

Master's Dissertation/
Trabajo Fin de Máster

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BILINGUAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING DEGREES IN NAVARRA: PERSPECTIVES OF STUDENTS

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A Marci,
por enseñarme,
entre otras muchas cosas,
mucho más importantes,
este bonito mundo
que descubrimos juntos

INDEX

INDEX OF CHARTS, FIGURES AND TABLES	3
Figures	3
Charts.....	3
Tables.....	3
INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS, INITIALS AND ACRONYMS.....	4
ABSTRACT	5
1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	8
2.1. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).....	8
2.1.1. <i>Origins of CLIL</i>	8
2.1.2. <i>Conceptualization and characterization</i>	10
2.2. Implementation of CLIL programmes.....	13
2.2.1. <i>Europe</i>	14
2.2.2. <i>Spain</i>	15
2.3. Critical appraisal about CLIL programmes	17
2.3.1. <i>Emerging challenges</i>	20
2.3.2. <i>Suggestions for improvement</i>	21
3. RESEARCH	25
3.1. Research aims.....	25
3.2. Context and participants	25
3.2.1. <i>CLIL programmes in Navarra</i>	25
3.2.2. <i>CLIL programmes in Centro Integrado</i>	29
3.2.3. <i>Participants</i>	33
3.3. Data collection instrument and procedure	34
3.4. Findings	39

3.5. Discussion	44
4. CONCLUSIONS	48
5. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES.....	51

INDEX OF CHARTS, FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Figure 1. Met's continuum of language and content integration. Source: Met (1999).	12
Figure 2. Vocational training students stay in Paderborn (Germany). Source: Department of Education (2022).	31

Charts

Chart 1. Students' initial level of English.	39
Chart 2. Students' capability to follow teachers' explanations in bilingual vocational training degrees.	40
Chart 3. Students' level of reading skills.	40
Chart 4. Students' level of speaking skills.	41
Chart 5. Students' level of writing skills.	41
Chart 6. Efficiency of CLIL regarding language learning.	42
Chart 7. Efficiency of CLIL regarding Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS).	42
Chart 8. Efficiency of CLIL regarding Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. ...	43
Chart 9. Impact of CLIL in content learning.	43

Tables

Table 1. Sample: all students.	34
Table 2. Sample: responses.	34

INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS, INITIALS AND ACRONYMS

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
Br	British
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CBI	Content-Based Instruction
CEIP	<i>Colegio de Educación Infantil y Primaria</i> (Infant and Primary Education School)
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CNAI	<i>Centro Navarro de Aprendizaje Integral</i> (Centre of Integral Learning of Navarra)
ESO	<i>Educación Secundaria Obligatoria</i> (Compulsory Secondary Education)
HVTD	Higher Vocational Training Degree
IES	<i>Instituto de Enseñanza Secundaria</i> (High Schools)
n.d.	No date
PAAL	<i>Programa de Aprendizaje en Alemán</i> (Programme of German Learning)
PAF	<i>Programa de Aprendizaje en Francés</i> (Programme of French Learning)
PAI	<i>Programa de Aprendizaje en Inglés</i> (Programme of English Learning)
PALE	<i>Programas de Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras</i> (Programmes of Foreign Languages Learning)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TIL	<i>Tratamiento Integrado de Lenguas</i> (Integrated Treatment of Languages)

ABSTRACT

This research consists of the Master's dissertation of the Master's degree in Bilingual Education and Content and Language Integrated Learning (henceforth, CLIL). Its main objective is to study the implementation of bilingual vocational training degrees of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing in the Region of Navarra (Northern Spain), from the perspective of pioneer students. In order to achieve this objective, this research starts with a literature review, providing the reader with an analysis of CLIL and the key points of its implementation both in Europe and Spain. Most critical appraisals, the most valuable possible solutions and the main emerging challenges for this model of bilingual education are also tackled. Finally, the main guidelines of the bilingual education model of the Region of Navarra are analysed, prior to presenting the results of data collected on the students' opinions about it, throughout the first academic year where bilingual vocational training was implemented in this region (2021/2022).

Keywords: CLIL, bilingual education, vocational training, Navarra.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization is a consolidated phenomenon that entails certain challenges and demands. One of them is the necessity to communicate with people from different regions worldwide. In the contemporary era, English has turned out to be the current *lingua franca*, in other words, the key language for nationals of all countries to communicate among themselves. In this scenario, learning this key language becomes one of the most important objectives of educational systems all over the world. CLIL arises as the most interesting and complete proposal in order to satisfy this goal. As David Marsh (2022, p. 23) claims, CLIL became “*European solution to a European need*”, and it is not wrong to state that it is actually a universal solution for a universal need.

This circumstance was already evinced by the *European Commission’s White Paper on Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society* (1995), which pointed out the convenience for European citizens to master at least two foreign languages, besides their mother tongue. However, even now it is evident that there is a clear gap between this educational objective and the reality itself, given the fact that most of the population do not even master just a single foreign language (Marsh, 2022, p. 24). When it comes to our country, the Eurobarometer (2012) revealed that Spain appears to be “*the bottom rung of the foreign-language knowledge ladder*” (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009), given the fact that 54% of Spaniards admit being monolingual, whilst just 18% feel capable to hold a conversation in the targeted two foreign languages.

This current approach to language learning aligns with the European goal of becoming “*the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world*” (Marsh, 2022, p. 26), raising highly qualified citizens, able to adapt and succeed in such a suddenly evolving society (Coyle, 2009, p. 30). Indeed, CLIL entails a student-centered methodology, based on the principle “*learn as you use, use as you learn*” and, hence, operating as a social-constructivist educative model where teachers adopt the role of mere guides, whilst students drive their own learning-by-doing process (in this case, by communicating) (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008, p. 41).

In this context, CLIL has become the main trend regarding foreign language teaching over the last three decades, throughout all the educative stages: from infant school to university, including vocational training.

The general objective of this research is to analyse the implementation of bilingual vocational training degrees of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing in the Region of Navarra (Northern Spain), from the perspective of its pioneer students.

In order to achieve the aforementioned general objective, this research has been developed pursuing the following specific objectives:

- ❖ To conduct an integral review of the concept of CLIL and the main features of its implementation within the European and Spanish context, in order to prepare the reader for a better comprehension of this matter.
- ❖ To review the particularities of the concrete implementation of bilingual education within the vocational training system of the Region of Navarra, in order to let the reader know about the context where data collection took place.
- ❖ To analyse the efficiency of the concrete implementation of bilingual education in higher vocational training degrees of the professional fields of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing, through the data collected from the students of *Centro Integrado*.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the master's dissertation aims at analysing the main theoretical aspects of CLIL:

- ❖ As an introduction to the topic, this work begins with a brief description of the origins and evolution of bilingual education.
- ❖ In order to provide the reader with the basics of the latest trends regarding bilingual education, a proper definition of CLIL is subsequently granted.
- ❖ Afterwards, theory is concreted by exposing how CLIL programmes are implemented both in Europe and Spain.
- ❖ Given the aforementioned points, a critical appraisal of CLIL, as the latest proposal for bilingual education, and its real implementation is also developed.
- ❖ Subsequently, possible solutions to improve the main weaknesses and limitations of CLIL are explained.
- ❖ Last but not least, this section ends with the main emerging challenges that CLIL faces both in the present and towards near and far future.

2.1. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

2.1.1. *Origins of CLIL*

CLIL appears to be the latest and most interesting proposal for bilingual education. However, CLIL has not appeared as a completely new invention, but as the evolution of previous educational models.

In this sense, it is worth mentioning *Content-Based Instruction*, North American bilingual teaching systems that started running back in the late 1950s. Within these systems, it is especially remarkable the Canadian proposal, as a consequence of the

French immersion occurred in Montreal and the French-speaking Canada. Relevant investigations (from Lambert & Tucker [1972, p. 77] to Genesee & Jared [2008, p. 43], through Cummins [1989, p. 90]) revealed interesting and promising results about the success of these models regarding five key learning areas: foreign language, subject matter, native language, cognitive growth and attitudinal levels.

Despite the enriching lessons provided by our North American colleagues, it is convenient to note that their systems cannot be simply transferred to the European scenario, given the crucial impact that sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts have when it comes to analysing the efficiency of bilingual teaching (Gallardo del Puerto, Gómez Lacabex, & García Lecumberri, 2009, p. 64).

