidelines* for school teams, which favor a whole-school approach, are comprehensive and digitalized, target the entire school team, include self-evaluation to enhance user-friendliness, and comprise concrete, detailed advice for frontline CLIL stakeholders.
- Internal and external *frameworks of quality assurance* should also be set in place, with different levels, factors, and

indicators to help the school team identify what good CLIL pedagogical practice should look like and to constitute a standard against which to evaluate it.

- *Initial and in-service teacher training* options should be articulated in direct response to

diagnosed needs in order to ensure they are updated and relevant.

These directly relate to the three work packages which are addressed by the *One-Stop CLIL (OSCE)* project, using the present position paper as a jump-off point.

# 1. Introduction

## *Aim and background of the project*

The “One Stop CLIL Europe” project aim is to ensure high-quality Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) education in Primary (8-12 years) and Secondary (12-15 years) schools that are organizing CLIL or are actively planning to do so. As explained in the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019, there is a direct link between the promotion of a comprehensive approach to language and teaching and CLIL:

Teaching subjects through an additional language, and digital and online tools for language learning have proven efficient for different categories of learners. Thus, language teachers across Europe could benefit from continuous professional development in both updating their digital competence and learning how they can best support their teaching practice by using different methodologies and new technologies. An inventory of open educational resources could support them in this, taking into account the work of the Council of Europe.

The project objectives support entire school teams with all CLIL-related aspects, thus greatly enhancing their chances of ensuring high-quality CLIL education. The target groups envisaged involve:

- school leaders;
- language and internal quality coordinators;
- teachers of CLIL;

- language and other teachers of the Primary and Secondary CLIL schools where pupils between 8-15 years old are being taught subjects in a second or a foreign language.

They also encompass lecturers in institutions of Higher Education offering CLIL teacher training to Primary and Secondary teachers.

Developing and aligning support and professionalization instruments and documents and offering them as one comprehensive digital and online package will make it easier for schools looking to optimize the realization of their curriculum through a second or foreign language or starting out on this new venture and wanting to deliver high-quality education. It will also aid lecturers at Higher Education institutions offering CLIL teacher training who are looking to broaden their horizon and optimize their training. Last but not least, this “One Stop CLIL Europe project” will help make CLIL more accessible and attractive to pupils and teachers, improve the motivation of pupils to learn a second or foreign language and engage in intercultural activities and the motivation of teachers to become involved in CLIL and guarantee higher quality.

The “One Stop CLIL Europe” project will develop a package with several documents and tools that will help realize the European goals that 1) every European should be able to speak their mother tongue plus two additional languages, 2) language

proficiency levels among students at the end of compulsory education should be enhanced, and 3) mobility within Europe should be positively impacted by multilingualism. This project addresses the concrete needs of school leaders, language and internal quality coordinators and teams of CLIL, and language and other teachers. Instead of having to maneuver from one source or organization to another, they will find everything they need in one project. Primary and lower Secondary education (8-15 years old) are targeted since prior needs analyses have evidenced how valuable it is to start CLIL at a young age.

Research shows that bilingual education has become a popular and widespread curricular approach to facilitate functional, authentic, intensive, and contextualized second or foreign language learning. In the context of bilingual education, CLIL, as a pedagogical approach, aims at simultaneously reaching language and subject learning goals. However, research has also shown that, on many occasions, CLIL is not implemented to its full potential. Subject teachers struggle with the integration of language learning goals and activities in their subject-specific programs. Schools fall short with the alignment between subject departments (sciences, social sciences) and language departments for an integrated approach to teaching and learning. Although in some European countries bilingual

schools collaborate in quality assessment networks (see Van Wilgenburg & de Graaff, 2015), this is not yet common in all European countries. Furthermore, bilingual education still aims mainly at the integrated teaching and learning of 'powerful' foreign languages, such as English, instead of a pluralistic and multilingual approach from which all languages present in the school and the society can benefit (Hajer, 2018; see also carap.ecml.at). The present project aims to provide solutions for those needs by developing and implementing tools and pedagogies for a whole-school approach, bringing together experiences and practices from several European countries.

### *Objectives of the position paper*

This position paper has the following objectives:

- To explain with arguments the view that high-quality CLIL education stems from a combination of inclusion, language-aware teaching for all, the effective integration of CLIL pedagogy and different registers in the CLIL classroom, careful consideration for the well-being of CLIL pupils and teams, CLIL teachers taking on the role of innovators and catalysts, and efficient internal and external quality assurance;



- To motivate why every pupil should be able to follow CLIL classes, regardless of their (dis)ability, socio-economic status, educational and linguistic background or achievement level, since focusing on a growth mindset has a considerable impact on learner development and CLIL is achievable for all;
- To propagate that every teacher must be language-aware in order to better understand the challenges language might present for deep learning (operating on a level which is not lower than the cognitive level of a pupil by providing lower- and higher-order thinking skills for sufficient challenge) and assist pupils to overcome them;
- To raise language awareness in non-language courses, as introducing CLIL in a whole-school approach influences and supports language and language-aware subject teaching;
- To encourage CLIL classes to be taught according to a specific methodology with particular emphasis on vocabulary and language strategies; interaction; appropriate language feed-up, feedback and feed-forward; and subject-specific, general academic language, and real, fluent, spoken target language to guarantee that the usage of authentic materials in the classroom still ensures deeper learning amongst CLIL students;
- To emphasize that, apart from the subject-specific language, the so-called “classroom chat” teachers use to motivate and instruct pupils, stimulate their self-reflection, discipline them when necessary, and be spontaneous and flexible, is also essential.

### *Bilingual education*

Bilingual education initiatives have been decisively taking root across our continent for nearly three decades. Content and Language Integrated Learning, considered the European approach to stimulate plurilingualism, has had an exponential uptake and is increasingly being embraced in Latin America, Asia, and Australasia. In its steadfast advance within the language and content teaching arena, it has been growing and evolving in exciting new directions, posing new challenges, and throwing new curveballs to researchers, gatekeepers, practitioners, and students alike. It has also, at the same time, raised key questions and legitimate concerns among frontline stakeholders vis-à-vis its effectiveness. Its impact on content learning, foreign language proficiency, mother tongue

competence, cognitive and intercultural aspects, pedagogical innovation, diversity-sensitiveness, and whole-school integration and collaboration of content and language teaching and learning have all occupied a central role in current educational debates. Luckily, we now have a track record, a solid evidence base, to provide reliable research-based answers to these hot topics on the CLIL agenda, as well as to identify good practices, chief challenges, success factors, and ways forward, in embracing a whole-school approach in order to achieve high-quality CLIL education for all learners, in any subject, though any language. This position paper will serve as an empirically grounded piece to examine the main concerns which have surfaced regarding CLIL implementation and provide an updated state-of-the-art account on where CLIL stands and where it should be going. In doing so, it hopes to offer pointers for evidence-based practice and pedagogical decisions which can be implemented both at the institutional (top-down) and grassroots (bottom-up) levels in order to allow CLIL to continue

unlocking its full potential as it advances into the next decades of implementation.

In doing so, the position paper will take into account:

- inclusion, i.e., the aim that every pupil should be able to follow CLIL classes, regardless of their language and cultural background, (dis)ability, socio-economic status, educational background, or achievement level, and with particular reference to special-needs and vocational education students;
- the importance of language-aware (or sensitive) teaching in L2<sup>1</sup> or L1<sup>2</sup> for all;
- the importance of considering the well-being of pupils and CLIL teams;
- the role that CLIL teachers can take as innovators and catalysts in the school;
- the importance of quality assurance for whole-school<sup>3</sup> inclusive CLIL.

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<sup>1</sup> L2: second language (i.e. the language through which subject content is taught in CLIL)

<sup>2</sup> L1: first language (i.e. mother tongue)

<sup>3</sup> The whole-school approach is the backbone of the One Stop CLIL project. This means involving the whole school (school leaders; language and

internal quality coordinators; CLIL, language, and other teachers; pupils; and parents) in optimizing the organization and realization of the CLIL curriculum, which, in turn, positively impacts the rest of the curriculum. The whole-school approach thus not only guarantees high-quality CLIL education, but benefits other pupils as well.

## 2. Concerns and benefits

When an innovative educational initiative is set in place, it inevitably encounters roadblocks and legitimately raises concerns amongst participating stakeholders. Criticism might even be levelled at it on those fronts which are awarded the most attention. This has, not surprisingly, been the case with CLIL, which has garnered reservations from researchers, practitioners, and parents alike.<sup>4</sup>



This criticism hinges primarily on five main fronts:

1. A first area where concerns have been voiced affects the *syllabus* of those subjects taught through the foreign language. It has been held that, although CLIL might improve target language competence, it would do so *at the expense of content*, which is then 'inevitably' watered down. Syllabi have to be reduced, it is held, given the increased cognitive load inherent in teaching them in a different language, which precludes advancing at the

same pace as if they were taught in the mother tongue.

2. A second aspect which has been regarded with caution is the actual *foreign language level*. Some skeptics have questioned whether bilingual education initiatives truly yield better L2-level results than other language teaching alternatives. In this sense, it has been propounded that increasing the amount of formal foreign language teaching rather than teaching content through that language might be as or even more effective to increase target language competence levels.

3. Also controversial is the impact of CLIL on *students' mother tongue*. Since the number of subjects taught in the L1 is reduced in CLIL programs, certain critics consider this language can be detrimentally impacted in its development and specific academic terminology, not mastered.

4. Another oft-cited reservation pertains to the *pedagogical traits of CLIL*. This approach is considered to be social-constructivist, interactive, and student-centered, but skepticism has been voiced as regards the actual practical application of CLIL's

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<sup>4</sup> In certain countries, these negative appraisals have even found their way into newspaper articles, blog posts, social media accounts, or the national television, causing a rift between critics and defenders which has threatened to

impair or curtail bilingual education schemes, whilst discouraging those involved in CLIL programs.

innovative potential at the grassroots level. A breach has been held to exist between educational policies and real teaching contexts, as the theoretical characteristics of CLIL might not really be trickling down to on-the-ground practice.

5. Finally, an increasing cause for which CLIL has been decried in certain countries is its *elitist and segregative nature*. Indeed, the creaming effect of CLIL, the covert self-selection inherent in CLIL tracks, and the sometimes exclusive gatekeeping criteria for admission into these programs are criticisms that have frequently been levelled at CLIL. It has also been considered that it works best in elite contexts and could thus be prejudicing students from different styles, levels, paces, and backgrounds.



Others, however, stress the benefits and potential of CLIL, when the following criteria are met:

1. A thorough examination of the curriculum, in combination with an intensive CLIL pedagogy, ensures that the attainment targets are realized and the syllabi of subjects taught through a foreign language are as high quality as syllabi taught in the language of schooling.
2. CLIL lessons, when taught by teachers that master the foreign language well, are a valuable addition to regular language teaching because they broaden and enhance students' vocabulary, grind grammatical structures in, and have a positive impact on attitudes and skills.
3. An intensive CLIL pedagogy can also positively impact students' mother tongue as we progress towards an integrated system where translanguaging and code-switching are no longer vilified but, instead, embraced in the CLIL classroom.
4. An in-depth initial and in-service teacher training ensures that CLIL lessons at classroom level are as high quality as lessons taught in the language of schooling.
5. When CLIL is made achievable for all, regardless of their disability, socio-economic status, educational

background, or achievement level, there is absolutely no reason why a certain subject should not be taught in a foreign language to a certain pupil.



These concerns and potential benefits will now be discussed based on evidence from research and educational practice. The uncertainties harbored in CLIL implementation are not only understandable, but also reasonable, and the fact that critics have been vocal about them has helped push the CLIL agenda forward, as an increasing and robust body of research has addressed each one and provided solid evidence to determine where we stand and where we need to go. This reliable evidence base is now summarized in the following section in order to provide clear-cut answers on each of these fronts, while concomitantly signposting ways forward in the field. The chief findings are summarized, the broader take-aways are extracted, and ways forward are made explicit.

## 3. Facts

### 3.1. On the effects of CLIL on content learning

**Findings:** Studies into the effects of CLIL on content learning in certain countries have tended to zone in primarily on three main areas: History & Geography, Mathematics, and Science. At the end of Primary Education, results are mixed and, hence, inconclusive. Indeed, an important set of investigations has found that CLIL learners outperform their non-CLIL counterparts in subjects taught through the vehicular language. Another set of studies has found no significant differences between both groups, a finding which is positive in and of itself, as it means that CLIL students are learning content just as successfully as their non-bilingual peers, despite it being taught in a different language. And finally, a third batch of research has reached the conclusion that CLIL students, in some cases or stages, obtain significantly worse results than those in monolingual streams. Studies in History teaching in the Netherlands suggest that this may be due to cognitive overload as a result of low levels of language proficiency, as well as due to limited use of effective CLIL pedagogy. However, at the end of Secondary, a clear-cut pattern emerges from existing research: bilingual students significantly outperform their non-CLIL counterparts in content

learning or are at least at a comparable level. Thus, *any strong misgivings regarding content learning should be dismissed*, especially in the *long term*.

**Take-away:** It takes *time* for CLIL to take root: its effects are more intensely felt with time, as contents are recycled as students progress along the different grades and as their general, academic, and subject-specific language proficiency further develops, thus becoming deeply rooted with more years of participation in CLIL programs.



