



Cooperative learning in the CLIL classroom: Challenges perceived by teachers and recommendations for Primary Education

Aprendizaje cooperativo en el aula de AICLE: retos percibidos por los docentes y recomendaciones para Educación Primaria¹

CRISTINA CASTILLO-RODRÍGUEZ²

Universidad de Málaga, España

cristina.castillo@uma.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7200-7442>

BEATRIZ PRAT FERNÁNDEZ

Universidad de Málaga, España

prat.fernandez.b@gmail.com

Resumen:

Nadie pone en duda la popularidad de la cual goza el enfoque pedagógico denominado Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y de Lenguas Extranjeras (AICLE), que requiere de una metodología flexible para el aprendizaje de contenidos y de lengua extranjera (LE). El Aprendizaje Cooperativo (AC) se muestra, de hecho, como una metodología ideal que cubre las necesidades de AICLE. El objetivo de este artículo es recopilar las percepciones de docentes AICLE con respecto a los retos que supone

Abstract:

The popularity of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), as a pedagogical approach requiring a flexible methodology to learn content and a foreign language (FL), is unquestionable today. Cooperative learning (CL) seems to be an ideal methodology to meet the demands of CLIL. This study is aimed at collecting the perceptions of CLIL teachers with regard to the challenges that this approach entails when CL is implemented in primary-school classrooms. The respondents (n=

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2 Dirección para correspondencia (Correspondence address):

Cristina Castillo-Rodríguez. Departamento de Didáctica de las Lenguas, las Artes y el Deporte. Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación. Avda. Cervantes, 2. 29071, Málaga (España)

este enfoque cuando implementan AC en las aulas de primaria. Los informantes (n= 35) respondieron un cuestionario online de 25 preguntas (cerradas y abiertas). Los resultados de este trabajo reflejan los siguientes retos: uso de la lengua meta para la interacción; motivación; falta de tiempo; problemas de gestión potenciales; y evaluación. Por otro lado, los informantes declararon que para sentirse seguros a la hora de combinar ambos (AICLE y AC) necesitarían más formación al respecto. Además de presentar los retos percibidos por parte de los participantes, propondremos una serie de recomendaciones para cada curso de Educación Primaria con el fin de que arrojen luz a estos retos, dejando una puerta abierta para futuros estudios sobre AC en clases AICLE en otros países.

Palabras clave:

educación bilingüe; aprendizaje cooperativo; educación primaria; retos AICLE; percepciones docentes.

35) completed an online survey with 25 questions (closed-ended and open-ended). Results revealed the following challenges: use of the target language for interaction; motivation; lack of time; potential management problems; and assessment. On the other hand, respondents declared that in order to feel confident when combining CLIL and CL they would need more training. Finally, we provided some recommendations for each grade of Primary Education so as to shed some light on the challenges teachers perceive when CL is employed in CLIL subjects. This leaves an open door for further studies on CL in CLIL lessons from other countries.

Key words:

bilingual education; cooperative learning; primary education; CLIL challenges; teachers' perceptions.

Résumé:

La popularité de l'approche pédagogique de l'enseignement d'une matière par l'intégration d'une langue étrangère (EMILE), qui requiert une méthodologie flexible pour l'apprentissage d'une matière et d'une langue étrangère (LE), est incontestable. L'apprentissage coopératif (AC) s'avère en effet être une méthodologie idéale qui répond aux besoins de l'EMILE. L'objectif de cet article est de recueillir les perceptions des enseignants EMILE sur les défis posés par cette approche lors de la mise en œuvre de l'EMILE dans les classes primaires. Les informateurs (n= 35) ont répondu à un questionnaire en ligne de 25 questions (fermées et ouvertes). Les résultats de ce travail reflètent les défis suivants : utilisation de la langue cible pour l'interaction, motivation, manque de temps, problèmes potentiels de gestion et évaluation. D'autre part, les informateurs ont déclaré que pour se sentir en confiance dans la combinaison des deux (EMILE et AC), ils auraient besoin de plus de formation à cet égard. En plus de présenter les défis perçus par les participants, nous proposerons un certain nombre de recommandations pour chaque année de l'enseignement primaire afin de faire la lumière sur ces défis, laissant la porte ouverte à de futures études sur l'EMILE dans les classes EMILE d'autres pays.

Mots clés:

Éducation bilingue; l'apprentissage coopératif; enseignement primaire; défis en EMILE; perceptions des enseignants.

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Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (known as CLIL) is a dual-focus educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of content from a non-linguistic subject and a foreign language (Coyle, Holmes & King, 2009; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). CLIL has been implemented in schools around the world in the last few years and an increasing number of centres are adopting this approach for their bilingual programmes. However, the success of CLIL lies directly in the methodology chosen to complement its implementation in the classroom setting. Cooperative Learning (CL) seems to be an adequate methodology to complement CLIL, as it develops social skills and promotes academic achievement (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994).

Some of the benefits of implementing CL in the CLIL context have been described in the literature (Moss, 1992; Casal, 2008; Kagan & Kagan, 2009; Pastor Martínez, 2011, to mention a few). Besides, some other works have exclusively focused on CL challenges in general (Baloché & Brody, 2017; Buchs et al., 2017; Pescarmona, 2014; Shea, 2018), on challenges in CLIL implementation (Banegas, 2012; Pérez Vidal, 2013; Pérez Cañado, 2018), on CLIL implementation at university (Granados Beltrán, 2011; Vega & Moscoso, 2019), as well as on the teachers' perceptions towards CLIL implementation in the classroom (Brady & García-Pinar, 2019; Campillo, Sánchez & Miralles, 2019; Lundin & Persson, 2015; McDougald, 2015). However, research on collecting opinions from CLIL teachers about the implementation of CL in a CLIL classroom has not been found in the literature.