Indeed, back to the old continent, it is also interesting to bring up to the reader's attention the researches regarding bilingual education headered by Baetens Beardsmore, in collaboration with Swain (1985, p. 33), Housen (1987, p. 26) and Kohls (1988, p. 77). In comparison to the aforementioned North American models, European bilingual systems face a more complicated scenario, where students speak up to fifty different mother tongues. In this case, in line with the objectives posed by the previously mentioned European Commission's *White Paper on Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society* (1995, p. 35), the first foreign language has been gradually introduced at earlier stages (initially in 3rd grade and, subsequently, in 1st grade), while the second foreign language has usually been introduced in 7th grade.

This fact actually enhances CLIL as the most suitable bilingual model for European students. As Pérez-Cañado (2012, p. 39) highlight, CLIL is rather oriented to the needs and features of European learners and teachers.

All in all, and despite the aforementioned differences between the Northern American and European bilingual models, researches conducted on both systems prove that CLIL is significantly more effective than traditional foreign language teaching methodologies, where first and second foreign languages were taught with a particular emphasis on the formal dimension of language, neglecting its functional dimension. Moreover, for North Americans and European bilingual stakeholders it is rather

interesting to focus and learn from the similarities that link Content-Based Instruction and CLIL, than discussing their differences.

In words of Marsh (2002, p. 70), *“bilingual education is good for education”*.

2.1.2. Conceptualization and characterization

CLIL was firstly coined by UNICOM (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) and the European Platform for Dutch education in 1994, as the most valuable European proposal for bilingual education.

Marsh & Langé (2000, p. 97) define CLIL as *“a dual-focussed education approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language”*. This dual approach that CLIL entails refers to a simultaneous work on content and linguistic matters, as the foreign language is not only learnt as content itself, but also as the communicative instrument for learning the other subjects of the syllabus. Hence, CLIL constitutes a break with traditional methodologies for teaching foreign languages, where the target language was usually not even used as a vehicular communicative instrument in its specific subject (e.g., English).

Coyle, Hood & Marsh (2010, p. 120) state about CLIL, as *“planned pedagogic integration of contextualized content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching and learning practice”*, where the key elements consist of what Coyle (2010) calls the *“4 C’s”*: content (subject matter), communication (language), cognition (thinking and learning processes) and culture (global citizenship and intercultural learning).

Taking the aforementioned definition of CLIL, this proposal for bilingual teaching allows and actually leads to different variants when it comes to its practical application, depending on the concrete context where it is meant to be developed. According to different researchers (Wolf, 2005, p. 44; Coyle, 2010, p. 36; Smit, 2007; Rimmer, 2009,

p. 52), there are multiple factors that determine the particular features of the implementation of CLIL programmes in concrete educational scenarios, such as:

- ❖ Availability of qualified content teachers.
- ❖ Teachers' and students' levels of fluency in foreign languages.
- ❖ Students' profile: age, cultural level, educational stage and subjects.
- ❖ Degree of usage of mother tongue and foreign language.
- ❖ Procedures of content and language integration.
- ❖ Percentage of subject matters taught through the foreign language.
- ❖ Time of exposure to the foreign language.
- ❖ Assessment procedures.
- ❖ Extracurricular opportunities.

These factors lead to the distinction between the so-called duality of hard and soft CLIL (Marsh & Langé, 2000, p. 24), where:

- ❖ Hard CLIL is a concrete approach to bilingual education based on teaching subject matters by non-native teachers, experts on contents themselves. The exposure of students to the target language also in content subjects is one of the main strengths of CLIL. However, as content teachers in hard CLIL are not native English speakers, their level of the foreign language might not be high enough, especially regarding technicalities (as specific vocabulary is usually not taught in regular English lessons). Furthermore, content teachers might not know how to properly teach the target language (as they have not been trained as teachers of foreign languages) and might also ignore the basics of CLIL (unless they have studied specific courses).
- ❖ Soft CLIL consists of an approach to bilingual education based on teaching both content and foreign language by either non-native or native language teachers. This approach ensures that the level of foreign language teaching delivered to students is outstanding. However, given the fact that teachers are experts on the linguistic area, the level of completeness and accuracy of the contents taught to students might not be as valuable as in hard CLIL.

Following Met's continuum of language and content integration (1999), different models of CLIL can be implemented, depending on the degree of content and language orientation, as shown in Figure 1:

- Figure 1.

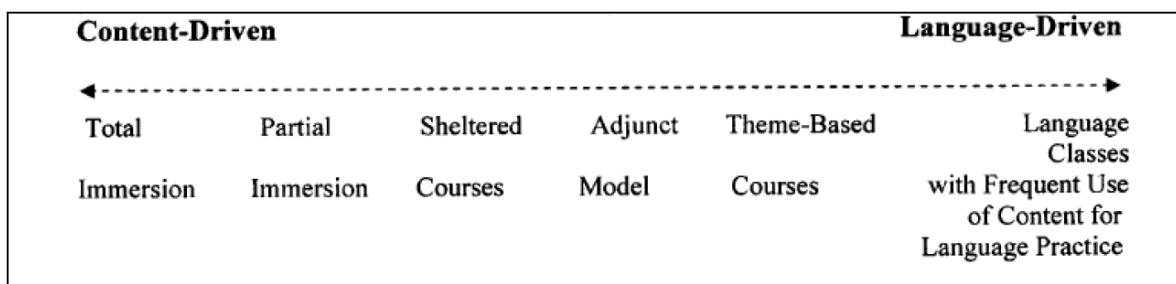


Figure 1. Met's continuum of language and content integration. Source: Met (1999).

As the reader may predict, both models have both strengths and weaknesses. Given the academic background of the content teachers involved in each option, while hard CLIL patterns might reinforce content learning, rather than language learning (especially in case that content teachers' foreign language proficiency might not be so high), soft CLIL approaches enhance language learning.

Total immersion programmes must be deemed to be the most efficient proposal in terms of overall learning (as long as content teachers' level of foreign language is high enough to provide the students with a qualified linguistic teaching), given the fact that foreign languages are just part of the curriculum.

To sum up, CLIL entails a number of assets, which can be summarized into nine key elements:

- ❖ Linguistic dimension, with a greater exposure to the foreign language, which is developed within its two main functions: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).
- ❖ Content knowledge, which is not watered down by the aforementioned linguistic dimension.

- ❖ Learning optimization, as CLIL programmes entail a symbiosis between content and language, where contents are used to learn the foreign language in a practical and significant context and the foreign language is used as the vehicular communicative instrument to learn contents.
- ❖ Cognitive dimension, as CLIL programmes widen students' minds, developing their intellectual capabilities by posing them in a context where proactivity and attention are highly required for following lessons carried out in a foreign language.
- ❖ Qualified teaching orientation, as CLIL aligns with the latest pedagogical tendencies, embodying student-centered methodologies as well as teachers' continuous training.
- ❖ Orectic/volitional, as the connection between content and both native and foreign languages, as well as its practical approach, boost students' motivation towards their own learning process.
- ❖ Social dimension, as CLIL aims at reaching all kind of students, of all educational stages and both from public and private schools, providing bilingual education to the whole educative community.
- ❖ Cultural scope, as CLIL encompasses an integral approach to education, inclusive of three key elements: content, native language and foreign language. This scope promotes intercultural awareness and a richer range of learning.
- ❖ Pragmatic orientation, preparing students for the current demands of such a globalized society, that requires to expand both knowledge and communicative skills worldwide.

2.2. Implementation of CLIL programmes

As for the implementation of CLIL, given the fact that it is the latest bilingual education proposal for the European educational context, it is convenient to begin with its

application within the old continent overall, before concreting its particularities within Spain and, finally, the Region of Navarra.

2.2.1. Europe

As per the report *CLIL at School in Europe* (Eurydice, 2006, p. 15), CLIL was then implemented in thirty countries all along Europe, excepting Portugal, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Cyprus and Lichtenstein. CLIL countries have gradually adopted their CLIL models from pilot studies to the mainstream educative offer.

As a result of the analysis of the implementation of CLIL in different European countries, it is evident that it significantly varies from one country to another. This variation mainly responds to their different social, cultural and educational contexts, not only in each country, but also in different geographical areas within the same country (Wolff, 2002, p. 74). Indeed, there are up to 216 different variants of CLIL programmes, depending on the factors mentioned in section 2.2. CLIL, such as mandatory status, duration, intensity, scholar grade of implementation or initial linguistic level (Coyle, 2007, p. 67).

However, despite such a variety of CLIL programmes along different European countries, most of the countries put in place CLIL models featured by a significant increase of the presence of the foreign language within the curriculum and the classroom usual speech, with several subjects being taught through the target language for several academic years. The exposure to subjects conducted through the foreign language, as vehicular communication instrument, usually varies throughout different educational stages, being increasingly implemented in early years and significantly decreased in pre-university grades (given the necessity to adapt the teaching-learning process to the concrete features and demands of college entrance tests, which are always driven in the native language).

