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From early selective experimental to generalised CLIL: code-switching challenges in the Spanish secondary schools

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Abstract

Over the last decades, research has placed CLIL as one of the most acknowledged FL learning approaches worldwide. However, many of these early CLIL programmes may have targeted above average and highly motivated learners. The need to understand the implications of the presence of low-language proficient students, as well as teachers' use of pedagogical code-switching functions in generalised CLIL instruction motivated this study. The mix-method approach adopted included ten face-to-face interviews in nine Valencian public secondary schools in Spain, while 31 CLIL teachers also responded to two online surveys. The results show that despite the language-based selection criteria used, the presence of a substantial number of low-language proficient students implied overreliance on L1 codeswitching, which in turn prevented more than half of the participants from attaining their lesson objectives. Therein, the urgent need not only for more efficient pedagogical code-switching use, but also for greater emphasis on language support structures as essential factors in CLIL instructions involving low-language proficient learners.

Keywords: CLIL methodology, language support structures, low-language proficiency, selection criteria; inclusion

1 Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become one of the most acclaimed and promising approaches to FL teaching across European countries, including Spain. Given the successful results of numerous early Spanish experimental programmes, CLIL instructions became highly attractive for parents and stakeholders (Martinez Agudo & Fielden Burns, 2021, p. 221). The renewed Spanish regional FL policies have offered CLIL instructions for all learners, which may have put an end to its highly criticized elitist character (Pérez Cañado et al., 2023). In the search for ever more inclusive and efficient CLIL instructions, much endeavour has recently been undertaken by scholars such as Pérez Cañado

et al. (2023) to design and validate reliable questionnaires which would in turn identify stakeholder perspectives of CLIL successes and challenges.

Bauer-Marschallinger (2021, p. 1063) insisted on the little attention paid to linguistically and academically diverse learners in the CLIL classroom. Thus, without a due consideration of important language learning variables, generalised instructions could raise new challenges for CLIL approaches involving large numbers of low-language achievers in the Spanish CLIL. It is precisely on the teachers' perception of the new generalised CLIL instructions where there may be scant literature. The impacts of low-language proficiency on CLIL methodology seem worth studying in Spanish secondary schools, characterized by high students-teacher ratio, where an institutional habitus of L1 use has also been observed (Codó, 2022). In effect, the desirable translanguaging practices seem even more challenging for low-language proficient learners at secondary education stages. The early CLIL programmes in the Valencian Community, i.e. the ones prior to the year 2020/21, when CLIL instruction was made obligatory for all secondary schools (*LAW 4/2018 of 21st February),* seem suitable ground for the present study on the impacts of language selection criteria and L1 code-switching (here after, L1 CS) on L2 teaching/learning.

The literary review will not only compare the importance of initial language proficiency for the early Spanish CLIL with other successful international CLIL/immersion programmes but also give due attention to the importance of L1, also referred to as code-switching (Du, 2016, pp. 45-46), in SLA research. Given the traditional need for oral language proficiency amongst most Spanish secondary school students (Cenoz, 2009, p. 115), it is hypothesised that not only controlling the student's language proficiency levels prior to their integration but also using L1 CS pedagogical functions more systematically could lead to more efficient target language use in mainstream CLIL instructions.

Three research questions configure the foundation of the present study. Research question 1 (RQ1) is to know what importance is given to the students' language proficiency in the selection criteria for the early CLIL programmes in secondary schools. A subsequent research question 2 (RQ2) focuses on the impacts of low-language proficiency on L1 use in a CLIL methodology. Thirdly, research question 3 (RQ3) seeks to state the frequency with which CLIL teachers use Gurthie's (1983) pedagogical code-switching functions, and other non-pedagogical L1 CS functions. The attempt to answer these questions will hopefully lead to fulfilling the aim of this study, namely, to state the importance the students' language proficiency played on their selection for the early CLIL programmes and its impacts on L1 CS use by CLIL teachers.

