

GIST EDUCATION AND LEARNING RESEARCH JOURNAL. ISSN 1692-5777.  
No.18 (JANUARY - JUNE 2019). pp. 109-141.

# Situated practice in CLIL: Voices from Colombian teachers<sup>1</sup>

Práctica situada en AICLE: voces de profesores colombianos

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## Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to determine the factors and conditions that intervene in the implementation of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in diverse Colombian educational contexts. This study was conducted at five private schools from different cities and towns in the country (Bogotá, Chia, Tenjo, Facatativá, and Girardot). Data was collected from three sources (interviews, questionnaires, and field journals). Data analysis procedures included the use of triangulation and validation procedures through the grounded theory approach. Findings revealed that teachers still have complications understanding CLIL as an approach that goes beyond the mere usage of the target language in content. Instead, the study advocates for the inclusion of essential lifelong skills (i.e. creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication) when implementing CLIL in the classroom. Results also indicated that staged lesson planning is scarce, and that teachers' practices still emphasize the scope and sequence plan provided by the textbook used in the institutions. Hence, the study supports the design and implementation of CLIL professional development programs that through scaffolding can assist teachers in viewing and situating CLIL as a dialogic pedagogical approach. Not only does the approach help teachers make use of their existing knowledge of CLIL, but also helps them materialize ways through which language and content can be integrated.

*Key words:* CLIL; professional development; CLIL planning; lifelong learning; 21<sup>ST</sup> Century Skills, teacher's practice; pedagogy; language and content integration

## Resumen

El propósito de este estudio exploratorio y cualitativo es el de determinar los factores y condiciones que intervienen en la implementación de AICLE (Aprendizaje Integrado de

<sup>1</sup> Received: November 16th 2018/ Accepted: May 14th 2019

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Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras) en diversos contextos educativos colombianos. Este estudio se condujo en cinco colegios privados de diferentes ciudades del país (Bogotá, Chía, Tenjo, Facativá y Girardot). Los datos se recolectaron de tres diferentes fuentes (entrevistas, cuestionarios y diarios de campo). El procedimiento de análisis de datos incluyó el uso de procesos de triangulación y validación a través del enfoque de teoría fundamentada. Los resultados revelaron que los profesores aun tienen problemas al entender AICLE como un enfoque que va más allá de el solo uso del idioma objeto dentro del contenido. En cambio, el estudio propone una inclusión de las habilidades para la vida (por ejemplo: creatividad, pensamiento crítico, colaboración y comunicación) cuando se implemente AICLE en el salón de clase. Los resultados también indican que la planeación de clase gradual es escasa y que las prácticas de los profesores aun se enfocan en el plan de alcance y secuencia dado por el libro de texto usado en las instituciones. Por lo tanto, el estudio apoya el diseño e implementación de programas de desarrollo profesional en AICLE que, a través de escalonamiento, pueda auxiliar a los profesores en ver y ubicar AICLE como un enfoque dialógico pedagógico. El enfoque no solo ayuda a los maestros a hacer uso de su conocimiento existente de AICLE, sino que también les ayuda a materializar formas a través de las cuales se pueden integrar el lenguaje y el contenido

*Palabras clave:* AICLE; desarrollo profesional; planeación en AICLE; aprendizaje para la vida; habilidades del siglo 21; practica docente; pedagogía; integración de lengua y contenido

### Resumo

O propósito deste estudo exploratório e qualitativo é o de determinar os fatores e condições que intervêm na implementação de AICLE (Aprendizagem Integrada de Conteúdos e Línguas Estrangeiras) em diversos contextos educativos colombianos. Este estudo foi conduzido em cinco colégios particulares de diferentes cidades do país (Bogotá, Chía, Tenjo, Facativá e Girardot). Os dados se coletaram de três diferentes fontes (entrevistas, questionários e diários de campo). O procedimento de análise de dados incluiu o uso de processos de triangulação e validação através do enfoque de teoria fundamentada. Os resultados revelaram que os professores ainda têm problemas ao entender AICLE como um enfoque que vai mais além do simples uso do idioma objeto dentro do conteúdo. Em troca, o estudo propõe uma inclusão das habilidades para a vida (por exemplo: criatividade, pensamento crítico, colaboração e comunicação) quando se implemente AICLE na sala de aula. Os resultados também indicam que o planejamento de aula gradativo é escasso e que as práticas dos professores ainda se enfocam no plano de alcance e sequência dado pelo livro de texto usado nas instituições. Portanto, o estudo apoia o desenho e implementação de programas de desenvolvimento profissional em AICLE que, através de escalonamento, possa auxiliar os professores em ver e situar AICLE como um enfoque dialógico pedagógico. O enfoque não somente ajuda os mestres a fazer uso do seu conhecimento existente de AICLE, senão que também ajuda a materializar formas através das quais se podem integrar a linguagem e o conteúdo

*Palavras chave:* AICLE; desenvolvimento profissional; planejamento em AICLE; aprendizagem para a vida; habilidades do século 21; prática docente; pedagogia; integração de língua e conteúdo.

## Introduction

There is no teaching approach that can be faultlessly used in every educational context. Before launching any intervention, it is necessary to understand that pedagogical approaches are meant to be adapted according to the educational context in which one teaches and should be shaped according to target students' needs in order to gauge their learning effectively. As new educational trends emerge, every teaching and learning action needs to be well planned out to achieve success. This includes keeping the target goals in mind and the learning standards traced. For example, in Colombia by law it is mandatory that all students in schools learn English as a foreign language. According to the Colombian Ministry of Education policy (2016), the improvement of the communicative competences in English as a foreign language in all the educational fields is one of the main objectives along with the use of new means and technologies and labor competences. Hence, it is imperative to design and implement pedagogical strategies for the effective development of plans oriented to meet such goals.

