La experiencia AICLE del alumnado de primero de educación secundaria desde una perspectiva transicional

The CLIL experience of students belonging to the First Year of Secondary Education from a transitional perspective

A experiência CLIL dos alunos do primeiro ano do ensino secundário de uma perspectiva de transição

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Resumen

La metodología Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos en Lenguas Extranjeras (AICLE) ha adquirido gran relevancia en la educación no universitaria y su propagación en la región canaria (España) ha sido considerable durante este siglo a través de diversos programas de adaptación de enseñanza de lengua y contenidos que se ofrecen de forma simultánea. Por tal motivo, el objetivo de la presente investigación fue conocer la percepción de 50 alumnos del primer año de educación secundaria obligatoria de una institución localizada en el área metropolitana de la isla de Tenerife (España) en torno al uso de la metodología AICLE como estrategia educativa para favorecer la competencia comunicativa en lengua extranjera. Para ello, se elaboró una encuesta de naturaleza cuantitativa y cualitativa conformada por 15 ítems. Los resultados demuestran la necesidad de fortalecer ciertas dimensiones de la metodología AICLE relacionadas con el grado motivacional, la figura del auxiliar de conversación y la implementación de estrategias y recursos de apoyo, elementos esenciales para impulsar la formación en una lengua extranjera. Por ello, se puede recomendar un mayor seguimiento del alumnado que se encuentra en ese periodo de transición educativa, ya que pueden verse afectados tanto por el cambio del contexto educativo como por el aprendizaje mediante una lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: dificultad en el aprendizaje, educación bilingüe, enseñanza de idiomas, transición educativa.

Abstract

The CLIL methodology has acquired a great impact upon non-university education. Its proliferation in the Canary Islands (Spain) has been considerable during this century by means of transitional programs that aims to introduce the simultaneous learning of language and contents. This study aimed to analyze how the different areas such as sources, strategies, parental and academic support, the motivation, etc. take part in the bilingual program and how they contribute to the learning process of students. Firstly, a theoretical approach will be developed taking into account issues such as the importance of getting to know the consequences caused by moving from one educational stage to a different one and the gradual introduction and development of the CLIL methodology in the Canary Islands. Afterwards, 50 students belonging to the first year of Secondary Education and inserted in the CLIL methodology have been selected. A questionnaire has been utilized as an evaluative instrument that goaled to detect those areas that require to be revised and improved in the bilingual program. The different areas created for result analysis are the following: use of materials and resources regarding CLIL methodology, utilization of the foreign language and mother language, use of other different methodologies within CLIL, evaluation, degree of motivation and reflection upon the experience. These results have demonstrated the need to combine the different elements that are applied in the academic activity in a bilingual environment. It has been also resulted the necessity to revise the selection of human resources and to generate more professional training regarding the utilization of CLIL methodology. Above all, the results have revealed the great relevance and necessity to make a gradual study of pupils who are starting Secondary Education because of the dual handicap they may suffer: change in the educative context and the learning through a foreign language.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, bilingual education, educational transition, learning difficulties.

Resumo

A metodologia de Aprendizagem Integrada de Conteúdos em Línguas Estrangeiras (CLIL) adquiriu grande relevância no ensino não universitário e a sua difusão na região das Canárias (Espanha) foi considerável durante este século através de vários programas de adaptação de ensino de línguas e conteúdos oferecidos em simultâneo. Por este motivo, o objetivo desta pesquisa foi conhecer a percepção de 50 alunos do primeiro ano do ensino médio obrigatório de uma instituição localizada na área metropolitana da ilha de Tenerife (Espanha) sobre a utilização da metodologia CLIL como estratégia educacional para promover a competência comunicativa em língua estrangeira. Para tanto, foi elaborada uma pesquisa quantitativa e qualitativa, composta por 15 itens. Os resultados demonstram a necessidade de reforçar certas dimensões da metodologia CLIL relacionadas com o grau motivacional, a figura do assistente de conversação e a implementação de estratégias e recursos de apoio, elementos essenciais para promover a formação em língua estrangeira. Por esse motivo, um maior acompanhamento dos alunos que se encontram nesse período de transição educacional pode ser recomendado, uma vez que eles podem ser afetados tanto pela mudança no contexto educacional quanto pelo aprendizado de uma língua estrangeira.

