Research and training in CLIL times: Meeting practitioners' needs

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Abstract

The widespread implementation of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) across school settings in Europe as an innovative and effective means of improving Foreign Language learning and teaching, has triggered a profusion of academic research on its tenets and rewards. The focus has been on theoretical discussions of CLIL's ins and outs and few empirical studies on key players' views regarding its efficacy. A consistent outcome of the latter has been the call made by CLIL practitioners for more guidance in the practical application of this approach. The goal of this study is to encourage a shift of focus from the theoretically-based discussion of this approach to one centred on its practical application. This study is a discussion paper that intends to encourage discussion and research on teacher training to better tackle the methodological concerns of those teachers in CLIL practice. This study concludes that, as a reality, CLIL methodology exists and is not merely a theory.

Keywords: CLIL, methodology, practitioners, teacher training

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1   Introduction

When examining the academic research on language teaching in the European context in the last decades, it is widely acknowledged that content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is cited as the model approach for bilingual education from preschool up to secondary grades (Durán-Martínez & Beltrán-Llavador, 2016) as substantiated results from a wide array of studies 'have found higher EFL proficiency levels for pupils enrolled in CLIL classes....even when pupils were at the very early stages of CLIL' (Goris et al., 2017, p. 247). Whether implemented voluntarily or by top-down regulation, it has been widely supported by stakeholders involved, and confidently endorsed by the language teaching research as the 'potential lynchpin to boost and reinforce foreign-language learning levels and multilingualism' (Pérez Cañado, 2018b, p. 213). Furthermore, European Union (EU) education policies advocate it as an effective tool to foster multilingualism and cross-cultural understanding (European Commission, 2018; Eurydice, 2006).

The overt support received from the academic community has undoubtedly strengthened CLIL's stability. For more than three decades since its appearance (Merino & Lasagabaster, 2018) extensive research has been carried out emphasising the innovative quality and potential of CLIL, particularly in language learning matters. Defined as 'a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language' (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 1), CLIL has 'certainly gained momentum across and outside Europe as one of the most innovative approaches aimed at promoting multilingualism' (Fazzi & Lasagabaster, 2021, p. 156).

What has not evolved at the same rate is research focusing on methodological training for CLIL practice even though teachers have repeatedly voiced their desire for further guidance in this matter in findings from numerous studies across the board. This deems incumbent to accurately assess the breadth and depth of CLIL's proclaimed success. If teachers do not feel adequately prepared or confident in their teaching practice, the credence given to its alleged success is questionable. Pérez-Cañada (2018a, p. 370) reflecting on the span of this approach asks, 'has this transformative potential of CLIL which has been championed theoretically truly trickled down to on-the-ground praxis?'.

1.1. Purpose of the study

The objective of this article is to raise awareness among researchers and teacher educators of the need to address the teacher training stage of CLIL implementation to better equip the teachers who must deal with the inherent difficulties of its practice. The efficacy of the approach is not our concern, as it has been widely dealt with by the Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) research community. Instead, we argue for more meaningful collaboration between research and training, where each is formed and informed by the other, to assure the potential of this approach is attained. Furthermore, this interaction can also help to reduce the gap frequently acknowledged by in-service teachers between theory and practice, between their academic training and what they do in the school classroom (Ketter & Stoffel, 2008).

2.   Materials and method

This study is a discussion paper that intends to encourage discussion and research on teacher training to better tackle the methodological concerns of those teachers in CLIL practice. For this, we will first present a brief overview of how CLIL practice has extended across the board and point to the conditions that have allowed the exponential growth of this approach. We will then expose the need for a type of research that can provide more direction in CLIL teacher education by drawing on findings reporting this aspect.

2.1. Ethical consideration

The study and its findings do not pose a risk to any institution. The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

3. Results

3.1. The predominance of CLIL in the European language teaching scenario

The affirmation of CLIL as the optimal approach for language learning/teaching in the European school context has been widely acknowledged in the research literature as can be attested by the array of studies frequently cited on this topic (Coyle et al., 2010; Fernández Costales & Lahuerta Martínez, 2014; Goris et al., 2017; Lasagabaster, 2008; Martínez Agudo, 2020; Pavón Vázquez et al., 2020; Pérez Cañado, 2018b; van Kampen et al., 2017). The vast take hold of this approach has opened a wide field of research opportunities versing on its learning and teaching dimensions. Pérez-Cañado (2016a) points to this when she writes 'Its hard-and-fast appearance… its swift uptake across the continent (and even beyond it) …have caused a vibrant research scene to burgeon around it' (p. 21).

