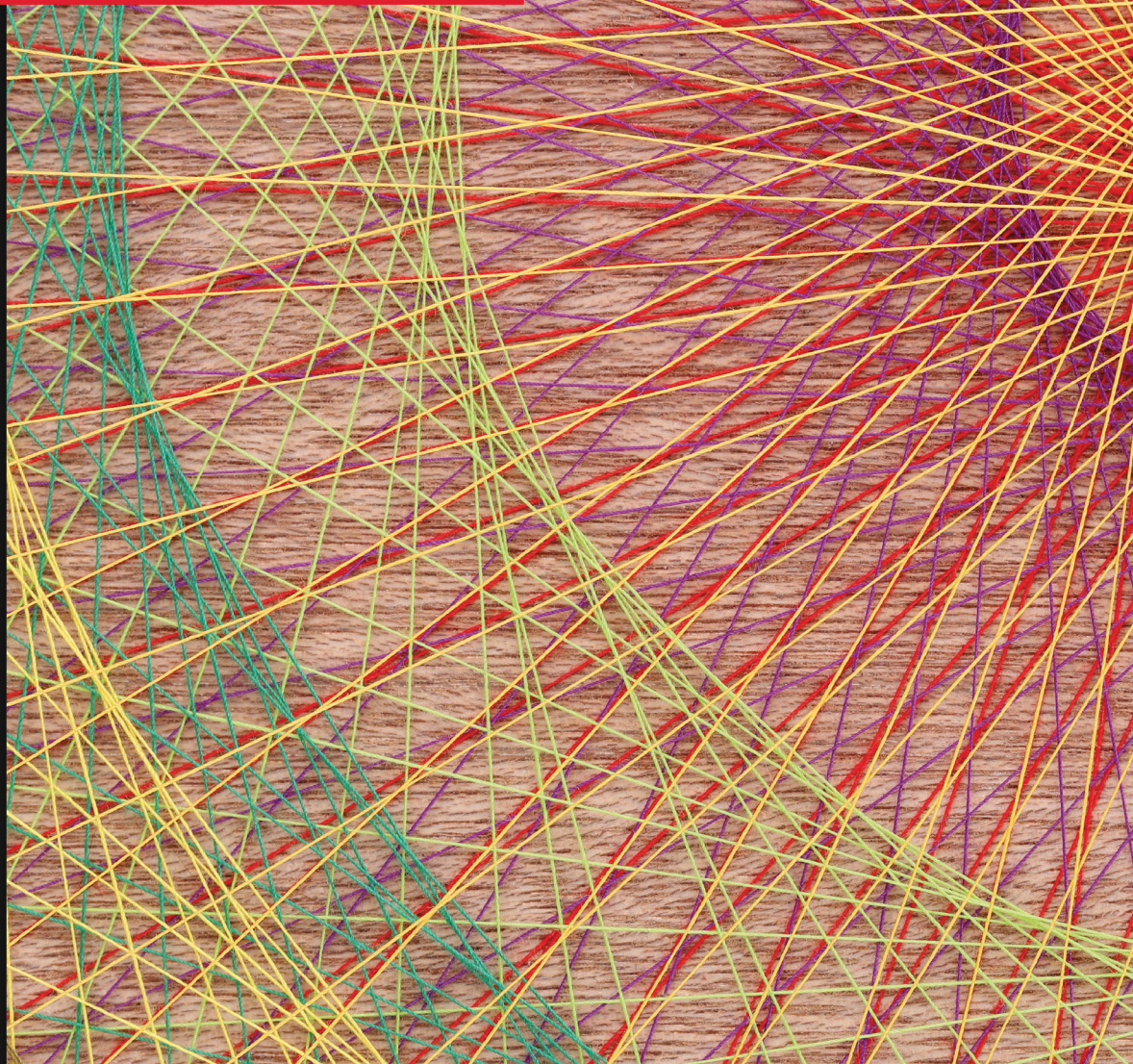# The Routledge Handbook of Content and Language Integrated Learning

Edited by Darío Luis Banegas and
Sandra Zappa-Hollman

SUPPORT MATERIAL

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is an increasingly popular educational approach given its dual focus on enabling learners to acquire subject-matter through an additional language, while learning this second language in tandem with content. This *Handbook* provides a comprehensive overview of recent CLIL developments, illustrating how CLIL has been uniquely conceptualised and practised across educational and geographical contexts.

Divided into six sections, covering language and language teaching, core topics and issues, contexts and learners, CLIL in practice, CLIL around the world, and a final section looking forward to future research directions, every chapter provides a balanced discussion of the benefits, challenges and implications of this approach. Representing the same diversity and intercultural understanding that CLIL features, the chapters are authored by established as well as early-career academics based around the world.