The main purpose of this paper is, then, to collect CLIL teachers' opinions with regard to the challenges when implementing CL. The study will allow us to analyse both quantitative and qualitative responses, as some of the questions require a close answer, while others require an open answer. Some of the qualitative responses will shed some light on the challenges CLIL teachers encounter when implementing CL in their CLIL subjects.

Theoretical framework

CLIL is an approach with the dual aim of learning content and language. These twofold objectives imply, therefore, a double effort in students: (i) to understand and be able to communicate in the target language (TL); and (ii) to develop more cognitive skills as well as to acquire competent knowledge in the content area. Besides, the complexity of integrating both (language and content) requires what has been called the 4Cs framework (Coyle, 2006), which stands for: Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture. For the implementation of those four dimensions in a CLIL lesson or unit we, as teachers, need to follow an effective and flexible methodology.

CL is an ideal methodology as it allows students to experience many possibilities and different situations in the bilingual classroom (Kagan & McGroarty, 1993). Apart from the positive effects of working cooperatively on areas such as maths, sciences, or language arts indicated by Slavin (1995), as well as the benefits highlighted by Johnson and Johnson (1999) (psychological health, self-esteem, ability to manage problems and stress, acquisition of more learning strategies, quality of interpersonal relationships, etc.), many authors have pointed out the advantages of implementing CL in the CLIL classroom. Moss (1992) already stressed the benefits of CL for content-based instructions, as it “establishes an environment in which students gain an understanding of content as well as prepare to interact in a social and economic world characterised by rapid change” (p. 113). In terms of social abilities, Casal (2008) also coincides that CL is the key factor for fostering natural communication among students in the real setting of the classroom. Besides, in those communicative exchanges taking place in the frame of a team, the students have more opportunities to develop what Cummins (1979) calls Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) —or the language necessary for day to day living and for informal interactions— and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) —the language necessary for content discussion in the classroom. On the other hand, Pastor Martínez (2011) carried out an experiment in a 4-grade Science class, and the benefits obtained were a more positive development in students’ linguistic and cognitive skills—as they had to solve problems—, more confidence and more cooperation among partners.

What is clear is that the most evident advantages of implementing CL

in a CLIL subject is the time students are exposed to the TL, as they have to interact more (Moss, 1992) than in a conventional CLIL lesson (with limited chances to interact, as indicated by Dalton Puffer, 2008). However, the time of exposure (and, therefore, production in the TL) varies on the basis of the CL type implemented which, in turn, depends on the teacher's purposes (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1999; 2008): i) formal: one-hour lesson or several weeks; ii) informal: a few minutes or one-hour lesson; or iii) cooperative base groups: months or even a whole school year.

It is also essential to take into account the principles of CL (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Jacobs, 2004): a) heterogeneous grouping; b) collaborative skills; c) group autonomy; d) positive interdependence; e) individual accountability; f) equal participation; g) cooperation as a value, and h) maximum peer interaction or simultaneous interaction (Kagan and Kagan, 2009).

But an issue that teachers are concerned with when implementing CL is how to group and the appropriate number of students in a group (2, 3, 4?). Jacobs (2006) considers that a pair is, in fact, a group. Among the advantages of groups, this author highlights greater participation of the members, easy coordination with fewer people to interact, and good starting point in early stages—for example, first years of primary education—so that students can get used to working in groups. Nevertheless, in the case of more complex tasks, a higher number of members in a team would be more beneficial as there are more varied opinions and views, which might also enrich the overall teaching-learning process of all the students.

Regarding how to group students, Jacobs (2006) suggests two possibilities: on the one hand, students decide with whom they want to work, and, on the other hand, the teacher selects the members. When the students decide, they are more comfortable as they tend to demonstrate lower inhibitions because they find themselves around their friends and feel more willing to interact. On the contrary, if it is the teacher who chooses, the groups can be formed following the principle of heterogeneity; that is to say, different language proficiency, ethnicity, gender, etc. This way, values of equality and tolerance are taken into account. In fact, heterogeneous groups are the essence of CL (Kagan & McGroarty, 1993), as the advantages are: more possibilities of peer tutoring and support; positive cross-race relations; and more integration of the different members of a team.

For guaranteeing balanced heterogeneous groups —and, therefore, more engagement among the members—, the teacher should apply certain techniques: (i) assigning roles to the students and rotating those roles; (ii) giving each member some specific responsibility; or (iii) performing the Jigsaw technique (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Griffin, 2015; Jacobs, 2006).

With regard to heterogeneous groups, it is important to mention, in the context of a CLIL subject, the situation of different levels of English. According to some authors, it has been proved that CL helps Limited English Proficient (LEP) students develop three domains such as English language, academic performance, and also social development (Kagan & McGroarty, 1993; Madrid, 1993). That is why assigning different roles would be beneficial when having groups of more than two. Kagan and McGroarty (1993) suggest combining different levels in a group of four students: a high achiever, two middle achievers, and one low achiever. Moreover, assuming a specific role inside a group will facilitate the cooperation among members: 1) Checker or Captain Sure: this member facilitates the language needed for production, becoming, thus, a referent; 2) Bilingual facilitator: for students with proficient English and that are good at the specific content area of the subject they are involved in; 3) Cross-Grade Facilitator: for groups formed by students with different ages so that the older ones can assume the previous role of Bilingual Facilitator for LEP students; 4) Special Roles: these are roles assigned to the rest of students of a group so that everyone has a specific responsibility.