As for the foreign languages being taught in CLIL programmes, English is honoured as the current *lingua franca*, followed by French and German (as most common

secondary and tertiary languages across European educational systems).

Regarding the requirements for students to join CLIL programmes, some countries demand a certain level of mastery of the foreign language or restrict bilingual education to certain studies. Likewise, depending on the political organization of each country, some of them follow a unified model, whilst others delegate to minor public administrations the faculty of designing different variants for their territory.

When it comes to choosing the concrete content subjects to be taught in the foreign languages, the usual tendency is to assign bilingual education to the least complex ones, in terms of difficulty for students to understand and assimilate their contents.

Last but not least, the relatively recent implementation of bilingual education usually entails the lack of textbooks for content subjects written in the foreign language and adapted to the corresponding curriculum. This fact forces bilingual teachers to translate textbooks written in the native language and designed for the corresponding curriculum, to adapt textbooks designed for the curriculum applicable in the country where the target language comes from or to design *ad hoc* materials themselves. Either way, it means a significant workload increase for bilingual teachers, compared to their non-bilingual colleagues, as the former must play the roles of teachers and editors (whilst they are usually not assigned with a specific time dotation within their working schedule for such a task).

2.2.2. Spain

Within the last decade, Spain has experienced a significant boost in bilingual education, which is said to respond to its traditional deficit of foreign languages domain, despite spending quite many years studying them (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010, p. 42). This fact can be evidenced by chronologically reviewing the numerous laws of education issued within the last fifty years (from *Ley General de Educación* [1970] to *Ley Orgánica de Modificación de la Ley Orgánica de Educación* [2006]), where language learning was initially rather exceptional and theory-oriented, whilst it

is nowadays increasingly spreading all over the whole curriculum and practice-oriented. Especially since *Ley Orgánica de Educación* (2006), bilingual education, as well as student-centered methodologies, have been significantly promoted.

The Spanish Ministry of Education and the regional governments have conducted multiple bilingual programmes, aiming at enhancing bilingual education and fostering the level of foreign languages domain of the Spanish population. The most remarkable bilingual programmes are:

- ❖ The Spanish Ministry and British Council Project.
- ❖ *Programa de Inmersión Lingüística*.
- ❖ *Programa de Apoyo a la Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras*.
- ❖ *Aulas Europeas*.
- ❖ *Proyectos de Innovación Lingüística en Centros*.
- ❖ English Through Content.
- ❖ *Secciones Europeas* and *Secciones Bilingües*.
- ❖ *Proyecto Bilingüe*.
- ❖ *Plan de Fomento del Plurilingüismo*.

These bilingual programmes were rather designed for early educational stages, while higher education still usually remains out of the scope of bilingual education.

Thus, the analysis of the Spanish bilingual education scenario shows three main features, compared to many other European countries (Fernández Fontecha, 2009, p. 15):

- ❖ An heterogenous reality of CLIL variants, in line with the decentralized political organization of the State (composed of up to seventeen autonomous regions, with own competences in education, and two autonomous cities, which align with the State regulations).
- ❖ The existence of co-official languages in several regions of the country, which entails the fact that some Spaniards have two languages as mother tongues

(where foreign languages are their third and fourth language), whilst most regions just speak Spanish as their native language and, thus, have less exposure to learning several languages.

- ❖ A traditional lack of exposure to foreign languages, as pretty much all kinds of information (especially, audio-visual content) coming from abroad are dubbed into Spanish.

Due to these three particularities, the Spanish CLIL scenario appears to be more complex compared to other European countries. This fact makes the Spanish bilingual educational system an interesting piece of investigation for CLIL researchers to develop and improve this pedagogical trend towards the future.

Comparing the CLIL systems of some regions to others, the main differences consist of the minimum level of foreign languages required for teachers and students to join bilingual programmes, the number of subjects falling under the CLIL model or the experience of each region carrying out bilingual education.

Finally, in line with the aforementioned hegemony of English as the current *lingua franca*, it is the most taught language in the Spanish educative centres, followed by French (in second position).

2.3. Critical appraisal about CLIL programmes

Once the main features of the CLIL approach have been defined, as well as the main features of its implementation (both in the whole continent and in our country), it is necessary to analyse it all from a critical appraisal, in order to identify its main pitfalls and downsides and finally suggest some possible solutions that may help CLIL to adapt and success through the arising challenges faced in the near future.

As for its characterization, one of the controversies is related to its own distinction from other bilingual models, adopted in other geographical areas (such as immersion or Content-Based Instruction), from which CLIL supporters usually tend to claim a higher efficiency regarding foreign language teaching. Many researchers, though, suggest adopting a rather collaborative approach, in terms of learning from their own assets and the similarities they share with CLIL (Hüttner & Smit, 2002, p. 21).

Regarding its implementation, the main counterargument against CLIL is the wide range of variants under which it can be put in practice. The great flexibility and adaptability to the very different European environments (which have actually helped to boost the domain of foreign languages within the last couple of decades, especially in countries like Spain) turn out to be both an advantage and a disadvantage, as it makes it difficult to clearly identify a precise pattern for the different stakeholders to take a theoretical reference and follow it in practice (Cenoz, Genesee, & Gorter, 2013, p. 22).

Concerning the results of researches conducted on CLIL, it is possible to find a change of tendency, as it was initially enthusiastically received by the scientific community (Pérez-Cañado, 2016, p. 53), but has recently been questioned due to its sudden implementation (especially in regions without significant previous experience in bilingual education) and its practical results (which might be deemed not to be as successful as originally expected) (Bruton, 2013, p. 13).

Indeed, as for the Spanish context, this lack of experience in bilingual education, as well as the relatively low level of foreign languages of the Spanish population (including both teachers and students), lead to think that that bilingual education is rather an empty proclamation than a reality nowadays. Indeed, quite many myths against Content and Languages Integrated Learning have spread out through educational fora. Some of the most popular myths against CLIL are mentioned below:

- ❖ CLIL does not really enhance foreign language learning (Marías, 2015).
- ❖ CLIL entails a lack of development of the students' native language (*Sindicato del Profesorado Extremeño*, 2017).

- ❖ CLIL boosts foreign language learning, but lowers content learning (Sanmartín, 2013, p. 33).
- ❖ CLIL suggests a methodology that is actually not being put in practice in real classroom circumstances (Pavón & Rubio, 2010, pp. 45-58).
- ❖ CLIL just shows satisfactory results in high-level educative environments (Bruton, 2013, p. 15).
- ❖ Combining content and language learning is not as efficient as teaching content and language separately (Monroy, 2013).
- ❖ Pedagogical training for bilingual teachers is rather useful than language training (Pérez-Cañado, 2016, p. 17).
- ❖ Trainings of CLIL theory for teachers are way less useful than simply providing them with some practical guidelines for its development (Pérez Cañado, 2018, pág. 23).

As for teachers, particularly, CLIL entails quite many challenges. Given the fact that CLIL programmes are rather recent and still not properly implemented, the workload of bilingual teachers usually exceeds their monolingual colleagues. Additionally, the organization of bilingual education is usually not properly approached, as there is usually no specific time assigned for content and language teachers to coordinate their work or to elaborate CLIL materials.

Moreover, the educative systems of most regions in Spain do not require high levels of the foreign language for teachers to join bilingual programmes, which results in deficient levels of quality of foreign language teaching.

In line with some detractors' opinion, syllabuses may experience certain reduction or simplification of the knowledge of the content subject, given the additional difficulty that teaching in a foreign language might entail. Likewise, for the sake of trying to effectively communicate, academic language might remain far from desirable levels (Smith, 2005, p. 32).

Last but not least, evaluation is also a controversial point, as the curriculum of content subjects does not allow to evaluate language matters. Thus, content teachers are only able to correct students' mistakes, being unable to penalize their lacks of proficiency within their qualifications, which usually leads to lower levels of effort from students concerning this issue.

2.3.1. Emerging challenges

After reviewing the most controverted weaknesses of CLIL, it turns out to be clear that CLIL faces several arising challenges that might determine its continuity as the ultimate proposal for bilingual education in Europe or its substitution by any possible emerging language teaching model.

One of the main challenges for CLIL is to homogenise its characterization. Despite the fact that the greater flexibility and adaptability to different educational contexts makes CLIL a suitable bilingual model for many different scenarios, it may also lead to confusion to the professionals in charge of putting it into practise, who might lack some clear guidelines to follow.

