



# “I Wouldn’t Say There Is Anything Language Specific”: The Disconnect between Tertiary CLIL Teachers’ Understanding of the General Communicative and Pedagogical Functions of Language

*“Yo no diría que hay algo específico del lenguaje”: La desconexión entre la comprensión de los profesores de AICLE de nivel terciario sobre las funciones comunicativas y pedagógicas generales del lenguaje*

*“Eu não diria que há algo específico da linguagem”: A desconexão entre a compreensão dos professores CLIL do ensino superior sobre as funções comunicativas e pedagógicas gerais da linguagem*

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**ABSTRACT.** CLIL teachers, particularly in tertiary "hard" CLIL settings, tend to underestimate the role of language for developing conceptual understanding of new content. Nevertheless, they consistently engage with English outside the classroom and even report a variety of activities that they carry out in English with the explicit hope that this will improve their language skills. However, they do not seem to develop transfer strategies that would allow them to benefit from this language engagement in their teaching. The results of a nation-wide study on CLIL teacher wellbeing in Austria confirmed this disconnect, prompting our present follow-up study, which aims to combine teacher training and research and to raise tertiary CLIL teachers' levels of Teacher Language Awareness (TLA). By means of an online questionnaire, class observations and stimulated recall interviews, we explored teachers' conceptualization of language, specifically their awareness of the language needed for effective content teaching. Results suggest that research-based TLA coaching must be part of CLIL teacher training to resolve the disconnect between the general communicative functions of language, on the one hand, and the pedagogical functions of language, on the other hand. This can help teachers unlock the potential of their existing language engagement for improving their classroom discourse and practices.

**Keywords (Source: Unesco Thesaurus):** Higher education; teacher education; language of instruction; discussions; questions.

**RESUMEN.** Los profesores de AICLE, particularmente en entornos AICLE terciarios "difíciles", tienden a subestimar el papel del lenguaje en el desarrollo de la comprensión conceptual de nuevos contenidos. Sin embargo, constantemente se relacionan con el inglés fuera del aula e incluso informan sobre una variedad de actividades que realizan en inglés con la esperanza explícita de que esto mejore sus habilidades lingüísticas. No obstante, no parecen desarrollar estrategias de transferencia que les permitan beneficiarse de este compromiso con la lengua en su enseñanza. Los resultados de un estudio a nivel nacional sobre el bienestar de los docentes AICLE en Austria confirmaron esta desconexión, lo que impulsó nuestro presente estudio de seguimiento, que busca combinar la formación docente y la investigación y elevar los niveles de Conciencia Lingüística Docente (TLA) de los docentes AICLE de nivel terciario. A través de un cuestionario en línea, observaciones de clase y entrevistas de recuerdo estimulado, exploramos la conceptualización del idioma por parte de los maestros, más específicamente su conocimiento del idioma necesario para la enseñanza efectiva de contenido. Los resultados sugieren que el entrenamiento en TLA basado en la investigación debe ser parte de la formación del profesorado AICLE para resolver la desconexión entre las funciones comunicativas generales del lenguaje, por un lado, y las funciones pedagógicas del lenguaje, por el otro. Esto puede ayudar a que los profesores desbloqueen el potencial de su compromiso existente con la lengua para mejorar su discurso y prácticas en el aula.

**Palabras clave (Fuente: Thesaurus de la Unesco):** Educación superior; formación docente; idioma de instrucción; discusiones; preguntas.

**RESUMO.** Os professores CLIL, particularmente em ambientes CLIL terciários "difíceis", tendem a subestimar o papel da linguagem no desenvolvimento da compreensão conceitual de novos conteúdos. No entanto, eles constantemente interagem com o inglês fora da sala de aula e até relatam uma variedade de atividades que realizam em inglês na esperança explícita de que isso melhore suas habilidades no idioma. Contudo, parecem não desenvolver estratégias de transferência que lhes permitam beneficiar-se deste compromisso com a língua no seu ensino. Os resultados de um estudo nacional sobre o bem-estar dos professores CLIL na Áustria confirmaram esta desconexão, o que motivou o nosso presente estudo de acompanhamento, que procura combinar a formação de professores e a investigação e aumentar os níveis de Consciência Linguística dos Professores (TLA) dos professores CLIL de nível superior. Através de um questionário on-line, observações em sala de aula e entrevistas de lembrança estimulada, exploramos a conceitualização de idioma dos professores, mais especificamente seu conhecimento do idioma necessária para o ensino eficaz do conteúdo. Os resultados sugerem que o treinamento de TLA baseado em pesquisa deve fazer parte da formação de professores CLIL para resolver a desconexão entre as funções comunicativas gerais da linguagem, por um lado, e as funções pedagógicas da linguagem, por outro. Isso pode ajudar os professores a liberar o potencial de seu envolvimento existente com o idioma para melhorar seu discurso e práticas em sala de aula.

**Palavras-chave (Fonte: Thesaurus da Unesco):** Educação superior; treinamento de professor; idioma de ensino; discussões; questões.

