

Opinions, perceptions and attitudes of a group of students taking a Bilingual Infant Teacher Training Degree: an empirical study

Las opiniones, percepciones y actitudes de un grupo de estudiantes del Grado Bilingüe de Magisterio en Educación Infantil (español-inglés): un estudio empírico

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Abstract

The present article focuses on the opinions, perceptions and attitudes of a group of students (N=23) taking the CLIL itinerary on their Infant Teacher Training Degrees. Our main objective was to reflect upon how students are experiencing this specific training based on the 'loop input' theory (Woodward, 1986 and 1988), thus making trainees experience what they will later put into practice in their classrooms. Information was gathered using a questionnaire and areas targeted were their perception of second language development, their training in CLIL provision as a teaching tool, and their opinions about the bilingual itinerary, including on an affective level. Results show students do perceive an added value in their studies, are generally capable of identifying CLIL elements in the classroom, and claim to have improved their English communicative competence. This piece of research aims to contribute to assessing and improving the implementation of similar studies on training through CLIL in Higher Education.

Keywords:

CLIL, research, Higher Education, Teacher Training.

Resumen

El presente artículo se centra en las opiniones, percepciones y actitudes de un grupo de estudiantes (N=23) que cursan el itinerario CLIL en sus estudios de Grado de Magisterio en Educación Infantil y Educación Primaria, respectivamente. Nuestro objetivo principal es reflexionar acerca de cómo los estudiantes están experimentando esta formación específica basada en la teoría del 'loop input' (Woodward, 1986 y 1988), que consigue hacer que los estudiantes experimenten lo que luego pondrán en práctica en sus clases. La información se recogió por medio de un cuestionario, y las áreas que se trataron en el mismo fueron la percepción de su desarrollo lingüístico en inglés, su formación en CLIL como una herramienta de enseñanza, y sus opiniones sobre el itinerario bilingüe, incluyendo las referidas al ámbito afectivo. Los resultados demuestran que los estudiantes perciben un valor añadido en sus estudios, son generalmente capaces de identificar los elementos CLIL en el aula, y afirman haber mejorado su nivel de lengua inglesa. Este trabajo de investigación pretende contribuir a evaluar y mejorar el desarrollo de estudios similares de formación a través de CLIL en Educación Superior.

Palabras clave:

CLIL, investigación, Educación Superior, Formación de profesorado.

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1. Introducción

Since 2004, a good number of schools in the Madrid region have had access to a bilingual project initiated by the regional government to introduce the teaching of some content subjects through English. This innovative project has had an impact on the profile teachers should have to be part of the teaching staff of a state bilingual school. Access exams, usually organised every two years, are now requiring teachers to demonstrate an advanced communicative competence in the English language (C1 level according to the Common European Framework for Languages) by means of an exam or an official certification.

Following this trend, private schools in the Madrid region are also implementing bilingual projects, such as the BEDA project (Bilingual English Development and Assessment) launched by the Federation of Catholic Schools in Madrid, and supported by Cambridge ESOL¹. These new projects have raised the standards set for new teachers to be hired by the schools, having a high English communicative competence as a must.

In this situation, the Cardenal Cisneros University College was challenged to revise the curriculum students followed to become Infant and Primary Teachers, and to design a programme which could prepare students to develop the profiles the labour market had set for them to get a job as a qualified teacher. That was how the Bilingual Project of the Cardenal Cisneros University College was born in the academic year 2008/2009, first as a training programme for university lecturers, and later, in the academic course 2010/2011, as a Bilingual Teacher Training Degree for undergraduates following a CLIL approach.

Looking around, foreign language medium instruction at university level is not new in countries such as Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium or Sweden (see Dafouz et al. 2007: 91 for an overview of this). Coleman (2006: 6) traces back the “exponential growth” of English medium teaching in European Universities to the last fifteen years. In other countries this type of projects is still a novelty at University, (even if it has been already successfully implemented in other educational levels), see for example the case of Austria (Kralicek 2009/2010). In Spain, the number of Higher Education Institutions with programmes taught in English was non-existent in the academic course 1999/2000 (according to Ammon and McConnell, 2002, quoted in Coleman: 2006: 7). Most bilingual degrees were offered by private universities, and they were predominantly focused on the field of Business and Administration (Dafouz and Nuñez 2009: 101). This trend has changed in the last few years as Ramos García (2013) has recently proved with her compilation of Higher Education Bilingual Studies in Spain.