CLIL practice in school classrooms has been traced back to the early '90s (Goris et al., 2017) when the acronym turned out to be the best choice for labelling the European option for bilingual education agendas at the time, as 'a group of pioneers began to advocate alternative terminology to account for emerging models and pedagogies' (Fernandez Costales & Lahuerta Martinez, 2014, p. 19). This well-known acronym in today's FLT context has served well 'to clearly distinguish European bilingual education efforts from other similar programs elsewhere…', and to dispel the conflictive views the term bilingual education generates 'given that in certain countries it has a negative connotation' (García, 2008, p. 208).

Early examples of its adoption can be found in Sweden, in 2001, where 'a total of 20% of all schools at upper secondary and 4% of those at lower secondary level implemented CLIL to varying degrees' (Sylvén, 2013, p. 302). Concrete case studies from at least two decades ago are well documented and often cited, as the case of Spain in 2005 (Pavón Vázquez et al., 2020), the Netherlands in 2006 (Admiraal et al., 2006), and Italy in 2003 (Cinganotto, 2016).

It is interesting to note that after three decades of presence in Europe's language teaching context, the research continues to highlight the innovative quality of the approach. Recent studies describe it as 'a broad trend' (Cortina-Pérez & Pino Rodríguez, 2021, p. 1) and 'one of the most innovating approaches aimed at promoting multilingualism' (Fazzi & Lasagabaster, 2021, p. 156). One might argue that the research has opted to place more attention on highlighting and reaffirming its success, particularly with an 'overemphasis on the language impact' (Martínez Agudo, 2020, p. 36), and bypassed a more in-depth assessment of how it is being taught across the board.

3.2. Reasons for stability

Two aspects can account for why CLIL has been widely embraced in our continent and beyond, the acknowledged widespread support of the research community, as mentioned before, and the versatility it allows for implementation. It is an approach that can be conveniently implemented in any school curriculum due to its ability 'to adapt itself to a myriad of linguistically diverse educational contexts' (San Isidro, 2021, p. 2). Moreover, the fact that specific guidelines and conditioning factors for CLIL practice are open and inclusive allows school settings to easily subscribe to it and take ownership of its practice (Durán Martínez et al., 2020; Lazarević, 2019; Pappaa et al., 2017; Pérez-Cañado, 2016a; San Isidro, 2019; Sylvén, 2013). As Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010) comment, 'Different countries have responded to calls for CLIL in different ways…' partly due to vague top-

down education policies regarding language instruction, both from the larger EU governing bodies and the national legislations which in most settings result 'rather diffuse' (p. 5).

This accommodating quality has been a key factor in the speed with which schools have jumped on its bandwagon reassured by its frequently cited 'umbrella term' definition (Mehisto et al., 2008), and its reference as a model approach for a variety of bilingual education scenarios (Durán-Martínez et al., 2020). Thus, the explosion of research centering on CLIL, along with its accommodating quality, is key in understanding the swift hold it has taken across European language teaching matters.

3.3. Research findings

The profusion of studies generated around the CLIL phenomenon has for the most part centered on aspects related to its 'grassroots implementation in European countries' (Karabassova, 2022, p. 2). The majority of studies report the positive results obtained in the foreign language learning field (Admiraal et al., 2006; Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Merino & Lasagabster, 2018) although not without dissenting views on the extent of its success (Admiraal et al., 2006; Fazzi & Lasagabaster, 2021; Martínez Agudo, 2020; Perez-Cañado, 2018a). More recently, particularly in the case of Spain as a multilingual country, a focus on the assessment and effectiveness of CLIL in bilingual versus monolingual contexts is also being discussed (Oxbrow, 2020).

Research studies have also dealt with teachers' needs and methodology concerns (Durán-Martínez & Beltrán-Llavador, 2016; Fernández & Halbach, 2011; Lazarevic, 2019; Pladevall-Ballester, 2015). Within this area, one recurring issue has been the need to enhance methodology training which is the main priority for practitioners, and the key factor for its success (Coyle, 2013; Fernández & Halbach, 2011; Pérez Agustín, 2019). Overall it can be affirmed that CLIL has remained an active field of study since its appearance, as evidenced by the vigorous European research it has generated. Nevertheless, if, as Pérez-Cañado (2018b, p. 213) affirms, this approach can truly be considered the 'answer to Europe's need for plurilingualism' the findings revealing teacher training needs cannot be left unattended.