Although numerous representatives converge in the educational panorama (i.e. stakeholders, teachers, directives, administratives), these parties are not necessarily informed, well prepared in the field of language teaching and learning, and/or might lack knowledge concerning the context with its pertaining needs and diversities. In Colombia, there is no specific approach stated or suggested from governmental entities to reach this objective. What is more, not all of the institutions act in a unified and uniform way to address approaches and methodologies. Most of the time the decision-making concerning the design and implementation of the language curriculum relies on teachers themselves. Some might claim that the process and responsibility of developing the target linguistic competences depends on each educational institution. Others might claim that it is entirely the say of the educational stakeholders such as the Secretaries of Education, and the Ministry itself to rule, guide, and support the process. To this point, the debate around the ones in charge of leading English language development in Colombia still remains open. It is well known that such stakeholders should strive for the provision of quality by favoring specialized instructional support and fostering infrastructure improvement. Principally, these cases emerge when the scarcity of resources (both human and physical) demands huge and timely attention.

Switching to new teaching and learning methodologies can create anxiety, lack of confidence and/or unskillfulness on the teacher's side. That teachers lack the necessary knowledge can affect pedagogical interventions as they might be reticent to understand or try out new approaches to teach. Change is always intimidating and high-risk since planning for a vibrant and diversified teaching and language scene always means investing additional time and effort.

The Colombian language teaching context has witnessed for decades the implementation of various conventional approaches. One of them is grammar-based, which according to Canale and Swain (1980), focuses purely on linguistics and the usage of grammatical forms. The majority of Colombian schools create their own curricula and choose the competences and foci that they are required to develop during the academic year. Sometimes they align with the Colombian language standards (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, hereafter) (Cambridge, 2011). In addition, most grammar-based educational institutions are provided with textbooks that suggest the topics and content to learn the language and is distributed according to the book's scope and sequence. All content topics and objectives are included there, and an initial guide is already created. However, educational resources (books, in most cases) do not always fill in the gaps of school curricula as they might lack the alignment to linguistic prospects and specific contextual elements needed to develop language practice efficiently.

Books might offer generic content for all learners, and teachers are called to pick and choose the elements that best suit their planning and practice keeping in mind that in terms of resources one size does not fit all. Most books that are used in Colombian schools do not generally fit the guidelines suggested by the Ministry of Education, as they were not designed for the Colombian context. Consequently, broken connections between what is and should be taught and what is and should be assessed appear. Last of all, in those cases in which schools do not use books, educational resources such as learning guides and lessons need to be designed or adapted. Most of the time they are generally created from scratch, posing additional burdens in terms of time and workload for the teacher.

Besides, Rodríguez-Boncos (2012) remarks how language learning approaches have influenced the way students learn by doing, and the CLIL approach is not the exception. Keeping in mind that the nature of EFL is not based on teaching language intrinsically but on drawing students for possible interactions with people from unlike contexts (Snow, 2015), CLIL offers a window to raise understanding of the world through culture, language acquisition, exchange, and situated content.

Challenges arise along the path, though. One of them concerns the need to find specialized teachers that deal with CLIL efficiently in schools either for offer or demand issues. The English teacher is generally the one in charge of dealing with specific content areas such as math, science, geography, history, etc., resulting in defective alignment of content and language goals and impeding the natural growth and development of the language curricula.

However, several reasons support the endorsement of CLIL. Mariño (2014) claims that among the main reasons for implementing CLIL is the impact of globalization and the technological advances in education. There is the need to create a means for communication to supply this gap and favor learning in context. Nevertheless, the usage of CLIL does also pose challenges. In Mariño's study, findings reveal that the teacher was neither clear about the criteria for assessing her students, nor about the reasons to evaluate their language level. This echoes the former difficulty exposed above, highlighting that not all teachers teaching content areas have appropriate preparation for such a mission, and content teachers do not necessarily focus on language skill development. This presupposes the existence of new breaches at the planning, feedback, and assessment generation instances. Among the ways to surpass these difficulties, the author mentions generating interdisciplinary connections between content and language teachers to better map curricula.

Other challenges reported by Rodríguez Bonces (2012) relate to difficult situations that teachers encounter when their students do not have good training in EFL because of limited exposure to the language. The author suggests that a possible solution is to begin a gradual implementation of CLIL only when students have had caught up with the required knowledge to understand several aspects and ideas needed for the proper growth of the learning process. As Rodríguez-Bonces (2011) states, CLIL requires a certain degree of knowledge of the language, meeting global and local standards such as CEFR and MEN respectively. This draws attention to key issues implemented in any teaching approach that makes use of new methodologies: 1. Adequate target-language competence. 2. Adequate subject knowledge. 3. Adequate materials in the target language. 4. Explicit institutional and national policies and 5. Teacher cooperation.

Numerous challenges await all the abovementioned agents involved in language development specifically for those involving CLIL. There is an urgent need to find a synchrony between educational contexts and ways to tackle their demands.

Thus, the present study attempts to illustrate accounts from five Colombian teachers from five schools that have had both opportunities and limitations for the effective usage of CLIL. The study derives from a preliminary phase in which observations *in-situ* and interviews with teachers were held. These revealed deficiencies in the ways in which they approach language teaching, their students' learning, and their practice itself. Therefore, the study was launched to inquire about the factors and conditions that might intervene in the implementation of CLIL in schools.

This study may add to the existing body of research in the analysis of CLIL implementation as it may broaden understanding concerning

deficiencies and gains in its applicability and make agents aware of the factors to be examined to achieve the expected goals in their educational contexts. The study advocates for a conscious and suitable use of CLIL, viewed as an approach that fuses theoretical and practical keystones to foster efficient and lifelong language learning development. It might be applicable to the ELT and content-language communities in Colombia and around the globe.

### Theoretical Considerations

#### CLIL gains and horizons

CLIL has been acknowledged as an innovative approach during the past 10 years mainly because of the novelty and diversity it brought in the classroom. In CLIL, content knowledge and language knowledge are expected to be learned simultaneously (Coyle, Marsh, & Hood, 2010). It also needs content teachers who are able to cope with target language demands. However, two aspects suggest a two-fold problematic scenario involving cognition and pedagogy. This often occurs because teachers do not always know their role in language teaching and some lack strategies to teach a subject in L2 (Lo, 2014). According to Tedick and Fortune (2008), content subject teachers are not aware of language demands, and they need to know how language constructs content, and it can be a barrier when learning subjects and theories in L2. The result of which is making students lose engagement in classes and activities which teachers created for assembling language and content.