The choice of a mixed methods approach, which implied ten face-to-face semi-structured interviews with ten CLIL teachers/coordinators involved in early secondary education experimental programmes in the Valencian Community and two online surveys addressed to 31 CLIL teachers in the same region has led to two main findings. Firstly, despite a widespread (90%) use of language proficiency selection criterion in the early Valencian CLIL, the frequency of L1 CS was increased by more than half of CLIL teachers, in response to low-language proficiency among their students. What is more, 51,62% of the CLIL teachers acknowledged that a frequent use of L1 CS impaired attaining their lesson objectives. The second finding revealed that, unlike some of the most successful international CLIL/immersion programmes, only a small minority (10%) of the early Valencian CLIL provided for language support structures prior to or during the CLIL instructions at stake. Consequently, the present study argues that generalised CLIL provisions, which involve low-language proficient students, not only require more clearly defined language support structures but also more systematic pedagogical L1 CS use by CLIL teachers. Indeed, an overuse of non-pedagogical L1 CS would prove highly inefficient, given that CLIL is precisely valued for providing quality extra-exposure to the target foreign language.

2 Theoretical framework

A study on the impacts of language proficiency selection criteria in early CLIL experimental programmes and the use of L1 CS in generalised CLIL contexts requires a literature review on two key issues. The first section of the review focuses on the importance of the students' language proficiency at the onset of some of the most successful CLIL/immersion programmes worldwide. The second part of the review compares the methodological relevance of L1 CS to translanguaging scope in SLA literature.

2.1 Comparative overview of the importance of the early Spanish CLIL students' language proficiency and other international programmes

The early Spanish secondary school CLIL programmes freely set the candidates' selection criteria. If the impacts of CLIL on the students' language proficiency have been exhaustively studied (Gallardo del Puerto & Gómez Lacabex, 2017), the importance of their language proficiency prior to the programmes might have received less attention. In contrast, other renowned international CLIL/bilingual programmes may have laid a stronger emphasis on the student's initial L2 proficiency.

The Canadian bilingual programmes might be relevant comparative references since they have been included among the most influential in second language learning worldwide (Catalán & Zarobe, 2009, p. 23). After evaluating them throughout the 1970s and 1980s, one of the four generalisations made had to do with the students' L2 language competence. A minimum language proficiency level, referred to as "threshold level", was considered a necessary condition for the students to obtain the expected levels of achievements in the content subjects (Catalán & Zarobe, 2009, p. 24). In contrast, though the early Spanish CLIL may have used language tests as CLIL selection criteria (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe 2010, p. 13), research seldom mentions a "threshold level" among their requirements.

The German CLIL described by Rumlich (2014) is another successful experiment worth analysing. The importance attributed to the students' language proficiency before integrating CLIL instruction seems unquestionable. Rumlich (2014) argued that the selected group for North-Rhine Westphalia CLIL strand "receives two additional lessons of English instruction per week in years 5 and 6 in order to prepare students for the linguistic demands of the CLIL classes that begin in year 7" (p. 82). The most notable difference with the German case might be the scarce importance attributed by the early Spanish CLIL to language preparation periods prior to CLIL instructions. Similarly, on one of the Japanese CLIL programmes, Yamazaki (2019) argued that without scaffolding, "learners with low English proficiency, had a hard time keeping up with the classes" (p. 162). In fact, CLIL has traditionally been considered a more suitable approach for older children on the grounds that "they are already equipped with more advanced cognitive skills along with more competence in the vehicular language" (San Isidro & Huerga, 2023, p. 123). It is not surprising that Martínez-Soto and Prendes-Espinosa (2023), in a review on 22 articles on international CLIL provisions, have spotted the students' low level as one of the main challenges in the use of ITC in secondary education CLIL. At terciary levels, Sato et al. (2021) have also emphasised the need for compulsory English courses before initiating a Japanese CLIL.

Though the early Spanish CLIL showed concern for their candidate's language proficiency, they may have laid less emphasis on the relevance of language proficiency requirements or language support structures than other international CLIL provisions. Yet, generalised secondary school CLIL instructions, deprived of the former language proficiency selection requirements and which operate under high teacher-students ratio, may imply a new CLIL instruction setting for the multilingual Spanish regions. Therefore, efficient L1 CS

might prove an even more determinative factor for CLIL methodologies, most especially when language and content acquisition are both essential at secondary education stages.

