

CLIL IN THREE SPANISH MONOLINGUAL COMMUNITIES: THE EXAMPLES OF EXTREMADURA, MADRID AND LA RIOJA

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Our world is becoming more and more complex, constantly imposing new societal, cultural and professional demands on the individual, such as the increased need for plurilinguistic competences. This situation has prompted the systematic search for new teaching methods that encourage the learning of foreign languages in the school context. One of these approaches is CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) instruction. In Spain, CLIL is increasingly becoming a widespread approach in order to foster foreign language learning in both primary and secondary education. The major aim of this paper is to discuss the implementation of CLIL methodology in three Spanish monolingual communities (Extremadura, Madrid, and La Rioja) so as to suggest future actions to improve its development. In doing so, it will look into the similar and distinctive traits of CLIL implementation initiatives in these communities as well as analysing the various teacher training programmes designed to prepare teachers for bilingual education and what CLIL research has concluded in the Extremadura, Madrid and La Rioja area to date.

Key words: *CLIL implementation, CLIL teacher education, CLIL research.*

Nuestro mundo es cada vez más complejo, imponiendo constantemente nuevas demandas sociales, culturales y profesionales sobre el individuo, como la creciente necesidad de competencias plurilingües. Esta situación ha llevado a la búsqueda sistemática de nuevos métodos de enseñanza que fomenten el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en el contexto escolar. Uno de estos enfoques es la instrucción AICLE¹ (Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenido y Lengua Extranjera). En España, AICLE es cada vez más un enfoque generalizado con el fin de fomentar el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en la enseñanza primaria y secundaria. El principal objetivo de este artículo es discutir la implementación de la metodología AICLE en tres comunidades monolingües españolas (Extremadura, Madrid y La Rioja) con el fin de proponer futuras acciones para mejorar su desarrollo. Se describirán los rasgos similares y distintivos de las iniciativas de implementación AICLE en estas comunidades, además de analizar los diferentes programas de formación de profesores diseñados para preparar a estos para la educación bilingüe y qué ha concluido hasta la fecha la investigación sobre AICLE en el área de Extremadura, Madrid y La Rioja.

Palabras clave: *Implementación de CLIL, formación del profesor para CLIL, investigación sobre CLIL.*

1. Introduction

Attending to the need for globalization and Europeanization (Mar-Molinero & Stevenson, 2006), the European Union has adopted several measures to foster a multilingual society such as the White Paper on Education and Training (European Commission, 1995) stating the well-known 1+ 2 principle, that is, all European citizens should be able to speak at least two foreign languages besides their mother tongue; the Action Plan “Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity” (European Commission, 2004), and “A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism” (European Commission, 2005). These strategies have prompted the search for new teaching methods that encourage the learning of foreign languages, and one of these approaches is CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). CLIL instruction consists of teaching content subjects, or parts of content subjects, through the medium of a foreign language (Marsh, 1994). Nowadays CLIL methodology is gaining more and more ground in European educational systems like Spain where CLIL is increasingly becoming a widespread teaching method in primary and secondary education (Fernández Fontecha, 2009; Ruiz de Zarobe & Lasagabaster, 2010).

The present paper will begin by presenting an overview of the rationale for, and current situation of, CLIL in Spain. Next, it will describe and discuss the language policy, putting special emphasis on the similar and distinctive traits of CLIL implementation initiatives, in three Spanish monolingual communities (Extremadura, Madrid and La Rioja²) during the academic year 2014-2015. In doing so, the paper will also focus on the teacher training programmes designed in these communities to prepare teachers for bilingual education, and on what CLIL research has concluded in the Extremadura, Madrid and La Rioja area to date. Finally, it will consider what actions need to be taken in future to improve foreign language education and CLIL implementation in these regions. It has to be noted that the educational policy described throughout the paper will refer to the public school system (i.e. run by the Spanish Government).

2. CLIL in Spain

The implementation of CLIL in Spain is mainly conceived of as a promising course of action to improve current foreign language skills in the country. The results obtained in the Eurobarometer 2012 “Europeans and their languages”³ (European Commission, 2012, p. 15) have revealed that Spain is clearly below the average for the European Community concerning foreign language ability. As can be seen in Table 1, the results of Spain are 8% below the average for the European Union regarding the number of people who can speak well enough one foreign language; 7%, two foreign languages; and 5%, three foreign languages

	Number of foreign languages spoken			
	At least 1	At least 2	At least 3	None
Spain	46%	18%	5%	54%
European Union	54%	25%	10%	46%

Table 1. Results of Spain and the average for the European Union in the Eurobarometer 2012 regarding foreign language competence.

