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THE NEED FOR FOCUS ON FORM (FoF) IN CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED APPROACHES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT. *Following an overall revision of the social circumstances and the philosophy behind a European integrated approach to education, that is an approach in which a non-vernacular language is used as the medium of instruction, this chapter focuses on a key question concerning language acquisition in formal instruction contexts: the role of Focus-on-Form (FoF) in otherwise communicative contexts when implementing educational approaches integrating content and language. On the basis of reported research findings with Canadian immersion programmes, the chapter analyses multilingual lessons in Catalonia, to find that virtually no focus-on-form can be found in teachers' input addressed to learners while interacting in CLIL classrooms.*

KEY WORDS: *Europe, Content and Language Approach, Focus-on-Form, Acquisition, Input, Interaction.*

1. THE GROWTH OF EUROPEAN "BILINGUAL EDUCATION" OR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

1.1. EUROPEAN INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES: A DESCRIPTION

Within the background of similar experiences in Canada (immersion) and the USA (content-based language teaching) European applied linguists and agencies in the 90s started to employ *bilingual education* as the umbrella term for a new approach to education, which today I would rather label a multilingual approach[1] (see Cummins and Swain 1986 for the Canadian perspective; Brinton *et.al*. 1989 for the US perspective). Within such an approach, content subjects such as History or Physics are taught through the medium of a second/foreign language, other than the main language of the learners, the teachers, or the language used in the rest of the school curriculum. The construct was later labelled Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in primary and

secondary education, whereas the term Integrated Content and Language (ICL) was also used to refer to the same multilingual modality yet in tertiary education[2].

The rationale for the approach rests on four main ideas corresponding to a socio-cultural dimension, an educational dimension, a content dimension and a linguistic dimension (see Pérez-Vidal 2004a). The socio-cultural dimension, dealt with in greater detail in the following section, is related to the role of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the construction of an ethos of European citizenship, and the key role that linguistic and cultural diversity play in the construction of Europe, embodied in the already popular motto *Europe will be multilingual or it will not be.*

The educational and content dimensions can be considered together. Firstly they can be presented on the basis of socio-constructivist ideas in what has been described as *the four Cs* curriculum –the four Cs standing for *C*ulture, *C*ontent, *C*ognition and *C*ommunication. This suggests that: "it is through *progression* in the knowledge, skills and understanding of the content, *engagement* in associated cognitive processing and *interaction* in the communicative context that learning takes place" (Coyle 1998: 7; Coyle 2000). As for the linguistic dimension, the focus of this chapter, from the point of view of language pedagogy the concept can be characterized as an extension of the United Kingdom's educational formula '*Language* across the curriculum' into '*Languages* across the curriculum' (see for example Wolff 1998: 26). 'Language across the curriculum' incorporates a concern for the development of mother tongue linguistic skills in all subjects of a school curriculum. In contrast, '*Languages* across the curriculum' sets out to include languages other than the mother tongue with the goal of promoting multilingualism using a transdisciplinary view of language development in the school system. Hence, the term encompasses different forms of learning in which languages carry a special role alongside the learning of any specific subject or content. From the point of view of language acquisition, it is claimed that not only exposure but *intensity* of exposure, that is an increase in the number of hours over shorter periods of time, may benefit language achievement more than longer periods of instruction with a lower number of hours (see García-Mayo and García-Lecumberri 2003; Muñoz 2006), something which CLIL programmes can guarantee, as they are generally organised in parallel to conventional language teaching.

1.2. European programmes: The story so far

It has been contended that the growth of multilingual education in Europe is perhaps the result of economic factors, the impetus of the Bologna declaration requiring European transparency and harmonization of qualifications irrespective of the language of instruction, and mobility policies (Van Leeuwen 2006: 26). What is undeniable is that the concern for languages as an asset to be preserved and promoted within the construction of Europe has led European institutions to herald change in the domain of education in general and languages in particular.

The recent European Commission's (2003) Action Plan stating recommendations of multilingual policies had been preceded by The White Paper on Education and Learning (1995), whereby citizens should be functionally proficient in their mother tongue and two other European languages. The paper framed a whole strategy towards multilingualism which included the factors mentioned above, "interdisciplinarity" alongside "intensity of exposure", as two key factors in the strategy and strongly recommended policies to member states. Thereafter, a specific European interdisciplinary approach represented by CLIL began to take shape, it was then handed over to the community to be refined and served as the background to a number of varied experiments being carried out in different European countries not unfamiliar with the wealth of good practice and research carried out in Canada and the United States. Accordingly the CLIL concept emerged, under the auspices of the European Council, but also within a large number of Commission funded projects. Indeed, the BILD and the DIESeLL projects, the ELC and the Thematic network in Bilingual Education, the CLIL Compendium, the ALPME project, the TIE-CLIL, the TICCAL and the CDI-BIT represent just a small sample of the work undertaken through the 1990s up until today, which has resulted in a construct, a European construct, around which shared knowledge and expertise is already an asset to European language acquisition and language pedagogy research[3] (see Pérez-Vidal 1997 and Marsh and Marsland 1999 on Spain; Van de Craen and Wolff 1997 for a complete European technical report; Nikula 1997 and finally Nikula and Marsh 1997 on terminological considerations).