**Ways forward:** Learning a subject in CLIL is about more than simply learning content: academic, disciplinary, or subject-related literacies are required, together with target language skills. The obligation is thus now on adequately integrating content and language learning in the CLIL classroom by following a *pluriliteracies approach* which reinforces the link between the conceptual and communicative continua. We should veer towards a more integrative stance which

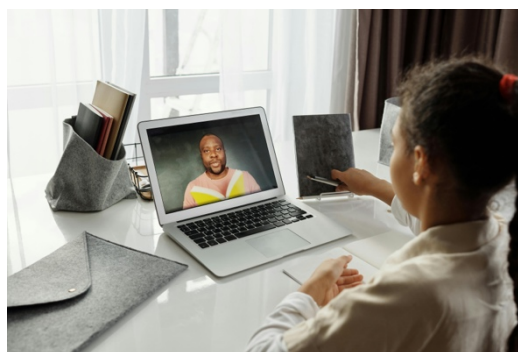
combines academic and disciplinary literacies and capitalizes on cognitive discourse functions (CDFs), while concomitantly favoring a systemic-functional approach to evaluation which considers not only the ability to use linguistic forms correctly, but also to use the appropriate form to express meaning adequately in a particular academic context. At the same time, measures need to be set in place to ensure that the quality of the CLIL curriculum remains as high as the 'monolingual' curriculum, by means of scaffolding and offering a language-rich program with abundant and meaningful input, output, and interaction opportunities. This requires initial and in-service training for teachers to focus on CLIL pedagogy, preferably not only in subjects taught through L2, but in any subject teaching.

### ***3.2. On the impact of CLIL on L2 learning***

**Findings:** Three key outcomes emerge from the latest investigations. First, robust empirical research (with a longitudinal perspective) without any doubt points to the fact that CLIL streams significantly outstrip their non-CLIL counterparts on all language skills (both receptive and productive; oral and written), particularly on fluency, complexity, and adequacy (with fewer differences on accuracy of

grammar and vocabulary). This is the case already from the end of Primary Education and outcomes are sustained and reinforced at the end of Secondary Education. Thus, CLIL *positively develops L2 competence* and is a clear success story on this front.

Second, the importance of *students' and teachers' language levels* has transpired as a key factor to guarantee the successful functioning of CLIL programs for all. The more the language level of students develops, the better they perform in bilingual programs (both in language and in content taught in that language). However, this does not imply that CLIL cannot be implemented at lower L2 levels, as long as sufficient and abundant scaffolding is provided through CLIL pedagogy. Teachers' language level has also been identified as a key success factor to guarantee the correct functioning of bilingual programs, according to both teachers and students. Thus, measures need to be set in place to ensure that both levels are increased to the greatest extent possible.



The crucial nature of *extramural exposure* (i.e. exposure to the

language beyond the confines of the classroom, via books, television, songs, videogames, (online) communication with peers, exchange programs, or extra language lessons) has also been pinpointed by the latest empirical evidence. More meaningful CLIL exposure has more impact than more form-focused EFL teaching; CLIL is favoring enhanced extramural exposure to the L2; and the greater the extramural exposure to the target language, the better the students' L2 and content achievement. Relevant pedagogical implications accrue on this front vis-à-vis the need to maximize input in the vehicular language beyond the confines of the classroom.

**Take-aways:** Thus, we can rest assured that CLIL results in *enhanced language competence* for participating students and thereby helps to counter deficient language learning standards. *Language level entry requirements* for teachers and students should primarily be used as guidelines for syllabus planning and CLIL pedagogy, not as the basis or measures to exclude students from CLIL. Finally, more hours of formal language teaching are not as effective as meaning conveyed through content, which makes a well-structured combination of CLIL subject lessons and language lessons more effective and motivating. Finally, *extramural exposure to the language*, in

addition to CLIL classes, should be favored within and outside school.

**Ways forward:** *Language training* for teachers should continue to be prioritized on the CLIL agenda (both in terms of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency), especially for Infant, Primary, and content teachers. Measures to *maximize exposure to the target language*, especially in countries with a firmly entrenched monolingual tradition where dubbing is the norm, should become commonplace.

### ***3.3. On the relationship of CLIL and the L1***

**Findings:** Studies comparing bilingual and non-bilingual branches have found *that CLIL students' mother tongue is not detrimentally impacted* by these programs. On the contrary, bilingual students' L1 competence is already significantly better than that of non-bilingual tracks at the end of Primary Education and, once more, these results are sustained and reinforced at the end of Secondary Education.

The *role of L1 in the CLIL classroom* is also being drastically reconfigured. From a separatist, reductive stance, which tended to avoid or even forbid L1 use and functionally compartmentalize the L1 and the L2, we have progressed towards a more dynamic and integrated system, where translanguaging and code-



switching gain momentum. Studies have revealed that L1 use can actually be enriching for low-proficiency students, its use does not negatively affect the learning of content, and if used strategically and purposefully, it can be a real lifeline for achievers needing help. It can be productively incorporated for *didactic purposes* (e.g. to give instructions or facilitate classroom management), within *materials* (e.g. to give extra support in differentiated activities to achievers needing help), to *scaffold* (e.g. to explain difficult concepts or clarify vocabulary), to *maintain motivation* (e.g. by preventing blockages or making CLIL lessons more accessible), or in *evaluation* (e.g. to highlight key words in an exam or adapt its vocabulary). This does not only relate to the use of the L1 as majority language, but also to the appreciation and application of the other (home) languages that pupils bring into the classroom, as a space for multilingual and intercultural communication.

**Take-aways:** We should no longer condemn the use of L1 (or a variety of L1s) in the CLIL classroom or feel guilty if we need to resort to it. *There is, thus, a lot to be said for the pedagogical use of translanguaging and for the principled deployment of L1 as a support strategy.*

**Ways forward:** It is interesting to explore the *effects of translanguaging in the CLIL*

classroom in order to identify the *most successful types of techniques* which can be productively incorporated in this sense, taking into account not only the L1 as majority language, but also the appreciation and application of the other (home) languages that pupils bring into the classroom, as a space for multilingual and intercultural communication.



### **3.4. On the cognitive and intercultural advantages of CLIL**

**Findings:** *Cognitively*, CLIL offers numerous assets in terms of the development of critical thinking abilities, cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, metalinguistic awareness, enhanced memory, and interpersonal competence. Research has also revealed that the European approach to bilingual education develops a more positive intercultural attitude, *critical cultural awareness*, and action-taking. It also improves cultural knowledge and intercultural learning, skills, and attitudes, fostering the ability to diverge in their perspective (broadening the scope beyond their home culture)

and critically reflect on otherness from a non-ethnocentric perspective. The factors underpinning this increased intercultural development in CLIL have equally been explored. For instance, they hinge on the increased participation in exchange programs with schools from other countries (through, e.g., eTwinning or Erasmus+ projects), the enhanced opportunity to travel to countries where the target language is spoken, parental involvement in the program, the use of more student-centered methodologies with a real-world orientation which foster critical thinking and self-reflection, the incorporation of authentic materials in the target language which draw on foreign cultural examples and offer opportunities for intercultural learning, and the contact with native language assistants who are part and parcel of these bilingual education initiatives.

**Take-aways:** Despite the increased cognitive challenge it entails, CLIL has *many cognitive advantages* for the learner. It also offers very rich potential for developing notions of *critical cultural awareness*, *pluricultural citizenship*, and *global understanding*.

**Ways forward:** It is essential to further explore *potential strategies to reduce the cognitive challenge inherent* in bilingual education. This is exactly what CLIL pedagogy is aiming at, and

what also makes it potentially relevant in a whole-school approach. It would be equally beneficial to *maximize the CLIL pedagogical potential of the subject teacher*, as well as the *provision of meaningful language input and interaction opportunities*. Initial and in-service *training for CLIL teachers* should thus focus on becoming familiar with these cognitive and intercultural advantages and how to develop them. Furthermore, the potential of a *native speaker language assistant* to act as a gateway to his/her country's culture and foster intercultural competence may facilitate an *authentic context* for learning and communication.



### **3.5. On the pedagogically innovative nature of CLIL**

**Findings:** CLIL is a bid to bring innovation into the language classroom, as it is entailing a modernization of grassroots pedagogy and a diversification of methodologies and pedagogical practices. It aims at superseding the teacher-fronted paradigm in order to introduce a critical, constructivist, student-centered

approach where the learner takes center stage. Tasks, projects, cooperative learning, gamification, baseline mixed-ability groups, or the flipped classroom are some of the most inclusive pedagogical options employed. Materials are considered to be more innovative and interesting, with ICTs acquiring a particularly sharp relief, and evaluation is more holistic, diversified, and transparent. Quality CLIL thus involves a *thorough methodological overhaul* and has been considered a catalyst for change and an opportunity to change our encrusted educational structures. This is inherent to CLIL pedagogical principles, but also relevant in non-CLIL contexts, as meaningful input and interaction facilitate learning through any language.

**Take-aways:** Student-centeredness and diversification of methodologies are firmly embedded in CLIL scenarios, as they are increasingly and extensively used in CLIL classrooms to provide opportunities for meaningful input and interaction in subject learning. The *pedagogical innovation* associated theoretically with CLIL is actually *trickling down to on-the-ground practice*.



**Ways forward:** It would be desirable to distil those factors which shape the effectiveness of bilingual education in order to determine what good CLIL practice should look like and to identify successful and representative pedagogical strategies, *both in bilingual education contexts and in other whole-school approaches*. Establishing clear-cut and validated indicators within a *quality assessment framework* would be highly recommendable in this sense. Initial and in-service teacher training needs to make sure that the pedagogical innovation associated with CLIL is actually trickling down to the classroom in bilingual education and beyond.



### 3.6. On the possibility of CLIL for all

**Findings:** *Selection (overt streaming)* is common for CLIL programs in several European countries. In others, selection is formally forbidden, but here too, *self-selection (covert streaming by parents and pupils)* may impact on the population in CLIL programs. That is, *elitism is a threat that is sometimes difficult to avoid*, particularly at the outset of CLIL programs.

However, recent research has, without any doubt, identified the following patterns:

- Most CLIL groups no longer consist particularly of the most intelligent, motivated, and linguistically proficient students; they are far more diverse. In other words, *CLIL groups are increasingly heterogeneous*.
- CLIL is acting as a *leveler* (cancelling out differences) across diverse settings and contexts. This levelling effect of CLIL has been ascribed to three main causes: CLIL learners have a sense of group belongingness that makes them more *responsible*; they are more used to taking responsibility for their own learning process, so they are also more *autonomous*; CLIL provides opportunities to take diverse L1 backgrounds into account and

*differentiate* language scaffolding for any pupil; and teachers are aware of the increased cognitive challenge inherent in CLIL, so they provide more *language-sensitive teaching* which makes teaching and learning more accessible to all, in any language.

- CLIL has the *potential to work also in less enfranchised settings*: rural, with low SES, with diverse language backgrounds, and minority groups.
- *CLIL CAN be for all*, as it works equally well (in L1, L2, and content learning) with any kind of learner (in terms of verbal intelligence, motivation, level of the foreign language, and academic achievement).
- Attention to diversity is *not a deal-breaker, but a game-changer*, and it is increasingly embedded in our bilingual education system.
- *Student-centered methodologies* and *evaluation techniques* have been made *increasingly diversity-sensitive*.
- *Multi-tiered systems of support* are increasingly stalwart.
- Key *success factors* have been identified to make the accommodation of diversity possible in the CLIL classroom.

**Take-aways:** Although an element of *elitism* tends to run through CLIL programs at their outset in certain countries, it is *increasingly watered down with time*. Indeed, it takes time and patience for CLIL programs to become truly accessible to all.



Moreover, it has been demonstrated that they have the potential to work with all types of achievers and that differentiation is increasingly being incorporated

into methodology, materials, evaluation, collaboration, and support systems. This does not only relate to CLIL in bilingual education programs, but also to *CLIL for all*, with any L1 background, learning through any target language.

**Ways forward:** Headway still needs to be made in drawing up *materials* which are differentiated, digital, interactive, multimodal, tiered-level, project-based, and trans-disciplinary, and *specific training* is required (especially vis-à-vis student-centered methodologies, scaffolding, materials design, and evaluation) for teachers to step up confidently to the challenge of diversity.

## 4. Conclusion

The multifaceted advantages of bilingual education have been solidly confirmed by existing research. CLIL significantly improves the learner's FL language level, while not detrimentally impacting L1 competence or watering down content learning. It also presents conspicuous cognitive and intercultural advantages for the student, contributes to modernizing classroom pedagogies, and has the potential to work with all types, levels, and paces of students. Also, CLIL has the full potential to facilitate a whole-school approach; inclusion; language-aware subject teaching for all; usage of different registers in the classroom; consideration for the well-being of pupils with any language and cultural background; teachers taking on the role of innovators and catalysts for the entire school team; an efficient, internal, and external quality assurance system; parental involvement and empowerment; and effective collaboration between Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education.

These outcomes allow us to extricate a series of relevant pedagogical considerations, which can be classified in terms of *good practices*, *challenges*, *success factors*, and *ways forward* for high-quality CLIL. They are now presented in a schematic way.

### Good practices for high-quality CLIL:

- On the *linguistic front*, these involve:



- Providing rich comprehensible input.
- Adjusting language to increase accessibility (e.g., through scaffolding, translanguaging practices, by means of visual support, or by adapting materials).
- Offering opportunities to communicate in the target language.
- Fostering higher-order questioning to elicit richer responses.
- *Methodologically*, the most success-prone techniques include:
  - Encouraging learner-centeredness and engagement.
  - Conducting cross-curricular projects and hands-on activities.
  - Providing visual and multimodal scaffolding.
  - Working with baseline mixed-ability cooperative groups, where each student has a clearly defined role and which are employed in a stable or routine manner, instilling a sense of security in learners.
  - Using the flipped classroom as an inclusive option.

- Offering personalized scaffolding and attention to take into account individual students' level and identify difficulties.
- In terms of *materials*, ICTs, audiovisual, and multimodal materials are particularly useful. Transcending the textbook in order to find topics and approaches which motivate students is key, especially in content areas.
- On the linguistic front, the *use of the L1* is an essential support to explain abstract concepts, translate key terms, save time, and ensure no learner is left behind.
- From an *organizational perspective*, CLIL provides opportunities and clear advantages for a whole-school approach and for language-sensitive content teaching, including all teachers, all subjects, and all languages.
- *Coordination* through co-tutoring and co-teaching is extremely useful in addressing difficulties, contrasting information about students, and sharing classroom practices.
- When it comes to *evaluation*, instances of good practice include:
  - Diversification of assessment instruments.
  - Transparency in communicating evaluation criteria.
  - Joint design of evaluation instruments (e.g. rubrics).
  - Use of formative assessment and self-assessment.
  - Adaptation of exams to the diverse abilities of students.