The Eurobarometer also analysed Europeans' attitudes in relation to learning new languages. In this respect, it is significant to discover that the percentage of people in Spain who agree with the statement "you have never learned any language other than your mother tongue" (p. 58) is 41%, being the second highest percentage in Europe after Portugal (48%). These negative results have led the Spanish education authorities to reaffirm their commitment with multilingualism and take decisive steps to foster foreign language competences among students. In this sense, CLIL seems to be an effective solution to reduce this foreign language deficit.

CLIL methodology is currently experiencing a rapid development in Spanish educational settings, becoming a fashionable term in the teaching practice over the last years (Huguet, Lasagabaster & Vila, 2008; Muñoz & Navés, 2007). However, CLIL implementation initiatives are developing at different paces depending on the Spanish context we refer to. For instance, Extremadura launched its plan for plurilingualism (*Plan Linguaeex 2009-2015*) when the Andalusian programme (*Plan de Fomento del Plurilingüismo 2005-2008*) had concluded. Spain is divided into seventeen autonomous communities and two autonomous cities. Although education in Spain is regulated at national level by the LOMCE (MECD, 2013) or *Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa* (Organic Law for the Improvement of the Quality of Education), the different autonomous communities have the power to regulate and adapt this law to their local conditions and interests. This decentralization of education and transfer of competences and decision-making to the autonomous communities has resulted in a great diversity of CLIL policies and practices such as bilingual sections, bilingual primary and secondary schools, and bilingual projects (e.g. *Proyectos de Innovación Lingüística en Centros* in La Rioja, *English Through Contents* in Navarra, etc.).

The teaching of contents through a second language is not a new phenomenon in Spain since in bilingual communities such as the Basque Country, Galicia or Catalonia bilingual programmes have been in operation for more than thirty years (Artigal, 1993; Etxeberría, 2003; Vez, 2011). In these regions the medium of instruction in content subjects has been both Spanish and the particular co-official regional language (i.e., Basque, Galician, or Catalan). Recently, a third language (e.g., English or French) has been accommodated to the school curriculum within CLIL instruction, thus becoming trilingual programmes. Nevertheless, this has not been

the case for monolingual communities where content subjects have been traditionally taught in Spanish and now they are seeing how bilingual education is beginning to spread in many primary and secondary schools thanks to CLIL teaching. In what follows, we will analyse the cases of three of these communities: Extremadura, Madrid and La Rioja.

3. CLIL in Three Spanish Communities

3.1. CLIL in Extremadura

The region of Extremadura is positioning itself as one of the most active communities in terms of bilingual education in Spain. In the last decade the Extremaduran Education Authority (*Consejería de Educación de Extremadura*) has adopted various measures such as the Bilingual Section Projects or the *Plan Linguaex* in order to foster a growing awareness of the need for multilingualism among its students.

To improve students' foreign language skills, the Government of Extremadura began by promoting the early implementation of a foreign language in the curriculum, thus bringing young learners into contact with the target language at an early age. In the second cycle of infant education (at the age of 3), pupils begin to learn a first foreign language, in this case, English. The next measure aimed at incorporating a second foreign language, namely French or Portuguese, in the third cycle of primary education (i.e., grade 5 and 6). French clearly outnumbers Portuguese in this sense. For the academic year 2014-2015, for example, the community of Extremadura had 138 primary schools including a second foreign language in the curriculum: 116 schools for French, 20 for Portuguese and just two schools for Italian. After these initiatives concerning regular foreign language teaching, the Extremaduran Government has mainly focused on implementing and extending CLIL methodology across the region.

The beginning of bilingual education in Extremadura can be traced back to the academic year 1996-1997 as a result of the participation of this community in the agreement signed between the Spanish Ministry of Education and the British Council. The aim of this agreement is, for it is still in operation, to "provide children from the age of three to sixteen with a bilingual bicultural education through an integrated Spanish/English curriculum" (Baldwin, 2006, p. 94). Thus, the programme promotes the

learning of Spanish and English through an integrated content-based curriculum as well as the knowledge about the culture and history of both countries. The main experiences in this bilingual programme in the region of Extremadura were set up in two primary schools. Nonetheless, nineteen years after the beginning of the programme, these two primary schools continue to be the only Extremaduran schools participating in the project as no other primary school has joined the programme thereafter.

