

## ENGLISH TEACHERS IN CLIL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MADRID: BELIEFS, ATTITUDES AND KNOWLEDGE

## LOS PROFESORES DE INGLÉS EN CENTROS AICLE DE SECUNDARIA EN MADRID: CREENCIAS, ACTITUDES Y CONOCIMIENTOS

**Marta Jaén Campos**

*Universidad Complutense de Madrid*

marjaen@ucm.es

### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the teacher cognition of EFL specialists working in CLIL Secondary settings in Madrid. More specifically, the dimensions of teacher knowledge and beliefs regarding the bilingual education programme and their own role are addressed. Being part of a larger study, it was designed as a multi-case study in which six EFL teachers from different Secondary schools took part. Moreover, a mixed-methods approach was followed in order to contrast and triangulate the results. First, they were administered a questionnaire consisting mostly of Likert-type scale questions which were analysed following quantitative procedures. Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants and were later examined following a qualitative content analysis approach. The questions were concerned with their beliefs, attitudes and knowledge about CLIL, its outcomes, the role of language in these programmes and their own ideal professional role within

them. The results show that although the participants' vision about CLIL, its benefits and the role of language diverge; their beliefs are compatible with CLIL underpinnings. Also, they believe their contributions as language experts must be considered. The findings of this study, which could be replicated and extended to more language teachers, can help us design tailored teacher education programmes which take EFL teachers' beliefs into account.

*Keywords:* CLIL, EFL teachers, teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge.

### **Resumen**

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo explorar la cognición de los profesores de inglés que trabajan en institutos bilingües de la Comunidad de Madrid, en concreto su conocimiento y creencias acerca de su propio rol en estos centros y sobre los programas bilingües AICLE. Se ha diseñado como un estudio de caso múltiple que tiene como participantes a seis de estos profesores. Además, se ha utilizado una investigación mixta para contrastar y triangular resultados. En primer lugar, se utilizó un cuestionario formado por preguntas de escala tipo Likert que fueron analizadas siguiendo procedimientos cuantitativos. A continuación, se llevaron a cabo entrevistas semi-estructuradas para las que se siguió un análisis de contenido cualitativo. Las preguntas tenían relación con su conocimiento, creencias y actitudes acerca de AICLE, sus beneficios, el papel del lenguaje y la visión idónea de su papel en estos programas. Los resultados muestran que a pesar de que su perspectiva cambie con respecto a AICLE o el papel del lenguaje, sus creencias son ampliamente compatibles con los principios básicos de AICLE. Además, creen que su conocimiento como expertos en lenguaje debe ser más tenida en cuenta. Los resultados de esta investigación, que podría replicarse y hacerse extensiva a otros centros, podría contribuir a desarrollar formación específica para estos profesores, y que dicha formación tuviese en cuenta las creencias de estos profesores.

*Palabras clave:* AICLE, profesores de inglés, creencias del profesor, conocimiento del profesor.

## 1. Introduction

In the last two decades, a wide number of bilingual education programmes have spread across Europe. These programmes are conceived as educational strategies to comply with the European efforts towards multilingualism. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been considered as the European approach to bilingual education. In Spain, CLIL implementation has resulted in growing enrollment figures. For instance, 45% of the children in Primary Education attended the so-called *bilingual schools* in 2020-2021 (Ministerio de Educación, 2022). Similarly, Madrid, the context of this study, offered CLIL programmes in 63.6% of the state Secondary schools in the same academic year (Comunidad de Madrid, 2021).

Such a scenario undoubtedly entails a rapid educational transformation, in which teachers play a fundamental role. As a result, content teachers, who teach their subjects through a foreign language (mostly English), have been the focus of extensive research at different levels. One of them is teacher cognition, particularly when referring to the beliefs and attitudes of these practitioners towards bilingual education and CLIL programmes (see Hüttner et al., 2013; Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has remained as a school subject, which is one of the particularities of CLIL programmes. In this context, some studies have claimed that CLIL has also had a profound impact on language teachers' beliefs about language learning or their vision about their own professional role (Dale et al., 2018a; Jin et al., 2021; Pavón & Ellison, 2013). However, EFL teachers are under-represented in CLIL research and their sets of beliefs, attitudes and knowledge are yet to be extensively investigated.