3.4. Teacher training needs

Studies of different sorts, from different periods and contexts, have reported the need to attend to teachers' calls for more methodological guidance when teaching CLIL (Garcia-Esteban et al., 2021). From wide spectrum ones carried out across Europe to locally documented cases, when it comes to practitioners' views in this realm, they show similar results. An early and frequently cited study carried out by Fernández and Halbach (2011, p. 266) to assess a CLIL bilingual education project after five years of implementation in 24 primary schools in Madrid, already revealed: 'the need for teachers to receive appropriate training, both methodological and linguistic'. Some years later, Pérez Cañado's (2016b, p. 285) European-based study addressing the level and training needs of bilingual education teachers, concluded that 'The overriding impression is that current level is higher on linguistic and intercultural competence….and insufficient or nonexistent for the theoretical underpinnings of CLIL'.

More recently, in cases where official top-down implementation of CLIL is imposed as a means to fulfill bilingual education objectives, the findings of a national study in Kazakhstan reveal a worrying situation, which might not be an isolated case. Karabassova (2020, p. 13) boldly reports that teachers 'who were not sufficiently prepared for CLIL, in terms of both language and methodology, wasted their instructional time by duplicating the same content material in two languages…'. However, even more, serious is her following observation regarding those who '…because of the low awareness of CLIL pedagogy….did not believe in the benefits of CLIL' (p. 13).

This type of reaction is not uncommon and has been referred to as a 'power-coercive strategy' for changing teacher practice. It comes down to enforcing regulations for implementation, which in the end due to a demanding and at times frustrating process makes teachers 'reduce novelty to simple routines with no acceptance of the rationale and theory behind the proposed changes' (Nicolaidis & Mattheoudakwa, 2008, p. 280). Consequently, it is not surprising to find this type of reaction when faced with top-down CLIL implementation requirements for schools and teachers. Thus, we cannot overlook the fact that 'despite the level of institutionalization…there is no guarantee that policy will find its way to the grassroots practitioners' (van Kampen et al., 2017, p. 15).

3.5. The challenging factor of integration

The response to the training needs exposed in the research findings has to come from teacher education programs whose faculty are in turn the researchers in the field. This means that their focus has to switch from analysing results to assessing the training stage since there is a need to 'upgrade and attune teacher education options to truly diagnose needs, and to transition smoothly and successfully from theory to practice in this terrain' (Perez Cañado, 2018b, p. 218).

One of the main difficulties when assessing teacher education programs is the diversity of the European educational scenario, with multilingual and multicultural representations which make each country a particular case for action (Pérez Cañado, 2021; Siepmann et al., 2021). As Barros del Río (2020) comments 'there is no unified format for teacher training at a European level' (p. 158). This is evident in the fact that even though there are efforts to provide guidelines for a common set of competencies for multilingual teaching 'they are not equally understood and represented in teacher education programs at the national level' (Raud & Orehhova, 2022). This becomes more evident when implementation is mandated by top-down regulations based on its promising outcomes but unaware of the intricacies involved in the process.

However, the main complication of this approach for the practitioner, and consequently for the teacher trainer as well, is the fact that CLIL teaching follows a twofold objective, the target language and the content learning (Pérez Cañado et al., 2021). Due to the necessary combination of these two areas when teaching CLIL, the classroom teacher has to learn to juggle both. This is not new for teachers who have had training in FLT but it does entail a new dimension for the teachers who have only concentrated on their subject area teaching. The challenge of integrating these two dimensions has been acknowledged by researchers and practitioners alike since the beginning (Breeze & Azparren Legarre, 2021; Papaja, 2021). Karabassova (2020) refers to the Eurydice (2006) survey of which already then 'documented that defining the notion of integration is problematic due to the diversity of meanings attached to CLIL in different countries' (p. 1531).

An in-depth study on how this integration is carried out by practitioners from three different countries implementing CLIL programs in their schools describes the challenging intricacies involved in the application of this theoretical pillar of the approach. Skinnari and Bovellan (2016) underscore the fact that 'defining integration is problematic for both practitioners and researchers in the field because of the varying understandings and diversity of the practical realisations of CLIL in different contexts' (p. 145).