Motivation is an important part of learning an L2 (Gardner & Lambert, 1959), and CLIL studies have also drawn on this issue. Coyle (2006) has also claimed that CLIL improves learning quality and at the same time, provides students with more opportunities to put language into practice while boosting learning motivation in students and teachers. Likewise, Doiz, Lasagabaster, and Sierra (2014) conducted a research study with 393 secondary students focusing on motivational issues. The authors claim that those learners that are not exposed to L2 all the time need classroom motivation, which is generally affected by the class environment, the program, the curriculum, and the teacher.

Babocká (2015) indicated how CLIL integrates content areas in language teaching. She used Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlou's (2003) premises to highlight the connections between assessment and classroom teaching, drawing attention to learner's attitude(s) before, during, and after assessment. Furthermore, viewing assessment and evaluation were presented as a part of a more comprehensive process in which testing is only one part. The researcher found out how it helps students to keep attention in class, appropriate learning activities, and internalize content and language. The main concern though, was finding ways to assess students in CLIL classes in a practical way. Researchers

suggested a variety of resources to keep track of the process such as pictures, charts, web links, video links, etc., It was also found that the context, the school possibilities, the resources, and students' individualities affect the way the progress is made.

The latest trends in CLIL indicate an arising interest towards the use of resources, both print and digital. Authors such as López Medina (2016) and Czura (2017) report how textbooks are valuable due to the level of exposure that students have to them, and highlight their guiding role as a logical sequence of contents and skills to develop in students. Among the benefits that textbooks bring to the educational community, it is discussed that these resources have been designed by experts who (more likely) know the current regulations and standards presented by academic organizations. Thus, resources constitute an additional tool to assist teachers in keeping track of the target teaching and learning processes. However, several challenges are faced when using these materials. As reported by Czura (2017), there is a shortage of textbooks that assist content and language and in some contexts, publishers distribute translated versions of regular textbooks written in learners' first language (L1) without making any adjustment to further comply with the requirements of CLIL instructional mode. Thus, very often these translated CLIL textbooks fail to support learners' development in the subject matter in a foreign language.

On the one hand, CLIL resources are also accessed and used from the educational resources that publishing houses bring to educational institutions. On the other hand, the changes in educational policies and guidelines might affect the effectiveness in their usage given the different contexts in which these might be utilized. CLIL resources do provide general academic language (metalanguage) that is not quite easy to understand by novice teachers and learners. In addition to this, CLIL resources can also be scarce, and can be mostly addressed to a native speaker population.

The aforementioned challenges with printed resources (textbooks) might be tackled via the implementation of other additional sources such as audiovisual tools (Zhyrun, 2016). Since the textbook does not provide all the necessary elements for proficiency development, teachers are also called to gather additional resources that allow them to customize their lessons based on students' preferences and needs, while using authentic and reliable resources. However, teachers need to be cognizant that not all resources found online are suitable to their learners, so they have to prepare themselves for a proper and gradual material adaptation process.

### **The use of resources in the English classroom**

Resources in the current era include digital and print-based means. Many educational institutions around the globe have diversified the usage of resources to support language learning. The vast offer of resources on the web and through publishing houses has demanded the acquisition of new competences both on the side of teachers and learners. Nevertheless, there still are debatable issues concerning such a panorama. On the one hand, many institutions still prioritize the use of the textbook over the use of digital support sources, and on the other, many textbooks do not fill the context, expectations, and needs of the learners. In his study, Muhsen Al Harbi (2017), revealed some feelings towards the use of textbooks. Teachers mentioned that the clarity of the textbook objectives was not treated effectively. In addition to this, the content was not helpful to apply teaching theories and practices, and the content of the textbook had no helpful tests or procedures to evaluate students' achievement effectively.

Teachers can also display drawbacks when using digital tools for the class. As Çelik and Aytin (2014) describe in their study, teachers are often seen as weak in computing technologies skills, indicating deficiencies in digital literacies. In their study, the authors applied a series of interviews with six elementary and high school teachers. Results suggested that participants felt confident with their level of skill in applying the digital resources. However, this also showed that the lack of connectivity limited teachers in taking advantage of the available resources. Teachers can feel anxious when using digital resources, and do not want to fail when using them. Therefore, it can be argued that incorporating digital resources does not mean generating success in the class. Instead, on a modest basis, it can be stated that novelty and change might be gauged using digital sources only when users have understood the rationale of use by going through sequential guidance and training stages for optimal usage.

Onofrei (2016) highlights in her study that access to new technologies for academic study and the identification of the level of training and use of new ICT resources by secondary school teachers are essential skills. Her study was conducted in secondary schools located in rural and urban areas in Romania. To identify the level of access, training and use of new ICT resources by secondary school teachers, she used a questionnaire about access and use of new ICT in education. In this questionnaire, access to technology was measured through a scale that examined both access to new ICT in school and in classroom, and the study identified activities where teachers used new ICT resources and revealed the kind of applications that they used. Results indicated that teachers used technological resources to prepare their lesson and activity but did not do it efficiently. Although there had been investments in technology into schools, teachers use new ICT at a basic level. The author claims that such situations happen because the implemented training programs place high emphasis on



the “technological aspects and offer little use of technology for teaching” (Onofrei, 2016, p. 31), focusing merely on technical usage matters, rather than on pedagogies.

Similarly, this also happens in Colombian schools, where there are classrooms that have wide access to ICT resources (i.e. learning platforms, devices, internet, etc.), but teachers do not (or cannot) take advantage of them because they lack the skills to implement them effectively. McDougald (2013) mentions how teachers are currently using methods that are not part of traditional approaches and that fulfill teachers’ expectations regarding language learning usefulness, not as part of imposed beliefs from an academic institution but as level of comfort that allows them to increase their competence about ICT along with their beliefs about it. Besides, teachers report having knowledge about platforms and digital sources that help extending students’ knowledge outside the classroom. They claim to have been exposed to professional development opportunities through ICT, resulting in the improvement of their language skills because of using such technologies.