CLIL methodology was implemented in Extremadura in the academic year 2004-2005 when the Extremaduran Education Authority promoted the *Proyectos de Sección Bilingüe* (Bilingual Section Projects) with the aim of developing experimental CLIL initiatives in both primary and secondary education. The fundamental characteristics of these bilingual sections can be summarised in the following points (Alejo & Piquer Piriz, 2010, p. 229):

- The schools can develop their bilingual projects in three different foreign languages: English, French or Portuguese;
- The foreign language should be used for at least one session a week;
- The number of content subjects that can be taught through a foreign language can range from two to three subjects;
- CLIL students will have to take an additional foreign language and attend these classes for an additional hour;
- A language specialist teacher will be in charge of coordinating the development of the programme in the school;
- Partnered schools will be promoted in primary and secondary education to ensure the students' continuity in the CLIL programme after finishing their primary education;
- Bilingual sections will be given official support by measures such as visits abroad for the students, financial support for teachers to attend language courses abroad, and the assignment of native language assistants to the bilingual schools.

During the academic year 2014-2015, there were 265 bilingual sections in Extremadura: 147 Spanish-English sections, 3 Spanish-French sections,

and 2 Spanish-Portuguese section in primary education; and 102 Spanish-English sections, 8 Spanish-French sections, and 3 Spanish-Portuguese sections in secondary education. These figures show a clear predominance of English over French and Portuguese as the preferred option for bilingual education. The bilingual sections have recently extended to other educational stages such as vocational training where the *Ley de Educación de Extremadura* (Junta de Extremadura, 2011) opens up the possibility for certain courses to be taught by means of a foreign language. At present, there are 9 bilingual sections in vocational training. In 2014, the Extremaduran Education Authority (Gobierno de Extremadura, 2014) proceeded to evaluate the bilingual sections of the region and the students' level of proficiency in the target language in grade 6 and 10. This evaluation yielded very positive results in terms of language competence, concluding that the students were able to reach an A2 level in the target language at the end of primary education and a B1 level at the end of secondary education. Nevertheless, it also revealed that there is a lack of teachers with the required qualification and enough motivation so as to develop the programme in all the educational stages and the need for more teacher training programmes.

The bilingual sections were a small step towards a more ambitious objective within the language policy of the community. In 2008 the Government of Extremadura undertook one of the greatest enterprises in terms of foreign language education in the region by launching the *Plan Linguaex* (Junta de Extremadura, 2008) which was to develop from 2009 to 2015. The central aim of this plan is to immerse Extremaduran society, a traditionally monolingual society, in plurilingualism in order to be in line with European initiatives on language policy (e.g., the 1+2 principle). The *Plan Linguaex* consists of several specific actions targeted at schools, teachers, learners, and the Extremaduran society. To begin with, the plan aims to increase the number of bilingual sections in the region and create a network of bilingual schools in primary education where all students will receive up to 40% of the school curriculum in a foreign language. In addition, every new infant and primary school which is opened in Extremadura will be immediately a bilingual school. As we have seen, bilingual sections are a widespread option, but this is not the case for bilingual schools since for the academic year 2014-2015 the community had 6 bilingual primary schools and only one bilingual secondary school.

The Government of Extremadura is perfectly aware that teacher education is an essential component in the development of bilingual education in the community. Although in our opinion a higher level of proficiency should be required to teach in the bilingual programme, one of the main objectives of the plan is to allow teachers to reach a B2 level in the target language and, for that reason, different measures have been introduced. The PALE programme or *Programa de Apoyo a la Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras* (Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Support Programme), for instance, is a specific training programme in foreign languages designed for infant, primary and secondary school teachers. These teachers may be both language and content teachers who wish to improve their language proficiency. The programme encompasses 200 hours which are divided into three phases: the first phase consists of 80 hours of methodological training, the second phase includes other 80 hours to be spent in an immersion course abroad and, finally, the third phase comprises 40 hours for workshops in which the teachers involved may share experiences and design teaching materials. Besides, the Extremaduran Government has set up two projects called *Proyecto Ágora* and *Proyecto Atenea* whose main purpose is to promote the knowledge and use of technologies among teachers with a view to integrating ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) into foreign language teaching and the development of teaching materials. The problem so far is that there have not been any research study in Extremadura which has investigated the efficacy and impact of these teacher education programmes on teacher development towards CLIL and their teaching practices in the classroom.

