

Multilingual CLIL and gender: longitudinal differences in lexical availability

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is thought to have a positive effect on learners' content-related vocabulary (Heras & Lasagabaster, 2015). However, although CLIL has become increasingly widespread, the majority of programmes to date have been conducted through English (Dalton-Puffer, 2011), with other target languages being largely overlooked. There is consequently a need for comparative research across additional languages to confirm whether the advantages observed hold true only for English, or also other target languages. Furthermore, previous research has shown that female learners often outperform their male peers in vocabulary measures such as lexical availability (LA). However, as it has been suggested that CLIL has the potential to blur gender differences (Lasagabaster, 2008), there is a need to confirm whether this difference is also observed in multilingual CLIL. The present paper addresses these gaps, seeking to confirm whether CLIL learners perform better in terms of LA in English, and whether this advantage is dependent on the participants' gender. To this effect, it assesses the LA of male and female adolescent Spanish learners, enrolled simultaneously in English and French, and analyses the differences that are observed across time. Findings reveal interesting gender-based differences, in particular concerning time and the interaction between time and language.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning; Foreign Languages; Male and Female learners; Multilingualism; Vocabulary