2.2 Codeswitching and translanguaging in SLA methodologies

Code-switching has been object of both sociological and purely linguistic studies. Poplack's (1988, p. 583) linguistically-based definition understood code-switching as "the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent" (as cited in Du, 2016, pp. 45-46). Following (Du, 2016), this study conceives code-switching as "the use of two or more languages within or beyond an utterance" (pp. 45-46). The long-time debate over the use of L1 in SLA methodologies rapidly went beyond its controversial character by determining important functions L1 could play in FL instruction. Such functions included classroom management, affective purposes, content transmission or even more sophisticated purposes such as translation, viewed as a higher cognitive activity (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2021).

In a study of EFL teaching, Guthrie (1983) defined four code-switching functions. These functions included using L1 as a "we-code" for solidarity, for clarifying or checking for understanding, for contrasting variable meanings in L1 and L2, and for anticipating sources of confusion for learners (Üstünel, 2016, p. 50). Apart from scaffolding strategies (Lo et al., 2018), using the appropriate amount of L1 CS to fulfil pedagogical functions seems one of the most suggested approaches for low-proficient FL students (Üstünel, 2016, p. 48).

More recently, the concept of translanguaging, which has been used to refer to both "the complex and fluid language practices of bilinguals, as well as the pedagogical approaches that leverage those practices" (García & Lin, 2017, p. 117), has occupied research on FL in multilingual learning contexts. Translanguaging, understood as "communicative practices that involve several linguistic, semiotic, and ideological resources" has been conceptualized in opposition to "monoglossic or monomodal perceptions of language" (Moore, 2016, p. 143). On the other hand, drawing from the Vygotskian concept of collaborative dialogue, Swain and Lapkin (2013, p. 2) explain how translanguaging, provided the learners with opportunities to "co-construct a complex linguistic structure by focusing their attention and providing opportunities to revise their own language use". Thus, the complexity of CLIL approaches, which not only require the challenge of both basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and a cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), leading to discipline-specific literacy (Lo et al., 2018), may have incremented the attention given to translanguaging over code-switching practice.

After analysing translanguaging in CLIL contexts, Nikula and Moore (2016) reached the conclusion that research is unanimous on the place of L1 in CLIL classrooms, though there is a concern that teachers' L1 use may be 'intuitive' (p. 240). However, it is precisely because of its emphasis on purposefully switching between different linguistic systems that pedagogical L1 CS might play a key role in CLIL, especially when the learner has little mastery over the target language. Indeed, while translanguaging may focus more on the linguistic behaviour of bilinguals (García & Lin, 2017, p. 120), code-switching is considered a frequently used pedagogical or communicative strategy in learning contexts involving low-language proficient learners (Cancino & Díaz, 2020, p. 117).

In the Spanish education contexts, the reported overuse of L1 may negatively affect L2 learning in generalised CLIL settings. For this reason, translanguaging understood as the deployment of the learner's "complete linguistic resources" (Garzón-Díaz, 2021, p. 86) might be a much greater challenge for the secondary school learners struggling with basic oral language competence. Though Garzón-Díaz (2021, p. 87) argues that translanguaging may occur in any setting, Üstünel (2016) posited that "code-switching is almost unavoidable for low-level learners due to their need for clear explanations and meaning" (p. 85). Therefore, the newly implemented generalised CLIL in the Valencian Community, which

may imply the integration of low-language proficient learners, often poorly motivated, might be facing the crucial decision of efficiently addressing L1 CS use for ever more inclusive CLIL instructions.

3 Methodology

A Mixed method approach seemed the most adequate methodology to gather and analyse the necessary data for this study. Indeed, the main aim of this study is not only to determine the importance language proficiency has on CLIL students' selection for the early programmes but also its impact on a functional use of teachers' L1 CS. Having access to reliable data on CLIL students' selection criteria in the public secondary schools required not only two online survey questionnaires but also a series of face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted with early CLIL teachers. Using the online questionnaires not only allowed gathering quantitative data on L1 CS frequency but also contrasting the data obtained from the interviews. Two hypotheses and their subsequent research questions were formulated in the following terms:

1. Determining the relevance of language proficiency in early CLIL programmes' selection criteria can reveal the importance of the student's onset language competence for CLIL instructions in secondary schools. The subsequent RQ1 is: what is the importance of the students' language proficiency in the selection criteria of the early CLIL programmes in secondary schools?

