

Article

The Interaction between Language Skills and Cross-Cultural Competences in Bilingual Programs

María Isabel Amor ¹, Antonio-Jesús Tinedo-Rodríguez ^{2,3,*} and Mercedes Osuna-Rodríguez ³

¹ Department of Education, Faculty of Education and Psychology, University of Córdoba, 14701 Córdoba, Spain; m.amor@uco.es

² Department of Foreign Philologies and Their Linguistics, Faculty of Philology, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), 28040 Madrid, Spain

³ Department of English and German, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Córdoba, 14003 Córdoba, Spain; mercedes.osuna@uco.es

* Correspondence: ajtinedo@flog.uned.es

Abstract: Language and culture are intrinsically intertwined, and culture should not be considered as an expendable fifth skill in language teaching. Bilingual programs are expected to be a key element to enhance culture learning and to develop intercultural competence due to the extensive use of the L2. This study aimed at exploring the effects of bilingual programs for the development of the formerly mentioned skills in language learners. It also sought to contrast students' insights with teachers' perceptions on the implementation of bilingual programs and their effects on students' language and culture learning. The sample consisted of 136 students and 35 Spanish teachers. The results should be carefully interpreted as they showed that there is no significant difference between the perception of bilingual and non-bilingual students in their development of intercultural competence and culture learning. Additionally, content teachers usually adhere to narratives of resistance towards CLIL programs. We concluded that the current implementation of bilingual programs should be specifically addressed. In this regard, it is important to focus on teacher training and to foster exchange programs for teachers and students. Moreover, addressing the availability of human and material resources is essential.

Keywords: language learning; culture learning; bilingual programs; cross-cultural communication



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1. Introduction

Language and culture are mutually dependent spheres that conform integral facets of the human experience. Linguists, such as Kramsch (1998), deepened our understanding of the bounds between these two concepts and explored the importance of culture in foreign language teaching (Kramsch 2017). If we bear the mutual dependency of language and culture in mind, it becomes apparent that teaching a language invariably involves teaching its culture (Larrea-Espinar and Raigón-Rodríguez 2019). Teaching a language and its culture may be challenging (Rodríguez Arancón 2023). With respect to this, the history of language teaching methods revealed that culture teaching and the development of intercultural competence received scant attention until the second half of the 20th century, which was a decisive historical moment in this regard (Gómez-Parra 2021). Pertaining to this, it is of uttermost importance to highlight the contributions by Michael Byram (Byram 1993; Jurasek and Byram 1995; Prevos et al. 1992) at the turn of the millennium, as they undoubtedly paved a path towards the rigorous integration of culture teaching and the development of the intercultural competence in contemporary language teaching methods and approaches.

In connection with the topic of language teaching methods and approaches, it is of paramount importance to delve into the role of CLIL, which stands for content and language integrated learning. The very roots of bilingual programs such as CLIL were found in

a sociolinguistic conflict that took place in Canada towards the conclusion of the 20th century, when the Canadian French-speaking community became dramatically concerned about the nuanced imposition of the English language in the public sphere (Chacón-Beltrán 2021). This situation led to the adoption of a series of language policy measures that were effectively applied when the government enacted the Official Languages Act in 1969 in order to guarantee language rights for both the English-speaking and French-speaking communities. Consequently, immersion programs were implemented in schools, offering part of the syllabus in both English and French in a balanced manner (Chacón-Beltrán 2021). This immersion model is at the very origin of what we nowadays know as content-based approaches (CBA) (Tinedo-Rodríguez 2022). These language teaching approaches aim at integrating content from different subjects into language teaching. In other words, it consists of the acquisition of language skills while learning a specific disciplinary content. The pedagogical bases of these approaches lie on the fact that teaching language in context is more meaningful and effective (Coyle and Holmes 2009; Gómez-Parra 2021; Talaván and Tinedo-Rodríguez 2023).

