

**ARE TEACHERS READY FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION?  
EVIDENCE FROM A EUROPEAN STUDY**

**ESTÀ EL PROFESSORAT PREPARAT PER A L'ENSENYAMENT  
BILINGÜE? LES EVIDÈNCIES D'UN ESTUDI EUROPEU**

MARÍA LUISA PÉREZ CAÑADO

mlperez@ujaen.es

UNIVERSIDAD DE JAÉN

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It is widely consensual in the specialized literature that CLIL places increased demands on the in-service practitioner. A first of them is the relative novelty of the project: teachers who embark on this difficult enterprise can apply little of others' navigational knowledge. A further issue which is highlighted as a possible pitfall is the increased workload which CLIL entails for instructors: it requires a great deal of initiative and effort on their part, as well as learning to collaborate and liaise with other content and/or language colleagues in order to guarantee integration. Instructors must be prepared to work collaboratively to achieve language and content integration and the teacher thus ceases to be "a lone rider" (Marsh, 2006: 32). A final oft-cited problem which needs to be circumvented is the qualification of teachers: their insufficient mastery of the target language has surfaced as a major concern, together with the lack of support they receive from educational authorities and the shortage of teacher training programs. They must not only master the foreign or second language, but must also have expertise in the subject content and training in second language pedagogy. This requires intensive staff training in pedagogical and theoretical aspects of language acquisition, as numerous

authors underscore (Muñoz Barredo, 2011; Rennie, 1993; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It is thus not surprising that the shortage of CLIL teachers is documented in the official literature: the implementation of this approach is outpacing teacher education provision.

Given the heightened importance of CLIL as the answer to Europe's need for plurilingualism, and the dearth of teacher training actions to prepare practitioners to successfully step up to this novel approach, it becomes increasingly urgent to equip them for one the key challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: plurilingual education. To this end, the present paper reports on a European investigation<sup>7</sup> which has just been carried out to determine the training needs which language and non-linguistic area teachers currently have in facing up to bilingual education, in terms of linguistic and intercultural competence, theoretical and methodological aspects of CLIL, materials and resources, and ongoing professional development.

The broad objective of the study has thus been to conduct a large-scale multi-faceted CLIL evaluation project into the main training needs which teachers currently have across Europe in order to successfully implement bilingual education programs. Four key metaconcerns have driven the study and served as cornerstones for the project.

*Metaconcern 1* has involved the design and validation of four sets of questionnaires in order to determine the training needs of bilingual teachers across Spain and Europe via data triangulation (teacher trainers – in-service teachers – pre-service teachers – bilingual coordinators).

*Metaconcern 2* has entailed carrying out a needs analysis in Spain and Europe vis-à-vis linguistic and intercultural competence, the theoretical underpinnings of CLIL, methodological aspects, materials and resources, and ongoing professional development.

*Metaconcern 3*, in turn, has determined the existence of statistically significant differences within and across cohorts in terms of a series of intervening variables which have been factored in for each of the main stakeholders.

Finally, the fourth *Metaconcern* has involved the design of an original CLIL Master's (*Máster Universitario en AICLE*) for teachers involved in CLIL programs based on the research outcomes of the project.

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The research design has thus been a mixed quantitative-qualitative one which has employed survey tools (questionnaires) and multiple triangulation: *data triangulation* (as multiple sources of information have been consulted to mediate biases interjected by people with different roles in the language teaching context: pre-service teachers, teacher trainers, coordinators, and in-service teachers, and within the latter, non-linguistic area teachers, English language teachers, and teaching assistants); *investigator triangulation* (due to the fact that three different researchers have analyzed the open-response items on the questionnaires, written up their conclusions, and collated their findings); and *location triangulation* (given that language learning data has been collected from multiple data-gathering sites: Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, universities, and the provincial educational administration). The questionnaires have been validated following a double-fold pilot process: the external ratings approach and administration to a representative sample of 39 informants. They have then been applied online (via *Surveypro*), through both self- and group-administration, to a total of 706 respondents from over 11 different European countries.

The results reveal, to begin with, that, in line with Metaconcern 1 (objective 1), the surveys designed are valid and reliable, as extremely high coefficients have been obtained through *Cronbach alpha* for the questionnaire as a whole and for each and every one of its parts.

With respect to Metaconcern 2 (objectives 2 to 6), our investigation has enabled us to carry out a detailed diagnosis of the current level and training needs which the key CLIL stakeholders have in terms of linguistic and intercultural competence, the theoretical underpinnings of CLIL, methodological aspects, materials and resources, and ongoing professional development. The overriding impression is that current level is higher on linguistic and intercultural competence (something not surprising if we consider that the majority of respondents in the in- and pre-service teacher cohorts have been English language teachers and students with a B2 to C1 level) and insufficient or non-existent for the theoretical underpinnings of CLIL and ongoing professional development. More mixed results are obtained for methodological aspects and materials and resources, where roughly equal percentages of respondents claim to have an adequate and insufficient level (cf. Fig.1).