For the development of students' foreign language skills, the *Plan Linguaex* encompasses several actions. As teachers, learners can benefit from study visits abroad (i.e., the United Kingdom or Ireland) and language immersion programmes in school camps organised by the Extremaduran Education Authority where they spend two weeks learning English or Portuguese with native teachers. Additionally, the plan is going to increase the number of native language assistants in the schools. It also promotes the use of the European Language Portfolio and the CEFR as essential tools for the teaching and assessment of foreign languages. In this sense, the *Plan Linguaex* provides a detailed description of the foreign language levels students have to attain at the end of each educational stage. Thus, the levels for those students who follow only regular foreign language instruction

are: all primary school students should have reached an A1 level by the end of their primary education whereas secondary school students should achieve an A2 level by the end of this educational stage and a B1 level after post-compulsory secondary education. In contrast, the plan states that all those students enrolled on a bilingual programme should acquire a higher level in each educational stage than their non-bilingual counterparts (Junta de Extremadura, 2008, p. 34), for example, bilingual students in primary education are expected to reach an A2 level.

Finally, the scope of the *Plan Linguae* goes beyond the confines of the pedagogic environment (i.e., the school) since it tries to benefit the Extremaduran society as a whole. The regional government is committed to improving the linguistic knowledge of the population and, to this end, it has promoted a network of Official Language Schools in the community. These schools are conceived of as a means of providing Extremaduran citizens with language training. In this educational context, for example, the Extremaduran Education Authority develops the programme Get-Through English, which is completely free and targeted at the population aged between 18 and 30. The aim of this course is to promote the learning of English as a foreign language, emphasizing oral skills and communication in the target language, and to help learners acquire strategies to assume language learning as a lifelong activity. Moreover, the Government of Extremadura supports foreign language learning through the media, broadcasting TV programmes such as *Falamos Português* (We speak Portuguese) on the regional channel or radio programmes like *Voces Rayanas*, which is the result of the close cooperation between the community of Extremadura and the region of Alentejo in Portugal.

As we have seen, the region of Extremadura is making considerable advances in promoting foreign language learning and bilingual education but we do not know for example how this is working because research on the bilingual initiatives implemented so far is quite scarce, with the only exception of the aforementioned evaluation of the bilingual sections of the region (Gobierno de Extremadura, 2014). It is for this reason that there is still the pressing need for more research studies on the effects of CLIL methodology in Extremadura. In this respect, research will have to conclude whether or not CLIL is contributing positively to improving Extremaduran students' foreign language skills without affecting content knowledge.

3.2. CLIL in Madrid

The *Comunidad de Madrid* (henceforth Madrid) is making a great investment to implement bilingual education in its educational system, especially bilingual English-Spanish education. The main bilingual initiatives undertaken by the regional Government of Madrid in order to promote foreign language learning in the community are:

- Bilingual programme by the Spanish Ministry of Education and the British Council
- *Programa Colegios Bilingües* (Programme of Bilingual Infant and Primary Schools)
- *Programa Institutos Bilingües* (Programme of Bilingual Secondary Schools)
- *Secciones Lingüísticas* (Language Sections)

Like Extremadura, the region of Madrid also participates in the bilingual programme developed by the Spanish Ministry of Education and the British Council since the academic year 1996-1997. The integrated Spanish-English curriculum is set up from the second cycle of infant education (at the age of 3) to primary education, in which 40% of the school curriculum is taught through the medium of English. When these students complete the bilingual programme, they go to the programme of Language Sections implemented in secondary education, or more specifically, to the English bilingual section. Here it is interesting to point out that Madrid has a higher number of schools involved in the programme (10 infant and primary schools) than Extremadura, but as happened in this region this number has not increased since the beginning of the programme in 1996.