Another important aspect is the role assumed by CLIL teachers in CL. Some basic roles with specific duties CLIL teachers should assume when implementing CL are (Gillies, Ashman & Terwel, 2008; Pavón & Ellison, 2013):

- *Planning* objectives, classroom arrangement, size of groups, and the students belonging to every group and the materials for every student.
- *Explaining* the instructional task and cooperative structure.
- *Monitoring* students' learning.
- *Assist* students in their task.
- *Assessing* students' learning.
- *Establishing* cooperation with the language teacher.
- *Promoting* the usage of the academic content matter (CALP) and the language for communication (BICS).

Taking into account all these theoretical premises, this study aims to tap into CLIL teachers' opinions and impressions when implementing CL in their lessons. The questions of the survey and the analysis of the results are presented below in the following sections.

Materials and method

This study was carried out with the aim of collecting the perceptions of teachers involved in a bilingual-education programme. Therefore, in this section, the participants, the instrument used to collect the information, and the procedure are described.

Participants

A total of 41 teachers from Spain answered and submitted the survey online, but 35 of them were valid for this study because of two reasons:

- Two responses were provided by secondary-education teachers, and this study was addressed to primary-school teachers.
- Four responses were provided by teachers who were teaching the subject "Literacy" or "English Language" in a bilingual-education programme, but the purpose was to collect information from teachers of non-linguistic subjects.

A descriptive method was followed to analyse the responses of the 35 participants who submitted the survey online. The information collected through the survey was analysed using descriptive statistics, defined by Holcomb (2017) as the tools helping users to organise and summarise data. Apart from this, the inclusion of some figures and tables in the results section visually supports the data obtained and also leads to a better understanding of the results.

Instruments

Data were collected through an online survey containing 25 questions. These questions were somehow inspired from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews proposed in McDougald (2015) and Lundin and Persson (2015). This survey was designed for primary-school teach-

ers who teach CLIL subjects in Spain. The survey was delivered using Google Forms and remained opened from April 2017 until May 2017.

The 25 questions of the survey are divided into different sections:

- Questions 1-5 collect information about the different contexts in which CLIL takes place: type of school (state, private or charter schools), school name and its location; and how long the Bilingual Project has been operating. These questions provide a more fine-grained picture of each teacher's situation.
- Questions 6-8 gather information about CLIL subjects and grades.
- Questions 9-14 focus on lessons. These questions search for information about how content and language are integrated, the balance between oral and written language, if the students use the target language and how much, if the students are used to working in groups of two or more members. These factors are decisive to achieve a successful combination of CLIL and CL in the classroom.
- Questions 15-24 show a reflection of every teacher participating in this study upon the difficulty of working in groups, taking into account different factors such as the students' age, the CLIL subject, the type of assessment, etc.
- Question 25 is aimed at highlighting the most difficult aspects and the challenges that teachers might encounter when using CL in their CLIL lessons.

These questions will allow us to have a global picture of the real situation according to some CLIL teachers in Spain. Besides, the specific answers given by each participant will enhance the analysis of the difficulties, if any, of implementing CL in the CLIL context (see the questions of the survey in Appendix 1).

Procedure

The study combines quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative data contribute to understanding the conception of CLIL as well as the implementation of CL. Following Muijs (2011), quantitative research is defined by the collection of numerical data, which must be analysed by mathematical methods. All these quantitative data collected through the survey will offer an idea about the real situation.

Nonetheless, this research also requires collecting some qualitative

information. According to Pathak (2013), qualitative research allows us “to understand people’s beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions” (p. 192). In this study, the qualitative method was used in order to understand the perceptions of CLIL teachers in primary-school education. Moreover, qualitative-sound questions enabled teachers to express authentic opinions about the weaknesses they have to deal with regarding the implementation of CL in the CLIL context. All in all, some CLIL experiences together with the implementation of CL, teachers’ beliefs about this combination (CLIL and CL), as well as some conclusions of interactions that occur through CL are collected through this survey.

Results

This section presents the key findings of the study by analysing the survey responses. First of all, with regard to the type of school the teachers were working in, according to the information provided by respondents in question 3, 25 belonged to a state school, 8 to semi-state and 2 to a private one. The answers for question 4 revealed the city and the Regional Community participants were working with. But these and the name of schools have not been revealed for preserving the privacy of participants. The participants also responded to a question (question 5) which delved into when the bilingual project was implemented in their schools. The results have been classified as follows in Table 1:

Table 1
Bilingual program initiation.

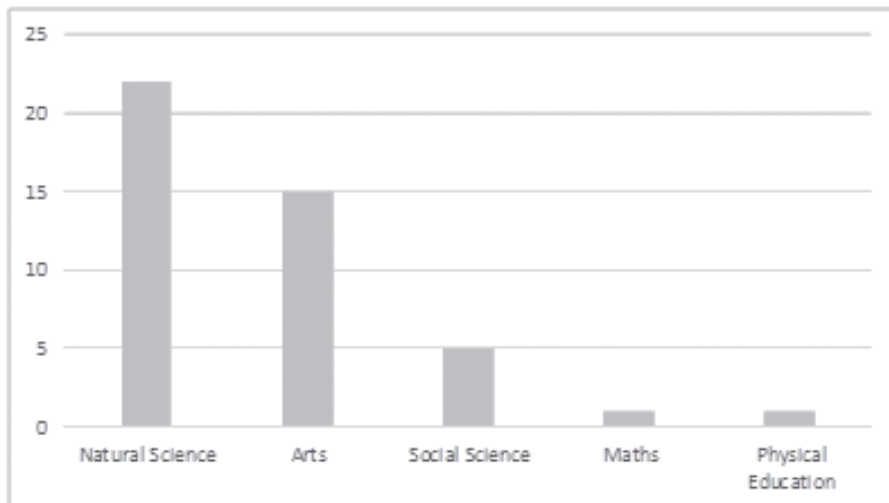
	0-5 years ago	6-10 years ago	More than 10 years ago
No. of teachers	15	15	5

