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The Effect of the CLIL Approach on
EFL Student's Motivation

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Abstract

This paper addresses the benefits of implementing alternative approaches to teach as a foreign language (EFL) with traditional methods in Spanish educative centres and explores the role of motivation in the learning process. More specifically, it highlights the impact of the implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on motivation and the implicit belief that CLIL not only positively improves learners' attitude, but also increases motivation and contributes to maintaining it over time. For this purpose, the concept of motivation and its types will be explored in relation to L2 acquisition. Moreover, after comparing methodological traditional approaches implemented in Spanish classrooms, this paper concludes that the use of CLIL within Spanish ELT education enhances students' linguistic skills and competences by providing incidental learning and promoting higher levels of motivation thus, producing better results than traditional methods.

Key words: motivation, EFL, traditional methods, CLIL.

Resumen

Este trabajo aborda los beneficios de la implementación de enfoques alternativos a la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) con métodos tradicionales en los centros educativos españoles y examina el papel de la motivación en el proceso de aprendizaje. Más concretamente, destaca el impacto de la implementación del Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas (AICLE) en la motivación y la supuesta creencia de que CLIL no sólo mejora positivamente a la actitud del estudiante sino que incrementa la motivación, y contribuye a mantenerla a lo largo del tiempo. Para ello, el concepto de motivación y sus distintos tipos se examinarán en relación con la adquisición de L2. Además, después de comparar los enfoques metodológicos tradicionales implementados en las aulas españolas, en este trabajo se concluye que el uso de AICLE en la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera mejora las habilidades y competencias lingüísticas de los estudiantes al proporcionar un aprendizaje incidental y promover mayores niveles de motivación, produciendo así mejores resultados que los métodos tradicionales.

Palabras clave: motivación, ILE, métodos tradicionales, AICLE.

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1. Introduction

The exponential growth of globalization and the major influence of Anglo-Saxon countries throughout the world have turned English into a lingua franca. Therefore, in the last decades English has been paramount as it is the language for international communication regarding commerce, finance, and education. Besides, it is the official language of multiple international organizations. As a consequence of its significant importance, English has been widely incorporated into European educative centres including Spain where it has become mandatory in schools and high schools. The main concern of governments is the development of a good English level. Thus, in order to achieve this goal several teaching methods have been implemented to reach the best results. Nevertheless, worldwide failure rate in language learning is high (Dörnyei, *Teaching* 146). Some of the factors that lead to the failure of English teaching implementation plans are caused by the methodology used in classroom, impacting negatively on student's interest and motivation. However, the use of CLIL, an innovative methodology which is based on teaching content and language simultaneously has shown its efficacy with regards to the increase student motivation and has produced great results in English learning. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the essential role of motivation when learning English as a foreign language. A further aim is to explain what CLIL consists of, its advantages and how it may encourage motivation while developing student competence by helping them to acquire English incidentally and in a natural way in contrast with the traditional methods.

2. The Role of Motivation in ELT

In its early stages, SLA — Second Language Acquisition— research mostly concentrated the attention on linguistic aptitude, as it was believed to be the major determinant with regards to the acquisition of the L2. Nevertheless, Gardner and Lambert discovered in 1959 that apart from aptitude what is truly related with learning and achievement is the motivational factor (268). There is no consensus when it comes to defining what motivation is. This is probably due to the fact that there are multiple kinds of motivation which may affect differently students' commitment and outcomes in second language learning (Navarro et al. 72). Despite this discrepancy regarding its meaning, several authors have attempted to define it in a proper way. Gardner defined it as a multi-faceted concept involving affective, cognitive, and behavioural elements (10). Moreover, Dörnyei describes motivation, not as a role of incentives and reinforcement, but as a complex process focused on the individual's thoughts and beliefs that are converted into action (*Motivation* 18).

The complexity of the concept motivation and the difficulty to fully comprehend what it actually is has hindered its importance in language learning (Lasagabaster 3). Nevertheless, several studies have been carried out in many different contexts demonstrating a clear correlation between motivation and language achievement. Over decades, motivation was deemed as a relatively stable trait of the learner. However, from the 1990s, research on motivation has shifted to being understood as a broader construct that depends on the context in which learning occurs and, therefore, it started to be considered a crucial aspect of the language-learning process within EFL classroom. For Lasagabaster motivation is a direct determinant of L2 attainment and is indeed one of the individual variables to which many scholars have paid attention in second language acquisition literature lately (3). Thus, it can be affirmed that motivation is one of the most

powerful factors in EFL as it provides learners with an aim to achieve. Nevertheless, motivation comes from within and even though teachers can maintain and enhance it, they cannot motivate the student (Gardner 201). Motivation is considered as a dynamic factor that requires to be initiated by the student itself and maintained throughout time with the help of several factors. If students make progress in EFL, there will be changes concerning their motivation, thus it is necessary to evaluate the internal and external factors that interact with it since all the elements involved in the teaching-learning process are mutually affected. The teaching methodology and activities previously chosen as well as teachers' attitude towards EFL are crucial factors which interact with the motivation process and seriously affect the language learning process.

