

Integrating content and foreign language learning

What do CLIL students believe?

David Lasagabaster

University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programmes have recently gained momentum in many European countries in the belief that students will significantly improve their foreign language proficiency while content learning is not negatively affected. Based on a longitudinal qualitative approach, this article focuses on students' reflections on their experience with CLIL. Previous studies have shown that students are able to reflect on organizational conditions and their learning process, while their reflections allow researchers to identify some of the key elements in students' beliefs. Through focus groups carried out over a three-year period, this study gathers secondary education students' reflections on their motivational stance, the CLIL experience, and the use of their linguistic repertoire in the CLIL classroom. By tapping into students' language beliefs, reflections, and motivation, a clearer picture of CLIL settings will be available by bringing to light both the strengths and weaknesses of these programmes.

Additional abstract(s) at end.

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1. Introduction

In 2002 the European Commission launched a plan to boost the learning of two foreign languages in addition to the mother tongue amongst European citizens (European Commission, 2004). The implementation of this language policy entailed that education curricula should integrate the learning of contents in different foreign languages and led to the blossoming of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programmes. Despite attempts to foster the presence of

diverse foreign languages, the real picture is that English is the predominant foreign language in CLIL programmes in primary and secondary education (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Pérez Cañado, 2012). At the university level the Bologna process¹ has similarly brought about an increasing presence of English (Fortanet & Räisänen, 2008; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014; Wilkinson & Walsh, 2015).

The impact of CLIL programmes on the European context has steadily increased in the last two decades (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2011). Spain is one of the European countries in which CLIL programmes have proliferated, especially in secondary education (Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010), but with an increasing presence also in higher education institutions (Alcón & Michavila, 2012; Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013; Halbach & Lázaro, 2015). Although there is a significant number of research studies on CLIL, there are still many questions in need of an answer and plenty of leeway to improve the implementation of these programmes (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010; Lyster, 2007).

The CLIL approach has been praised on many different grounds. In fact, CLIL is expected (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2011; Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Pérez Cañado, 2012):

- not to hinder L1 development and content learning;
- to boost the affective dimension, in the sense that students will feel more motivated to learn foreign languages;
- to help improve specific language terminology;
- to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence;
- to foster implicit and incidental learning by centering on meaning and communication;
- to trigger high levels of communication among teachers and learners, and among learners themselves;
- and, as a result of all the reasons mentioned above, to improve students' overall language competence in the target language, in particular oral skills.

However, studies have produced encouraging results concerning only foreign language competence (see Dalton-Puffer, 2011 and Pérez-Cañado, 2012), whereas content learning outcomes and other alleged benefits still need to be thoroughly researched.

After reviewing the results obtained in German speaking countries, Dalton-Puffer (2007) states that the language learning outcomes of CLIL are satisfactory,

1. The Bologna process consists of a series of agreements signed by the European Union member States whose main objective is to make European higher education systems more compatible, while modernising degree structures and strengthening quality assurance mechanisms in the so-called European Higher Education Area.

as CLIL students attain foreign language competence well above that of students enrolled in regular courses. A very interesting conclusion of Dalton-Puffer's revision has to do with the fact that, whereas those with a knack for foreign languages secure a high degree of competence even through conventional foreign language classes, in CLIL groups average students manage to significantly improve their foreign language command and therefore this approach would cater better for them. In general terms it can be affirmed that the results obtained in other European countries reveal similar tendencies and point to the beneficial effects of CLIL insofar as language acquisition is concerned (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Pérez Cañado, 2012). Nevertheless, a caveat has to be entered, as some voices (Rumlich, 2016, among them) affirm that these positive results cannot be attributed only to the CLIL approach *per se*, but rather to other factors such as student selection in CLIL groups and the lack of valid non-CLIL comparison groups.

Empirical evidence needs to be complemented by analysis of students' beliefs, as the latter represent a very important part of any CLIL experience. Because learning beliefs and motivation are dynamic constructs (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015), this study is based on a longitudinal qualitative approach to understand exactly what happens to students' motivation in CLIL programmes. It is worth noting that, as Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p. 208) point out: "longitudinal studies can offer far more meaningful insights into motivational matters than cross-sectional ones, and only by collecting longitudinal data can we fully explore the dynamic nature of the mental processes underlying motivation." That is, longitudinal studies allow the researcher to analyse the interplay between motivational factors and the events that take place in CLIL courses over time.

Qualitative research focuses on the particular by operating on a small scale with a view to providing a nuanced picture of individual participants. In contrast to quantitative inquiry, qualitative research does not generate statistically significant results as representatives of a category, but instead attempts to bring out individual features or differences and to explore them in depth (Friedman, 2012). Qualitative data are often referred to as rich or deep, because they provide the researcher with a much more detailed picture about language learning than a mathematical/statistical procedure. As Baralt (2012, p. 223) points out, "Recursive interaction with the data, reflecting on coding decisions, questioning themes (or categories), and bringing out patterns define the qualitative coding process."

Against this backdrop, this article aims at bringing to the fore students' reflections on their experience with CLIL, the reasons being that not only have students been shown to be capable of reflecting on the materials, organizational conditions, and their learning process (Dalton-Puffer, Hüttner, Schindelegger, & Smit, 2009), but their reflections have also been argued to have positive effects on students' language learning experience (Coyle, 2013; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2016a; Sierra,

2011). In this sense, Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, and Smit (2013, p. 269) assert that students' beliefs about the nature of language and language learning "affect how learners make sense of their experiences and organise their learning" and are pivotal for "the understanding of learner motivation."