Against this background, it is the purpose of this study to explore language teachers' understanding of CLIL and their own roles to gain insights into the impact this may have on ideal practices targeting better content-language integration. To do so, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1. How do EFL teachers perceive their own 'ideal' roles in CLIL programmes?

RQ2. To what extent can EFL teachers' beliefs influence desired practices in CLIL Secondary scenarios?

The following section will provide a sound theoretical basis to explore language teachers' understanding of their own role in CLIL settings. This will be the point of departure for the methodological design, and the results and discussion sections which will follow.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

For decades, communicative approaches, whose target is the development of communicative skills to use language effectively to perform real-life tasks, have been predominant in language teaching in general. But recently, multilingual education, and CLIL in particular, have gained more and more presence as an approach capable of providing citizens with the language skills which they need to navigate a globalised society. Such transformation has had profound implications for language teachers, and English teachers in particular.

This section will review the literature on the role of EFL teachers in multilingual education and the framework of language teacher cognition.

### ***2.1. The Role of EFL Teachers within CLIL Programmes***

The benefits of multilingual education and CLIL over Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are claimed to be related to its authenticity (Coyle et al., 2010) of purpose and language use, which makes the CLIL classroom a more effective context for language learning

(Mehisto et al., 2008; Pérez-Vidal, 2013). Over the last two decades, a considerable body of research has shown that the most obvious outcome of CLIL and other similar approaches is the higher level of FL competence achieved when compared to non-CLIL students (Jiménez Catalán & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2009; Pérez Cañado, 2011; Roquet & Pérez-Vidal, 2015), particularly when it comes to oral proficiency (Gallardo et al., 2017; Gálvez, 2021, Goris et al., 2021), and strongly evident towards the end of Secondary Education (Martínez Agudo, 2020).

However, the decades of implementation of immersion approaches and later the years of CLIL practice have revealed that one area for improvement is concerned with the role of the target (foreign) language. Research has demonstrated that exposing learners to comprehensible input in the content lessons without paying explicit attention to form is insufficient for effective language acquisition (Brinton et al., 2003; Lightbown, 2014; Lyster, 2007; Snow et al., 1989; Swain, 1996).

Moreover, more recent CLIL research has emphasised that language and content are not two separate phenomena (Coffin, 2017). On the contrary, language is at the core of knowledge and conceptual development (Coyle & Meyer, 2021; Gierlinger, 2017; Dalton-Puffer, 2016; Meyer et al. 2015); so specific academic language is essential for academic success (Dalton-Puffer, 2013) in CLIL settings.

This scenario leads to a reexamination of language teaching and the EFL subject. On the one hand, many practitioners have reported a loss of status and their concern that their work will eventually become redundant (Halbach, 2014; Pavón & Ellison, 2013) because of the potential disadvantages of EFL. On the other hand, the reexamination of EFL teaching could be done in the light of CLIL, so as to take more advantage of these language experts (Jaén, 2022) with the aim of addressing those language hindrances mentioned above.

Against this backdrop, the literature has put forward some *ideal practices* for the reshaping of EFL teachers, especially in CLIL Secondary Education settings. Such proposals give response to the claims for more systematic attention to language, incorporate the expertise of language teachers and involve the collaboration with content teachers.

Firstly, it has been suggested that content and language teachers should work together in the identification of common language structures across content subjects (Pavón et al., 2014; Otto & San Isidro, 2019). Secondly, it has been recommended to cooperate with content teachers in practices such as the co-planning of activities (Linares et al., 2012) or the design of assessment tools such as rubrics (Jaén, 2016). In this regard, the eventual goal of having merged templates and integrated curricula (Nikula et al., 2016) could be pursued. Another proposal for language teachers is to advise content teachers on the language-related issues which may arise in the content classroom, and to deal with them by offering some kind of reinforcement (Coonan, 2012; Dale & Tanner, 2012; Pavón & Méndez, 2017). Finally, all these practices would affect the current EFL curriculum and specific syllabi, which would be adapted to this new reality. More specifically, it has been argued that their teaching should move towards a textual level (Bovellan, 2014; Coyle & Meyer, 2021; Halbach, 2022; Lorenzo & Moore, 2010), include activities which “require the use of core academic functions common to many content subjects” (Leaton-Gray et al., 2018, p. 61-62) and even implement genre-based approaches which enable learners to deconstruct and produce texts which they need to decode and write in their content subjects (Jaén, 2022).

