

Ante la actual gran eclosión de opiniones dispares, planteamientos e ideas diferentes acerca de la educación, parece necesario recurrir a la teoría para, a partir de la práctica, pensarla y repensarla, y beber de ella. Este libro, brillante por su contenido y su peculiar planteamiento, va destinado a todo estudioso y profesional de la educación, o a cualquier intelectual interesado en la misma, que desee hacer este ejercicio de repaso y de recapitación: nos atrevemos a asegurar que su lectura marcará un antes y un después en su manera de abordar “la educación, en teoría”.

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Rumlich, D. (2016).

Evaluating Bilingual Education in Germany. CLIL Students' General English Proficiency, EFL Self-Concept and Interest.

Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 580 pp.

The spread of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) programmes in many European countries over the last fifteen years has been characterised by great expectations regarding students' future language competences. However, the results of these programmes are only now being analysed, and there is still a shortage of large-scale longitudinal studies that map where the language (and other purported) gains are to be found. In this context, Dominik Rumlich's book *Evaluating Bilingual Education in Germany. CLIL Students' General English Proficiency, EFL Self-Concept and Interest*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, can be welcomed as a timely and valuable contribution to the ongoing discussions on this subject.

Looking at the concrete case of selective secondary schools (*Gymnasien*) in the largest German federal state of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rumlich sets out to measure the English language competences, EFL self-concept and motivation of students enrolled in CLIL programmes. He compares these with the data obtained from two other sets of students, namely students who are at the same schools but not enrolled in CLIL programmes (non-CLIL students) and students in similar schools where CLIL has not been implemented (regular students).

Covering a total of 953 pupils, this is one of the larger empirical studies to emerge from the German context, and also one of the longest in terms of the time-period covered. Rumlich's careful study design looks at the students' performance and other measures in the German year 6 (age 12) before they enter the CLIL programme, and documents their progress at the end of year 8, after two

years in the programme. Importantly, the German CLIL students receive ‘pre-CLIL’ preparatory training consisting of an extra two 45-minute English lessons every week (bringing the number of weekly classes up from 4 to 6) over the two years prior to starting CLIL (years 5 and 6), which means that they already start the CLIL programme with a higher level of English than their non-CLIL and regular counterparts. Taking into account this advantage, and other consequences of this special focus on English such as a higher EFL self-concept, Rumlich tracks these students’ progress through the first two years of the CLIL programme and comes to the startling conclusion that the gains made by the CLIL students are no greater than the gains made by the non-CLIL and regular students over these years. In other words, at the end-point of the study, the CLIL students do indeed have a higher level of English than the students who do not receive CLIL, as is the case in other large-scale studies available. But the progress made by these German students in English is not accelerated by taking part in CLIL: the differences between the three sets of student at the end of year 8 are essentially the same as the differences between them in year 6, before the CLIL programme has begun. In simple terms, the good news is that the preparation-plus-CLIL package appears to give the students a distinct advantage over the students who have received neither, which is equivalent on average to around one year’s schooling as far as English is concerned. The bad news is that –counterintuitively– the gains do not seem to be boosted by the CLIL programme itself.

Obviously, this raises a number of important questions, concerning the CLIL programmes taught, the measures used, and the conclusions drawn. First, from the descriptions in the book we receive little information about what kind of CLIL these students are receiving, other than the number of hours. Have the content teachers endeavoured to integrate content and language learning in their programmes? What pedagogical adjustments have they made? These key questions remain unanswered, although admittedly, it would be extremely difficult to tackle methodological issues across such a large sample.

Secondly, regarding measures, several important issues need to be addressed. The main tool used to measure English language competence was a C-test, which is based on the principle of cloze tests and is thought to be a good measure of grammatical and lexical competence that correlates well with other general language competence measures. However, like previous research on the vocabulary of CLIL students, this sidesteps the issue of the different nature of the language competences likely to be developed in CLIL programmes (which is particularly marked in the area of lexis, where gains are likely to be domain-specific). It is not so surprising that students’ general lexical competence improves in parallel to

that of the non-CLIL students, but general tests leave out what is precisely distinctive about CLIL programmes, namely the area of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which is thought to be one of the main areas where students gain in CLIL. Issues such as the interplay between fluency/complexity, on the one hand, and accuracy, on the other, have taken on some importance in the discussion of what is gained in CLIL, but these do not rise to the surface when C-tests are used. It is also unfortunate, though perfectly understandable given the numbers involved, that the study does not attempt to factor in productive oral skills, for example, or even apply a standard listening test, as listening and speaking are two areas where CLIL students are often thought to have an advantage over their peers.

Thirdly, in his conclusions, Rumlich puts forward the interpretation that “regular EFL classes are the driving force behind the development of students’ (productive) general EFL proficiency (...) Consequently it would be counterproductive (...) to discard regular EFL classes for the sake of substituting them with additional CLIL lessons” (p. 449). It is indeed important that education authorities and curriculum planners should not sacrifice language teaching on the altar of CLIL. It is also important that the extravagant claims sometimes made for content teaching in English should be challenged by rigorous empirical studies. However, this also cuts both ways. We also need to know more about what domain-specific gains students might make as a result of taking science or history in English, and about how an optimum balance between language teaching and CLIL teaching can be achieved in practice. Finally, the study and its results are, inevitably, strongly embedded in the German education system where streaming and “creaming” are normal practices that potentially distort the outcomes of CLIL programmes. It would be interesting to compare the results of similar studies carried out in countries like Spain, where CLIL starts at a much younger age and is generally applied across the board.

Aside from this, other plus points of the book are its ample bibliography, its careful statistical analysis, and the fact that it provides a good introduction to the history of CLIL in Germany, and to the German authors on this subject, not all of whom are well known outside Germany. This book has earned its place on the reading list for all young CLIL researchers, and the questions it raises definitely point the way for future research of both a quantitative and a qualitative nature.

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