2. Using more systematically designed language support structures and Gurthie' s (1983) pedagogical code-switching functions can significantly reduce inefficient L1 use in CLIL methodology involving low-language proficient learners. Two subsequent research questions were raised. RQ2 is: what are the implications of the students' low-language proficiency on code-switching in a CLIL methodology? RQ3 asked: how often do CLIL teachers make use of Gurthie's (1983) pedagogical code-switching functions and of L1 for other non-pedagogical purposes?

The present study exclusively targeted voluntary secondary education CLIL programmes conducted prior to 2020/2021, when generalised CLIL was introduced in the Valencian community. Ten CLIL teachers or coordinators responsible for 9 different CLIL programmes in the city of Valencia and surroundings were interviewed[1]. 31 teachers, fully involved in their secondary school CLIL programmes, in the Valencian community, also responded to an online questionnaire on the implications of low-language proficiency on the functional use of L1 CS in their CLIL classrooms[2]. Saris and Gallhofer's (2014) battery of requests was used for this purpose. The authors explained that in surveys, "People are asked to give numeric evaluations of the size of the possible advantages and disadvantages because in this way it is possible to get a total of the advantages and disadvantages for each option" (p. 137). Consequently, reaching a general conclusion based on the sum of all these separate options is possible, as was shown in previous studies such as Neijens (1987). Obtaining reliable quantitative data on the third study question meant fulfilling the first stage. According to

[1] The face-to-face interviews were divided into two parts. The first questionnaire raised 7 questions on the different selection criteria applied for their respective CLIL students. The second part of the interview, also made of 7 questions raised in the second questionnaire, collected data on the different implications of the students' low-language proficiency on L1 CS in CLIL lessons.

[2] For the third online survey questionnaire, 8 questions were designed through Survey Monkey to collect 5-level answers, as well as brief responses from the 31 CLIL teachers. Thus, the frequencies with which they make use of L1 CS for both pedagogical and non-pedagogical purposes were collected and quantitatively analysed.

Saris and Gallhofer (2014, p. 21), it is necessary to identify the set of essential aspects, also called formative indicators, which are all the main elements of answer related to the study question. Therefore, telling the global frequency of CLIL teachers' functional use of code-switching will depend on the frequency at which they use each formative indicator. Indeed, according to Saris and Gallhofer's (2014, p. 22), the total score of the study question (the frequency of code-switching use) can then be obtained as a weighted or an unweighted sum of the scores on all aspects or as a weighted or unweighted mean of the scores over all the aspects. The set of formative indicators chosen for the third study question is Guthrie's (1983) four code-switching functions, as redefined by Üstünel (2016, p. 50). L1 can be used:

a) to act as a "we-code" for solidarity with the students.
b) to clarify or check for understanding.
c) to contrast variable meanings in L1 and L2.
d) to anticipate likely sources of confusion for learners.

According to Üstünel (2016, p. 50), these four code-switching procedures are seen by Guthrie (1983) as efficient use of code-switching in L2 instruction. In contrast, the use of the target language for "attention-getters", "requests for action" and "protests" was considered an inefficient use of L1 in L2 teaching (Üstünel, 2016, p. 50).

After randomly consulting over fifty secondary schools in Valencia capital and surroundings, nine public secondary schools (IES) running CLIL/plurilingual programmes kindly accepted to participate in this study. One of the nine schools had two CLIL programmes. Among the ten interviewees, nine were CLIL teachers in charge of content subjects which were: Mathematics (2), Technology (2), History and Geography (2), Economics (1), Information Technology (2). They will be identified, as for instance: IES1CLIL teacher1, for the first CLIL teacher interviewed in the first school; IES4CLIL Coordinator, for the CLIL coordinator interviewed in the fourth school…etc.

To place the focus on the most relevant data from the interviews, three data analysis parameters were set. On the presence of language proficiency in the selection criteria, two parameters were used. The first one consisted in retaining only the selection criteria which explicitly mentioned requisites about the students' English language ability or competence. The second parameter required the presence of any types of language support actions outside the daily CLIL instruction itself. About the impacts of the students' low-language proficiency on code-switching in CLIL methodology, the third analysis parameter only considered the methodological actions taken in response to the low-language proficiency of CLIL students and conducted once the students had been incorporated in the programmes.

4. Results

The findings of the study were organized according to the three study questions above mentioned.