2.1 Types of motivation related to L2 acquisition

There are multiple kinds of motivation, nonetheless, there has been four types analysed related to L2: intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental, and integrative. Gardner distinguishes two types of motivational orientations, which are the reasons that drive people to learn the L2 (56). Firstly, intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation that leads individuals to learn the language for their own need or goals. Thus, this motivation enhances the effort to learn English with a persistent attempt to spending time doing homework, seeking outside the classroom opportunities to improve the knowledge, etc. Nevertheless, "effort alone does not indicate motivation" (Alizadeh 11). Furthermore, motivation is closely related to the learner's enjoyment while learning the target language. The second type is extrinsic motivation which is the motivation driven by external forces, the actions performed are to get rewards or instrumental aims. Therefore, extrinsic motivation remains in external factors outside the inherent fulfilment of the learning process. In 1998, Dörnyei remarked that in a motivational construct instrumental and integrative motivation were also involved in L2. An integrative orientation reflects the wish to be integrated and thus, be

part of the target language community and be involved, whereas an instrumental orientation suggests a functional or practical motivation such as the necessity to pass an exam, get a job or earn money (“Motivation” 88). Integrative oriented learners are better trained to succeed in FL since they reveal a deeper desire to learn the language, displaying more positive attitudes towards the learning process and therefore, putting more effort into acquiring knowledge. Notwithstanding, in an EFL class, where there is a deficient contact with the target language community, instrumental motivation can be crucial to maintain and foster student’s motivation as long as it is properly focused.

3. Traditional Methods and Motivation in Spanish Education

In Spain, there has been a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction with regards to ELT these past decades (Vez 25). This discontent is not isolated as it is likely to be followed by demotivation. First of all, it is essential to distinguish between amotivation, which is the absolute absence of motivation, from demotivation. Demotivation is the lack of interest from a person who initially was motivated. For Dörnyei and Lambert it is the “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action” (143). Hence, it should be noted the negative role demotivation has on student’s learning as it decreases the interest and its unconscious desire to continue learning on its own initiative. This implies a higher effort as well in achieving the requested targets and to be able to keep with the studies in an effective manner.

Among the factors causing demotivation there are key ones such as “lack of hours of exposure to English, lack of teacher’s training, inadequate materials lacking authenticity, mismatches between the methodologies used or negative attitudes” towards learning English (Méndez 106). As well as other countries in the EU, Spain initiated among its reforms the Bologna Process in 2007, which attempted to synchronize the academic

standards throughout Europe. Such implementation intended to reduce class sizes to carry out a more personalized service and better address student's needs. Nevertheless, while other surveys such as Eurostat and a new report by language training company Education First place Germany or Sweden with great result in EFL, Spain showed bad results with regards to student competence in EFL. Although Spain is one of the first countries introducing English in pre-school and making it compulsory until secondary education, the policies and practices which attempt to boost it, are not being reflected in the outcomes. A consequence of this may be that even though the exposure to English in a regular Spanish high school is around three or four hours per week, the ineffectiveness of traditional approaches, the lack of authenticity of materials as well as the lack of contact with native speakers, has a negative impact on students who tend to consider English as a useless subject. All these factors may also contribute to low levels of motivation and engagement, which are crucial for effective language learning.

During the last few decades, ELT in Spain has been carried out frequently through traditional teaching English. Thus, English has been taught as a set of disconnected skills and teachers have relied on traditional materials and textbooks, where EFL is divided in sections, including vocabulary, grammar, listening and reading. This division entails a rupture of the language and affects the way it is perceived inside students' brain. As a result of this, students will not be able to put all the skills together properly when it comes to its use. ELT does not usually follow the natural way in which the mother tongue is acquired since it does not focus on oral exposure and its use. Additionally, the teaching of English does not foster a dynamic and practical learning environment where the students use the target language in different context in order to improve language competence, but has become a discipline consisting on memorizing language patterns. Consequently, they lose their interest in the target language. Indeed, commonly the aim

for many Spanish students is passing the exam rather than learning to use it for future purposes. The key to foster student motivation, as Tinajero concludes, is to help students perceive the multiple short and long term benefits of learning English (4). This likelihood of increasing their interest and effort happens when students perceive the intrinsic meaning of what they have learned, this increases student interest in practically all cases, although more in those who tend to act seeking the development of personal competence and the enjoyment of the task.