Palavras-chave: dificuldades de aprendizagem, educação bilíngue, ensino de línguas, transição educacional.

Introduction

Learning a foreign language (English) has become a communication imperative due to the need to know and master an international means of communication. This concept of English as a lingua franca has promoted the growth of bilingual education in numerous European centers (European Commission, 2001), which is promoted from a dual vision: as an end and as a means in the learning process. Language and content are merged in the educational system to promote the learning of the foreign language. Therefore, this article will try to analyze the learning context of students belonging to the first year of compulsory secondary education (ESO) in a bilingual education program.

This first course is characterized, without a doubt, by the emergence of new changes and demands that the student must face, which can generate numerous problems that can affect their academic career (Fernández, Mena & Riviere, 2010; Roca , 2010). Therefore, Monarca, Rappoport and Fernández González (2012) point out that around

33% of students are in a vulnerable condition regarding their performance in this period of variation towards secondary education.

As students progress through the different courses and educational stages, a more analytical language acquisition is observed in the consolidation of linguistic and cognitive skills and abilities (Loaiza Villalba and Galindo Martínez, 2014; Signoret, 2013). From a maturational perspective, the design of bilingual programs is determined by this cognitive issue, hence the implementation of bilingual education requires a progressive perspective that allows adapting the contents to the cognitive evolution of the students. For this, however, it must be taken into account that in primary education a teacher is in charge of teaching and learning various subjects, while in secondary education each teacher teaches the subject of their specialty. In this educational format whose teaching staff is more fragmented, a greater degree of cooperation and coordination between teachers is necessary (Julián de Vega, 2013), as well as better training.

The latter is evidenced in a study by Durán Martínez (2018), who observed a greater training of L2 in secondary education teachers, compared to teachers of the previous stage, who had better methodological training in the exercise teacher of bilingual programs.

However, from a historical perspective, the Canary Islands (Spain) have been characterized by being formulated as a free port between various cultures where various commercial activities are carried out. In fact, its strategic geographical position - between the African, American and European continents - has been a decisive factor for the English language to influence the Canarian dialect[1]. Starting in 2003, the European Commission issued a plan to promote foreign language learning among European citizens. Through the implementation of this plan, proposals have been prepared for the different national, regional and local institutions to promote language learning.

In this sense, Frigols and Marsh (2014) analyzed the beginning of bilingual education programs (from the 2004-2005 academic year) in nine primary education centers in the Canary Islands. Although its implementation has been gradual, it can be indicated that this initiative has presented the highest results with regard to the exposure of the foreign language, which is why it has become a positive experience for the students belonging to that program educational (Rodríguez-Sabiote, Madrid, Ortega-Martín and Hughes, 2018).

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[1] Vocablos tales como *queque*, *piche* o *tifa*, comúnmente empleados por los hablantes del dialecto canario, proceden del inglés *cake*, *pitch* y *theft act*, respectivamente, entre algunos anglicismos en dicho dialecto.

Later, in June 2005, this program continued with the incorporation of the Integrated Learning of Contents in Foreign Languages (CLIL) methodology in compulsory secondary education centers through the Bilingual Sections Project (Martín Frigols and Marsh, 2014). Then, in the 2006-2007 academic year, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the Canary region determined the spread of this simultaneous methodology of language and content - and later cognition (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010) - in educational centers Infant, primary and secondary school to promote communicative competence in the foreign language, for which the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages was used as a linguistic foundation. For participation in such program, requirements were indicated such as a minimum of two participating non-linguistic areas, commitment between the faculty and the English department for the development of this methodology, a B1 level of the teaching staff in those non-linguistic subjects that they wished to be part of the program, as well as the participation of teachers in continuous training processes and in the development of resources in accordance with the CLIL methodology.