On the whole, it can be concluded that these proposals claim for more involvement of language teachers, based on the assumption that their figure could be essential to address the language issues found in CLIL settings.

## 2.2. Language Teacher Cognition

*Teacher cognition* has been defined as “what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p. 81) or the “often tacit, personally-held, practical system of mental constructs held by teachers and which are dynamic – i.e. defined and refined on the basis of educational and professional experiences throughout teachers’ lives” (Borg, 2008, p. 35). For instance, one dimension of teacher cognition is Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which refers to the knowledge of the content to be taught and of the pedagogy to teach it (Shulman, 1987). It has also been argued to be dynamic, as it can vary according to the context particularities (Morton, 2012; Troyan et al., 2017).

Thus, the relevance of this framework for this study is concerned with the need to examine teacher cognition in scenarios of pedagogical and role transformation (Calderhead, 1987), as is the case here. Moreover, this framework enables us to examine the extent to which stakeholders (i.e. language teachers) are open to accepting innovation.

It was only in the 2000s that language teacher cognition emerged as a field of research interest (Sasajima, 2015), with a special focus on the interrelation of teacher cognition and practices. In fact, it has been argued that language teachers’ practices are shaped by:

(...) their knowledge of language, language pedagogy, context, students and themselves, their prior beliefs about how languages are learned and how they should or should not be taught, and the diverse images and models of teaching that teachers have internalised throughout their careers. (Kubanyiova; 2014, p.74)

Freeman (2013) claims that language teachers incorporate their beliefs about how languages are learnt into their teaching. Borg (2008) has also argued that these beliefs are influenced by the methodological approaches prominent by the time they start teaching and that language teachers are willing to accept

innovation if they see certain agreement with their current beliefs and practices.

As for the impact of CLIL on language teachers' beliefs, there is still scarce literature on the issue. A study in Austria revealed that EFL teachers do not regard CLIL as a replacement, but a complement; and that for these practitioners, the aim of EFL still is to target native-like proficiency (Hüttner et al., 2013). This stance is related with *monolingual views*, which contrast with one of the main tenets of multilingual education; that is, the paradigm of the multilingual speaker able to make use of their multilingual repertoire in a variety of communicative situations (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

Moreover, there seems to be an identity struggle among EFL teachers (Halbach, 2014; Pavón & Ellison, 2013) due to the shared responsibilities with content teachers. In this regard, Dale et al. (2017) claim that EFL teachers' stance may vary according to the EFL teachers' previous collaborative practices, cultural and disciplinary identities (Dale et al., 2017). For instance, a language teacher who is familiar with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) will tend to emphasise textual genres, as it has been recently recommended as an ideal practice (see 2.1). In fact, a study on EFL teachers working in CLIL settings carried out by Dale et al. (2018a) concluded the participants' disciplinary identity aligned with functional views of language and communicative approaches and that they were willing to teach subject-specific language in their EFL lessons. In general, it has been reported that, although both content and language teachers see the benefits of collaboration, they lack the necessary institutional support for the suitable conditions to take place (Dale, 2020; Pavón et al., 2020; Pavón & Méndez, 2017).

Finally, other studies have highlighted the potential of teacher education and professional development sessions to help teachers readapt their knowledge and beliefs with regard to CLIL,



collaborative actions and their own role within these programmes (Sasajima, 2015; Banegas, 2019; Banegas et al., 2020). In fact, it is one of the most extended requests among practitioners, including EFL teachers (see Barrios & Milla Lara, 2020; Milla Lara & Casas, 2018). These initiatives could be the way forward to answer the inevitable questions which may arise in these contexts, namely: What if a teacher's PCK and practices do not respond to the students' learning needs? What if teachers' knowledge and beliefs do not align with the demands of the context where they teach?

### 3. Methodology

The present study was part of a broader research project involving multiple aims, research questions and source of data. This section will present the participants, as well as the data collection and analysis procedures deployed to answer the research questions mentioned above.

#### 3.1. Participants

This study was conducted in the Madrid Region. Three CLIL Secondary schools took part in this research. School A is state-subsidary<sup>1</sup>, while Schools B and C are both state schools. The three schools have implemented Madrid's official bilingual education programme; but School A holds an additional bicultural Spain-USA programme. In each of the settings, two EFL teachers were selected. Table 1 comprises some of their most relevant demographic information:

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<sup>1</sup> Known as *colegio concertado* in Spanish.