The Programme of Bilingual Infant and Primary Schools was launched in 2004, beginning with a total of 26 schools. Today Madrid has more than 330 bilingual infant and primary schools. This means that 43% of the schools in the region are bilingual and around 88.000 students are receiving bilingual education in these two educational stages. The aim of the programme is to incorporate English as an essential subject in the school curriculum and the language of instruction for other subjects. Unlike the model of bilingual sections, this programme is implemented

as a whole-school project. In other words, all the students are enrolled on the bilingual programme. Within the school timetable, a minimum of 30% of the curriculum has to be taught in English. Bilingual primary schools teach English as a foreign language, Sciences (*Conocimiento del Medio*) and any other subject of the curriculum in English. The only exceptions are Mathematics and Spanish language and literature that by law have to be taught in Spanish. At the same time, the bilingual programme increases the number of native language assistants who, among other activities, help teachers design teaching materials for the classroom, reinforce speaking activities and bring the target culture closer to the students. For the academic year 2014-2015, there were 1.098 language assistants in primary education and 428 in secondary education.

The Government of Madrid is very ambitious regarding the foreign language levels to be attained by bilingual primary school students. Thus, students are expected to reach an A1 level by the end of grade 2, an A2 level in grade 4 and a B1 level in grade 6 (Consejería de Educación de Madrid, 2010, p. 27). Every year external official evaluations are carried out to measure students' linguistic competence at the end of each cycle of primary education. These exams are set by the Trinity College of London and the University of Cambridge. The results for these tests have been extremely positive so far, for instance, in 2013 86.9% of the students passed them; however, it should be noted that only those students in the public school system who teachers deem to be prepared take the examination.

To ensure continuity of the programme of Bilingual Infant and Primary Schools in compulsory secondary education, the Government of Madrid launched the Programme of Bilingual Secondary Schools. The programme began in the academic year 2010-2011 when the students enrolled on a bilingual primary school reached secondary education for the first time. In the first year of the initiative 32 bilingual secondary schools were set up in Madrid. At present, this figure has trebled as there are almost 100 bilingual secondary schools in the region involving approximately 48.500 secondary school students in bilingual English-Spanish education. This programme works with two modalities of bilingual education: the Bilingual Programme and the Bilingual Section. In the model of Bilingual Programme, students receive 5 hours per week of traditional English language classes and at least one content subject of the curriculum in English (Physical Education, Art, or Music). On the other hand, the

Bilingual Section is more selective as it includes all those students who have studied in a bilingual primary school and whose proficiency level in the target language allows them to cover the syllabus of the programme. Throughout secondary education, these students have different subjects which are compulsorily taught in English like Geography and History, Social Sciences, or Natural Sciences, among others. In short, students receive between 30% and 50% of the curriculum in the foreign language.

By and large, these CLIL initiatives have obtained positive results in terms of research outcomes. Although somewhat scarce, the studies conducted on the effectiveness of these bilingual programmes have indicated both linguistic and affective gains (see Llinares & Dafouz, 2010). CLIL students, for example, show high levels of motivation, self-esteem and confidence in the target language, and they obtain better results in terms of foreign language competence. The UAM-CLIL project at the *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, with Llinares and Whittaker at the forefront, is also analysing and comparing the oral and written production between CLIL and non-CLIL students in specific content areas of the curriculum (e.g., Social Sciences) (Llinares & Whittaker, 2006, 2010; Whittaker & Llinares, 2009). Although the results show that there is little difference between the spoken and written modes between both groups, CLIL students are beginning to acquire the lexis and some of the register features of their discipline. Whittaker, Llinares and McCabe (2011) have analysed specific features (e.g., coherence and management of nominal groups) in the development of writing skills in CLIL students over the four years of compulsory secondary education, observing substantial benefits in the control of textual resources and some increase in nominal group complexity. Finally, research has highlighted the positive reception that bilingual education has had among students, teachers and parents (Fernández & Halbach, 2011). The clearest evidence is that the student registration rate in bilingual schools increases every year (Miranda & García, 2009).

The fourth bilingual initiative in Madrid is the development of Language Sections, similar to the bilingual sections in Extremadura. They are implemented in secondary education and they can be developed in three different languages: English, French and German. When the students involved in the integrated Spanish-English curriculum reached secondary education, the Education Authority of Madrid created the English bilingual

sections in 10 secondary schools of the region. This section increases the number of hours devoted to English as a foreign language to 5 hours per week and three subjects of the curriculum are taught through English. These secondary schools have recently been incorporated into the programme of Bilingual Secondary Schools, so the English bilingual sections are gradually disappearing.