¹ More information is available here: <http://www.ecmadrid.org/Pedagogico/Programas%20y%20Proyectos/Beda/Diptico%20beda.pdf>

In the field of teacher training, bilingual initiatives are more recent. Some entail a proportion of the university ECTS being delivered in English, some include subjects describing and explaining CLIL, but they are still scarce (see Fernández Fontecha 2009:15 or Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2010: 371). At our university college, we decided to offer two bilingual degrees, one for Infant Education Teacher Training, and the other focused on Primary Education Teacher Training. Students gradually increase their exposure to subjects taught in English, starting with 12 ECTS in the first year. Apart from that, they are required to complete a Practicum period in a bilingual school or abroad, and will have the chance to participate in activities dealing with the culture of English speaking countries.

Nevertheless, we did not want to “just teach in English”, but teach “through English”. Our main aim was truly to integrate content and foreign language, and to do so it was decided to apply the concept of loop input put forward by Tessa Woodward (1986 and 1988). In her words, “loop input is a specific type of experiential teacher training process that involves an alignment of the process and content of learning” (2003: 301). To sum up, students being trained should not only get the language or the basics of a teaching approach, but should experience it themselves.

Once this idea was clear, the first loop of the process was carefully considered, and a training plan was devised to cater for the needs of University lecturers involved in the teaching of bilingual subjects. It was obvious that the introduction of a foreign language in the classroom required a methodological change, and we started to work on training lecturers to reflect on their own practices, acquire new knowledge and skills, and share (and learn to share) their doubts and problems as well as their ideas and successful actions.

Naturally, it is desirable to know the experience and perceptions of students experiencing this new mode of learning with a view to discovering to what degree they feel it is successful and of benefit to them and how that experience might be improved. The aims of the study then were:

- To discover students’ perceptions of their own progress in English language competences.
- To discover their perception of the differences in the way of learning and the demands of working through English and the CLIL approach.
- To discover their perceptions of the experience on a practical and affective level.
- To discover their feelings towards complementary training related to bilingual education.

2. Literature Review

Research on pre-service CLIL teacher training is still scarce as these programmes are still developing, especially in Spain. Also, some so-called CLIL-based studies are really

English as Medium of Instruction programmes. With regards to this present study, we would like to make a distinction between CLIL understood as a context in which English as an additional language is used as the teaching-learning language, contrasted with CLIL seen as a pedagogical approach which strictly demands a change in the methodological strategies used in the classroom.

For the purposes of this research, the second notion of CLIL will be used. Previous literature on the topic is almost inexistent, as most studies have not provided enough information to demonstrate they may truly be labeled as CLIL studies in this sense. This situation will hopefully change as there is a growing body of studies interested in shedding light on the nuts and bolts of CLIL provision programmes and what they can bring into the teaching-learning process.

In Europe, research on students' perceptions are more present in secondary studies. In this sense, Dalton- Puffer et al. (2009) conducted a study to find out vocational training students' perception towards the CLIL programme they were taking in Austria. Results showed that participants assessed CLIL positively, and rated their speaking abilities higher than those shown by their non-CLIL counterparts.

In this line, Thijssen and Ubaghs (2011) have presented the results of a study which examined teachers' and students' perceptions of CLIL chemistry education at a secondary school in the Netherlands. Even though this study was focused on finding correlations between teachers' and students' responses, their overall conclusion was that students considered CLIL positive in their learning.

In a more equivalent context to the one presented in this study, Papaja (2012) conducted research to find out the impact of students' attitude on CLIL in Higher Education. Examining her findings, Papaja shares the view of other authors on students' positive evaluation of CLIL but warns about the difficulty of keeping them motivated throughout their learning process, as "CLIL is a challenging process" (53). She also points out the need to train university lecturers adequately to be able to handle CLIL lessons more effectively.

