



# International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism

ISSN: 1367-0050 (Print) 1747-7522 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rbeb20>

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To cite this article: Christiane Dalton-Puffer (2018) Postscriptum: research pathways in CLIL/ Immersion instructional practices and teacher development, International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 21:3, 384-387, DOI: [10.1080/13670050.2017.1384448](https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2017.1384448)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2017.1384448>



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Published online: 08 Oct 2017.



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## Postscriptum: research pathways in CLIL/Immersion instructional practices and teacher development

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**ARTICLE HISTORY** Received 9 July 2017; Accepted 13 July 2017

**KEYWORDS** CLIL; subject literacy; teacher knowledge; research types in CLIL; knowledge appropriation and implementation

Taken together, the contributions in this special issue give an excellent account of the themes currently on the agenda of language and language education researchers working on CLIL/immersion at the school level. If we take a ‘historical’ perspective on the types of research that have been pursued in the area, we notice that typical of the early phases of research were studies focussing on learning outcomes and the overall effectiveness of the approach(es). In the case of CLIL this was almost exclusively directed at language learning outcomes while the longer history of research on immersion in North America has also produced studies on content learning outcomes. Another early strand of research has looked at students and teachers in terms of their motivations, attitudes, and needs, while a third substantial strand of research has sought to characterise CLIL/immersion classrooms as environments of language use/learning, employing a wide array of concepts that are discourse analytic in a broad sense and subscribe to a broadly usage-based and contextual theory of language learning. A few years ago, the content learning perspective started to make an appearance in this research-strand via the notion of subject literacy (e.g. Llinares, Morton, and Whittaker 2012). The article by Hüttner and Smit (this issue) is a good example of this kind of theoretical framing and research approach: it is an observational discourse study, but with the focus on *learners* performing acts of argumentation as instantiations of subject literacy and thus content learning. The content subject studied is itself a new aspect in school-level CLIL/immersion research, namely Business Studies and Economics, where the ability of arguing a factual position appropriately is seen as a key subject literacy element. The observational mode is also employed by Morton (this issue) for the purpose of substantiating his conceptualisation of the different types of language knowledge which CLIL/immersion teachers need. Morton’s contribution is also a good example of the productive migration of theoretical constructs between related research areas, as he develops his specific conceptualisation of language-knowledge for content-teachers from earlier constructs emerging in mathematics education and EFL. Applying a metaphor introduced by Dale, Oostdam, and Verspoor (2017), then, the ‘lineage’ of Morton’s LK-CT (Language Knowledge for Content Teachers) reaches back to Shulman’s notion of Pedagogical Content Knowledge or PCK (Shulman 1987).

The lineage-metaphor is used by Dale et al. in their article to capture the ‘several lines of thinking about language teaching in school contexts, broadly represented by the three terms foreign language (FL) teaching, second language (SL) teaching and mother tongue or first language (L1) teaching.’ They continue by stating that ‘All three lineages can provide insights into language teaching in this context. CLIL, CBI and immersion are built on both FL and SL lineages; EAL and Sheltered Instruction on an SL lineage; language and literacy across the curriculum are built on an L1

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lineage' (Dale et al. xx). I appreciate the lineage-metaphor because it combines notions of difference (the various origins) with notions of family resemblance and recombination, and thus seems to me a productive way out of the objectively unresolvable debates around sorting approaches to bilingual education into Aristotelian categories (e.g. Cenoz, Genesee, and Gorter 2014; Dalton-Puffer et al. 2014).

Thinking further along the lines of broad types of educational research (effectiveness, observational, interventional, developmental) represented in the study of CLIL/immersion, this special issue is strong on intervention studies, of which there are three (Zarobe and Zenotz; Tedick and Young; Cammarata and Haley), the latter happening on the level of teacher professional development rather than classroom teaching. Calls for research incorporating planned language-focussed interventions and their effect on student awareness and student learning have been variously put forward (e.g. by Dalton-Puffer and Smit 2013 following Lyster 2007 with first calls going back as early as Harley and Swain 1984). These are founded on the realisation that conclusions drawn and concepts developed from a combination of theory ('on theoretical grounds this should be good') and observational studies ('but it happens very little and there should be more') have to be actively put to the test, exploring their viability in concrete CLIL/immersion contexts, as has been done for reading strategy instruction and focus-on-form by the three intervention studies included in this special issue. Many more such studies ought to follow in order to drive forward the translation (or not) of theory/data-driven research results into pedagogical practice. On this very account, Tedick and Young's study, trialling focus on form in Spanish/English two-way immersion, addresses very openly the fact that explicit on-line attention to linguistic form-function combinations during content-lessons requires unforeseen degrees of sophistication in declarative metalinguistic knowledge. Such a degree of sophistication is hard to reach for language specialists, let alone content specialists, in the case of highly complex form-function pairings like the Spanish past tenses.