In the French bilingual section, students can be taught two or more subjects of the curriculum (mainly Social and Natural Sciences) through French, devoting a total of 5 hours per week to learning the language. To do this, the teachers of this language section get specific training in the *Institut Français*. Moreover, three secondary schools in Madrid allow their students to follow the programme “Bachibac”. In 2008 the Spanish and French Government signed an agreement to promote the language and culture of both countries in Spanish and French schools and, as a consequence, this programme was launched. Thus, Spanish students in post-compulsory secondary education receive a third of the school timetable in French in order to reach a B2 level in the target language. When the programme is completed, students obtain the double qualification *Bachiller-Baccalauréat*. Similarly, the German bilingual sections include two or more content subjects which are taught in this language. The schools implementing this language section are part of the programme PASCH (*Schulen: Partner der Zukunft*, Schools: Partners for the Future) which aims at creating links between Spanish and German schools as well as fostering linguistic and cultural exchanges among teachers and students from both countries. During the academic year 2014-2015, 15 secondary schools incorporated French bilingual sections and only 4 secondary schools developed their bilingual sections in German. If we compare these figures to the number of secondary schools offering bilingual English-Spanish education (i.e., 98 bilingual secondary schools), we can conclude that there is a clear imbalance regarding the priority given to certain foreign languages. In this sense, the educational system of Madrid is far from being a truly multilingual scenario. English is the predominant language in terms of bilingual education whereas French and German are simply reduced to ‘minority’ languages.

Regarding CLIL teacher education, the Government of Madrid develops the *Plan de Formación en Lengua Inglesa* (English Language Training Programme). This plan encompasses different activities for

CLIL teachers to better prepare them for bilingual education. Teachers can receive linguistic and methodological training either in universities of Madrid (see Olivares Leyva & Pena Díaz, 2013) or in English speaking countries (the United Kingdom, Canada or the USA), they may attend CLIL methodology courses organised by the community of Madrid, or they can complete school placements in Ireland. Despite these teacher training initiatives, research conducted in Madrid has found out that there are specific areas in which CLIL teachers feel they need further training. Some teachers perceive that their foreign language proficiency is not enough to conduct classes through the target language and that they still need a higher level (Fernández & Halbach, 2011; Fernández Fernández et al., 2005; Pena Díaz & Porto Requejo, 2008). From the academic year 2010-2011 onwards, the language competence teachers must hold to take part in the bilingual programme is a C1 level. Halbach (2010, p. 249) points out that CLIL teachers demand more theoretical and practical knowledge about the implementation of CLIL methodology since “they need a different approach to this kind of teaching” and feel they have to cope with the lack of materials for CLIL. Classroom management represents another concern for teachers (Fernández & Halbach, 2011; Pena et al., 2007), especially when learners have difficulties in understanding new content through a foreign language and this situation may lead to disruptive behaviour.

3.3. CLIL in La Rioja

La Rioja is a small Spanish community where monolingual education (i.e., in Spanish) has been traditionally predominant. Similarly to the rest of Spain, the regional Government of La Rioja is advocating the need for enhancing new ways of foreign language teaching and learning, for instance, by promoting the implementation of English as a foreign language in the second cycle of infant education, encouraging the development of a network of Official Language Schools, etc., and it is in this course of action that CLIL has begun to occupy a prominent place in the educational system of the region. In the academic year 2014-2015, more than 20.000 Riojan students (30% of the total) were participating in a bilingual programme. The main bilingual initiatives developed in this field are the *Proyectos de Innovación Lingüística en Centros* or PILC (School Language Innovation Projects), the Bilingual Sections, and the *Programa de Competencia Lingüística Integrada en Centros* or PCLIC (School Integrated Language Competence Programme).

The PILC initiative (Gobierno de la Rioja, 2004) began in the academic year 2004-2005 and is divided into three modalities: Model A, Model B and Model C. In Model A the teacher only uses the foreign language to convey greetings, routines, instructions and frequently used words to students whereas in Model B at least one unit of work should be taught through the foreign language. Model C has recently been implemented (Gobierno de la Rioja, 2013) and it establishes that one content subject is completely taught in the target language. The advantage of the programme is that it allows schools to set up their own bilingual projects. The main languages to be used in this initiative are English and French. In terms of qualification, content teachers are required to hold a B1 level in the foreign language to participate in Model A and a B2 level in Model B and C. To evaluate the outcomes of the different projects carried out, each coordinator must submit a final report to the local administration including a detailed description of the different activities and teaching materials designed for the project, a list of the goals attained at its completion, and a global assessment of the whole project.