In turn, as **chief challenges for high-quality CLIL**, the following have been identified:

- As CLIL is increasingly being mainstreamed, the diversity of students' language levels comes across as a major hurdle for a success-prone implementation of CLIL.
- Access, filtering, adaptation, and creation of materials for all types of learners is another tall order for many teachers.
- Universal access to ICTs is still not a reality and it would be highly desirable, given the utility of new technologies for



an adequate implementation of CLIL.

- There is insufficient time for teacher coordination, which oftentimes has to be carried out outside the official school timetable, thereby negatively impacting practitioners' motivation.
- Greater training for and coordination with language assistants are required.
- Evaluation is still a blind spot in the system.
- There is a clear need for enhanced teacher development, especially for content teachers: on language, methodology, evaluation, coordination, and materials.
- Teachers feel disenfranchised in coordination, training, and finding materials: these tasks depend on their generosity, time, and money, and they feel left to their own devices by the administration in this sense.
- CLIL is still considered a separate approach for bilingual education in many schools. However, the development of a whole-school team may benefit all teachers and all learners.

On the basis of these findings, **success factors for high-quality CLIL** can be grouped in terms of the following main indicators (partly based on Pérez Cañado, 2024):

## 1. *Policy and ideology*

- Adjustment of regulations: reconsideration of class size (teacher-student ratio).
- Facilitating and stimulating a whole-school approach, based on CLIL pedagogy for any subject, through any language, for all learners.



## 2. *Resources*

- Resources and materials adapted to different student levels (especially linguistic).
- Universal access to ICTs and teacher training in digital competence to support inclusive education and opportunities for intercultural interaction.
- High language proficiency level for teachers and opportunities for teachers to develop both their subject-specific literacies and classroom language use.
- Adequate language level of students, stimulated and scaffolded, and adequate contents offered per level



and adapted when necessary.

### 3. *Curriculum*

- Recycling of concepts and content in subsequent grades and educational stages, facilitating and taking into account increasingly higher levels of subject-specific literacies and classroom language use.
- Reorientation of the subjects taught in the target language, with a proper balance of sciences, social sciences, and creative subjects, as they all contribute to language use and language learning.
- Provision of continuity for subjects taught through the target language, taking into account local contexts and also facilitating the development of subject-specific literacies in both the L2 and L1.
- Increase in motivation in the content subjects taught through the target language for the adequate acquisition of both content and language by all students.

### 4. *School climate, attitudes, and beliefs*

- Awareness that redesigning subject curriculum programs according to CLIL pedagogy in order to promote subject and

language learning for all takes time and effort, and should be facilitated by the school management.

- Awareness that setting diversity-sensitive measures firmly in place takes time, effort, and dedication.
- Developing and supporting a positive attitude towards the provision of CLIL for all, though any language, to support learning content and language.

### 5. *School and teaching practice*

- Purposeful and strategic use of the L1, as well as of other home languages, and analysis of the interaction between any language that could be used in the CLIL classroom to support learning and well-being.
- Variety of student-centered methodologies and types of groupings (cooperative learning, tasks, projects, gamification, flipped classroom).
- Extensive use of visual and multimodal scaffolding.
- Diversified, formative and summative, transparent, adapted, and commonly designed evaluation criteria and instruments, which depart from students' initial level and incorporate self-assessment.

## 6. *Collaboration*

- Coordination through collaboration or co-tutoring among teachers in CLIL teams, in order to address difficulties, contrast information, and share good practices.
- Time for CLIL teachers to coordinate within their in-school schedule.
- Parental involvement through multi-tiered systems of support.
- Coordination with language assistants.

## 7. *Support*

- Teacher development options specifically on attention to diversity in bilingual education.
- Adequate initial and in-service training for teachers and language assistants, focusing on pedagogies for the role of language in the teaching and learning of any subject.
- Increased support for teachers from the administration in coordination, training, and access to materials.

In line with the foregoing, three main ways forward can be signposted for high-quality CLIL:

- It is desirable to draw up a clear-cut set of *guidelines*

for school teams, which favor a whole-school approach, are comprehensive and digitalized, target the entire school team, include self-evaluation to enhance user-friendliness, and comprise concrete, detailed advice for frontline CLIL stakeholders.

- Internal and external *frameworks of quality assurance* should also be set in place, with different levels, factors, and indicators to help the school team identify what good CLIL pedagogical practice should look like and to constitute a standard against which to evaluate it.
- *Initial and in-service teacher training* options should be articulated in direct response to diagnosed needs in order to ensure they are updated and relevant.

These directly relate to the three work packages which are addressed by the *One-Stop CLIL (OSCE)* project, using the present position paper as a jump-off point.

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# *The Challenge of Diversity in CLIL: Game- changer or Deal- breaker?*

**This article focuses on one of the most hotly debated issues affecting Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at present: diversity, inclusion, and elitism in bilingual programs. The latter have been in place in many parts of Europe for over 20 years and are evolving in exciting new directions. One of the most prominent ones at present involves mainstreaming CLIL and making it accessible to an increasing range of learners. This new challenge has thrown bilingual education a real curveball and is entailing a thorough overhaul of our current CLIL programs. This article will explore the main areas on which the impact of inclusion has been most intensely felt as a more diversity-sensitive model continues to take root in bilingual education. These hinge on ten main fronts: the concept of diversity in itself, the charge of elitism, the importance of the supranational perspective, language and methodology, materials design, the role of the L1, teacher education, multi-tiered systems of support, the focus of research, and success factors. The latest empirical evidence on the topic (stemming from the ADiBE Project: [www.adibeproject.com](http://www.adibeproject.com)) will be used to address each front and the broader take-aways and chief pedagogical implications will be extracted for the frontline stakeholders. A broad array of materials, methodological tips, and teacher development options will be made available to continue addressing the challenge of diversity in CLIL in the immediate future and to ensure CLIL for all increasingly moves away from being a mere chimera to become a firmly embedded reality in our classrooms.**

**Keywords:**

CLIL, elitism, diversity, inclusion, differentiation

## ***1. Introduction***

**B**ilingual education initiatives have been making a steadfast advance in our continent and beyond for well over two decades. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), considered the European approach to favor plurilingualism, has in particular become a global signature pedagogy (Shulman 2005) and is now largely held to be “an unstoppable train” (Macaro 2015, 7). In its 20+-year life span, CLIL has been subjected to substantial empirical scrutiny which has unequivocally indicated that the metaphorical train is advancing firmly and relatively unencumbered, as robust research has shed largely positive light into its inner workings. Indeed, the latest investigations indicate that CLIL significantly improves foreign language (FL) standards (Rallo Fabra and Jacob 2015; Pérez Cañado 2018a; Martínez Agudo 2020; Gálvez Gómez 2021; Navarro-Pablo, 2021), while not detrimentally impacting L1 competence (Navarro-Pablo and López Gándara 2020; Barrios 2021; Nieto Moreno de Diezmas and Custodio Espinar 2022) or watering down content learning (Dallinger et al. 2016; Surmont et al. 2016; Pérez Cañado 2018b; Graham et al. 2018; Hughes and Madrid 2020; Martínez Agudo 2021). In addition, numerous SWOT analyses (Pavón Vázquez and Rubio 2010; Pérez Cañado 2018c) have evinced high levels of satisfaction among all participating frontline stakeholders in these types of programs and the cognitive advantages inherent in CLIL have equally been signposted in the latest specialized literature (Marsh et al. 2020).

However, as with any successful language teaching method, CLIL has not stayed still, but has been growing and evolving in exciting new directions, posing new challenges along the way. One of the most conspicuous ones is undoubtedly the issue of diversity, inclusion, and egalitarianism in CLIL. Indeed, Content and Language Integrated programs have been wrestling with issues of elitism, segregation, and discrimination for well over a decade. The creaming effect of CLIL (Bruton 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2015, 2019), the covert self-selection inherent in CLIL tracks (Lorenzo et al. 2009), and the exclusive gatekeeping criteria for admission into these programs (Dallinger et al. 2018) are criticisms that have frequently been leveled at CLIL. Increased attempts to mainstream CLIL school- and program-wide have been heeded with caution, as “this novel model of mainstreaming is not only a huge challenge which entails an increased difficulty, but it could seriously jeopardize everything achieved so far in bilingual programs” (Pérez Cañado 2023a, 1129-30).

This concern thus raises the question of whether and under what conditions CLIL can truly be for all and of whether reshaping our educational structures to encourage opportunity and access for all types of bilingual students is a total deal-breaker or merely a game-changer in CLIL. This is a topic of great currency in today’s language teaching scenario which has garnered heightened academic interest yet remains to date underexplored. It is still, as Mearns et al. (2023, 13) have put it, “a blind spot” in the specialized research. This is precisely the niche which the present article seeks to fill. It will explore the main areas on which the impact of inclusion has been most intensely felt as a more diversity-sensitive model continues to take root in bilingual education. These hinge on ten main fronts: the concept of diversity in itself, the charge of elitism, the importance of the supranational perspective, language and methodology, materials design, the role of the L1, teacher education, multi-tiered systems of support, the focus of research, and success factors. The latest empirical evidence on the topic will be used to address each front and the broader take-aways and chief pedagogical implications

will be extracted for the frontline stakeholders, showcasing how the potential of bilingual education programs to serve as inclusive settings remains high, provided substantial modifications are introduced in each front in order to attune bilingual education to the changing landscape brought about by the curveball of diversity.

## **2. The impact of diversity on bilingual education: Ten salient issues on the CLIL agenda**

### **2.1. The concept of diversity**

A necessary starting point in examining the impact of diversity in bilingual education is the very concept in and of itself. Prior to implementing an inclusive education reform agenda in bilingual education, diversity was essentially equated with special education needs and students with severe learning disabilities. However, now that CLIL is increasingly being made accessible to all, the concept of diversity needs to be broadened and updated in the new bilingual scenario. In this sense, to capture the manifold dimensions involved in the concept of diversity, different learning styles, achievement levels, learning paces, and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds also need to be encompassed within its definition. In order to attain this goal, a new conceptual framework has been drawn up to approach diverse students in an asset-oriented and inclusive manner and to thereby create more dynamic, efficient, and responsive structures to meet students' differentiated needs.

The DIDI framework has thus been set in place (Pérez Cañado 2023b) to attune the concept of diversity to the new demands posed by bilingual education. It capitalizes on the notions of *diversity*, *inclusion*, *differentiation*, and *integration*, with *diversity* being the overarching umbrella term which entails providing an adequate education to all students. It rests on the pillars of *inclusion* and *differentiation*. The former refers to an educational model which also aims to respond to the learning needs of all students, but from an asset-based perspective. In this sense, it views diversity as a source of enrichment and as an opportunity to help at-risk learners who are on the fringe go from being outsiders to becoming participants. In turn, *differentiation* attempts to tailor teaching to students with diverse abilities and backgrounds, via, for example, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, Gardner's multiple intelligences, or Bloom's taxonomy of higher- and lower-order thinking skills. A conflation of these three aspects then leads to the *integration* of students with diverse ability levels and all four concepts dovetail to favor equitable access to CLIL programs and to offset the disenfranchisement of the most vulnerable and underserved learners.

Moving forward, this theoretical foundation should ideally be applied from a practical stance in order to tackle the multifaceted dimensions of diversity and thereby support bilingual learners from all paces, styles, and backgrounds to unlock their full potential in a multilingual environment.

### **2.2. The charge of elitism**

A second key area where the impact of diversity has been intensely felt and has caused a substantial rethinking of previously harbored ideas is what we term the charge of elitism. Issues of gatekeeping and participation in bilingual programs are complex and multifaceted, as they have long been decried for being elitist, segregative, and cream-skimming (Bruton 2011a, 2011b, 2013, 2015, 2019; Paran 2013; Broca 2016). The silent agenda of selectivity in CLIL programs has forcefully come to the fore in the flurry of vocal criticism which has stemmed from different flanks, particularly in the past decade. This harsh disapproval has had a positive spin-off, namely, that robust research from the past five years has focused in a fine-grained way on this issue (Ainsworth and Shepherd 2017; Madrid and Barrios, 2018; Pavón Vázquez 2018; Rascón Moreno and Bretones Callejas 2018; Lorenzo 2019; Navarro-Pablo and López Gándara 2020; Pérez Cañado 2020; Lorenzo et al. 2021; Bauer-Marschallinger et al. 2023; Casas Pedrosa and Rascón Moreno 2023; Nikula et al. 2023; Siepmann et al. 2023). And the findings have spoken loud and clear, identifying four main iterative patterns offered by the data.

A first of them is that the most intelligent, motivated, and linguistically proficient students are no longer in the CLIL groups. The comparison of CLIL and non-CLIL strands in hundreds of randomly selected schools has detected no statically significant differences between both cohorts, indicating that bilingual and non-bilingual learners are increasingly homogeneous. A second trend which emerges is the leveler effect of CLIL: while in non-bilingual groups there are still marked differences in terms of socioeconomic status, rural-urban context, and type of school (private, public, charter), in bilingual classes, these differences are notably mitigated. CLIL appears to be canceling out these differences, mainly owing to CLIL students' greater sense of responsibility and autonomy and to teachers' provision of more language-sensitive teaching, according to the latest research results (Halbach and Iwaniec 2022). A third theme which has emerged

as salient is that CLIL has the potential to work even in the most disenfranchised settings: in rural, public schools, where parents have a low socioeconomic status, and with minority ethnic groups. The key to success here appears to rely on the teachers' training and commitment and on the adequate implementation of the methodological principles underpinning CLIL. Finally, the most recent investigations (cf. Pérez Cañado in press for 2023) have revealed that CLIL can work with all types of achievers. When over 2,000 CLIL students were trichotomized in terms of their verbal intelligence, motivation, English level, and academic achievement, it was ascertained that all three tiers performed successfully on the L1, the L2, and the content subjects taught through the target language. Socioeconomic factors did not appear to have a bearing in explaining these outcomes and those variables which did impinge on the success of bilingual programs for all were the students' verbal intelligence and their English level and extramural exposure to the language.

