

A PRESTIGIOUS IMPOSITION: FROM MULTILINGUALISM TO ENGLISH CLIL

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ABSTRACT

Along its history English has had to overcome many obstacles to achieve the prestige it holds today. Its submission to the Classical and other vernacular languages is a matter of the past. In spite of the omnipresence of the word multilingualism in the European legislation, English maintains its position as the first foreign language learnt. The purpose of this paper is to discern if the European linguistic policies have somehow contributed to this fact. By analysing documents issued by the European Commission as well as others it has funded, it is shown that multilingualism is actually in decay. Furthermore, considering reports on Spain and specifically the Canary Islands, it can be revealed that CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), rather than favouring multilingualism as it was once suggested by the EU, has promoted the use of English-Only in public classrooms occupied by selected students. Though it is not the objective of this paper to evaluate CLIL as method, a final concern is manifested when it might become a tool of segregation. Hence, if multilingualism needs a serious reconsideration, the use of English as a lingua franca does too.

KEYWORDS: multilingualism, European Commission, linguistic policies, English-Only, CLIL, Spain, Canary Islands.

RESUMEN

A lo largo de su historia la lengua inglesa ha tenido que sortear muchos obstáculos antes de llegar a alcanzar el prestigio del que goza hoy en día. Su sometimiento a las lenguas clásicas o a otras vernáculos europeas es ya una cuestión del pasado. A pesar de la omnipresencia del término multilingüismo en la normativa europea, el inglés mantiene su posición como primera lengua extranjera. El propósito de este trabajo es discernir si las políticas lingüísticas europeas han contribuido de alguna manera a otorgarle esta posición. El análisis de documentos elaborados por la Comisión Europea así como otros realizados con el apoyo de la misma muestran que el multilingüismo está en receso. Es más, al estudiar informes sobre España y concretamente de las Islas Canarias, puede señalarse que el sistema AICLE (Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras, CLIL en sus siglas en inglés), más que favorecer el multilingüismo como sugería la Unión Europea, ha servido para promover el uso de “solo inglés” en aulas ocupadas por alumnos preseleccionados. Aunque no es el objetivo de este trabajo, evaluar AICLE como método, cabe manifestar la preocupación de que este pudiera convertirse en una forma de segregación. De aquí que, si bien el multilingüismo necesita ser reconsiderado seriamente, el uso del inglés como lengua franca más aún.

PALABRAS CLAVE: multilingüismo, Comisión europea, políticas lingüísticas, “solo inglés”, AICLE, España, Islas Canarias.



1. INTRODUCTION

Along history, English speakers have struggled first to accept their vernacular as a valid source of communication and then to convince every other speaker that it was the most valid language for international communication. As already stated in this volume and in previous works (among others: Lass 6-9, Leith, 48 and recently Sutherland 26-34) from the end of the Middle Ages onwards many English middle class families demanded for their children's education the use of a language they could command and abandon Latin as a vehicular language; nowadays many Spanish families (and from other nationalities too) consider English is a *must* for their children and search best forms for them to use a language which, quite often they, as parents, do not master themselves.

The "supremacy" of English goes without discussion (Crystal, *English as a global*; Graddol, *The Future of English?*, *English Next*) except when combined with the concepts of *variety of English*, *lingua franca*, *Globish*, *linguistic imperialism*... Maybe in Spain the discussion of *what* should be learnt is still secondary (in spite of factors like the growing numbers of Spanish speakers¹) as compared to the sensed need of learning "THE language".

In the last decades, many European articles about learning foreign languages have used as their starting point the European policy of implementing second languages acquisition. The "White Paper on education and training. Teaching and learning - Towards a learning society" issued in 1995 by the E.U, focused on multilingualism as part of the European identity and citizenship, with the intention of promoting the proficiency in three community languages. That paper underlined the importance of an early introduction to foreign languages at school and encouraged the use of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) as the most adequate form of introducing language learning in the curriculum:

In order to make for proficiency in three Community languages, it is desirable for foreign language learning to start at pre-school level. It seems essential for such teaching to be placed on a systematic footing in primary education, with the learning of a second Community foreign language starting in secondary school. It could even be argued that secondary school pupils should study certain subjects in the first foreign language learned, as is the case in the European schools. (47).