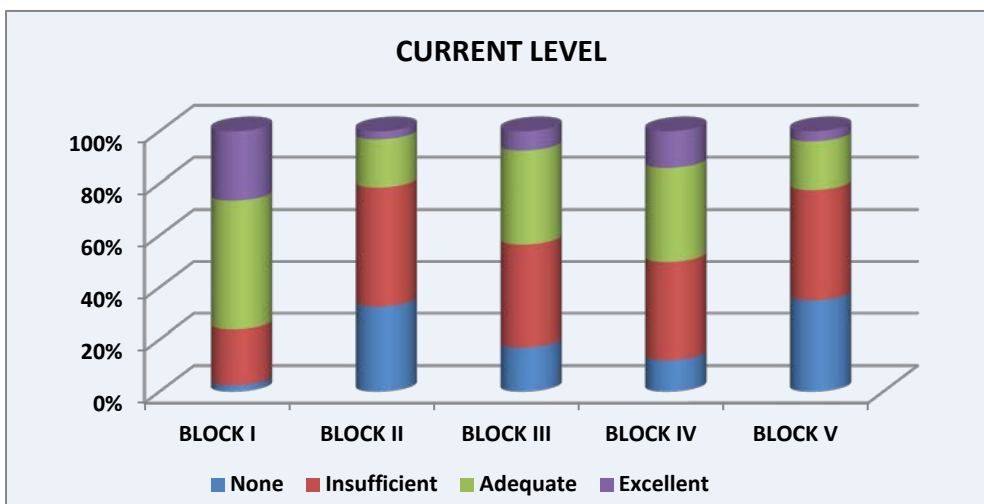


Fig.1. Current level of stakeholders by thematic blocks

Interestingly, however, training needs are deemed considerable across all five thematic blocks, to a lesser extent on linguistic and intercultural competence and to a much greater one on theoretical underpinnings and ongoing professional development, thereby confirming the overall consistency of results between current level and training needs. They are also from considerable to high on methodology and materials, which points to the generalized training needs of all the key players in CLIL settings (cf. Fig.2).

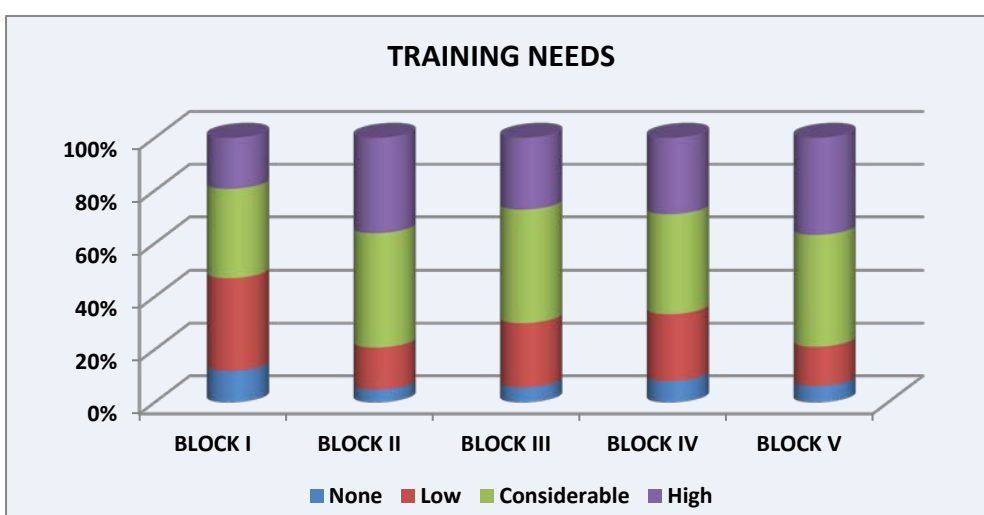


Fig.2. Training needs of stakeholders by thematic blocks

The ANOVA and t test, in line with Metaconcern 3 (objective 7), have then allowed us to ascertain that there are numerous statistically significant differences (at

extremely high confidence levels) across groups on absolutely all questionnaire items for training needs (normally in favor of pre-service teachers and teacher trainers), and on 47 out of 52 for current level (particularly in favor of in-service practitioners). If statistically significant differences are considered within each cohort in terms of our identification variables (objectives 8 through 11), equally interesting findings emerge, with differences diminishing from in-service practitioners to pre-service teachers to teacher trainers to coordinators.

The final step has been to have this empirical evidence inform a specific teacher training model for pre- and in-service practitioners involved in CLIL programs, thereby favoring evidence-based practice (Coyle, 2011). This is our fourth Metaconcern and final objective (12), which has been met via the specific and originally designed CLIL Master's we propose in the final section of the paper. The ultimate aim has been to base decisions regarding language degrees and teacher training courses on empirically-grounded guidelines in order to guarantee a success-prone implementation of CLIL in our continent, country, and region.

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