The author also highlighted that teachers are encouraged to use technology but more importantly receive training in order to be prepared for efficient technology implementation. Creating opportunities for students to practice is necessary to see if technology is an ally in the process of learning a foreign language. Ariza and Suarez (2013) pinpoint the support generated by digital tasks in which students gain linguistic awareness and understanding that language learning is a process for understanding rather than translating. However, such process is only effective when the teacher understands the pedagogical rules of technology (Cuesta Medina, 2018), which constitutes technology as a means to assist learners to achieve their goals and not the end itself. Such a development needs time to both raise understanding and awareness on the ways to attain progress and scaffolded support from those involved in the educational arena.

### **Professional development: A must for teachers?**

Efficient professional development (PD) takes place when teachers focus on learning to be able to foster improvement in students and themselves. This mission should not only be the teachers’ responsibility but also the institution in which they are affiliated. Through PD, teachers have the opportunity to reflect on their difficulties, set plans to improve them, and build on their strengths to trace pathways towards success.

Whether short or long-term plans, PD needs to be effectively delivered. In the case of the CLIL classroom, teachers do not only have to work towards gaining knowledge and expertise to conduct doable implementations, but they

also have to cope with the need for “official training programs or school policy to develop content teachers’ language skills” (Kewara & Prabjandee, 2018).

Several studies have introduced the importance of PD in academic environments. For example, Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis (2008) pinpoint the long-term effectiveness of training courses for EFL teachers. Their study addresses attention to individual needs and how teachers used the resources and knowledge taught during the training course as well as the usefulness of the subjects offered. In the study, the effects that short-term courses offer to long term teaching are questioned as well as the degree of importance assigned by teachers to put into practice something new, changing the routine they experience, and broadening their perspectives by becoming students again. This type of training might produce initial steps for reflection with colleagues but hardly ever end in change in classroom practice.

Correspondingly, Zein (2016) states that the lack of knowledge and skills impact PD. He raises the concern that PD programs are not focused on teachers’ needs and, in many cases, teachers were the ones reluctant to pursue their own professional growth. Conversely, PD programs that have objectives to address teachers’ needs, enhance instructional practice, pedagogical knowledge, and expansion in self-efficacy. Effective PD programs have a great relationship between training contents and teachers’ needs, generating optimal results, and increasing participation and active learning through inquiry-based learning modes that can positively affect practices and policies. These courses promote cooperative learning as discussion in which planning, and practice opportunities are offered. They also provide opportunities to generate feedback from different perspectives, which multiplies the possibilities for reflection and action.

The aforementioned insights lead us to initiate discussion on the contents to be included in professional development plans for ELT. In their study, LaFond and Dogancay-Aktuna (2009) point out that the emphasis should be on the social context and the pedagogical progress rather than the linguistic theory itself. Their focus prioritizes the pedagogical purpose mission over language teaching including sociocultural diversification and the ability to prepare teachers for different contexts. For the teacher educator, the principal role should be focused on the enablement of teacher learning; it does not matter if linguistic knowledge is not included and therefore, this kind of knowledge (syntax, pragmatics, phonology, etc.) does not guarantee that they are able to transfer these elements to their students.

One of the issues raised concerns whether teachers’ beliefs and the theory they work on as part of their teaching preparation affect the courses they teach. Johnson (2002), highlights the value of finding synergy among these elements so curricular changes can be fostered. The author claims that this should be a

collaborative and iterative process in which educators can develop reflective teaching actions and theorizing opportunities for their own benefit and the benefit of their institutions. Johnson's participants (2002) (n=86) report on the positive impact that raising awareness of the internal components of language had in boosting foundational knowledge underlying their professional development.

In a similar vein, González and Quinchía (2011) emphasize the importance of knowing the reality and the problems that educators have previously faced in their contexts for the training to be meaningful and objective. The authors also demonstrate that teacher trainers must be equipped with the necessary skills (i.e. language) to deliver efficient training and also with the knowledge on the target audience participating in the program. González and Quinchía (2003) state that teachers consider the exchange of knowledge with a trainer as a benefit especially regarding research experience, culture, and improvement in language proficiency.

The benefits of endorsing new PD in the present times are also recalled by Granados (2009), who highlights the fact that students possess needs that are no longer focused on content, materials, or topics. Instead, they need to develop lifelong learning skills that help them to be better able to face the outside world. A call for strategies to gauge PD is also made by the author including but not restricted to sharing with other teachers and their teaching context and the inclusion of critical thinking skills development to make informed decisions in the classroom.

Not only do Ferrer-Ariza & Poole (2018) support the aforementioned tenets, but they also emphasize the high value that the creation of teacher development programs brings to teachers and institutions. PD should focus on issues such as consolidating up-to-date teaching practices, increasing collegial work among teaching peers, and using reflection as a core component in the teaching process.

PD opportunities range from short-, mid-, and long-term plans. Considering long-term opportunities, Viáfara and Largo (2018) discuss the positive impact of studying in a master's degree program in Colombia and how this endeavor helps teachers to better understand the educational policies for adjusting and modifying their curricula. This aspect involves reflecting upon their own process and realizing the importance of research and reflection to reformulate professional practices while they develop empowerment to foster policy and curricular change in their institutions. In addition to this, collaboration adds significantly to PD as it allows teachers to work together and serve as conduits to generate enhanced teaching plans.

Therefore, in living in exponential change times, one cannot ignore the endorsement of methodologies that gauge student-centered learning practices,

requiring high doses of scaffolded work from teachers. It is necessary to mention that in terms of professional development, teachers should be constantly building their knowledge also in a process of learning, as Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) mention. When teachers become researchers and the theory that they know starts taking shape and coming to life with all the experiences that happen in and outside the classroom. Hence, the more expedite decisions are made to favour such process, the better results are gauged to aid the cycle and its agents: the teacher as a teacher, the teacher as a learner, and the learners themselves.

