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EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
G. Sue Kasun,
Georgia State University, United States

*CORRESPONDENCE
Máire Ní Riordáin
✉ maire.niriordain@ucc.ie

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Editorial: CLIL beyond the frontiers

Máire Ní Riordáin^{1*}, Craig Neville¹, Anssi Roiha² and María Carmen Sánchez Vizcaino³

¹School of Education, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland, ²Department of Education, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland, ³Department of Romance and Slavic Languages, University of Economics in Bratislava, Bratislava, Slovakia

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Editorial on the Research Topic
CLIL beyond the frontiers

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected and multilingual world, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has emerged as a transformative approach to fostering both disciplinary knowledge and linguistic competence. Initially conceptualized as a dual-focused pedagogical method (Coyle et al., 2010), CLIL has predominantly centered on teaching through English as the additional language, particularly in European contexts (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2010; Pérez Cañado, 2021). However, as global linguistic landscapes evolve, there is an urgent need to examine CLIL's implementation beyond English-medium contexts, commonly referred to as contexts for Languages Other Than English (LOTE). While CLIL has proven effective in fostering language and content learning (Dalton-Puffer, 2013; Lyster, 2007), its success is deeply influenced by sociocultural, contextual, and learner-specific factors (Madrid and Pérez Cañado, 2018). Emerging research also highlights the role of plurilingual and multimodal pedagogies as essential tools for supporting diverse learners while promoting equitable, inclusive education (García and Wei, 2014; Meyer et al., 2018). Considering these developments, this Research Topic seeks to expand the boundaries of CLIL research by focusing on three interconnected dimensions: inclusive pedagogies, minority and minoritized languages, and innovative practices. The following contributions shed light on these dimensions through empirical, classroom-based, and critical research. By doing so, they advance our understanding of CLIL in LOTE contexts and provide actionable insights for teachers, policymakers, and researchers striving for linguistic equity and pedagogical innovation.

Overview of contributions

Bower et al. evaluate the impact of a national pilot in Ireland for Transition Year students (ages 15–16) that employs CLIL methodologies in Modern Foreign Language classrooms to enhance language learning. Based on the theme of Fair Trade, integrating learning from the disciplinary areas of geography and history, the study demonstrates the positive impact that CLIL can have on language learning by fostering enjoyment, engagement and confidence amongst learners. The authors make the case for broader

adoption of CLIL across the curriculum to help promote the learning and acquisition of LOTE; however, they also identify the need for strengthened professional development to support CLIL provision in more diverse contexts and disciplines.

Extending the discussion on CLIL's practical application, [Mattheoudakis et al.](#) investigate which CLIL principles are employed by Greek teachers in primary and secondary classes with many refugee and migrant students, using a questionnaire ($n = 125$) and interviews ($n = 5$). The results show that even though teachers have not received CLIL training, they are experimenting with a variety of CLIL practices. However, those teachers who have received some relevant continuing professional development are more prepared to support their students with a variety of scaffolding techniques. The authors suggest that CLIL could be officially introduced into Greek state education through the teaching of Greek as L2 in classes with linguistically diverse student populations.

Shifting focus to subject-specific implementations of CLIL, [Ní Ríordáin et al.](#) analyse the impact of language-responsive mathematics teaching within additional educational needs learners in a CLIL context. Based on a case study within primary school learners in Irish medium education, this research employed small group language-responsive mathematics lessons over a 5-week period as a pedagogical intervention. The results show that adjustments to the language of the assessments had an insignificant impact. The study further demonstrates that summative assessments are not reliable methods for evaluating the abilities of students with additional educational needs in Irish medium education. The study's findings underscore the significance of affective factors, such as learners' attitudes and anxiety, the role of a supportive teacher, and the design/implementation of language-responsive lessons.

Building on these studies, [Pittas and Tompkins](#) present a systematic review of CLIL in LOTE, showcasing consistent linguistic benefits, such as enhanced vocabulary and oral proficiency, while highlighting variability in academic outcomes. These disparities are linked to factors like the sociolinguistic status of the language, learners' backgrounds, and available resources, with minority language learners often facing greater challenges. The study emphasizes the importance of plurilingual pedagogies and translanguaging to support learners' diverse linguistic repertoires. Additionally, they call for improved teacher training and policy reforms to promote linguistic justice and equity, fostering inclusive and effective CLIL practices in diverse, multilingual contexts.

Conclusion and future directions

This Research Topic makes a positive contribution to a subfield of the wider CLIL discipline that is yet to be explored in any significant depth. Specifically, the wide range of CLIL-based research that focuses on English as the medium of instruction far outweighs that of LOTE. Consequently, our current

understandings of how CLIL approaches, methodologies and outcomes need to be adjusted appropriately for other instructional mediums, including those of minoritised languages ([Pittas and Tompkins](#)). One specific avenue for future research is the proposal by [Mattheoudakis et al.](#) to integrate CLIL into Greek state education for teaching Greek as L1 to native speakers and examining how CLIL can be leveraged for other curricular subjects in mainstream classrooms in similarly under-researched linguistic and cultural contexts. The motivational and affective dimensions of LOTE CLIL also continue to remain under explored. This editorial makes a positive contribution to the area ([Bower et al.](#); [Pittas and Tompkins](#)) but more research is required, particularly in anglophone contexts where the challenge to engage more learners in language learning remains unresolved. Looking more widely at current key themes that perpetuate education systems, assessment practices and addressing the additional needs of diverse learners ([Ní Ríordáin et al.](#); [Pittas and Tompkins](#)), including those who are multilingual, requires further attention.

Accordingly, to advance this field, future research should focus on three critical areas: first, the exploration of plurilingual and translanguaging pedagogies to better support diverse learners; second, the development of tailored teacher training programmes to prepare educators for implementing CLIL in varied sociolinguistic settings; and third, the examination of CLIL's impact on both linguistic and content learning outcomes in under-researched contexts, including minority and heritage language settings. This Research Topic paves the way for more inclusive and equitable applications of CLIL, promoting both pedagogical innovation and linguistic justice across a range of multilingual educational contexts.

Author contributions

MNíR: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. CN: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AR: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. MS: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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