In a different context, Yang and Goslin (2013) report on a study dealing with the national appraisal and stakeholder perceptions of a tertiary CLIL programme in Taiwan. As part of the data gathering, students' opinions were gathered through a questionnaire including both open and close-ended questions. Students claimed to have difficulties to communicate, perceiving less interaction and having a clear preference towards native teachers. The researcher concluded that well-qualified CLIL teachers, among other measures, were needed to make this project launch successfully.

In the Spanish context, Aguilar and Rodríguez (2011) gathered information on lecturer and student perceptions on CLIL at a Spanish University. Their study is based on a pilot project

implementing CLIL in Higher Education. Students answered a questionnaire while lecturers were interviewed. Students reported having a positive experience, acquiring more specialised vocabulary and improving oral skills. However, they indicated that teachers generally had a poor level of English. On the other hand, teachers expressed their reluctance to receive CLIL methodological training.

Also in Spanish Higher Education, Martín de Lama (2015) presents a case study on 19 university students' opinions towards CLIL in Higher Education. Her study is also based on students who have education and teaching as their professional profile. However, CLIL provision is restricted to two subjects delivered in these postgraduate studies. Information was gathered by means of a survey, and results indicate students report excellent results in language development and content acquisition, however a need for improving students' interaction using the target language is highlighted. It may be the case that interaction is limited to the academic field, and students do not have the opportunity to explore their language abilities beyond academic tasks.

Even if they are scarce, studies published coincide in presenting students' positive attitudes towards CLIL provision programmes, highlighting students' improvement in their language competence. However, there is a lack of information about how pre-service teacher training through CLIL may be perceived by trainees. Only Martín de Lama (2015) presents a study with similar characteristics but carried out on postgraduate programme.

It is our belief that pre-service teacher training using CLIL as a pedagogical approach should be explored further as to train well-qualified teachers who can continue and improve bilingual projects, in this case at pre-primary and primary levels. Having CLIL provision integrating in their programmes will save time and money to administrations interested in launching and supporting bilingual education, as undergraduates will be more quickly available to the educational system. The present study is, thus, trying to contribute to this area.

3. Methodology

Bilingual Teacher Education Degrees at the Cardenal Cisneros University College entail the study of approximately 1/3 of the total credits through CLIL. In the case of students in the Infant Teacher Degree, they are required to complete a minimum 74 ECTS, and can extend this to the whole 128 ECTS through CLIL which is being offered (from the 240 credits the entire degree involves).

The idea is that the students experience the methodological approach they are supposed to be using once they start their teaching careers. The philosophy behind this programme follows the proposal of those experts who believe that a wide knowledge of a subject's content and good language proficiency is not enough to become a good CLIL teacher. Coyle et al, (2010) note the need for planning to be ongoing and to be rigorously monitored and evaluated whilst striving better to understand the complexities of learning through a vehicular language. Mehisto, (2008) points to the need to examine teacher belief systems and manage the overload of simultaneously focusing on content, language, cross-curricular integration and reflective practices. De Graaff et al (2007) identify a whole range of sub-skills required in CLIL contexts which go beyond merely trying to fuse the skillsets language teachers or content teachers typically have. Coonan (2007) similarly asserts that CLIL requires a wholesale re-appraisal of learning and teaching processes and procedures.

It is in light of such calls for a careful consideration of the requirements placed upon teachers in CLIL contexts that this research takes place. The teaching staff in charge of these subjects is composed of university lecturers with a minimum C1 English competence, qualified to teach content subjects in their areas at university level (some of them holding PhDs) and trained through tailor-made courses to use CLIL in their classrooms. This bilingual teaching staff is also complemented by two language assistants, both of them native speakers, who reinforce language comprehension (input) and language production (output).

As said above, CLIL is used as the pedagogical approach to deliver lessons using English as the language of instruction and communication. As such, content is considered to be leading the way for the language needed in the classroom. To grant students access to knowledge acquisition and skills development, their learning is facilitated by the use of scaffolding techniques, considered as temporary support to facilitate every student learning path. This also requires lecturers to know a number of strategies and resources to make the learning process available for every student without having the additional language as an obstacle. For this reason, a variety of assessment tools is used in the programme, and students received interim feedback to improve their content and language development. As a rule, students are also encouraged to put their CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) into play by engaging in HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) tasks. It is not just to make the student learn but to make him/her able to think critically, to evaluate and to create new knowledge. These are just the main tenets our CLIL provision is based on, however, the complete philosophy behind the programme is available, (see Fernández and Johnson, 2016).