Nonetheless, in the same text it was already regretted that the learning of three Community languages was a commitment which Member States limited when added the words: "if possible" (47).

CLIL was meant to be a method to support multilingualism, which in turn would sustain that principle of the Treaty on The European Union in its article 3 (17): "It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced". CLIL was not supposed

¹ See Instituto Cervantes, Anuarios 2012, 2013.



to enhance just English, but in fact it has favoured bilingualism and diluted the policy of the European Union to sustain linguistic diversity. At least that seems to be the situation in Spain.

The aim of this paper is twofold: first we will try to show, through the documents and information provided by the European Union, how the multilingualism policy remains quite often in a declaration of intents; second it will be shown how CLIL, which was supposed to support the previous multilingual policy, has become identified with the main tool of a mollified “mono-bilingual” education in Spain, especially in the Canary Islands, thus, assuming the prestige of English. This promotion, though far from favouring multilingualism, might be considered by many legitimate, given the current linguistic globalization, but it is at the least disquieting when it may produce as a collateral effect the segregation of students.

In order to achieve these purposes, in the next two sections the concept of multilingualism within the European Union will be exposed leading to the relation between multilingualism and CLIL. The fourth section presents data obtained from an external evaluation of CLIL in the Canary Islands and questionnaires applied to a small group of university students; these data will be discussed to reach some conclusions in section five.

2. MULTILINGUALISM

In 2006 the Commission’s multilingualism policy (EUR-lex c11084 – EN “Framework strategy for multilingualism”) presented three aims:

1. Encourage language learning and promote linguistic diversity in society.
2. Promote a healthy multilingual economy.
3. Give citizens access to European Union legislation, procedures and information in their own languages.

Starting from the third aim, the official website of the European Union, EUROPA, states that European citizens have the right to consult and receive information in their own mother tongue. Thus, legislation & key political documents, official documents which are legally binding, and general information are to be published in all EU official languages. To this ideal panorama, restrictions start appearing: when the documents are not legally binding, they are usually published in English, French and German; when the information is considered “urgent or short-lived” it might appear initially in a single language; specialized information may also appear in a few languages or just one, “the choice depends on the target audience” (EUROPA website (2015)). These limitations are explained by making users aware of the costs of maintaining such policy:



With a permanent staff of 1,750 linguists and 600 support staff, the Commission has one of the largest translation services in the world, bolstered by a further 600 full-time and 3,000 freelance interpreters. In order to reduce the cost to the tax payer, the European Commission aims to provide visitors with web content either in their own language or in one they can understand, depending on their real needs. This language policy will be applied as consistently as possible across the new web presence. An evidence-based, user-focused approach will be used to decide whether many language versions are required or not.

Though it may be true that not all European citizens will read every single publication of the EU, this procedure comes to reinforce the idea most “ordinary people” have: if you want to reach the higher levels of society you must speak English, an idea that makes them search for “bilingual schools” or private lessons that reinforce the language their children should learn at school.

An interesting, though *working document* only published in English, is “Language Competences for Employability, Mobility and Growth. Accompanying the document Communication From [sic] the Commission Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes”. In this Commission’s analysis and recommendations there is mention of the poor results in language learning and also how (my emphasis):

English is becoming de facto the first foreign language. It is the most taught foreign language, both in Europe and globally, and it plays a key role in daily life – **but: it is proficiency in more than one foreign language that will make a decisive difference in the future.** This calls for language policies and strategies inspired by a clear vision of the value of language skills for mobility and employability.

The same document indicates that the lack of sufficient linguistic skills affects not only the mobility and integration of workers but also their safety when, for example instructions cannot be followed properly (3.1). This can be linked with a need highlighted by the European Commission supporting language diversity in Europe: “It is also essential to ensure that languages are not a barrier to participation in society, and that marginalized language groups can be identified, represented, and included in society.” (“Languages in education”). After all, and according to the Commission’s Eurobarometer of 2012 (“Special Eurobarometer 393”), Europeans consider that the highest levels of discrimination are related to ethnic origin, and language is no doubt part of it. In present times this perception must have increased given the socio-economic problems of the Union and neighbourly conflicts which have derived in new migrant waves. A second aim of a “healthy multilingual economy” seems difficult to achieve.