According to the above figures, more than half of the schools represented in the survey had an important experience with regard to bilingual programmes or initiatives. This means that most of the participants were part of a school with a wealth of experience in bilingual education. The experience of the participants is also an important issue of the survey, given that expert teachers can provide a more precise context, as well as the real obstacles and drawbacks they have been dealing with for years. This also leads to the following question (question 6) in which all re-

spondents confirmed that they had been teaching in Bilingual Education for the last 15 years.

More questions were asked in the survey to collect data from CLIL teachers. When they were asked about the bilingual subject they were teaching or used to teach (question 7), most of the participants wrote more than one area. The most popular CLIL area indicated by participants was Natural Science, followed by Arts. Social Science is taught in a few schools, while Mathematics and Physical Education were not very common to find in CLIL education according to the answers of the respondents. Figure 1 illustrates graphically the previously-mentioned areas:

Figure 1. Answers for “What is the bilingual subject you are teaching/used to



teach?”.

Another question (question 8) tapped into the grade participants were teaching. Most participants marked several grades. This question only reveals that most of the teachers had been teaching CLIL in the first grades of primary education, as Figure 2 shows:

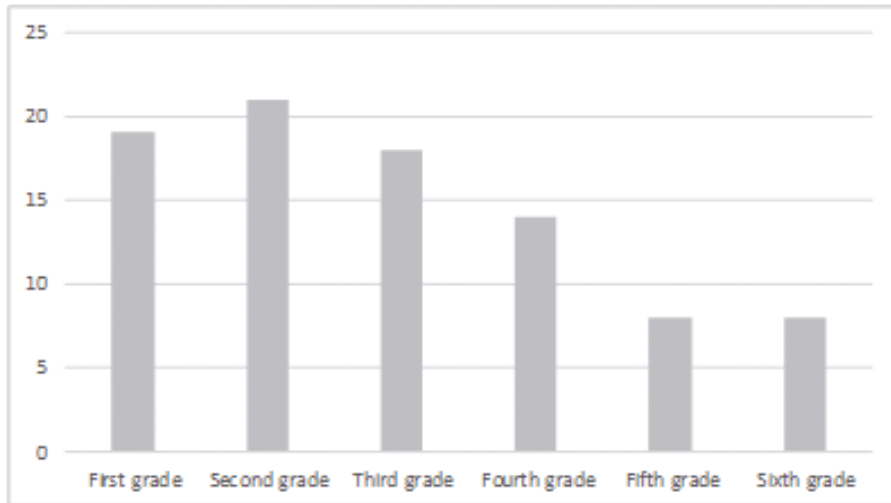


Figure 2. Answers for "What grades have you taught at?".

Other questions related to methodological aspects were also considered in the survey. A 4-point Likert Scale was used for questions 9-15. Table 2 illustrates the questions and answers provided by the respondents:

Table 2
Respondents' answers for questions 9-15.

	I totally disagree	I do not have an opinion about that	I agree up to a point	I totally agree
9. In your lessons, the focus is on both content and language.	0	4	12	19
10. In your lessons, it is essential to make the students develop written and spoken skills.	0	4	10	21
11. In your lessons, the students need to communicate in the target language.	0	5	12	18
12. In your lessons, the students are used to working in pairs.	2	5	16	12
13. In your lessons, the students are used to working in groups.	1	7	10	17

	I totally disagree	I do not have an opinion about that	I agree up to a point	I totally agree
14. In your lessons, group work allows students to communicate in the target language and also to learn new contents in an autonomous way.	1	9	14	11
15. Cooperative learning is a potential tool for bilingual education.	0	1	9	25

These results show that many respondents agreed with most of the statements, thus providing a positive perspective regarding the implementation of CL in the CLIL context. Most of them agreed or agreed up to a point that the focus was both on content and language (88.5% of respondents). With regard to the linguistic skills, 88.5% of the respondents agreed or agreed up to a point that, for their lessons, it was essential to develop both written and spoken skills in students, and 85.7% also agreed or agreed up to a point that their students needed to communicate in the TL.

Regarding CL implementation, as presented in the literature review, Jacobs (2006) demonstrates that pair work could be quite advantageous in that it is the basis for more complex group work. According to the responses of the survey, group work was more used than pair group (48.5% vs. 34.2% of the respondents who totally agreed). Surprisingly, the rate of participants who agreed up to a point were higher in the case of pair work (45.7%) than in group work (28.6%). Besides, 31.4% of the respondents agreed that working in groups allowed students to communicate in the target language and to learn new contents of the non-linguistic subjects. It is worth noticing, however, that 25.71% of the respondents declared that they did not have an opinion about that, which highlights these teachers were not sure that working in groups fostered communication in a TL and the acquisition of contents.

All in all, and regarding the last questions of the table (question 15), the overall opinion about CL was positive in that it was considered a powerful tool for bilingual education (71.42%, totally agreed, and 25.71% agreed up to a point).

In question 16, participants were asked how often in a unit their students worked in groups (Figure 3 below). It is worth mentioning that

only one of the respondents declared that s/he never implemented CL in a unit, while most of the participants (exactly 22 of them) reported a moderate use.