More recently, after many years of CLIL practice, integration continues to be a challenge as Villabona and Cenoz (2022) report in a study dealing with teachers' views on this aspect, 'This study clearly shows that it is difficult to achieve a balance between content and language' and that 'Teachers in CLIL and immersion contexts seem to struggle to focus on language and content at the same time' (p. 47). Considering that the concept of integration is at the core of CLIL teaching, and the challenge it poses is critical to its success, it is understandable to find some skepticism regarding the

extent of the proclaimed results (Villabona & Cenoz, 2022). A critical analysis of CLIL summons the need to 'examine efficient ways to effectively integrate language and content instruction' if this approach is to be implemented across the board (Cenoz et al., 2014, p. 258).

3.6. The teacher training challenge

Recent findings in CLIL teaching continue to stress the need to address the explicit call for more training and guidance in teachers' practice. Teacher educators have been targeted for not fulfilling practitioners' needs and expectations, as one of the leading authors in CLIL research states 'the broader takeaway is that the training that is currently being provided is not fitting the bill' (Pérez Cañado, 2018b, p. 217).

Recent research on this aspect in the case of Spain, considered a well-established CLIL practitioner (Coyle, 2010), reports that 'there seems to be a disconnection between training programs at university and the real requirements of bilingual programs implemented in primary or secondary education' (Pavón Vázquez et al., 2020, p. 5). A study on the views of stakeholders involved in CLIL programs in the same country which included parents, teachers, and students, reported that 'many CLIL teachers…were not at all sure whether CLIL programs were rightly or wrongly implemented…' and considered 'the training they received is adequate, but not sufficient' (Martínez Agudo & Fielden Burns, 2021, p. 231).

It becomes evident that top priority should be given to this situation to genuinely address classroom teachers' needs. In an early article dealing with the challenges of implementing a plurilingual approach like CLIL, aspects such as teacher training, material development, and language requirements among others were pointed out (Author, 2013). Almost a decade later, the same concerns are still lingering (Martínez Agudo & Fielden Burns, 2021).

When researchers and teacher educators support and endorse an approach but do not meet the needs of the classroom teachers who have to put it into practice, the consequences can be detrimental for teachers and learners alike. Escobar Urmeneta (2013, p. 335) refers to 'dissociative approaches' in teacher education to describe training programs that emphasise theoretical knowledge through lecture-type strategies. The author argues that in the end, this creates discontent among practicing teachers and reports, 'Unfortunately, classroom observation shows that once at work the contents presented in lectures are categorised by the novice practitioners as 'sonorous words' 'detached from the here-and-now- challenges that the lessons impose on them'.

The 'theory vs practice' dichotomy is not solely a CLIL issue, it has long been acknowledged in FLT research (Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Fernández Costales & Lahuerta Martínez, 2014; Genç, 2016; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Wolter, 2000). Some unsettling results for stakeholders involved in FLT training are reported by scholars like Vélez-Rendón (2002), who claims in a study that deals extensively with this issue that, 'There is evidence in the general teacher education literature that teacher education programs have little bearing on what pre-service teachers do in their classroom'. Along these lines, Wilbur (2007) maintains that 'Once in the classroom, preservice teachers rely more on their apprenticeship of observation and beliefs than on new theoretical approaches presented in formative courses'.

One possible explanation for this imbalance between theory and practice, and the critical opinion teachers may have about their formative training, could be because in the FLT it is difficult to find agreement on what teacher training courses (TTCs) should entail. There is evidence in Wilbur's (2007) study of more than 30 EFL teaching programs that 'methodological training, while based on common beliefs that theory informs practice…is accomplished in a great variety of ways' (p. 79). Along these lines, Faez (2011) states that there is 'no agreement in the field as to exactly what

effective language teachers need to know' (as cited in Farrell, 2012, p. 439). Thus, it follows that in the case of CLIL teachers, the situation is not much different since for them 'the main difference between CLIL teaching and teaching the subject in the mother tongue is the fact that CLIL involves additional language teaching objectives' (van Kampen et al., 2017, p. 3).

Efforts have been made at the European level to provide some guidelines for multilingual teacher training. The Council of Europe through various programs and recommendations has actively promoted a teacher training curriculum that can meet the needs of multilingual education models (Pavón Vázquez & Ellison, 2018). However, there is still much to be done since 'it is important to implement European guidelines in teacher education to create a common understanding of the key components of teacher training for multilingual schools' (Raud & Orehhova, 2022, p. 3).