Thus, in mapping out future pathways for progression, it seems clear to posit that the issue of elitism / segregation / classism in CLIL is on its way out from being a burning issue on the bilingual agenda to become a non-issue. Instead, we need to redirect our attention to setting in place measures to ensure CLIL will work with over- and under-achievers alike.

## 2.3. The importance of the supranational perspective

And, in doing so, the latest investigations point unequivocally to the need for “increased research at the supranational level” (Macaro et al. 2018, 64). While the one-size-fits-all model has been disparaged in CLIL given the variegated nature of its application across our continent and a “context-sensitive stance” (Hüttner and Smit 2014, 164) has long been propounded, navel-gazing needs to be overcome in accommodating differentiation in bilingual programs. Indeed, in this sense, learning from what is successfully being implemented in other contexts stands out as a hallmark of good practice to balance out different learning paces and ability levels (Casas Pedrosa and Rascón Moreno 2023). Pan-European studies (Pérez Cañado 2023a) have revealed the highly beneficial nature of learning from the best practices of other countries, as key areas of expertise have been identified which can be usefully adapted to other scenarios. In this respect, Finland stands out for inclusive lesson planning, Austria is conspicuous for student-centered methodological practices, the UK excels at differentiated materials design, Italy is notable for the use of ICT options, and Spain particularly masters diversified assessment procedures.

The latest research stemming from the ADiBE projects<sup>1</sup> has allowed the identification of key areas of good practice for the construction of multicultural and plurilingual spaces which favor inclusion. These involve, to begin with, finding motivating topics and approaches which transcend the textbook, in order to engage learners with additional support needs, particularly in content areas being taught through the vehicular language. Methodologically, the use of visual and multimodal scaffolding, of student-centered options, and the provision of one-on-one personalized attention to determine entry levels and identify difficulties are all resolute pillars for diversity-sensitive CLIL classes. In terms of materials, the use of ICTs via Google Classroom, IWBs, or gamification options come to the fore as beneficial to cater to learner variance. The use of the L1 and coordination through co-teaching and co-tutoring are also successful conditions to encourage equity in bilingual scenarios. And, finally, diversified, transparent, and adapted summative and formative evaluation procedures are equally advocated as examples of good practice, where self-assessment is worked in and the students' entry level is taken into consideration.

Thus, keeping an eye on how other countries are tackling the creation of inclusive learning spaces and accommodating these good practices of others to our own context is major take-away for the future, as we can learn a great deal from what others are doing to encourage opportunity and access in CLIL programs for all bilingual students.

## 2.4. Language and methodology

Another interesting reconfiguration is being operated in language and methodology thanks to the entrance of diversity on scene. Stepping up to the challenge of creating inclusive learning spaces has made it necessary to raise the bar on both these fronts. Indeed, to begin with, linguistically, the need to communicate content to different levels, types, and paces of achievers has caused teachers' linguistic requirements to be pushed up to either a B2 or a C1 (European Commission 2023) and conspicuous efforts have been made to update and upgrade their language competence to ensure their BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) are more natural and attuned to present-day English (e.g. through publications like Pérez Cañado and Ojeda Pinar 2018). In addition, very recent research (Pérez Cañado in press for 2023) has found that the amount of extramural exposure is a key success factor to guarantee the adequate functioning of CLIL programs with all types of achievers. This exposure is being increased thanks to heightened access to original versions on TV platforms such as Netflix or HBO, or via YouTube clips assigned as homework for language catch-up.

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1 Cf. [www.adibeproject.com](http://www.adibeproject.com).

In turn, methodologically, enacting differentiation has led to more student-centered, diversified, and communicative methodologies which are increasingly embedded in CLIL classrooms. Indeed, more active and participative student roles have been documented, together with a more variegated amount of groupings and learning modalities. In this sense, clear-cut pedagogical measures have hit the ground running in order to counteract the potentially adverse influence of the teacher-frontedness which previously found traction in many CLIL classrooms (Breidbach and Vriebock 2012). Some of these strategies (McClintic 2022; Bauer-Marschallinger et al. 2023; Casas Pedrosa and Rascón Moreno 2023; Nikula et al. 2023; Pérez Cañado 2023a; Ramón Ramos 2023; Siepmann et al. 2023) include, to begin with, transcending disciplinary fragmentation so as to forge cross-disciplinary collaboration among subjects in order to address students' intersectional needs. Co-tutoring, co-teaching, and collaboratively tracking progress through a joint progress book greatly contribute in this respect. The use of scaffolding techniques (through, e.g. grammar framework sheets; scripts, diagrams, and images; gestures or mime; highlighting key words; matching words with definitions; reformulation; or using the L1 strategically) is another very useful technique which is deployed successfully. Employing diversified student-centered methodologies (with project-based learning, task-based language teaching, cooperative learning, and the flipped classroom as salient examples) is another instance of good practice. Finally, hetero- and homogeneous achievement-based groupings also come to the fore as a productive way to cater to learner variance, together with the use of learning stations to create an inclusive atmosphere in the CLIL classroom.

Thus, in advancing in this terrain, the afore-mentioned linguistic and methodological upgrade which is already becoming part and parcel of bilingual education should be leveraged to turn CLIL classrooms into inclusive environments where all students can be confident and successful learners.

## 2.5. Materials design

A fifth key area which is being drastically reshaped due to inclusion and differentiation pertains to materials. Indeed, traditional, static printed materials no longer fit the bill in balancing out different learning styles and abilities (Siepmann & Pérez Cañado 2022) and they now need to pivot towards digital, interactive, multimodal, tiered-level, project-based, transdisciplinary, and differentiated options. These are still thin on the ground and constitute one of the major roadblocks to diversity in CLIL scenarios, as the latest research has recently revealed (Casas Pedrosa and Rascón Moreno 2023; Pérez Cañado 2023a; Siepmann et al. 2023). Indeed, very limited access to tiered-level materials is still documented, so that practitioners are forced to resort to either adapting or creating them. The absolute lack of textbook is highlighted for certain subjects such as Music, which leaves teachers at a loss. This is the area on which they claim to need most guidance and feel disenfranchised in finding materials: the process depends on their generosity, time, and financial investment, they claim, and they do not feel supported by administrative authorities in this area (Pérez Cañado in press for 2024).

In order to cover this core gap, the ADIBE project has designed 12 batches of interactive, multimodal, tiered-level, project-based, and transdisciplinary projects in three different languages (English, French, and German—cf. <https://adibeproject.com/output-2/>) and with differentiation triangulation. In the first phase, students are grouped into same-ability clusters, encouraging them to choose the highest possible level at which they feel comfortable, following a growth mindset. They then focus on the same contents, albeit through differentiated activities, in line with Bloom's taxonomy. In this sense, achievers needing help are only asked to understand and are provided with heavy scaffolding. Mid-level achievers are required to evaluate, whereas high-level achievers are requested to produce. The learners are then grouped according to different ability levels, and leveraging their strengths, they work together towards a final outcome via differentiated and varied student-centered methodologies. The third and final phase—the final product presentation—is also differentiated, as students can choose whether to draw up an infographic, a video, or an interactive presentation. These projects are transdisciplinary, as they include the L1, the L2, and a minimum of three content subjects. The ADiBE principles on which they are based are also fleshed out within a specific guidelines manual for materials implementation (cf. [https://adibeproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/GUIDELINES\\_22\\_04\\_2022.pdf](https://adibeproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/GUIDELINES_22_04_2022.pdf)).

Thus, conspicuous headway still needs to be made on the materials front in order to fully step up to the challenge of diversity in bilingual education. However, using examples such as those which have been originally designed via the ADiBE project can be a useful jump-off int for further elaboration of materials which fit the bill in diversity-sensitive learning spaces (cf. Siepmann and Pérez Cañado 2022 for a detailed instance and substantiation of the German materials).

## 2.6. The role of the L1

Within these materials, the role and status of the L1 have also been problematized in supporting differentiation in CLIL scenarios. Indeed, prior to the challenge of catering to diversity, its use was practically proscribed within the bilingual classroom and a functional compartmentalization was favored, where the L1 and the L2 were kept apart. However,



having to cater to very diverse learner styles, paces, and backgrounds has pulled practitioners out of their narrow siloes and caused them to veer towards a more dynamic and integrative stance, bolstered by the concepts of code-switching and translanguaging (García and Wei 2014).

Indeed, the latest research (Pavón Vázquez and Ramos Ordóñez 2019; Bauer-Marschallinger et al. 2023; Siepmann et al., 2023; Pérez Cañado in press for 2024) has corroborated that perfunctory and principled L1 use can be enriching for low proficiency students, as its use does not negatively affect the learning of content and can be a lifeline if used strategically and purposely as a fall-back option. It can be beneficially employed for didactic purposes (to give instructions or for classroom management), within materials (e.g., in tiered-level activities for achievers needing help), to scaffold (to clarify vocabulary, explore difficult concepts, introduce new content, or revise and add a new perspective), to maintain motivation (by ensuring interest, making CLIL lessons more accessible, and preventing blockages), and even within evaluation (to highlight key words in the exam or adapt its vocabulary).

There is thus a lot to be said for the pedagogical use of translanguaging and for the principled deployment of the L1 as a support strategy, a sit can be conducive to enhanced learning of content, it saves crucial time, and it ensures no learner is left behind. In the future, practitioners would thus do well to leverage its potential in diverse CLIL classrooms.

## 2.7. Teacher education

And it is precisely to practitioners that we now turn. How has bilingual teacher education evolved with the advent of diversity and inclusion? In general, great headway has been documented on this front since the inception of bilingual programs, particularly hinging on three main fronts. To begin with, a clear-cut CLIL teacher profile has been mapped, thanks to both national and international proposals (Bertaux et al. 2010; Marsh et al. 2010; Lorenzo et al. 2011; Madrid Manrique and Madrid Fernández 2014) which have distilled the seven core competencies which any bilingual teacher should master (linguistic competence, pedagogical competence, scientific knowledge, organizational competence, interpersonal and collaborative competencies, and reflective and developmental competence). Secondly, instruments (in the form of surveys, interviews, and observation protocols) have been carefully developed and validated to tap into the main teacher training needs in bilingual education. These are available for the broader educational community (Pérez Cañado 2016) and disseminable in future investigations for a personalized diagnosis to be carried out by those practitioners who wish to. And, finally, a third area of progress has involved their actual application across variegated contexts, which has allowed the identification of the main teacher development needs which should still be honed. These affect five main fronts: *linguistic competence*, *pedagogical competence*, *scientific knowledge*, *collaborative competence*, and *reflective and developmental competence* (cf. Pérez Cañado in press for 2024 for the concrete outcomes).

However, the new diversity-oriented CLIL scenario has led to increased and more fine-tuned training requirements: teachers now need to be equipped with additional attitudes, knowledge, and skills in order to provide culturally and linguistically informed learning opportunities for all bilingual students. New instruments (surveys, interviews, and observation protocols) have been designed to tap into specific teacher education needs to cater for diversity (cf. Pérez Cañado et al. 2023). And when they have been applied, the latest research (Pérez Cañado in press for 2024) has revealed that teacher development options for differentiation should have a three-pronged structure: a brief theoretical basis, a majority of practical training (on methodology, scaffolding, groupings or evaluation), and guidelines for materials design and adaptation. Ideally, tailor-made courses based on real and relevant needs in concrete contexts should be offered, specific CLIL subjects should be incorporated in undergraduate degrees, and they should also be worked into generic MA degrees. The curveball thrown by attention to diversity also seems to have made increased coordination and collaboration a sine qua non for CLIL programs to stay afloat. The preparation of the language assistant equally comes across as a major niche to be filled, and their coordination with content and language teachers is still regarded as deficient. Maximizing the full potential of the language assistant is thus still an area which has not as yet been sufficiently addressed, according to our very recent data (Pérez Cañado in press for 2024).

Thus, ensuring that these areas figure prominently in initial and continuing professional development courses is key. They should trickle down to on-the-ground practice via specific courses and (under)graduate training proposals, in order to ensure that the new needs are met in an evidence-based manner. Therein lies the way forward in reinforcing CLIL teacher education for diversity.

## 2.8. Multi-tiered systems of support

In addition to teachers, another frontline stakeholder whose role has also been affected by the pivot towards diversity-sensitiveness is the parental cohort. At the outset CLIL implementation, a lack of multi-tiered systems of support (involving educational authorities, multi-professional teams, colleagues, language assistants, and parents) was

documented, together with very scarce satisfaction with those that were in place. Concurrently, parents (especially those with a low socioeconomic status) felt disenfranchised in helping their offspring with homework, claimed to have insufficient information and involvement, and did not motivate their children to participate in exchange programs, yet voiced the greatest satisfaction with bilingual education initiatives, as they regarded them as an opportunity for upward mobility (Ráez Padilla 2018; Barrios 2019).