3.1. Sample

Participants were a group of 22 female and one male student in their second year of the Infant Education Teacher Training Degree. All of them had either passed a level test (Oxford English test online interview) taken the previous year demonstrating a minimum B1 level or shown recent B1 or higher accreditation in order to gain entry to the bilingual itinerary. The typical level of students ranged from a bare B1 level to a consolidated B2 level. The typical age of students was nineteen years old at the time of administering the questionnaire with a handful of slightly older students. At the time of the study, students had already had taken 4 subjects through CLIL (24 ECTS). Didactics, Pedagogical Diagnosis and Observation Techniques in the Infant Classroom, Fundamentals of attention to Diversity and Foreign language (English) for Infant Education.

3.2. Data gathering tool

The main data gathering tool was a questionnaire (see appendix) created by the researchers and administered during one of their lessons by the Bilingual Project staff in February 2012. Students did not have any time limit to finish the questionnaire, it was written in Spanish and students were asked to answer using this language. In this way we sought to increase the validity of the responses by allowing them ample time and eliminating any potential obstacle in the language. This tool was divided into different sections, the first one being "General information". In this section, participants were asked about their gender, the course and the Degree they were studying. The following section was focused on students' perception of their performance in class. They were asked whether they considered their English level to be appropriate to follow the lessons, and if they had spotted any areas of improvement with regard to their English language skills.

Another area of interest was to find information on the differences students taking the bilingual itinerary could spot between the subjects taught in Spanish and the subjects lectured in English and following the CLIL methodological approach. They were required to rate participation, attention, interaction and creativity. If the CLIL approach is being implemented appropriately, learning gains should be noticed in these areas. Regarding this, they were also invited to reflect on which methodological aspects were more characteristic in Spanish subject and CLIL subjects.

The third area of research was their perception toward the bilingual studies they are taking. It was necessary to find out if they perceive that this way of studying is positive for them. In

this sense, they were also asked to compare the level of difficulty they could find in the CLIL subjects in comparison with the Spanish subjects they are also taking. Even though students taking the bilingual itinerary are experiencing CLIL at all times, it remained unclear whether they are shaping their concept of CLIL. For that reason, the following question asked participants to identify CLIL as a known concept in theory, in practice, or in both.

Another area of interest was the emotional realm. Students taking the bilingual itinerary may have different feelings towards this experience, and towards the reactions and opinions of those students not choosing the bilingual itinerary.

Finally, students were asked to provide information about further training they may be receiving in relation with English language competences or CLIL, and to rate the complementary training offered by the University. More specifically, students were asked to rate the Bilingual Open Workshops (BOW) offered once a month at the University. Also, they were questioned about what type of complementary training would suit them best.

4. Results

4.1. General questions and English level

The participants were 22 women and 1 male, all taking their second year in the Bilingual itinerary for the Infant Teacher Training Degree. Except for one, all participants considered their level appropriate to follow the lessons. The one participant who considered their level to be less than sufficient pointed specifically to their level of understanding.

4.2. Areas of improvement

When asked to evaluate their own sense of having improved their English, the majority of participants felt that all their language skills in English had improved in all areas, although in some cases one or two students declined to respond to some of the questions. In terms of language structures, most participants expressed a sense of improvement. Regarding vocabulary, 91.3% asserted that it had increased. A further 78.3% believed that their grammar had improved, with 13% feeling that it had remained the same and 8.7% being unsure of whether it had improved or not.

With respect to comprehension, students felt on the whole that they had made gains in both written and oral understanding. Regarding comprehension of written texts, 82.6% believed that this had improved with 8.7% stating that it had stayed the same. In addition, 87% stated that their oral comprehension had improved with 4.3% (1 student) believing they had not progressed in this area. The majority of participants also perceived improvements in their productive skills. Indeed, 78.3% considered that their written English had improved and 13% that it remained unchanged. Moreover, 82.6% felt that their oral expression in English was improved with 8.7% feeling that it had stayed the same.