Multilingualism is certainly coupled with multiculturalism but whereas the first still maintains an apparent value, the latter seems to be out of question. According to authors like Ossewaarde, most relevant political figures in Europe have claimed that “multiculturalist policies have failed, and resulted in social exclusion



and cultural segregation” (173). Giving support to the original culture of immigrants apparently obstructs their assimilation into the recipient country. That primary ideal of the integration of different cultures to favour migrants, especially Muslims, clashed with monoculturalist defendants that grew together with an anti-Islam populism.

The death of multiculturalism discourse reached a certain climax in 2010–2011, but since then political entrepreneurs have lost some media attention. Although the media discourse certainly continues newspapers have appeared a little bit less willing to communicate cultural imperialist messages. Newspapers seem a little bit less concerned with Muslims now (by the end of 2013) than they were in 2010–2011. Newspapers have found themselves new priorities, particularly the Eurozone crisis and the possible influx of migrants from Southern Europe hit by mass unemployment and austerity measures (Ossewaarde 186).

In December 2014, the conservative party Christian Social Union (CSU), part of the coalition government in Berlin, issued the proposal that was basically reported as: “people wanting permanent residency ‘should be urged to speak German in public and in the family’” (*The Guardian*). Although, because of the criticism and mockery received, they had to backtrack on their discourse this was not essentially different from what the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) said in a study on *Jobs for Immigrants* published in 2007 with respect to the school performance of the children of immigrants in Germany (227) as compared with what happened in communitarian and extra-communitarian countries (my emphasis):

However, the remaining differences, after controlling for the socio-economic background, appear to be largely **due to the fact that less well performing persons of the second generation do not speak German at home**. This is surprising since, in principle, the share of the second generation which does not speak the national language is not higher than in other OECD countries.²⁵ A recent econometric study (Schnepf, 2004) analyzed the OECD’s PISA study and other international evaluations of pupils (PIRLS, TIMSS) 26 with respect to the determinants of their educational achievement.

The difference lays on the advice given by the OECD, that children should be exposed and trained in the German language from kindergarten, facilitating immigrants’ children attendance to these pre-school stages. Nevertheless, this does not seem to be a policy in harmony with multilingualism when considering that speaking your mother tongue at home has a “negative impact”:

Moreover, kindergarten and primary schooling are generally only half-time. This may explain why the effect of a foreign language spoken at home has a stronger negative impact on students’ educational outcomes than in other countries. Language training should thus be systematically integrated into the kindergarten activities, and ideally be offered also after the half-day kindergarten (OECD 242)

Concerned with the education of children and young people with a migrant background, the EU launched a project called SIRIUS (2012-2014). This project was



in turn connected and funded by the by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. Its web, TV channel, Facebook, its policy brief exposing “The importance of language proficiency among pupils”, insist on the importance of multilingualism in and out of the EU: “[a]t European level the recommendations on language support to children and youngsters with a migrant background by European Institutions also emphasize the importance of providing teaching of languages of the host country for migrants while exploring the ways to respect and value the languages of their country of origin” (2). However, except for Austria and Sweden, most countries present one difficulty or another (amount and varied origin of immigrants, lack of preparation of teachers, no funding...) to implement the good practices that the Commission reiterates. In the case of Spain the SIRIUS policy brief by Siarova and Essomba (7) states:

In other cases, these difficulties are rooted on a homogeneous approach to culture. In Spain, diversities are respected but there was a monolingual policy before. It is with democracy that the system became decentralized so that regions could adapt the national school system according to their own cultural specificities. This happened only three decades ago

It might be true that the Spanish political past has had an influence on the present linguistic views, though it might be wondered if it also has something to do with the prestige given to the English language. According to Roith (203) it is right the opposite:

During the Franco dictatorship education-policy-makers did not consider foreign language learning as a priority for Spanish students, given this tradition of imperial thinking [...] Today, Spain is making efforts to enhance language teaching in state schools, especially in the context of EU recommendations and the Bologna reforms. All autonomous communities within Spain have tried to establish as many bilingual or trilingual schools as possible, but the results, especially relating to the teaching of oral comprehension, are still very poor compared to other European countries. The situation has changed in the last years, but it is still a common phenomenon that only 10 out of 70 students in a university course consider themselves linguistically prepared to follow a lesson in English, and this despite of the introduction of bilingual schools and the obligation to take a test in English at the university access exams.