Another challenging goal for CLIL is to satisfy the demands of catering to diversity. Given the fact that CLIL is becoming a spreading trend, most bilingual schools are offering just bilingual education at certain educative stages (especially, in primary school), which leaves no room for students who might have higher difficulties to follow the lessons in the foreign language (Bruton, 2013, p. 26). Hence, it is convenient to ensure the coexistence of Content and Langue Integrated Learning and the special attention to those who might require an adaptation of bilingual methodologies.

Additionally, the teachers' level of language proficiency of foreign languages is still far from desirable standards. As previously mentioned, most regions just require a B2 level in the target language, whilst this level must be deemed not to be enough for qualified teaching of foreign languages. Moreover, the lack of exposure to foreign languages of the Spanish population overall leads to the existence of teachers who

might have been able to certify an advanced level in a foreign language, progressively lowering their domain due to the scarce usage. This fact usually entails an insufficient fluency when it comes to communicate through the target language, both writing or speaking. Hence, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), the two key elements of CLIL, would not be properly transmitted to students (Ruiz Gómez, 2015, p. 39).

Moreover, most teachers who are assigned to bilingual positions do not even know what CLIL actually means. On the contrary, they are simply experts in their own field of knowledge and hold a certification of level B2 or higher of the foreign language. This fact, along with the extra work that bilingual positions entail for new joiners to bilingual education, leads to improvisation when it comes to the challenge of teaching contents and language at the same time. Consequently, another crucial challenge for CLIL to be tackled is to enhance the awareness of teachers and school managers regarding its underpinnings, which also involves public administrations.

Regarding materials, there is still much work to do in collaboration with professional authors, editors and publishers, which requires both a consolidation of bilingual education and the clarification of the content subjects meant to be taught in foreign languages. Involving professional publishers in the production of materials for students' and teachers' disposal would release teachers of such a workload and would let them focus on the teaching process itself.

Satisfactorily responding to the aforementioned emerging challenges for CLIL would lead to a significant evolution of this bilingual education proposal, to its consolidation in the educative system and, thus, to a higher qualification in foreign languages of the Spanish and European population.

2.3.2. Suggestions for improvement

Once the main controversial aspects of CLIL have been discussed, possible solutions must be considered, in order to improve this bilingual education proposal and

especially enhance the quality of students' learning.

First of all, it is interesting to set up a general process for reviewing the current status of CLIL, in order to find concrete actions that might be deemed to lead to eventual improvements. Subsequently, some concrete suggestions for improvement are exposed below.

A good starting point is to conscientiously observe the circumstances underscored in the previous section. It is convenient that all stakeholders involved in the educational process partake in this task, followed by a joint reflection that may lead to richer conclusions and more suitable and efficient solutions. In this sense, it is interesting to organize conferences cycles on key issues, followed by debates where knowledge can be shared.

Observation and sharing ideas should lead to investigation, in order to dig deeper in the corresponding matters. Again, all parties involved in the educative system should take part in this task, specially, public administrations, school managers and teachers, who are called to take responsibility of the quality of the teaching process.

As a result of such investigations, the conclusions obtained should be shared with the whole community, so all members can learn from colleagues' experience and findings. This is where scientific journals and magazines, books, conference cycles, congresses, associations and similar agents play a crucial role. As union makes strength, networking is quite a valuable tool also regarding the satisfactory development of CLIL.

The lessons obtained through the whole aforementioned process must be put into practice while organizing the bilingual education proposal of each educative system and school, as well as while teaching the recipients of this service: students.

Going one step further, some concrete suggestions for improvement of CLIL are presented below.

As for the expertise of CLIL, it is convenient to tackle the scarce training that current teachers assigned to bilingual education usually have. In order to enhance their knowledge and skills for a successful bilingual teaching performance, the following actions should be taken:

- ❖ Orienting linguistic subjects to learning technicalities of the concrete field of each vocational training degree. This measure is in line with the recent requirement of certifying B1 level of a foreign language, prior to issuing the diploma of university bachelor degrees and goes one step further: requiring specific professional linguistic proficiency.
- ❖ Offering specific courses of CLIL by Modern Language Centres of colleges.
- ❖ Including CLIL within the Master's degree in Teacher Training, either as compulsory or elective subject.
- ❖ Extending internships in bilingual educative centres related to university studies for teachers.
- ❖ Offering Master's degrees in CLIL, as the one that motivated this dissertation.
- ❖ Designing specializing post-graduate degrees that allow to gain further expertise in specific areas of CLIL for teachers.

Besides the aforementioned measures, given the extra training needs and workload that CLIL entails, it would be convenient to provide bilingual teachers with significant incentives, continuous training and professional stability within their job positions. It would definitely help to boost teachers' qualification and motivation and, thus, an optimal teaching performance, resulting in a higher quality of the teaching service delivered to students (Fernández & Halbach, 2011, p. 42).

Finally, apart from the aforementioned suggestions for the improvement of teachers' key competences, it is also convenient to redesign the educational offer itself, by featuring it with a higher connection to foreign languages learning that help increasing its mastery by the Spanish population (Madrid-Manrique & Madrid-Fernández, 2014, p. 25):

- ❖ Designing plans for the promotion of bilingualism in colleges.

- ❖ Offering more bilingual degrees.
- ❖ Including the possibility to specialize in different areas and graduate with different mentions in bilingual degrees.
- ❖ Adding specific bilingual subjects in courses for the access to bilingual degrees.
- ❖ Encouraging research themes related to CLIL in Bachelor's and Master's dissertations.

3. RESEARCH

3.1. Research aims

After reviewing the theoretical framework of the topic of this Master's dissertation, it is time to analyse the implementation of CLIL in the vocational training degrees of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing in *Centro Integrado*¹, as part of the educative system of the Region of Navarra. Given the latest student-centered pedagogical tendencies, this research aims at studying the students' perspectives regarding their own performance, in order to evaluate the efficiency of these CLIL programmes.

3.2. Context and participants

In order to coherently analyse the research context, general aspects of CLIL programmes implemented in Navarra are studied firstly, followed by the concrete application of the bilingual education model specifically developed by *Centro Integrado* and, finally, the features of the students who participated for data collection.

3.2.1. CLIL programmes in Navarra

According to the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra, *"languages are the main element of identification, communication, socialization and learning"*. Ensuring language learning, since very early stages, for new generations plays a central role in students' integral training.

¹ Due to personal data protection reasons, the name of the high school that has been taken for reference for this Master's dissertation has not been disclosed.

The linguistic programmes of the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra develop the current curriculum, coordinating teaching in two or more languages, and develop the syllabus of one or several subjects totally or partially using English, French or German as vehicular languages (*Departamento de Educación, 2022*).

Despite this dissertation focuses on the bilingual model implemented in vocational training degrees of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing, it is interesting to conduct a brief review of the bilingual education offered in Navarra throughout the students' whole scholar progression, in order to properly understand their linguistic proficiency.

The bilingual education model offered by the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra addresses the different pre-university educational stages (infant education, primary education, compulsory secondary education, baccalaureate and vocational training) through the following programmes:

A. Programmes of Foreign Languages Learning in Infant and Primary Education

Programmes of Foreign Languages Learning (*Programas de Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras, PALE*) in infant and primary education develop non-linguistic curricular areas in foreign languages, integrating content and language teaching (CLIL) and the treatment of curricular languages (*Tratamiento Integrado de Lenguas, TIL*).

Plurilingual programmes begin at the second stage of infant education and continue through compulsory secondary education (*Departamento de Educación, 2022*).

B. Programmes of Foreign Languages Learning in secondary education

Programmes of Foreign Languages Learning in secondary education (*Programas de Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras, PALE*) include two different models (*Departamento de Educación, 2022*):

- ❖ Plurilingual secondary education, as a continuation of the scholar itinerary for students of Programme of English Learning (*Programa de Aprendizaje en Inglés, PAI*), Programme of French Learning (*Programa de Aprendizaje en Francés, PAF*), Programme of German Learning (*Programa de Aprendizaje en Alemán, PAAL*) and British (programme of Spanish and English learning, *Br*).

Plurilingual secondary education consists of learning curricular contents of at least two non-linguistic areas through a foreign language. The methodological principles that support these programmes are also the integrated treatment of languages (*Tratamiento Integrado de Lenguas, TIL*) and the integration of curricular contents and language (CLIL).

- ❖ Bilingual sections (English, French and German) develop the official curriculum of one or several subjects totally or partially using one of the aforementioned languages as vehicular languages. Its objective is to integrate both content and language learning. Students join this programme from 1st grade to 4th grade of compulsory secondary education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, ESO*).

C. British Council

Since 1996, the Ministry of Education of the Government of Spain has signed successive collaboration agreements with the British Council, aimed at developing a bilingual programme based on the integration of the Spanish and British curricula (*Departamento de Educación, 2022*).