The Routledge Handbook of Content and Language Integrated Learning is the essential guide to CLIL for advanced students and researchers of applied linguistics, education and TESOL.

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THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING

*Edited by Darío Luis Banegas and
Sandra Zappa-Hollman*

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CLIL IN ECUADOR

Juanita Argudo, Tammy Fajardo-Dack and Mónica Abad

Introduction

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) involves the interplay of three core dimensions: content, language, and procedures or skills, in which both the conceptual content and linguistic content are considered vehicles for the development of cognitive skills or competences, which are contained in the procedural content (Ball et al., 2015). In CLIL, it cannot be assumed that learners already have the necessary language skills to learn subject content. In fact, learners need to develop these language skills through explicit teaching, which consists of making learners aware of the type of language they need in order to perform a task as well as supporting learners when producing that type of language (Ball et al., 2015). In order to achieve a systematic integration of language and content that contributes to the development of CLIL pedagogies, Coyle (2007) developed the 4Cs Framework that integrates 'content (subject matter), communication (language), cognition (learning and thinking), and culture (social awareness of self and "otherness")' as a complex relationship (p. 550).

Due to the substantial benefits that learners can reap from CLIL such as enhanced motivation, higher levels of cognitive engagement and related cognitive development, enhanced communication skill development, deeper language progress, meaningful interaction, and intercultural awareness, among others (Dale & Tanner, 2012), CLIL has expanded rapidly, especially in Europe and Latin America. Empirical studies have focused mainly on teachers' and learners' beliefs (Corrales et al., 2016), pedagogy (McDougald, 2018), teacher education (Banegas & del Pozo Beamud, 2022), global citizenship (Porto, 2016), and language development (Torres Martinez, 2013); nevertheless, data-driven studies that show how CLIL has been operationalised in Latin America are scant (Banegas et al., 2020), Ecuador being no exception to this reality. This chapter reviews the current status of research in CLIL in the Ecuadorian context.

Context

According to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016), taking EFL classes in all educational levels is mandatory and is based on the canons of

the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Although students are expected to reach a B1 proficiency level when finishing high school, they are far from meeting this requirement, as shown in the Education First (EF) index (2020), which ranks Ecuador in position 93 out of 100 countries and in the last position out of 19 countries in Latin America. Some have speculated that these results could be the consequence of the insufficient number of English teachers and low proficiency levels of some of the in-service teachers. In order to address this identified need to improve English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning, as of 2016 the Ecuadorian educational authorities have implemented CLIL in the national English curriculum with the goal of enhancing students' English learning through the use of CLIL pedagogies (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016, 2019a). Similarly, in higher education, CLIL has been used in some undergraduate programmes such as EFL teaching, international relations, and tourism for teaching subject matters. However, despite these key recent changes in Ecuadorian education, very few studies on CLIL implementation and its effects have been published. In this paper, we address this issue and aim to make a contribution by summarising the state-of-the-art research conducted on CLIL implementations in Ecuador. Through this analysis, our aim is to examine the literature and present here how CLIL has been operationalised and implemented in Ecuadorian educational settings and help to determine trends and omissions, which can contribute to improve and advance research in this area. The chapter begins with a review of the research methodologies used in the corpus of studies examined; it then focuses on factors that seem to have either contributed to or hindered CLIL implementation in Ecuador, and in the last section, we report on findings about the effects of CLIL on language and cognitive development.

The review

For this review, a literature search was conducted in order to identify and analyse how teachers and researchers have implemented CLIL in Ecuador since it was adopted in 2016. For this purpose, the following criteria for selecting the studies were considered: The studies had to be conducted in Ecuador; only peer reviewed publications were selected to ensure only high-quality research was included. In addition, as the focus of this chapter is on empirical studies, this was also a criterion for inclusion in our corpus of articles on CLIL studies that were carried out in Ecuador.

Our search was conducted by accessing several academic databases. The search terms, keywords, and phrases in their various combinations were the following: (1) CLIL in Ecuador; (2) language development; (3) content development (4) cognitive skills; (5) language learning; and (6) content learning. The search was done for research articles in Spanish and English published since 2016 as this is the year the government included CLIL in the curriculum. Our search strategy also specifically included publication venues that focus on research in Latin American, such as *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning (LACLIL)*, *Revista Pertinencia Académica*, *Revista Boletín Redipe*, *Ciencia Digital*, among others. After a thorough search, only eight articles reporting on empirical studies conducted in the Ecuadorian context meeting all our search criteria were found: Andrade Mendoza et al. (2020), Argudo et al. (2018), Benalcázar-Bermeo and Ortega-Auquilla (2019), Dahik Solis et al. (2017), Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2021), Palma (2020), Recino et al. (2019), and Vega and Moscoso (2019).