### **Methodology**

This exploratory qualitative study took place at five schools from five different cities in Colombia: Bogotá, Chía, Tenjo, Facatativá, and Girardot. All ethical procedures corresponding to a study of this kind, such as the signing of consent forms, validation, piloting, and management of data were followed. The role of the researcher was of a participant one and adopted different levels of involvement in the research situation (Burns, 1999)

### **Context and Participants**

Participant schools were chosen taking into consideration that they all shared the same features: type of schools (private), approach to language learning using task-based methodology, and CLIL and communicative approach. Besides, they all had the same course resources Thumbs Up<sup>3</sup> (Fash, Harris, Hobbs, & Keddle, 2012), and had accessed the same digital resources including but not restricted to apps and online platforms.

The participants were six English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, who worked in primary levels in Colombian schools from Bogotá, Chía, Tenjo, Facatativá, and Girardot (Table 1. summarizes general data of each institution). These teachers have worked with the school for more than a year and had at least one year of experience in the use of the target book. Their ages ranged from 21 to 50 years old (M=33.8).

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<sup>3</sup> Thumbs Up! is a series of textbooks used in the participant schools (Levels 1-5).

*Table 1.* General data of each institution

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Number of English teachers</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Does it have an English coordinator?</b>
School 1	11	1611	Yes
School 2	29	1002	Yes
School 3	3	145	No
School 4	10	625	No
School 5	1	87	No

## **Instruments**

### **Interviews**

Interviews are a systematic way of talking and listening to individuals and a way to collect data through conversations (Kajornboon, 2005). Moreover, interviewees can discuss their perceptions and interpretations regarding a given situation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The researcher conducted one interview with all participants at the beginning of the study (Appendix A). The rationale behind the use of interviews in this study focused on having a broad understanding of teachers' views regarding their teaching practice and their actions in implementing new methodologies in their classes. Five of the six teachers were interviewed in person at each of the schools. One teacher was interviewed via cell phone, making use of WhatsApp™ functionalities, given that the teacher was not available during the time the visit at school was programmed. All data from the interviews was transcribed, and the analysis included a careful reading of the transcripts and a manual extraction from raw data. Data was then summarized onto a MS Excel matrix. Verbatim transcription procedures were also exercised, capturing each interaction with the individuals including pauses, non-verbal utterances, and even silence from audio recordings into a text format. This was done to enrich the breadth and depth of data by presenting quotations as evidence and presenting spoken words for explanation of how situations might have happened (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006).

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### **Web-based Questionnaires**

A web-based questionnaire is a survey instrument that collects data via the Internet, and that can generally collect extensive amounts of data in a rapid form (Creswell, John & Poth, 2018). In this study, a web-based questionnaire designed by the researcher and his/her advisor was used to gather information

from teachers regarding their professional backgrounds and their understanding and experiences in the use of CLIL, in order to compare data with the responses obtained in the interviews (Appendix B).

### **Field journals**

The purpose of this instrument was to track and account for teachers' experiences inside the classroom and find out about how they planned, designed, and integrated different aspects in their lessons. According to Friedemann, Mayorga, and Jimenez (2011), journals enhance the interpretation of data collected through other sources through introspection. Field journals were used every time the researcher visited the institution and observed the lessons. A total of five observations of the teachers were made. The field journals were stored digitally easing retrieval and analysis of data (Appendix C).

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

Two instruments were designed and applied *in-situ* (interviews and field journals), and one instrument, a questionnaire, was applied online via Google Forms™. The researcher designed both a draft and a final version of these instruments and validated them with a peer and his/her expert advisor. A total of five observations were conducted of each of the participants of the study, from April to August 2018.

All data gathered was anonymized and participants' responses were issued a code (T1, T2, T3, etc.). Grounded theory and its core process coding were used to analyze data, transcending through the three main coding stages (open, axial, and selective), making use of several strategies such as comparison and contrast, questioning, and color-coding, and triangulation and validation procedures (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). A MS Excel™ matrix was used to handle data throughout the coding process.

### **Results and Discussion**

Three main categories emerged from the analysis of the collected data: limitations to conceptualize CLIL, planning and implementing with a contextual focus on mindplanning and implementation, and resources offered by the school that support CLIL implementation. These categories appeared to support CLIL implementation; all of them integrated the core category named: Advocating for a situated practice in CLIL (Figure 1). Resultant categories revealed the existence of factors and conditions that intervened and affected the success of CLIL implementation in schools. A detailed explanation of each of these data sets is described as follows.

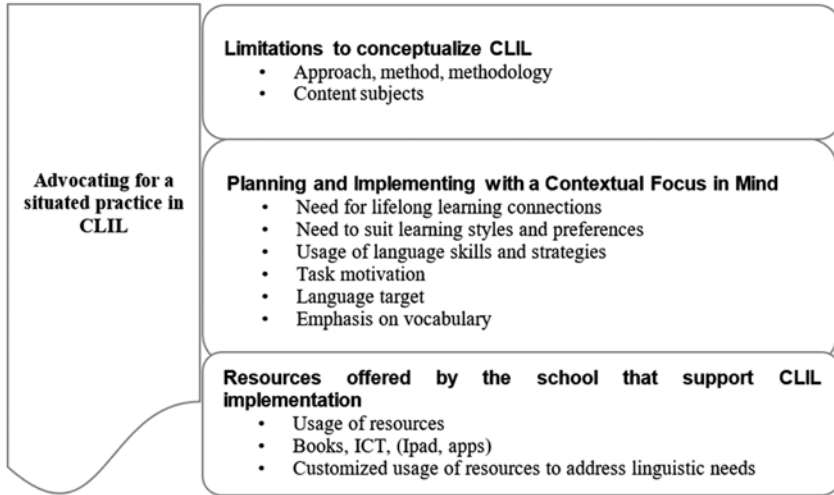


Figure 1. Description of the categories and associated factors in the study

### Limitations to conceptualize CLIL

Results indicated that teachers showed some basic knowledge about the CLIL approach. This came up after asking “what is CLIL for you?” when teachers were interviewed. Several answers indicated basic recognition of what the approach entails: “*it is an approach that includes content, topics and English language learning (T1)*”, “*it is a method in which you teach English and other content*” (T2), and “*it is a pedagogical and methodological tool to learn another language.*” (T6). However, further analyses of data allowed the researcher to see that teachers have difficulties recognizing elements and intervening factors to gauge effective usage of CLIL (evidenced during class observations). This aspect echoes the claims by Lo (2014), which indicated that the content teacher just focuses on the subject, and the foreign language is not an issue in the class as long as the student is able to respond and develop the activities for achieving the objectives for the class. It can be said that the study participants recognize the relationship between content and language (theory), but they do not seem to know how to apply it (application).