## Introduction

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In recent years, the European educational landscape has been profoundly influenced by the increasing use of English as the language of instruction. In the Austrian context, “English-taught degree programs [in tertiary education] (...) predominately aim at the acquisition of subject knowledge” (Unterberger, 2014, p. 37) and thus would seem to be a form of EMI rather than CLIL as CLIL was originally designed to be “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of content and language with the objective of promoting both content and language mastery to pre-defined levels” (Marsh et al., 2010, p. 11). However, we believe that “the existence and stability of content separate from language is an illusion” (Byrnes, as cited in Nikula & Dafouz, 2016, p. 21) and that, therefore, “an understanding of CLIL as fusion implies a multiperspectival view on both language and content” (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010, p. 289). Throughout this paper, we use the term *CLIL* to refer to a type of education where content might be perceived as dominant by teachers, but “viewed from a discursive perspective in which meaning is co-constructed through inter-actions, the integration of content and language occurs in [these] classes, irrespective of the explicit teaching aims” (Smit & Dafouz, 2012, p. 7). Our use of the term *CLIL* reflects the view that content and language are of equal importance in the classroom and that “all content lecturers are language lecturers” (Airey, 2012, p. 64). It follows that teacher training programs need to address the disconnect between an understanding of language as a simple tool for transmitting content shared by many teachers (i.e., the EMI view) versus the fusion of content and language that is unavoidable in the CLIL classroom. In this paper, we discuss how teacher training can address this disconnect and raise teachers’ awareness of the general communicative and pedagogical functions of language.

It is widely acknowledged that successfully realizing the dual focus on content and language in CLIL is “a challenge at the individual and systemic levels” (Mehisto, 2011, p. 177). On the individual level, CLIL teachers must develop effective discursive practices to achieve the desired integration of content and language; on the institutional

level, they have to implement CLIL with insufficient support. Specifically, there are very few professional development options that address the challenges of the integration of content and language. Instead, these programs focus on either improving language proficiency or methodological and didactic competence (O'Dowd, 2018).

In traditional teacher training for CLIL, the increased cognitive load involved in processing information in a foreign language has not been addressed. This would require teachers to develop both appropriate discursive practices and teaching methods (see Roussel et al., 2017, p. 73). Meyer et al. (2015) point out that "unravelling the integrated approach and the inherent interrelationship of using language for progressing knowledge construction and meaning-making needs to be addressed, drawing together linguistic and pedagogic theoretical underpinnings" (p. 41). If the potential of CLIL is to be fully realized, mentoring and training of CLIL teachers in these areas is needed. According to Morton (2020), "there is an ever-increasing need for conceptual and practical frameworks to foster the integration of content and language" (p. 7). Familiarizing teachers with effective discursive practices for the classroom that complement their general language proficiency would facilitate deeper integration and lead to better teaching strategies combining content and language.

Data gathered in interviews with Austrian tertiary CLIL teachers in a nation-wide study on CLIL teacher well-being across educational levels [ÖNB funded project: The Subjective Well-Being of CLIL Teachers in Austria, 17136] carried out between 2017 and 2019 (see Hessel et al., 2020) showed that these teachers tend to reflect on their own foreign language competence exclusively in terms of (interpersonal) communication skills (i.e., language proficiency) outside the classroom, which they strive to improve. They seem to be unaware of the pedagogical function of language and its role in the development of students' conceptual understanding of the content they teach and, consequently, they do not express an interest in developing skills in that area.

It is worth noting that this is not exclusively a problem faced by non-native speakers teaching content through English. In fact, the concept of *knowledge about language (KAL)* was developed in Britain in the late 1980s in response to a perceived need for better L1 literacy teaching in British schools, which was understood to require "conscious

awareness of the nature of language in its social, affective and cognitive domains” (Komorowska, 2014, p. 5). This interest in language awareness was then transferred to the fields of second language acquisition research and English language teaching.

In this paper, we argue that the disconnect between teachers’ language engagement outside the classroom and their limited understanding of the pedagogical function of language needs to be addressed more thoroughly in CLIL teacher development. Teacher language awareness (see, for example, Andrews, 2007; Morton, 2020; Lin, 2016) must play a central role, with a special focus on the integration of content and language (Andrews & Lin, 2017). CLIL teachers have to be analysts as well as users of the language (Lindahl, 2016). Only if they receive guidance that enables them to reflect on the role of language in their professional practice, will they be able to make informed decisions about how language can be integrated into content classes in a way that facilitates conceptual understanding.

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## Language knowledge for content teaching (LKCT)

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The lack of a clear conceptualization of the language skills required by tertiary CLIL teachers has been noted by Macaro et al. (2018) in their extensive systematic review of the field. They identify, as one of the key issues arising from their review, whether the field (both researchers and EMI practitioners) can reach a consensus about what is meant by “language proficiency and teaching skills needed to teach through EMI” (p. 69) and whether it is possible to measure and certify these. This raises the question as to whether it is enough for these teachers simply to have a high level of general language proficiency (e.g., C1 or C2 in the Common European Framework), along with knowledge of the specific terminology of their subjects, or if there are some, as yet unspecified, other dimensions of language knowledge essential for teaching in an L2.

Morton (2018) proposes the construct *Language knowledge for content teaching (LKCT)*, which has two sub-domains: common language knowledge for content teaching (CLK-CT) and specialized language knowledge for content teaching (SLK-CT). The concepts of common

and specialized knowledge draw on Ball et al.'s (2008) work on "Content Knowledge for Teaching" in mathematics education. Ball et al. distinguish between two types of content knowledge for teaching — common content knowledge (CCK) and specialized content knowledge (SCK). They define CCK as the subject matter knowledge teachers know in common with all others who have expertise in the subject, and which is used in settings other than teaching. In other words, CCK is knowledge that anyone conversant with the discipline would have, but that is not unique to teaching. Teachers, on the other hand, need not only to have the CCK they share with other knowledgeable people in their field, but they also need to use a special kind of content knowledge, one that is unique to teachers. This specialized content knowledge implies "knowing" the content in the ways teachers do, for example, seeing it from the perspective of learners' common misconceptions about it, the different strategies and pathways learners use to acquire the content, and different ways of presenting the content to make it meaningful to learners.