Drawing on the latest agreement (signed in July, 2020)², this programme of integrated Spanish and British curriculum begins in the second stage of Infant Education and lasts until 4th grade of Compulsory Secondary Education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, ESO*). It is currently being carried out in five public Infant and Primary Education Schools (*Colegios de Educación Infantil y Primaria, CEIP*) and four public high schools (*Institutos de Enseñanza Secundaria, IES*) in the Region of Navarra, as

² [Resolución de 3 de julio de 2020, de la Secretaría General Técnica, por la que se publica el Convenio con la Delegación en España de la Fundación British Council y la Comunidad Foral de Navarra, para la realización de proyectos curriculares integrados y actividades educativas conjuntas.](#)

well as in other eighty-four Infant and Primary Schools and fifty-two high schools of other nine regions of Spain, as well as in Ceuta and Melilla (Spanish autonomous cities).

D. Bachibac

Bachibac is the agreement signed by the governments of Spain and France that allows baccalaureate students to obtain the double diploma of Spanish and French Baccalaureate and to access the higher education system both in Spain and France. Bachibac evaluates students from both countries through an external test based on the same criteria and offers them a bicultural training through a curriculum that integrates elements of the French educative system into the Spanish curriculum (*Departamento de Educación, 2022*).

E. Bilingual vocational training

The general objective of the Strategic Plan for boosting Vocational Training (*Plan Estratégico de impulso de la Formación Profesional*) is the transformation and modernization of vocational training, aimed at making it one of the pillars of a new economic model based on knowledge, being able to respond to the constant transformations of the productive sectors, in order to enhance the employability of workers and, thus, to improve the productivity and the competitiveness of companies.

Aimed at achieving the aforementioned general objective, one of its specific objectives is to foster bilingual vocational training as a previous step for students' mobility and internationalization and their eventual progression as employees in European countries. The implementation of bilingualism in vocation training entails teachers' and students' training.

The concretion of the bilingual educative offer in vocational training by the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra consists of two key curricular elements (*Departamento de Educación, 2022*):

- ❖ A foreign language subject (English or French) in 1st and 2nd grades of vocational training, meant to be addressed to all students.
- ❖ A content subject taught in a foreign language (English or French) for students who certify B1 level or higher of the target language. Students who cannot certify this level of domain of the foreign language study the corresponding content subject in Spanish (or Basque, in high schools where it is the default vehicular language).

As per the Department of Education (2022), there are 1.559 students of vocational training degrees of the professional family of Business Administration and 881 students of vocational training degrees of the professional family of Trade and Marketing, summing up to a total of 2.380 students in Navarra.

Furthermore, in Spain, there are a total of 137.723 students of vocational training degrees of the professional family of Business Administration and 61.349 students of vocational training degrees of the professional family of Trade and Marketing, summing up to a total of 199.072 students in Spain (CaixaBank, 2022).

3.2.2. CLII programmes in Centro Integrado

Centro Integrado is a high school whose main objective is to provide students with an integral training in Business Administration, Trade and Marketing and Information Technologies, qualifying them to properly access the labour market with the corresponding professional skills.

Centro Integrado is located in an outskirt neighbourhood of Pamplona (Navarra). Its students come from medium-class families and show quite a positive attitude towards their studies.

Centro Integrado is a modern educative centre, with adequate facilities and IT equipment, adapted to the requirements of its vocational training degrees and with periodical renewal of the necessary equipment.

In order to provide its more than five hundred students with an integral training, both from the professional and personal perspective, the teachers of *Centro Integrado* especially work on four key points: technological and pedagogical innovation, orientation towards insertion in the labour market, the fostering of continuous improvement and internationalization.

Regarding internationalization, which aligns with bilingualism, *Centro Integrado* pays special attention to the European programmes *Erasmus+* and *Leonardo da Vinci*, which allow students to enjoy stays³ and curricular internships in other European countries. These programmes help students to live international personal and scholar experiences, to boost their linguistic competences in foreign languages and to improve their professional competitiveness.

Moreover, since the past academic year 2021/2022, the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra is deliberately fostering bilingual education in vocational training. Indeed, last year, *Centro Integrado* was assigned to offer bilingual higher vocational training degrees of Information Technologies, Trade and Marketing and Business Administration. The current academic year, the Department of Education has implemented bilingual education in every single higher vocational training degree developed by public educative centres within Navarra⁴.

Besides this increase of bilingual vocational training degrees, the Department of Education is working closely with other institutions (such as Cambridge Assessment English, in charge of examinations and certifications of English for Speakers of Other Languages [ESOL] and *Centro Navarro de Aprendizaje Integral [CNAI]*)⁵, in order to

³ [Over a hundred students of bilingual higher vocational training degrees travel to Paderborn to know similar European experiences](#) (Departamento de Educación, 2022).

⁴ [The offer of vocational training for the school year 2022/2023 keeps rising and pushes Navarra towards the European objective with 40% of students in vocational training](#) (Departamento de Educación, 2022).

⁵ [CNAI will offer training programmes for certification, vocational training and foreign languages enhancement for students of bilingual vocational training in 2022](#) (Centro Navarro de Aprendizaje Integral, 2022).

provide both students and teachers participating in bilingual programmes with extracurricular training of foreign languages, with the possibility of obtaining the aforementioned certifications. The students of vocational training degrees of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing had the chance to participate in this programme; however, due to administrative issues, these lessons and eventual examinations could not be carried out. On the contrary, students could enjoy the stay abroad, meeting and relating to other vocational training students from different European countries.

❖ Figure 2.



Figure 2. Vocational training students stay in Paderborn (Germany). Source: Department of Education (2022).

As for teachers' qualification, it is worth mentioning that the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra requires C1 or C2 level for them to be appointed for bilingual positions. This is a remarkable milestone, as the vast majority of regional governments in Spain accept B2 level of the corresponding foreign language for joining bilingual education job positions, which must be deemed to be insufficient for proper bilingual teaching.

However, despite the positive attitude from the Department of Education and *Centro Integrado*, there is still much room for improvement. The main weaknesses observed in the implementation of bilingualism in higher vocational training degrees can be summarized as follows:

- ❖ As the Strategic Plan for Vocational Training for Navarra (2017-2020, p. 17) admits in their SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, one of its main weaknesses is the “*insufficient effort in [...] foreign languages training*”, which contrasts with one of its opportunities: “*increasing demand [...] of foreign languages*” (Departamento de Educación, 2017).
- ❖ Apart from the bureaucracy required for applying for and implementing bilingual educational programmes, there were no special instructions from the school management regarding the CLIL model of *Centro Integrado*.
- ❖ There was no coordinator of bilingual education, pretty much no coordination between bilingual content teachers and language teachers and no time assigned for CLIL-related tasks within the teachers’ official schedule.
- ❖ Apart from the corresponding linguistic subjects (English and French, depending on the concrete vocational training degree), just one of the content subjects of each grade was taught in English. Therefore, the exposure of students to the foreign language was quite limited.
- ❖ As previously mentioned, the linguistic reinforcement with extracurricular lessons (meant to be provided by *Centro Navarro de Aprendizaje Integral* to students and teachers participating in bilingual vocational training degrees) never took place, due to an issue with the procedure of authorization by the regional tax agency of the Government of Navarra.
- ❖ There are no materials from publishers adapted to the syllabus of many of the subjects taught in English, which means a significant extra workload for bilingual teachers, compared to their colleagues in charge of non-bilingual subjects.
- ❖ Students were required to certify a minimum of B1 level of the foreign language to join the bilingual vocational training degree, which must be deemed to be insufficient for students to properly follow the lessons in English.
- ❖ Bilingual education is still not properly perceived by some teachers and students, as the former tend to think that CLIL is still not really working and the latter are more likely to think that studying in a foreign language is an extra difficulty. Moreover, some teachers who cannot speak foreign languages perceive bilingual education as a handicap for the professional career.

3.2.3. Participants

This data collection has been conducted on students participating in higher vocational training degrees of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing developed in *Centro Integrado*, a public high school located in an outskirt neighbourhood of Pamplona driven by the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra.

Despite *Centro Integrado* has vocational training degrees of another professional family (Information Technologies), data has just been collected regarding the students of higher vocational training degrees of Administration and Management and Trade and Marketing, as these students tend to show a similar profile.

As the participants were pioneer students in bilingual higher vocational training degrees and it was the first time that bilingual higher vocational training degrees was offered by this high school, the sample could not be so large: just fifty-one students were called to participate in this research, whilst just twenty-one students finally filled in the questionnaire.

As for the students' main characteristics, 58,82% of students were women and 41,18% were men. The vast majority of them were between 18 and 20 years old, mainly coming from baccalaureate, except for a few of them who had previously studied intermediate vocational training degrees.