In the examined population, the teacher was the one in charge of planning the class based on some basic guidelines provided by the school. The researcher found that the involved institutions also shared a factor in common: the model and the methodology to teach English and content were not defined. Each institution relies on the decisions that teachers make and find appropriate. In two of the five schools, there are English coordinators to guide the planning

and implementation phases. The remaining three do not count on this support source, as evidenced in the observations *in-situ* and in the interviews with teachers.

Another particular element found in the study has to do with the training of teachers, due to the fact that none of the participants were content teachers. Hence, it was found both in the data collected in field journals and in the interviews with teachers, that the research participants focused more on the mere teaching of language structures rather than the idea of teaching or including different content subjects. Consequently, the notion of implementing CLIL is highly restrictive, as they do not only possess limited skills in the field, their actions are limited to the usage of pre-designed vocabulary lists included in the course resources (chosen by the school), and the use of resources and digital aids that are provided to the teacher. T6 insights reflect such panorama:

Interviewer: *How have you implemented CLIL in your institution?*

T6: *“Through the books used by the school, I bring to the class vocabulary and information from different subjects”.*

### **Planning and Implementating with a Contextual Focus in Mind**

For this category questions that aimed at recognizing the impact of CLIL in the research participants' classes were prompted. In the interview, an initial question guided the discussion: How can the integration of different content areas influence the process of learning a foreign language in your students? The teachers' answers mentioned elements like broadening the scope of strategies to learn and finding ways to enhance the processing and understanding of information. Hence, teachers recognize the importance of integrating content areas in their language class advocating for the use of target strategies and skills, as Korosidou and Griva (2016) also found in their study.

As it has been previously mentioned, the use of new vocabulary reflects what teachers think in regard to planning and implementation. T4 exemplifies such ideas stating: *“In my class I teach weather and the solar system,”* referring to the areas, contexts, and lexicon they focus on in class. In the examined data, all teachers referred to plan, taking into consideration contextual issues that help students analyze daily situations especially in regard to the environment. According to Trujillo Becerra, Alvarez Ayure, Zamudio Ordoñez, and Morales Bohórquez (2015), and Mendieta Aguilar (2009) this denotes an increasing interest for teachers to plan their classes with a premise of more real contexts activities. These also lead to enriched comprehension for students in that lifelong learning connections are built, and knowledge is expanded based on inquiry processes.



T4 asserts that “*by integrating different content areas, the process of learning a foreign language results in the discovery of new ways of learning in students*” indicating that it is possible to avow that there is a hidden approach that arises when teachers recognize that the diversification of strategies help students acquire knowledge related to different subjects. Thus, it is possible to assert, based on the findings, that teachers apply CLIL principles without knowing it.

In agreement with Otwinowska and Foryś (2017), the present study also found that barriers in terms of language occurred. Since it differs from the regular lexicon known by students in the language lesson, the interaction and learning process proposed in the language class gets modified for an academic proficiency from both agents: teachers and students. In Pappa, Moate, Ruohotie-Lyhty, and Eteläpelto (2017), this could be associated to the cognitive weight/load that students may feel, since their classes are restrained to a complex language that is needed as a part of the input component incorporated in class. That is why, as these authors have indicated, the time devoted to explanation, elaborated language, and material required is a necessary part of an optimal planning process. As a result, the selection of knowledge is not limited to conventional practices, and new forms of assessment also take place.

In the present study, it was found that in four out of the six cases, teachers reported difficulties when delivering their lessons because their students needed additional training in the understanding of the target lexicon and communication functions beneath the lessons. The situation gets worse, when teachers themselves have barriers in their linguistic proficiency, which severely hinders the accurate delivery of linguistic targets. In three of the six cases examined, it was evident that teachers possessed limitations in this regard.

### **Resources offered by the school that support CLIL implementation**

Starting from the notion that all institutions in this study have the same chances to use the resources provided by the schools, it is possible to assert that teachers value the use of computer assisted language learning (CALL) as an engine to make classes more dynamic, leaving aside the conventional textbook usage, and including a digital aid to increase levels of interaction (Moore, 1989). Findings reveal that teachers display high engagement in the learning and usage of ICT inside and outside the class, a concomitant finding of Liu, Lin and Zhang (2017).

The variety of resources used by the research participants included printed books, apps, and devices (i.e. iPads). Through these resources, teachers could find activities and projects that were mainly based on the CEFR to develop linguistic competences and lifelong learning skills. The question: “*How could*

*you integrate the resources that your school uses and the CLIL approach in your classes?"* had several responses. On the one hand, T1 said: *"to include areas and knowledge,"* while T6 said: *"to integrate learning, acquisition, skills and understanding,"* and T2 stated: *"the book has CLIL."* Therefore, in the present study teachers are cognizant that the resources provided support CLIL usage; however, they adhere to such simplistic use and remain generating content and resource-based practices rather than advocating for skill or process-based ones which entail effective planning, follow-up, and assessment. All of them report making use of traditional drill-based and fill-in-the-gap tasks to assess language performance. In agreement with González Moncada (2007), despite the variety offered in resources and approaches, ultimately the teacher is solely the one in charge of making the decisions in the class and examining ways to select and use available resources.