Table 1: Participant demographic details

|   | School A                  |                                    | School B                       |   | School C                  |                           |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
|   | T1                        | T2                                 | T3                             | T4  | T5                        | T6                        |
| <b>Gender</b>                                     | Female                    | Male                               | Female                         | Female  | Male                      | Male                      |
| <b>Age</b>  | 50                        | 27                                 | 50                             | 43  | 50                        | 50                        |
| <b>Experience as EFL teacher</b>                  | 26                        | 2                                  | 10                             | 15  | 28                        | 27                        |
| <b>Teaching experience in 'bilingual' schools</b> | 9                         | 2                                  | 5                              | 9   | 6                         | 6                         |
| <b>Studies</b>                                    | English Studies-Philology | BA in English Studies + MA in TESL | English Studies-Philology + MA | English Studies-Philology                           | English Studies-Philology | English Studies-Philology |
| <b>Formal Knowledge of CLIL</b>                   | Courses and conferences   | Within the MA                      | None                           | Content courses for ESL (Literature, History, etc.) | None                      | None                      |
| <b>Head of the department</b>                     | ✓                         |                                    |                                |   | ✓                         |                           |

The six participants have diverse professional experience but rather similar educational trajectories and scarce formal education on CLIL. Finally, it is worth noting that the two teachers appointed as head of department are also the bilingual programme coordinators in their settings.

### 3.2. Data Collection and Research Design

Once the participants had given their informed consent, they were administered an initial questionnaire. Some weeks later, the researcher and participants met for an individual interview. Additionally, in order

to detect any potential bias as well as misleading, subjective or redundant questions, both instruments were piloted with an English teacher and externally rated by a researcher with expertise in this field.

This study was designed as a multi-case study, defined as “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context” (Yin; 2014, p.16). Another benefit of multi-case studies is that they offer various examples of the phenomenon under research and the possibility to ascertain shared features and contextual variation (Duff & Anderson, 2015). Therefore, this approach is valid for this context due to the recent implementation of CLIL (contemporary phenomenon) and the reality shared by the six teachers, who have a position as EFL teachers in bilingual education settings in Madrid but in three different schools, which may trigger contextual factors which may also shape their experience and understanding of the programme.

Furthermore, although quantitative procedures have been used, this study is qualitative dominant (QUAL+quant). It qualifies as qualitative according to Creswell’s classification because the data gathering took place in a “natural setting”, using “multiple sources of data” and the “researcher as the key instrument”, adopting mainly inductive but also some deductive data analysis, and also focusing on the participants’ meaning about the matter (2014, p. 234-235).

The first of the data sources is the questionnaire, for which quantitative procedures were deployed. Its reliability was tested, obtaining a 0.812 Cronbach alpha coefficient. For the purpose of this study, only sections 2 and 3 of the questionnaire are considered, since they were the sections concerning teacher cognition. More specifically, section 2 versed upon the knowledge and beliefs about some relevant issues concerning the implementation of CLIL, while section 3 addressed their beliefs and attitudes towards their own role within this programme (see 4.1.). The questionnaire consisted of four-point agreement or frequency Likert(-type) scale questions. It was

decided not to use a five-point scale to avoid irrelevant responses, in line with Dörnyei's view that "neutral items do not work well on a Likert scale because they do not evoke salient evaluative reactions" (2009, p.28).

The second data source was the individual interview, which could be triangulated with the results obtained from the questionnaire. The interviews enabled us to secure the information obtained about the participants' views, so it was a suitable method of gaining insights into teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Although there was a rather fixed sequence and grouping of questions to facilitate data comprehensiveness comparisons among participants, they were designed as semi-structured interviews. Contrary to the questionnaire, they consisted of open-ended questions, which favours a qualitative approach. In other words, the interviews addressed the same issues and aimed to answer the same research questions, but using different sets of data and approaches.

As for the analysis of the interviews, the point of departure was deductive (Kuckartz, 2019), since it was necessary to establish some initial major categories which ordered the materials and topics covered during the interviews. As in the questionnaire, these broader categories were concerned with their knowledge and beliefs about CLIL and their vision about their own role. The rest of the analysis was purely inductive. A thematic content analysis was carried out, so themes emerged from the examination of the interview transcripts. All the codes which emerged from the analysis were compiled in a codebook. Following Saldaña (2009), the analysis was conducted twice: manually and using a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), MAXQDA in this case. Additionally, a Second-cycle coding was applied to discard irrelevant or redundant codes (Lewins & Silver, 2007, p. 100) and to facilitate the organisation into more categorical emerging themes (Saldaña, 2009, p.149).