Common language knowledge for content teaching (CLK-CT) extends the CCK concept to language knowledge. Just as with any other subject matter, teachers will need to be able to use the language of instruction in the ways it is used outside teaching settings, both "everyday" and in (non-teaching) academic contexts, such as keeping up to date with the field through reading. Thus, we would expect CLIL or EMI teachers who teach through English to be confident, proficient users of the language for a wide range of personal, leisure and professional (outside teaching) purposes. Specialized language knowledge for content teaching (SLK-CT) refers to the unique perspective on language as content that is the preserve of language teachers, which involves appreciating students' linguistic difficulties and misconceptions, having a repertoire of strategies with which to resolve language issues, modifying their own output, or using language deliberately to scaffold students' understandings.

While SLK-CT is of special interest in conceptualizing the language knowledge base for CLIL teaching, both types of language knowledge (SLK-CT and CLK-CT) are essential for integrating language and content in teaching. Teachers' CLK-CT will emerge in their use of a wide range of communicative functions in the classroom, their appropriate use of the lexis, grammatical structures, registers and genres of the discipline, and their flexibility in drawing on

non-academic language knowledge, for example in using examples and analogies. Their SLK-CT will emerge in the way in which they repair their students' linguistic misunderstandings and gaps, distinguishing between conceptual and linguistic problems. It will also be visible in the ways in which they grade their own linguistic output and use interactional strategies and types of questioning in order to co-construct knowledge and probe students' thinking. A key issue for teacher education and professional development, then, is how teachers can be made aware of both types of language knowledge and their importance and can be provided with tools that allow them to draw on both in their teaching practices.

Morton (2018) provides an example of how a CLIL science teacher uses SLK-CT to handle giving feedback to students on an experiment they have carried out. The teacher uses different interaction patterns and types of questions (questions that elicit what students observed and/or their explanations of what they observed). He scaffolds their responses by "shaping" them (Walsh, 2011) with appropriate grammatical structures, or recasting them to better reflect the conceptual content. Examples such as this illustrate the need to "fill out" the LKCT construct with examples from real classroom practice. This will help to show the multitudes of skillful actions through which teachers deploy both CLK-CT and SLK-CT in building curricular knowledge across a range of disciplines. It also highlights the need for teachers to have access to data in the form of recordings and/or transcripts of their own teaching practices. CLIL teachers are often not in the habit of reflecting on the role of language in the teaching and learning process (see, for example, Papaja, 2013). Confronted with a recording of their own teaching, it is easier for them to grasp the importance of language and understand what aspects beyond simple communicative competence they have to work on. In our study, we, therefore, established a very close link between research and coaching from the beginning. This was the objective of the exploratory case study described in the following section.

In this section, we show how we use stimulated recall (see, for example, van Someren et al., 1994) to build up TLA based on concrete examples aiming at creating a better understanding of the pedagogical function of language in CLIL.

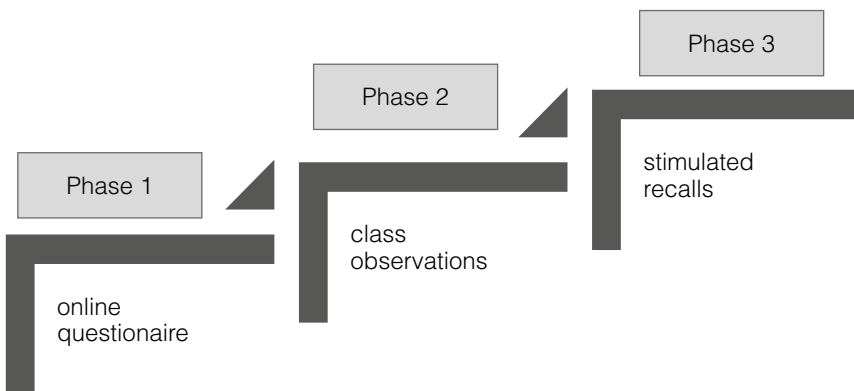
## Methodology

The present exploratory case study was conducted at an Austrian University of Applied Sciences. We chose a mixed methods approach because it allows for an “in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme, or system in a ‘real life’ context” (Simons, 2009, p. 21).

Miles and Hubermann. (2014) state that a case can be “an individual, a role, a small group, an organization, a community, or even a nation” (p. 28) in which “a phenomenon of some sort in a bounded context” (p. 28) is investigated. This case study sheds light on the classroom practices and reflections of a content specialist teaching in English, thus providing insights into the teacher’s conceptualization of language and its use for pedagogical purposes. In preparation, data on self-reported attitudes of a small group of teachers working in the same setting were gathered via a questionnaire.

The study thus consisted of three phases (see Figure 1): an online questionnaire distributed to the faculty, observation and filming of a sequence of classes taught by a teacher who volunteered to participate in the study, and stimulated recall sessions with this teacher.

**Figure 1.** Research design exploratory case study (phase 1–phase 3)



Source: Own elaboration.

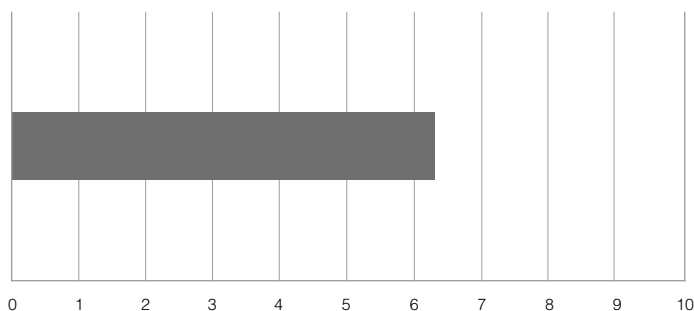


The research team consisted of an English specialist from the institution in question (though not from the same department), who the teacher knew well, and an external collaborator. Both researchers have a research interest in CLIL and several years' experience in training content teachers at tertiary institutions for CLIL. With the teacher's consent, it was decided to combine teacher training and research in the stimulated recall sessions. Thus, in the third phase, the researchers additionally took on the role of coaches (referred to as Coach 1 and Coach 2 in the transcripts).

In Phase 1 of our study, the online questionnaire was distributed to all the teachers (n=10) who teach classes in English at one department of a University of Applied Sciences in Austria. The teachers who took part in the study work in a "hard CLIL" context where the focus is clearly on content with very little attention paid to language.

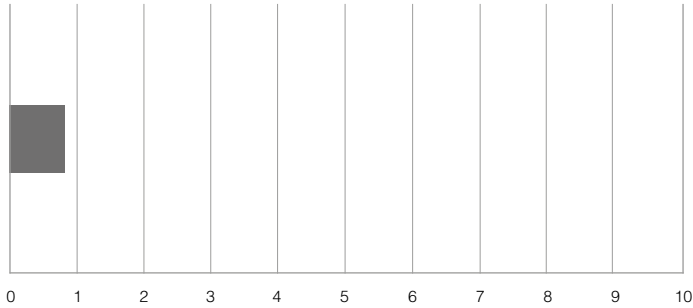
The questionnaire (see Appendix A for the complete list of questions), for which we used the SurveyMonkey® tool, comprised 55 open and closed questions on topics such as: engagement with the English language outside the classroom, CLIL classroom discourse and language-sensitive teaching. The analysis of the graphic representations of the results of the questionnaire, which were generated automatically by the tool, allowed us to visualize different aspects of the disconnect such as the dramatic difference between how the participants experience English in class and in their lives outside their classroom (see Figures 2 and 3 below for a graphic representation of the results if questions 26 and 41 of the online questionnaire).

**Figure 2.** Q26 ("How do you experience English in the classroom?";  
0 = takes me further; 10 = holds me back)



Source:

**Figure 3.** Q41 ("How do you experience English in your free time?";  
0 = takes me further; 10 = holds me back)



Source: Graphic representation of survey data generated automatically by SurveyMonkey.

These aspects were further explored in the case study in Phase 2.

In Phase 2, we prepared the in-depth analysis of a single case. We observed and video recorded all classes of one teacher's module on human resources development in an English-medium Master's program for engineering students (total = 22.5 hrs). The teacher in question, who volunteered for the stimulated recall sessions, is an L1 speaker of German with more than ten years of experience in teaching in an international setting, and the students were a diverse group of German-speaking Austrian and international students (no L1 speakers of English).

The in-depth analysis of the case in Phase 3 took the form of stimulated recall interviews. Stimulated recall can be a useful tool to "evaluate teacher effectiveness" (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 16). We used it to gain insight into the factors that prompted the teacher's methodological choices and elicit information on the teacher's mental processes (see, for example, Morton, 2012).

We chose short episodes of classroom situations we had recorded to analyze with the teacher. In stimulated recall interviews, these so-called prompts support cognitively engaging information retrieval. In addition, a predefined collection of questions supports and guides the interviewee's thinking process. This form of introspection is a particularly valuable one, especially if it is carried out close to the event (Gass & Mackey, 2000). We based our questions on the findings of the questionnaire we used in Phase 1 of the study.

In line with Mann and Walsh (2017), who coined the phrase “reflection in the wild” (p. 103), we hypothesized that teachers might also find such guided reflections helpful for developing their teaching effectiveness. Mann and Walsh (2017) stress that this should happen in a collaborative, evidence-based and dialogic way together with colleagues seeking answers to the same questions. “Snapshot” recordings should be used to allow teachers to engage more deeply with their professional practice. This kind of analysis, preferably in conversation with a teacher development expert who takes on the role of a critical friend, allows teachers to develop a “detailed and up-close understandings of [their] local context” (Mann & Walsh, 2017, p. 112).

For our stimulated recall sessions in phase 3, we, therefore, identified two teaching sequences that seemed to be particularly relevant for an investigation of the teacher’s use of English for pedagogic purposes. The sequences covered the topics “organizational silos” and “management styles” (using the online voting system Mentimeter). A session for the recall interview with the teacher was arranged after the last session, which we had observed and filmed. The researchers and the teacher watched the scenes together twice. The first time, the teacher was asked to “think aloud” and describe his mental processes at that particular point in the session. This process was supported by guiding questions based on the findings of the questionnaire used in phase 1 (see appendix for a list). The second time, the teacher was asked to stop the video whenever he had a comment on the classroom scene, and the researchers also took on the role of coaches, answered the teacher’s questions and offered their observations and feedback.

The stimulated recall sessions were all conducted in German (the teacher’s and the researchers’ shared L1). This decision was taken to remove unnecessary barriers to communication and to allow the teacher to express his thoughts freely.

To analyze the data, we opted for a thematic analysis as put forward by Clarke and Braun (2014). Using MaxQDA, we conducted several waves of coding on the transcript of the recall session. Finally, we grouped the results thematically and developed three major categories:

1. Challenging the disconnect
2. Discussing the disconnect
3. Resolving the disconnect

In the next section, the most relevant findings of the online questionnaire are summarized. This is followed by the representation of the findings of the case study.

## Findings

### Online questionnaire

In general, tertiary CLIL teachers tend to be satisfied with their language competence as soon as it allows them to cope in the classroom and carry out the teaching procedures that they are used to from teaching in the L1 (see Moate, 2011), but as the results of the questionnaire show, this does not indicate a general lack of interest in the English language. Although the respondents mentioned that their time to engage with English at work is limited due to their tight schedule, it seems that they do prepare for CLIL classes in terms of academic literacies. Looking up specialist vocabulary was the focus of teachers' preparation for classes, along with the attempt to produce PowerPoint slides that do not overwhelm the students linguistically.

This makes sense considering that, according to the questionnaire, CLIL teachers' main language learning goal for their students is confidence in language use, followed by the familiarity with the linguistic conventions of the respective subject area. They further mention knowledge of specialist vocabulary and the ability to speak fluently. Interestingly, the respondents agree strongly with the statements "English is a means to an end," "English is the job of the language teacher", and "graduates of CLIL programmes should be able to engage in professional discourse effortlessly." However, they only partially agree with the claim that every teacher is also a language teacher. The respondents' partial disagreement with the statement that CLIL automatically improves students' English (often summarized as "language comes by itself") might be connected to their belief that improving students' English is the job of the language teacher and thus cannot be achieved by CLIL teachers, who must focus on content knowledge. This suggests a lack of awareness of the pedagogical functions of English on the part of the respondents.

Comparing teachers' attitudes towards the use of English in their private lives versus in the CLIL classroom again shows evidence of a disconnect between teachers' interests in practicing general communicative language skills and their lack of interest in the pedagogical functions of language. Most CLIL teachers state that English helps them grow personally, but, at the same time, they claim that English holds them back in their teaching. Similarly, they believe that using English in their teaching imposes boundaries, whereas using English in their free time broadens their horizons.

### **Challenging the disconnect: Classroom observation and stimulated recall**

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In this section, we will present the teaching sequences we used as prompts in our stimulated recall sessions and the teacher's reflective comments. The following lesson snapshot (an exchange between the teacher (T) and a student (S)) illustrates some of the challenges the teacher in our study faces in the classroom in terms of his own language competence. His attempt to elaborate on the concepts of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation is hampered by his lack of specialist vocabulary.

T: What is this trigger, how can you call it?

S: External trigger.

T: External trigger, yeah. Like money, yeah. Or like if you do this, then you will get a pain, yeah. Or if you can do this, then you will get the money. That's external motivation. And we all know that external motivation is somehow successful [...].

The teacher seems to confuse "external" and "extrinsic" and uses circumlocutions like "you will get a pain" for punishment and "you will get the money" instead of reward. In addition, he tends to use everyday explanations instead of a more academic register. Consequently, the dialogic interactions required for the scaffolding of academic language development (Mahan, 2020) remain scarce. The teacher holds high expectations as far as the standard of his own teaching is concerned. However, his thinking about the pedagogic function of language in CLIL

is limited and reduced to a strong focus on vocabulary, as the following extract from the recall session shows:

Language-wise — well, ok, I mean, I don’t know a lot of words, and that’s kind of — somehow — I know exactly what words are going to come, because I don’t have a lot to choose from, yes?

The following extract from the recall session seems to indicate that the teacher might be aware of the importance of employing meta-discursive strategies in classroom discourse and realizes that his classroom practice falls short in this area. Again, he explains this by referring to his lack of vocabulary.

In German it’s easier, you can play with it more. You can have a better grip on the situation. I can react verbally. In English, I need more preparation and so on. That definitely... these transitions, the explanations, the justifications, closing topics, summarizing. That’s just as relevant in German but in English it’s even more, because it’s more difficult in terms of vocabulary and the language.

Interestingly, when reflecting on his classroom practice in this passage, he even names specific techniques to structure content and achieve coherence in a lesson (e.g., summarizing, signposting). He argues that this is easy for him in German, but he lacks the vocabulary to do so in English. He identifies his knowledge of vocabulary as the main impediment to successfully using language for pedagogical purposes. However, “teaching content in a foreign language takes more than just being equipped with some key terms and expressions” (Reitbauer et al., 2018, p. 91).

Another consequence of his perceived vocabulary limitations that he mentions in the recall session is the overuse of certain words and phrases, e.g., “focus on.” Although this overuse does not impede successful communication, it does have a negative impact on his attitude towards teaching in English.

Before every session I think to myself, shit, I really don’t want to do this [teaching in English] now [...] in the normal German sessions it’s much easier for me.

When he comments on his use of tools such as videos and audience-response systems in his teaching, he focuses almost exclusively on didactic considerations. For example, in one of his classes, the

teacher used the audience-response tool Mentimeter and made the following comment on his choice of methodology in the recall interview:

So the goal was to choose something that's a bit interactive, a bit different from, erm, just raising your hand, yeah? [Mentimeter is] an organized form of participation.

When asked directly whether he had considered the impact of using Mentimeter on classroom discourse, he said:

To be honest, nothing at all... I wasn't thinking about language, I just thought about maybe using a method [i.e., mentimeter.com] that was a bit more attractive.

When integrating videos in class, he has a didactic purpose in mind. However, he misses the opportunity to clearly communicate this purpose to the students. During the recall session he discussed the potential of the tool and his failure to fully exploit it:

And I'd like to, but — that would have been even better — tell them to watch it and ask what they see, from their perspective, what do they like, what do they not like so much in this video. Watch it like that, right? So, don't just watch it, that was — that was probably the stupidest way to do it: "here's a video, click."

Despite his personal interest in the content of the videos that he incorporates into his teaching, there is no evidence that he uses them as supportive materials to help students understand language in context in a way that would aid the development of their academic language. He implies that he would be able to do so in German by asking follow-up questions.

I could ask more sophisticated follow-up questions [...] with types of questions that don't work because they don't elicit any answers, in German I could provide a bit more input, so ... more variation. [In English] There is no answer, and then I answer myself rather than thinking about whether I should add another bit [of input] and how I should phrase that input. It is definitely heavier going, right? So, I could probably dance with the subject matter more in the German language.

One of the strategies he would like to incorporate in his teaching is elaboration, i.e., prompting the student to justify or lengthen their answers (see, for example, McNeil, 2011). However, he feels he

cannot realize his ideal form of classroom interaction, which results in a teaching style dominated by teacher monologues.

Maybe I felt a bit alone – like, here I am up the front carrying on like a clown about extrinsic/intrinsic and explain this to them and, yeah – well, yeah, you could be more dialog-like about this [...] The way it was, I was having the discussion at the front of the room by myself, kind of like a talk show host.

As the examples above show, the teacher's reflection on the teaching situation is a very thoughtful and sophisticated one in terms of methodology, while his conceptualization of the role of language for teaching and building knowledge is not equally well-developed.

## Discussing the disconnect in CLIL

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Based on our findings, it appears that the CLIL teacher's conceptualization of language is limited, focusing merely on vocabulary knowledge. He does not seem to have a clear concept of the pedagogical function of English in the CLIL classroom. This is mirrored in his comments on his inability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning. He also comments on his struggle to adjust his teacher talk to the purpose of the activity, which also includes the effective use of questions. This disconnect between his general understanding of the communicative function and the pedagogical function of language has far reaching consequences.

In Morton's (2018) terms, he is not aware of the potential of SLK-CT to improve his classroom practices and the learning outcomes of his students. Interestingly, as soon as the researchers addressed language issues directly in the recall sessions and thus triggered reflections on language, he was able to see the boundaries that his limited language skills impose on his classroom interactional competence. This is in line with the findings of Escobar-Uremeneta and Walsh (2017), who argue that the development of academic discourse is limited in the classroom due to the scarcity of teacher elicitations. In other words, teachers need to work on their Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) in order to use the pedagogical functions of language



successfully. Pedagogical goals and the language used to achieve them are inseparable and thus teachers need to be sensitized “to the complex interplay of language, interaction and learning” (p. 20).

The teacher’s reflections clearly indicate his wish to improve his classroom communication competence, which aligns with his constructivist understanding of learning. He holds a strong implicit belief in collective mediation, discovery learning and socially mediated activity frameworks (SMA) (Gabillon & Ailincui, 2015), which he is unable to realize when teaching in English due to his limited SLK-CT. In line with the findings of Mahan (2020), a lack of scaffolding strategies impairs the comprehension of new material, a fact that the teacher, based on his comments, seems to be aware of. In this context, he specifically mentioned his inability to spontaneously ask follow-up questions in the language of instruction. This is consistent with the results of previous studies (see, for example, Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Banse et al., 2017), which suggest that the extensive use of display questions in which the teacher knows the answer is favored by the majority of CLIL teachers, although these questions do not encourage students to interact with the teacher and produce complex answers.

This tendency to limit classroom interaction to lecturing and the use of occasional display question impedes the development of students’ academic language, which, according to the results of our questionnaire, was clearly stated as an aim of CLIL teachers. As Cummins (2013) claims, academic language is particularly difficult to acquire, since meaning very often cannot be inferred from the context. To fully exploit the supportive teaching materials, it would be necessary to carefully plan teaching sequences in advance with language development in mind. The teacher’s comments indicate that he is not in the habit of planning his teaching in this way.

## **Resolving the disconnect: Implications for teacher training**

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We argue that teacher training for CLIL should address the general communicative and the pedagogical functions of language and draw

teachers' attention to the disconnect that shapes their classroom practices. In line with Andrews (2007), we argue that "a combination of language-related self-reflection and focused collaborative activity [...] represents the most effective way of helping L2 teachers to achieve enhanced levels of language awareness and the development of pedagogical strategies for dealing with language" (p. 189) for their specific teaching contexts. In coaching CLIL teachers, stimulated recall sessions could guide the participating teachers towards developing TLA that encompasses SLK-CT. The following examples provide possible realizations of interventions.

Successful interventions must be based on the building of mutual trust between the teacher and the coaches. Specifically, it is important to respect the teachers' own interpretation of what they experience in their classroom, rather than impose the coaches' interpretation on them right away. This can then be the foundation for exploring the role of language together, as in the following example:

Teacher: Clearly the main problem was the bad briefing, I mean the unclear — I went in too fast, I didn't thoroughly —

Coach 1: I wouldn't say it was a bad briefing [...] it's definitely not the quality of the instructions, it's the sequencing [...].

Teacher: Sequencing, what do you mean exactly, sequencing?

Coach 1: What do I do first, you should consider, ok, today I want to use Mentimeter because that means they [the students] are more active, and then you think, specifically [...] what is the sequence here, so, first there's an explanation [...] and the following terms will be checked...

Teacher: [...] and some of those will have to be explained first, exactly — what does "line manager" mean or whatever and so on.

Here, the teacher repeatedly uses the word "briefing" to refer to his instructions, and the coaches adopt his terminology. When he is not sure what they mean by "sequencing," this is clarified. In this way, the coaches and the teacher create a common basis for talking about language issues. At the end of the passage, the teacher discusses how he could have used classroom language more effectively and gives one specific example (pre-teaching the meaning of "line manager").

Moreover, at this stage, it is important to introduce the relevant pedagogic functions of language as soon as they are noticed by the

teacher. Here, the teacher reflects on an aspect of his own language use that he is beginning to view as problematic, based on the analysis of the video in the stimulated recall session:

Teacher: I try to explain again, while they are working, what I explained at the beginning, maybe in different words. My intention is to provide clearer guidance for when we have a discussion at the end, but it's possible [...] that this is lost because they are working.

Coach 2: That depends a lot on what you are doing at the time [coach adds some specific suggestions for dealing with this problem] [...] because then they also have to put in some work on the linguistic level, and when they engage with it, they also benefit linguistically [...].

Coach 1: A deeper form of engagement.

In this example, the teacher is looking for a solution to an unsatisfactory aspect of his teaching. Once the teacher has seen for himself that there is a problem with a specific aspect of his classroom language use, the coaches can work out a solution with him.

To conclude, the combination of stimulated recall and coaching may allow teacher trainers to address the disconnect between the general communicative function and the pedagogical function of language more effectively and help to develop teachers' awareness of the importance of SLK-CT.

## Limitations

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We are aware that “epistemology, methodology and the choice of paradigms are all influenced by the values and beliefs, as well as the identities, of the researchers and the researched” (Hartas, 2010, p. 20) and that the judgements we make are shaped by our experiences and roles. However, the particular and potentially problematic position of one of the researchers, who is part of the same institution as the participants of the study, was addressed in the data analysis, where the external perspectives of the other co-authors acted as a corrective. Concerning the small sample size in Phase 1, we have been careful to avoid over-generalizations in our presentations of the findings.

## Conclusion

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Teaching complex subject-matter in a second language poses many challenges to teachers who have limited proficiency in their language of instruction. Effective CLIL teacher training must take the complexity of the teachers' situation into account. An effective first step is to let the teachers discuss their experiences on their own terms in stimulated recall settings. The advantage of this method is that it enables the trainers to provide clear and detailed feedback on language use in recorded lessons and use concrete, authentic examples from the teachers' own lessons to explore the links between language, content, and methods (see, for example, Reitbauer et al., 2018).

Language Awareness (LA), specifically an awareness of SLK-CT, is therefore another element that must be part of CLIL teacher training to enable tertiary CLIL teachers to cope with the challenges of their particular teaching situation and to make informed choices about how and in which way language needs to play a role in their teaching.

As already mentioned, we need to fit teachers' existing understanding of language into this new framework for CLIL teacher training and help them to use their own linguistic resources effectively. This can be done by setting realistic language goals to work towards with teaching in mind, e.g., improve a teacher's signposting when presenting or lecturing, exploring effective strategies for introducing activities and explaining their purpose clearly to students.

In addition to that, professional development in CLIL in HE needs to be a collaborative, dialogic and dynamic process (He & Lin, 2018). CLIL teacher trainers need to develop materials focusing on effective discursive practices for the classroom that take into account subject conventions, as well as the teacher's level of English and their personal communication style (see Airey et al. 2017). The different ways content knowledge is unpacked in different subjects will have implications for the language used in the CLIL classrooms by content specialists. Thus, a key issue for teacher educators is the extent to which this knowledge can be brought to conscious awareness so that teachers can deploy it in ways that better fit their stated purpose in dealing with content. Teacher training based on the SLK-CT

framework could disentangle the myth of language being solely a medium of instruction and show content teachers how language in CLIL can be enriching if they have a better understanding of the connection between content and language based on a systematic analysis of their own language use in the classroom.

In conclusion, more studies that allow trainers and CLIL programme designers to make better informed recommendations based on teachers' authentic thinking are needed. Mixed methods studies that use stimulated recall designs seem like a particularly promising avenue to explore and also lend themselves to teacher training models that closely link research and coaching.

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## APPENDIX

### Online Questionnaire

#### Questionnaire on Teachers' Experiences and Opinions Regarding Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): "The Disconnect in CLIL"

**Q1.** Teaching situation (1): Please rank the following teaching situations according to how much they promote the learning of English. (1 = promotes the learning of the English language the most; 3 = promotes English language learning the least).

- Teacher talk (lecture-style teaching)
- Role play (simulate professional situations in class)
- Group work (working on new content in groups)

**Q2.** Teaching situation (2): Please rank the following teaching situations according to how much you believe they promote the learning of subject content. (1 = most conducive to learning subject content; 3 = least conducive to learning subject content).

- Teacher talk (lecture-style teaching)
- Role play (simulate professional situations in class)
- Group work (working on new content in groups)

**Q3.** English outside CLIL: How intensively do you engage with podcasts in English in your free time? (on a scale from 1 to 5)  
Please explain briefly what your motivation is for engaging with podcasts in English (e.g. why podcasts in English and not in German...).

**Q4.** English outside CLIL: How intensively do you engage with audio books in English in your free time? (on a scale from 1 to 5)  
Please explain briefly what your motivation is for engaging with audiobooks in English (e.g. why audiobooks in English and not in German...).

**Q5.** English outside CLIL: How intensively do you engage with English books (the question refers to both print and e-books) in your free time? (on a scale from 1 to 5)  
Please explain briefly what your motivation is for engaging with books in English (e.g. why books in English and not in German...).

**Q6.** English outside CLIL: How intensively do you engage with magazines in English in your free time? (on a scale from 1 to 5)

Please explain briefly what your motivation is for engaging with journals in English (e.g. why journals in English and not in German...).

**Q7.** English outside CLIL: How intensively do you engage with films and series in English in your free time? (on a scale from 1 to 5)

Please explain briefly what your motivation is for watching films and series in English (e.g. why films and series in English and not in German...).

**Q8.** English outside CLIL: How often do you talk to friends and acquaintances in English?

Please explain briefly what your motivation is for doing this:

**Q9.** English outside CLIL: How often do you travel to English-speaking countries to study English intensively?

Please explain briefly what your motivation is for doing this:

**Q10.** English outside CLIL: What else do you do in your spare time to engage with English?

**Q11.** English outside CLIL: Please explain briefly whether you benefit from engaging with English in your spare time when teaching in English?

**Q12.** CLIL lesson preparation: How do you prepare for lessons in English? Please tick all the statements that apply to you.

- I look up relevant technical vocabulary.
- I prepare material that supports the students linguistically (e.g.: preparation of a glossary).
- I make sure that my visuals (e.g. PowerPoint slides) do not overwhelm students linguistically.
- I think about the wording of my explanations and work instructions in advance.
- I determine what students should learn linguistically in my course.
- I schedule time to debrief with students about their presentations.
- When planning lessons, I make sure that my methods are appropriate for teaching in English.

**Q13.** Do you make sure that your methods are appropriate for teaching in English? Please explain your answer to the previous question.

**Q14.** CLIL teaching: Please tick all statements that apply to you.

- I correct students if they do not use the technical vocabulary correctly in class.
- I give students plenty of opportunity to talk to me in English about the content covered in class.
- When I use English-language texts and videos in class, I consciously point out to students the characteristics of the technical language in my field of specialization.
- When I notice pronunciation errors in class, I correct students.
- When I correct written work, I mark linguistic errors.
- I make students aware of the conventions of academic writing in English for written assignments.

**Q15.** 'Good English': graduates of an English language degree programme should have good language skills. How important do you consider the following areas:

(very important - important - less important - not important)

- Technical vocabulary
- General vocabulary
- Linguistic conventions of the respective field
- Academic writing
- Grammatical correctness
- Fluent speech
- Not afraid to use the English language

**Qs 16 – 21.** Reflection "language access point": How much do you agree with the following statements? Please explain your answer.

(totally agree - agree - agree somewhat - disagree)

- When I teach my subject in English, I see English as a means to an end. English is the responsibility of the language teachers.
- English is an asset to my classroom.
- When subject classes are taught in English, students' language skills automatically improve.
- The study of English is an enrichment for my personal life.

- One goal of a higher education in a subject area must also be the ability to participate in professional discourse in English.
- Every subject teacher is also a language teacher, that cannot be avoided. You need the language to express yourself well in terms of content.

Explanation / Notes:

**Qs 22-36.** How do you experience English in class? Move the slider to the appropriate place. (1-10)

enrichment	burden
Easy	hard
Annoying	delightful
not my responsibility	my responsibility
holds me back	takes me further
restricts me	expands my horizons
external constraints	my own interest
helps me achieve my teaching goals	gets in my way in class
means to an end	enjoyment of the language
makes interpersonal contact with students difficult	facilitates interpersonal contacts with students
I would like to improve my English	my English is good enough
is familiar	arouses my curiosity
concerns only me personally	I would like to share my enthusiasm
remains at the same level	gets better and better
self-confidence	uncertainty

**Qs 37-50.** How do you experience English in your free time? Move the slider to the appropriate place. (1-10)

Enrichment	burden
Easy	hard
Annoying	delightful
not my responsibility	my responsibility
holds me back	takes me further
restricts me	expands my horizons
external constraints	my own interest

helps me achieve my goals	gets in my way
means to an end	enjoyment of the language
makes interpersonal contacts difficult	facilitates interpersonal contacts
I would like to improve my English	my English is good enough
is familiar	arouses my curiosity
concerns only me personally	I would like to share my enthusiasm
remains at the same level	gets better and better
self-confidence	uncertainty

**Q51.** Personal background: Which statement best describes your situation? Think of a typical semester for you.

- I teach all my courses in English.
- I teach my courses predominantly in English (>50% of the courses and/or >50% of the teaching time)
- I teach my courses partly in English (<50% of the courses and/or <50% of the teaching time).
- I hold most of my courses in German, but occasionally design a module or project in English.
- I always hold my lectures in German. Only if the study programmes in which I teach are designed in English (e.g. Master Degree Programmes in English), I hold my lectures in English.

**Q52.** Personal background: How many years have you been teaching in English? You can consider all the situations described in the previous question.

- Other (please specify)

**Q53.** Personal background: Which statement best describes your motivation to teach your course in English?

- I volunteered when I had the opportunity.
- I was advised of the opportunity to get into CLIL, but was completely free to choose.
- It was suggested to me 'from above' (course director etc) but there was no explicit mandate.
- I was explicitly assigned to teach in English.

**Q54.** Personal background: English is also an important language in research. How often do you perform the following activities in English? (very often - often - rarely – almost never)

- Presentation at an international conference
- Contribution to an English-language publication
- Participation in an international project meeting
- Conference call with cooperation partners
- Read technical literature
- Cooperation with colleagues with non-German mother tongue
- Other (please also indicate very often / often / rarely / almost never)

**Q55.** In your opinion, what is language-sensitive teaching:

### **Stimulated Recall Questions**

1. What was going through your mind at this point in the lesson?
2. Why did you choose this method? (What was the goal?)
3. In your opinion, how effective was the method you chose?
4. What linguistic considerations played a role when you were teaching (what were the linguistic challenges, how easy/difficult was it for you to express yourself in English?)
5. Would you have done anything differently if you had taught the same material in German?