### **Core category: Advocating for a situated practice in CLIL**

The assembly of the previously mentioned categories suggests the situated practice approach as a main factor or condition that intervene in the implementation of CLIL in the context under investigation. It would allow teachers to make use of their existing knowledge of CLIL by operationalizing the ways in which language and content can be integrated while using students' life experiences to create meaningful classroom activities within a community of learners (The New London Group, 1996). In doing so, such situated practice will not only bridge students' and teachers' views and acts within a dialogic approach to teaching, but also integrates students' primary knowledge by allowing teachers to carefully observe students to discover what they know and what they are already able to do (Henderson, 2012). With such knowledge their language learning can be better mapped and sequenced.

There remain several challenges to be addressed such as the effective planning and implementation of the approach *per se*. Although teachers recognize the importance of using resources and establishing lifelong connections in the English class, they hardly ever know how to make them evident in their planning, resorting to highly traditional ways of teaching language and content. The claims from T1, clearly illustrate such intake, and the needs and horizons, CLIL practitioners should lead: *"Although the CLIL proposal has been integrated into the classes from the books worked by the institution, an approach like CLIL demands new challenges that are beyond books or a new curriculum. Somewhat, it requires the construction of learning environments that stimulate the development of new skills, different from those already practiced in the acquisition of a second language" (T1).*

## Pedagogical implications

The study has put in evidence the knowledge, actions and needs of a group of teachers. Not only have the findings unveiled the need for teacher preparation to follow-up on CLIL instructional process, but also, they have pinpointed possible areas to focus on to find synergy between teaching and learning with the goal of using CLIL smoothly in the language class. Based on the findings collected in the present study, it is argued that teachers find a breach to transfer theory into practice. Therefore, it is highly beneficial to scaffold them with target guidelines derived both from the analysis of the context, their educational institution goals, and the overall learning standards, congruent with the expected performances of worldwide English language users.

At a novice level, teachers should be provided with lesson scaffolds, so they are better able to plan their classes, targeting at efficient lesson and course design, implementation, and assessment. Appendix A is a simple example of initial guides that can assist teachers in doing so. The lesson plan draws on the tenets proposed by Coyle (2006) and, based on this study findings, offers a sequential and practical approach to plan lessons. It does so by being framed on situated practice principles and diversified ways to assess language and learning themselves.

Understanding that a situated practice in CLIL requires agents to guide such scaffolding process, the role of the teacher/instructor is compatible with the one of a mentor and facilitator. Thus, switching to new power relationships in which knowledge is co-constructed. In this line of thought, the mentor should make a thorough analysis of the needs of the students such as affective, linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural as accurate assessments can guide learners developmentally towards success and growth (The New London Group, 1996). Besides, we once again advocate for the importance of training teachers and teacher trainers themselves, so they develop awareness-raising processes, and trace effective actions on the development of a situated practice in CLIL.

In agreement with Granados (2009), teachers should constantly engage a culture of reflection and analysis based on their class experiences, examining how implementations should (or not) work in a given context in this case specifically in Colombia, while fostering critical assessment and feeding their professional engagement for the benefit of their educational communities. These actions can also be at the core of study groups, communities of practice and further spaces, specifically designed for dissemination of findings such as of colloquia, symposia, and conferences.

Resources support the teaching practices and appear as part of the English teaching process to assist the teacher. This study relates to Knight

(2015), in how the textbook offers limited possibilities in an era where students can have a vast variety of information online, nevertheless, it is still observed how nowadays it is important to have a point of reference to help teachers in planning their classes. Knight (2015) also remarks how the textbook can aid teachers in comprehending the scope, sequence, and learning activities of the course, while it offers additional resources available via a learning management system. However, Ball (2018) draws on one of the initial premises discussed in this manuscript, highlighting the needs for adaptation to suit the target teaching and learning context. The author suggests having in mind three elements: concepts, procedures, and language.

The current research goes together with Biçaku (2011), as she also found out that teachers are implementing an approach without knowing it or having basic ideas about what is sought along the continuum. In other words, teachers might teach and use the approach guided by their intuition. Nevertheless, content teachers have an active role in the implementation of the approach in their role as experts in concepts who can certainly contribute to develop language skills in context. In addition to this, results from the present study coincide with Vázquez and Alcalá (2010), which defies to adapt the CLIL curriculum, its didactic units, and the resources themselves to generate success in the implementation of the approach. Likewise, both, this study and Vázquez and Alcalá's (2010) indicate that teachers still place high value on the use of the textbook. These are considered as vital for them in planning and guiding the conceptual and theoretical principles beneath the language and content lesson.

### Concluding remarks

The present study portrays the challenges and opportunities reported by six teachers in regard to the implementation of CLIL. The findings elucidate how despite the existence of standards and plans to generate efficiency in the teaching of foreign languages as proposed by the MEN as part of the Colombian bilingualism plan, there are barriers to understanding, development, and growth of CLIL as an approach that contributes to such goals.

The studied populations do still struggle with the identification of factors to situate CLIL as an approach that does not limit to enhance linguistic target lifelong skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. Most participants of this study are traditionally-led teachers and agents that act in accordance with the guidelines that their schools demand and have not yet approached alternative pedagogies. Leaving aside their contexts and student needs and prioritizing the decision-making exerted by their institution, the textbook is the leading element in their planning. This has unveiled the diffuse connections between effective language and content planning and perse development and it has also evidenced in their tendency

to foster vocabulary learning over an integrated skill development, which not only resorts merely to linguistic but also lifelong learning dimensions.

The study also evinced teachers' lack of use of target CLIL scaffolds such as lesson plans that could assist the language and content development progress. The examined lesson plans (assessed in the preliminary phase of the study) reveal that teachers reported an incongruence amongst language and content elements. Instead, they demonstrated that teachers continue to focus more on developing lexicon over content. None of the surveyed teachers use a specific CLIL lesson planning format, thus these types of connections remain scarce or even inexistent. As previously reported, their lesson routes were traced by the target textbook's scope and sequence. Thus, it is argued that if planning is the basis for efficient interventions, formats viewed as scaffolds need to be highly structured, managed, and familiar to the target users (teachers), so they can be used flexibly, in a variety of moments across the CLIL lessons. Hence, teachers need to be cognizant of the target integrations between language, content, and learning. As an attempt to bridge such a gap, this study suggests the use of a customizable CLIL lesson plan, which can be used in initial scaffolding stages for any CLIL practitioner (Appendix D).

Hence, we advocate for the rational use of resources in the CLIL classroom, and the instructional and pedagogical savvy that teachers, practitioners, and educational stakeholders need to build in order to better assess their contexts, plan efficiently based on their goals and expected outcomes, and on their available infrastructure including educational resources. In contexts like Colombia, the call for customization will be always made as every learner population might be different, although they all attempt to develop the same target language objectives. This study might have contributed to portray both assets and challenges when teachers use CLIL, with the aim to assist textbook designers, teachers, stakeholders, and curriculum developers. However, it is noted that although the accounts presented in this manuscript can hold limitations regarding the generalizability of results, the analysis made discusses essential considerations in the CLIL field, both concerning instructional and pedagogical matters, while keeping in mind how the design of situated practices can bridge existing gaps in language teaching, learning and in the integration of CLIL in the language classroom itself.

According to Sylvén (2013), there are factors that determine the success of learning English as a foreign language that correlate with the present study in terms of the design of a policy/framework that is needed to aid the understanding and exercising of CLIL in given contexts. In Colombia, there is not yet a target policy that establishes how CLIL should be implemented, and while one is created, teachers will remain in charge of creating their own programs. They will need sufficient support and training by stakeholders and

expert instructors to be able to move from the mere prioritization of the textbook as the main course material to engaging in the development of target essential lifelong learning skills in the CLIL classroom supported by myriad educational sources now available in the current information era. In addition to this, much is needed still to suit a gradual incorporation of cultural aspects (Banegas, 2014) in the CLIL curriculum, to bridge communication, content, and culture gaps more successfully. This could be set as a future area to research on.

Thus, we believe that constant CLIL professional development opportunities need to be accessible to a wider variety of teachers, as we argue that such opportunities hardly ever impact public, rural, or small city communities such as those of the present study in Colombia and are restricted to intensive or bilingual private contexts. Engaging in further outreach efforts concerning teachers' difficulties, achievements, and opportunities towards the integration of language and content will not only assure a broader understanding of CLIL practices, but also will serve to foster a development plan with specific target actions to address along the process. Moreover, it generates connections between theory and practice by viewing teaching and learning as a contextualized mission that makes use of an integrated approach to gauge progress on student and teacher cognition and action.

Further research should examine the ways in which CLIL is implemented and operationalized through specific assessment measures in the language classroom. Although the analysis conducted in the present study offers a scope unveiling target features concerning effective implementations and situated practices, more work is needed in the design of instruments, procedures, and plans. These can assist teachers in planning, design, and intervention phases as well as they can help them develop strategic assessment measures. The end goal is helping teachers gain understanding about the real purpose of CLIL as an efficient approach to foster language development.

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**Appendix A**  
**Interview to teachers**

1. What is CLIL for you?
2. How have you implemented CLIL, can you name an example?
3. How can you improve your planning skills based on the training given on CLIL?
4. How can the integration of different content areas influence the process of learning a foreign language in your students?
5. How could you integrate the resources that your school uses and the CLIL approach in your classes?

\*This interview was designed by Cuesta Medina, L. and Torres, J. C. (2018).

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire

Demographics
Gender
Age range
Teaching experience (in years)
First language
Type of institution
Name of institution
Level of students you teach
Your English level (CEFR)
Your current post
<b>My Beliefs and Experiences About CLIL</b>
1. Have you implemented CLIL in your institution?
2. Yes/No. Why? (if you answer YES, continue to the next item, if you answered NO, skip and go to question 5)
3. If you answered yes to the former item, describe the challenges that you currently face when /while implementing CLIL at your institution?
4. What resources might be needed in order to successfully implement CLIL at your institution?
5. What would you need to initiate a CLIL project at your institution?
6. How confident do you feel about integrating thinking skills with language teaching?
7. How confident do you feel about integrating content with language teaching?
8. How confident do you feel about integrating culture with language teaching?
9. How confident do you feel about identifying language teaching opportunities within the content of other curricular areas?
10. When planning, how do you do it? Explain.
11. Do you have to use an existing syllabus or curriculum?
12. How do you select new knowledge, skills and understanding of the theme you teach?
13. When planning, do you prioritize the content to be included?
14. Why?
15. In your opinion, does CLIL require a lot of administrative support?
16. Why?
17. Does your principal, director, coordinator, favor the implementation of CLIL?
18. Is your school staff knowledgeable about the CLIL approach?
19. Do the language teachers at your school take a collaborative approach in terms of planning for instruction?
20. Include any additional comments

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\*This questionnaire was designed by Cuesta Medina, L. and Torres, J. C. (2018).

Adapted from Cuesta Medina L. and McDougald, J. S. (2017).

**Appendix C**  
**Field Journal. Observation Registry Form.**

Name of School	
Grade	
Date	
Subject	
Teacher	

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Presentation of class objective.			
Evidence of students' opportunities to show what they are learning.			
Evidence of lesson sequencing.			
Variety of learning activities provided.			
Evidence of resources used.			

<b>Comments:</b>
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<b>Feedback and recommendations</b>
(To be used in the post-lesson conversation with the teacher)

\*This field journal was designed by Cuesta Medina, L. and Torres, J. C. (2018).

**Appendix D**  
**CLIL Lesson Plan**

<b>Topic of the day:</b>
<b>Previous knowledge:</b> (recap from last class)
<b>Class objectives:</b> (include performance-based indicators)
<b>A. Content outcome</b> (include lifelong learning contexts for students)
<b>B. Cognition outcome</b>
<b>C. Communication outcome</b>
<b>Language of learning</b> (vocab & grammar)
<b>Language for learning</b> (expressions for discussion)



<b>Language through learning</b> (combination of vocabulary and specific subject content knowledge)
<b>D. Culture/ Citizenship</b> (relate topics to your local context)
<b>Material and resources</b>
Activities plan
1.
2.
3.
General Assessment
Comments/Homework

\*This format was designed by Cuesta Medina, L. and Torres, J. C. (2018).