We analysed each of the eight studies following these categories: (1) the research methodology used for the study; (2) the factors that enhance and hinder the application of CLIL

in educational contexts; and (3) the learners' development of language and cognitive skills. This process followed the two coding levels described by Creswell (2014); in other words, a holistic procedure to organise information into categories and a thematic analysis to look for issues that responded to the purpose of the analysis (Wolcott, 1994 as cited in Creswell, 2014). After the first round of coding, there was a comparison process to solve any disagreements among the three researchers/authors of this chapter.

On research methods and contexts

Educational research provides teachers with the essential tools to analyse and make important and necessary decisions about how to improve their teaching methodologies (Mertens, 2015). In this regard, examining the different research methodologies used by Ecuadorian EFL teachers and researchers to carry out studies on the implementation of CLIL can contribute to shed light on the current situation to upgrade the use of this approach, which can also bring about positive effects on students' performance.

Participants and setting

Both a wide age range and various levels of education and occupation of participants were found in the different studies, including primary and secondary school students (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019), university students (Dahik Solis et al., 2017; Ortega-Auquilla et al., 2021; Vega & Moscoso, 2019), EFL student teachers (Argudo et al., 2018; Recino et al., 2019), and EFL teachers (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Palma, 2020). The majority of studies were carried out with high school students, probably because of the requirement to follow this approach in the national curriculum. Most of the studies were conducted in public institutions and only two studies in private settings (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Vega & Moscoso, 2019).

The studies were carried out in the following cities of Ecuador: Cuenca (Argudo et al., 2018; Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019; Vega & Moscoso, 2019), Azogues (Ortega-Auquilla, et al., 2021; Recino et al., 2019), Ambato (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020), Babahoyo (Dahik Solis et al., 2017), and Manta (Palma, 2020). It is worth mentioning that no studies were found in the most populated cities in Ecuador (Quito and Guayaquil) nor in any rural setting.

Research design

Different types of research designs were used: descriptive, quasi-experimental, exploratory, and non-experimental. For example, Dahik Solis et al. (2017) worked with both a control and an experimental group, which were not selected randomly; thus, a quasi-experimental study (Creswell, 2014) was adopted. Recino et al. (2019) used a qualitative approach while Benalcázar-Bermeo and Ortega-Auquilla (2019) and Vega and Moscoso (2019) used a mixed-method approach; nevertheless, these papers can be also classified into action research studies as the authors implemented the CLIL approach in their classes with their own students.

Benalcázar-Bermeo and Ortega-Auquilla (2019) and Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2021) used a mixed-method approach. In the case of Benalcázar-Bermeo and Ortega-Auquilla (2019) and Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2021), the data obtained was analysed by using a quantitative approach. However, the research approach chosen depends more on the researchers' method of data analysis than on the approach of data collection (Eyisi, 2016); therefore, even though

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data was obtained with a qualitative instrument, these studies may be considered to be quantitative because they were analysed using a quantitative approach. Some authors also employed only a quantitative approach to draw their conclusions (Argudo et al., 2018; Palma, 2020).

As can be observed, mixed methods seem to be the preferred approach; nonetheless, the most common data analysis approach is quantitative, making the latter the most common one in the Ecuadorian CLIL studies. Additionally, the action research methodology was identified (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019; Dahik Solis et al., 2017; Ortega-Auquilla et al., 2021; Recino et al., 2019; Vega & Moscoso, 2019); nevertheless, none of the researchers reported considering students' needs to plan their classes. According to Ball et al. (2015), identifying students' language needs is a step that has to be taken into account when implementing CLIL in order to plan strategic class activities to teach the content, considering that students learn more effectively when they have to produce spoken and written language and personalise the learned material.

Instruments

A variety of instruments were used to collect the data in the studies. The most common instruments applied were either a questionnaire or a survey (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Argudo et al., 2018; Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019; Ortega-Auquilla et al., 2021; Palma, 2020; Vega & Moscoso, 2019). Vega and Moscoso (2019) made the participants complete the survey after the intervention; however, this instrument was not used with their control group. It would have been interesting to make students in the control group, who were taught through English for specific purposes (ESP), complete the survey to compare answers. Another important aspect to consider is the fact that some studies asked students about their knowledge of CLIL (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019; Vega & Moscoso, 2019); however, students do not need to be aware of the specific methodological features the teacher uses in class, and it is not necessary to ask them about these issues (Dörnyei, 2003).