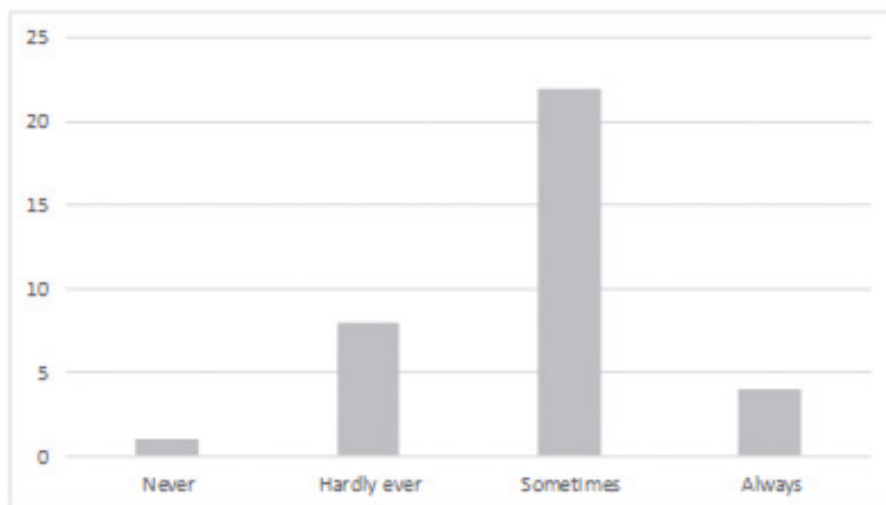


Figure 3. Answers for “How often do your students work in groups during a unit?”

Other questions related to impressions about the difficulty of implementing CL and the time for preparing group work were also considered. Table 3 indicates the number of responses for each case.

Table 3
Respondents’ answers for questions 17-19.

	Yes	No
17. Working in groups is difficult depending on the students’ age.	23	12
18. Working in groups is difficult especially in bilingual subjects.	15	20
19. Working in groups requires extra preparation.	29	6

The survey revealed that most of the teachers had taught at a variety of grades, so many of them knew the different possibilities they could find depending on the students’ age. That might be the reason why most of the participants (more than 65%) declared that the difficulty of working in groups depended on the age of the students. For question 18 most of the participants (around 57%) claimed that working in groups was not more difficult in bilingual subjects. However, almost 83% of par-

ticipants did find that working in groups required extra preparation. As Coyle, Holmes, and King (2009) explain, the twofold objective of CLIL requires learning content and learning the target language. That is the reason why CLIL teachers must prepare everything related to both content and language beforehand (McGroarty, 1993). Rejecting the necessity of extra preparation in bilingual subjects might affect in a negative way the effectiveness of CL. But, fortunately, this belief is shared by a minority of our respondents.

For questions 20-22, another 4-point Likert scale was used. Table 4 shows the questions and the answers of respondents:

Table 4
Respondents' answers for questions 20-22.

	Not at all	Not very much	A bit	Very much
20. Do you find it hard to implement group work in bilingual subject lessons?	7	6	13	9
21. From your point of view, have you received appropriate training to implement group work in bilingual lessons?	4	18	9	4
22. How comfortable do you feel when developing a whole didactic unit based on cooperative work (working in groups)?	1	6	16	12

Some of the respondents found it really hard (26%) or a bit hard (37%) to implement group work in the lessons of bilingual subjects. On the other hand, more than half of the respondents (51%) declared not to have received much training, while less than half of the participants (37%) indicated to have received some adequate training with regard to implementing CL in bilingual lessons. Lastly, in question 22, 80% of participants recognised to feel very comfortable or comfortable enough when developing a whole didactic unit based on cooperative work, which constitutes a very high and satisfactory percentage. However, those who did not answer "Very much" were invited to answer question 23 with the aim of knowing what they would need to feel confident and prepared to implement cooperative work. This open question helped us to collect qualitative data from our respondents. The following chart shows the 23 qualitative answers collected in the survey:

- “To avoid the students’ use of their mother tongue.”
- “To make the students speak in the target language.”
- “To improve the students’ English level before starting to work in groups, because they are not able to use English when they talk to each other. When we carry out group work, they tend to speak in Spanish during the whole activity.”
- “To ensure the students’ understanding of the task in the target language.”
- “More training.”
- “Training in cooperative learning.”
- “To receive more training.”
- “To have training in grouping methods in a class in which students are very disruptive and noisy.”
- “To have a deeper formation about this during the University degree.”
- “More preparation and materials.”
- “To have clear ideas about cooperative learning.”
- “To acquire knowledge about the processes involved in that methodology.”
- “Appropriate training and less students in the class group.”
- “To have more preparation in this field and to encourage schools to start programs in cooperative learning involving the whole school or stage.”
- “To see how other teachers implement cooperative learning in their lessons and to have an extra hand in the classroom.”
- “To experience how other teachers apply this methodology.”
- “To have enough time to implement work projects.”
- “Time to prepare the students for their work, with the key language and the materials they will have.”
- “More time to prepare the lessons.”
- “To have more time to coordinate with other teachers so that we can prepare activities and materials together.”
- “To have more support from the English teacher.”
- “To have more technical support.”
- “More resources that could be used in different units and contexts.”

Chart 1. Answers provided by participants for question 23.

In light of these qualitative responses, we can state that participants in the survey demand different aspects to feel confident when implementing cooperative work. More training seems to be the common answer in most of the participants; however, other aspects were also stressed among respondents, for example, the lack of time for preparation and coordination, or their students’ level of English when it comes to understanding, producing oral messages and avoiding the use of their mother tongue, among others.

