



The effect of CLIL: bilingual and non-bilingual learner's linguistic competence in Primary and Secondary Education.

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Contribution

The effect of CLIL: bilingual and non-bilingual learner's linguistic competence in Primary and Secondary Education.

At present, bilingual education has become a crucial issue for second language teachers, not only in secondary schools but also in primary schools. Bilingual education has social, cultural and professional benefits and it occupies an important position in many educational studies (Madrid & Hughes, 2011; Lorenzo, 2009; Bruton, 2011). Its value nowadays is acknowledged, but it is somehow more complicated to define (Coyle, 2007). Defining bilingualism without specifying a context is rather complex.

In Europe today, there is a desire to improve bilingual programmes, as well as the education systems in which they belong. The governments grant projects that, in general, aim to reach an agreement upon appropriate teaching and learning strategies for second language learning. During the second decade of the 90's many investigations indicated the need to create the basis for bilingual education. There has been a significant change in the vision of teaching foreign languages and most European countries are developing the CLIL approach in their educational settings (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2015; Gutiérrez, Durán & Beltrán, 2012; Madrid & Hughes, 2011; Cenoz, Genesse & Gorter, 2013; Lorenzo, 2009). The CLIL approach, adopted to describe a "new European trend" is presented as a way to achieve the acquisition of effective cognitive and communicative competences in a second language while integrating that language with other curricular areas. Particularly in primary education, both content and language should be presented in an understandable way. CLIL gives the opportunity to introduce children to cross-curricular connections, meaningful interactions, cognitive skills development and a

variety of different cultural contexts.

This study takes place in a European country; it is set up in Andalusia, a monolingual community with 8 million inhabitants, situated at the Southern Spain. In 2005, its government launched the Plurilingualism Promotion Plan in order to provide for bilingual sections programmes in state schools. As Casal and Moore (2009) pointed out, after this Plan the number of bilingual schools has been expanding steadily, from 26 schools prior to 2004 to 518 at the beginning of the 2008-9 academic year, a network of 400 bilingual Primary and Secondary schools were created over a four-year period (Lorenzo, 2010).

The number of researches on CLIL initiatives has increased (Bruton 2011) along with studies where the accent is on demonstrating the beneficial effects of CLIL (Casals and Moore, 2009; Lorenzo, Casals and Moore, 2009 and 2013). Nevertheless, few empirical researches have investigated the effects of CLIL. Therefore, the need for an evaluation of CLIL programs and its effect is sufficiently justified.

The purpose of this paper is to present findings from a project funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (National Research Project Program) and by the Regional Government of Andalusia (Spain). The overall project aims to include carrying out a large-scale evaluation of CLIL programs within the English bilingual sections of three monolingual communities in Spain. It's a three-year longitudinal study focused on the effects of CLIL on the English language competence, Spanish language competence, and content knowledge of those subjects taught through the foreign language (FL) of Primary and Secondary Education students. The project also incorporated different types of tests for quantitative studies (verbal intelligence, motivation, content test), as well as, instruments for qualitative analyses (questionnaires, semi structures individual and focus interviews and direct behaviour observation)

In this paper, we'll focus on the linguistic competence of CLIL learners in one of the provinces of the project mentioned above, Seville. Thus, it is an evaluation of language scores comparing students from CLIL and non-CLIL groups. It analyses and compares results on the linguistic competence of CLIL and non-CLIL learners and suggests a direction for future research.

Method

This study is focused on a quantitative method and it involved the participation of a total of 8 schools, 4 Primary Schools (from now on PS) and 4 Secondary Schools (from now on SS), which were randomly selected in the region of Andalusia. All the chosen schools needed to represent a variety including: 1) urban and rural regions; 2) public, private and semiprivate schools; and 3) schools with an early and a late immersion into CLIL programs. The data collected included the answers of 355 students: 197 students of PS and 158 students of SS, including students of both the experimental (bilingual section) and the control groups (non-bilingual section). The students were matched within and across schools in terms of verbal intelligence to guarantee the homogeneity of the groups.

The analyses presented here are based on the data provided by a content test to measure the linguistic competence of the students. This test was divided into different parts: Use of English, Vocabulary, Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. The quantitative data collected and analysed here refers to Use of English, Vocabulary, listening and reading.

A Non-metric Multidimensional Scaling (PROXSCAL) method was used to check out the validity of each version of the English test (one for the PS and another one for the SS). The Stress and Fit measures show effectively how the resulted distances come close to the original distances. The results obtained presented a very good solution for the adjustment indicators. Each of the four Stress measures are close to 0 ($S_{bn}=0,0194$ in the PS' version and $S_{bn}=0,01534$ in the SS' version), whereas the DAF (Dispersion Accounted For) and the CCT (Tucker's Coefficient of Congruence) are close to 1 ($CCT=0,98998$ in the PS' version and $CCT=0,99230$ in the SS' version), which denotes excellent results. Cronbach's Alpha statistic was calculated as a measure of internal consistency and reliability of each test. In the English Tests, the scores obtained were Cronbach's Alpha= $0,926$ (PS' version) and Cronbach's Alpha= $0,957$ (SS' version). The questions related to the Listening in the SS' version presented some problems in the internal consistency so the results obtained in this test were interpreted with caution. The results obtained in the other parts of the test were compared according to the type of school (public/private) and to the kind of program taught (bilingual/non-bilingual). In order to do so, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was carried out.

Expected Outcomes

Multivariate analyses was performed on the quantitative data and it showed the existence of significant differences in relation to the linguistic competences of the students in favour of the bilingual sections both in primary and secondary schools. In this way, all CLIL learners outperformed their non-CLIL peers. Besides, each part of the test was disaggregated and there were some differences in their scorings in relation to the different parts of the test. On the one hand, primary students achieved their highest scores in Listening, Use of English, Vocabulary, Reading and Listening in that order, while on the other hand, secondary students did their best in the following order: Use of English, Vocabulary, Reading and Listening. The comparison of the students' scores also identified differences across schools. The type of school was a crucial variable that acted on the results. Thus, no statistically significant differences were found when considering both the school and the section, i.e. the type of school covered the effect of the CLIL program up. After disaggregating the students' scores

according to the schools and sections, an apparent inconsistency occurred as the students of some non-bilingual sections outperformed students of the bilingual sections in other schools. Many variables can explain that, such as socioeconomic and organizational factors or motivational and educational aspects.

This quantitative research based on learners' test scores is important to establish some primary connections between observed CLIL learning outcomes and CLIL programmes effectiveness, although it needs to be complemented with the qualitative part of the overall project (writing and speaking tests, teachers and students questionnaires and direct classroom observation). Therefore, the data and analyses presented in this paper may contribute to preliminary steps towards new key research questions and further analyses.

References

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