Now, the fact that CLIL is being increasingly mainstreamed is turning this situation around (Pérez Cañado 2023a). Although the overall school support system is still not considered to be coming through for diverse students (McClintic 2022), collaboration with colleagues and parents has been stepped up and is now more operative in CLIL programs (perhaps because the greater challenge posed by diversity has made it a *sine qua non*). Multi-professional teams and the guidance counselor are present and important. Student, parent, and teacher views are quite homogeneous and aligned vis-à-vis this aspect, thereby pointing to the fact that they are a realistic snapshot of grassroots practice. Information to parents has been increased, via initiatives such as that spearheaded by the British Council (cf. van Wechem and Halbach 2014). And now, parents with a high SES also have faith in teachers' preparation, methodologies, and support systems to step up to the challenge of diversity. Bilingual education is thus still regarded as prestigious and worthwhile and there is buy-in from frontline stakeholders who have to make the decision of whether to enroll their children in these types of programs.

In the future, we thus need to continue reinforcing these multi-tiered systems of support and enhancing parents' ability to engage in their children's bilingual learning experiences and weigh in on their educational outcomes, as this has been unveiled as a key success factor of CLIL programs (cf. Pérez Cañado in press for 2024 and section 2.10 below).

## 2.9. The focus of research

An interesting change of pace and focus in research has also been documented ever since inclusion has increasingly made its way into CLIL programs. Indeed, initially, the general trend was to quantitatively measure the impact and functioning of bilingual education initiatives by guaranteeing the homogeneity of CLIL and non-CLIL streams. Experimental and control groups were separated out and differentiated CLIL and non-CLIL groups were matched and compared. In turn, qualitatively, general SWOT analyses were conducted, though which stakeholder perceptions were gauged vis-à-vis the main aspects of program evaluation (linguistic aspects, methodology, materials and resources, assessment, coordination, or teacher education). A host of intervening variables were also factored in to determine the possible modulating effect they exerted on student performance (e.g. age, gender, nationality, rural-urban context, socioeconomic status [SES], or type of school).

Now that CLIL programs are being made extensive to all types of students, new research needs have arisen. At present, only CLIL students are the focus. Trichotomizing (rather than homogenizing) them is also a future avenue for further investigation: they are now grouped into three different ability levels (according to variables such as motivation, verbal intelligence, language level, and academic performance) in order to determine whether CLIL can truly be for all. And narrowing down SWOT analysis from general program evaluation to specific curricular and organizational aspects related to diversity is also a desirable line of action in order to complement the overall perspectives which we currently have from a more updated and concrete point of view.

These new lines of action are already being explored via the ADiBE projects and new instruments have been designed and validated to address them (cf. Pérez Cañado et al. 2023). The preliminary results can be found in McClintic (2022), Casas Pedrosa and Rascón Moreno (2023), Ramón Ramos (2023), and Pérez Cañado (in press for 2024), as well as a special issue which is in press in *Porta Linguarum* for 2024. And the results clearly lean towards the fact CLIL *can* be for all, as it is working equally well with all three tiers of learners (in L1, L2, and content subjects), with verbal intelligence and English level are the only variables which yield statistically significant differences (as opposed to context or SES). Thus, continuing to capitalize of this new approach to CLIL research will allow us to ascertain whether the same patterns emerge as in these initial studies or a completely new picture transpires on the ways in which CLIL is functioning with all types of learners in order to base future pedagogical and political decisions on the data obtained.

## 2.10. Key success factors to attain inclusion in CLIL

The afore-mentioned research has also allowed key success factors to be distilled in guaranteeing attention to diversity within CLIL programs. A framework with 22 key success indicators has been originally articulated for effective diversity-sensitive CLIL programs (cf. Pérez Cañado in press for 2024). Following Kirss et al.'s (2021) taxonomy, they are grouped into *input* and *process* factors. The former hinge on three main fronts (*policy and ideology, resources, and curriculum decisions*), while the latter affect four main aspects (namely, *school climate, attitudes, and beliefs; school teaching and*

*practice, collaboration, and support*). Many of these success factors are reliant on macro-level decisions stemming from the educational authorities (e.g. questions of ratio, language level certification, or the types of subjects taught through CLIL). However, another important batch of indicators depend directly on schools and teachers (including enhanced coordination, the development of student-centered methodologies, or the motivation and attitude necessary for these programs to be successful for all). Some of the most conspicuous ones are now foregrounded.

To begin with, at the *policy* level, an adjustment of regulations should be effected in order to reduce class size (teacher-student ratio). *Resource-wise*, materials need to be tiered-level and adapted to different student levels (especially linguistic). An adequate language level on the part of students and a very high competence on the part of teachers also need to be guaranteed for CLIL to work successfully with all types of achievers. *Vis-à-vis* the *curriculum*, three main indicators transpire as crucial: reduction of content load, as said contents are recycled in subsequent grades and educational stages; reorientation of the subjects taught in the target language, as some of them are more amenable to being taught through CLIL than others (e.g. Spanish History should be maintained in the L1); and provision of continuity for subjects taught through the target language, so that they are not implemented in different languages across grades. In terms of *school and teaching practice*, a variety of student-centered methodologies and types of groupings (cooperative learning, tasks, projects, gamification, flipped classroom), together with across-the-board access to ICTs, should be favored. *Collaboration* is another major area which accounts for success: here, time for bilingual teachers to coordinate within their in-school schedule, coordination with language assistants, and parental involvement through multi-tiered systems of support should all be promoted. *Support* also has an important weight, especially regarding teacher development options on attention to diversity in bilingual education and adequate training for language assistants. And, finally, two last crucial success factors pertain to *school climate, attitudes, and beliefs*: there needs to be awareness that setting diversity-sensitive measures firmly in place takes time and maintenance of a positive attitude towards the possibility of CLIL being for all, because it has been found to have a major impact on how these programs function.

The validation of such indicators should seriously inform future investigation on bilingual education and an empirically validated and full-fledged quality assessment framework for CLIL should be set up for CLIL.<sup>2</sup> In this manner, a common standard for multilingual education would be established, involving the design of an evaluation rubric with quality control indicators which would serve as an assessment instrument for internal purposes and for external inspections. Self- and co-evaluation of multilingual and multicultural teaching practices could thus be promoted among those instructors who teach academic content in a different language. Those bilingual subjects, strands, degrees, or schools which satisfy the criteria would receive an official certificate or quality seal, which guarantees the adequate implementation of core CLIL principles for all.

### 3. Conclusion

The present article has addressed the crux of whether the challenge posed by catering to diversity in increasingly inclusive CLIL programs has jeopardized the latter or has simply changed the rules of the game. In order to address this overarching question, the ten main fronts on which the impact of diversity has been most intensely felt in bilingual education have been canvassed, showcasing what the situation was prior to the entrance of differentiation in the bilingual scene, the changes which have been operated following its accommodation, and where the future lies in order for the inclusive CLIL agenda to continue advancing unfettered. The overarching take-away is that attention to diversity has been a positive game-changer—rather than a deal-breaker—in CLIL, as it has forced stakeholders to forge new ground and go above and beyond in creating inclusive learning spaces within it.

Indeed, in this sense, the concept of diversity has been substantially modified and broadened via a brand-new theoretical framework. A growing body of robust research has shot down claims that CLIL is elitist and segregative, evincing that it is actually leveling the playing field and working successfully across different settings and with very diverse types of students. Key areas of expertise have also been identified which allow us to learn from the best practices of others in providing diversity-sensitive instruction, and language and methodology have undergone considerable upgrading and updating in order to successfully enact differentiation in bilingual classrooms. Original materials with interactive, multimodal, and tiered-level traits have equally been designed to guide future iterations in this terrain and the role of the L1 has been reconfigured from outcast to crucial support strategy. Teacher education has undergone upskilling and fine-tuning to respond to newly diagnosed needs, multi-tiered systems of support have been reinforced to ensure

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2 This is in fact already being undertaken through the European project “One Stop CLIL Europe” (KA220-SCH-05539825).

parental engagement and empowerment, and the focus of research has shifted considerably, veering towards trichotomization and specificity in SWOT analyses. Finally, key success factors have been distilled and taxonomized for bilingual education programs to be effective or all.

Thus, this overview clearly champions the need for systemic change in order for bilingual education to become accessible to all. CLIL is very much alive and will continue to throw new curveballs our way, but, as this article has evinced, we have the experience, the resources, the faith, and the evidence to step up to them with confidence. Navigating the both exciting and daunting challenge at hand—and those which still lie ahead—will be essential to ensure that CLIL delivers enhanced learning experiences for all in a constantly changing bilingual scenario. To do so, we will have to vary the mix of resources and initiatives along the way, supported by close stakeholder involvement and driven by stalwart empirical evidence, which is what will, ultimately, continue to keep the metaphorical CLIL train on track.



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# Attaining inclusion in bilingual programs: Key factors for success

## La atención a la diversidad en los programas bilingües: Factores clave de éxito

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### **Abstract**

This article carries out a comparison of frontline stakeholder perspectives in order to determine the most successful practices to cater to diversity in bilingual education. It conflates school effectiveness research and attention to diversity in CLIL programs for the first time and reports on a cross-sectional concurrent triangulation mixed methods study with 2,093 teachers and students in 36 Primary and Secondary schools across the whole of Spain. It employs data, methodological, investigator, and location triangulation in order to determine the potential of CLIL to provide diversity-sensitive teaching on the main curricular and organizational levels of bilingual programs. On the basis of this data, it then sets forth an original framework of key success factors for attention to diversity in CLIL, comprising 22 indicators, grouped into input and success factors, macro-/meso-/micro-levels, and encompassing seven main fronts which range from policy and ideological issues to school and teaching practice. Three overarching take-aways ensue from our findings. First, a conspicuous overall alignment of teacher and student views can be discerned as regards successful strategies for inclusive CLIL programs, something which points to the fact that their opinions are a realistic snapshot of grassroots practice. A second conclusion is that headway is notably being made in this area, as key factors for success have increasingly been identified as present in CLIL classrooms by both cohorts. And, finally, there are certain recurrent issues which the specialized literature has repeatedly identified as niches to be filled, but which still stand in need of being adequately addressed (e.g. time for coordination



within teachers' official timetables or the preparation of language assistants). The main pedagogical implications accruing from the data are signposted and future pathways for progression are mapped out to continue reinforcing a success-prone implementation of diversity-sensitive teaching in the CLIL classroom.

*Keywords:* CLIL, effectiveness, success, diversity, inclusion, differentiation

### **Resumen**

El presente artículo realiza una comparación de las perspectivas de los participantes clave en los programas bilingües con el fin de determinar las prácticas más exitosas para atender la diversidad en AICLE. Combina la investigación sobre la eficiencia escolar con la atención a la diversidad en los programas AICLE por primera vez y realiza un estudio transversal de métodos mixtos y triangulación concurrente con 2.093 profesores y estudiantes en 36 centros de Educación Primaria y Secundaria en España. Emplea triangulación de datos, metodológica, investigadora y de lugar para determinar el potencial de AICLE para proporcionar una enseñanza sensible a la diversidad en los principales niveles curriculares y organizativos de los programas bilingües. Basándose en estos datos, establece un marco original de factores clave de éxito para la atención a la diversidad en AICLE, que comprende 22 indicadores, agrupados en factores de entrada y de éxito y macro-/meso-/micro-niveles, y que abarca siete frentes principales que oscilan desde la política e ideología hasta el centro y la práctica docente. Tres conclusiones principales emanan de nuestros hallazgos. En primer lugar, se puede discernir una armonía entre los puntos de vista de docentes y discentes con respecto a las estrategias exitosas en los programas AICLE inclusivos, algo que parece indicar que sus opiniones son un reflejo fiel de la práctica a pie de aula. Un segundo hallazgo relevante es que se están logrando avances notables en esta área, ya que ambas cohortes identifican un número creciente de factores clave para el éxito presentes en las aulas AICLE. Y, por último, existen ciertos temas recurrentes que la literatura especializada ha identificado reiteradamente como nichos a cubrir, pero que aún necesitan ser adecuadamente abordados. Se señalan las principales implicaciones pedagógicas derivadas de los datos y se explicitan futuras áreas de mejora para continuar reforzando una implementación exitosa de la atención a la diversidad en el aula bilingüe.

*Palabras clave:* AICLE, eficiencia, éxito, diversidad, inclusión, diferenciación

## Introduction

Bilingual education initiatives have been decisively taking root across our continent for the past two decades. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), considered the European approach to favor plurilingualism, “has been a tremendous success story and its influence on practice is currently expanding quickly across Europe and beyond” (Meyer, 2010: 12). In its steadfast advance within the language teaching arena, it has been growing and evolving in exciting new directions, posing new challenges and throwing new curveballs to researchers, gate-keepers, practitioners, and participants alike. Two of the most conspicuous ones are undoubtedly determining the factors which shape the effectiveness of bilingual education and catering to diversity in CLIL.

Indeed, on the one hand, the variety of approaches encompassed within CLIL has led to a characterization controversy (Pérez Cañado, 2016) which continues to run deep and which prominently underscores the need to determine “what good CLIL practice should look like” (Mearns et al., 2023: 3) and to identify successful and “representative pedagogical practices” (Bruton, 2011: 5) within this approach. In turn, the increased mainstreaming of CLIL school- and program-wide (Junta de Andalucía, 2017) raises questions of whether it can truly create inclusive learning spaces, accommodate diversity, and encourage opportunity and access for all types of students. This remains “a blind spot” (Mearns et al., 2023: 13) in the specialized research. Taken in conjunction, both issues acquire a particularly sharp relief for the sustainability of CLIL programs. In Kirss et al.’s (2021: 192-3) words: “during the times of [...] diversification of student populations, education policy-makers are in critical need of up-to-date and trustworthy concise information on the evidence of what works in multilingual education and what factors contribute to its effectiveness”.