In question 24, participants were asked to mark the options in which they find more difficulties. The options were: 1) Making students use communicative language properly; 2) Making students use the key language related to the bilingual subject; 3) Grouping students; 4) Making students learn the contents and achieve the objectives; 5) Making students work equally in a group; 6) Assessing the students learning. More than one option could be marked. Figure 4 illustrates graphically the options preferred by respondents, being the most popular option 1, and the least difficult option 3.

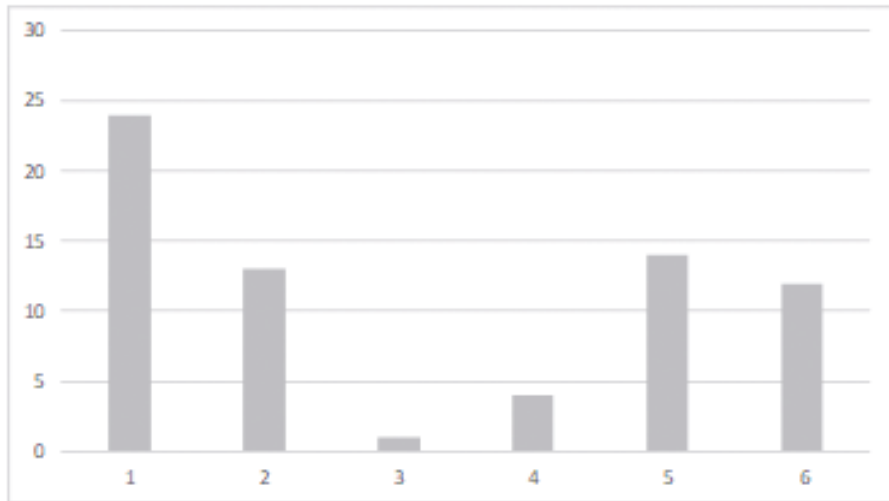


Figure 4. Answers for “Where do you find more difficulties?”.

Finally, the participants responded to another open question, providing us with more qualitative data. Question 25 asked participants to indicate the biggest challenge they could encounter when managing a didactic unit based on collaborative work among students. The answers collected for this question are shown below:

- “To be able to achieve the participation of all students and motivate them to use the target language.”
- “To plan motivating activities.”
- “The biggest challenge is to make the students enjoy and learn at the same time.”
- “Motivation, learning and equal work.”
- “It needs too much time and preparation.”
- “The amount of time available for carrying out that unit.”
- “Lack of time.”
- “The time teachers have is not enough to prepare a unit based on this methodology.”
- “The preparation beforehand so that each one in the group knows what they have to do.”
- “The challenge is for the teacher, that runs out of time and needs that time to think, plan and design something useful, interesting and authentic.”
- “To keep the students calm and get the lessons not noisy.”
- “To make all students in the group behave properly and work equally in the tasks.”
- “To think of activities that a group with different levels can achieve.”
- “Very high amount of students per class, different levels among students, special needs children without supporting teachers, discipline problems...”
- “To give an appropriate response to all students.”
- “Keep students using English in the group, especially at first grades.”
- “To make the students use the target language rather than their mother tongue.”
- “To avoid the students talking in Spanish in their groups.”
- “To make children speak with their peers in the target language.”
- “To communicate in the target language.”
- “To make students speak with correct language.”
- “To make the students communicate between them in the target language and not in their mother tongue.”
- “To try to get students to use English instead of Spanish when communicating among them.”
- “To achieve the students' appropriate usage of the language.”
- “To make them use the target language.”
- “To find adequate reading materials to base my unit on at the right level for the students.”
- “To group the students according to their grade.”
- “To make the students get used to cooperate in groups.”
- “Assessment.”
- “How to assess students.”
- “Enhancing shared meaning and promoting knowledge building while allowing a good group flow of information and emotions... Orchestrating learning.”

Chart 2. Answers provided by participants for question 25.

In summary, the biggest challenges of implementing CL in a CLIL context are: making students communicate in the TL; motivating students; having time to organise and plan adequate activities and materials; managing the class to avoid disruptive behaviour and noise; and assessment.

Discussion

According to the answers of the previous section, most of the respondents indicated their opinion with regard to the biggest challenge they encountered when implementing CL in the bilingual classroom. Some

of these challenges will be discussed in this section. Furthermore, some recommendations will be provided according to the challenge discussed.

Many respondents were concerned for the use of the TL for communicating when working in groups. As the survey shows, many teachers declared that their students tend to use their mother tongue to communicate rather than the TL. Firstly, the teachers must bear in mind that the students should use the TL as much as they can and from an early age. If the students are used to employing formulaic language since the first grade of Primary Education, they will always try to use English language whenever they can. We recommend, thus, a suitable and progressive use of the TL so as to make students use that TL in cooperative work.

Besides, it is very important that students understand and assimilate the language they will require for completing a task. To achieve this, before the task, students need a kind of assistance or scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). In the case of CLIL, the students will need “dual scaffolding”: in terms of language and in terms of content. This will imply to practise with two different languages: the language they will need to interact in the group, as well as the language of the content area, which might be more technical and complex. By using different strategies, such as reference books, videos, realia, brainstorming, etc., the teachers can provide the students with the scaffolding they need to enable them to use the TL and foster their communication in the cooperative groups.

It is also interesting to mention what Kagan and McGroarty (1993) declared with regard to the theory of role assignments. The role of the “Bilingual Facilitator”, as the linguistic leader, might be responsible for controlling that all the members in the group use the TL, whereas other “Special Roles” can be created to guarantee that all members use that language to communicate.