Accordingly, by understanding the learning experience from the learners' point of view, we may be in a better position to identify some of the key elements in students' beliefs. Studies reveal that learners are able to construct their own views about learning as a result of the influence exerted by their own personal development, the school experience, and the attitudes of parents, teachers, and the community at large (Muñoz, 2014). In particular, in this paper we gather secondary education students' reflections on their motivational stance, the key aspects of the CLIL experience, and the use of their linguistic repertoire in the CLIL classroom. If we tap into students' language beliefs and reflections, a clearer picture of CLIL settings will be available and students' learning motivation may be boosted. At this point, it has to be mentioned that this article is part of a larger study in which we have gathered quantitative and qualitative data from students, teachers, and management teams in both secondary and tertiary education (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017; Lasagabaster, 2016, 2017; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2015, 2016a, 2016b), and some references will be made to our previous findings in order to help the reader understand some of the results presented below.

Pladevall-Ballester (2015) points out that there is an urgent need for longitudinal studies of stakeholders' perceptions of CLIL experiences. Previous studies on CLIL students' perceptions have shown that students are usually contented with the experience due to the nature of the experience itself or by comparing the CLIL experience favourably with their foreign language classes (Coyle, 2013). Students tend to report that CLIL lessons provide a better stimulus for communication, which helps them to keep more involved, to feel better about speaking the foreign language and to sustain their interest even in the case of students perceived as less motivated language learners (Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013), while they feel that their foreign language skills improve (Coyle, 2013; Massler, 2012; Pladevall-Ballester, 2015). However, low achievers usually complain about the difficulties they encounter when content is taught in a foreign language. These studies concur in highlighting that CLIL boosts students' motivation, but this affective construct is usually analysed in a very general way without any particular theoretical framework in mind. Similarly, there is a dearth of studies on students' beliefs about the use of their linguistic repertoire in CLIL contexts or how they believe CLIL programmes could be improved, issues that will be analysed in this article.

Since motivation plays an important role in the present study, reference needs to be made to the theoretical framework on which its analysis is based, namely Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) *Motivational Self System*. This model encompasses three

components: two forms of possible selves and the learning experience. The first component is the *ideal L2 self* and refers to the person the individual would like to become as a speaker of the L2. The ideal L2 self generates motivation which reduces the discrepancy between our actual and our ideal selves. The second component is the *ought-to self* and refers to the attributes (duties, obligations, responsibilities) one believes one ought to possess to meet the expectations of significant others. The final component is the *L2 learning experience*, that is, the motives related to the environment in which the language is being learnt and the language learning experience. Studies carried out in diverse contexts such as Hungary (Csizér & Lukács, 2010), Indonesia (Lamb, 2007), China, Iran, and Japan (Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009) have demonstrated that the ideal L2 self exerts a determinant influence on the learner's L2 motivation, but little is known about how the model fits in CLIL settings.

2. Research questions

This study was designed with a view to answering the following three research questions:

1. How does students' foreign language learning motivation develop over a three-year period as a result of the CLIL experience?
2. Throughout three academic years, what aspects of the CLIL experience do students highlight?
3. What do CLIL students think about the use of their other languages (Basque and Spanish) in CLIL classes?

3. The study

3.1 Participants and procedures

The participants were members of three different schools located in Vitoria-Gasteiz and Bilbao, two of the main cities in the Basque Autonomous Community, one of the 17 autonomous communities that make up Spain. In all three schools students started learning English in Grade 1 of primary education, whereas CLIL programmes were not launched until the first year of secondary education. School A was attended by middle class students, and had been involved in CLIL for 15 years. All the teachers had C1 (low advanced) English on the Common European

Framework of Reference² (CEFR) scale and an average of seven years of CLIL experience. Students had four weekly sessions of CLIL subjects apart from the usual three English as a foreign language (EFL) sessions. School B was located in a (low) middle class neighbourhood and had been using the CLIL approach for 12 years. The teaching staff's level of English competence was either B2 (high intermediate) or C1 on the CEFR scale and their average experience of teaching CLIL was six years. School B also had four weekly sessions of CLIL subjects apart from the usual three EFL sessions. Finally, School C had only been involved in CLIL for the previous three academic years and was located in a low middle class neighbourhood. The majority of the teachers held a B2 certificate and had one year's experience on average. This school had three CLIL sessions per week (plus three EFL classes). Therefore, Schools A and B were more experienced and had been involved in CLIL programmes for considerably longer than School C, and the latter's teachers' competence in English was lower than that of teachers at the other two schools.

In June 2013, 2014, and 2015 three focus groups were organized in each of the three schools. The participants were the same 17 students in each of the three groups, namely five in School A, six in School B, and another six students in School C, all of whom participated over the three years. The participants were randomly chosen by the teaching staff and they were explicitly asked to include a range of English proficiency levels and a balance regarding gender, which is why the participants could be considered to be representatives of the three schools. Three researchers carried out the discussion groups (one in each site over the three years) and discussed how the questions would be tackled before their actual implementation. The focus groups were carried out in Spanish because this was the language chosen by the participants, as this was the L1 of the vast majority of them and consequently they felt more at ease using the majority language. In fact, all the students had Spanish as their L1 except for two students for whom Basque was their mother tongue; this is the usual picture in most schools in Vitoria-Gasteiz and Bilbao, two predominantly Spanish-speaking cities. Therefore, all the quotes were translated into English by the author. After the recordings of the nine group discussions were transcribed, the word count totalled 67,381 words.

The participants were all enrolled in model D, a linguistic model in which Basque is the language of instruction except for the Spanish language and literature subject, the English language subject, and the two CLIL courses. Students did not have to go through a selection process to participate in CLIL programmes at any of the three schools.

None of the participants had had any CLIL experience before the first year of secondary education, which is why by the end of the project all of them had

2. Available at <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf>

been exposed to CLIL courses for three academic years (2012/13, 2013/14, and 2014/15); all the respondents were 12/13 years old at the beginning of the study and 14/15 by the end. Although the subjects taught in each school and even each year may have varied, the CLIL subjects were arts and crafts, music, physical education, drama, and citizenship.

The focus groups were based on a series of questions that were focused on some background information about the participants, their perception of English as the current *lingua franca*, questions concerning their motivation from a self-system perspective (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), the CLIL experience, and the use of the L1 in CLIL lessons.