As already noted in Extremadura and Madrid, the Bilingual Sections are also a widespread initiative in La Rioja. They were first implemented in the region in the academic year 2008-2009 and operate in all the educational stages: primary and (post-) compulsory secondary education as well as vocational training. Thus, one of the aims of the programme is that students commit themselves to completing their educational stage in the bilingual section. At least two content subjects of the curriculum are to be taught in the foreign language, namely English or French, and the only requirement is that the number of hours in the target language cannot surpass 50% of the total hours of the school timetable. Furthermore, a native language assistant is assigned to each bilingual section. The language competence demanded from the content teachers of the section is a B1 level or an Intermediate level in an Official Language School. Finally, the outcomes of the bilingual sections are also evaluated by means of a final report submitted to the Education Authority of La Rioja (*Consejería de Educación de la Rioja*). In the academic year 2014-2015, there were 6 bilingual sections in the region, all of them in Spanish-English, and 80 schools participating in the PILC initiative, where 620 teachers teach their subjects within one of the three modalities of the programme (Model A, B and C): 590 teachers in English and 30 teachers in French. These figures make it evident once more that the predominance of English over other foreign languages is also a noticeable feature in La Rioja.

A few years ago, the PCLIC programme was initiated in the Riojan educational system (Gobierno de La Rioja, 2012). This bilingual programme is based on the premise that oral and written skills in a foreign language are acquired by using the language in diverse communicative situations and contexts. Foreign language teachers design activities and tasks in their language area to be integrated with activities from other content areas of the curriculum taught through a foreign language. To participate in the programme, teachers just need to hold a B1 level in the particular language. Despite being an appealing initiative, there was a substantial reduction in the number of schools developing the PCILC programme in its second year of implementation (from 11 schools in 2012-2013 to 4 schools in 2013-2014), whereas in 2014-2015 the programme was not developed.

These three programmes represent important steps towards bilingual education in the region, but we believe there are certain aspects which should be reconsidered. For instance, we wonder how Model A in the PILC initiative can help learners to significantly improve their foreign language proficiency when the input they receive in the target language is simply reduced to some greetings, routines or instructions. Rather than being just an occasional tool, we advocate that the foreign language should be used as a regular vehicle for instruction in the classroom as happens in Model C or the Bilingual Sections. On the other hand, the competence students acquire in the foreign language depends largely on their teachers' language competence. In this respect, we concur with Fernández Fontecha (2010, p. 90) in the need to demand from bilingual teachers a higher level of proficiency in the target language so as to participate in these programmes. If we want learners to become highly proficient in the foreign language, teachers should be required to hold more than a B1 level, which is normally the language level that students are expected to reach by the end of their post-compulsory secondary education (see section 2.1). Teacher training is then essential to meet this requirement.

Primary and secondary education CLIL teachers have different training programmes at their disposal in La Rioja, both on a national and international level. The *Centros de Profesores y Recursos* (CPR), for example, are regional teacher training centres that organise various courses, activities and conferences to contribute to teachers' professional development. One of these activities is the organization of CLIL

methodology courses in which the CLIL teachers of the community should participate at least once during the academic year. At present, there are 4 CPR in La Rioja. Another specific programme consists of a series of conversation workshops taught by native language assistants in which teachers have the opportunity to work on their communicative skills in English and French. Riojan teachers can also participate in the PALE programme in which they can complete language immersion programmes in England and France aimed at improving their language competence and CLIL methodological practices. If teachers cannot take part in this training programme, the Official Language Schools of the region offer two courses designed to practice language skills in English and French during the summer term: *L'été en Français* and Summer in English.

Although no official report has been made available by the Education Authority of La Rioja about the results of these bilingual programmes in comparison to traditional foreign language teaching, relevant research has been conducted by the GLAUR research group (*Grupo de Lingüística Aplicada de la Universidad de La Rioja*) in collaboration with the REAL (Research in English Applied Linguistics) group of the Basque Country. This research has mainly focused on vocabulary acquisition and has revealed positive outcomes in favour of CLIL students regarding lexical transfer production, a wider range of vocabulary in the target language, etc. (see Agustín Llach, 2009; Agustín Llach & Jiménez Catalán, 2007; Jiménez Catalán & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2009; Jiménez Catalán, Ruiz de Zarobe & Cenoz, 2006). Nonetheless, less positive results have also been obtained in Moreno Espinosa's (2009) study about the productive lexical profile of a group of learners in a CLIL and non-CLIL setting where the differences between both groups "are less clear-cut than might have been expected" (p. 106) or in a similar study by Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2009) in which no significant difference was found between both groups of learners. For that reason, further research and on a wider range of topics (e.g., communicative competence, writing skills, pronunciation, etc.) is needed in the region to confirm the supremacy of CLIL over regular foreign language teaching in terms of linguistic outcomes.

4. Conclusion

The present paper has offered an overview of the state of play of bilingual education in the public school system of Extremadura, Madrid, and La

Rioja during the academic year 2014-2015. As has been noted, these three regions are experiencing a marked increase of CLIL programmes in their educational system, developing a great diversity of bilingual initiatives (e.g., bilingual sections in all the communities, bilingual primary and secondary schools in Madrid, the *Plan Linguaex* in Extremadura, and language innovation projects in La Rioja) and important teacher education programmes for CLIL teachers. On the whole, the results obtained so far in research studies are quite positive and they show that CLIL instruction seems to have a positive influence on learners' language competence. Nevertheless, in this section we would like to address the major shortcomings observed throughout our analysis. We aim to emphasise what should be done in future to improve foreign language education and CLIL implementation in the Extremadura, Madrid and La Rioja area.

To begin with, it has become clear that these Spanish educational contexts are far from being a multilingual scenario since English is clearly the predominant foreign language when we refer to bilingual education. There is a great difference between the number of schools offering bilingual Spanish-English education and those introducing other foreign languages such as French, German, or Portuguese. To foster multilingualism and accommodate to the 1+2 initiative set up by the European Union, regional education authorities need to provide greater support to the teaching and learning of other foreign languages by giving them equal priority and opportunities in the bilingual initiatives undertaken. Otherwise, bilingual education in these regions will be just a synonym for bilingual Spanish-English education. Second, although many of the CLIL programmes described above have been in operation for several years, CLIL research is still in its infancy in some of these regions (namely in Extremadura) or this is limited in scope (see the research conducted in Madrid and La Rioja). Therefore, further work is necessary to confirm the efficacy of CLIL in terms of linguistic outcomes, content knowledge in non-linguistic areas, or methodological practices, especially the quality of language instruction. CLIL programmes often imply an increase in the number of hours students are exposed to the target language in the school timetable. However, we should be aware that more hours of exposure to the language do not necessarily mean higher levels of language proficiency. Different studies, for instance, have demonstrated the relevance of the quality of exposure over the quantity of exposure to the foreign language (see Llinares-García,

2006, 2007). Consequently, we consider that one important matter for future CLIL research is to analyse the quality of language instruction CLIL students receive. This quality depends, to a certain extent, on the language competence CLIL teachers hold. Thus, teacher education gains considerable relevance to the optimal development of CLIL teaching. Content teachers must be provided with the knowledge about CLIL methodology and the adequate language proficiency to carry out bilingual education (and this should be more than a B1 or B2 level), but in this respect there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of CLIL teacher education in these areas. Are the teacher training initiatives undertaken effective in preparing teachers to implement CLIL instruction in their classroom? Do content teachers acquire the language competence needed to conduct classes through a foreign language? Future research will need to shed light on these questions. All in all, CLIL has become a promising approach when it comes to improving foreign language teaching and learning in the Spanish educational system, but we need to be aware that there remains a lot to be done in this field so as to assure the future success of bilingual education.

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Notes

- ¹ Spanish term for CLIL.
- ² Extremadura is a region located in the south-west of Spain, bordering on Portugal in the west. The region of Madrid is situated in the centre of Spain and is the third most populated Spanish community. La Rioja is a small community situated in the north of Spain. It borders the Basque Country to the north, Navarra to the north-east, Aragón to the south-east and the region of Castilla y León to the west and south.
- ³ The Eurobarometer 2012 was an extensive survey co-ordinated by the European Commission to measure European citizens' language skills.

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