- Table 1.

ALL STUDENTS		
1 st grade of HVTD of Administration and Finance	Total	
	13	
	Men	Women
	5	8
2 nd grade of HVTD of Administration and Finance	Total	
	17	
	Men	Women
	7	10
1 st grade of HVTD of Direction Assistance	Total	
	6	
	Men	Women
	2	4

1 st grade of HVTD of Transport and Logistics	Total	
	15	
	Men	Women
	7	8
Total	Total	
	51	
	Men	Women
	21	30

Table 1. Sample: all students.

- Table 2.

RESPONSES		
1 st grade of HVTD of Administration and Finance		13
2 nd grade of HVTD of Administration and Finance		6
1 st grade of HVTD of Steering Assistance		2
1 st grade of HVTD of Transport and Logistics		0
	Total	21

Table 2. Sample: responses.

Given the deliberately selection of students belonging to the professional families of Administration and Management and Trade and Marketing, the conclusions of this research could probably be extrapolated to other students of these professional fields. However, this data should be analysed taking into account the average level of students within each region. Hence, indicators of students' performance from each region should be used in order to calculate a deviation coefficient, meant to be applied to the data obtained in this research.

3.3. Data collection instrument and procedure

The data collection specifically conducted for this research aims at analysing the

opinion of pioneer students participating in the bilingual higher vocational training degrees of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing.

Regarding the concrete scenario analysed in this Master's dissertation, specific data was collected through a mixed instrument, directly addressed to the students participating in these brand new bilingual vocational training degrees. This data collection instrument consisted of a quantitative and qualitative survey based on:

- ❖ A multiple-choice question, aiming at knowing the students' level of English at the beginning of the academic year, and ranging from A1 to C1 (Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR).
- ❖ A Likert-scale questionnaire, with five possible answers ranging from "*Not able at all*" to "*Completely able*". Five possible answers were offered, so the participants could accurately assess and express their opinions, avoiding very few or too many possible answers, which may lead the results and their interpretation to possible distortions.
- ❖ An open-answer question, included in the questionnaire for students to freely express their suggestions for improvement, given the limited answering possibilities of closed-answer surveys, and the fact that qualitative investigation enhances statistical research. Qualitative data was studied in order to group similar responses, highlighting the ones that presented a minimum of three occurrences (in line with the sample size).

This survey contained ten different questions, preceded by an introductory question where students had to specify the concrete vocational training degree they had studied. Questions were deliberately posed in Spanish, so the participants could express themselves more easily through their mother tongue.

The survey was sent to students at the end of the school year, so they had a wider experience as bilingual students, and it was an anonymous survey, so the students could express their opinions without any fear for any eventual retaliation from teachers. The survey was conducted through Google Forms and their e-mail addresses were only required in order to avoid duplicated responses from the same student.

The questions designed for this research were as follows:

0. What subject of the bilingual programme have you studied in English?

This is an open question, aimed at knowing the students of which vocational training degrees had answered the survey.

1. What level of English do you think you had at the beginning of the school year?

This question aimed at knowing the students' perception about their level of the foreign language before joining the bilingual vocational training degree, and had five possible answers:

- ☐ A1
- ☐ A2
- ☐ B1
- ☐ B2
- ☐ C1

2. Have you been able to follow the teacher's explanations in English?

This question aimed at knowing the student's perception about their listening skills in the target language, as one of the most popular myths against bilingual education is that students usually have such a low domain of the foreign language that bilingual education is rather an empty declaration than a reality. The mastery of the foreign language by teachers can be deemed to be enough, as Navarra requires C1 or C2 level for joining bilingual job positions. This question had five possible answers:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not able at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Completely able

3. Have you been able to study the text book and complementary materials in English?

This question had the same purpose as the previous one, regarding written comprehension skills, and had the same five possible answers:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not able at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Completely able

4. Have you been able to communicate orally in English?

This question had the same purpose as the previous one, regarding oral production skills, and had the same five possible answers:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not able at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Completely able

5. Have you been able to communicate by writing in English?

This question had the same purpose as the previous one, regarding written production skills, and had the same five possible answers:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not able at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Completely able

6. How much English have you learnt due to the bilingual content subject?

This question aimed at knowing the student's perception about the efficiency of CLIL regarding language learning, and had the same five possible answers:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not able at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Completely able

7. How much has your fluency in English improved?

This question aimed at knowing the student's perception about the improvement of their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), one of the two key linguistic elements of CLIL, and had the same five possible answers:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not able at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Completely able

8. How much technical vocabulary in English have you learnt?

This question aimed at knowing the student's perception about their improvement in Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), the other key linguistic element of CLIL, and had the same five possible answers:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not able at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Completely able

9. With the same teacher, how much do you think you would have learnt with the content subject taught in English, if you had studied it in Spanish?

This question aimed at knowing the student's perception about the efficiency of CLIL regarding content learning. The beginning of the question aimed at excluding the teacher factor from the equation, as content subjects taught in English were also taught in Spanish to students who were not participating in the bilingual model. This question also had the same five possible answers:

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not able at all	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Completely able

10. Regarding bilingual education, what suggestions for improvement would you point out for future school years?

This is an open question aimed at knowing any personal opinion about CLIL, apart from the aforementioned matters.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings were studied in order to extract rational conclusions and discussed with the literature previously reviewed, thus, carrying out a theory-based analysis of the results.

3.4. Findings

The answers for the questions of the survey conducted on students can be summarized as follows:

1. What level of English do you think you had at the beginning of the school year?

The results for this question prove that, despite the fact that it is just required to certify level B1 in the target language, over half of the students admitted having B2 level, which can be deemed to be sufficient to study in a foreign language.

- Chart 1.

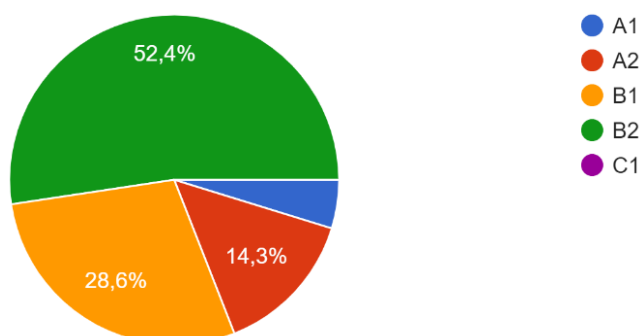


Chart 1. Students' initial level of English.

2. Have you been able to follow the teacher's explanations in English?

The results of this question prove that over three quarters of the students participating in bilingual vocational training degrees of the professional areas of Administration and Management and Trade and Marketing have enough level of oral comprehension skills to participate in bilingual education.

- Chart 2.

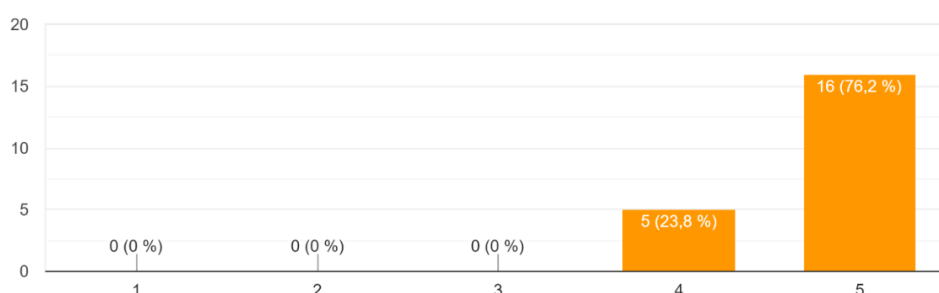


Chart 2. Students' capability to follow teachers' explanations in bilingual vocational training degrees.

3. Have you been able to study the text book and complementary materials in English?

The results of this question prove that the students' level of written comprehension skills is significantly lower than their oral comprehension skills, which could also respond to the teachers' ability to explain contents in an easier way than how they are presented by text books. However, it can still be deemed to be enough for students to participate in bilingual education, as the vast majority of them rated high or very high their performance regarding these skills.

- Chart 3.

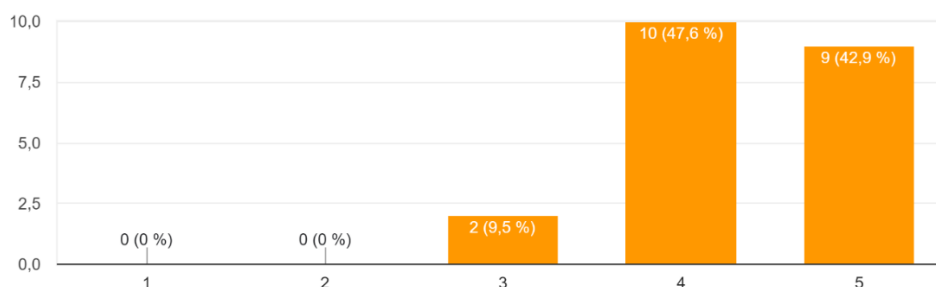


Chart 3. Students' level of reading skills.