Thus, it can be observed that the same phenomenon was examined using different sources of data as well as different analysis

procedures and approaches. The following section will present the different results that the complementary nature of this study has revealed.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Questionnaire Results

This questionnaire results will be presented according to the two major sections which composed this source of data.

#### 4.1.1. Knowledge and beliefs about CLIL and its benefits

Table 2 comprises the most relevant findings obtained from this section of the questionnaire:

*Table 2: Results obtained from Section 2 of the questionnaire*

| ITEM  | ANSWER  |
|---|---|
| Knowledge about CLIL                                      | A little - 4 participants<br>A lot - 2 participants |
| CLIL benefits content learning                            | All of them (strongly) agree                        |
| CLIL benefits language learning                           | All of them (strongly) agree                        |
| Content teachers need more knowledge of language pedagogy | Four of them (strongly) agree (School A&C)          |

Four of the six participants affirmed not having too much knowledge about CLIL theoretical and methodological principles, which contrasts with the answer provided by the other two participants, for whom their knowledge about CLIL is ample.

When it comes to the benefits of CLIL, all the participants agree or strongly agree with two of the main tenets of CLIL: this approach is beneficial for both content and the target language development.

When asked about the knowledge that content teachers have of language pedagogy, there was no full agreement: two teachers strongly agree with this statement, two participants agree, and the other two disagree. However, when categorising the answers in the two axes agreement-disagreement, they mostly think that content teachers would benefit from more knowledge on the principles involved in language teaching and learning.

#### *4.1.2. Questionnaire results: the impact of CLIL on EFL*

Section 3 of the questionnaire was the last one concerning the area of teacher cognition and it versed upon the teachers' perceptions about the areas of EFL teachers' roles and practice which, according to the literature, may have been shaped by CLIL. Table 3 summarises the main findings:

| ITEM  | ANSWER                           |
|---|----------------------------------|
| English Teaching limited to EFL classroom   | Five of them strongly disagree   |
| Role threatened by CLIL                     | Five of them (strongly) disagree |
| Relevance of the subject for their students | (Totally) relevant               |
| Students find the EFL subject purposeless   | Five of them (strongly) disagree |
| Need to adapt the EFL subject               | 100% agree                       |

Firstly, the majority of the participants do believe that English teaching is to be done beyond the limits of the EFL classroom, which could be interpreted as evidence of their acceptance of interdisciplinarity. In any case, the questionnaire did not consider the variable implicit-explicit teaching, so the interviews could contribute to triangulating this finding. With regard to whether they feel their role threatened by the presence of content subjects taught through English, four of the participants disagree completely with those voices who see this potential threat as a reality.

But this impact could also affect students. All the participants agree that the EFL subject, in its current curricular design, is

relevant for students. Moreover, five of the participants disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that their learners find their subject purposeless. However, when asked about whether their English lessons need to be adapted to become more relevant for the subjects taught through English, they all think that the EFL subject must be reshaped. This may indicate that finding the subject useful as it is currently designed does not exclude the possibility of a future reconsideration. In any case, as mentioned above, these quantitative results need to be contrasted with the interviews.

#### ***4.2. Interview Results***

This section will comprise the themes which emerged from the analysis in relation to the two areas of the interviews regarding teachers' beliefs. While Area 1 is concerned with CLIL's tenets and features, Area 2 will look at the participants' perspectives on their ideal role in CLIL settings.

##### *Area 1: Teachers' knowledge and beliefs on CLIL and its impact*

###### *a) Positive and negative effects of CLIL*

On the one hand, the participants explored some benefits of CLIL implementation such as the positive academic results, the fact that content classrooms offer a natural context for language practice or that this approach does not interfere with content knowledge development. On the other hand, two participants mentioned some hindrances, mainly for content. Some of the arguments were the inevitable content simplification or the need to learn relevant concepts in the mother tongue:

###### *Extract 1 - Teacher 4*

We cannot take a language that is in the process of being acquired to learn content that has nothing to do with it, because the

content is likely to be diminished or not fixed as they should. It is an added difficulty for learning. And above all because they don't have the necessary skills to express themselves. If you don't have that tool that is the language to express what you are thinking, how are you going to do it right?