4.1 On the importance of language proficiency in CLIL selection criteria

Following the first data analysis parameter, two main types of selection criteria were identified. While 90% of the schools used at least one language proficiency requirement, only one school offered CLIL, notwithstanding the students' language proficiency. Indeed, IES2 Head of studies, IES7CLIL Teacher, IES8CLIL Teacher1 and IES5CLIL Coordinator explained that their selection criteria relied on the students' Year 6 Primary school EFL marks. For IES2CLIL Programmes, once incorporated, there was an observation period during the first term by the CLIL teacher to re-orientate (to non-CLIL programmes) the students who did not have the minimum language proficiency level. IES3CLIL Teacher explained the double language requirements which consisted of both the students' Year 6

Primary EFL mark and the English language entrance test. IES6CLIL Teacher also mentioned three language requirements, namely, an English language entrance test, an English workbook previously completed and submitted for marking and an oral interview in English. Only IES7CLIL programme explicitly used a language test as an entry requirement.

4.2 On the presence of language support structures in CLIL programmes

After applying the second analysis parameter, the results show that 30% of the programmes used a certain type of language support structure other than the CLIL methodological techniques. Two of the CLIL programmes (IES4CLIL Programme and IES7CLIL Programme) used the EFL subject lessons to pave the way for CLIL instruction. Though the use of EFL lessons was viewed as very efficient by the CLIL teachers in these programmes, such actions were the result of a mere coincidence in IES4CLIL Programme and far from systematically planned in IES7CLIL programme.

The second language support action found in the interview results consisted in the voluntary completion of an EFL workbook during the summer preceding the candidate's entry in IES6CLIL programme. Though the submitted workbooks were marked by the CLIL selection commission, the impacts of such measures could hardly be determined as they depended on the students' entire initiative. Therefore, the study results reveal that only 20% of the schools used the EFL subject as a language support structure for their CLIL students, though such actions were either incidental or randomly used.

4.3 On the students' low-language proficiency implications for CLIL methodology

As can be observed in Figure 1 below, the results showed that 83,87% of the CLIL teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the students' low-language proficiency has important methodological implications. Secondly, 90,32% either agreed or strongly agreed that the presence of low-language proficient learners conditioned the amount of L1 used in the lessons (see Figure 2 below). 54,83% of the teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that low-language proficient students depend on L1 to achieve the lesson objectives (see Figure 3 below). One of the participants explained the CLIL teachers' concern about the need to increase the frequency of L1 in the following terms: "The rhythm of the lessons is excessively slowed down. At the end of the terms, priority must be given to Spanish to fulfil the contents of the topics" (own translation). Thirdly, the results also indicated that the majority of CLIL teachers (83,87%) agreed or strongly agreed on the need for other methodological strategies in response to the lack of language proficiency among their students (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 1: The students' low-language proficiency has implications for CLIL methodology

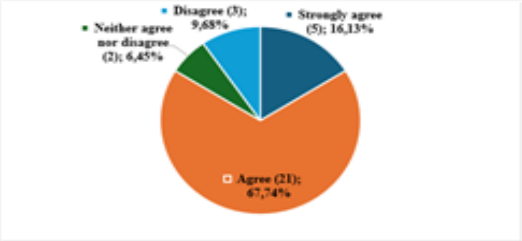


Figure 2: The students' low-language proficiency has an impact on the amount of L1 CLIL teachers use

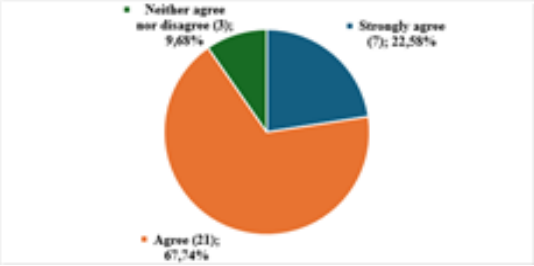


Figure 3: The use of L1 by CLIL teachers is necessary for low-language proficient students to achieve the objectives of the lessons