Another common instrument used to collect data was a test, either a placement test (Argudo et al., 2018), a proficiency test (Vega & Moscoso, 2019), or a pre- and post-test (Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019). In addition, other sources of information to evaluate students' language proficiency level were also used, such as the analysis and evaluation of written assignments (Argudo et al., 2018; Dahik Solis et al., 2017) and the evaluation of oral production through dramatisation (Dahik Solis et al., 2017). As Creswell (2014) states, researchers need to be careful when working in the different stages of the experiment since measuring the variables incorrectly could threat the statistical conclusion validity; however, in Dahik Solis et al.'s (2017) study, these authors compared data collected by using an instrument with one group (written text) and a different instrument with the other (oral production), which compromises the validity of the study.

It was also found that *in situ* observations were used in some research studies (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Dahik Solis et al., 2017); however, information about the observation protocols as well as the implementation of the CLIL approach was not provided. Crucial details about the procedures, materials, tasks, language scaffolding, and activities used when implementing the CLIL approach were not found in the studies, which constitutes a research pitfall since as stated by Block and Kuckertz (2018), a complete and detailed description of the procedures used is necessary in the case of a future replication study. This omission may have happened due to teachers' lack of knowledge about the CLIL approach and the duties

that CLIL teachers need to fulfil (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Dahik Solis et al., 2017; Palma, 2020).

From the above analysis it could be said that training in research protocols is crucial for Ecuadorian CLIL researchers if reliable findings are to be achieved. In the same vein, training in the CLIL approach seems urgent to improve teaching practices and reach the learning outcomes determined by the Ecuadorian educational authorities.

Influential factors

Although none of the research articles set out to directly examine factors that can enhance or hinder the application of CLIL, they were determined based on the analysis of their research contexts and results.

Regarding the factors that can promote CLIL implementation, two main categories were identified: *curriculum requirement* and *motivation and attitude*. The first category refers to the fact that CLIL has been endorsed by educational policies, which can foster its implementation since the sustainability of a programme is more likely to occur when education authorities support it (Ball et al., 2015). In this light, the studies carried out in high school contexts mention CLIL as a curriculum core principle (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019; Palma, 2020). In fact, since 2016, the Ecuadorian national English curriculum has enforced the use of a language-driven CLIL approach, in which language and language use are more emphasised than content knowledge, and the development of content, communication, cognition, and culture are highlighted as well (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016). Furthermore, in university contexts, Recino et al. (2019) indicated that CLIL is the pedagogical approach to teach subjects in English at the EFL teaching major, while Argudo et al. (2018) reported that, even though CLIL is not established as the approach to teach at the EFL teaching programme, a content-led approach, *hard* CLIL (Ball et al., 2015), has been used for many years for teaching most of the subject matters. As can be seen, the CLIL approach has engaged the attention of Ecuadorian educational authorities, EFL teachers, and researchers at the three levels of education: primary, secondary, and university, which can contribute to advance research in this area, which, according to Banegas (2022), is still exiguous in South America.

The *motivation and attitude* category subsumes positive learners' perceptions towards the CLIL approach, which can positively influence its implementation. For instance, enthusiasm when doing tasks (Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019), stress release, more confidence, and class participation (Ortega-Auquilla et al., 2021) have been reported. Likewise, Vega and Moscoso (2019) pointed out that learners perceived that learning through CLIL was easier since they did not have to take grammar and vocabulary quizzes, and thus, had more time to focus on the content, which demands more effort. As a consequence, the learners reported they were more engaged in learning since meaningful content related to their future careers was used instead of the tedious textbook. These findings are in line with the view that authenticity of tasks, materials, content, and communication in the target language as well as their direct connection with the learners' interests promote learner motivation (Fazzi & Lasagabaster, 2020). On the other hand, concerning the factors that can hinder CLIL implementation, three categories were identified: *low English proficiency level*, *insufficient CLIL knowledge*, and *time-consuming lesson planning*.

Regarding *low English proficiency level*, some studies acknowledge that both learners' and teachers' low English proficiency can be an obstacle when learning and teaching through

CLIL. For instance, Vega and Moscoso (2019) found that some low English proficient learners admitted that their self-assessed low English level hampered content understanding and comprehension, so they did not perceive they benefited from CLIL. In fact, one student in the CLIL group even wished to have taken some grammar lessons, which shows that these low English proficient students did not perceive the value of not having to learn grammar in CLIL classes, since their lack of grammar knowledge hindered content understanding. This finding supports the need of a threshold level of proficiency for taking CLIL lessons (Ball et al., 2015). Nevertheless, it is not clear whether the learners' low proficiency level or the lack of scaffolding, since nothing is mentioned about language scaffolding in Vega and Moscoso's (2019) study, are to be blamed for the lack of understanding. In relation to scaffolding language development, Mariño (2014) noted that without the provision of language-focused tasks that make the language prominent, the student participants' accuracy and academic vocabulary did not improve in a content-driven CLIL class in Colombia.