In Europe, the most widespread CBA is CLIL, and authors such as Coyle (2006, 2008) and Marsh (2002) have played a significant role in the development and implementation of CLIL. CLIL is a clear proposal of an integrated curriculum (Coyle and Holmes 2009) with a very particular way of understanding lesson planning, because in CLIL, there are four main axes: cognition, (inter)culture, content, and communication (Coyle 2008). One of the main advantages of CLIL is its flexibility, as it allows the use of both the L1 and the L2 in the language learning process without rigid constraints. In this aspect, it is worth highlighting that the role of translanguaging (Cenoz 2019) within CLIL contexts deserves special attention, as it allows to switch the code at the learners' convenience, fostering the use of their entire linguistic repertoire (L1 and L2) (Couto-Cantero and Fraga-Castrillón 2023). There are even specific adaptations of CLIL to infant education, such as the proposal by Couto-Cantero and Ellison (2022), titled *InfanCLIL*, or *PETaL* (Play, Education, Toys, and Languages), which is a proposal for early childhood education coined by Gómez-Parra (2021). Additionally, CLIL shows a high degree of complementarity with other emerging disciplines such as Didactic Audiovisual Translation (Fernández-Costales 2017, 2021; Talaván and Tinedo-Rodríguez 2023; Tinedo-Rodríguez and Ogea-Pozo 2023), which proves its potential to adapt to future educational scenarios.

The pervasiveness of bilingual programs and the unprecedented quickness in their implementation in Spain require a comprehensive analysis to explore the current state of bilingual programs in Spain and the outcomes of the way in which they were implemented. Alonso-Belmonte and Fernández-Agüero (2021) addressed the issue of resistance to bilingual programs, delving into the reasons why teachers opposed the implementation of these programs by distinguishing five main axes: the effectiveness of the programs, the teaching experience, possible inequalities derived from the implementation of the programs, opportunities for career development, and hierarchies amongst professionals. Concerning this topic, research conducted by Fernández-Sanjurjo et al. (2019) holds significant importance. The authors discovered that elementary education students in CLIL programs performed slightly below non-CLIL students when their science knowledge was assessed. This means that non-CLIL students scored higher in science content assessments conducted in their L1. The sample consisted of 709 students from a Spanish monolingual region. At the other side of the spectrum, there are longitudinal studies, such as the one conducted by Serra (2007) in Switzerland, which showed that CLIL students performed better than non-CLIL students. There are also studies such as the one conducted by Admiraal et al. (2006) in the Netherlands that showed that there were no statistically significant differences between CLIL and non-CLIL students. In this rich scenario, it is worth taking the reflections of Cenoz (2013) because the author expressed that language teachers tended to approve the CLIL approach, whilst the same did not happen when it came to content teachers. The author explored the effects on language learning but did not fully agree with Marsh (2008) since Marsh (2008) stated that learning a concept in an L2 may develop High-Order Thinking

Skills (HOTS), but [Cenoz \(2013\)](#) did not find a reason that justified that the development of HOTS (as conceived by [Blyth et al. \(1966\)](#)) could not take place in a non-bilingual setting. With regards to this matter, [Pérez Cañado \(2020\)](#) longitudinally examined [Cenoz \(2013\)](#) hypotheses, due to the fact that her research showed that students taking part in bilingual programs performed much better than the ones enrolled in non-bilingual programs in the use of English, vocabulary, oral reception, written reception, oral production, grammatical accuracy, lexical range, fluency, interaction, pronunciation, and task fulfilment. However, this study had a limitation when it came to assessing the equilibrium between content and language because it did not put the focus on content.