The improvement of the Spanish English proficiency is also recorded by the EF EPI (Education First company and its English Proficiency Index), that publishes rankings where Spain occupies the 20th position among 63 world countries and the 17th position as compared to the rest of Europe (including Ukraine, Turkey and Russia, that is, out of 24 countries). The studies of EF indicate Spanish adults’ proficiency in English has improved in the last seven years though it would still be classified as *moderate proficiency*, right in the middle of the *very high*, *high*, *low* and *very low* of other countries. For many, this improvement is the result of multilingual policies enhanced in public schools in Spain and related with CLIL.



3. MULTILINGUALISM AND CLIL

Eurydice, a network dependent on the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) in turn, another unit of the EU Commission, published a survey (2005) on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at school in Europe. In the very preface it is stated that “[m]ultilingualism is at the very heart of European identity”, curiously enough this report was published in “just” English and French, probably because of its own findings:

Close examination of CLIL target languages (Figure 1.4) reveals that English, French and German are the most widespread foreign target languages in countries in which provision is in one or several foreign languages. Seven countries (Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden) provide scope for trilingual CLIL provision combining the national language and two foreign languages (Spain and Latvia), or the national language, a foreign language and a minority language (Estonia, Latvia, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden). (18)

In spite of the inclusion of Spain among those countries offering three languages, namely English and French plus Spanish itself, most people, even scholars, assume that when talking about CLIL the only possibility is English.

A recent (2012) and methodical publication of the British Council (edited by Extra and Yagmur) fostered by the European Commission (with disclaimers) analyzes the multilingual situation in different European countries. In the case of Spain three main cities (Madrid, Valencia, Sevilla) and two communities (Catalonia and the Basque Country) are studied. Although with regard to the whole country’s context it is asserted that “[m]ultilingualism is not a new issue for Spanish people as four out of every ten Spaniards live in communities with more than one official language”², it is also added that “regional languages are not promoted or taught in other regions, leaving the initiative to regional clubs or academies” (194). Not only that but “[i]n the business sector, Catalan moves to third position, behind Castilian and business English, and is followed at a considerable distance by other European languages, mostly those of tourists and European residents” (206). For the Basque Country, English is again the first foreign language offered. Basque is parents’ main choice as instruction language at school but according to the same study (211):

The main problem concerning school is that children whose first language is Spanish identify Basque mainly with homework. They give up speaking Basque as soon as they are outside school. [...] Nevertheless, as mentioned above, school has become crucial in the revitalisation of the language

² Other non-official languages at the state level are mentioned like *Bable* (Asturias) or Aranés (Aran valley in Catalonia), but their position is quite compromised nowadays though making great efforts to obtain higher recognition and survive



The Eurydice report for 2012 presents in its annex II the high numbers of primary and secondary schools in Spain which offer CLIL.

Instruction in two different languages and the ISCED levels concerned				Number of schools providing CLIL according to the language pair and ISCED level(s) concerned (+ reference year)							
Language status	Names of the languages concerned	ISCED Level									
			1	2	1 + 2	3	2 + 3	1 + 2 + 3	Reference year		
ES	1 state language + 1 foreign language	Spanish-English / Spanish-French / Spanish-Italian / Spanish-German / Spanish-Portuguese	1-3	1706				948			2010/11
	1 state language + 1 minority/regional language with official language status	Spanish-Basque	1-3	73				19			2010/11
		Spanish-Catalan	1-3	2430				1036			2010/11
		Spanish-Galician	1-3	662		187		398			2010/11
		Spanish-Valencian	1-3						2062		2010/11
	1 state language + 1 minority/regional language with official language status + 1 foreign language	Spanish-Basque-English or French	1-3	3				4			2010/11
		Spanish-Catalan-English or French or German	1-3	273				148	160		2010/11
		Spanish-Galician-English or French or Portuguese	1-3						351		2010/11
		Spanish-Valencian-English or French	1-3	283				57			2010/11