Concerning teachers' L2 proficiency, Palma (2020) pointed out that the majority of the EFL teacher participants do not meet the national standard English proficiency level (B2), while Argudo et al. (2018) reported that the majority of the student teachers exhibit A1 and A2 English proficiency levels, and even some seventh-semester students, A1 minus and A1. This fact is a hurdle for CLIL implementation since, as stated by Ball et al., (2015), even though teachers' CLIL pedagogical ability has been given more importance than teachers' proficiency level, a teacher at A1 or A2 levels is very unlikely to teach CLIL in a mean-ingful way.

The next category, *insufficient CLIL knowledge*, encompasses the lack of CLIL know-ledge and training as well as some omissions found in relation to CLIL practice. Some studies reported EFL teachers' lack of CLIL knowledge (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Palma, 2020). Palma (2020) indicated that the majority of EFL teachers have none or little knowledge of CLIL and that only 10% of the teachers have received CLIL training. As mentioned below, methodological awareness is crucial for CLIL teachers to the extent that it can compensate for the lack of linguistic competence (Ball et al., 2015). Consequently, CLIL programmes will not succeed without the provision of enough training for teachers.

Some omissions were identified in the studies. For instance, Benalcázar-Bermeo and Ortega-Auquilla (2019) affirmed that in the high school where their study was conducted 'students are not being exposed to an authentic CLIL approach' because 'there is a greater focus on the knowledge of content than [on] language use' (p.122–123). However, the Ecuadorian English curriculum guidelines recommend the use of soft CLIL (which is language-driven), and thus, the mandatory resources feature this principle (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2019b). Therefore, it is not clear if the EFL teachers at this high school decided not to use the national textbooks and developed their own resources. If that was the case, it is also unclear what teaching approach and resources they implemented instead, and how they differed from the 'authentic' CLIL approach that the authors claimed was used for their study. Another missing aspect that most of the studies feature is related to language scaffolding, which, according to Ball et al. (2015), is a crucial factor in CLIL and thus, CLIL teachers have to make the language prominent and explicit and provide learners with the necessary scaffolding when speaking and writing. However, the studies do not specify how language was made salient and how language scaffolding was offered (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019; Dahik Solis et al., 2017; Ortega-Auquilla et al., 2021; Recino et al., 2019; Vega & Moscoso, 2019).

Lastly, some studies stress the category of time-consuming *lesson planning* because they indicate that teaching through CLIL demands more preparation, and thus, more planning

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time (Palma, 2020; Vega & Moscoso, 2019). In the words of Palma (2020), the majority of EFL teachers are reluctant to content teaching since they believe that the lack of resources would force them to spend more time to design materials and plan lessons; besides, they perceive school authorities do not realise the extra effort needed for teaching CLIL. These findings are similar to the ones reported by González and Barbero (2013) in which CLIL teachers in Spain expressed their dissatisfaction about their excessive workload and responsibilities which did not positively affect their wages in comparison to the non-CLIL teachers. Accordingly, it can be said that Ecuadorian educational authorities interested in CLIL have just made schools adopt this approach without realising the extra burden it entails for teachers. As Banegas (2022) wonders, how fair is it 'to expect quality CLIL provision by increasing the pressure on EFL teachers' workload and duties without professional support or improvement of working conditions?' (p. 384).

The development of language and cognitive skills

Language skills

Focusing on language in CLIL involves making an interaction between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in terms of grammar, vocabulary, discourse markers, thinking skills, and the four language skills (Ball et al., 2015). Cummins (2008) argues that while BICS could be practised and developed in one to two years through social interaction, CALP might take up to seven years to fully develop, and it needs to be instructed with suitable methods and techniques to allow students to complete context-reduced communication tasks positively. It is necessary to highlight that CALP is a requisite to use language in the cognitively demanding tasks of context-reduced academic situations where higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) are needed (Baker, 2006). It is also imperative to provide students with the necessary contextual and extensive instructional scaffolding (Ball et al., 2015; Chamot, 2009); in the words of Cummins (2008),

> the construct of academic language proficiency refers not to any absolute notion of expertise in language but to the degree to which an individual has access to and expertise in understanding and using the specific kind of language that is employed in educational contexts and is required to complete academic tasks. Thus, in the context of schooling, discussions of greater or lesser degrees of language proficiency or adequacy of an individual's proficiency refer only to the extent to which the individual's language proficiency (CALP) is functional within the context of typical academic tasks and activities.
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> *Cummins, 2008, p. 67*

Therefore, practising the language in CLIL should involve principles such as (1) mediating language between the learner and the subject knowledge; (2) developing awareness of the language of the subject; (3) planning with language in mind; (4) making academic language explicit; and (5) sequencing language practice activities from personal oral expression, in groups, in plenary, to finally reach written production.