Even though the studies on culture learning and intercultural learning are still scarce for the Spanish case, [Gómez-Parra \(2020\)](#) shed some light by identifying the factors that students consider crucial for intercultural learning (IL): contact with peers through international exchanges, and the opportunity of having contact with native language assistants. Former studies, such as the one conducted by [Rodríguez Navarro et al. \(2011\)](#), analyzed different initiatives that were taking place in Spanish schools to include intercultural education in their programs, and the authors categorized these actions into seven different areas: welcome plans for foreign students, the importance of language and culture attention, the need to provide teachers with specific classroom management strategies, the intersection between intercultural education and mediation, the implication of the community, teachers' training, and observatories. Nonetheless, these pioneering studies from the first decade of the 21st century focused on interculturality, particularly regarding the integration of migrant students into Spanish schools, but the intercultural competence should go beyond, as [Osuna-Rodríguez and Rodríguez-Osuna \(2017\)](#) affirmed. For these authors ([Osuna-Rodríguez and Rodríguez-Osuna 2017](#)), intercultural competence is a need for 21st century citizens that is linked to the exponential technological growth that has fostered mobility and connectivity among people worldwide. In this context, exploring effective practices in bilingual education is of paramount importance, as [Aguado Odina \(2013\)](#) affirmed in a study in which she developed useful instruments to assess successful practices in bilingual and intercultural education. More recent and comprehensive studies, such as the ones compiled by [Lasagabaster and Doiz \(2016\)](#), went a step further, exploring the role of CLIL in the content and language learning processes and putting a special emphasis on interculture.

As has been formerly mentioned, language teaching methods and approaches are context dependent. In the Spanish context, a recent legislative change in education has taken place with the enactment of the new Education Act in 2020. The current education act put the focus on a competence-based approach ([Esteban and Cantero 2022](#)). This new educational law has humanistic roots ([López Rupérez 2022](#)), and a brief analysis of its key competences led to the conclusion that these competences are linked to the development of intercultural awareness, culture learning, and language acquisition. The key competences according to the law (R.D. 157/2022, p. 9) are language and communication skills, plurilingual skills, STEM skills, ICT skills, personal growth and autonomous learning skills, citizenship skills, entrepreneurship skills, and cultural awareness and expression skills. The law contains a total of 34 descriptors for elementary education, and eight of them (23.53%) are directly linked to bilingual and intercultural learning (BIE, hereinafter), as Figure 1 shows.

Taking this legislative framework in mind, it is important to explore the contribution of CLIL towards the acquisition of all the LOMLOE competences that contain a BIE-based descriptor: language and communication skills, plurilingual skills, citizenship skills, and cultural awareness and its expression skills. Former studies have explored the contribution of CLIL towards the acquisition of language skills (e.g., [Pérez Cañado and Lancaster 2017](#); [del Puerto and Lacabex 2013](#)). This study aimed at exploring the relationship between CLIL programs and language learning and acquisition, as well as culture learning and the development of intercultural awareness. This was conducted through the analysis of BIE-based descriptors from the current Education Act, which are linked to IL.

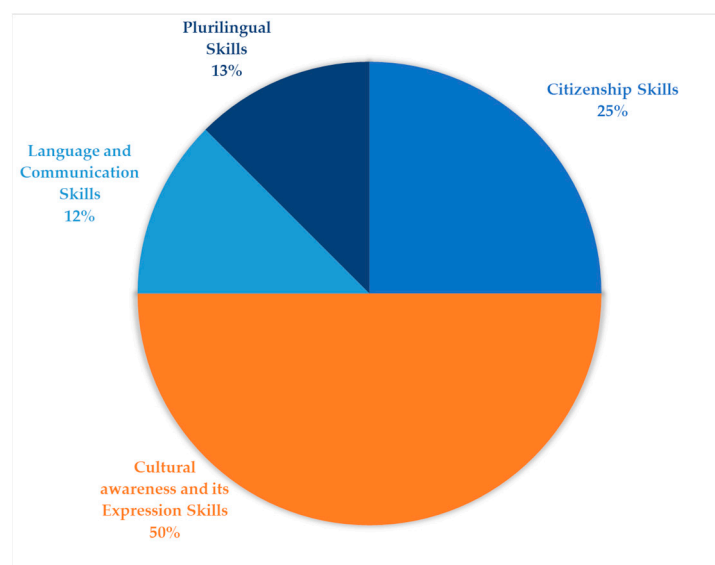


Figure 1. Distribution of BIE-based descriptors.

2. Materials and Methods

Exploring the impact of CLIL in terms of culture and language learning and the development of the intercultural competence is a challenging task (Gómez-Parra 2020; Coyle et al. 2021; Pérez Cañado 2020). The research design that has been implemented has a cross-sectional nature and has the objective of exploring students' and teachers' insights on language and culture learning and the acquisition of the intercultural competence through two ad hoc questionnaires. Questionnaire A was designed to gather students' perspectives on their development of interculturality and language and culture learning within the framework of bilingual programs. Hence, the research team delved into the descriptors of the new Education Act and identified the descriptors of each key competence that was linked to interculturality and to language and culture learning. The instrument was developed based on the specified descriptors, and it consisted of 117 items, with 92 focused on the development of intercultural competence and language learning, while the remaining 25 focused specifically on culture learning. The instrument was implemented in two Andalusian schools, a bilingual and a non-bilingual one. The bilingual institution had a participant count of $N = 55$, whereas the non-bilingual school consisted of $N = 81$ participants. Questionnaire B comprised four sections and was designed to gather teachers' perceptions. The following four dimensions can be identified in this second questionnaire: the training received by content and language teachers, their perceived competence in delivering courses using the CLIL approach, their views on human and material resources, and the impact of the program on culture and language learning. A total of 44 items were included in this questionnaire. The sample of teachers consisted of 35 in-service Andalusian teachers, and 54.3% ($N = 19$) had specific training on language teaching, whilst 45.7% ($N = 16$) were content teachers. The research questions are the following ones.

RQ1. *Is there an impact of bilingual programs for the development of the intercultural awareness, and culture and language learning among students who belong to bilingual and non-bilingual schools?*

RQ2. *In what way do teachers perceive the adequacy of their training, teaching competencies, and resources for implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in their schools?*

RQ3. *What are the perceived learning outcomes of students resulting from the implementation of CLIL in their classrooms?*

The research adhered to the strict ethics of research on Applied Linguistics. The data gathered were anonymized. Participants agreed to take part in the study, and they even

showed a willingness to keep participating in future research because they found the feedback useful.

3. Results and Discussion

The very nature of this research was quantitative, and as it has already been mentioned, the outcomes are showcased within the framework of three main axes that correspond to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. The data were analyzed with two statistical packages, JASP 0.16.4.0 and SPSS 27.

3.1. Students' Insights on the Acquisition of the Intercultural Competence, and Culture and Language Learning in CLIL Programmes

In order to study the perception of students on their development of both culture learning and the intercultural competence in CLIL programs, the instrument that has been implemented departed from all the indicators of the key competences linked to culture and language learning and interculturality in the Spanish education system. Therefore, these results correspond to the cultural and language components of the following key competences of the Education Act (LOMLOE (*Ley Orgánica de Modificación de la Ley Orgánica de Educación enacted in 2006*)): competence in communication and language (CCL), plurilingual competence (PC), citizenship competence (CC), cultural awareness and cultural expression competencies (CACEC), and the personal, social, and learning-to-learn competence (PSLLC).

Apart from the descriptive data shown in Figure 2, an inferential analysis was conducted to determine whether the differences between bilingual and non-bilingual schools are statistically significant. Therefore, a *t*-test was performed on the collected data, obtaining the results shown in Table 1.

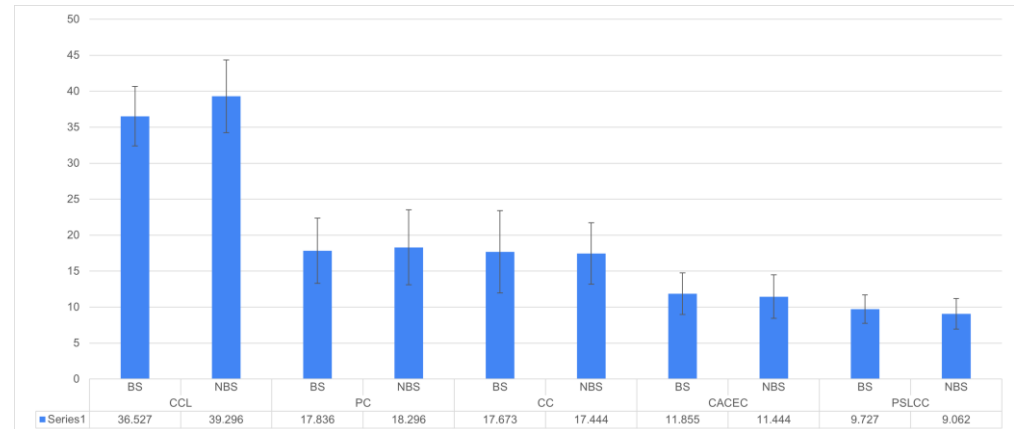


Figure 2. Students' perceptions on their own development of the key competences in BS (bilingual schools) and NBS (non-bilingual schools).

Table 1. Independent samples of the *t*-test.

Competence	t	Df	p-Value
CCL	−3.319	134	<0.001
PC	−0.532	134	0.298
CC	0.266	134	0.605
CACEC	0.791	134	0.785
PSLLC	1.838	134	0.966

¹ For all tests, the alternative hypothesis specified that the BS was less than NBS.

In relation to RQ1, from these results, we concluded that the differences between NBS and BS were statistically significant for the very case of competence in communication and language (CCL) due to the fact that the *p*-value was less than 0.001, and NBS seemed

to perform better than BS. For the rest of the competences (PC, CC, CACEC, PSLLC), the differences were not statistically significant, and they showed a certain harmony with the study of [Admiraal et al. \(2006\)](#).

Based on the collected data, students from the bilingual school (BS) perceived a relatively lower development of key competences in the realms of culture and language learning, as well as cross-cultural awareness, compared to the students from non-bilingual schools (NBS). Nonetheless, the differences were not statistically significant for the cultural and language components of PC, CC, CACEC, and PSLLC.

3.2. Teachers' Perceptions on CLIL Programmes in Terms of Training, Competencies, Resources, and Results

This section aims at providing an answer for RQ2 and RQ3, which focused on teachers' insights on bilingual programs. Questionnaire B contained four blocks of questions that can be grouped into the following four main categories: the training teachers have received, the extent to which they feel they are competent to deliver courses under the CLIL approach, their perceptions on human and material resources, and the impact of the program in terms of culture and language learning.

The results were divided into the perceptions of content teachers (CT) and language teachers (LT) as shown in Figure 3. As has been formerly mentioned, the sample comprised 35 Andalusian in-service teachers, with 54.3% (N = 19) having received specific language training and the remaining 45.7% (N = 16) being content teachers. The first group consisted of teachers who have a degree on a specific non-language subject such as Physics, Law, History, or Geography, whilst language teachers (LT) were the ones who received specific training on teaching a language (belonging to this group are teachers who have a degree in Primary Education majoring in Foreign Language Teaching, and teachers who have studied Philology, Translation and Interpreting Studies, Linguistics, or related degrees).

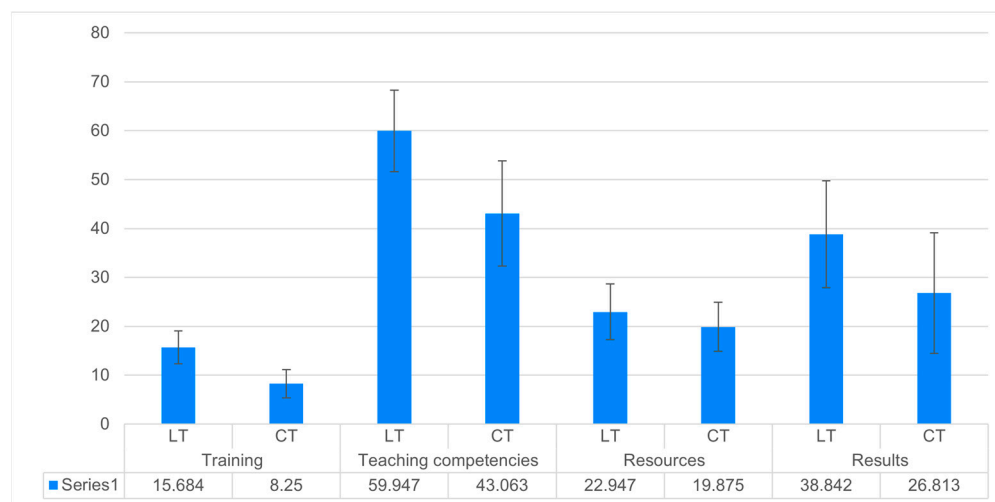


Figure 3. Teachers' perceptions on key elements for the implementation of CLIL programs. ¹ LT stands for "language teachers" and CT stands for "content teacher".

From the data shown in Table 2, we may infer that LT have a more favorable perception of CLIL programs compared to CT, and these differences are statistically significant in areas such as training for teaching in CLIL contexts, their perception of their own teaching competencies and their suitability for CLIL contexts, and their insights on the results of the CLIL program. Nonetheless, the difference between the perceptions of LT and CT is not statistically significant for the case of the human and material resources. Apart from studying the convergences and divergences of content and language teachers' perceptions, it is important to investigate the variations in perceptions of bilingual programs according to teachers' English proficiency level.

Table 2. Independent samples of the *t*-test.

Competence	t	df	p-Value
Training	6.959	33	<0.001
Teaching competencies	5.244	33	<0.001
Resources	1.683	33	0.052
Results	3.060	33	0.002

¹ For all tests, the alternative hypothesis specified that the LT was greater than group CT.

An ANOVA analysis was also performed, as the reader may observe in Table 3. This analysis attempted to delve into the possible relationship between the level of English proficiency (according to the CERFL) and the perception of the different dimensions involved in our study. The results showed that the English proficiency levels might be related to teachers' perceptions of their own competencies for teaching (p -value = 0.001) under the CLIL approach, and this relation is statistically significant. Notwithstanding, the ANOVA results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in language proficiency levels with regard to the training received (p -value = 0.276), available resources (p -value = 0.183), or teachers' perceptions of the program's outcomes (p -value = 0.157).

Table 3. ANOVA results for training, competencies, resources, and results across CEFRL English proficiency levels.

Element	Grouping	Sum of Squares	df	RMS	F	p-Value
Training	Between groups	122.898	4	30.724	1.347	0.276
	Within groups	684.245	30	22.808		
	Total	807.143	34			
Competencies	Between groups	2953.003	4	738.251	8.876	0.001
	Within groups	2495.168	30	83.172		
	Total	5448.171	34			
Resources	Between groups	188.671	4	47.168	1.669	0.183
	Within groups	848.014	30	28.267		
	Total	1036.686	34			
Results	Between groups	1095.886	4	273.971	1.791	0.157
	Within groups	4590.000	30	153.000		
	Total	5685.886	34			

¹ For all tests, the alternative hypothesis specified that the LT was greater than group CT.

It is of interest to deepen our understanding of the different items that compose the four dimensions to have a better understanding of the results that have been analyzed. Table 4 focuses on the perceptions of teachers of their training on the implementation of CLIL courses, bilingual education, intercultural competences, and language learning. Participants should evaluate each and every item by making use of a 5-point Likert scale, 0 being the minimum degree of agreement and 5 being the maximum degree of agreement.

Table 4. Teachers' perceptions on CLIL and their training.

Item	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
I have received specific training to apply the CLIL methodology in my teaching planning.	2.657	1.533	1	5
I have received comprehensive training in bilingualism.	2.486	1.463	1	5
I have received specific training in the development of multilingual-multicultural competence.	2.200	1.132	1	5
I am learning new languages.	2.343	1.679	1	5

As we can observe in Table 4, the perception of each item was average. Nevertheless, when it comes to exploring the descriptive results for the dimension of teaching competencies (Table 5), we found that teachers rated the training they received for the implementation of CLIL programs the highest ($M = 2.657$, $SD = 1.533$), but they did not seem to agree with the fact of having received specific training for developing the intercultural competence of their students ($M = 2.200$, $SD = 1.132$).

Table 5. Teachers' perceptions on CLIL and their teaching competencies.

Item	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
My level of English is sufficient for me to feel comfortable teaching in a bilingual program in terms of oral production.	3.543	1.400	1	5
My level of English is sufficient for me to feel comfortable teaching in a bilingual program in terms of written production.	3.771	1.352	1	5
My level of English is sufficient to feel comfortable teaching in a bilingual program as far as listening comprehension is concerned.	3.600	1.311	1	5
My level of English is sufficient to feel comfortable teaching in a bilingual program as far as written comprehension is concerned.	3.800	1.368	1	5
I have a good knowledge of English culture and the culture of my students' native language.	3.371	1.285	1	5
My level of English is sufficient to feel comfortable designing my own materials in a bilingual program.	3.429	1.378	1	5
I feel competent to integrate interculturality into my planning for the bilingual program.	3.143	1.353	1	5
I know how to include cultural elements in different tasks, activities, and exercises.	3.343	1.162	1	5
I know how to plan a CLIL class.	2.943	1.434	1	5
I know how to plan a CLIL class including interculturality.	2.657	1.282	1	5
I know how to encourage reading in my students.	3.686	1.078	1	5
I know how to motivate my students to use the school library.	3.543	1.010	1	5
I use didactic strategies to encourage students to use the municipal library.	2.886	1.157	1	5
I talk with my students about the richness of having people from different countries and cultures in the classroom.	4.229	1.060	1	5
I talk with my students about events that occur in other places.	4.286	0.667	3	5

Teachers perceived (Table 6) that they did not have enough time to prepare their CLIL-based lesson during the school day ($M = 1.486$, $SD = 0.781$). They were aware of the fact that the participation in a CLIL program required an extra workload outside the workday ($M = 4.257$, $SD = 1.094$), and they did not specially show a firm desire to assume an extra workload for the preparation of this sessions ($M = 2.886$, $SD = 1.323$). It is of uttermost importance to delve into their language skills, and they perceived to have an average development of the following: oral production ($M = 3.543$, $SD = 1.400$), written production ($M = 3.771$, $SD = 1.352$), oral reception ($M = 3.600$, $SD = 1.311$), and written reception ($M = 3.800$, $SD = 1.368$). They thus declared to have a better performance when it comes to written reception, but they affirmed to have a worse performance in terms of oral production, and it is of paramount importance to bear in mind that in CLIL programs oral production skills play a key role as they are expected to create an immersion-like environment.

It is also important to deepen our understanding of the perceptions of teachers of the impact of the CLIL program (Table 7). Teachers' perceptions showed that CLIL programs did not foster motivation ($M = 2.686$, $SD = 1.409$), but from the evidence presented, it can be inferred that they did have a positive impact on the development of language skills, specifically on oral production ($M = 3.086$, $SD = 1.380$) and oral reception ($M = 3.257$, $SD = 1.462$). Nonetheless, they did not particularly agree with the fact that students assimilated concepts better in bilingual programs ($M = 2.571$, $SD = 1.367$).

Table 6. Teachers' perceptions on CLIL and the human and material resources for its implementation.

Item	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
I have enough time during the school day to prepare my classes using CLIL methodology.	1.486	0.781	1	4
The school has the necessary teachers to implement the bilingual program effectively.	2.400	1.397	1	5
In terms of space and material resources, the center has the necessary means for the implementation of the bilingual program.	2.486	1.197	1	5
Participating in the bilingual program involves an extra workload outside of the workday.	4.257	1.094	1	5
I wish to assume the possible extra workload involved in participating in a bilingual program.	2.886	1.323	1	5
My center has native-speaking language assistants.	2.886	1.843	1	5
My school promotes stays and exchanges with other foreign schools.	2.429	1.378	1	5
My school participates in European bilingual programs such as Erasmus +, Comenius, etc.	2.714	1.637	1	5

Table 7. Teachers' perceptions on CLIL and the results of the program.

Item	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
The bilingual program promotes interculturality among the entire educational community.	3.171	1.272	1	5
The bilingual program has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching.	2.771	1.308	1	5
The bilingual program has had a positive impact on student motivation.	2.686	1.409	1	5
The bilingual program has had a positive impact on the motivation of the school's teachers.	2.457	1.120	1	5
Parents have a positive perception of the bilingual program.	2.686	1.132	1	5
The bilingual program is effective in terms of the attention to student diversity.	2.143	1.216	1	5
Students' oral production in English has improved.	3.086	1.380	1	5
Students' written production in English has improved.	2.829	1.294	1	5
Students' listening comprehension in English has improved.	3.257	1.462	1	5
Students' written comprehension in English has improved.	2.971	1.317	1	5
Students assimilate concepts better in a bilingual program.	2.571	1.357	1	5

The data interpretation in this section should be approached due to the limited sample size. Even though the sample is not sufficiently large enough to draw definitive conclusions, it is useful because it may pave the path towards future studies focusing on interculturality, language, and culture learning in CLIL programs, taking the key competences of the Education Acts into consideration.

4. Conclusions

The results obtained in this study could be perceived as counterintuitive, which is why it is important to contextualize them. [Fernández-Sanjurjo et al. \(2019\)](#) discovered that elementary education students enrolled in CLIL programs exhibited a marginally lower level of science proficiency in their first language, as evaluated by the researchers, compared to non-CLIL students. Even though [Fernández-Sanjurjo et al. \(2019\)](#) warned about the importance of interpreting the results carefully because of the size of their sample, as we said the same in our study, similar results were obtained. On one side of the spectrum, the results from students' perceptions of their performance showed that there are not statistically significant differences between the bilingual and non-bilingual group, except for the CCL in which the NBS was perceived to perform better. On the other side of the spectrum, teachers affirmed to lack the time to prepare their CLIL lessons properly, and

they also put a special emphasis on the difficulties of including intercultural elements in lesson planning and the lack of training in this regard.

The lack of statistically significant differences in terms of the key competences seem to be aligned with the results obtained by [Admiraal et al. \(2006\)](#), as the authors found no statistically significant differences between CLIL and non-CLIL students in terms of learning. In contrast, teachers did not fully agree with the fact that students assimilate concepts better in a bilingual program; thus, they may have negative expectations on the CLIL approach and its potential. Particularly, content teachers were the ones who showed a higher tendency to adhere to narratives of resistance towards CLIL programs, and it is coherent with [Alonso-Belmonte and Fernández-Agüero's \(2021\)](#) study on the negative perceptions of teachers towards bilingual programs. Furthermore, [Pérez Cañado \(2020\)](#) conducted a longitudinal study that showed that students who took part in CLIL programs performed better in terms of language skills. The results from our study were harmonious with [Pérez Cañado's \(2020\)](#) research. Additionally, according to teachers' perceptions, the skills that students developed the most were the oral ones.

With reference to intercultural learning, [Gómez-Parra \(2020\)](#) identified two key elements for its development: contact with peers through international exchanges, and the opportunity of having contact with native language assistants. In Table 6, we can find that teachers perceived that these two elements were not sufficiently enhanced within the current implementations of CLIL programs. It is in this point that we find limitations for the development of interculturality and culture learning, and the elements highlighted by [Gómez-Parra \(2020\)](#) should be specifically addressed.

The effectiveness of CLIL programs is undeniable, but they need a proper implementation that requires providing content teachers with specific training on CLIL from a practical perspective, appropriate funding, and more human and material resources. In this regard, it is crucial to provide teachers with sufficient time to take on this workload within their teaching schedules, as well as hiring additional staff to create room in the schedule and enable the proper implementation of CLIL programs.

We consider the research topic of this study of interest due to the fact that it explored the impact of bilingual programs on language and culture learning, as well as on the development of interculturality within the framework of the Education Acts. Notwithstanding, the study has its limitations since validated instruments have not been used because the specificity of the new Education Act (LOMLOE) required the creation of ad hoc tools for the study.

In conclusion, it is important to take into consideration that it is key to provide teachers with sufficient time to manage the workload. Furthermore, the consideration of hiring additional teachers could be beneficial to create sufficient time in the schedule for providing students with personalized attention. It is also of paramount importance to provide content teachers with specific training on the implementation of bilingual programs. In terms of language skills, the development of oral skills should be addressed, as teachers need to be fluent to deliver CLIL-based courses effortlessly.

For future studies, it is important to increase the sample size and to measure not only perception, which can be biased, but also empirical levels of language proficiency, culture learning, and intercultural awareness of students.

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