Thus, motivation contributes not only to greater learning and development but also to a higher personal well-being. It is essential that governments and teachers review their education policies and teaching methods so that they can awaken the curiosity of students by showing the relevance and usefulness of what they are actually learning. Thus, changes in the methodology would help to highly increase this low motivation towards English. One of the methodologies which are currently being implemented is CLIL, a method that is getting great results in boosting motivation as well as student English competence.

4. Moving forward: Implementing CLIL to motivate EFL Students in Spain

4.1 Definition and objectives

CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning, an innovative methodology consisting of a learning approach based on teaching content and language simultaneously. It is a well-known method as it has shown its efficacy to increase motivation and to promote foreign language acquisition. It has a great impact on motivational aspects, enhances cognitive development, and restructures the brain as a result of learning a FL in a more reflective way. Moreover, this dual teaching allows students to be exposed to the English language for a longer period of time and enhances its use in a natural and real

environment. Therefore, students learn science, history, or geography through the use of a non-native language, in this case English. However, the use of CLIL does not imply the disappearance of English as an isolated subject, as it is still necessary to reach a high level of language competence, thus students have English lessons to reinforce and improve their skills. The main difference with traditional approaches to EFL teaching relies on the fact that language is not the end, but the means through which students acquire new knowledge. Rather than focusing exclusively on language, CLIL offers a marvellous balance between content and language learning providing plenty opportunities for incidental language learning. This methodology was developed by David Marsh in 1994 and, although CLIL has been steadily gaining fame across Europe over the last two decades and continues to do so, it presents a few problems, such as the lack of a regularization and standardized approach to its implementation in educative centres (Navarro et al. 78), which have been attributed to its newness. For a lesson to be successful in CLIL it should combine all four language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) along with the following elements included in the 4Cs curriculum of Coyle (44).

1. Content: progress in knowledge, skills and understanding associated to specific elements of a well-defined curriculum.
2. Communication: using language to learn while learning how to use it.
3. Cognition: development of thinking skills linking concept formation, comprehension, and language.
4. Culture: exposure to different perspectives and common understandings, which strengthen consciousness of otherness and self.

The objectives of the CLIL provision as contained in Eurydice are to prepare students for life in a more globalised world and provide them with better job opportunities in the

labour market (socio-economic objectives). A further aim is to convey to students the value of tolerance and respect towards other cultures through the use of the CLIL to learn the target language (sociocultural objectives). Lastly, a final aim is to facilitate students to develop language skills which emphasise effective communication and motivate students to learn languages by using them for real practical purposes (linguistic objectives) (Eurydice 22).

4.2 CLIL and Motivation

CLIL has demonstrated to bring remarkable advantages to foreign language education. It has a great impact in acquiring English for future academic or professional goals. Moreover, language is learnt in meaningful contexts. This means that, in contrast with traditional approaches where English is taught through artificial and inauthentic activities, CLIL proposes activities that are linked with the real world and language is acquired in a natural way, taking into account students' ages and interests.

CLIL gives the opportunity of time saving, providing better result in less time compared with traditional approaches since the exposure to FL is higher. However, the most paramount and significant advantage CLIL offers is undoubtedly related to motivation. Having to learn English in the traditional EFL classroom throughout compulsory education can be demotivating for learners as many researchers contend. Nevertheless, CLIL seems to sustain motivation. Several studies in Europe have shown the effectiveness in terms of higher motivation in comparison to non-CLIL students. Students are highly motivated in English lessons where the language can be used to fulfil practical and real purposes. This entails working and practicing the target language with authentic materials where English is portrayed in its essence, resembling the actual reality of the language in the native countries. Indeed, Peacock was able to demonstrate that those

authentic materials can be used to increase motivation even with lower proficiency learners (150). Furthermore, when students start in high school, grammar and vocabulary become the main focus of attention, which ends in a decrease of curiosity, interest, and motivation. This initial response led Davies and Brember in 2001 to measure the attitudes of several students in sixth grade, discovering that the time students spent studying a subject, the more disenchanted they become with it (108). The solution for this common problem will be the implementation of CLIL, revealing the impact that the teaching approach has on motivation. Principally, its priority is to acknowledge the impact of the methodology approach. CLIL is considered an educational approach that includes any type of activity in which the target language — in this case English— is employed as a tool in the learning process of a non-language subject in which both, the language, and the subject, perform a collaborative role. Challenging the learner through this approach by providing more contexts where FL is used, promotes a higher quality learning, increases the need to learn the language in an efficient way and boosts students' motivation.