Regarding the level of English participants expected to reach by the end of their degree, their responses were perhaps optimistic. Some 21.7% expected to reach a C1 level and 78.3% expected to attain a C2 level. On the whole, students perceive that their level of English is improving as they undertake study in the CLIL programme. Whilst the level they expect to attain on completing their degree is perhaps unrealistic in some cases, interestingly, it seems to demonstrate students' faith in the CLIL programme. After all, their high expectations are surely based at least to some degree on their experience thus far. Between 78.3% and 91.3% of participants express improvements in each of the language areas and expect these gains to continue over the course of their degree.

4.3. Comparison between Spanish subjects and CLIL subjects

When asked to compare subjects taken in Spanish and CLIL subjects, 91.3% of the participants consider that they are asked to participate more in CLIL classes. Only 8.7% (2 students) considers that, quite the contrary, participation is reduced in the classes conducted through English.

About attention, 95.7% of the participants consider that they are asked to be more attentive during CLIL lessons. Only one student considers that his/her attention is equivalent in both cases, and nobody has stated that CLIL lessons demand for less attention.

In relation to interaction, 87% of the participants consider that CLIL lessons demand for more interaction whereas 13% state that participation is equivalent in both cases. Nobody considered that there is less participation in CLIL lessons.

Finally, regarding creativity, all participants except one (95.7%) state that there is more creativity required in CLIL lessons than in Spanish lessons. The student who disagrees with this idea, supports the view that creativity is equally demanded in both cases. Nobody considers that creativity is less required in CLIL lessons.

All in all, it seems that a CLIL approach makes students be more active in class. They generally consider they need to be more participative, attentive, active and creative.

4.4. Methodology

When asked to compare the methodology used in CLIL subjects and that used in Spanish subjects, the majority of students tended to notice and highlight differences. 78.3% claimed that they were made to reflect more than in Spanish subjects, whereas 21.7% thought that they actually reflected less in CLIL subjects. A little over half, 56.5%, felt that there was more room for dialogue and discussion in CLIL subjects with 30.4% making no distinction and 13% feeling there was less dialogue and discussion than in Spanish subjects.

In line with our expectations about how a variety of activities, groupings and cooperative or collaborative tasks are cornerstones of the CLIL classroom, a large majority of students, 87%, considered that they moved physically more in CLIL subjects. 13% did however consider that they actually moved less. Whilst 26.1% of participants considered that they related with their classmates just as much in Spanish subjects and one student (4.3%) felt they actually related less, 69.6% stated that in CLIL subjects they related with their peers more.

In terms of having increased autonomy to manage their learning, 73.9% felt that this was the case in CLIL subjects compared with Spanish subjects. Again, just one student (4.3%) felt that they had more autonomy in Spanish subjects and 21.7% made no distinction between CLIL and Spanish subjects in this respect. Where students saw less of a difference between the two modes was in being able to participate in making decisions about activities. In this question, 43% felt that this was truer of CLIL subjects than Spanish subjects, but 47.8% believed that there was no difference and 8.7% felt they participated more in decision-making in Spanish subjects.

Overall, the participants made various distinctions between the subjects they were taking in Spanish or with a CLIL approach. They perceived that CLIL subjects are more conducive to reflecting on their learning, moving physically, relating with their classmates and managing their learning in a more autonomous way. To a lesser degree, they tended to feel that they were able to enter more in dialogue and discussion, but did not believe strongly that CLIL subjects allowed them to participate more in making decisions about activities than Spanish subjects.

4.5. Classroom Dynamics

We were interested in discovering how participants felt about the overall way of working in the bilingual subjects. Here the 23 students were almost unanimous in responding positively. Twenty-two of the twenty-three felt that the way of working made them reflect upon how they could apply the way of working in their own classes as future bilingual teachers. The other participant stated that they liked the way of working, but did not see how it could be applied in the infant or primary classroom. None of the students chose the further options of finding the approach neither positive nor useful, or not having thought about how it could be applied in schools. These responses are extremely encouraging because they show that students have positive feelings towards the bilingual programme and are being challenged to think about how their involvement in it might help them apply a CLIL approach in their future as bilingual teachers.