*Extract 2 - Teacher 3*

I think that the content is slightly simplified, it is less dense, from what I have seen.

b) *The ambiguous role of language*

This emerging theme shows that there is no unanimous vision of what *language* really means in CLIL. Two major views were present. For Teachers 3 and 5, English is just the vehicular language in CLIL classrooms, in which content is prioritised and language is secondary. However, their vision differs inasmuch as Teacher 3 describes this situation as what she thinks usually happens in CLIL whereas Teacher 5 truly believes that English is simply the vehicle for communication. The second stance, overtly defended by Teachers 1, 2 and 6, claims for a major presence of language in terms of the specific academic language inherent to the content subjects:

*Extract 3 - Teacher 2*

(...) they expand some vocabulary and grammar that does not necessarily have anything to do with the English subject but with other areas (...) academic language. Some specific language, depending on the field of each content subject.

This suggests a more visible role of language, also determined by the specific content matter, its prototypical disciplinary language or genres. Thus, for these teachers, language represents much more than simply the tool for communication.

c) *Purpose and challenges of the EFL subject in relation to CLIL*

The third of the emerging themes reveals what the participants believe in terms of the space their subject occupies nowadays, and



particularly, since the rapid onset of CLIL in Spain. The subtheme *purpose* comprises all the codes which evince what these practitioners think are the main aims of EFL teaching today: the nature of English teaching must be mainly functional. Teachers 2 and 4 insisted that it is their responsibility to teach students how to use language in a contextualised way and Teacher 5 also thinks that students must be able to have functional interactions in different contexts. On the contrary, Teacher 4 focused on accuracy. In line with this idea, Teacher 3 believes that, because of her CLIL students' good command of English, EFL teachers should provide linguistic reinforcement and maintenance to ensure learners make a rigorous use of the target language. Indeed, some of the codes encompassed in the subtheme *challenges* are related to the learners. Although the questionnaires had revealed that it was the majority opinion that learners find the EFL subject relevant, the interview reflections showed rather complex perspectives. Some of the participants acknowledged the gradual loss of interest towards the EFL subject itself, but not towards the language. That is, despite their apparent disregard towards the subject, learners are internally aware of the usefulness of English in today's society, as the following extracts describe:

*Extract 4 - Teacher 2*

I believe that internally they do know that it is important for their lives. I think they know that English is important; and not only English, studying, knowing languages. I think they are aware of that.

*Extract 5 - Teacher 4*

Passing this subject is not a big special challenge for them. It is very difficult to motivate them. And nothing surprises them, because all the resources that we used to have in the English subject and that everybody loved, today they don't. I don't think they value the subject. I personally believe they don't. For them, it is important to know English. And I have witnessed this transformation clearly.

The participants also explored some of the factors which may have triggered this situation. For these two teachers, the cause has to

do with the fact that EFL teachers are no longer the only source of input for learners' learners, due to the growing role of ICT and media in language learning today. In fact, the main challenge for Teacher 3 is adequacy to formal registers. In her opinion, learners can make themselves understood because of all the exposure in general, and the exposure to informal language in the media in particular, but they lack other skills. Moreover, T4 acknowledged the difficulty to motivate learners, while T1 and T2 suggested that students' interest varies according to the teachers' style and how interesting they manage to make their subject. Some other challenges were not concerned with the learners' attitude and comprise codes which demonstrate that students have difficulties when using grammar in context, so there is a need to find alternative ways to teach them how to use grammar in a way that enables them to contextualise it effectively and integrated with speaking and writing.

### *Area 2: Teachers' beliefs about their ideal practices and roles*

#### *a) The supporting role of EFL teachers*

All the participants believe that it is their responsibility to offer support to address the language deficiencies detected in CLIL programmes. Nonetheless, they also believe that more advantage should be taken of their language expertise, which has not been exploited in CLIL. These participants advocate for a model which makes a better use of such expertise so as to make the programme more effective. In fact, they believe that they have a connecting role with the content subjects and should offer specific reinforcement to help learners cope with the specific language in content subjects.