While the issue of teacher knowledge is an emergent topic in the previously mentioned Tedick and Young study, it takes centre stage in Morton's and Dale et al.'s work. Morton's article could even be read as a direct reaction to the problem identified in the Spanish FFI intervention study, as he actually presents a construct which helps to think in an organised fashion about the language competencies and language knowledge required in order to function well as a content-specialist teaching students through a second language. The sub-constructs of Common Language Knowledge (CLK-CT) and Specific Language Knowledge (SLK-CT), Morton suggests, are in need of further bottom-up empirical validation but certainly offer an interesting perspective for structuring CLIL/immersion teacher education and teacher development curricula. Schematically similar in its shape as a diagram with four quadrants, the analytical framework developed by Dale et al. is also designed as an instrument for navigating the landscape of language teaching in bilingual education. Based on the accurate diagnosis that past and ongoing research and development concerns tend to focus on content-teachers' professional identities and dealings with language in the classroom, Dale et al. put the spotlight on the language teachers, arguing that they also face complex challenges with regard to positioning themselves within CLIL/immersion programmes. The framework presented in their article emerges in a methodologically engaging manner from a broad literature review (during which they identify the above-mentioned 'lineages' of thinking about language education). The framework that is the result, it seems to me, is of relevance well beyond the perimeter of bilingual education in the narrow sense (CLIL/immersion). It is a map that can guide analysis and design of curricula for language teacher education programmes as much as it can be an instrument of self-reflection for the individual language teacher. In developing the framework, the authors also open the door to the question of what is the 'content' of language subjects (Dale et al. xx). This is a debate which present-day competency-oriented language teaching has blanked out to a significant degree, but one which, in my view, needs to be put back on the agenda rather urgently. Two reasons I would like to mention here are (a) the low degree of cognitive demand reported by intermediate learners at upper secondary level ('it's quite boring!'<sup>1</sup>) and (b) the threat to the professional standing of

language teachers exercised by the perception of outsiders that they teach a subject ‘without content’ (see endnote 1). More good reasons will certainly emerge once this discussion is taken up within the community. Dale et al.’s framework represents an excellent springboard for such a debate and could serve as a pathway for feeding recent ideas about the significance of language in education back to the core group of modern/foreign language teachers/teacher educators.

‘Content’ in the sense of content-subjects naturally also remains a point of interest in CLIL/immersion research. While we have made some headway in honing more complex conceptualisations of what we mean by ‘integration’ of language and content (Nikula et al. 2016), we have seen little work which has incorporated the expert perspectives of subject education researchers. To my knowledge, virtually *all* CLIL research accessible in the international arena (such as this special issue) stems from what could be informally referred to as ‘language people’. This may not necessarily be true of more locally circulated publications, frequently in languages other than English,<sup>2</sup> but it certainly is an element that should be reinforced in CLIL/immersion research in general and might well be one of the next developmental steps the field takes.

As a final comment I would like to draw attention once more to the itinerary of ideas and the generation and appropriation of knowledge within the professional community (I hereby refer to classroom teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and academics). The classic trajectory is for the academics/researchers to produce conceptualisations including recommendations for action, and offer them for use to the practitioners. In reality, of course, the seemingly linear trajectory ‘from research to practice’ is often more convoluted because individuals may have more than one professional identity. Even so, the appropriation and enactment of research-based recommendations is a hugely complex process that demands time and an environment in which individuals feel unthreatened, something which is vividly portrayed in Cammarata and Haley’s article. Notwithstanding, the second feedback loop, the one from practice to theory, is less firmly established and less visible, and so it is remarkable what Coyle Halbach, and Meyer do in their article: they exemplify a radical change in procedure by involving a full array of members of the professional community in theory development (almost) right from the start, working towards their PluriLiteracies Approach to Teaching for Learning (PTL). It is an open question for me whether the jointly developed construct will require less effort of translation and appropriation by those who were not immediately involved in its genesis and so I look forward to reading a sequel of the process-description included in this special issue. A merit of Coyle et al.’s piece is clear already at this point: they are questioning the set ways of the discipline and doing this is what ensures its vitality.

## Notes

1. Anecdotal evidence.
2. The one other language (German) in which I can confidently access research publications certainly offers a considerable body of work written from the angle of subject educators (e.g. Maset 2015 and many authors in Hallet and Königs 2013).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes on contributor

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