Similarly, Seikkula-Leino in 2007 undertook a study in Finland taking into account a series of individual (age and sex) and contextual (socio-cultural) variables that may influence the results in order to examine how successfully students had learned content through CLIL and to evaluate affective learning factors such as motivation (31). The final conclusions revealed that there were no great differences affecting student adversely in learning related on the individual and contextual variables and that there was not a negatively impact on student's achievements, showing no loss of identity. Moreover, higher rates of motivation were observed among CLIL students than among non-CLIL students, especially with regards to their interest and instrumental motivation. As shown in the study, students were intrinsically more motivated, while showing a higher interest

in learning the target language. Moreover, she found a clear correlation between the level of motivation and the level of linguistic attainment, since the higher the level of motivation the better the language results. It was remarkably noticeable the grades obtained in receptive vocabulary tests in comparison to non-CLIL students due to their greater motivation. These results presented a clear evidence that the relationship between students' attitude and its motivation are reflected in their outcomes. Among those motivational factors contributing positively to their learning process is the fact that when learners are interested in a topic and feel the need to comprehend and to communicate ideas, their motivation to acquire the target language increases. Indeed, CLIL learners have shown to be "intrinsically more motivated and more instrumentally oriented, while they also showed a higher interest in FLs and cultures and a greater motivational strength" (Doiz et al. 217). A remarkable feature is that this motivational pattern in favour of CLIL program is maintained throughout the years of high school in contrast to the results of traditional approaches. Moreover, a study carried out by Lasagabaster and Doiz in 2016 among several communities all around Spain, showed that students in CLIL courses were more conscious of their improvement in English, as it fostered their positive attitudes compared to their negative perception of the learning process in the traditional English class (122).

Nevertheless, there are some problems that may decrease the efficiency of CLIL, such as the lack of systematization in educative policies, which might be negatively affecting its implementation. The major disadvantage might be teacher's training. The effectiveness of the method relies on teachers, therefore the fact they may spend more time focusing on content rather than language, might decrease the efficacy. It is paramount the organization of CLIL teacher training sessions or conferences throughout the academic year to offer them a possibility to learn at first-hand how the methodology works in a

practical way. Simultaneously, it would be beneficial to exchange experiences in order to overcome the problems which frequently arise in FL classrooms. Demanding higher effort from teachers and students makes this methodology very ambitious in comparison to traditional approaches, although the aim is not impossible to attain.

4.3 CLIL in Spain

The implementation of CLIL in Spain has been burgeoning with a good welcome in high schools, since it has been viewed as a great educative approach to improve students' English competence and boost their motivation simultaneously. With time, more educative centres and parents prefer this new learning approach as traditional approaches has shown ineffective results in the long term.

In a cross-sectional study at secondary education level conducted in the Basque Country, involving 191 secondary school students to compare three motivational factors between learner's EFL and CLIL, Lasagabaster analysed factors such as interest and instrumental orientation, attitudes towards learning English in class and effort (10). Although in this study Lasagabaster found that both EFL and CLIL students were motivated to learn English, CLIL students were significantly more enthusiastic than those in traditional EFL classrooms. Moreover, the investigation revealed CLIL students were intrinsically more motivated, and displayed a better instrumental orientation, a greater interest in foreign languages and put a higher effort made than non-CLIL students. Thus, these results obtained led him to conclude that "there is a strong relationship between the CLIL approach and motivation" (Lasagabaster 14). Nevertheless, the degrees of anxiety had no noticeable difference among the groups studied although it should be mentioned that through the interactive and co-operative nature of CLIL's approach, helps to boost self-confidence, raise self-esteem, and build learner independence. In addition, Lorenzo et al.

report the achievement of positive cognitive skills related with CLIL's implementation with the improvement of the L2 and L1 (419). However, all this tremendous investment made by students and teachers involved in CLIL will be useless if there is a constant lack of support from educational authorities since it may contribute to diminishing enthusiasm and motivation.

5. Conclusion

This paper has aimed to bring to the foreground the importance of motivation in the EFL learning process and to provide a clear picture of how traditional approaches may not offer a perfectly suitable learning framework in contrast with CLIL which increases simultaneously motivation and foreign language acquisition.

Motivation is a direct determinant of L2 achievement initiated by students, however, it must be maintained through time with the help of external factors. Hence, teachers must be aware of the significance of motivation regarding learner's language learning to be able to adopt some improvements in order to increase it and therefore, enhance positively their educational journey. Motivation to learn a second language is responsible for why a learner decides to learn L2, how long the learner is willing to maintain interest and how much effort is the learner going to put in acquiring the language. Therefore, research indicates that careful attention should be paid to the methodological approaches implemented as they may cause have a great impact on student motivation. In Spain, for example, traditional EFL methods had led to demotivation by teaching English as set of disconnected skills, promoting memoristic study of grammar rules and vocabulary and by making passing the exam the students' unique motivation. In contrast, CLIL promotes viewing English as mean to learn content, thus, there is a real motivation contributing positively to the learning process. Students are more interested in learning a language in

order to be able to communicate or understand ideas because this serves a meaningful purpose. Moreover, CLIL fosters a dynamic and a practical way of learning, where the target language becomes a tool for learning interesting and relevant content in real-life contexts which makes it a great methodology to teach English in Spanish education centres.

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