This is precisely the remit of the present article. It will address these two crucial aspects on the current CLIL agenda concomitantly by determining key success factors to cater for diverse student populations in bilingual education programs, an issue on which there is not as yet a structured research agenda. In doing so, it reports on a cross-sectional concurrent triangulation mixed methods study (Creswell, 2013) with 2,093 students and teachers which is distinctive on many fronts. To begin with, it polls frontline stakeholders’ self-reported perceptions, which are

particularly relevant in our field, as “their interpretations and beliefs are crucial to understand how the CLIL programme is socially viewed, understood and constructed, and the expectations it raises” (Barrios Espinosa, 2019: 1). In addition, it works with most numerically and geographically representative sample to date in studies on this issue and factors in diverse types of triangulation: methodological (it not only employs questionnaires, as in prior research -Casas Pedrosa & Rascón Moreno, 2023-, but also semi-structured interviews), data (as it polls students and teachers), and location triangulation (since it works with both Primary and Secondary Education). Moreover, it does so within a country -Spain- with a firmly entrenched monolingual tradition (Ruiz de Zarobe & Lasagabaster, 2010) and which is considered to be a representative microcosm of the variegated CLIL landscape given the heterogeneity of models implemented across both its monolingual and bilingual communities (Pérez Cañado, 2012). Finally, it also extracts the chief pedagogical implications accruing from the data by distilling key success factors from an empirically valid and multifaceted perspective and drawing up an original three-pronged framework with concrete criteria which can be applied at the grassroots and policy-making levels in order to allow CLIL to continue advancing unfettered on the language education scene. After framing the investigation against the backdrop of prior research on school effectiveness research and on the challenge of diversity, the article goes on to describe the research design of the study, present and discuss its principal findings, and map out future pathways for progression through a new output-, input- and process-oriented model of key success factors for attention to diversity in CLIL.

### **The theoretical backdrop: Factors influencing the effectiveness of inclusive bilingual programs**

School effectiveness research (SER) has traditionally aimed to identify key factors accountable for educational success (Kirss et al., 2021). However, it “has been only marginally addressed in multilingual education contexts” (Kirss et al., 2021: 1). In fact, according to these same authors, research on school effectiveness and on bilingual education has “largely developed as separate research paradigms” (Kirss et al., 2021: 1). Therefore, current studies on effective education do not provide clear evidence or conclusions about key success factors in bilingual education, lacking

a systematic approach. This dearth of research becomes notably more conspicuous when attention to diversity within CLIL programs is factored in. Nonetheless, the conflation of SER and bilingual education has been approximated from a four-pronged perspective. To begin with, general frameworks on factors influencing the effectiveness of bilingual programs have been set forth by key figures, based on research, observation, and critical reflection. Institutional proposals have also been conceptualized by renowned associations (e.g. the Center for Applied Linguistics in the US or the British Council in Europe). More recently, systematic reviews (both holistic and in specific contexts like The Netherlands) have also been put forward. And, finally, questionnaires at different educational levels (Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary) and countries (Spain, Austria, Germany, Finland, pan-European) have also tapped into how diversity is being successfully accommodated in CLIL programs, albeit without a specific focus on identifying key success factors. Let us now examine each of these overarching research strands in turn.

Within the first thematic block, key figures have itemized factors that need to be set in place for bilingual programs to be effective. Tabatadze (2015), basing herself on Baker (2006), has isolated five key factors influencing the effectiveness of CLIL endeavors. These include type of program, human resources and school leadership and administration (a solid top-down push is necessary from educational authorities, together with legislative changes and benchmarking), teachers' professional development (through pre- and in-service teacher education programs, resources, and an incentive system), bilingual education as a shared vision of the whole school (here, the creation of a common standard of education is highly advisable), and community and parental involvement in designing and implementing bilingual education initiatives (via, e.g., extensive awareness-raising). In turn, Meyer (2010) also expounds on quality criteria for successful and sustainable CLIL, with a more specific focus on teaching and learning. In this sense, he identifies six core strategies: rich (meaningful, challenging, and authentic) input, scaffolding learning (crucial to reduce the cognitive and linguistic load of the input and to support language production), abundant interaction and pushed output (triggered by tasks, whose design lies at the heart of CLIL lessons), adding the intercultural dimension (by approximating various topics from different cultural angles), fostering higher-order thinking skills

(HOTS), and favoring sustainable learning (to ensure knowledge sticks and becomes deeply rooted in students' long-term memory).

In addition to these research-based and observation-induced proposals, more institutionally substantiated frameworks have been delineated on both sides of the Atlantic. In the US, a quality scheme for the effective analysis, development, and monitoring of dual language programs has been designed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) through its manual *Guiding Principles for Dual Education* (Howard et al., 2018). It has become an essential reference for schools which implement these types of initiatives across the country. It identifies, in a flexible way, seven common strands, connected to effectiveness and firmly grounded in research outcomes, which are subdivided into concrete principles and key points, evaluated by means of progress indicators in the form of reachable levels of program alignment.

The strands span seven main dimensions. To begin with, programme structure measures the attainment of biliteracy and bilingualism, as well as of sociocultural competence, equity, leadership and ongoing planning, assessment and implementation. The curriculum is another crucial dimension, where three key principles are evaluated, namely, the revision of the curriculum, the alignment of the curriculum with standards, and the effective inclusion of technology in the process. Within instruction, the core aspects gauged include the use of student-centered methodologies, fidelity of instruction to the model, inclusion of strategies to achieve the core goals of dual education, and, once again, integration of technology in the learning process. Assessment and accountability also figure prominently in the CAL framework, and they revolve around issues such as attunement of student assessment with program objectives, language standards, and content; the introduction of infrastructure to support evaluation; the use of diverse methods in both languages for the collection and tracking of data; and the systematic measurement of student achievement with regard to the established goals. The fifth strand addresses staff quality and professional development, and assesses recruitment of high-quality teachers, professional development for dual-language education staff, and collaboration with other institutions. Family and community also acquire a sharp relief within this proposal, rating the introduction of adequate infrastructure to support relations between families and the community, the promotion of family engagement through activities, and the effective involvement of community members and families to

foster home-school links. The last factor considered affects support and resources, and it is calibrated by means of support by all stakeholders of the program, adequate and equitable funding, and the search for substantial back-up vis-à-vis program needs.

In turn, on the European continent, another recent proposal for quality assurance of bilingual programs has been propounded by the British Council, via its Self-assessment Framework for School Leadership Teams (British Council, 2021). It presents a toolkit for debate and self-assessment within schools which hinges on five main areas, usefully structured in terms of indicators and comprising features of highly effective practices, challenging questions, and a self-assessment template with strengths, areas for improvement, and future priorities. The initial thematic block pertains to self-assessment to improve schools and stresses the whole-school collaborative approach, the importance of ongoing professional development for the entire school team, and the regular assessment, via research, of educational achievements to continue ameliorating the learning process. Leadership for learning then places the onus on student-centered, dialogue-based methodologies, fostered from a three-pronged perspective: via the capacity of the management team to generate an attitude of leadership, through ongoing teacher reflection on the improvement of their pedagogical practice, and by supporting learners to become the protagonists of their own learning process. The third indicator -leadership for change- is achieved by reinforcing the social, economic, and cultural ties with the local community, by involving all key stakeholders in the strategic planning for ongoing improvement, and by adopting a hands-on approach to practically implement changes and upgrades. In turn, leadership and staff management is linked to school management, duties, and responsibilities. It lays out a management strategy, relies on ongoing staff development, and fosters a policy of wellbeing, equity, and balance. The final indicator -resource management to promote equity- is underpinned by the equitable use of economic and material resources and by the adequate and flexible deployment of the variety of resources available (with digital ones being particularly emphasized) to create a motivating learning environment.

A third, and very productive, perspective from which the effectiveness of bilingual programs has been approximated is through systematic reviews of the existing literature in concrete contexts or globally. Indeed, Mearns et al. (2023) have recently canvassed three decades of

CLIL development in The Netherlands and have distilled key features of successful bilingual education in their context. These involve, on the linguistic front, the provision of rich comprehensible input; adjusting language to increase accessibility (e.g., through scaffolding by means of visual support or by adapting materials); offering opportunities to communicate in the target language; fostering higher-order questioning to elicit richer responses; or employing translanguaging as a pedagogical tool. Methodologically, the most success-prone techniques include encouraging learner-centeredness and engagement, conducting cross-curricular projects, ensuring differentiation, and recycling contents. Intercultural and collaborative elements also run through their identification of success factors, as international orientation, intercultural competence, and global citizenship, together with collaborative and team-teaching, are regarded as impinging on the effectiveness of bilingual education. Finally, creating a supportive and positive atmosphere and bolstering learner confidence also go a long way towards enhancing the adequate functioning of CLIL programs in Holland.

A more holistic perspective is favored by Kirss et al. (2021), who undertake a systematic review of research evidence on specific factors conducive to success in multilingual education. Theirs is an innovative and extremely useful proposal of nine key factors, classified in three levels (macro -country/region-, meso -school-, and micro -student/teacher) and three typologies (outcome, input, and process). Within outcomes measures, they suggest taking into account language proficiency, academic achievement in curriculum subjects, GPA, and dropout rate to gauge the success of a bilingual programs. In turn, four factors are subsumed within input factors. The first involves policy and ideology indicators, where aspects such as local autonomy to create programs that meet the specific needs of student populations or the possibility of adjusting regulations (e.g. to reduce class size) come prominently to the fore. Resources also acquire a sharp relief here, particularly vis-à-vis accessibility of teaching materials and ICTS, availability of funding and teaching staff with multilingual education competence, or specific training regarding multilingual education. Leadership indicators also come into play in this section, hinging primarily on commitment, cooperation, training for principals, and evidence-based management. Finally, whether the curriculum has a multilingual focus and can be adjusted according to students' needs is equally considered a relevant factor here.

Finally, another four aspects are subsumed within process factors. Climate, attitudes, and beliefs are the first one, where the multicultural linguistic landscape in the school and classroom is highly valued, together with an overall positive attitude towards multilingual education. An important cluster of school and teaching practice indicators are also proposed, involving the use of the students' L1, a cross-curricular approach to learning, evaluation systems adjusted to the multilingual needs of students, and an interactive, learner-centered, personalized, and meaningfully contextualized approach to language learning. The final two factors are related to collaboration with parents and support from the educational authorities. Within the former, involvement of parents in school life, fostering strong home-school connections, and commitment of external partners (e.g. researchers) to advance the school vision are regarded as pivotal. And *vis-à-vis* the latter, local governmental support for multilingual education (including support for professional training) and concrete support activities to address the linguistic, academic, and social needs of students are underscored.

The last batch of publications narrows down the scope a step further by conducting concrete studies, generally employing surveys and/or interviews, with teachers and students at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary level in order to isolate quality factors in bilingual education. Julius & Madrid (2017) do so in higher education, by polling 164 students and 27 teachers involved in bilingual teaching at undergraduate level. Their outcomes evince that the teachers' commitment to the program and L2 level are key variables for quality bilingual schemes, together with student motivation, language exchanges with native speakers, interactive oral activities, tasks and projects related to everyday language, and availability of materials and resources. More recently, Melara Gutiérrez & González López (2023) center on Primary Education teachers' needs for quality bilingual education. Of the 41 elements analyzed, only three came across as priority needs: the creation and maintenance of a local and external network of contacts for the purposes of collaboration, the promotion of intercultural communication, and the evaluation, selection, adaptation, and use of existing CLIL materials.

The remaining studies center on Secondary Education and zone in on the specific topic of attention to diversity in CLIL. Although they were not conducted with the remit of isolating success factors, but, instead, simply tap into stakeholder perceptions (teachers, parents, students) into



how differentiation is being accommodated in bilingual scenarios, they offer interesting insights to guarantee quality bilingual implementation for all. Linguistically, the purposeful use of the L1 as a lifeline transpires as beneficial for complex content comprehension (Bauer-Marschallinger et al., 2023; Siepmann et al., 2023). Methodologically, the incorporation of student-centered methodologies such as tasks and projects and of varied classroom layouts and arrangements, together with specific lesson design for students of differing abilities, also fosters successful attention to diversity (Bauer-Marschallinger et al., 2023; Casas Pedrosa & Rascón Moreno, 2023; Siepmann et al., 2023; Nikula et al., 2023; Ramón Ramos, 2023). Varied summative and formative assessment techniques and support from multi-professional teams equally stand out as hallmarks of good practice to balance out different learning paces and ability levels (Casas Pedrosa & Rascón Moreno, 2023). Finally, pan-European studies (Pérez Cañado, 2023) have revealed the highly beneficial nature of learning from the best practices of other countries, as key areas of expertise have been identified with can be usefully adapted to other scenarios. In this scene, Finland stands out for inclusive lesson planning, Austria is conspicuous for student-centered methodological practices, the UK excels at differentiated materials design, Italy is notable for the use of ICT options, and Spain particularly masters diversified assessment procedures.

Thus, three main take-aways accrue from this review of the specialized literature. A first lesson gleaned is that studies conflating school effectiveness and bilingual education are still thin on the ground. This is most glaringly the case when applied specifically to attention to diversity in bilingual education, as there is, to date, an absolute dearth of research into key success factors for inclusive bilingual education programs to be effective. Secondly, what research there is on effectiveness in bilingual education has set forth frameworks that, despite their multipronged and differing focus, tend to coincide in the need to set in place measures at the legislative, school, and grassroots levels, and which affect all curricular and organizational levels (language, methodology, materials, evaluation, parental involvement, multi-tiered systems of support, and teacher collaboration and development). Finally, a third valuable reading is that there is as yet no existing framework on the key success factors of bilingual programs that meet the intersectional needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students. This is precisely the niche which the present study seeks to address. Its research design is now presented below.

## The study

### Objectives

The broad objective of this investigation is to conduct a large-scale multi-faceted CLIL evaluation project into stakeholder perspectives of the current *mise-en-scène* of attention to diversity in CLIL programs in order to isolate key factors for them to be successful with all types of students.