However, it should be noted that the success of these bilingual programs can be highly conditioned by the degree of study and reflection on practices in this educational model. Therefore, there is a need to deepen the effectiveness of CLIL programs, which must address the characteristics of the students to promote successful learning in them (Dalton-Puffer, Llinares, Lorenzo and Nikula, 2014), since the double focus on the learning that allows the acquisition of various objectives in unison of content and foreign languages has been favored by educational research and multidisciplinary practices (Mehisto, 2012)[2].

However, during the 2009-2010 academic year, Martín and Frigols (2014) observed a great evolution in the bilingual educational programs of this community, which was evidenced in the increase in participating educational centers (169), the formation of the CLIL teacher profile , the promulgation of the use of the Moodle platform and the increase in the initial and continuous training of participating teachers (stays abroad, exchanges with teachers from English-speaking countries, specialization courses and methodological innovation). In addition, as of this academic year, a monitoring and evaluation system was proposed that should take into account the following aspects:

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[2] A este doble foco, Coyle *et al*. (2010) han añadido un tercero: la capacidad y prácticas de cognición del alumnado, entendidas como habilidades de pensamiento.

- Present a quarterly evaluation of the most important aspects developed in the CCP.

- Attend follow-up sessions organized by the General Directorate for Educational Planning and Innovation (DGOIE).

- Collaborate with the monitoring of the DGOIE to determine the scope of the results and progress obtained.

- Participate and send others a satisfaction questionnaire to the educational community (Martín y Frigols, 2014).

This set of parameters that try to analyze the functioning and evolution of bilingual education programs focus on the teaching profession. In a beginning period in the implementation of the CLIL methodology in centers of different educational stages, it is necessary to know the perspective of the students, that is, their degree of satisfaction, the materials or resources they commonly use, their new vision of the foreign language , the areas that involve a greater effort for the conjugation of languages, content and cognition, among others.

The Plan for the Promotion of Foreign Languages (Plan PILE), currently developed in the Canary Islands, aims to host non-university educational stages (infant, primary, secondary, high school, professional training and official language schools) through centers Canarian publics. It tries to give a new perspective to learning English as a source of knowledge and a means of communication for the professional field, as this seeks to promote actions such as employability and mobility of individuals. This plan, divided into three phases for its adaptation and evolution in Canarian non-university education, is currently in the second phase of implementation. The final objective of this plan is that from the 2037-38 academic year, 40% of the infant and primary education curriculum, and 30% of the secondary education curriculum will be exposed in L2.

The PILE Plan is not only formulated from a quantitative perspective by increasing the number of hours of exposure to the foreign language through its use as a learning vehicle in non-linguistic subjects, since its application also requires a qualitative implementation regarding the use of compatible methodologies with this learning format, as well as the initial and continuous training of teachers in linguistic and non-linguistic subjects, and the updating of learning resources based on digital contexts.

Through the PILE Plan there is a greater insistence on the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the educational program, creating an evaluative commission, monitoring the training of teachers involved in the program, a proposal plan on the study of the most difficult advanced areas , and proposals for improvement regarding

compliance with the guidelines and the degree of acquisition of communicative competence in a foreign language, among the most relevant aspects. In summary, the PILE plan establishes the following parameters in the evaluation report:

1. The number of students who achieve their linguistic accreditation in foreign languages in A2, B1 and B2.

2. The number of participating teachers in the different training modalities for the improvement of communicative competence.

3. The number of participating teachers in the different training modalities for methodological improvement in foreign languages.

4. The number of teaching staff with linguistic accreditation that enables the delivery of linguistic projects in the educational centers of the Canary Islands.

5. The number of teaching positions created throughout the development of the plan and the coverage of these by teachers with different administrative profiles.