3.2 The procedure

The process of data analysis was based on Grounded Theory (Gibson & Hartman, 2014; Charmaz, 2006) and descriptive and analytic coding procedures with notes were followed for categorization and analytic understanding by two independent researchers who worked to reconcile any differences until they reached a shared interpretation. During the coding process different indicators or keywords emerged. These were compared and similarities and differences were considered. Later, the data were grouped and given conceptual labels, so that they could eventually be successively categorised. The coding was designed to analyse the transcriptions precisely and to minimise the risk of overlooking important categories. Qualitative coding is inherently interpretive, which is why it becomes a process of “delineating the nature of a phenomenon by continuous interaction with and re-reading of the data. By comparing and contrasting themes and stopping often to reflect and ask questions, the researcher discovers patterns in the data” (Baralt, 2012, p. 223).

Students’ reflections were analysed both at the group level and the individual level over the three points in time which allowed us to have a clearer picture of the evolution of their beliefs. A grid was used by each of the two evaluators to keep record of their analysis at both personal and group levels.

4. Results

4.1 Perception of English

The first set of questions was aimed at gathering information about students’ perception of English as a *lingua franca*, which led to the category “English as the current international language”. Initially two keywords clearly stood out: *global* and *international*. In the three schools English is seen by the participants as a global language

rather than the language of a few particular countries or inner-circle countries following Kachru's (1986, 1992) well-known division: "Nowadays many people speak English and they have decided that English is to be used as means of communication all over the world" (Student 4, School A, 2013). Except for three students in School A, the rest did not consider that the increasing presence of English would have a negative impact on Spanish, Basque, culture, or identity issues: "I don't think so because ... that is, we will keep speaking Spanish and Basque. English is something additional we learn to communicate when abroad" (Student 6, School A, 2013); "and besides, with the family, you'll keep speaking the same language" (Student 4, School A, 2013). The more critical three students were only concerned about the pressure that English may exert on Basque in areas such as Vitoria-Gasteiz, where Spanish is the predominant language in all social spheres except education: "I think that English and Spanish will finally destroy Basque because only Spanish will be spoken, because Basque is only spoken here (in the Basque Country) (Student 3, School A, 2013); "I think so, because in Álava Basque is less spoken than in Bizkaia or Gipuzkoa and if we start to have many classes in English, then, at the end, Basque will not be used so much" (Student 4, School A, 2015).

As for their orientation towards English, their motivation is clearly more instrumental than integrative or related to their desire to learn more about English-speaking people and their cultures. As a matter of fact, the two keywords distinctly identifiable in the transcriptions were *work* and *travel*, words which were recurrent over the three-year period: "But I prefer to have more things in English because English is very important and every time you wish to travel to any place in the world you need to know English" (Student 5, School B, 2013); "And for work, because if there is a work position in which you need to speak English or you need to know it and you don't, you will lose that job" (Student 1, School B, 2013).

When asked whether they considered English to be essential for secondary education students, different perspectives were found. In Schools A and B there was widespread agreement that English has become indispensable, but in School C the debate led the participants to conclude that it is very useful when it comes to getting a job, but that it is not essential; the importance of both other foreign languages and their own languages (Basque and Spanish) is also mentioned. In this case the most outstanding keyword was *useful*.

4.2 Motivation

The analysis of the students' comments led to three main categories in relation to motivation: the "ideal English self", the "ought-to English self" and the "CLIL learning experience", categories that are closely connected to Dörnyei's framework (2005, 2009), described in the introduction above.

4.2.1 *The ideal English self*

The first of these three umbrella categories, “the ideal English self”, consisted of four subcategories: “out-of-school activities”, “academic future selves”, “future careers” and “personal future selves”, which I will now analyse in more detail.

All the participants managed to sustain their motivation throughout the three years, although no increase on motivation related to the school context can be detected from the analysis of the transcriptions. In fact, the keywords in this case were *films, television series, music, video games, and youtube*, all of which made up the “out-of-school activities” subcategory, in which they used English for pleasure: “On television some series are subtitled and then you listen to English and I try to listen to it ... I feel a bit of envy because they speak very well and we speak as if we were robots ... Then I listen to improve” (Student 6, School C, 2013). The majority of students in this study come from (low) middle-class families and have had access to role models of interculturally competent and proficient English-speaking models (mainly through the media, e.g. Rafael Nadal and Pau Gasol), which is why they have developed aspirations towards an ideal L2 self since early adolescence (see Lamb, 2012; Lamb & Budiyanto, 2013).

The only keyword related to a formal learning context as an out-of-school activity had to do with the *language academy* and, in two of the schools, students highlighted its importance as time went by: “I also go to private language classes and at the beginning I thought that the only reason was that my mother wanted me to, because she told me that it was important for my future, but over time I have realized ... by myself, that it is important for me” (Student 6, School C, 2015).

When students were asked about their “academic future selves”, several issues arose. Firstly, and although in general terms students were willing to go on participating in the CLIL experience, a common feature shared by the respondents was their concern about future difficulties that may arise due to the increasing linguistic complexity of CLIL subjects. *Difficulty* was by far the most outstanding keyword in this part of the discussion, *language proficiency* being the second one, as the following quotation attests: “If we were taught English better and had a good proficiency level so as to understand history ... Those in the fourth year are taking history in English and my brother says that it is very difficult and if you don’t have good English, you have to work twice as hard” (Student 5, School B, 2013). Students underscored that a good command is necessary in order to be able to face the demands imposed by an increasing linguistic complexity on content learning, which is why they see themselves as participants of future CLIL courses (in accordance with Pladevall-Ballester, 2015 and Coyle, 2013), but in subjects that they consider not to be too complex, which brings to light another keyword,

namely *light school subjects*: “I wouldn’t mind taking a course such as *alternativa*³ in English, but, I don’t know, to study in English one of the important subjects ... such as history ... I find it difficult” (Student 5, School A, 2014). Students are wary of how the combination of increasing linguistic complexity and more complex contents may affect their academic results, which is why their future selves are constrained to some particular courses, the ones they deem softer and easier in content, such as arts and crafts, *alternativa*, and physical education.