It canvasses teacher and student perceptions of the way in which CLIL methodology, types of groupings, materials and resources, assessment, and teacher collaboration and development are being deployed to cater for different abilities among CLIL students in three monolingual autonomous communities in Spain. Two key metaconcerns drive the study and serve as cornerstones for this project. They are presented and broken down into three component corollaries below:

■ *Metaconcern 1* (Program evaluation)

(1) To determine teacher perceptions of the most successful practices to cater to diversity in CLIL programs (in terms of linguistic aspects, methodology and types of groupings, materials and resources, assessment, and teacher collaboration) and of the main teacher training needs in this area.

(2) To determine student perceptions of the most successful practices to accommodate differentiation in CLIL programs (in terms of linguistic aspects, methodology and types of groupings, materials and resources, assessment, and teacher collaboration and development) at Secondary Education level.

■ *Metaconcern 2* (Framework of success factors)

(3) To design and original framework, based on the above research data, of key success factors for inclusive bilingual education.

### Research design

This investigation is an instance of primary, survey research, since it employs interviews and questionnaires (Brown, 2001). According to this

author, it is mid-way between qualitative and statistical research, as it can make use of both these techniques. In addition, it incorporates multiple triangulation (Denzin, 1970), concretely, of the following four types:

(1) Data triangulation, as diverse groups of stakeholders with different roles in the language teaching context have been polled: students and teachers (and within the latter, non-linguistic area teachers, English language teachers, and teaching assistants) <sup>1</sup>.

(2) Methodological triangulation, since a variety of instruments has been employed to gather the data: questionnaires, interviews, and observation (although only the results pertaining to the questionnaires and interviews will be reported on herein).

(3) Investigator triangulation, due to the fact that different researchers have analyzed the open data in the questionnaire and interviews, identified salient themes, and collated their findings

(4) Location triangulation, given that stakeholder opinions have been culled from multiple data-gathering sites: 10 Primary schools and 26 Secondary schools.

## Sample

The project has worked with a substantial cohort of students and teachers, and parents in three monolingual autonomous communities which span Spain from north to south to west (Andalusia, Madrid, and Extremadura). The return rate has been significant, as the surveys have been administered to a total of 2,676 informants. The most numerous cohort has been that of students (with 1,774 participants), followed by parents (583 in all) and teachers (319). In terms of gender, women (53%) outnumber their male counterparts (46%).

If we focus specifically on the two cohorts considered for this specific study (2,093 respondents), the bulk of the students are from Madrid (53%), followed by Andalusia (36%) and Extremadura (11%). Roughly equal percentages are in the 11-12 (39.3%) and 15-16 (40.3%) age

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<sup>1</sup> Parents were also polled in this study, but have not been included due to space constraints and also because they were not interviewed (they were only administered the questionnaire), as opposed to the other two cohorts who are reported on in this study, who were subjected to focus group interviews

brackets, something which points to a balance in the amount of respondents from the two educational levels considered: the last grades of Primary and Secondary Education. An equilibrium is also detected between female (50%) and male (49%) students, with 1% ascribing their gender to “other”.

In turn, most of the respondents within the teacher cohort are from Andalusia (51%), followed by Madrid (29%) and Extremadura (20%).

However, in this second cohort there is more of an imbalance in terms of gender, as there are more female (69.1%) than male (30.9%) practitioners, and educational level, where Secondary teachers (67%) outnumber their Primary (33%) counterparts. Most are in the 41-50 (30.9%) and 31-40 (26.5%) age brackets and have mainly a B2 (34.6%) or C1 (25%) level of the target language. There is a majority of content teachers (52.2%), followed closely by language ones (36.8%), with language assistants (LAs) amounting only to a 9.6%. They are mostly civil servants with a stable job at their schools (55.9%) and have mostly 1-10 (39.7%) or 11–20 years (32.4%) of overall teaching experience. However, only 1-5 (39.7%) or 6-10 years (32.4%) of that time has been spent in a bilingual school.

## Variables

The study has worked with a series of identification (subject) variables, connected to the individual traits of the two different stakeholders who have been polled through the questionnaire and interview.

The identification variables for each cohort are specified below:

### Teachers

- Grade
- Age
- Gender
- Autonomous community
- Type of teacher
- Employment situation
- Level in the FL taught
- Overall teaching experience
- Teaching experience in a bilingual school

## Students

- Grade
- Class
- Age
- Gender
- Autonomous community
- Language(s) spoken at home
- Years in a bilingual program
- Amount of exposure to English within the bilingual program

## Instruments

The study has employed self- and group-administered questionnaires and semi-structured focus group interviews, categorized by Brown (2001) as survey tools, to carry out the targeted program evaluation. Three sets of questionnaires (one for each of the cohorts) have been designed and validated in English, Spanish, German, Italian, and Finnish. A double-fold pilot procedure has been followed in editing and validating the questionnaires, which has entailed, firstly, the expert ratings approach (with 30 external evaluators from Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Education) and, subsequently, a pilot phase with a representative sample of respondents (234 informants with the same features as the target respondents).

Extremely high Cronbach alpha coefficients have been obtained for the three questionnaires: 0.871 for the student one, 0.858 for the teacher equivalent, and 0.940 for the parent survey. The interview protocols, in turn, have been designed for teachers and students following a parallel structure for comparability across instruments and contexts (cf. Pérez Cañado, Rascón Moreno, and Cueva López 2023 for a detailed rendering of the design and validation process and for access to the final versions of both surveys and interview protocols for each of the cohorts).

Both instruments comprise a total of five thematic blocks: linguistic aspects (9 items for the teacher questionnaire, 5 for students, and 4 for the parents); methodology and types of groupings (12 items for the teachers, students, and parents); materials and resources (7 items for the teacher questionnaire, 5 for students, and 3 for parents); assessment (10 items for teachers and 11 for both students and parents); and, finally, teacher collaboration and development (15 items in the teacher questionnaire,

7 in the student survey, and 8 in that corresponding to parents). The parent survey only consists of four blocks because the items relating to materials and resources were merged into the methodology and types of groupings owing to the results of the statistical analyses obtained during the validation process. Finally, the interview protocol comprises one final block on overall appraisal of catering to diversity in the bilingual classroom. It was only administered to teachers and students.

### **Data analysis: statistical methodology**

The data obtained on the questionnaires has been analyzed statistically, using the SPSS program in its 25.0 version. Descriptive statistics have been used to report on the global cohort results for each research question. Both central tendency (mean, median and mode) and dispersion measures (range, low-high, standard deviation) have been calculated.

In turn, to determine the existence of statistically significant differences across the three cohorts, assessment of normality and homoscedasticity has been carried out via the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Levene’s test, respectively. Parametric tests have been run, using one-way ANOVA and the t test, employing the Bonferroni correction for post-hoc analysis, and calculating effect sizes as eta squared and Cohen’s d. In turn, Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) has been employed for the open data on the semi-structured interviews. The data has been subjected to qualitative analysis for commonly recurring themes by transcribing it, coding and collating it through NVivo, and identifying, refining, and naming themes.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Perspectives on attention to diversity in CLIL by cohort**

#### **Teachers: Global analysis**

In line with the first metaconcern (objectives 1 and 2), our study has allowed us to paint a comprehensive picture of teacher and student perspectives à propos successful practices to secure diversity-sensitive

teaching in the CLIL classroom. The teacher cohort harbors quite a self-complacent outlook of their academic language mastery ( $m=5.01$ ) and also their basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) ( $m=4.75$ ) to create inclusive learning spaces, a finding which chimes with those of Bauer-Marschallinger (2023), Casas Pedrosa & Rascón Moreno (2023), and Pérez Cañado (2023). Providing scaffolding to comprehend complex content ( $m=4.75$ ) shines through as a top go-to strategy. This bears out findings of prior research (Bauer-Marschallinger et al., 2023; Somers, 2017, 2018), according to which offering pedagogical support through scaffolding is present in CLIL classrooms to accommodate minority students' needs. This view is corroborated in the interviews, where especially visual and multimodal scaffolding comes across as a sine qua non in supporting differentiation in the CLIL classroom. The use of the L1 to clarify vocabulary or explore difficult concepts also emerges as a lifeline to make content accessible to all ( $m=4.79$ ). This perspective is in compliance with that of previous studies (Bauer-Marschallinger et al., 2023; Pavón Vázquez & Ramos Ordóñez, 2019; Siepmann et al., 2023), where the principled and strategic use of the L1 was a recurrent and successful fall-back option. In this sense, the interviews offer a more in-depth angle on the development of this strategy. Teachers claim that the L1 offers essential support ("They do need reassurance in Spanish"), especially to explain abstract concepts, to translate key words, to leave no learner behind, and to save crucial time. Thus, in order to accommodate differentiation in the CLIL classroom, translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014) and perfunctory L1 use can be an enriching strategy, conducive to an enhanced learning of content, as Pavón Vázquez & Ramos Ordóñez (2019) have also corroborated.

Vis-à-vis methodology, teachers claim to deploy a varied repertoire of methods to accommodate different student levels and abilities ( $m=4.68$ ). They uphold that student-centeredness has firmly found traction in the bilingual classroom ( $m=4.54$ ) and particularly resort, as successful techniques, to peer mentoring and assistance strategies ( $m=4.66$ ) and task- and project-based work ( $m=4.50$ ). Personalized attention in individual and smaller groups is also capitalized on, albeit to a lesser extent ( $m=4.39$ ), together with cooperative learning ( $m=4.33$ ), mixed-ability groupings ( $m=4.24$ ), and diverse classroom layouts ( $m=4.22$ ). The least employed strategies according to this first group of stakeholders are newcomer classes ( $m=2.85$ ), teacher-led instruction ( $m=3.38$ ), and

multiple intelligences ( $m=4.10$ ). Indeed, in the interviews, practitioners highlight that one-on-one teaching is extremely useful to determine students' level and to identify difficulties. They also consider that the use of baseline mixed-ability groups, where each student has a clearly defined role and which are employed in a stable or routine manner instill a sense of security in learners which positively impinges on their learning process. This accords with the findings of Bauer-Marschallinger et al. (2023), where pair and group work, together with spontaneous peer help, were employed to balance out different learning paces and ability levels. Other student-centered methodologies which are brought to the fore in the interviews are gamification, which is held to considerably heighten motivation, and the flipped classroom, regarded as one of the most inclusive pedagogical options, since it allows students to watch the audiovisual material at home as many times as necessary in order to fully grasp it.

Materials and resources come across as one of the major roadblocks to diversity in CLIL scenarios. Indeed, very limited access to tiered-level materials is still documented ( $m=3.97$ ), so that practitioners are forced to resort to either adapting ( $m=4.78$ ) or creating ( $m=4.72$ ) them. On the upside, ICTs are present to a greater extent in fostering methodologically diverse learning spaces ( $m=4.55$ ), as is the provision of multimodal input ( $m=4.58$ ). This cohort further elaborates in the interviews on the technological options they primarily employ to balance out different learning styles: Google Classroom, IWBs, or gamification via Kahoot, Quizlet, or Padlet. The absolute lack of textbook is highlighted for certain subjects such as Music, which leaves teachers at a loss. This is the area on which they claim to need most training and guidance and feel disenfranchised in finding materials: the process depends on their generosity, time, and financial investment, they claim, and they do not feel supported by administrative authorities in this area. These outcomes are in harmony with those of Fernández & Halbach (2011), Casas Pedrosa & Rascón Moreno (2023), Pérez Cañado (2023), and Siepmann et al. (2023), where the dearth of materials and the challenge of designing and adapting them shone through, especially vis-à-vis access to ICT resources.

Although Spain particularly stood out on the assessment front as an instance of inspirational practice (Pérez Cañado, 2023), the present study slightly qualifies this trend. The current data reveal that ongoing evaluation is adapted to differing abilities ( $m=4.76$ ) to a greater extent than summative assessment ( $m=4.70$ ). Indeed, top strategies for



a success-prone evaluation involve, above all, adapting activities carried out in class ( $m=4.55$ ) and offering detailed guidelines as extra support ( $m=4.5$ ), along with personalized and regular feedback adapted to different levels of achievers ( $m=4.48$ ). The only summative technique which is resorted to assiduously is providing different versions of an exam ( $m=4.48$ ). Less use is made of self-assessment ( $m=3.14$ ), varying grading criteria according to different abilities ( $m=4.25$ ), or highlighting key words/adapting the vocabulary of exams ( $m=4.38$ ). The interviews allow further insights into this topic, which comes across as major blind spot in the system, thereby disrupting previous positive trends in the research (“It’s still a big mystery”, as one of the respondents highlights). Teachers consider a greater effort is still required to diversify evaluation instruments and design them jointly, reinforce transparency in communicating assessment criteria, systematically work in self-assessment, depart from students’ initial level, and adapt exams to the differing abilities of students without raising red flags. Considerable headway is thus still necessary on this front.

A final crucial issue to ensure an inclusive education agenda in CLIL affects multi-tiered systems of support, collaboration, and training. In general, teachers consider the back-up of multi-professional teams essential ( $m=5.15$ ) and have largely positive outlooks on their coordination with colleagues ( $m=4.98$ ). The curveball thrown by attention to diversity thus seems to have made increased coordination and collaboration a *sine qua non* for CLIL programs to stay afloat. However, in the interviews, they qualify these views by underscoring that time to coordinate is in need of urgent attention (“There is no time to coordinate – categorically”, as one teacher claims). They have to resort to carrying out this task during recess, via WhatsApp, in the hallways, or at home in their free time, something which very negatively impacts their motivation. The figure of the guidance counsellor ( $m=5.47$ ) is also vastly appreciated and appears to be firmly ingrained in the participating schools. However, parental involvement is only moderately present ( $m=4.66$ ) and overall satisfaction with the support system in place is also lukewarm ( $m=4.49$ ). The greatest training needs emerge on language scaffolding techniques ( $m=4.71$ ), access to materials ( $m=4.71$ ), and design and adaptation of the latter ( $m=4.64$ ). The lowest scores can be located on teachers’ needs to critically reflect on their own teaching practices ( $m=4.06$ ), something which accords with the largely positive outlook they sustain on their

own abilities to step up to diversity. These findings resonate with those of Pérez Cañado (2023) and Casas Pedrosa & Rascón Moreno (2023), where similar highs and lows were found for the afore-mentioned items, unveiling an iterative pattern which seems to point to teachers' desire to fine-tune to perfection those methodological techniques they most claim to capitalize on. Finally, the preparation of the language assistant comes across as a major niche to be filled ( $m=4.06$ ). "You're basically learning on your feet", as one of these assistants underscores. Their coordination with content and language teachers is also regarded as deficient. Maximizing the full potential of the LA has been a consistent concern in the existing literature (Buckingham, 2018; Sánchez Torres, 2014; Tobin & Abello Contesse, 2013), which has not as yet been sufficiently addressed, according to our very recent data.

