

**EXPLORING THE MUSIC-LANGUAGE COGNITIVE
CONNECTION FOR A CLIL-ORIENTED TEACHING OF MUSIC
IN SECONDARY SCHOOL:
A CASE STUDY BASED ON PROGRAMME MUSIC**

**ANÁLISIS DE LOS VÍNCULOS COGNITIVOS MÚSICA-
LENGUAJE COMO PIEZA CLAVE DE LA ENSEÑANZA DE LA
MÚSICA EN SECUNDARIA OBLIGATORIA (E.S.O) DENTRO DE
UN PROGRAMA AICLE: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO BASADO
FUNDAMENTALMENTE EN LA MÚSICA PROGRAMÁTICA**

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Research on CLIL (e.g., Bently, 2010; Coyle, 2007; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2008; Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2007; Darn, 2006; Eurydice, 2006; Lasagabaster, 2008; Marsh, 2008; Marsh, Maljers & Hartiala, 2001; Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols, 2008; Muñoz, 2007; Ruiz de Zarobe & Jiménez Catalán, 2009) has grown rapidly during the past decade. After the progressive development of bilingual programs in education, a great amount of theoretical and methodological discussion on the subject has thus appeared. However, the development of CLIL-oriented approaches to the teaching of music, especially in secondary education, has been rarely examined.

In this context, we posit that the music-language connection offers a new and interesting field of study, where a CLIL-oriented teaching of music may find encouraging insights contributing to developing not only the cognitive connection between both areas, but also – and perhaps more importantly – the ways of fostering creativity and knowledge. As Coyle et al. (2010: 3) illuminatingly highlight in this respect, “currently, there is increasing recognition that the exploration of learning by cognitive neurosciences provides alternative insights by which to improve overall efficiency”.

Within the vast literature on the subject, over the last decade the music-language cognitive connection has raised special interest in neuroscience. Contemporary trends indicate that music and language have minimal cognitive overlap (Peretz, 2002), and indeed that both share a number of basic processing mechanisms (Patel, 2008). Gardner’s (1993) multiple-intelligence theory significantly hints at the connection between musical competence and – through subcortical structures – the linguistic one. Although music may not be claimed to have semantic meaning as such, its lack of specificity of semantic reference does not amount to being utterly devoid of referential power (Patel, 2008). As it is, Western music happens to have developed certain cues that have come to be taken as key to perceiving music, for example, ‘tempo’ (speed of pulse), pitch, dynamics, register, rhythmic complexity, melodic contour and complexity, harmonic complexity and timbre (Balkwill & Thompson, 1999). So, music with a fast tempo, high average pitch, and bright timbre is much more likely to be identified as expressing ‘happiness’ than ‘sadness’, and vice versa.

With a fundamental focus on secondary schooling in Spain, this contribution is part of a broader on-going research aiming at developing strategies and resources for implementing CLIL-oriented teaching programs of music in secondary education. In adhering to the overall approach to CLIL developed by Coyle et al.’s (2010) triptych of language, Anderson & Krathwohl’s (2001) revision of Bloom’s Taxonomy has been theoretically drawn upon for the research conducted. All in all, the present experience means to substantiate the possibility of achieving meaningful learning (Ausubel, 2002) of music and EFL through a teaching of music in/through English following the methodology herein proposed. Assuming the students’ previous – albeit basic – knowledge of English and the activation of their ZPD (i.e. Zone of Proximal

Development) for a simultaneous creation of musical materials and acquisition of EFL, we take 10 musical works of programme music to introduce the students into musical analyses. So-called ‘programme music’ is a variety of art music attempting to musically render an extra-musical narrative. Such a narrative may be provided to the audience in the form of programme notes, thereby inviting imaginative correlations with the music. This type of music is consequently quite narrative and dependent on context; hence its ‘pragmatic’ function, in accordance to Patel (2008), may be an area particularly productive for investigating connections between linguistic and musical meanings.

In an attempt to enhance oral- and written-production skills in EFL while learning music, this paper presents the results of a case study leading to the comparison between two first-year compulsory-secondary-education (ESO) groups of a high school in Ciudad Real (Spain) where Music is taught through English. Group 1 was taught through a more collective and ‘traditional’ system involving less cooperative work due to the number of students involved (10 students) and fewer musical-composition activities, which resulted in a more teacher-centred group. On the other hand, Group 2 (19 students) was taught through a more clearly ‘innovative’ perspective following a cooperative methodology including more compositional activities as well. With a major focus on this type of narrative music, pupils were provided with scaffolding for target questions about dynamics, melodic and rhythmic elements, tempo and instrumentation. Given that the students had to produce specific explanations through different written and oral activities in English, they were likewise supported with adjectives to describe different kinds of timbre and musical tempo as well as English structures to tell stories. Relevant past tenses and simple uses of the passive voice were introduced as well.

In full consistence with recent findings on CLIL motivation and attitudes (Lasagabaster, 2009; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009), case study results indicate that the students following the ‘more innovative’ approach in Group 2 manifested remarkably greater involvement in the classroom than those in Group 1. The students in Group 2 similarly evidenced not only faster progress but also more significant learning in oral and writing skills in EFL than those in Group 1. The paper will thus discuss specific findings in terms of the pedagogic implications of the study concerning: (i) the design and development of music courses in the secondary-school curriculum; (ii) their implementation in bilingual programs; (iii) the types of materials and activities that may

be systematically employed for such courses; (iv) linguistic structures that need to be paid more attention to; and (v) major problems prospectively encountered by practitioners.

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