Their “ideal English selves” were highly influenced by their vision of their “future careers”, a subcategory defined by the keywords *work* and *go abroad*. In the three schools students were well aware of the importance of English in the job market, and some participants even mentioned that it is more than likely that they would have to travel abroad to find a job and that, therefore, English would become indispensable: “I want to be a teacher, so I will need English. Besides, nowadays almost all jobs require English” (Student 4, School A, 2013); “I also see myself in the future in need of English, because right now there isn’t much work here and I believe many people will have to travel abroad and then, since English is the general language ... I think so” (Student 1, School A, 2013); “Besides I don’t like this country nor the way we learn, and there is more future abroad and they value the youth more in other countries than here and they have more opportunities to study” (Student 5, School B, 2015). However, as time went by, this positive predisposition to use English in their jobs in the future waned among some discussants from the first focus group in 2013 to the second in 2014, although it was stronger again in the last focus group in 2015. This indicates that students’ future selves were non-linear and varied across time as indicated by these fluctuations. Such fluctuations were observed in the case of Students 2 and 6 in School B and Students 2, 5 and 6 in School C, and to a lesser extent among students in School A. To set a particular example, Student 2 in School C made the following comment in 2013, “I can think of myself in my future having a job offer from an English or North American and then I will need English to work”; a stance that was smoothed in 2014, “I think I may use English at work but it won’t be so such a priority”; to end up affirming in 2015 that “I think I will speak English at work because if it is regularly used in the company, this will mean that it is a strong one”.

Nevertheless, and despite some small fluctuations, a constantly recurrent reflection made by the students over the three years was that they deemed English a precious and very valuable asset for landing a job. In fact, they all considered that they should have the possibility of choosing CLIL courses in their future studies (whether they be high school, university, or vocational training), but as

3. This is a subject for those who do not choose religion and in which social and ethical values are taught.

time passed they decided that it should be optional (this issue will be revisited in the next section). Therefore, their future self is closely linked to the keywords *job* and *asset*.

Students also revealed a strong “personal future self” in which they will have international friends with whom they will communicate in English, the two main keywords being *friends* and *communication*. In fact, two of the participants claimed to already have foreign friends with whom they regularly used English as means of communication: “I have friends with whom I speak English, so I see myself speaking English to my friends in the future” (Student 4, School A, 2013); “I don’t have foreign friends but I can imagine myself speaking English with some friends in the future” (Student 3, School A, 2013). Likewise, several instances of contact with foreign people were brought out in the discussion: “I use English sometimes to communicate when I play with my Xbox video games and play against a foreigner” (Student 2, School B, 2015). However, a few of the students showed a motivational decline as the years passed due to the difficulties they encountered when having to speak English: “I have met foreign people while on holidays and although I was able to understand them quite well, I found it very hard to find the word I needed and I wasn’t able to speak fluently” (Student 1, School C, 2015).

4.2.2 *Ought-to English self*

As for the “ought-to English self” category, the second main category, it was made up of three main subcategories: “external factors”, “ability to communicate with foreigners” and “negative effect”. Students concurred in acknowledging that their parents placed much importance on English and that they encouraged them to improve their English language skills. *Parents* became thus the main keyword, although it is closely linked to another keyword in this category (external factors), *importance*: “They tell me it’s very important to get a job ... it is useful for many things” (Student 1, School A, 2013); “Too much (importance my parents attach to English). I started to learn English from a very early age in a private language academy. And that was the reason. I don’t know why my parents wanted me to study English and, in fact, now my teacher has told me that I could jump to the following course, but I don’t want. But my parents want me to advance, so it seems to me it is going to be so. I think they give English too much importance” (Student 5, School B, 2015); “Although it is said that those kids that go to language schools are wasting their time and that it is a drag, at the end you realize that if you don’t go it is a mistake for your future” (Student 4, School C, 2014). In School B the participants highlighted that parents consider that English is more important than Basque, although none of the students in Schools A and C mentioned this issue. In School C two of the students pointed out that one of their parents was also learning English and they considered it was due to the importance of the current *lingua franca*.

When pondering other “external factors” that led them to try to succeed in CLIL, parents and social demand were highlighted as the most influential factors, followed by teachers and peers. As mentioned above, the initial main keywords were thus *parents* and *social demand* (a word which interacts with the aforementioned *importance*) due to their recurrent presence in the discussions. The pressure exerted by the social demand is attested by the following exchange in School A:

1. Social demand and parents because parents wish the best for us and if they see that English is so necessary that is why they tell us to study it (Student 4, School A, 2015);
2. At the end of the day it is the social demand that has an influence on parents then ... (Student 3, School A, 2015);
3. Due to pressure ... because supposedly you need it for your future and if you don't have it then you have fewer opportunities to find a job (Student 2, School A, 2015).

Although parental influence is mentioned over the three years, it seems that, as students get older, they become more aware of the importance English may have in their future professional careers as a result of the current social demand for English proficiency. Albeit to a lesser degree, *communication* also arises as a keyword and the category “ability to communicate with foreigners” should also be mentioned: “I think that, since everybody speaks English, wherever you may go, even if English is not their own language, when you want to travel, then you can communicate ...” (Student 5, School B, 2013).

In connection with the ought-to self, the “negative effect” subcategory that arose during the discussions is related to the pernicious consequences that not knowing English could entail, and this category is explicitly linked to a single keyword: *work*. The discussants repeatedly revolve around the same idea: “If you don't know English you won't have access to lots of jobs” (Student 3, School B, 2015); “I think that now if you don't know how to speak English you may not get a contract” (Student 2, School C, 2014); “Right now English is needed for almost everything and if you don't grasp the English language you will have more difficulties at work” (Student 2, School A, 2014). However, in Schools A and C students distinguished between CLIL and the English language. Over the three years the same trend was observed in both schools; initially, in 2013, they affirmed that their academic record would be less brilliant if CLIL was not included, but by the time they reached the third year of secondary education, they deemed good English proficiency more important than having participated in CLIL experiences.

4.2.3 CLIL learning experience

In the following lines I will focus on the third main category, the “CLIL learning experience”, which encompassed the following subcategories: “optional CLIL courses”, “CLIL classroom anxiety”, “native speaker”, “feeling at home in CLIL classes” and “problems arising from different degrees of English competence”. The main belief shared by all the groups was that if the school subject was a difficult one (history in comparison to arts and crafts, for example), they needed to pull their weight and make a greater effort: “If we had to study history in English it would be more complicated, but the CLIL subjects we are taking right now are not very difficult” (Student 4, School A, 2015). It seems that their opinion varied depending on the subject being learnt in each academic year: the more demanding the content, the more prone they were to highlight the need to work harder. Therefore the keyword in this category is *difficulty*, which they link to the content subject. The general feeling is that they do not need to make any additional effort because their current CLIL subjects are not such a big challenge.

Students showed widespread agreement as to the non-compulsory nature of CLIL courses. In the “optional CLIL courses” subcategory there were some outstanding keywords: *marks*, *difficulty*, *dislike*, *optional*, and *interest*. By the time students reached the third year, greater concern was shown about the fact that marks may drop if all students are obliged to embark on CLIL, especially among those who find English difficult: “There are students who find English more difficult and if they have to take subjects in English their marks will be worse” (Student 3, School A, 2015); “If somebody dislikes it, they should have the right to choose ... if they don’t feel at home with the language they should not be obliged” (Student 3, School C, 2014); “I believe that if it is compulsory and some people dislike it, they will have no interest, but if it is optional those that enrol in the course will have more interest” (Student 1, School B, 2015). What is evident from the transcriptions is that students are very worried about their marks and that misgivings are on the increase as they move up in the last years of secondary education.

As for the “CLIL classroom anxiety” subcategory and its two main keywords (*nervous* and *insecurity*), in Schools A and B students agreed that they felt confident in CLIL classes and that they did not feel nervous about having to take part in English: “I agree, I don’t feel nervous because we have been learning English for quite a few years now. In German, for example, I feel insecure because we have studied it only for two years but English ...” (Student 5, School A, 2015). Although there are some exceptions in particular situations: “I sometimes get nervous because I have doubts when I have to express an idea and I don’t know how to express it, and I get nervous while trying to say what I want to express” (Student 5, School A, 2015). In School C, students’ beliefs changed, as they said they felt insecure in 2014 but their insecurity diminished as time wore on, as a result of having

higher exposure to CLIL and English. The sense of insecurity increased however when referring to native speakers: “I obviously get more nervous when speaking to native speakers ... besides we Spaniards are well known for our bad pronunciation. With a native speaker you have to pay more attention and prick up your ears because they speak faster and there is no time to catch it ... but I don’t know, it is not so bad” (Student 6, School C, 2015); “Especially when it comes to speaking because they speak much faster. The speed when we are taught here is not the same” (Student 2, School A, 2013); “Here they teach us how to write in English, not how to pronounce it. Then when pronouncing you happily try to say something and they tell you, ‘what? I don’t understand you.’ And you are left with a weird feeling” (Student 5, School B, 2015). In the case of the “native speaker” subcategory, *pronunciation* and *speed* emerged as the recurrent keywords. Conversely, this anxiety was not reported by students in relationship to speaking to other foreign students, even if the latter were very proficient.

In general terms, the three groups asserted that they felt at home in CLIL classes, although in all cases the central role played by the teacher was underscored. With a few exceptions in School C, the students claimed that they participate as much in their CLIL classes as in the classes delivered in the two co-official languages. Students in Schools A and C were quite positive, whereas students in School B showed some concern about some students’ low English competence, and they attributed this fact to the sluggishness of some CLIL classes: “Sometimes I don’t feel comfortable, because your English is better and you understand the topic faster than others whose English is not so good ... You could learn more, but ...” (Student 5, School B, 2015). Hence, the subcategory “feeling at home in CLIL classes” is characterized by the keyword *teacher*, but it was closely related to students’ comments regarding the differences in language proficiency.

The participants agreed on the fact that CLIL classes bring to light students’ language competence differences (see also Pladevall-Ballester, 2015). The subcategory that appears as predominant in this part of the discussion is the one labelled “problems due to different degrees of competence in English”, which is packed with the following keywords: *slow down*, *delay*, *bored* and *different proficiencies*: “Sometimes some students already know what is being taught and they get bored, whereas others don’t understand it even if it is explained several times ... so we have to keep explaining the same thing and this slows down everything” (Student 5, School B, 2014); “There are many different proficiencies in class ... some people find the spelling, the grammar, pronunciation very difficult ... There is some delay in class because the teacher has to teach easier things and the most complex ones are set aside” (Student 3, School C, 2015). Two main reasons were put forward to explain these differences: attendance at private language schools and lack of effort and interest in the English language. In the three schools it was mentioned

that those students who were more proficient tended to find classes boring and that this competence diversity hindered delivery of the subject content. In fact, students in Schools A and B entertained the idea of dividing the CLIL groups according to language competence levels as a possible solution.

4.3 Key aspects of the CLIL experience

When exploring students' beliefs about other aspects of the CLIL experience, five main topics were considered: CLIL recognition, content learning, language learning, teacher motivation, and measures to improve CLIL experiences.

4.3.1 *CLIL recognition*

As for the importance they attached to having a CLIL recognition in their degrees (the "CLIL recognition" category), their opinion changed from 2013 to 2015, with the exception of students in School B, where their belief that English will enhance their academic records persisted. In both Schools A and C students' initial stance was that of school B, but as time went by, they ended up concluding in 2015 that a students' academic record does not need the CLIL component to be regarded as brilliant, *not important* becoming the main keyword. The idea of making CLIL compulsory seemed to provoke a negative reaction among the majority of the participants. In general they considered that the number of CLIL options on offer should not be increased (they have two CLIL courses in all schools, that is, between three and four sessions per week) and that their decision to take the CLIL course or not would be based on their perceived difficulty of the content subject concerned. Notwithstanding, the three groups raised the job market issue once again when discussing the value of CLIL.

4.3.2 *Content learning*

As far as the "content learning" category is concerned, in the three schools the participants affirmed that their participation in CLIL did not have a negative effect (*not negative effect* becoming thus the keyword) and went on to say that they had learned as much as they would have if the classes had been delivered in Basque: "I think we learn the same content. It may take you more time to understand, but the content is the same" (Student 1, School A, 2013). Curiously enough, two students in two different schools claimed that they learnt more in CLIL classes: "I think we learn a bit more in English. Because in the future, as I have said before, if you want to study this subject [computer science], things are not going to be in Basque, they will be in English, I think. Then you have that additional information [because you have been enrolled on a CLIL course]" (Student 5, School C, 2013).

4.3.3 Language skills

In the “language skills” category, importance was attached to the explicit learning of *grammar* and *vocabulary* (keywords), which suggests that their language awareness may have been awakened through the CLIL experience. However, when they were asked which language skill was the one that benefited most from CLIL, the range of answers over the three years turned out to be so wide and variegated that no clear-cut conclusion could be drawn from the analysis. Some students asserted that the importance of the language skills varies depending on the content matter: “In my opinion it depends on the subjects because in *alternativa* speaking is the most important, but in arts and craft the writing is more important” (Student 3, School A, 2015). However, there was great variation at the inter- and intra-individual levels. In general, there was a feeling of having improved their vocabulary, but the improvement in other language aspects and skills varied considerably depending on the teacher and the subject matter. For example, some students acknowledged that in the arts and crafts or physical education subjects they did not speak much, as they were “doing things rather than speaking”.

The same can be applied to how their mistakes are corrected: “For example in physical education we don’t write anything and we aren’t corrected. We don’t speak much either. But in citizenship we get the vocabulary and the spelling corrected” (Student 1, School A, 2014); “In citizenship we are often corrected because we have the same teacher and she focuses on grammar and vocabulary ... And in computer sciences as well, if we don’t know the vocabulary he tells us how to say it and to memorize it” (Student 4, School A, 2014). In School A, the one in which teachers have the highest English qualifications and the one that has been immersed in CLIL for the longest time, the discussants provided the most positive answers regarding English improvement: “I have improved everything, but especially my speaking and listening” (Student 4, School A, 2014).

The influence of the school’s experience in CLIL programmes and the teachers’ qualifications seem also to have a bearing on the correction of mistakes. The students from Schools A and B responded that their teachers paid attention to a wider range of type of mistakes (mainly pronunciation in oral tasks and grammar mistakes in written texts), whereas the students from School C (which had only been involved in CLIL for three years) highlighted that their teachers mainly focused on correcting their vocabulary mistakes: “I think that in the classes in English the teacher focuses on the learning of content, not on English. They pay some attention to vocabulary, a bit more, but not much to the English language” (Student 1, School C, 2015).

4.3.4 *Teacher motivation*

In the “teacher motivation” category, students did not perceive any difference between CLIL and non-CLIL teachers’ motivation and believed that the CLIL approach by itself did not have any significant effect on their teachers’ classroom behaviour. The participants stated that teacher motivation is a personal issue that has more to do with the teacher’s personality and whether s/he likes the subject than with the CLIL approach. Nevertheless, they claimed that *students’ behaviour* is a key issue to bear in mind and therefore it is the main keyword in this respect: “I think that depends on the students. If the students are interested, the teacher will feel more at home and will teach more happily” (Student 3, School C, 2014). However, in School A it was mentioned that some teachers may harbour a more negative attitude because they have just received the necessary qualifications to teach in English and may have been obliged to take part in the CLIL experience (for example, not to be sent to a different school due to their lack of English qualifications): “You can see that some teachers like the English language but others have been obliged to study it to be able to teach a particular subject and, my God ...” (Student 1, School A, 2015).

4.3.5 *Measures to improve CLIL experiences*

In the “measures to improve CLIL experiences” category, the keywords were *native speaker*, *exchange programmes*, *more English language classes*, and *higher competence*. Although other proposals were also offered, these were the most recurrent ones (those formulated by a single student and only in one of the years were not considered in the analysis). The discussants thought that native speakers and language assistants would help to improve the CLIL programmes: “I would do what has been done in other schools where they have contracted native teachers, from England, a native teacher who spends a year at the high school and helps to improve students’ English” (Student 4, School C, 2014). Students alleged that exchange programmes would be beneficial as well: “Organize exchanges, because let’s imagine, if someone is going to England, they will probably show more interest and study it [English] harder” (Student 5, School A, 2015). They also thought that more English classes should be available, especially at a very early stage, because this would help them to improve their English competence:

I believe that English classes should start earlier than primary education because in this way students would have a more sound basis and would be better prepared ... have a higher language level in secondary education in the classes taught in English. Everybody would have the same command, because now there are many different proficiency levels and this makes everything more difficult. An earlier start could help to improve the situation, I believe. (Student 1, School C, 2015)

4.4 The use of students' L1 and L2 (Spanish and Basque)

In this part of the analysis of the focus groups a single category was observed, namely “use of students' linguistic repertoire”, which was underpinned by five keywords: *Spanish*, *beneficial*, *harmful*, *assessment*, and *proficiency differences*.

Spanish emerged as the main keyword. The most remarkable fact that was maintained in the focus groups over the three years in the three schools had to do with students' tendency to fall back on Spanish rather than on Basque, even though the latter was the language of instruction of most of their subjects: “Most of us usually speak Spanish; it is the language we use with our friends, and then when we come here we use Spanish rather than Basque or English” (Student 5, School C, 2014). As explained previously, most students' L1 was Spanish, being Spanish besides the predominant language in their contexts, which explains the fact that this language exerted a much greater influence than the more usual language of instruction (Basque) at school. However, there were differences depending on the school. Whereas in Schools B and C Spanish was used quite often in the CLIL classes, this was not the case in School A and students attempted to stick to English: “We try to use Spanish as little as possible, because then we learn more English” (Student 3, School A, 2015). Analysis of the teachers' transcriptions (who were also interviewed as part of the larger study) showed that teachers at School A had a stricter language policy in favour of sticking to English, and this seems to have a bearing on their students' greater use of English (Lasagabaster, 2017).

Students also mentioned that significant differences could be observed between their own linguistic behaviour and that of their teachers. In general teachers were said to provide their explanations in English and to switch into Basque when necessary: “He explains things in English but if he sees that we don't understand, then he explains it again in Basque” (Student 3, School C, 2014); “but sometimes they also forget that they have to speak in English and then, you ask a question in Basque and they answer you in Basque” (Student 6, School C, 2014). In School C some of the students acknowledged that if the teachers were stricter, they would use more English in CLIL classes. In the three schools Spanish would only be used as a last resort when teachers were upset with students' behaviour and needed to scold them. Nevertheless, some teachers were told to use Basque also in reprimands.

Students always used Spanish to talk to each other in the three schools and throughout the CLIL experience and used either Basque or Spanish to ask questions in class, although the former was more habitual because it is the language they usually use to address their teachers. Some students also used Spanish, which is why no clear-cut trend could be identified, as stated by both the students participating in this study and the data gathered from the focus groups with their

teachers in Lasagabaster (2017). However, the trend seemed to be that they did not use English when they wanted to pose their queries, especially in Schools B and C.

Students agreed in their belief that the use of either Basque and Spanish may be *beneficial* (keyword) if it is resorted to in specific moments of the class: “I think on some occasions it can be beneficial, for example when you don’t understand something, then it is not going to have a negative effect. But if you are speaking Spanish all the time and you don’t practice your English then it is harmful” (Student 2, School A, 2014). However, a few held an inflexible position and claimed that the use of the other languages is always detrimental: “I think it is harmful because we go to [CLIL] classes in English to learn English, not to learn Spanish or Basque, that we already speak very well, so I think it is harmful” (Student 6, School C, 2014). The overuse of Spanish led to the second keyword in this respect, *harmful*.

Their position in the case of exams and assignments was not as flexible, though, as there was widespread agreement that any classwork for assessment should be written and/or spoken in English, as the following comments illustrate:

“If is in English, it’s in English. And that’s all” (Student 2, School A, 2015);

“By doing it [the assessment task] in English the student shows his knowledge, because if he doesn’t understand what needs to be done he can’t do it and if it’s explained in Spanish, his English will not improve” (Student 3, School A, 2015);

“It’s only logical that oral presentations and exams have to be done in English, because it’s as if you include Basque sentences in a Spanish exam... it should be a Spanish exam, not a Basque exam” (Student 4, School A, 2015).

Assessment is therefore a keyword in the “use of students’ linguistic repertoire” category, since students in Schools A and B agreed on an English-only language policy for assessment tasks. Only in School C, where students seemed less fluent, did some entertain the idea of allowing those less able in English to answer in Basque: “Some students have not improved their English so much, so maybe they could use Basque, but all students should be assessed on an equal basis, so I find it difficult to decide whether Basque should be allowed ... if not, it would do harm to those with a lower level” (Student 6, School C, 2015). The empathy showed by this student was, however, in sharp contrast with the adamant position held by Students 4 and 5, who remained inflexible about the English-only language policy when it came to assessment, because they considered that after three years everybody had to be able to take the exams in English (they were initially more flexible in 2013). In short, in Schools A and B students only contemplated English during their discussions about classwork that was to be assessed, whereas in School C using Basque was also supported by a few students, albeit only in some very exceptional classroom situations.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Students' motivation undergoes temporal variation because the learner is an individual whose language learning process hinges on the interactions of different variables and how such interactions change over time (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015). Hence, the motivation to learn in a CLIL setting may wax or wane depending on diverse factors and the resulting interactions. In spite of this, the qualitative data collected in this study indicate that motivation remained relatively stable and confirms the results of previous quantitative studies (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2015; Rumlich, 2016), despite the ineluctable ups and down that students go through over a three-year time period.

This stability is brought about by the coexistence of students' ideal selves and their ought-to selves, in conjunction with the impact of the CLIL learning experience. And this part of the discussion brings us to the first of three research questions posed in the qualitative part of the study, the one focused on CLIL students' language learning motivation development over a three-year period. Some predominant keywords emerge from the data, mainly *work* and *useful*. The CLIL students under scrutiny in this study clearly show instrumental orientation towards the use of English to learn content, as they are well aware of the importance English has nowadays in the job market. It seems that the current difficult economic situation in Spain and the fact that the media regularly make reference to the compelling need to be competent in English exert a strong influence on the students.

In their comments students' ideal selves are closely connected to their future careers, and they envision that English will more than likely become very important. However, the non-linearity of motivation (Dörnyei, MacIntyre, & Henry, 2015) is once again detected, because their initial shared firm beliefs in 2013 wavered in 2014, to come back stronger in 2015, indicating that fluctuations do occur. Although their ideal self also included a competent English speaker who feels at home when talking to foreign students and friends, the classroom reality and the difficulty of becoming proficient in the language was also considered. In their future selves they had the vision of themselves as students in CLIL programmes, but their CLIL experience led them to conclude that it should be optional and not compulsory in their future studies.

Students' ideal selves develop hand in hand with their ought-to selves, which are strongly mediated by their parents and social demand. English is observed as an attribute students ought to possess to meet the expectations of significant others, especially their parents. However, influence exerted by parents diminishes over time to be replaced by one word: *work*. Work becomes the most intrinsic and internalized type of instrumental motive, and it is closely linked to students' view of the current job market, in which English is believed to be crucial. But the

fact that English is seen as a must in society today leads students to ponder its instrumental role both from a promotion and a prevention perspective, the former connected to the ideal self and the latter to the ought-to self (Dörnyei, 2009, 2010). English seems to play a double role then, one that is more internalized and pleasurable, and one that is externalized and is linked to the problems they may have in the future to get a job if they do not master the language.