Motivation was another relevant challenge that teachers considered in the survey. The necessity of involving students in their own learning is the basis of student-centered approaches. This means that the student must be an active part of the learning process so that meaningful learning is ensured. In the CLIL context, motivation involves, again, two domains: motivation to use the TL, and motivation to learn content.

The studies carried out by Zhou (2012) focus on the problems that affect EFL students’ motivation. The findings of these studies reveal that the main problems regarding motivation are: lack of purpose, lack of autonomy, lack of experience, lack of confidence and lack of learning strategies.

However, the same author proved that CL increases students' motivation because, when working in groups, the students use the foreign language, and step by step they gain in confidence, and, therefore, in autonomy. As they become more autonomous, they feel able to do things on their own, getting involved and motivated in their learning processes. CL itself could be the key to keep the students involved in learning based on their interests, needs, and capabilities. The students enjoy having time when working with their peers rather than listening to the teacher during the whole lesson.

With regard to classroom management, teachers declared in the survey to be worried about the noise and behaviour in group work. One of the benefits that CL offers to CLIL is the principle of simultaneity, thanks to which different conversations can be carried out at the same time. In the CLIL classroom, students need to communicate as much as possible. This means that, even though it is true that students need an adequate environment to feel concentrated, the classroom does not normally provide a quiet and absolutely silent atmosphere. Emmer and Gerwels (2005) suggest a simple strategy that would draw students' attention: giving the students the possibility of having large-group instructional areas. The fact that all the students clearly know what they are expected to do will reduce the unnecessary questions as they will all focus on their task. In addition, as already mentioned, role assignment can be another strategy for managing the classroom (Kagan & McGroarty, 1993): the "Checker" (also called "Captain Sure"), the "Bilingual Facilitator", the "Cross-Grade Facilitator" and "Special Roles". These role assignments can be adapted to each specific situation of the classroom. If teachers feel that CL leads to lessons which are too noisy, a possible measure could be to give one of the students the "special role" of controlling the noise of the group. The "checker" could assume this role, as his/her responsibility is to control that all the classmates understand how to do something. Other "Special Roles" can be assigned in order to maintain a suitable working atmosphere in the classroom. Another possible solution to deal with the problem of noise might be what Emmer and Gerwels (2005) suggest: signals to draw their attention. The teacher could establish one signal to let the students know that they are speaking too loud: when the students see or listen to the signal, they will have to stop speaking, pause the activity, and stay quiet for a moment before continuing with their work.

To finish with classroom management issues, the concern of working

equally was highlighted in the survey. Authors like Jacobs (2006), as well as Kagan and Kagan (2009) suggest having students perform individual activities in such a way that the common task (to do in groups) depends on those individual parts.

Students' grade is of utmost importance in cooperative work, as some answers of the survey revealed. It is very important to take into account that, as Emmer and Gerwel (2005) state, the students should receive explicit instruction and training about how to work cooperatively. There is not a specific range of age to implement cooperative work. Moreover, teachers must observe their students and consider if they are ready to get involved in cooperative work. However, what teachers should keep in mind is that progression is key for CL to be successful and effective. We propose the following guidelines according to the different grades:

- As indicated in the theoretical framework of this paper, Jacobs (2006) states that grouping in pairs could be a good starting point for effective cooperation. But, for example, in the case of *first graders*, they need to learn how to work in pairs. At the beginning, the duration of pair work could last for a few minutes, which is enough to let the students feel comfortable and confident in the natural conversations that emerge in the bilingual classroom. This pair work will be classified as informal CL (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 2008) and will set the basis for future CL in larger groups (and for longer periods of time), and for using the TL as the vehicle for communication (BICS, Cummins, 1979). Students can, then, be trained and taught how to interact and how to use social language and content-related language (Emmer & Gerwels, 2005).
- In *second graders*, some simple information can be exchanged without problems. Consequently, their conversations in pairs should include BICS but also CALP (Cummins, 1979) and should be more demanding as far as cooperation is concerned. An example of a technique for promoting cooperative work in second graders is the jigsaw technique (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997). After appropriate training in pairs, using BICS, CALP and cooperation, the students need to continue with more complex activities.
- In *third grade*, the students might be ready to include a third person in the group. By working with groups of three, the students must demonstrate their mastery of BICS and CALP and transmit their cooperative skills acquired in previous grades. This is a bit more

complicated, not only because communication must occur among three people, but also because the task must be more demanding. Specially from this moment and onwards, the members of each group must be carefully selected, ensuring heterogeneity and, in particular, a variety of language proficiency. The tasks to perform cooperatively can be similar to the ones in previous grades. The tasks must be communicative and search for a common aim requiring cooperation among students. Moreover, the time to do the task can be longer.

- In *fourth grade* of primary education, if training on CL has been progressively introduced from the first grade, students are supposed to have more cooperation knowledge and background. They can now apply their cooperative skills in a 4-member group and, consequently, perform more demanding tasks requiring cooperation when it comes to investigating, researching, or producing language. Moreover, students are also supposed to have better written skills. These demanding tasks need more time to be developed and students are expected to be ready to work in groups in a more autonomous way and for groups that last longer than a few sessions.
- In *fifth and sixth grades* of primary education, the students have improved in cooperation and are ready for a formal CL (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 2008). They have the abilities and skills to work cooperatively in challenging projects that can last a term or even a whole school year. The number of students in the group will be determined by the task itself, and the particular features of the members will be considered to ensure the suitable combination of heterogeneous and homogeneous groups, given that, as Kagan and McGroarty (1993) highlight, both types of grouping bring advantages at a given moment.