## Students: Global analysis

What is the outlook sustained on differentiation by the student cohort? That pertaining to linguistic aspects is commensurate with the perspective harbored by teachers. Indeed, the use of the L1 to thrash out difficult concepts is most often capitalized on, according to this second cohort ( $m=4.84$ ), followed closely by language scaffolding ( $m=4.81$ ). However, in the interviews, they qualify type of L1 use, as they claim to be constantly encouraged to use the target language in class, with Spanish not being resorted to immediately. First, teachers "repeat the idea as many times as necessary", paraphrase with different word, or explain in a simpler way. Translation is only relied on as a last resort, to ensure understanding of more complex ideas, key words, and concepts which have not been grasped adequately. The learners polled also evince quite a positive appreciation of their teachers BICS ( $m=4.52$ ) and CALP<sup>2</sup> ( $m=4.5$ ) to attend to diversity, a finding which accords with the findings of Casas Pedrosa & Rascón Moreno (2023), Pérez Cañado (2023), and Ramón Ramos (2023), where students' faith in their teachers' preparation shone loud and clear.

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2 Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

In terms of methodology and groupings, students, like teachers, acknowledge the use of variegated methods to accommodate diversity in the CLIL classroom ( $m=4.32$ ) and the firm presence of student-centered options ( $m=4.44$ ). These results are congruent with Pérez Cañado (2018), Bauer-Marschallinger et al. (2023), and Siepmann et al. (2023), where the student-oriented nature of CLIL was ascertained as a trend which is increasingly becoming dominant in bilingual scenarios. The theory associated to CLIL methodology is thus trickling down to on-the-ground practice and becoming a hallmark of bilingual education. The most successful strategies are held to be task- and project-based work ( $m=4.55$ ) and cooperative learning ( $m=4.41$ ), a view which again concurs with that of teachers. However, unlike practitioners, students consider an element of teacher-frontedness still runs through CLIL programs ( $m=4.23$ ).

In fact, in the interviews, students (particularly in the upper Secondary grades) worryingly report the presence of “bulimic learning” in content subjects, where they learn to memorize and “spit out”, as they put it, contents which are fed to them in a homogeneous way by their teachers. Discrepant findings are also detected on the use of different types of groupings and varied layouts ( $m=3.92$ ), the provision of personalized attention ( $m=4.07$ ), or the use of peer assistance strategies ( $m=4.18$ ), all of which are not as often deployed as teachers would have it. In the interviews the students clamor for more work in pairs and groups, as they are held to foster greater participation, interaction, and production (“we feel more comfortable and we help each other”) and underscore that the language assistant is particularly prone to employing this type of classroom arrangement. Complex content, according to this cohort, is made more accessible through group work. This accords with the findings of Bauer-Marschallinger et al. (2023), where pair and group work, together with spontaneous peer help, were employed to balance out different learning paces and ability levels.

Cases of successful practice with materials and resources are very meager, according to this second cohort. Indeed, multimodality is the only strategy used beneficially to a greater extent ( $m=4.14$ ). However, the textbook is clearly not fitting the bill vis-à-vis diversity-sensitive contents ( $m=3.15$ ). Students do not perceive that tiered-level materials are adapted ( $m=3.54$ ) or created ( $m=3.65$ ) by their teachers and ICTs are not sufficiently present to accommodate different learner styles and paces ( $m=3.82$ ). On the upside, the diversification of materials (textbooks,

videos, presentations, Kahoot, IWBs, virtual learning environments) is foregrounded in the student interviews, something which they claim facilitates their learning process and makes it more accessible, motivating, interactive, and competitive. Their open feedback also reveals that the textbook is not adequately adapted to different ability levels, but that it is gradually being superseded and complemented with other types of more diversity-sensitive materials, which they clearly prefer. Thus, a more positive trend seems to be detected in this study, thereby departing from previous ones, in that diversification of materials is acquiring a sharper relief, with its concomitant advantages in terms of accessibility and motivation.

A similar pattern emerges for evaluation. Here, only formative assessment seems to incorporate diversity-sensitive strategies ( $m=4.08$ ), but students do not perceive any differentiated practice in concrete summative or ongoing techniques, except perhaps for the provision of detailed guidelines in activities as extra support ( $m=3.96$ ). These outcomes echo those of Ramón Ramos (2023) in bilingual Spanish contexts, as well as Bauer-Marschallinger et al.'s (2023) findings in the Austrian context, Siepmann et al.'s (2023) in the German one, and Nikula et al.'s (2023) in Finland, where students did not perceive their teachers' differentiation between skill levels in assessment. Nonetheless, these outcomes could well be interpreted in a positive light, as it could be the case that students are simply not aware of different levels of assessment being incorporated by their teachers, something which practitioners underscored in the interviews they strived to avoid so that learners did not perceive any sort of differential treatment.

Finally, as regards coordination and training, while students' viewpoints of their teachers' preparation to step up to the challenge of diversity are high across the board (for language teachers  $m=4.75$ -, content teachers  $m=4.69$ -, and language assistants  $m=4.67$ -), their perceptions of multi-tiered systems of support pivot towards an average satisfaction ( $m=4.39$ ). They are significantly less aware than their teachers of the support provided by multi-professional teams ( $m=3.85$ ), although they do appreciate the role of the guidance counselor ( $m=4.61$ ) to a greater extent. In the interviews, they mention that, although coordination among their teachers is not watertight, they do witness it, especially with the language assistant. Their view of parental involvement is more negative than that of their teachers ( $m=4.11$ ). These outcomes are, however,

slightly more positive for both cohorts considered than those found in the latest research (Casas Pedrosa & Rascón Moreno, 2023; Pérez Cañado, 2023), which thus points to a shy, albeit gradual amelioration of these systems, which appear to be reinforced as attention to diversity continues to take root across bilingual education.

### **An original framework of key success factors for inclusive bilingual education**

These outcomes allow us to identify salient themes which feed into 22 key success indicators to set in place for effective diversity-sensitive CLIL programs, thereby addressing our third and final objective. Following Kirss et al.'s (2021) taxonomy, they are grouped into input and process factors. The former hinge on three main fronts (policy and ideology, resources, and curriculum decisions), while the latter affect four main aspects (namely, school climate, attitudes, and beliefs; school teaching and practice; collaboration; and support). Many of these success factors are reliant on macro-level decisions stemming from the educational

TABLE I. A framework of key success factors for inclusive bilingual education

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Level</b>
Input	Policy and ideology	Adjustment of regulations: reduction of class size (teacher-student ratio)	Macro
	Resources	Resources and materials adapted to different student levels (especially linguistic)	Macro
		Universal access to ICTs and teacher training in digital competence	Macro
		C2 level for teachers	Macro
		Adequate language level of students guaranteed and adequate contents offered per level, mixing student levels in certain subjects	Macro

TABLE I. A framework of key success factors for inclusive bilingual education

Typology	Factor	Indicator	Level
Input	Curriculum	Reduction of content load, as said contents are recycled in subsequent grades and educational stages	Macro
		Reorientation of the subjects taught in the target language, as some of them are more amenable to being taught through CLIL than others (e.g. Spanish History should be maintained in the L1)	Macro
		Provision of continuity for subjects taught through the target language, so that they are not implemented in different languages across grades	Meso
		Increase in motivation in the content subjects taught through the target language for their adequate acquisition by all students, especially at Secondary level	Micro
Process	School climate, attitudes, and beliefs	Awareness that setting diversity-sensitive measures firmly in place takes time	Meso/ Micro
		Maintenance of a positive attitude towards the possibility of CLIL being for all	Micro
	School and teaching practice	Purposeful and strategic use of the L1 and analysis of the interaction between the L1 and L2	Micro
		Variety of student-centered methodologies and types of groupings (cooperative learning, tasks, projects, gamification, flipped classroom)	Micro
		Extensive use of visual and multimodal scaffolding	Micro
		Diversified, formative and summative, transparent, adapted, and commonly designed evaluation criteria and instruments, which departs from students' initial level and incorporates self-assessment	Meso
	Collaboration	Coordination through co-tutoring and co-teaching, in order to address difficulties, contrast information, and share good practices	Meso
		Time for bilingual teachers to coordinate within their in-school schedule	Meso
		Parental involvement through multi-tiered systems of support	Meso
		Coordination with language assistants	Meso
	Support	Teacher development options specifically on attention to diversity in bilingual education	Macro
		Adequate training for language assistants	Macro
		Increased support for teachers from the administration in coordination, training, and access to materials	Macro

Source: Compiled by the authors.

authorities (e.g. questions of ratio, language level certification, or the types of subjects taught through CLIL). However, another important batch of indicators depend directly on schools and teachers (including enhanced coordination, the development of student-centered methodologies, or the motivation and attitude necessary for these programs to be successful for all). Table I now presents the breakdown of the criteria, classified in terms of typology, factor, indicator, and level:

## Conclusion

This study has focused on key success factors to cater for diversity in CLIL scenarios, a topic which has recently garnered heightened attention in the specialized literature, but remains as yet underexplored. Key informants (students and three types of teachers) have been polled and interviewed using four types of triangulation. Three RQs have been addressed in order to identify the linguistic, methodological, materials-oriented, assessment, coordination, and training techniques which are best suited to accommodate differentiation in the CLIL classroom and to design a brand-new framework of success factors to guarantee they are adequately addressed in order to unlock the full potential of bilingual education for all.

Vis-à-vis our first RQ, practitioners evince self-confidence in their language level and preparation to step up to the challenge of diversity in CLIL. Multimodal scaffolding and purposeful, strategic use of the L1 are regarded as valuable strategies in this respect. A variety of student-centered methodological options also appears to be a reality to disrupt educational inequities, particularly through the use of tasks and projects, cooperative learning, gamification, the flipped classroom, and mixed-ability groupings. Materials, however, are still a major hurdle on the road to diversity, as their scarcity is clearly documented. Against this grain, ICTs appear to be used to a greater extent as a welcome solution to address diverse levels and paces. Progress equally needs to be made on assessment for differentiation (particularly in summative evaluation), to ensure it is diversified, transparent, adapted, attuned to diverse student levels, and self-assessed. Finally, our results lend credence to the fact that diversity has reinforced coordination, although it needs to be carried out within the in-school schedule. Parental involvement also needs to be

heightened and the LA's training and coordination surfaces as another niche which requires substantial reinforcement.

In turn, RQ2 has allowed us to ascertain that students' perspectives run largely parallel to teachers' on linguistic and methodological issues. Indeed, linguistic scaffolding and L1 use (albeit as a last resort) are also documented by this second cohort as successfully deployed strategies to ensure no learner is left behind. Students clearly value systematic language alternation to facilitate understanding of new content. Students' faith in their practitioners' preparation runs strong and they equally perceive student-centeredness and variegated methods as present in the CLIL classroom to cater for diversity. Some tensions have surfaced, however, between both cohorts' perceptions on the teacher-frontedness of CLIL lessons, which the students maintain still characterize bilingual teaching. Learners also underscore, to a greater extent than their teachers, the value of peer assistance through pair and group work. Conguent outlooks with teachers ensue for materials and resources. Multimodality and diversification of materials are ascertained, a positive finding since the textbook is not considered to be aligned with diverse needs. This tendency positively disrupts previous trends in the literature, as a timid yet firm progression seems to be characterizing resources for diversity. Differentiation seems to be less present in both formative and summative assessment, although this outcome can be positively interpreted since students' awareness might not have been raised in this respect to avoid feelings of disenfranchisement. Finally, a modest increase in coordination is also perceived by this cohort, especially with the language assistant, although parental involvement and multi-tiered systems of support are still scant.

Thus, on the basis of this track record, it is safe to say that three main tendencies are unveiled by our data. First, a conspicuous overall alignment of teacher and student views can be discerned as regards successful strategies for inclusive CLIL programs, something which points to the fact that their opinions are a realistic snapshot of grassroots practice. A second chief take-away is that headway is notably being made in this area, as key factors for success have increasingly been identified as present in CLIL classrooms by both cohorts. In this sense, it takes time for attention to diversity to become a hard-and-fast reality in our bilingual education system. And, finally, there are certain recurrent issues which the specialized literature has repeatedly identified as niches to be filled,



but which still stand in need of being adequately addressed (e.g. time for coordination within teachers' official timetables or the preparation of LAs).

These patterns necessitate new pedagogical considerations regarding the ways in which our educational system should accommodate diversity. And these didactic, evidence-based implications are precisely what have fed into an original theoretical framework (RQ3) comprising 22 success indicators, grouped into input and success factors, macro-/meso-/micro-levels, and encompassing seven main fronts which range from policy and ideological issues to school and teaching practice.

The validation of such indicators should seriously inform future investigation on bilingual education and this study hopes to be a stepping stone in mapping out future pathways for progression in this area. Indeed, more stringent and consistent research into quality assessment and bilingual education effectiveness for all will undoubtedly help shed better light on the new challenges which CLIL is throwing our way, provide more substantial evidence to support changes in policy, and allow us to continue developing CLIL pedagogies attuned to the novel needs of an increasingly diverse bilingual learner population.

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