Regarding specific CLIL practice, research expert such as Pérez-Cañado (2018b) has compiled from various studies a thorough categorisation of CLIL teachers' profiles. The author proposes seven core competencies ranging from linguistic to pedagogical skills needed when teaching CLIL students. These proposed competencies for CLIL teaching are described conceptually and serve both teacher trainers and class practitioners alike. The author maintains that there is a 'substantial body of research tapping into teacher training for CLIL' citing numerous case studies from across the board where 'researchers have evolved towards a more complex mesh of items inquiring into the current level, perceived training needs, and differences in terms of an ample set of identification variables' (p. 214). Even though these studies undoubtedly address the methodological concerns of practitioners, we argue that they only deal with part of the problem.

The emphasis we place in this article is the need for a reflection-for-action type of research in which the 'purpose is more explicitly proactive and future-oriented…to develop action plans for what to do and for what to do differently in the future' (Murphy, 2014, p. 616). In doing so we can better address the formative concerns articulated in the findings and ascertain a 'way in which teachers and teacher trainers can utilise research to encourage reflection on their classroom practices' (Kamiya & Loewen, 2014, 216). It seems reasonable then to pursue a 'how to' inquiry for a type of training that can be instrumental for teachers, who, as research indicates, 'fundamentally need to understand the methodological mechanisms that serve to produce successful CLIL teaching' (Pavón Vázquez et al., 2020, p. 13).

When the role of the teacher trainer and researcher join to 'lay the ground for training itineraries for teachers while functioning, as it were, as conveyor belts' (Durán-Martínez et al., 2020, p. 3) we can better respond to the 'numerous calls for teachers and researchers to work as partners in exploring the effectiveness of L2 pedagogy' (Kamiya & Loewen, 2014, p. 218). Although studies have shown that research does not always have the intended effect on language teaching pedagogy (Nicolaidis & Mattheoudakis, 2008; Perez Cañado, 2016b), it is the way to make progress and improvement. Moreover, it is within university training programs where the connection between theory and practice has to be consolidated if we are going to take action on the findings reporting teacher training needs. Durán Martínez et al. (2020) affirm that teacher education is being reconsidered 'as stakeholders are becoming more aware of its key role in both ensuring and enhancing the quality of bilingual programmers within mainstream education' (p. 14).

3.7. Teacher training components: the what and the how to

The key to the matter is to examine effective ways to teach students the theoretical knowledge of CLIL's tenets in formative courses. We maintain that the **how-to** cannot be left to individual interpretations but rather teacher educators have to convey this knowledge in a way that makes practitioners feel confident and prepared to put it into practice. As Lazarevic (2019) reflects on the findings of her research on teachers' experience with CLIL practice 'more support and training

should be offered to teachers so that they see the theoretical frameworks applied, to use them in their teaching' (p. 9). The link between theory, research findings, and practice must be made by the teacher trainer. Unfortunately, it seems there is still work to be done since it has been reported that regarding CLIL practice in Europe 'apart from a small number of institutions…there is very little specific training for teachers who combine language and content matter so that many teachers of CLIL/EMILE have learned how to cope 'on the job' (García, 2008, p. 213).

While CLIL is largely based on the 'conceptual theory developed by Do Coyle (1999)' (Alvarez Gil, 2021) of the 4Cs, it is 'not an all-new pedagogy since most of the strategies and methods recommended for quality CLIL implementation might be a common state of the art pedagogical practices' (Karabassova, 2022, p. 1). Concerning second language learning theory, fundamentals are shared by CLIL, immersion programs, and communicative language teaching (CLT) (De Graaff et al., 2007). The theoretical framework of CLIL along with the well-established language teaching/learning principles are at the core of foundational teacher training curricula. Both CLIL and CLT emphasise the fact that structurally they are formed by a set of principles rather than a list of procedures. Other pedagogical strategies common to both approaches are the use of cooperative learning, meaningful interaction, task-based activities, communicating for real purposes, increasing learner motivation, and student-centered teaching revisar (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010; Ng, 2020; van Kampen et al., 2017).

Thus, the theoretical framework is well structured but what seems to be lacking is a more practical and *hands-on* approach to the teacher training process. Methodological training has to be honed and further developed and this can be achieved by placing 'research at the service of pedagogy' as Pérez Cañado (2018b, p. 218) affirms so that the diagnosed teacher training needs from 'stocktaking studies' are dealt with more efficiently.

Teacher training which centers on the transmission of knowledge cannot offer the answers practitioners need as research has shown that this type of approach 'commonly delivered in the form of formal lectures, where theory and practice are separated, reduce learners to passive recipients of knowledge' leaving them with critical expectations far from the outcome intended (Nicolaidis & Mattheoudakis, 2008, p. 280).