Finally, assessment is another challenge indicated in the survey by respondents regarding CL and CLIL. The CLIL teacher has lots of different assessment tools to measure students' learning. Nevertheless, when CL is used, the CLIL teacher needs to assess both content and language in action, while cooperation takes place. It would be also recommendable to assess how the cooperative groups have performed the tasks. Pastor Martínez (2011) recommends different resources as observation, diary notes, recording students' performance, portfolios, etc. As there are sev-

eral aspects to assess, the assessment tool that best fits these demands is the rubric. According to Mertler (2001), rubrics are “scoring guides, consisting of specific pre-established performance criteria” (p.19). Particularly, analytic rubrics are ideal for teachers, since, as Mertler (2001) explains, it gives teachers the opportunity to assess separate scores and calculate the sum to obtain a total score. An analytic rubric must be, then, divided into different categories: content, language, and cooperative group. Each category must be divided into different specific observable attributes, defined gradually through quantitative and qualitative descriptors. With analytic rubrics, the teacher will prepare the items that must be assessed during the students’ performance. On the other hand, rubrics might be used as well by peers or as self-assessment, but they should be negotiated first with the students (Casal, 2016).

Conclusions

This paper aimed to identify some Spanish CLIL teachers’ perceptions about the implementation of CL in their bilingual classrooms in primary education. Apart from quantitative information about the subject areas in which CLIL approaches are more popular, years of experience in CLIL for both teachers and the school they work for, or the relevance of linguistic skills in their lessons, etc., other questions specifically focused on CL were posed: whether students are used to working in pairs or groups with more members, whether group work encourages communication in the TL and learning content in an autonomous way, whether CL is a potential tool for CLIL subjects, whether difficulties in group work depend on the age or the subject (CLIL or non-CLIL), whether sufficient and proper training in CL has been received, among other questions. The most outstanding response of this quantitative questions was that almost all the respondents agreed or agreed up to a point that CL is a potential tool for bilingual education.

Questions aimed at obtaining qualitative answers focused on determining what CLIL teachers would need to feel confident when implementing CL (question 23), as well as on detecting the biggest challenges encountered by CLIL teachers in cooperative work implementation (question 25). The most popular responses of the participants for question 23 were (i) more training on CL, (ii) lack of time, and (iii) students’ com-

prehension and production in the TL. For question 25, the most popular responses included (i) communication in the TL, (ii) motivation, (iii) time, (iv) classroom management, and (v) assessment. We also provided some recommendations so as to shed some light on the challenges detected by CLIL teachers in the implementation of CL in bilingual education.

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APPENDIX 1. Survey questions

1. Are you a bilingual teacher?

- Yes
- No

[If No is your answer, you can stop here. Thank you]

2. Are you a primary-school teacher?

- Yes
- No

[If No is your answer, you can stop here. Thank you]

3. What type of school are you teaching at?

- State
- Private
- Semi-state

4. What is the name of your school? Where is it located?

5. When was the Bilingual-Education Program implemented in your center?

6. Have you taught Bilingual Education in the last 15 years?

- Yes
- No

7. What is the bilingual subject you are teaching/used to teach?

8. What grades have you taught at?

- 1st grade.
- 2nd grade.
- 3rd grade.
- 4th grade.
- 5th grade.
- 6th grade.

9. In your lessons, the focus is on both content and language.

- I totally disagree.
- I do not have an opinion about that.
- I agree up to a point.
- I totally agree.

10. In your lessons, it is essential to make the students develop written and spoken skills.

- I totally disagree.
- I do not have an opinion about that.
- I agree up to a point.
- I totally agree.

11. In your lessons, the students need to communicate in the target language.

- I totally disagree.
- I do not have an opinion about that.
- I agree up to a point.
- I totally agree.

12. In your lessons, the students are used to working in pairs.
 - I totally disagree.
 - I do not have an opinion about that.
 - I agree up to a point.
 - I totally agree.
 13. In your lessons, the students are used to working in groups.
 - I totally disagree.
 - I do not have an opinion about that.
 - I agree up to a point.
 - I totally agree.
 14. In your lessons, group work allows students to communicate in the target language and an autonomous way.
 - I totally disagree.
 - I do not have an opinion about that.
 - I agree up to a point.
 - I totally agree.
 15. Cooperative learning is a potential tool for bilingual education.
 - I totally disagree.
 - I do not have an opinion about that.
 - I agree up to a point.
 - I totally agree.
 16. How often do your students work in groups during a unit?
 - never.
 - hardly ever.
 - sometimes.
 - always.
 17. Working in groups is difficult depending on the students' age.
 - Yes
 - No
 18. Working in group is difficult especially in bilingual subjects.
 - Yes
 - No
 19. Working in groups in bilingual subjects requires extra preparation.
 - Yes
 - No
 20. Do you find it hard the implementation of group work in the bilingual subject lessons?
 - not at all.
 - not very much.
 - a bit.
 - very much.
 21. According to you, have you received appropriate training to implement group work in bilingual lessons?
 - not at all.
 - not very much.
 - a bit.
 - very much.
 22. How comfortable do you feel when developing a whole didactic unit based on cooperative work (working in groups)?
 - not at all.
 - not very much.
 - a bit.
 - very much.
- [If 4 is your answer, skip to question 25]
23. What would you need to feel confident and prepared to use a methodology based on cooperative work?

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24. Where do you find more difficulties? (You can mark several options)

- Making students use communicative language properly.
- Making students use the key language related to the bilingual subject.
- Grouping students.
- Making students learn the contents and achieve the objectives.
- Making students work equally in a group.
- Assessing the students learning.

25. What is the biggest challenge when managing a didactic unit based on cooperative work among students?