#### *b) The need for more top-down initiatives*

The interviews reveal that the participants regard collaboration with content teachers as a positive initiative. However, they claim for

top-down regulation in this regard. Additionally, the majority of the participants added some practical suggestions, as the following extract illustrates:

*Extract 6 - Teacher 6*

We would realise that it is positive to spend that time together. We could reflect upon our mistakes, we can devote more time, a second one-hour meeting or maybe the third year to create various coordinated groups among the different subjects so that we could have a one-hour meeting for that too.

Some other proposals made by the teachers in which they ask for more regulations have to do with fostering more interdepartmental work and allocating more spaces in the schedule to meet with content teachers.

*c) Curricular reforms*

Another major theme which emerged dealt with some curricular modifications suggested by the participants. All of the participants suggested that amendments should be introduced. They all showed willingness to adapt the curriculum to the new realities and needs, grounded on the challenges discussed above and to favour greater content and language integration in CLIL programmes. Furthermore, five of them stated that a special merged curriculum could be created in bilingual schools for both content and language subjects. They see benefits at different levels. For instance, Teacher 2 argues that the EFL subject would be the nexus to connect the rest of the subjects and such an approach would engage students and would make teachers cooperate. Only Teacher 5 does not see the implementation of a merged curriculum as something feasible, based on his assumption that content teachers would have to explicitly correct language mistakes, which, in his opinion, does not fall within the responsibilities of those teachers.

d) *The role of academic language and competence in the EFL subject*

In this last major theme, two other issues which have already been discussed converged: the role of academic language in CLIL programmes and its relevance in the EFL subject. In fact, two subthemes emerged: the factors for difficulties experienced with academic language and the responsibility of English teachers.

As far as the first one is concerned, the participants pointed at the learners' predominant use of colloquial language in all kinds of situations as the main reason why they find academic language complex. They believe that learners are not always aware of the convenience to modify their discourse according to the social context. Interestingly, three of the participants added that the nature of this problem also draws on an existing similar situation in the students' use of their mother tongue, since they have trouble adapting their discourse to academic situations in their mother tongue:

*Extract 7 - Teacher 1*

But they also do it in their mother tongue. We emphasise the differences between different ways to communicate, so that they do it better. And it is funny, they do it better in a foreign language than in their own mother tongue.

As for the responsibilities of EFL teachers in this regard, they do believe that academic language falls within the scope of the EFL teacher duties as well as distinguishing the conventions in each domain, the social and the academic. Indeed, these teachers claim academic competences are currently assessed in their lessons. Only Teacher 5 disagrees, arguing that such distinction should be made in higher education, once the learners are more mature.

This section has dealt with the interview findings, isolated from those obtained in the questionnaire. The next subsection will triangulate and discuss all these findings in order to gain clear insights into the participants' mindset.

### **4.3. Discussion and Synthesis of the Main Findings**

The interviews confirm the questionnaires' results, but incorporating enriching nuances and subtle contradictions. This illustrates that the relation between teacher cognition and the set of teaching practices is not always consistent and straight-forward but complex and dynamic (Hüttner et al., 2013). This could also evince the natural process of transformations which these EFL practitioners may be experiencing.

When it comes to their PCK, it could be concluded that the participants endorse functional and communicative views. These results would confirm Dale et al. (2018b) and Dale (2020) previous studies, which claim that EFL teachers' mindset is shaped by the predominance of Communicative Language Teaching. This is also in line with Borg's claim (2006) that language teachers' views and beliefs tend to align with those dominating by the time they were being trained to become teachers.

Both the questionnaires and interviews have shown that, despite the fact that most of the participants admit not having a great knowledge of CLIL, they acknowledge the positive impact of CLIL on content and language acquisition. This finding is consistent with the extensively reported benefits of CLIL and other multilingual models (Dobson et al. 2010; Genesee, 2004; Jiménez Catalán & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2009; Lyster, 2007; Navés, 2011; Pérez Cañado, 2011). However, our participants' stance reinforces the recommendations made by researchers to offer content teachers more specific training on the principles of language acquisition and pedagogy (see Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Llinares & Whittaker, 2010).