To ascertain a type of formative experience that overcomes the breach often perceived between teacher education theory and the reality of the classroom or 'between "knowing about" the work of teaching and "doing" the work of teaching' (Butler & Cuenca, 2012, p. 305) we must take into account in-service and pre-service teachers' views. We cannot underestimate the fact that classroom teachers prefer and 'desire professional growth opportunities that involve their voice and choice….done with and for them, not to them' (Cassada & Kassner, 2018, p. 18). Such a sound pedagogical principle cannot be too difficult for teacher educators to exercise.

The concept of teacher cognition according to Borg (1999) understood as 'the belief and knowledge regarding one's teaching practice' become fundamental when considering teaching formation (as cited in Quinn Allen, 2002, p. 519). By applying teacher cognition as a strategy, we assure that change and action can occur, as this last author maintains 'if teacher education is to have an impact on how prospective teachers will teach, it must engage participants in examining their beliefs' (p. 519). In a study reporting on educational research in Finland, Barros-del Río (2020) maintains 'the training of future language teachers should contemplate competencies related to pedagogical, communicative and reflection skills'. Thus, incorporating a reflective teaching approach in designing formative courses lays the groundwork for the task. One of the pioneering studies regarding early CLIL implementation in bilingual programs in Spain, already suggested simple but decisive steps move forward in this direction. Fernández and Halbach (2011) concluded that teachers

needed 'time for training, time to reflect on what bilingual teaching is and how it affects the way they go about teaching'.

Several authors have proposed practical suggestions for promoting change and long-term effects on teacher training implications. Strategies like microteaching have also proved to be successful in achieving authenticity in the teacher training task, particularly because of the opportunity to practice self-evaluation with a formative purpose (Ismail, 2011; Kilic, 2010; Ralph, 2014; Wilbur, 2007). In a study reporting on the effectiveness of TTCs for EFL teachers, Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis (2008) explain that a degree of change in practitioner's teaching was reported based 'on a combination of awareness raising and experiential practices…through microteaching, classroom observation and teaching, reflection and peer feedback' (p. 286). These studies are examples of how research can impact practice by reporting on effective strategies used in teacher formation courses. More detailed reports of this nature should be replicated.

The pivotal role of the Practicum experience and the mentoring relation between the schoolteacher and the student-teacher has been widely discussed in teacher education research (e.g., Agudo, 2019; Butler & Cuenca, 2012; Sinclair, 2003; Walkington, 2005), but a lesser degree in the specific English Language Teaching context (Farrell, 2001; Genç, 2016). Overall, the focus has been mainly on analysing data regarding the student teacher and mentor dynamics but scarce on the student teacher's performance, which would result in more enlightening for the teacher trainer. Barros-del Río (2020) has proposed the use of digital tools to be used between all parties involved during the practicum stage. She argues that this would prove highly beneficial when seeking to establish common goals for teacher training and practice at a European level.

We strongly believe this type of conjoint collaboration between mentor teachers and teacher educators has a lot to offer for both parties involved, as Vélez Rendón (2002) points out 'it can enable teacher educators to both stays in touch with the realities of the classroom and build more meaningful relationships with classroom teachers' (p. 464). Moreover, a 'collaborative inquiry with teachers' will better instruct the type of training teachers need to be 'better prepared for the complexity of real classrooms' (Farrell, 2012, p. 438).

4. Conclusion

Much work remains to be done as the results of these past decades have steadily shown the need to improve teacher education for CLIL practice to ascertain the announced benefits supported by the research. Moreover, as there is a lack of a unified format for teacher training at a European level, rather than reinstating the benefits of CLIL as a booster for plurilingual European education efforts, further studies reporting on strategies and tools employed in training courses would be more advantageous for all.

Realigning teacher education to meet this demand by no means implies neglecting the theoretical knowledge needed for CLIL and bilingual education teacher practice. On the contrary, we need to delve into it further by devising ways in which we assure practitioner teachers know how to implement it in their daily lessons. Previous research has evaluated the implementation of CLIL programs in various countries in and out of Europe to determine how this approach is being put into practice. The conclusions end with a positive outlook as 'CLIL methodology is currently a reality and not merely wishful thinking' but there is still a need for enhanced training for non-linguistic area teachers among other aspects which need to be attended as they could otherwise jeopardise the effectiveness of dual-focused programs.

Supporting research venues that address the methodological concerns of teaching students and in-service teachers will guide and inform teacher educators to assure the continuation and

further honing of the approach. More importantly, CLIL teachers will develop their trust, faith, and credence in CLIL teaching practice.

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