4.6. Difficulty

Students were asked about whether or not they found more difficulties in the CLIL subjects than in the Spanish subjects. We supposed that students may find the former problematic, as they have the added difficulty of being taught through a foreign language. 13% of students consider this to be the case. 87% stated that CLIL subjects were not more difficult than Spanish subjects.

The degree of difficulty may not be linked to the fact of introducing a foreign language, but to other factors. To find out about this, we asked students who answered NO to indicate which the difficulties they had were. One student indicated that it was more difficult to study in English than doing it in Spanish. Another commented on the difficulty of learning specific terminology a subject involved. Finally, a student complained of the "language factor", saying that although they may understand the contents, they cannot obtain the maximum mark if the language used is not correct.

4.7. CLIL

Students were asked if they knew about the methodological approach which is being implemented in their classes, that is, Content and Language Integrated Learning. We were curious about whether students only knew it as a theoretical construct or if they were able

to identify it in the practice inside the classroom. 91.3% of the participants stated that they knew what CLIL was and could identify it as a common practice in the classroom. Only one student said that he/she could recognize it as a theoretical concept, but not in practice. Nobody commented on not being able to explain what CLIL is.

This means that students taking the second course are already able to identify the approach which is being used. This is essential, as our project tries to benefit from the “loop input” (Woodward, 1991), giving students the chance to experience an approach they can then take to their schools once they start their professional careers as teachers.

4.8. Their feelings

Students were given four options which we anticipated might be true regarding their feelings about the opportunity of studying on the bilingual degree. They were able to choose multiple options in this section of the questionnaire. A pleasing 69.6% felt privileged to be studying on the bilingual degree and felt that the training they are receiving is somehow superior to that of those studying solely in Spanish. The remaining 30.4% were satisfied with the training they receive, but felt that, while it was certainly different, it was not necessarily better than that received by their Spanish counterparts. Eight of the participants (34.8%) felt that the bilingual degree provided them with an added challenge and more complex training. Four of the students (17.4%) admitted to being concerned that the subjects delivered in English could be difficult and require a great deal of effort on their part.

4.9. Perceptions of the monolingual students' feelings

Becoming part of a bilingual group has also some intricacies at an emotional level. Students are sharing some subjects taught in Spanish with a group of students who have not chosen the bilingual itinerary. We wanted to find out if the relationship with the Spanish group was smooth, and if they have special feelings about how their counterparts considered the bilingual classes. To do so, we offered the students the possibility of choosing from a variety of feelings, and encouraged them to choose as many of them they needed to describe this situation. Students generally felt that those taking the Spanish option are curious about what the bilingual itinerary implies (47.8% of the participants state so). Nine out of the 23 participants (39.1%) stated that the other group does not have any special feeling. Only 17.4% thought that the Spanish group admire the bilingual group, and

13% chose “envy” as the predominate feeling of the Spanish group. One student indicated that all the feelings included in the optional answers could be true.

4.10. Training outside

According to the input hypothesis established by Krashen (1981), students would be able to develop a better competence in the foreign language if they had a larger exposure to English. We wanted to find out if students taking the bilingual degree were committed to improving their English level by doing more activities apart from coming to class. Surprisingly, only 34.8% (8 participants) of the students are involved in any type of English training. 6 students indicated they were enrolled in the language courses offered in our institutions (B2-B2.2 levels). One student indicated that he/she was learning English in a private language school in her town. The other person who stated that he/she was learning English outside did not specify where.

It seems paradoxical that almost 80% of the participants expect to reach a C2 level of English at the end of their studies, when they do not seem to devote any time to extending their training in the language outside the university lessons. As Papaja (2012: 31) puts it: “At the beginning of the CLIL course the learners are very excited about learning subjects in the foreign language but they are unaware of the demands that will be placed on them.”

4.11. Bow workshops

Throughout the academic course 2011/2012 students had the chance to attend a series of workshops on bilingual education (Bilingual Open Workshops). They were offered in the afternoon and at reduced prices so that students could get extra training. As students’ attendance to these events was low at the time of delivering the survey, we wanted to find out the reasons why they were not interested in this, and any relevant comment they wished to make.

