

**A STUDY OF THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE: INTEGRATING CONTENT AND LANGUAGE IN
MAINSTREAM EDUCATION IN BARCELONA**

**ESTUDI SOBRE L'ADQUISICIÓ DE L'ÀNGLÈS COM A LLENGUA
ESTRANGERA: INTEGRANT CONTINGUT I LLENGUA A L'EDUCACIÓ
CURRICULAR A BARCELONA**

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1. Theoretical background

The contrast of different learning contexts and the effects these have on learner's linguistic development is one of the main current areas of interest in SLA research these days.

As regards research conducted in the European continent concerning this issue, several recent publications attest of the enormous impact of CLIL approaches on linguistic development (Ackerl, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2007, 2008; Escobar Urmeneta, 2006; Hellekjaer, 2006; Lasagabaster, 2008; Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Moore, 2009; Lorenzo, Casal & Moore, 2008, 2010; Pérez-Vidal & Escobar Urmeneta, 2002; Ruiz de Zarobe & Jiménez Catalán, 2009).

The present study focuses on whether or not the acquisition of a language which is almost only heard and practised in the language classroom as the object of instruction, i.e. a formal instruction (FI) context, presents significant differences with respect to the acquisition of the same language which is, in addition to the FI context, also heard and practised in the language classroom as the vehicle of instruction, i.e. a CLIL context.

2.1. Research questions

This study will try to answer the following main research question and a subquestion derived from it:

RQ1: How does context of learning affect the linguistic development of young bilingual secondary education EFL learners when contrasting a group experiencing FI only and a group experiencing FI in combination with CLIL? Namely,

RQ1a) When contrasting the differential effects of the two different programmes, a FI only and a FI+CLIL, that is with an additional CLIL component, which programme results in linguistic benefits if any and which skills benefit the most if any?

2.2. Hypotheses

H1: When contrasting the linguistic development of two groups of bilingual secondary education EFL learners experiencing FI only and FI in combination with CLIL respectively, the CLIL context of learning will affect in several different domains of language competence and forms.

H1a) When contrasting the differential effects on learners' linguistic progress of two programmes a FI programme, and a FI+CLIL with the additional hours, the group in the FI+CLIL will improve significantly more than the other especially in receptive skills.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

For the purpose of this study the linguistic production of 100 Catalan/Spanish bilingual EFL learners was analysed.

As Fig.1 summarises, Group A, the experimental group, had received conventional formal instruction in the foreign language classroom, and, in addition,

being part of the school's CLIL programme, they had studied Science with English as its medium of instruction two hours per week since Grade 5 (10 years old). On the other hand, Group B, the control group, acquired English following conventional formal instruction in the foreign language classroom. Having been placed together in the same school since nursery, they had all started learning English at the age of 6 (Grade 1), so both groups shared a common age of onset of exposure to English as their L3.

Onset Age	Time1 (2005)	Time2 (2006)
GROUP A: FI + CLIL FI: 5 yrs. CLIL: 10 yrs.	Grade7 /1st ESO (12 yrs.)	Grade8/2nd ESO (13 yrs.)
GROUP B: FI FI: 5 yrs.	Grade8/2nd ESO (13 yrs.)	Grade9/3rd ESO (14 yrs.)

Fig.1. Participants (N=50)

3.2.Design

The results obtained along two consecutive academic years (2004-2005, 2005-2006) were analysed. Fig.2 below shows its longitudinal pre-test, post-test design.

This design allows for a between-groups comparison of the effect of 210 hours (140 FI + 70 CLIL) in Group A versus 140 (FI) in Group B. Hence, the difference in the gains obtained by each group over a year treatment.

	Time1 (2005)	Time2 (2006)
A: FI + CLIL	Grade7 / 1st ESO (12 yrs.) FI: 1120 h + CLIL: 210h = 1330	Grade8 / 2nd ESO (13 yrs.) FI: 1260 h + CLIL: 280h = 1540 (+ 210h)
B: FI	Grade8 / 2nd ESO (13 yrs.) FI: 1260 h CLIL: 0h	Grade9 / 3rd ESO (14 yrs.) FI: 1400 h CLIL: 0h (+ 140h)

Fig.2. Design

3.3.Instruments and data collection procedure

As can be seen in Fig.3, in order to gauge production, students were administered a written task. In order to analyse comprehension, a reading task and a dictation were administered. Finally, lexico-grammatical ability was also measured.

Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Composition
Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading ability <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cloze <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dictation
Lexico-grammatical ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar test • Grammaticality judgement test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple choice - Multiple choice

Fig.3. Instruments

3.4. Analysis / Measures (analytic qualitative, quantitative)

On the one hand, the reading task, the dictation, the grammar and grammaticality judgement tests were straightforward marked following objective criteria. A correcting matrix was used with the right answers.

On the other hand, the written task was corrected on the basis of standard objective and subjective procedures.

As can be seen in Fig.4, the writing test is analysed quantitatively following an adapted matrix (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki & Kim, 1998) and also qualitatively following a rating scale (Friedl & Auer, 2007).

Quantitative measures:	Syntactic complexity	Lexical complexity	Accuracy	Fluency
Qualitative measures:	Task fulfilment	Organisation	Grammar	Vocabulary

Fig.4. Measures used to analyse written development

4. Results

Fig.5 below displays the results obtained through the statistical analyses. The left hand-side column lists the different skills gauged. The central column shows the results obtained by Group A, experiencing a FI+CLIL context of learning, and the right hand-side column those by Group B, experiencing a FI only. The upper boxes include the number of hours of instruction accumulated by each group. It must be remembered that bold results are those that reach significance.

	CLIL(Group A) AT1: 12 yrs. 210CLIL+1120FI=1330h AT2:13 yrs. 280CLIL+1260FI=1540h	FI(Group B) BT1:13 yrs. 0CLIL+1260FI=1260h BT2: 14 yrs. 0CLIL+1400FI=1400h
Writing		
Syntactic complexity	AT1: 0.40 ; AT2: 0.39 (+0.01)	BT1: 0.47 ; BT2: 0.49 (-0.02)
Lexical complexity	AT1: 6.50 ; AT2: 6.71 (+0.21)	BT1: 6.31 ; BT2: 6.73 (+0.42)
Accuracy	AT1: 0.120 ; AT2: 0.078 (+0.042*)	BT1: 0.092 ; BT2: 0.086 (+0.006)
Fluency	AT1: 146.2 ; AT2: 145.1 (-1.1)	BT1: 149.1 ; BT2: 144.7 (-4.4)
Task Fulfilment	AT1: 2.92 ; AT2: 3.29 (+0.37)	BT1: 2.63 ; BT2: 2.87 (+0.24)
Organisation	AT1: 2.84 ; AT2: 3.24 (+0.4)	BT1: 2.49 ; BT2: 2.76 (+0.27)
Grammar	AT1: 2.40 ; AT2: 3.06 (+0.66)	BT1: 2.34 ; BT2: 2.70 (+0.36)
Vocabulary	AT1: 2.52 ; AT2: 3.18 (+0.66)	BT1: 2.53 ; BT2: 2.74 (+0.21)
Reading	AT1: 14.3 ; AT2: 16.1 (+1.69*)	BT1: 14.6 ; BT2: 14.8 (+0.22)
Listening	AT1: 109.4 ; AT2: 112.2 (+2.8)	BT1: 109.7 ; BT2: 112.7 (+3.1)
Grammar	AT1: 37.1 ; AT2: 39.8	BT1: 38.5 ; BT2: 38.8 (+0.3)

(Lexico-grammatical ability)	(+2.72*)	
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Fig.5. Skill Results per Context (progress)

Note: the higher the value for syntactic complexity and accuracy the lower the competence level

T1: first data collection time

T2: second data collection time

A: Group A

B: Group B

5. Conclusions

Results obtained confirmed the effectiveness of the CLIL programme, something which previous research had already shown. However, significant benefits did not accrue in all skills and measurements. Therefore, Hypothesis 1a) can be only partially confirmed. Reading but not listening improves significantly. Furthermore, our findings show significant improvement in productive skills on behalf of the FI+CLIL group, something which we had not hypothesised, as writing and particularly accuracy, significantly progress and so do lexico-grammatical abilities. This is in contrast with findings published in previous studies.

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