6. The number of teachers accredited in B2 in foreign languages.

7. The number of centers that participate in European, international or other projects within their language projects.

8. The number of centers that teach at least one third of their curriculum in English by levels.

9. The number of students who access the double degree in high school.

10. The implementation of the teaching and learning model in foreign languages by educational districts.

11. The number of materials created by educational centers and their dissemination.

In the different parameters selected by this plan, it can be noted that it focuses on the teaching figure: the number of participating teachers, their respective linguistic accreditations, number of places, number of teachers with the specific B2 linguistic level, as well as references on the educational center such as the material created by the center, number of centers participating in international projects and the implementation of this methodology by educational zones. The continuous evaluation of the requirements and the practice of teachers is unquestionable in nature, since they are the ones who design teaching-learning strategies according to the CLIL methodology, select, create and share materials and resources adjusted to this methodology, and promote student participation in international projects, among the most relevant aspects. However, the purpose of the

methodology falls especially on the students: their degree of acquisition of communicative competence in the foreign language and their simultaneous learning of languages, content and cognition.

Methodology

The objective of this research was to know the perception of the students of the first year of compulsory secondary education regarding the use of the CLIL methodology as an educational strategy to promote communicative competence in a foreign language.

As indicated in the introduction, the implementation of bilingual education in the Canary Islands began in the 2004-2005 academic year, from an experimental format in nine early childhood and primary education centers, and then — a year later — was incorporated into secondary education centers[3].

Now, the educational center chosen for the development of this study was one of the pioneers in applying this learning methodology. It is an institution located in the metropolitan area of the island of Tenerife. It is a public center, characterized by the use of innovative methodologies and by having highly trained teachers.

Students of the first year of compulsory secondary education (n = 50), whose ages ranged from 11 to 12 years, participated in this study. More than 90% of these students studied in a public primary education center that used the CLIL methodology in various non-linguistic subjects. These students belonged to the bilingual program developed by the center adapted from the guidelines of the PILE Plan. The selection system of the students belonging to this program was based on the results obtained in the subject of First Foreign Language (English) and the rest in non-linguistic subjects that have been exercised through the CLIL methodology in the last year of primary education.

To carry out this study, a quantitative and qualitative survey focused on the students was used. The items that made up said survey (a total of 15 focused on aspects related to the implementation of the CLIL methodology, such as the use of the foreign language in the classroom, the use of resources for the study of content, language and cognition, figure of the conversation assistant as a human resource in the learning process, the conjugation of the CLIL methodology through other methodologies such as project-based learning and cooperative learning. Through a self-reflection activity, the students had to determine the degree of compliance with the affirmations proposed through four parameters: never,

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[3] Su introducción en centros de educación secundaria también se desarrolla desde una perspectiva experimental y observacional.

sometimes, generally and always. In some of the affirmations raised, the justification of the answer offered was requested to gather more information about their experience in the first year of secondary education. The different dimensions selected for this research were the following, as observed in the following table:

Tabla 1. Dimensiones tratadas en la encuesta y número de preguntas dedicadas a cada área

Dimensiones	N.º de cuestiones
Utilización de materiales y recursos en materias de metodología AICLE (dimensión I)	5
Utilización de la lengua extranjera y lengua materna (dimensión II)	2
Empleo de otras metodologías (cooperativa, aprendizaje basado en proyectos) (dimensión III)	1
Evaluación (dimensión IV)	2
Grado de motivación (dimensión V)	4
Reflexión personal (dimensión VI)	1

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Results

In order to define the degree of reliability of the results, the number of elements proposed was evaluated from the reliability indices. For this, Cronbach's alpha was selected as an evaluative method of the reliability of said survey and its result was positive, as it was close to 1 (Table 2).

Tabla 2. Estadística de fiabilidad

Alfa de Cronbach	Número de elementos
0,973	15

Fuente: Elaboración propia

On the other hand, in terms of dimensions, it can be said that they have certain connections because they are part of the same educational axis. In dimension I - dedicated to statements about the use of materials and resources in the study of subjects belonging to the CLIL methodology program - the following premises were formulated, and the following results were obtained, summarized in the following table:

Tabla 3. Utilización de materiales y recursos en materias de metodología AICLE

Dimensión I	Nunca	A veces	Generalmente	Siempre
Utilizo el traductor u otras herramientas en las clases y tareas AICLE	16 %	70 %	14 %	0 %
Voy a clases particulares por dificultades con las asignaturas AICLE	74 %	12 %	8 %	6 %
Los/as profesores/as ofrecen recursos y estrategias para las clases AICLE	22 %	50 %	24 %	4 %
El auxiliar de conversación me ayuda con las clases AICLE	48 %	30 %	18 %	4 %
El auxiliar de conversación trabaja y explica los contenidos AICLE durante sus horas de	8 %	42 %	34 %	16 %

clase				

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Regarding the second dimension - referring to the use of the foreign language and the mother tongue - two premises were formulated, from which the following information collected in this table was obtained:

Tabla 4. Utilización de la lengua extranjera y lengua materna

Dimensión II	*Nunca*	*A veces*	*Generalmente*	*Siempre*
Los profesores hablan en español en asignaturas AICLE	0 %	86 %	14 %	0 %
Me cuesta seguir las clases AICLE por el nivel de inglés	52 %	40 %	8 %	0 %

Fuente: Elaboración propia

The third dimension - dedicated to the use of other methodologies - has not been studied in depth due to the large number of elements that were attempted to be addressed in this study. However, an attempt was made to determine whether cooperative learning and project-based learning methodologies were used in the learning process through CLIL methodology. The results obtained are summarized in this table:

Tabla 5. Empleo de otras metodologías

Dimensión III	Nunca	A veces	Generalmente	Siempre
Trabajo más con mis compañeros en AICLE que en lengua materna a través de proyectos y de forma cooperativa	16.3 %	14.2 %	40.8 %	28.6 %

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Evaluation is a fundamental process in learning that tries to define the degree of acquisition of knowledge. In this case, we are in a complex process due to the triple focus of the CLIL methodology: languages, cognition and content. Here are the results obtained in table 6:

Tabla 6. Evaluación

Dimensión IV	Nunca	A veces	Generalmente	Siempre
La evaluación de asignaturas AICLE es más difícil que en las asignaturas no AICLE	18 %	42 %	32 %	4 %
Me evalúan de diferentes formas en el programa AICLE (exámenes, proyectos,	12 %	36 %	24 %	28 %

tareas, etc.)				

Fuente: Elaboración propia

The degree of motivation in student learning is an essential element that determines the behavior and attitude of the student towards their learning. For these reasons, a dimension has been created for this factor, which allowed obtaining the following information collected in this table:

Tabla 7. Grado de motivación

Dimensión V	*Nunca*	*A veces*	*Generalmente*	*Siempre*
He pensado en abandonar el programa AICLE	60 %	28 %	8 %	4 %
He pensado que las asignaturas AICLE son más difíciles	32 %	38 %	18 %	12 %
Participo más en las clases AICLE que en las lecciones de lengua materna	18 %	30 %	32 %	10 %
Me gustan más las clases en lengua materna que en inglés	32 %	28 %	26 %	14 %

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Finally, in the dimension on suggestions for possible modifications of the bilingual program, the students issued free configuration responses to determine those areas for improvement in this learning methodology, which are summarized in the following table:

Tabla 8. Reflexión personal

Dimensión VI	Respuestas de libre configuración
¿Qué cambiarías del programa AICLE?	Explicar más detenidamente para entender mejor. No estudiar tanto vocabulario. Cambiaría la elección del auxiliar de conversación. Cambiaría que los profesores te dieran consejos de cómo facilitar el estudio. El nivel de inglés.

Fuente: Elaboración propia

Discussion

First of all, it can be pointed out that 70% of students sometimes use translation tools to follow non-linguistic subjects and those belonging to the bilingual educational program. Likewise, in the third statement it is observed that 50% sometimes and 22% never receive resources and strategies, such as study methods or materials for their CLIL methodology lessons. These results suggest the need to offer more learning tools.

Regarding the figure of the conversation assistant, 48% of the students never receive support from this human resource, while 30% indicate that they only sometimes have that help. Taking into account that later 42% indicated that they sometimes worked on the contents of the subject belonging to the CLIL methodology program, the reasons for this situation should be studied in depth.

On the other hand, in the dimension dedicated to the use of foreign and mother tongues, 86% indicated that teachers sometimes used their mother tongue in CLIL

subjects. In this sense, the students argued that teachers used it to resolve conflicts or to understand more complex content. In a CLIL methodology it should be taken into account that although the mother tongue is an essential communication vehicle for learning, the use of the foreign language should also be favored to promote the communicative competence of learners in a new language, therefore that both must complement each other to achieve the optimization of learning.