In contrast to previous studies (see Halbach, 2014; Pavón & Ellison, 2013), our participants do not seem to feel disregarded or threatened by the spread of CLIL. Even though they are the language specialists, they do not agree that content teachers are

taking over their job. Although the teachers in this study believe that more advantage should be taken of their language expertise, this situation does not necessarily imply that their job is at stake. It is rather the opposite. Their willingness to open their classroom reveals that they are clearly prone to interdisciplinarity and cooperation, an attitude reported by previous studies (Banegas, 2019; Doiz et al., 2019; Pavón et al., 2020; Pavón and Méndez, 2017). What is more, they feel responsible for scaffolding academic and content-disciplinary language. This supportive and advisory role is not found in Dale (2020), whose participants showed no enthusiasm towards this position.

These teachers see challenges regarding the students' attitudes and motivation. Although the questionnaires had shown that the majority of the participants believe that the learners find the subject relevant and purposeful, the interviews revealed that some of the participants disassociate the students' attitudes towards the subject and the language itself. Thus, the learners acknowledge the value of the English language despite their apparent demotivation. It could be interpreted that these challenges could actually be regarded as opportunities to transform the subject, which is supported by the six participants.

Such transformation necessarily involves some rethinking of their teacher roles. In this regard, the most relevant findings obtained from both sets of data are that, were it be the participants' decision, their involvement in the CLIL programme would be higher and that it would be beneficial to adapt the EFL subject to make it even more relevant for the CLIL scenario. Our participants' willingness to collaborate is evident, although they report other external hindering pressures. This makes them claim more institutional support in this regard, which is observed in previous studies (see Tan, 2011; Lo, 2014; Pavón et al., 2020; Pavón and Méndez, 2017). Once again, their belief that offering the necessary linguistic support is their responsibility as EFL teachers in CLIL settings opens up opportunities for profound transformations. However, in order to make this a reality, the

participants claim the need to support it from a top-down perspective. Thus, the success of such a pedagogical transformation depends greatly on the support from policy-makers and institutions (Davison 2006; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Ortega & Hughes, 2017; Pavón & Méndez, 2017; Snow et al., 1989).

Furthermore, they agree with the proposal to merge the content and language curriculum in CLIL settings (see Coonan, 2012; Dale & Tanner, 2012). The enactment of this suggestion would inevitably blur the boundaries of their own discipline but they seem willing to embrace this transformation as well.

Despite the influence of communicative approaches, their own identity and role appears to be evolving towards new and different approaches because of the special contextual factors surrounding CLIL implementation in Secondary settings. Teachers 3 and 4 best illustrate this, since they vividly vindicate their transformed role through accuracy more explicitly. In other words, as learners are now fluent enough, they believe that it falls within the scope of their responsibilities to develop learners' accuracy. This correlates with the previous finding that, contrary to content teachers, language teachers are more prone to explicit correction and believe in the relevance of accuracy (Milla & García Mayo, 2021). In any case, with the exception of T5, who holds contradictory views, all our participants are aware of the space that CLIL-specific academic language should also occupy in the EFL curriculum, which also opens opportunities for transformation in these settings.

## 5. Conclusions

With regard to RQ1, the findings confirm that the EFL teachers taking part in this study share the view that they should be actively involved in CLIL programmes and they have shown approval of the new ideal roles suggested by the literature, including collaborative

practices. Moreover, it is generally shared that it is the EFL teachers' responsibility to guide the process of acquisition of language academic competences in this type of educational setting. Thus, the teachers under scrutiny hold beliefs which can be framed within what have been described as the desired ones within CLIL settings, particularly when it comes to supporting more language awareness and addressing academic and subject-specific language.

As for RQ<sub>2</sub>, although our participants are ready to assume these desired practices, their implementation could be affected by the divergent knowledge about some of the underpinnings of CLIL scenarios, which seems to indicate an insufficient teacher education for EFL teachers working in these settings. Therefore, they would benefit from more teacher education programmes about the CLIL basics and the role of language in these programmes (Milla Lara & Casas; 2018; Pavón et al., 2020).

In any case, this study has evinced that the role and beliefs of EFL teachers are undergoing a transformation, which is ahead of policy in areas such as collaboration, and needs to be revisited. The reduced sample size as well as the context-bound and geographical representativeness are two limitations of this study, which could be regarded as a point of departure for future discussion on this issue. If the success of educational reforms such as CLIL is partially contingent on teachers' beliefs and attitudes (Talbot & Gruber, 2021), future research in CLIL implementation cannot disregard the variable of teacher cognition and its dynamic nature.

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