It came as a surprise that 34.8% of the participants state that they did not have information about these workshops, even when they were advertised using posters, leaflets, as well as media such as Facebook or the website of the Bilingual Project. 21.7% stated that the main reason for not having attended the previous sessions was the lack of time, and the overlapping of these sessions with the British Council courses. 8.7% (2 participants) stated that the programme was not interesting for them (mainly because talks did not specify whether they were directed to infant education or not). This information will help us find better ways to advertise and promote training courses.

4.12. Complementary training

In the interests of catering to the needs of students on the bilingual degree, we felt it important to canvass their ideas on the kind of complementary training they would wish to receive, beyond what was already being offered. The most popular type of training was online courses aimed at improving their English language skill, selected by 52.2% of the participants. Ten students (43.5%) favoured online courses aimed at discovering further teaching strategies for bilingual education and ten students also suggested drama classes in English in the afternoons. Other options suggested were unpopular, with only two students showing interest in sessions related to the cultures of English-speaking countries and none being interested in an afternoon reading club. Two students did have suggestions of their own, however. They coincided in believing that the Erasmus programme should be improved, allowing them to develop their English abroad. They also believed that greater contact with children was required, either in the form of workshops or teaching practice in schools.

5. Conclusions

The results of this study are certainly encouraging on several levels. Whilst the original purpose was not limited to analyzing student satisfaction, this does seem to be high. In linguistic terms, they perceive that their level of English has improved due to increased exposure to the language. This was perhaps to be expected, but their responses also reveal a great deal more than general satisfaction. For instance, although the differences are slight, a higher proportion of students felt that both their comprehension and production through the oral medium had improved than through the written medium. Perhaps then a greater and more explicit emphasis on both understanding and producing texts is worth pursuing, especially as this awareness might feed into their future work in developing literacy with young learners. It is also clear that students' expectations with regards to their language acquisition perhaps need to be managed. Although their high expectations are a vote of confidence for the programme, they are rather unrealistic especially given that paradoxically many are doing little beyond their university classes to develop their language proficiency. It might be wise then both to promote and facilitate further study of English outside the university timetable. Nevertheless, it does appear that students' needs in overcoming the inherent challenge of studying through a foreign language are largely being met. Almost 35% felt that studying in English implied an added challenge, yet 87% stated that CLIL subjects were not more difficult than subjects taught in Spanish.

Concerning the CLIL approach, students' perceptions are also reassuring. Some felt that they related with their peers more and were more autonomous in CLIL classes and the vast majority believed they were required to be more participative, attentive, interactive and creative. These are adjectives that teachers of any level anywhere would surely like to apply to a group of their students. As educators these are favourable conditions and a CLIL approach not only requires them, but also seemingly helps to create them. More importantly perhaps, given that we are training future teachers, is the assertion by over 78% of the students that they are asked to reflect more in CLIL lessons. This process of reflection fosters metacognition and is of particular value to prospective educators when considering how they will have a responsibility to develop cognition in their learners. We feel encouraged then that the loop input is working, but also have to be cautious. Over 90% of students said that they knew what CLIL is and were able to recognize it in practice in the subjects taught through English. This indicates that the overwhelming majority of students believe they know what CLIL is, but it is not clear to what degree their ideas would coincide with a generally accepted theoretical framework. This is something that may need to be dealt with more explicitly and assessed in some way in order to be more confident that the loop is working effectively.

Although the programme can be deemed thus far an overall success, it is certainly worth paying heed to the minority opinions amongst the responses as we seek further to improve the bilingual degrees. One example is the student who mentioned the "language" factor involved in assessment, raising a very legitimate concern. We must try to ensure that language is not an obstacle to a student demonstrating what they know and should also make explicit how we attempt to achieve this so that they too can apply similar principles in the future. In fact, drawing attention more explicitly to several elements of the approach is a recurring theme and would also aid students such as the one who responded that they liked the way of working, but did not see how it could be applied in the infant or primary classroom. Likewise, a small minority of students believed that certain areas of their linguistic competence in English had not improved. This tends to run contrary to what their lecturers have observed. It may be a positive step to develop ways in which we can make students aware of their own learning and progression in this aspect through formative assessment, which would surely be motivating for them. It is also clear that complementary training offered until now has not been exploited by students. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of them do assert that online courses in English language and teaching strategies for bilingual education would be of benefit. This is something that needs to be reevaluated in order to cater better for their training needs.