4. Have you been able to communicate orally in English?

Compared to the previous chart, the results of this question prove the fact that comprehension skills are usually higher than production skills.

- Chart 4.

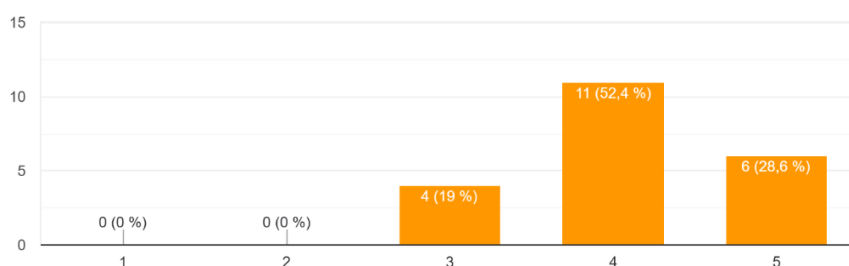


Chart 4. Students' level of speaking skills.

5. Have you been able to communicate by written in English?

The results of this question prove that Spanish students feel unconfident while communicating orally in foreign languages, given the fact that their written production skills are significantly higher than their oral productions skills.

- Chart 5.

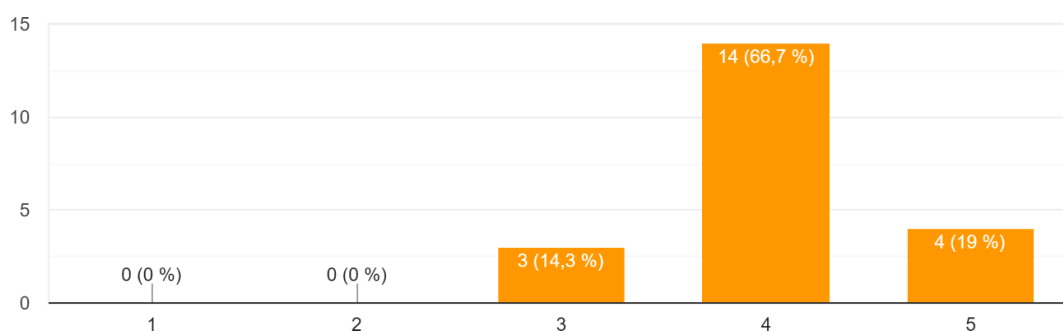


Chart 5. Students' level of writing skills.

6. How much English have you learnt due to the bilingual content subject?

The results of this question show a different perception from students regarding the

improvement of their level of English thanks to the bilingual model of vocational training offered by the Department of Education, which could probably respond to the fact that just one content subject was taught in the target language. This interpretation could be supported by the fact that most of the students considered they had improved their level of English, despite the fact of having different levels of improvement.

- Chart 6.

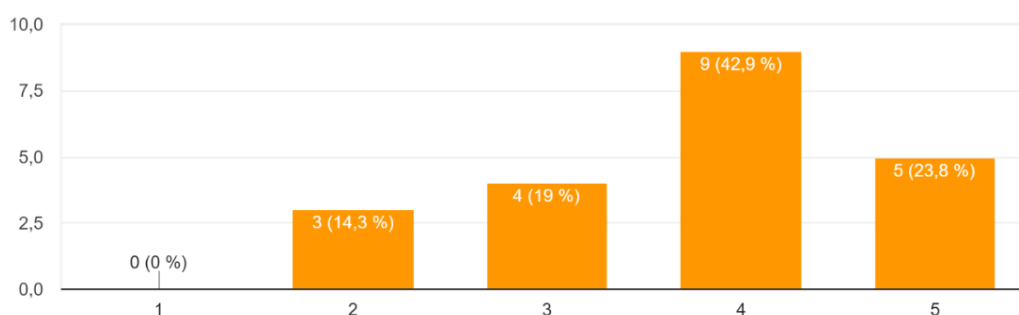


Chart 6. Efficiency of CLIL regarding language learning.

7. How much has your fluency in English improved?

Compared to the previous chart, the results of this question prove that bilingual education improve the level of English of students, despite the fact that the Spanish population tend not to feel comfortable while speaking a foreign language.

- Chart 7.

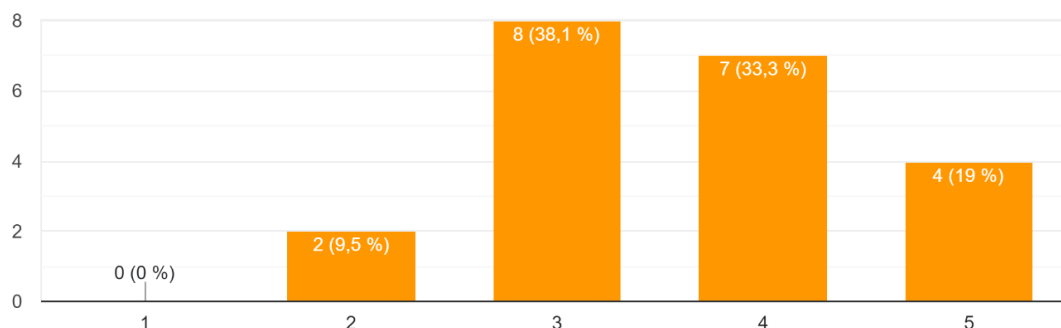


Chart 7. Efficiency of CLIL regarding Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS).

8. How much technical vocabulary in English have you learnt?

Compared to the previous chart, the results of this question prove that Spanish students may make a significantly higher improvement regarding Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency than regarding Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills.

- Chart 8.

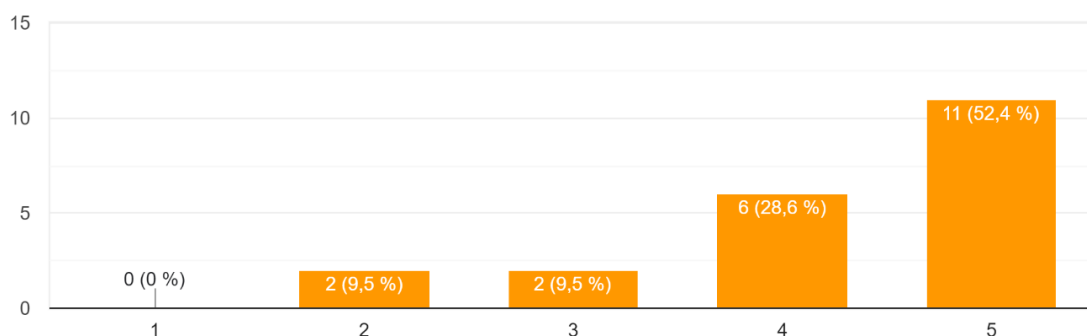


Chart 8. Efficiency of CLIL regarding Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency.

9. With the same teacher, how much do you think you would have learnt with the content subject taught in English, if you had studied it in Spanish?

The results of this question prove that bilingual education has pretty much no negative impact in content learning, as just a minor percentage of students think they would have learnt more content if they had studied it in their mother tongue.

- Chart 9.

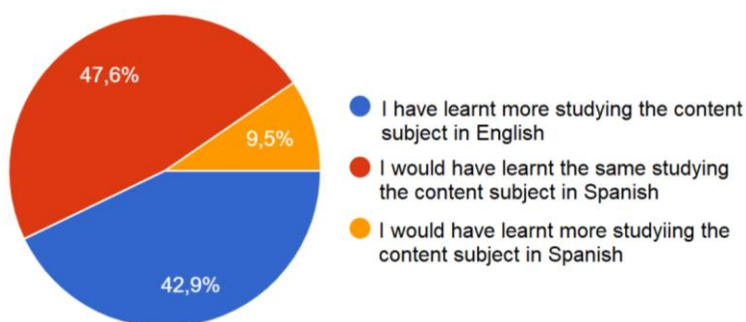


Chart 9. Impact of CLIL in content learning.

10. Regarding bilingual education, what suggestions for improvement would you point out for future school years?

The results of this open question point out that *ad hoc* materials for bilingual education is one of its more important weaknesses. Students also demanded a more practical education, which is not strictly related to bilingual education (but to teaching methodologies) and complaint about the scarce amount of content subjects taught in the target language and low level of the linguistic subject (English), which keeps offering students poor standards.