Figure 1. Eurydice report 2012: Spain extract from annex II

According to the information provided, schools are counted as many times as combinations of languages offered, so it is difficult to know from the total how many teach exactly which languages. In the case of the regional languages these are only taught in their communities. It is also worthy of mention that the concept used for CLIL has also “evolved” from that first Eurydice report in 2006 to that of 2012, the latter includes bilingual schools and schools that work with a third language, one being the regional, the third group found in the language status column from the extract of the annex II above. Thus, the definitions found in the glossary of the first and the second report:

CLIL: Acronym of ‘Content and Language Integrated Learning’. This survey covers the use of at least two languages to teach various subjects in the curriculum, one of which is the language used in mainstream education (generally the official state language), and the other a target language (which may be a foreign language, a regional or minority language, or another official state language), independently of language lessons in their own right (the aim of which is not content and language integrated learning) (Eurydice 2006, 61).

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning).

CLIL is the acronym for ‘Content and Language Integrated Learning’. This acronym is used as a general term to designate different types of bilingual or immersion education. It is necessary to distinguish two types of CLIL on the basis of the languages used to teach non-language subjects (subjects other than languages and their literature/culture):



Type A. Provision where non-language subjects are taught through a ► foreign language (status conferred in the central curriculum). The number of non-language subjects taught through the foreign language may vary according to schools and countries. In some schools (case 1), all non-language subjects, are taught through the foreign language. In others (case 2), some non-language subjects are taught through the foreign language and others through the language of the governing or administrative body of the school. In this latter case, two languages are thus used to teach non-language subjects of the curriculum.

Type B. Provision where non-language subjects are taught through a ► regional and/or minority language or a ► non-territorial language or a ► state language in countries with more than one state language, and a second language, which may be any other language. In short, in these schools, the non-language subjects are always taught through two languages. In a very few schools, in addition to these two languages, a third is used to teach non-language subjects. The three languages include a minority and/or regional language, a state language and a foreign language (Eurydice 2012, 137).

The second definition is more convenient for Spain because of the communities whose languages have obtained official recognition; however, with the exception of Spanish-Catalan schools, the figures show higher numbers for combinations with foreign languages, correspondingly, in the whole Europe, there is evidence that the balance is still inclined towards English:

English is a mandatory language in 14 countries or regions within countries (see Figure B13). It is by far the most taught foreign language in nearly all countries at all educational levels. Trends since 2004/05 show an increase in the percentage of pupils learning English at all educational levels, and particularly at primary level (see Figures C4 and C10). In 2009/10, on average, 73 % of pupils enrolled in primary education in the EU were learning English [...] In 2009/10, the percentage of pupils learning languages other than English, French, Spanish, German or Russian was below 5 % in most countries, and in a significant number the percentage was less than 1 % (Eurydice 2012, 11).

The prestige acquired by this language in Spain is such that parents demand extra-tuition for their children on this language as well as public language schools with extra hours devoted to English. Central and Community governments try to satisfy this demand (that somehow they have also nurtured) through the implementation of CLIL in primary and secondary schools. Concerning the achievements of CLIL itself or/and bilingual schools there is, nevertheless, a certain controversy, see recent (Nuez, May 2015) blog articles like “El Timo de la Enseñanza Bilingüe en la Comunidad de Madrid” and the debate created among its readers. Basically, parents consider the general knowledge children should acquire at early stages might be compromised because of a lack of command of the vehicular language, nearly always: English. Whether the use of English might be to the detriment of other languages and cultures is apparently less questioned or timidly done (my emphasis):

El equipo de profesores que lidera el proyecto considera que el AICLE no solo contribuye a mejorar competencias en inglés del alumnado, sino que posee un fuerte carácter empoderador y mejora la autoestima de todos los alumnos y de sus familias. Sin embargo



se teme que un programa más intensivo en inglés (una asignatura a lo largo de toda la secundaria, por ejemplo) podría afectar al desarrollo del catalán y castellano como lenguas de uso académico (Escobar-Urmeneta, 211)

In pragmatic terms, the hedging used to talk about possible side-effects of a *more intensive English programme* contrasts with the boosters used to show the CLIL benefits: *not only* improving the students' competences *but also* providing *empowerment* and *improving the self-esteem of students and families*. This is an aspect that needs reflection on since we would be talking of power and high self-esteem which usually do not pair well with equality and sharing. Even more when not all students are admitted in CLIL programmes.