In the third dimension, 40.8% indicated that they generally used cooperative and project-based methodologies, while 28.6% commented that they always did. They also recognized that in the Geography and History subject they were carrying out more projects cooperatively. Furthermore, in their justification responses they indicated that they preferred these methodologies because they felt they had learned more while having fun with their peers. In this regard, Pastor Martínez (2011) considers that the combination of the CLIL methodology with cooperative methodologies is essential for the formulation of learning communities while acquiring the values and norms of the community. Despite the need for further study of these methodologies, these results show certain preferences for cooperative and project-based methodologies.

In the dimension dedicated to the evaluation of the subjects, 42% considered that it sometimes seemed more difficult, while 32% thought that it was generally. Although the evaluation must be carried out based on current regulations, current curricula in the Canarian community do not acquire this triple perspective in this methodology of learning languages, content and cognition. Therefore, carrying out the evaluation, even from the teacher's perspective, is a highly complex task due to the incompatibility of the objectives of the CLIL methodology with current educational regulations. Likewise, it is positively observed that teachers always (28%) and generally (24%) use numerous learning products. Despite the fact that it is an evaluative method, this result shows a favorable perception of the students.

Regarding the motivational dimension of the students, very few students have considered in a generic way —generally (8%) - or continuously —always (4%) - abandon the bilingual education program. However, more than a quarter of the students consider such a decision (28%) on some occasions, which shows the need to determine those areas in which they can demonstrate the greatest weakness and seek methods and resources to strengthen them.

On the other hand, 26% and 28% of the students considered that sometimes and generally, respectively, they like classes in their mother tongue more than in English. Due to this, the motivational component of the strategy must be studied in depth, as well as

the reasons behind these percentages. In this regard, some opinions of the students are offered:

- "Because having to study in English is more difficult."
- "Because in Spanish I understand the classes better and I can explain myself more fluently because it is my mother tongue."
- "By vocabulary."

These comments on their experiences with the CLIL methodology raise certain problems in understanding the foreign language. Among them, vocabulary is repeatedly referred to as an impediment to learning. Although a bilingual educational program may favor the learning of a receptive vocabulary (Mora Ramos, 2014), this could become a handicap in the learning process in the CLIL methodology (Castellano-Risco, 2017), depending on the methods used for its treatment and learning in the classroom. Likewise, it is observed that students recognize that studying in English is more complicated because it is not their mother tongue. This statement suggests the reinforcement of study resources and techniques for the application of the CLIL methodology, since these students come from primary education centers in which the same methodology has been applied.

The last dimension - dedicated to an exercise in self-awareness about the educational program - shows various areas that the students consider that they should be reinforced (for example, receptive vocabulary, the figure of the conversation assistant and language adaptation) in order to optimize the application of the CLIL methodology in the classroom.

Conclusions

One of the main conclusions that can be reviewed after completing this research work has to do with the need to strengthen certain dimensions of the CLIL methodology related to the motivational degree, the figure of the conversation assistant and the implementation of strategies and resources of support, essential elements to promote training in a foreign language.

In addition, it must be said that the application of a questionnaire such as the one used in this inquiry supposed for the student a means of self-reflection that favored the third educational approach, that is, cognition in the CLIL methodology. In other words, this type of research offers the student the possibility of evaluating not only the didactic strategies used in the classroom, but also their communicative competence and

motivation, as well as the need for resources and support to consolidate their training process. . In this way, the learner studies the contents, the language and the individual himself through a process of simultaneous objectives.

Future lines of research

Finally, new lines of research can be mentioned, which could include variables such as the academic development of students throughout secondary education in order to observe the evolution of the selected parameters; likewise, the assimilation of the foreign language as a dual mechanism for learning and communication in the classroom during the secondary education stage, as well as a more detailed analysis of the functions of the figure of the conversation assistant, and of the strategic learning methods used by teachers.

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