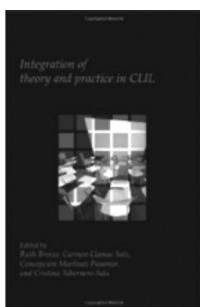


Reseñas/Book Reviews



Integration of theory and practice in CLIL

Ruth Breeze, Carmen Llamas Saíz, Concepción Martínez Pasamar and Cristina Tabernero Sala (eds).

Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014. 197 pages. ISBN: 978-90-420-3814-1.

Fertility and organicism are the two qualities that best describe this collectively edited work on CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), which fully meets the expectations aroused by its title and embodies the claim that “new times should bring new approaches to teaching” (PÉREZ-IBÁÑEZ, chapter 6 in the volume, p.97). *Integration of Theory and Practice in CLIL* is, in effect, a fertile endeavour because it poses questions and challenges paramount to English-medium and Spanish-medium instruction, such as how to determine the degree of language and content integration in schools and universities, or what strategies can be used to stimulate transversal skills and teach specific literacies in a language other than the mother tongue. In some of the multilingual environments presented in this collection, English and Spanish are not even second languages, but are becoming less and less foreign and, due to globalization, have acquired the status of ‘basic assets’, almost taken for granted in the job market.

The book’s organic coherence, on the other hand, is manifest both externally and internally. From an external viewpoint, it is heir to a recent but solid – and prolific – editorial architecture on CLIL and EMI built by Spanish scholars¹, who have delved into materials design, student profiles and new instructional contexts (Pérez-Vidal, 2005, 2014; Pérez-Vidal, Juan-Garau & Bel, 2008), language policy making (Cenoz & Genessee, 1998; Cenoz & Jessner, 2000; Smit & Dafouz, 2012; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2013), linguistic minorities (Gorter, Zenotz & Cenoz, 2014), ‘translanguage’ (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015), the pedagogical continuity and diversity of CLIL across educational levels (Dafouz & Guerrini, 2009), teacher training

(Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010), research and didactic trends (Smit & Dafouz, 2012; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013), and finally multilingualism (Cenoz & Genessee, 1998; Todeva & Cenoz, 2009; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013; Ruiz de Zarobe, Sierra & Gallardo del Puerto, 2011). Internally, the volume is divided into two distinct sections, the first one bringing together conceptual approaches and the second offering a suggestive multi-angled perspective of classroom practices and task design. The two sections feed on each other and their common denominator is empirical research, as most of the ten chapters they contain are based on case and longitudinal studies that give an idea of the efficacy of concrete CLIL initiatives over time.

In the first part, ANA HALBACH points to the need to teach academic and disciplinary literacies (terminology, genre rhetoric and discourse functions for higher-order skills or CALP), making language salient but breaking with the traditional language class, which for decades has taught about the language without giving much chance to its use. She advocates a close cooperation between language and subject specialists and warns us against the danger of ‘immersion interlanguage’ (Lyster, 1987). In a similar vein, AOIFE AHERN supports the introduction of genre-based pedagogies as early as in primary school, through a process of genre deconstruction and joint and independent construction, and suggests an ‘exploratory talk’ pattern of interaction between teachers and students, more dynamic than the conventional initiation-response-feedback routine. With a two-year longitudinal study in a primary school of the Basque Country, YOLANDA RUIZ DE ZAROBÉ and VICTORIA ZENOTZ show that explicit strategic reading instruction improves critical and metacognitive reading competence, and likewise empirically, JILL SURMONT, PIET VAN DE CRAEN, ESLI STRUYS and THOMAS SOMERS argue that CLIL students outperform their monolingual peers in standardized mathematics tests demanding problem-solving and conflict tasks and metalinguistic abilities.

In the second part, and along this same line, DOMINIK RUMBLICH’s investigation explores how language-related interest increases in prospective CLIL students over non-CLIL groups in a German-speaking context. A very different linguistic scenario is depicted in the next chapter, where IGNACIO PÉREZ-IBÁÑEZ proposes a hybrid Task-Based and Project-Based methodology for a Spanish-language CLIL courses in US high schools. He envisages Project-Based Learning, originally content neutral and not intended to teach language, as a natural continuation of Task-Based

pedagogies, more structured and oriented towards a clearer and more tangible goal. Critical skills and literacies are tackled once again, this time through drama techniques and situated writing, by FELIPE JIMÉNEZ, AGATA MUSZYNSKA and MAITE ROMERO in their case study on innovative teaching experiences in Spanish high schools. The last three chapters in the section, written by DAVID LASAGABASTER, RUTH BREEZE, and JAVIER BARBERO and JESÚS ÁNGEL GONZÁLEZ, examine CLIL in tertiary settings and deal respectively with motivation, self-assessment and instructional continuity issues. LASAGABASTER proves that a specific language-oriented background of the teacher does not make a difference in the students' self-reported perception of their learning achievements, although he notes that further research involving more teachers, class observation and higher exposure to the target language would be desirable. BREEZE'S study reveals that, although the ability to understand lectures correlates slightly with academic success and is just one factor among many affecting academic performance in a foreign language, it has a strong influence on students' self-reported satisfaction and in their perception of being able to cope. To conclude, BARBERO and GONZÁLEZ stress the importance of tending bridges across educational levels and curricula to assist university teachers in adopting CLIL methodologies. They underline the prioritization of content over linguistic competence (an added value), and devise a methodological 'decatalogue' for tertiary education. In it, they emphasize planning, contextualization and personalization, task decomposition, cooperative learning, autonomy conceived of as interdependence, learning styles, teacher mediation, scaffolding, and progression from a lower order of thinking to a higher order. The book closes with a useful directory of CLIL projects and resources that provides an overview of current action research on CLIL, curriculum projects, resource centres, networks and associations.

What I have missed in this volume is the inclusion of standpoints and experiences from university content teachers using CLIL methodologies, especially team-teaching initiatives between language and subject matter specialists. Despite this minor gap, however, the chapters compiled by the editors not only enrich the existing literature in the field with a variety of theoretical approaches, inspiring practical strategies, research foci and cultural scenarios, but also prompt us to reflect on our own teaching practices and stay open-minded to future trends and findings.

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NOTES

¹ The list of names and works cited here is by no means exhaustive.