Since 1992 Phillipson has dealt thoroughly with “linguistic imperialism” and answered criticisms that ascribed his work to conspiracy theories (Spolky, Language policy; Phillipson, “Linguistic imperialism: a conspiracy”), this author (*English-only Europe?*, 7) questions if a certain hierarchy of languages is evolving in Europe as it happened in former colonies of Asia where English is “the key medium for prestigious purposes” and its use correlates with socio-economic privilege. This seems to be the case in Spain and in the Canary Islands where parents consider the level of English their children will reach without apparently reflecting on other aspects of the same or higher importance. Roith (203) states:

The ability to fluently speak a foreign language, above all English, is in Spain a clear distinguishing feature between social classes. The possibility of acquiring a satisfactory knowledge of English in a state school is relatively minimal, so that only children from families who can afford to enrol them at private language academies, or by paying for language courses in English speaking countries, have a realistic chance of mastering the language as adults. The necessary reforms of language teaching in the public education system have been initiated but much more effort will be needed, especially relating to oral comprehension and speaking, if Spain desires to reach the levels of Northern European countries

At the moment, only in the Canary Islands there are about 482 authorized public educational centres (primary and secondary schools) implementing CLIL and which clearly state this methodology refers, exclusively, to English. In the Canarian Community when searching for CLIL centers, the Consejería de Educación, as mentioned before, identifies them with learning English (my emphasis): “Centros con Programa CLIL en el cursos 2014-15 (Modalidad de aprendizaje integrado de **lengua inglesa** y contenidos de otras áreas o materias)”.

4. ENGLISH CLIL IN THE CANARY ISLANDS

It is not the objective of this paper to question how good the CLIL system might be for learning a foreign language. Though the reader may reach tangential conclusions, the main argument here is to what extent this system has helped multilingualism, as it was supposed to do when it was first proposed.

In the Canarian Community, the identification of CLIL with English is most outstanding. The previous quote may arise some doubts but the website of the Consejería de Educación answers the question *what is the CLIL programme?* as follows:



En el año 2003, la Comisión Europea adoptó un plan de acción para promover el aprendizaje de idiomas y la diversidad lingüística. Este propone la adopción a nivel europeo de una serie de medidas destinadas a apoyar las de las autoridades locales, regionales y nacionales que propicien un cambio decisivo en la promoción del aprendizaje de idiomas y la diversidad lingüística. Siguiendo estas directrices europeas, la Consejería de Educación, Universidades y Sostenibilidad del Gobierno de Canarias, a través de la Dirección General de Ordenación, Innovación y Promoción Educativa, ha promovido acciones concretas orientadas a mejorar el proceso de **aprendizaje del inglés**, favoreciendo el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa del alumnado a través de un currículo que utilice la lengua extranjera como medio de aprendizaje de contenidos de otras áreas o materias curriculares no lingüísticas.

In the Canarian Community pilot projects started as early as the academic year 2004-2005. In 2014 the Gobierno de Canarias published an external report (Frigols-Martín & Marsh), which analysed the evolution and success of CLIL in the islands although it was only from 2010 when the denomination CLIL started to be used here.

The progression of the programme depicted in the report shows the efforts that have been made to improve the use of English: from an initial primary school project, a year later secondary school was also included; non-English teachers have been asked to improve their linguistic competence from a B1 to a present day B2 in order to participate in the project, providing professionals with the help of meetings, courses, and even in 2007-2008 with the possibility of periods of stay abroad. The specific involvement of the English teachers, particularly, and the rest of the staff has always been a requisite and from 2007-2008 informing the families about “características del proyecto y de los criterios establecidos para la incorporación del alumnado” (55) was also requested.

Once reached the consolidation of the CLIL programme, according to the report in 2008-2009, the non-linguistic subjects to be taught in English were established: *Conocimiento del Medio Natural, Social y Cultural* in the first two years and *Conocimiento del Medio Natural, Social y Cultural y Educación Artística* in the final four years of primary school. The subjects for secondary school were not so clearly specified.

