

Guest Editorial

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This Volume 14, Issue 4 includes six selected best papers from *the VIII International Conference on Bilingual Teaching in Educational Centers (CIEB)*, held at the University of Jaén in October 2022. Bilingual education initiatives have been firmly taking root across the European continent (and increasingly, in Asia and Latin America) for the past two decades. In particular, CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), considered to be the European approach to plurilingual education, has been steadfastly advancing within the language teaching arena and evolving in exciting new directions which have posed novel challenges to researchers, practitioners, gate-keepers, and educational authorities alike. These new avenues for CLIL development include extending its implementation from infant education through to tertiary degrees (as research -e.g. Pérez Cañado, 2018 - has voiced that the effects of CLIL grow stronger with time), setting in place diversity-sensitive bilingual education systems which can increasingly cater for all types of students (Pérez Cañado, 2021), ensuring quality assurance within CLIL programs in order to determine those traits which characterize successful pedagogical practices (Pérez Cañado, 2016), or polling stakeholders' self-reported perceptions, which are particularly relevant in our field, as "their interpretations and beliefs are crucial to understand how the CLIL programme is socially viewed, understood and constructed, and the expectations it raises" (Barrios Espinosa, 2019, p. 1). These are precisely the key issues which the present volume seeks to address.

The first two contributions center on the crucial stage of infant education. **Louisa Mortimore** sets forth an innovative proposal to conflate social and emotional learning (SEL) and CLIL as highly compatible approaches to language learning in the early stages of bilingual education. She contends that an encouraging and supportive classroom climate is essential and that the concomitant development of both approaches is conducive to substantial benefits in favoring the holistic development of young children in bilingual programs. The author identifies the main niches to be filled in implementing SEL through CLIL in the official legislation and within teacher education, and maps out future pathways for progression via the provision of concrete pedagogical strategies which contribute to making bilingual education more extensive to all.

Violeta Delgado-Crespo also focuses on this initial educational level from a trail-blazing perspective by proposing a content-enhanced, needs-based, and CLIL-oriented syllabus model aimed at teaching and learning English in the Degree of Infant Education of the University of Zaragoza to develop the linguistic and communicative competence of undergraduate students. It aims to supersede the coursebook-driven approach and transition into a more meaning-focused, authentic, and multimodal syllabus which encourages cognitive engagement, self-directed learning, and critical thinking.

The next two papers then extend bilingual teaching to the tertiary stage. **Vicky Gil and Pilar Mur Dueñas** present an exemplary professional development itinerary designed and implemented at the University of Zaragoza to equip lecturers with the linguistic and methodological competencies required to step up to the challenge of ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education) successfully. It raises teachers' awareness of the need to adapt their methodology and to adopt new strategies and techniques to teach effectively in a second language, with a special focus on the development of digital competence. Participant satisfaction with the initiative is also gauged via a qualitative evaluation survey and high degrees of satisfaction transpire, especially vis-à-vis the combined communicative and pedagogical nature of the training received.

In turn, **Cintia Álvarez-Domínguez, Ana Postigo-Fuentes, and Palma Chillón** also focus on ICLHE by carrying out a qualitative study with pre-service Physical Education teachers experiencing this methodology at Master's level and being trained to implement CLIL in the classroom. They tap into the perceived linguistic and professional competences acquired after applying this approach and use those results to directly inform pedagogical improvements in the subject, thereby constituting an instance of evidence-based practice. After a three-month intervention program, improvement is perceived by the students in their linguistic (especially oral) skills and professional competences. The outcomes then help tweak subsequent teaching practice, such as organizing micro-teaching sessions individually rather than in pairs or encouraging roles entailing more active involvement on the part of the students.

The final two studies cull frontline stakeholder perceptions in order to move towards effective, high-quality, and diversity-sensitive bilingual programs. **Francisco Melara Gutiérrez and Ignacio González López** conduct a mixed-methods investigation with methodological triangulation to determine teachers' chief training needs in guaranteeing quality assessment in bilingual teaching. They work within the school effectiveness and bilingual education research paradigms and make a double-fold contribution with their study: to design and validate a survey tool and to gauge educational needs for effective professional practice. Three teacher training demands emerge as a priority: local and

external networking, the promotion of intercultural competence, and evaluating, selecting, and adapting existing CLIL materials. The training needs identified are then used as a jump-off point to design specific teacher development proposals in working towards effective bilingual education.

Finally, **Pablo Ramón Ramos** also carries out a mixed-method concurrent triangulation study which examines frontline stakeholder perceptions (teachers, students, and parents) via questionnaires to determine the way in which differentiation is being accommodated in CLIL programs at the end of Primary Education. It does so, for the first time, in a bilingual context (the Valencian Community) and extracts key take-aways on all curricular and organizational fronts of CLIL programs, including linguistic aspects, methodology and groupings, materials and resources, assessment, and teacher coordination and organization. Within- and across-cohort comparisons are also carried out in terms of a series of identification variables. The insights gleaned allow the author to identify best practices, key challenges, and chief training needs to continue making CLIL more diversity-sensitive and accessible to all.

It is hoped that, as bilingual education continues to gain ground and make headway, the research-grounded, pedagogically-oriented, and multifaceted insights gleaned from the six articles comprised in this special issue will help guide decisions, boost CLIL implementation, and equip frontline stakeholders to rise successfully to the new challenges which bilingual programs continue to throw our way. Therein lies the sustainability of CLIL initiatives, to which this volume hopes to contribute.

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