The learning experience component of the self system is also worth discussing. Interestingly, students feel at home in their CLIL classes, but their discussions reveal that they consider the CLIL subjects undemanding. One recurrent issue throughout the discussions has to do with the differences in language proficiency, which is seen as a stumbling block by the participants and is said to negatively affect their motivation, because less proficient students slow down the pace of the CLIL class.

As for the second research question (what aspects of the CLIL experience do students highlight?), the results indicate that students are not keen on compulsory CLIL subjects, mainly because of their fear of getting lower than expected marks due to the increasing complexity of the content matter. This finding is similar to what Paulsrud (2016) found, namely that Swedish students deemed it was harder to earn good grades in CLIL courses. Thus, it seems that once the novelty wears off (Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013), students harbour a more reluctant attitude towards an unlimited spread of CLIL courses and they are particularly critical of any imposition. This same trend was observed among Basque university students (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2014).

The general impression among students in the three schools over the three academic years is that they learn as much content as they would do if the classes were delivered in Basque. That the students participating in the quantitative part of the study (reported in Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2015) sustained their motivation towards content learning throughout the CLIL experience attests to the interconnectedness of motivation and achievement (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

Students also highlight that the attention paid to the different language skills and the correction of mistakes is largely influenced by the content subject. Thus, some subjects are primarily oral, while in others more attention is paid to writing, which constrains the development of the different language skills. Lastly, students believe that CLIL programmes could be improved by incorporating native speakers, implementing international exchange programmes, and increasing the number of English language classes in primary education to increase language fluency. Students demand the presence of language assistants (native speakers), and results obtained in the Andalusian context seem to indicate that language assistants foster a conversational language style (Lorenzo, Casal, & Moore, 2010). Nonetheless, as Dafouz and Hibler (2013) point out, merely hiring language assistants may not be

sufficient. These authors reveal that despite the high numbers (800 native speakers in Madrid's CLIL primary schools, for example) and the high cost to the programme, no specific guidelines are provided concerning how the assistants should collaborate with the local teachers in the classroom, which means that CLIL programmes are not capitalising on the presence of language assistants. Dafouz and Hibler (2013) conclude that teacher education sessions should include team-teaching planning and practice, because this "will help foster greater appreciation among all participants and, in that fashion, render the programme more successful" (p. 337).

As for the use of the students' other languages in CLIL classes, the third research question, in the three schools a similar trend can be observed, as students speak to each other overwhelmingly in Spanish. What has been observed in Basque-medium classes in predominantly Spanish-speaking contexts (Cenoz, 2009) seems also to be reproduced in CLIL classes. Few students seem to make the effort to speak English and they even assert that, were their teachers stricter about its utilisation in class, they would speak it more regularly. In fact, in a study carried out among CLIL teachers in the same schools participating in this study, Lasagabaster (2017) observed that two main points of view arose: on the one hand, that of those who attempted to keep the languages separate and, on the other hand, that of those for whom there was little point in keeping them apart. However, even the most reluctant teachers (those in the first group) acknowledged that they used Basque and Spanish in their CLIL classes. A pedagogical implication would then be the need to evolve from a flexible multilingual standpoint in the early years of CLIL to a more mainly-English language policy later on, because otherwise students will make little use of English in their CLIL classes. As a matter of fact, students recognize that they need to be forced to use English. Therefore, although students enjoy and even demand the use of their own language because this practice facilitates their learning, teachers and students need to establish some clear-cut guidelines concerning the use of students' linguistic repertoire.

In contrast to their belief that Spanish and Basque can be used in CLIL classes, the vast majority of students agreed over the three years that, when it comes to assessment, English should be the only language allowed. It can thus be concluded that students do not accept the use of the L1 in work which is to be graded, which may come from a deep-rooted belief among Basque teachers that students should make an effort to write assessment-related tasks only in English (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2017), which seems to have percolated down to the students.

Last but not least, it has to be underscored that the results put forward in this study need to be complemented with further analyses of data gathered among teachers and school management teams, because this will give us a much more detailed picture of all the stakeholders' beliefs and practices. Examining and

comparing the data gathered from these three groups will make it possible to develop a set of methodological guidelines that will make future CLIL programmes more efficient, because the power of beliefs, lay theories and their impact on the implementation of CLIL programmes should not be overlooked (Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, & Smit, 2013).

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Laburpena

EHII (Edukien eta Hizkuntzen Ikaskuntza Integratua) programek hedapen handia izan dute Europako hainbat herrialdetan, ustez programa hauen bitartez ikasleen atzerriko hizkuntza gaitasuna nabarmenki hobetuko delako edukien garapenari inolako kalterik egin gabe. Ikerketa kualitatiboa eta longitudinala abiapuntuz hartuta, artikulu honetan EHII programetan parte hartzen duten ikasleen hausnarketak aztertuko dira. Ikasleak ikasketa prozesuari eta antolaketa baldintzei buruzko hausnarketa egiteko gauza direla frogatu dute aurreko ikerketek, ikasleen hausnarketek haien sinismen sistemaren ezaugarri nagusiak azalaratzen dituzten bitartean. Hiru urtez burututako eztabaida-taldeen bitartez, ikasleek motibazioari buruz, EHII programei buruz eta beste hizkuntzen erabilerari buruz dituzten eritziak jaso ziren. Ikasleen eritziak, hausnarketak eta motibazioa aztertuz, EHII programen irudi zehatzagoa izatea lortuko dugu, programa hauen indar guneak eta ahuleziak argitara aterako baitira.

Author's address

David Lasagabaster
 University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU
 Faculty of Arts
 English and German Philology Department
 Paseo de la Universidad 5
 01006 Vitoria-Gasteiz
 Spain
 david.lasagabaster@ehu.es