The number of groups per course under the CLIL umbrella is one of the aspects mentioned and how the school centres have been asked to increase them each year according to the resources (human mainly) they have. Nonetheless, the main issue is that specially in secondary school, students are pre-selected to be able to attend one of the CLIL groups. Normally they have to prove through a test a certain level of English and from 2012 the families also have to sign a compromise document whose elaboration is the responsibility of the school: “Elaborar de forma consensuada un compromiso de participación e implicación en el programa para el alumnado y las familias” (79).

The results obtained from questionnaires and their interpretation in the IV part of report are quite significant for our purpose.³ In primary school 77% of the children are in the programme because of their teachers’ decision, however the study considers

³ There are aspects that could be questioned such as the use of a 55% of Spanish to clarify doubts in CLIL subjects where more than 75% of the content was partially known by the students



this: “un resultado positivo porque demuestra que las familias han participado más en la decisión de continuar con el programa. Con un 23%, la combinación de la decisión individual y la de las familias es un resultado razonablemente positivo”. Age could be a factor to take into account, but in secondary school only a 45% of the students took the decision by themselves, knowing also that those students who attended CLIL classrooms in primary school have a preference to continue in the programme in secondary school.

According to the graphs, more than 80% of the students find it difficult to follow their subjects in English; the commentary made by the authors shows some concern (134) but still underlines the positive perception in the acquisition of linguistic skills:

Este resultado resulta preocupante. Es difícil determinar si los alumnos están diciendo que aprender a través del inglés es más difícil, que sin duda ninguna lo es, o si les cuesta avanzar como harían si estudiaran en español. Es llamativo el contraste entre la percepción con respecto a la dificultad del proceso de aprendizaje de los contenidos y la percepción con respecto a la adquisición de destrezas en la lengua, muy positiva a juzgar por las respuestas a las preguntas anteriores.

Some of the aspects mentioned before already pointed to the possibility of segregation of students but the most assertive could be the answer given by secondary students when asked whether their inclusion in the programme has meant a difficulty in relating with the rest of the students in the school. More than 80% answered it did. In this case the authors consider (136):

Este resultado resulta preocupante. Habría que indagar con mayor profundidad en qué centros, aspectos y hasta qué punto, para tomar medidas correctoras con la finalidad de evitar el efecto “dos centros en uno”.

This is a disturbing aspect that needs some sort of reflection. The journal of the Universidad Internacional de la Rioja, also includes it within the four challenges of a bilingual education, related with first, the selection of the staff; second, their training; third, the process of learning and how it may affect other subjects, and finally, the access of the students: “¿Puede entrar cualquier alumno? ¿Hay prueba de acceso? ¿Voluntaria u obligatoria para todos?” These are left as open questions for which no one seems to have a suitable answer.

Frigols-Martín and Marsh offer different proposals of improvement for CLIL in the Canary Islands at the end of their report. Nonetheless, a concern about selection is not clearly present among them, except tangentially in the following paragraph:

Considerar si la situación socioeconómica actual requiere un esfuerzo mayor por parte de los centros educativos en sus programas de inglés en lo que se refiere al desarrollo intercultural [sic] del alumnado (por ejemplo, para seguir impulsando el fomento de la tolerancia, la comprensión y las actitudes positivas hacia el otro). (154).

(99-101) and the authors comment that teachers and students need to improve their linguistic skills as well as their self-confidence. However, his would be the concern of a different type of paper.



Among the suggestions appear: increasing the information provided about the objectives of the CLIL programme; encouraging other teachers with less English fluency to join “los grupos que enseñan en lengua inglesa” (155) or searching forms of sharing the experience:

Seguir buscando maneras de compartir la experiencia (la metodología) con todo el personal, con el fin de establecer un impacto positivo en la enseñanza a través del castellano. Cualquier práctica innovadora en el centro educativo, cualquiera que sea la lengua, puede interesar y beneficiar a todos los docentes. (157)

A final suggestion to the government is:

Plantear de manera consistente la idea de establecer el programa CLIL como algo más que un simple proyecto, hasta formular la educación bilingüe como el modelo vigente de educación reglada para las Islas Canarias. (160)

If there were any doubts about the reference Spanish-English when talking about bilingual education, another suggestion comes to clarify this (my emphasis):

Realizar un análisis de **coste-beneficio del programa en lengua inglesa**, si aún no está disponible, que comunique el valor del mismo, comunique con los principales grupos de interés, y potencie la sostenibilidad a largo plazo. Lo probable es que los costes disminuyan tras la fase inicial de desarrollo, y un análisis de estas características puede guiar la toma correcta de decisiones por parte de [sic] las administración educativa. (161).

The Canary Islands have a reasonable offer of languages schools and academies that offer other languages different than English but reading this report it seems that multilingualism is completely out of question in terms of community policies.

It seems clear that further reports will be necessary in the future and not only external like this one but also detached from the methodology itself. The length and purpose of this paper does not allow for it, though this might be a start for future research. Even so, in order to obtain a “personal” snapshot of the present situation, a group of 2nd year students in an English degree⁴ were questioned about their previous experience in high school. Doing an English degree and being at the end of the second year presupposes some sort of motivation to use English professionally and be very involved in its study, nevertheless out of 45 students (all of Spanish nationality but 6 ERASMUS), only 9 coursed studies in a CLIL secondary school and of these only 3 knew what CLIL was.⁵ Only one student had attended a bilingual school and high school. All of them, but one ERASMUS, studied English as first foreign language and only 6, from no-CLIL schools, considered they had achieved a high level when finished high school.

⁴ My special thanks to those students who anonymously answered the questionnaire during the academic year 2014-15, University of La Laguna.

⁵ They were not asked about the acronym but just if they had studied in a CLIL center and three possible answers were given: yes, no, I do not know.



The majority, including the CLIL students and the bilingual school one, considered the level of English they reached was medium and 4 considered it was low.

When asked about what three European languages,⁶ other than their mother tongue, they would like to dominate, more than 90 % maintain English in the first position (logical to a certain extent because they are coursing an English degree) and the second and third choices go for other “dominant” languages: French and German, precisely the target languages included in the educational systems of most European countries according to the Eurobarometer report of 2012.

Enquired about the reasons for their choice, most students include the option of favouring intercultural dialogue or understanding other cultures for both the first (English) and the third language selected. Curiously enough, these are motives for promoting multilingualism included in most European documents, the question is if intercultural dialogue and full understanding of other cultures can be done though English-only policies.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Multilingualism seems to be in decline. It is a term maintained in documents even though in many cases it appears as a euphemism, an understatement or a fallacy, considering that English is always the first second language taught, if not the one and only. The policies may be right but the reality they describe goes far from what they want to enhance.

It is also apparent that CLIL policies which were started to sustain multiculturalism have ended benefiting bilingualism. It is not easy trying to implement a method for which initially professionals have not been prepared. Nor is teaching a language through other subjects in which you are not a specialist, and the reverse, teaching the contents in which you were specialized through a language in which you did not learn them or simply you do not command. In the case of students the difficulty is also clear: you have to learn new contents in a foreign language. Trying to do this with more than one foreign language increases the inconveniencies, not only for both parts but in terms of the economic support expected from the governments. The ultimate factor is the assumed prestige of English as a global language. Hence, it is not surprising that most European documents conclude that English is the mostly preferred language.

Even when accepting that English is well worthy sacrificing other “minor” languages, a serious reflection on the type of instruction students receive would be required. If this means learning English as a *lingua franca*, capable of favouring intercultural dialogue, a change in the perception of the prestige given to a specific accent or even syntactic structure would also be necessary. Additionally, diminishing the quality of contents for the sake of “certain” linguistic skills will not supply better workers.

It might be difficult to assert if CLIL—even as a bilingual tool—is actually working or not, considering there might be an apparent students’ progress because there has been a previous selection of their capacity, motivation and supportive family background.

⁶ A list was provided with 24 languages.



Many of those who are language teachers nowadays did have these three elements on their side, though their curriculum did not include learning other subjects in English. But this is not the main point of this paper.

Multilingualism needs review and revival. A language should not be imposed and people cannot be segregated because of the language they speak or want to speak, this is certainly not a way of respecting Europe's *rich cultural and linguistic diversity* nor ensuring that its *cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced*.

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