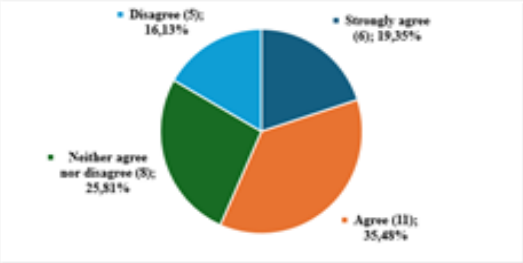
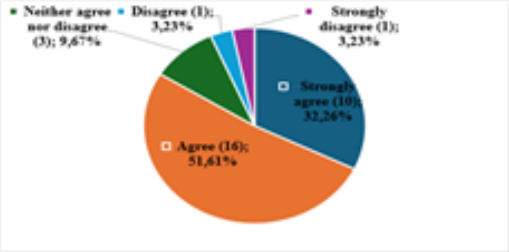


Figure 4: The students' low-language proficiency requires the use of other methodological strategies to compensate for the lack of comprehension



4.4 On CLIL teachers' perception of the frequency of L1 code-switching use

The teachers' perception on the proportion of low-proficient students in their CLIL groups was determined. The results showed that no less than 32,8% consider they have between a lot and a great deal of low-proficient students in their classes, despite the widespread use of language proficiency selection criteria in the majority of the CLIL programmes under study.

On the other hand, the results on the individual scores for each of Guthrie's (1983) four pedagogical code-switching functions were determined from the online questionnaire, as shown in Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 below.

Figure 5: How often do you use L1 in your lessons to act as a "we-code"?

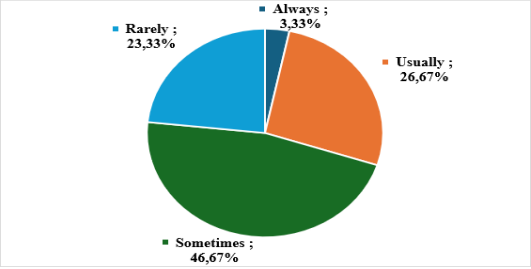


Figure 6: How often do you use L1 in your lessons to clarify or check for understanding?

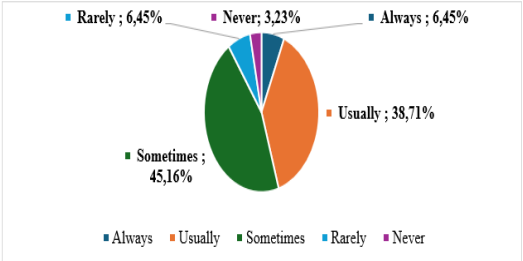


Figure 7: How often do you use L1 in your lessons to contrast variable meanings in L2?

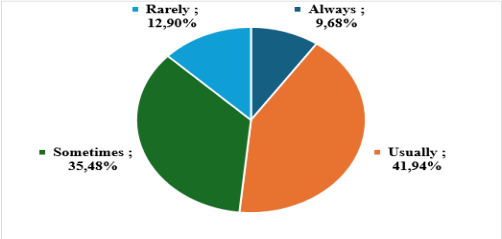
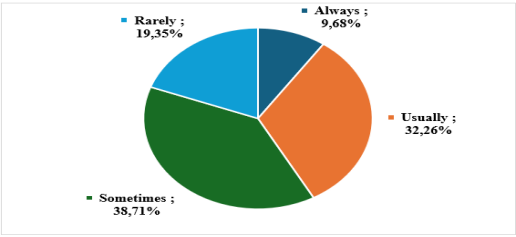


Figure 8: How often do you use L1 to anticipate likely sources of confusion for learners.



Thus, the overall mean scores of the four formative indicators above showed that no less than 42,2% of CLIL teachers usually or always make use of pedagogical code-switching functions. Only a negligeable 0.8% of the teachers claim they never use such code-switching functions. However, the results also revealed that 64,52% of CLIL teachers also admitted they always or usually used L1 for purposes other than pedagogical code-switching.

In sum, the results have revealed a widespread use of L1 by 83,7% of CLIL teachers to fulfil pedagogical functions in the early CLIL programmes. However, the results on the teacher's perception of L1 CS effectiveness, when it comes to attaining their lesson objectives revealed concerns over the integration of low-language proficient learners in CLIL instructions. In effect, the results of the open-ended question in the online survey underscored issues such as, time constraint, slower rhythm of lessons and, most especially, difficulties in fulfilling the lesson objectives. Such concerns could be summarised in the words by IES3CLIL Teacher[3] or IES6CLIL Teacher' s observations[4]. However, in the interviews, four teachers (IES8CLIL Teacher1, IES3CLIL Teacher, IES7Plurilingual Coordinator, IES5CLIL Coordinator) also sustained that motivation or hard-work can sometimes compensate for low-language proficiency. In question 8 of the third online questionnaire, the teachers were also asked whether the use of L1 in CLIL lessons involving low-language proficient students impaired attaining their language objectives. The results revealed that more than half of the participants (51,62%) agreed or strongly agreed while only 22,58% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above-mentioned statement. Therefore, even if the vast majority of CLIL teachers perceive they use L1 for functional purposes, the study results have also revealed that achieving language objectives in overwhelmingly selective settings is far from secured, according to more than half of the teachers surveyed.

5 Conclusion

The first objective of this study was to determine the importance of the students' language proficiency for the early Spanish CLIL in secondary schools. Given the importance of onset language proficiency in some of the most outstanding international CLIL or bilingual programmes, determining the impacts of the students' low-language proficiency on L1 CS in a CLIL methodology became the second main objective of this study. As was shown in the literary review, L1 is viewed by more recent research as a potential methodological ally in L2 teaching and learning. Thus, CLIL teachers' perception of the pedagogical use of Guthrie's

[3] IES3CLIL Teacher: "I find our Maths CLIL programme quite challenging for the students and without a considerable language proficiency, I believe it would be tough for them to follow CLIL instruction, as a matter of fact, because of the level of difficulty, at least one student voluntarily leaves the programme every year" (own Translation).

[4] IES6CLIL Teacher: "year after year, some students leave the programme when it becomes more and more challenging for them" (own translation).

(1983) four pedagogical functions of code-switching also seemed essential in the search for an inclusive CLIL methodology.

The analysis of the data obtained from a series of ten semi-structured face-to-face interviews, along with two online survey questionnaires completed by 31 CLIL teachers involved in public Valencian secondary schools, has led to the following main findings. Firstly, the results on RQ1 confirm the importance of language proficiency in early CLIL programmes, as 9 out of 10 of the programmes under study set language proficiency requirements. However, if some of the influential international CLIL/bilingual programmes provided their students with language support structures outside the CLIL instruction itself, the use of the EFL subject as a language support action found in 20% of the programmes was far from systematically planned.

The results on RQ2 indicate that despite the language selection processes applied, a considerable 32,8% of the CLIL teachers perceived the presence of a substantial number of low-language proficient students in the early Valencian CLIL programmes. Besides, the vast majority of CLIL teachers (90,32%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the students' low-language proficiency has an impact on the amount of L1 used. Consequently, L1 CS was viewed as a necessary methodological strategy by more than half of the teachers (54,83%), which also confirms the findings of previous studies (Üstünel, 2016) on the importance of language proficiency for FL teachers' code-switching use. Thus, it can be argued that without a more systematic L1 CS use, the impact of the students' low-language proficiency on the amount of L1 used in CLIL lessons may imperil a consistent use of L2 in generalised CLIL instructions.

Regarding RQ3, the data gathered led to the conclusion that L1 CS use for Guthrie's (1983) four pedagogical functions is widespread among the majority (83,7%) of the early Valencian CLIL teachers. More importantly, the study has found that more than half of the participants (51,62%) sustain that L1 CS in CLIL lessons involving low-language proficient students may impair attaining the lesson objectives. The issue becomes even more significant, if we consider that the concerns expressed by the CLIL teachers in the present study refer to above-average and highly motivated voluntary language learners. It must be underlined that one of the limitations of the present study was the reduced number of participants, apart from its cross-sectional character. Therefore, this paper would refrain from generalising the findings. However, though there have been studies suggesting the scarce impact of CLIL approaches on content acquisition, the present study posits that low-language proficient learners could significantly benefit from more systematic language support structures such as well-planned collaboration between CLIL programmes and FL subject teachers. A fuller reliance on such structures may prevent the increase of ineffective L1 use in secondary education CLIL instructions. The Spanish secondary education CLIL, now involved in a new stage of inclusive and more generalised instructions, might need more extensive research on issues such as the types and impacts of language support structures for the effectiveness of mainstream CLIL instructions.

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