3.5. Discussion

The Department of Education required a minimum of level B1 of the target language for students to join bilingual vocational training degrees, which can actually be deemed not to be sufficient for them to properly face the challenges posed by bilingual education. However, given the recent implementation of bilingual vocational training degrees in Navarra and the corresponding scarcity of students considering joining these programmes, *Centro Integrado* decided not to be strict while applying the aforementioned requirement and to accept not only students who actually held level B1 certificates issued by well-known certifying institutions (e.g., Cambridge Assessment English), but also students who stated having that level of proficiency. This decision aimed at promoting bilingual vocational training education, but entailed one of the main issues arisen at the beginning of the school year, where the only coordination meeting between content teachers and language teachers took place.

During the first sessions, the language teacher had conducted an exam in order to test the students' initial level of English and found out that some of the students who stated to have a minimum of B1 level had probably been too optimistic about their own skills and posed a question to the content teacher (author of this research): whether letting these students definitely join the bilingual education groups (groups B) or finally

assigning them to the group studying content subjects in their mother tongue (groups A).

The content teacher reflected out loud about the purpose of education itself: whether it is mainly about certifying a certain level of knowledge at the end of the degree or rather boosting students' motivation towards studying and helping them improve their wisdom, contributing to achieve a progression from day 1 at school until they graduate. The latter turned out to align with the sense of teachers' occupation and main role within societies, so these students were allowed to finally join the bilingual groups under their signed agreement to be eventually moved to the monolingual group in case their capability to properly study through the target language would turn out to be insufficient. The final result was quite positive, as these few students finally proved to be highly motivated to stay in the bilingual group, showing significant improvements both in content and language learning.

As for the overall capability of all students to study in English, the results proved that they were qualified enough to face this challenge, but some observations must be done:

- ❖ A compared analysis of the results of questions 2 to 5 proves that the Spanish population keeps feeling unconfident when it comes to orally communicate in foreign languages (including English, the most spoken foreign language), as listening (oral comprehension) and writing skills (written production) show higher standards than speaking skills (oral production). This finding aligns with Pérez-Cañado's investigations (2016, p. 17) regarding the performance of Spanish students participating in CLIL programmes.
- ❖ A compared study of questions 2 and 3 proves that teachers' role can be deemed to be essential in terms of facilitating the students' acquisition of new concepts, as they stated to have had it easier to understand contents thanks to teachers' explanations compared to reading text books and complementary materials. This finding is also supported by Pavón's researches about teachers' concerns and uncertainties about the introduction of CLIL programmes (2010, p. 20).

A compared analysis of questions 7 and 8 also proves that students consider that CLIL is useful, whilst they still seem not to feel so confident when it comes to speaking to others (as their perception of their improvement in Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills is not as high as their improvement in Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). As previously mentioned, this fact may respond to the scarce application of CLIL over the curriculum of vocational training degrees (just one content subject each school year) and the lack of exposure to the target language of the Spanish population. This finding is in line with Marsh's investigations (2000, p. 41) about the crucial role that the extension of bilingual education to as many content subjects as possible play in the efficiency of CLIL programmes. Anyways, both key competences show a positive self-evaluation by students.

Besides students' progression regarding linguistic skills, according to the results of question 9, content seems not to be affected by bilingual education, as most of the students consider that studying content subjects in their own language would not have made them learn more contents. This fact would deny some criticisms that state that bilingual education jeopardizes content learning (Sanmartín, 2013, p. 33), due to the low level of students regarding the foreign language (which has also been proved to be wrong, as per the analysis of the results of questions 1 to 5).

Finally, the results of question 10 prove some weaknesses previously analysed, especially the ones related to the following matters:

- ❖ The lack of materials designed and adapted to the syllabus of vocational training degrees, as some of the most frequent suggestions for improvement submitted by the participants of this research asked to *“change the textbook”*, *“develop better materials”* or *“not to provide materials in L1”*. This lack of proper materials actually responds to the still scarce implementation of bilingual vocational training, which make the edition of text books and complementary materials not to be profitable for professional editors and publishers. This finding aligns with one of the criticisms of Bruton (2013, p. 19), who points out this issue as one of the main weaknesses of CLIL.
- ❖ The low exposure to the target language due to the low number of content subjects taught in English (as previously mentioned, one per school year: two

content subjects in two school years). This fact makes bilingual education not so bilingual, as it is still conducted through the students' mother tongue most of the time. Indeed, Bruton (2013, p. 20) highlighted the scarce extension of bilingual teaching throughout the whole curriculum, which decreases the efficiency of CLIL programmes.

4. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, CLIL can be conceived as the ultimate evolution of bilingual education for the European landscape, as it is specifically designed to respond to the concrete circumstances of its population (whose main features are its heterogeneity and the scarce exposure to foreign languages, especially in countries like Spain).

CLIL lays far from the mere fact of teaching content subjects using a foreign language as the code for communication. It entails a complex process where all stakeholders involved in the educative community play an important role. Therefore, the success of this model of bilingual education depends on their assumption of their responsibility within the process. Indeed, CLIL programmes must follow clear proven guidelines, as well as a specific adaptation to each educative scenario, where public administrations, school managers and editors of materials are called to action. Teachers are demanded to have a high level of mastery of the target language and student-centered methodologies, as well as a solid domain of the contents related to their field of expertise. Content teachers and language teachers must coordinate their teaching, in order to achieve the desirable symbiosis in terms of linguistic learning. Students also face the challenge of studying in a foreign language, which requires an extra level effort from their end.

The Department of Education of the Government of Navarra makes significant efforts in order to boost the level of English of its students. Indeed, thanks to the bilingualism already consolidated in earlier educational stages, students from *Centro Integrado* reached vocational training with quite a decent level of English, letting them complete their education using this foreign language. However, much work must still be done by all the stakeholders involved in the educative community in order to improve the aforementioned weaknesses and to successfully face present and future challenges.

The results obtained from the data collection specifically conducted for this research have proved that most of the criticisms on bilingual education are rather myths than actual issues, as the students referred in this Master's dissertation did not have significant difficulties to study in the target language and to achieve significant learning out of it.

Nevertheless, it is also convenient to acknowledge the limitations of this research:

- ❖ The scarce number of participants in the data collection entails the necessity of being cautious when it comes to extrapolating the interpretation of its results and the conclusions deducted out of them. It also evidences the low implementation of CLIL within the educational system, especially when it comes to vocational training. Due to the fact that bilingual vocational training degrees were officially just offered to students who could certify B1 level of the foreign language, the sample of students available at *Centro Integrado* for answering the survey was not as high as desirable.
- ❖ The concrete profile of the students involved in the data collection: pupils of higher vocational training degrees of Business Administration and Trade and Marketing. This kind of students are at least 18 years old, which entails the fact they have already gone through all pre-university educational stages (where English is also taught, either just through language subjects or also through content subjects, in case of bilingual education). Furthermore, as per the field of knowledge of their degrees, these students usually show an upper-intermediate level of proficiency regarding their average qualification, compared to students of other degrees. This fact also requires caution while extrapolating the results and conclusions of this study to other educational scenarios: other vocational training degrees or educational stages (infant, primary, compulsory secondary education, baccalaureate or, even, university studies).
- ❖ The nature and scope of the data collection instrument, mainly based on a Likert-scale survey, with an open-answer question. This type of data collection instrument entails the fact that the data collected and analysed consists of the students' perception of the upsides and downsides of the implementation of CLIL programmes in *Centro Integrado*. Despite the fact that the data collection instrument was deliberately based on students' perceptions in order to find out their opinions regarding bilingual education, it is necessary to bear in mind its subjective nature. Hence, it would be convenient to complete and support the conclusions of this research with future investigations based on objective data collection instruments, such as content and language tests.

Finally, despite the aforementioned limitations, this research contributes to expanding the knowledge about the implementation of CLIL programmes within the Spanish educational systems, due to the following reasons:

- ❖ Its focus on the implementation of CLIL programmes in vocational training, whereas most of the literature regarding CLIL is based on primary and secondary education. This approach turns out to be especially interesting given the fact that vocational training appears to be the most increasingly demanded education service from students in Spain.
- ❖ Its focus on Navarra, which is deliberately making significant efforts in order to make bilingual education the rule, not the exception. Providing studies from numerous educational scenarios helps to extract richer conclusions, which helps to improve the approach regarding CLIL. Indeed, Navarra can be taken as a valuable example of bilingual education for other educational systems with less experience in this field.
- ❖ Its focus on students' perceptions, in line with the latest educational tendencies, which assign them a major role as the real protagonists of the teaching-learning process.

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