CLIL research in Ecuador has given special attention to the study of how language skills are developed and/or improved; however, it seems that teachers and researchers have taken for granted that learners can listen, speak, read, or write fluently in the target language, and have not provided, or at least it is not shown in the studies, the language support needed

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while learning the new content (Benalcázar-Bermeo & Ortega-Auquilla, 2019; Dahik Solis et al., 2017; Recino et al., 2019; Vega & Moscoso, 2019), which, as aforementioned, must be done through explicit instruction (Ball et al., 2015; Chamot, 2009; Cummins, 2008).

The main concern thus seems to be methodological as the researchers do not provide enough information about the teaching dimension of the study. For instance, the quasi-experimental study conducted by Vega and Moscoso (2019), which collected data through tests and interviews, portrays a minimal improvement, in fact not significant, in language proficiency when direct grammar instruction was provided only to university students in a non-CLIL versus a CLIL group. Both groups were taught content in tourism through the use of the same coursebook; while the CLIL group received instruction with a focus on content, the non-CLIL group was an English for specific purposes (ESP) course that emphasised vocabulary and language functions. The authors report that participants in the CLIL group felt their oral production, vocabulary, and reading and listening comprehension improved. However, even though language production, oral and written, should be scaffolded, and encouraged as a sequence (Ball et al., 2015), there is no evidence of how the researchers provided scaffolding or made language salient to achieve oral or written production. Similarly, Benalcázar-Bermeo and Ortega-Auquilla (2019) sought to examine the impact of CLIL in oral production through a mixed-methods study conducted in an Ecuadorian university. From pre- and post-tests and surveys, gains in oral production were found; however, as procedures, materials, tasks, and activities they used to provide strategic and planned language scaffolding – which according to Ball et al. (2015) is imperative – were not presented nor explained, the reported gains could have happened as a result of instructing students with any language teaching approach.

Another example is that of Dahik Solis et al. (2017) who conducted an action-research study in which they compared the results of using the Direct Method and CLIL for developing reading skills. The participants were two groups of students of a language centre at a tertiary education institution. Through observing participants during the development of tasks, researchers collected and analysed data, reporting findings that students in the CLIL group outperformed students in the Direct Method group when expressing sentences and phrases more clearly, applying the vocabulary of the course content, answering comprehension questions about the content correctly, and improving their reading comprehension skills; nonetheless, the process followed to apply CLIL and provide language support is not explained. While the researchers reported that the results were positive, favouring CLIL as a potential approach to foster reading comprehension skills, it is necessary to acknowledge certain omissions in the design, data collection, and data analysis stages of the study which could have influenced the reported findings. It is mentioned in the article that 30 students participated in the group instructed by CLIL, but it is not made explicit how many students were in the group taught using the Direct Method. Even though the study sought to analyse and communicate positive results regarding the impact of CLIL and the Direct Method on reading comprehension, the researchers did not assess this skill; instead, they evaluated speaking in the CLIL group and writing in the Direct Method one. While learners in the latter had to write a paragraph at the end of the intervention, which rather is the last stage in CLIL to develop CALP (Ball et al., 2015), the group taught by CLIL had to perform a dramatisation based on the content of the reading activities. The comparison made between two different tasks completed by the two groups after the treatments, producing written and spoken texts respectively, could have had a major effect on the results obtained.

Correspondingly, another action research study interestingly performed three cycles to analyse the use of CLIL in the training process of language teachers (Recino et al., 2019).

Each application phase implemented different CLIL frameworks. The first integrated Coyle's (2007) 4Cs Framework; the second phase applied the 5Cs framework of Attard et al. (2014) which integrates content, communication, cognition, community, and competence. During the third phase of the study, the researchers introduced five essential elements of CLIL also proposed by Attard et al. (2014): scaffolding, learner autonomy, interaction, evaluation, and scenario to complete the methodological tool. The analysis of the data collected through classroom observations confirmed the development of linguistic skills and the enhancement of their communicative competence; however, it is not clear how the CLIL process took place and how the language gains were measured.