Based on the empirical evidence obtained, our research suggests that students' perceptions of the Bilingual Infant Teacher Training Degree are extremely positive. They feel that

there is an added challenge in their studies, but also an added value in overcoming that challenge. They are aware that they are not only learning about the CLIL approach, but also experiencing it at the same time as they develop their language proficiency in English. They have also revealed however that there are elements of the programme which can still be optimised and provide us with clues on how to continue improving the implementation of CLIL studies in Higher Education. Continued monitoring through further studies of this type will also serve to ensure that training is increasingly effective.

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Appendix 7

Cuestionario para estudiantes de 2º curso (Magisterio Ed. Infantil) Itinerario Bilingüe. Junio 2012	
Eres: <input type="checkbox"/> Hombre <input type="checkbox"/> Mujer	
¿Consideras que tu nivel de inglés te está permitiendo seguir las clases adecuadamente? <input type="checkbox"/> Sí <input type="checkbox"/> No	
¿Qué nivel de inglés esperas alcanzar al finalizar el Grado? <input type="checkbox"/> B1 Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> B2 Upper Intermediate <input type="checkbox"/> C1 Advanced <input type="checkbox"/> C2 Proficiency	
¿En comparación con el primer curso, ¿cómo valoras tu progreso en...?	
Gramática	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Vocabulario	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor

Las asignaturas bilingües, en comparación con las impartidas en español,	
Te hacen reflexionar...	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Te permiten dialogar y discutir	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Te permiten moverte físicamente	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Te permiten relacionarte con todos los compañeros de clase	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Te dan autonomía para gestionar tu aprendizaje	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
Te permiten participar en las decisiones de las actividades	<input type="checkbox"/> Menor <input type="checkbox"/> Igual <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor
La manera de trabajar en las asignaturas bilingües... <input type="checkbox"/> No te gusta ni te parece útil para aplicarla en infantil o primaria <input type="checkbox"/> Te hace pensar sobre cómo puedes aplicar lo mismo en el aula bilingüe en infantil o primaria. <input type="checkbox"/> Te parece bien, pero no ves cómo puedes aplicarla en el aula bilingüe en infantil y primaria. <input type="checkbox"/> No habías pensado en este tema hasta ahora. <input type="checkbox"/> Otras respuestas:	
¿Encuentras más dificultades en las asignaturas bilingües que en las impartidas en español? <input type="checkbox"/> Sí. <input type="checkbox"/> No. <input type="checkbox"/> Otras respuestas y comentarios.	
¿Sabes lo que es CLIL? <input type="checkbox"/> Sí, en la teoría y también lo veo reflejado en la práctica de las clases. <input type="checkbox"/> Sí, sólo en la teoría <input type="checkbox"/> No. Comentarios:	

Ante la oportunidad de cursar un grado bilingüe, te sientes...

- Desafiado, creo que la formación es más compleja y supone un reto para mí.
- Privilegiado, creo que estoy recibiendo una formación superior que la de los grupos en español.
- Satisfecho, creo que la formación es diferente, pero no necesariamente mejor.
- Asustado, creo que puede resultar difícil e implicar mucho más esfuerzo por mi parte.
- Otro:

Qué crees que sienten los estudiantes de grado en español hacia los estudiantes del itinerario bilingüe:

- Admiración
- Envidia
- Curiosidad
- Nada en especial
- Otros:

¿Estás recibiendo formación en inglés fuera de las clases?

- Sí, con el British Council en esta universidad.
- Sí, en academias privadas.
- Sí, en otra institución (indícala, por favor)
- No
- Otro:

Durante este curso se han ofertado talleres sobre CLIL en el programa BOW (Bilingual Open Workshops), si no has asistido a ninguno de ellos, indica las razones:

- Falta de tiempo
- Temas poco interesantes
- Precio muy alto
- Falta de información
- Otros y comentarios:

¿Qué tipo de formación complementaria te gustaría que nuestro centro te ofreciera?

- Clases de inglés presenciales
- Clases de inglés on-line
- Sesiones con recursos, estrategias y técnicas sobre CLIL
- Teatro
- Clases de conversación
- Otras: