

Editorial introduction

Welcome to Volume 8, Issue 1 of the *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning* (LACLIL). This issue presents a variety of research endeavors on how content and language are being treated at different levels of education. Nowadays, the progression of foreign language teaching and each of its methods and approaches are taking place in a framework in which the term *innovation* is fundamental. The pace of globalization has been rapidly increasing, strongly affecting cooperation and communication across cultures. This is why it is very important that practitioners and researchers alike participate in making the teaching and learning process much more meaningful in the twenty-first century classroom. Therefore appreciating and analyzing our own cultural perspective against foreign cultural perspective are essential elements in the development of intercultural competence.

However, on another note, connecting culture and language has not been an easy task for many, and this challenge will continue to be discussed among professionals and teachers for many years to come. As the world becomes more globalized, more people are coming into contact with and learning about other cultures to gain mutual understanding and benefits. Thus, it is important to understand how content and language integrated learning (CLIL) can work in different situations, with different learners, yet with a common goal: to acquire a second and/or foreign language as well as content knowledge simultaneously. Even so, understanding and appreciating culture and language in its context is what needs to be understood to achieve successful integration of both.

This issue of LACLIL brings together researchers from Spain, Italy, Japan, and the United States in an array of levels, including primary, secondary, and even higher education. This edition starts by looking at a critical vision of CLIL at the secondary level in the Valencian Community in Spain, in which Guillamón-Suesta and Renau Renau (Spain) explore attitudes and backgrounds of learners in English and content classes. Results revealed that CLIL could have a positive effect on students and that Valencian teachers were quite eager to cooperate in its implementation.

On another note, in Galicia, Spain, 13 primary schools were analyzed over a period of 2 years to determine whether the performance was different between classes that use CLIL and non-CLIL approaches. González Gándara (Spain) tracked learner performance to determine that there is no significant difference between the two types of groups. This is quite similar to the findings of Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009) which revealed that CLIL students showed significantly more positive attitudes towards English as a foreign language than did EFL students. Such studies should encourage more educational institutions take up the CLIL approach as a strategy to enhance learners' performances. Although there are a number of studies that claim CLIL makes an impact (Lasagabaster, 2011; Cross, 2013; Dafouz, Nunez, & Foran, 2007) and/or improves learner performance (Massler, 2012; Mehisto & Asser, 2012), there have been few studies that actually track learner performance in content areas vs. non-content areas, thereby leaving the door open for future studies on CLIL performance.

Turning to the issue of connecting culture and language, Tsuchiya (Japan) and Pérez Murillo (Spain) studied tertiary educational context to reveal the existence of some important differences between these two countries, such as the socio-economic rationales of CLIL implementation. They found CLIL in Spain to be "proactive", adhering to bi-/multilingual language policies in the European Union, while CLIL in Japan was seen as "reactive", basically providing human resources for English proficiency for its economic purposes. Overall, regardless of their distance and differences, participants from both countries showed positive views towards CLIL at the tertiary level. This is a clear example of what makes CLIL different from any other form of bilingual education: it is a planned pedagogical integration of contextualized content, cognition, communication, and culture into teaching and learning practice.

Learner anxiety has always been a challenge in many learning contexts, but for many, anxiety levels are particularly acute in the second/foreign language classroom. A small-scale study conducted by Smith (USA) among American students in a university-level Spanish course examined how well students performed on a Spanish grammar test. Overall, the students saw foreign languages as less stressful than other academic subjects they have taken. Studies conducted by Sylvén and Thompson (2015), Lasagabaster and Sierra (2009), Maillat



(2010), Fehling (2008), and Sylvén (2004, 2013) all illustrate that motivation among foreign language students in language classes tends to be higher than non-language classes.

Renata Agolli (Italy) discusses how translanguaging can serve as a bridge between pre-CLIL and full-immersion CLIL programs by way of a CLSL (content & languages [L1/L2] shared learning) model. Agolli goes on to explain how the CLSL model serves as a dynamic phase, which enhances inter-content as well as linguistic competences by providing language and content learning by way of code-switching and participatory instigating new inter-learning experience. Often strategies such as code-switching and translanguaging are viewed merely forms of “translations” in the classroom, often prohibited from use by teachers who claim that they are easy ways out of teaching or simply glorified crutches for students. On the other hand, many researchers many (for example, Cole, 1998; Bicer, 2003; Yung, 2003) argue that translation practices in the language classroom can be a valuable additional language-teaching tool. Petrocchi (2006) describes translation as a two way-device, comparing two languages (L1) Spanish and (L2) English. However, Agolli’s study demonstrates a much more positive outlook regarding the inclusion of these types of strategies within the language classroom.

Finally, Abdi and Ivey (USA) identify some of the gaps in methodology regarding cognitive task complexity in writing. They also discuss the state-of-the-art in relation to the different types of studies conducted surrounding cognitive task complexity on linguistic performance in L2 contexts and offer recommendations on how to obtain more comprehensible and general findings using mixed-methods studies.

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