Studies drawn on the perceptions of students toward the use of CLIL for improving overall language proficiency are found in the published CLIL research in Ecuador. For example, in a study conducted with 171 university students from four different undergraduate education programmes (Ortega–Auquilla et al., 2021), participants' self–reported reflections showed that their English proficiency level improved when content subjects were used as vehicles for learning. Notwithstanding, learners report a feeling of language proficiency improvement, only perceptions about reading and listening skills are observed when the objective of CLIL is to practise the language through oral activities to ultimately achieve written production (Ball et al., 2015). These student teachers also expressed that learning English through content subjects improves their language and course content learning, their in–service performance, and their academic opportunities to pursue graduate degrees.

Furthermore, in a survey–based study with ten English teachers of a public school, Palma (2020) aimed at determining participants' knowledge and understanding of CLIL. After measuring teachers' answers by means of a Likert scale, findings illustrated the lack of knowledge participants had of the basic features and principles of CLIL and the guiding role teachers have in helping students respond to the demands of input and the development of the skills necessary to complete a task in the target language, which, according to Palma (2020), results in the infrequent implementation of CLIL in Ecuadorian classrooms. Conversely, some studies reported participants' positive perceptions (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020; Argudo et al., 2018) regarding the development of content, communication, cognition, and culture through the English language (Andrade Mendoza et al., 2020). In Andrade Mendoza et al. (2020), participants (students and teachers) mentioned they felt motivated to learn and teach, respectively, through the CLIL approach. Furthermore, Argudo et al. (2018) reported that even though participants felt they were not developing the language at the same time as content, they were 'acquiring the necessary subject knowledge' (p. 82).

Cognitive skills

CLIL programmes are effective for learning content and improving language proficiency, bearing in mind that language and content are vehicles for acquiring abilities in the target language and developing thinking skills (Ball et al., 2015; Cummins, 2013), especially HOTS. Ball et al. (2015) state that the interplay between the three dimensions of CLIL, concepts, procedures, and language, allow students to understand content by doing something and using language as a tool.

As with language proficiency, it cannot be assumed that thinking skills develop automatically through CLIL; instead, tasks and activities that engage the use of lower- and higher–order thinking skills are needed. Another assumption that needs to be deconstructed regarding the development of thinking skills in the L2 is that learners, due to their interlanguage, will not be able to use HOTS and therefore cognitive demanding tasks have to

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be modified (Ball et al., 2015). Therefore, teachers' guiding role becomes crucial to train students 'to use problem solving skills, to engage them interculturally, to develop their sense of initiative, and to ground them in an awareness of the ethical consequences of their action' (Ball et al., 2015, p. 32); in other words, to help them increase their range of thinking to expand their range of language (Ball et al., 2015).

Banegas (2022) stated that CLIL research in South America fails to describe how thinking skills (LOTS and HOTS) are developed, and in the specific case of Ecuador, this tendency is not different as the studies analysed highlight the importance of content and thinking skills, but do not provide information about processes where scaffolding and taxonomy are used to progress from LOTS to HOTS (Bruno & Checchetti, 2015; Kusuma et al., 2017).

For instance, Argudo et al. (2018) discuss that most of the learners in their study somehow developed HOTS throughout the undergraduate programme; however, there were students who had difficulties when examining and breaking information into pieces, identifying causes and effects, making inferences, analysing, evaluating, and creating. These challenges that students faced show that teachers might not be using suitable and enough learning strategies to foster in students the use or development of HOTS (Bruno & Checchetti, 2015), which can predict academic success or failure.

Andrade Mendoza et al. (2020) and Recino et al. (2019) agree that content courses can help students improve language and cognitive skills. For instance, during the second action research cycle of Recino et al.'s (2019) study, it was observed that as student teachers learned the content of the mainstream subjects of their teaching programme, they integrated language skills with higher-order thinking skills while explaining, diagnosing, and evaluating what they observed in their practicum teaching framed within the content of the courses. However, the study does not provide detailed information on the process of developing HOTS.

In regards to cognitive development, the perceptions of participants have been of the interest of CLIL researchers. The conclusions provided in the study conducted by Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2021) relied on the students' self-reflections about learning language and content in their mainstream courses. These students report they felt content courses had positive effects and influence on their academic training, critical thinking, and cognition. Similarly, Palma (2020) draws on teachers' perceptions to acknowledge that a reduced number of teachers use activities that involve discussions, projects, and problem-solving. The majority of her participants do not spend enough time on developing students' thinking skills. These findings are similar to those reported by Savić (2012) who discussed that teachers were not ready to implement CLIL as they lack experience or interest in 'applying appropriate pedagogical practices involving problem-solving, negotiations, discussions and classroom management'. As it was aforementioned, the development of cognitive skills in CLIL in Ecuador has been scarcely analysed which suggests that it may be neglected in teaching pedagogical practices and research.

Conclusions and implications

The aim of this chapter was to provide a state-of-the art review on how CLIL has been implemented and researched in Ecuador. One of our goals was to identify trends in implementation as well as in the types of studies conducted; we also aimed to identify omissions, gaps, and aspects that require investigation. Despite the small number of published and available empirical studies, this research synthesis sought to raise critical understanding of the issues within Ecuadorian classrooms where content and language are being taught, which

could lead to informed actions being taken to benefit student populations with the many advantages this approach could offer.

CLIL has gained prominence at all educational levels in this country as it is one of the core principles of the Ecuadorian curriculum for the teaching of EFL in schools and high schools (Ministerio de Educación, 2019a). Some research on the implementation of CLIL has been conducted reporting, among other positive effects, the optimistic views of researchers, teachers, and students about the benefits it could bring to learning the language. However, information about the procedures that the studies that implemented CLIL in classrooms followed were not detailed; this might constitute a starting point for conducting further studies in the area of CLIL research and practice at the primary, secondary, and higher educational levels in the country.

Even though CLIL has been implemented and studied in most of the educational levels in Ecuador, research studies conducted with elementary school students were not found. It is clear that this area needs to be explored in order to have a thorough understanding of CLIL implementation and face the challenges the use of this approach involves. According to Mertens (2015), conducting research at all educational and psychological levels can help to enhance the comprehension and management of any situation under study.

As for the implications, they are presented in this section at two levels: (1) practice and (2) research, which should not be treated as two entirely separate activities, because when creating a link between them teaching practices are enhanced, a research culture is strengthened, and students' learning experience is improved.

At the practice level, the basic conditions needed for any (language) teaching experience to succeed should be (re)considered and given its due importance. First, the English language has to be practised by teachers to keep or even achieve higher proficiency levels to prevent hurdles when trying to teach CLIL in meaningful ways. Second, the lack of teacher training in regards to CLIL theory and practice was a common thread in all the studies. It is a responsibility of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education to offer ongoing training, with special emphasis on scaffolding, activities to develop thinking, and assessment, if teachers are expected to adopt and successfully implement this new approach, still unknown by many practitioners. In the same light, there is an urgent need for support at the national and institutional level. National educational authorities should support the implementation of CLIL by providing teachers with the resources and material required to teach CLIL lessons, or at least offer assistance for creating such material to somehow ameliorate the time-consuming task it represents. Third, EFL teaching programmes for pre-service teachers ought to undertake curriculum updates to include CLIL as one of their essential courses to work in accordance with what the Ministry of Education expects from future English teachers.

At the research level, it is evident, by the reduced number of published studies found, that teachers and researchers should be encouraged to closely observe and examine what is happening in English classrooms, where CLIL is supposed to be the main teaching approach according to the language teaching policies in the country. Through the analysis conducted, gaps in the literature and, as a result, opportunities for future research were identified. Several aspects of language and content acquisition and learning could be researched. For instance, it would be interesting to know how the dimensions of CLIL are connected in lesson planning and in the actual class. Also, it would be important to increase the existing research by examining contextual, instructional, and language scaffolding processes and their impact on cognition and language learning. Last, but not less important, teachers and researchers must be aware and up to date on research methodologies and processes to avoid omissions and misleading results.

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Further reading

Ball, P., Kelly, K., & Clegg, J. (2015). *Putting CLIL into practice*. Oxford University Press.

This book contains a complete model for the successful implementation of CLIL with practical examples and explicit instructions to help both experienced and novice teachers.

Carrió-Pastor, M., & Bellés, B. (Eds.). (2021). *Teaching language and content in multicultural and multilingual classrooms: CLIL and EMI approaches*. Palgrave Macmillan.

This book discusses the similarities and differences between CLIL and EMI and explains how they are implemented and exert an influence on language and content acquisition.

deBoer, M. & Leontjev, D. (Eds.). (2020). *Assessment and learning in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) classrooms: Approaches and conceptualizations*. Springer.

This book provides teachers with a wide range of activities to carry out assessment in a CLIL classroom.

Hemmi, C. & Banegas, D. (Eds.). (2021). *International perspectives on CLIL*. Palgrave Macmillan.

This book provides current information on the implementation of CLIL in different educational contexts as well as practical details of the challenges, implications, and opportunities this approach offers.

Mehisto, P. (2017). *CLIL essentials for secondary school teachers*. Cambridge University Press.

This work delineates the underlying principles of CLIL and provides scaffolding techniques to foster content and language learning and formative assessment strategies as well.

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