Many programmes around Europe have been set up throughout these years of industrious innovation and practice, at primary, secondary and tertiary level, following recommendations from European institutions. Finland, Germany, Italy and Holland, France and Spain, Hungary, and other newly arrived countries to the European Union have witnessed the spread of initiatives in this direction taken either by schools, parents associations or the administration (see Baetens Beadsmore 1993; Klapper 1996 as an example of a German report; Baetens Beadsmore 1998; Van de Craen and Pérez-Vidal 2001, for primary and secondary level accounts; the survey in Marsh *et al*. 2001, and Pérez-Vidal 2001a, as a survey with a Europe wide scope; Grenfell 2002; Van Leeuwen *et al*. 2003; Wilkinson, Zegers and Leeuwen 2006, for tertiary level). As Pérez-Vidal (2001b) stresses, in the Catalan and Basque autonomous communities of Spain, those programmes benefited from the accumulated experience of the highly successful CLIL programmes for the normalization of their official languages, Catalan and Basque which, in a background of societal bilingualism, since the 1980s have set up different educational models geared to ensure additive bilingualism. (see Artigal 1993 for a general presentation of programmes; Sierra 1994 on the Basque model).

1.3. European programmes: Evaluation and Research

With such a wealth of groundbreaking practical experiences, the evaluation of the programmes in terms of actual outcomes is still to come, and research still pressing; however, the social and educational benefits of multilingual programmes seem to be

unquestionable, and the very existence of integrated programmes can be equated with success. Bilingual acquisition in the United States was heralded by Krashen as (1985: 57): "the most successful language teaching program ever recorded in professional language teaching literature." Nonetheless, actual content and language outcomes, in tandem with the pedagogical intricacies involved in their actual development, need to be investigated. Today, little is known of the variables and the teaching and learning *processes* to which success or failure of the bilingual/CLIL programmes can be attributed, both educationally and linguistically. Similarly, the real *product* or benefits and gains need to be quantified. Reseachers seem to be working in two directions. One reflects on general policy issues, programme design, teacher education, teachers', students' and programme evaluation for CLIL (see, for example, Räsänen 1993; Escobar 2002, 2004, 2006, forthcoming; Pérez-Vidal and Escobar 2002; Escobar and Pérez Vidal 2004; Wilkinson 2004 on higher education). The second explores language acquisition, while also attending to content acquisition, with special attention given to exploring the impact on proficiency of different CLIL task designs (Escobar 2006, forthcoming). In this vein, studies on the contrasting impact of teachers' native-like speech on 5-year-old children's linguistic development put the case for methodologically sound teaching, whether or not with native teachers, as a predictor of greater learner achievement. In Spain, against a background of societal bilingualism in several Autonomous communities where, since the 1980s different educational models geared to ensure additive bilingualism have been set up, namely Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia, there exists a wealth of research tapping into results at a linguistic level. In Catalonia see Arnau *et al*. (1993), Vila (1994), Roquet (2003) and Sanz (forthcoming); in the Basque country Sierra (1994), Lasagabaster (1997), Cenoz (2002) and Cenoz and Genesee (2002). They report on mainstream education outcomes either focusing on bilingual development, or its beneficial effects for L3 acquisition.

2. The lessons from immersion programmes in Canada

2.1. Immersion programmes in Canada: The narrative

If the growth of European multilingual education has been socially driven, as described above, it would seem as if the growth of Canadian immersion programmes went through a similar development only earlier in time. In Canada, in the 60s, the need by English speaking children to learn French, the official language in Quebec, prompted a group of parents to lobby their school board for improvements to the teaching of French. Upon consultation with McGill university scholars in bilingualism, an immersion programme was proposed to the schools' education board (Wesche 2001). From the first day of school in kindergarten children would be instructed entirely in French and would learn to read in this language. Only later in grade 2-7 years of age –would they start with their L1s, until little by little, by grade 6-12 years of age– half the curriculum would be taught in French and half in English. Variations to this model were then introduced

(partial immersion: half and half day since kindergarten; mid-immersion: programme starting at grade 4/5; late immersion: programme starts at 6/7, and other very flexible and imaginative formulae of different sorts), while it was spreading widely and rapidly in Canada during the 70s and the 80s, and involved other languages such as English for French speaking children. It is estimated that 8% of the student population in Canada had followed an immersion programme (300,000 students). Funds were given for research and dissemination of the idea. Swain (1984) noted that nearly every new programme generated its own research group. Consequently, bilingual acquisition in formal settings has had a strong record of research in Canada that compares favourably with any other innovation in education (Swain 1997: 13) if only for the well-known Interdependence and Threshold models put forward by Cummins (1984, 1991) describing the nature of bilingual development in learners with different levels of proficiency in their L1.

2.2. Canadian programmes: Evaluation and Research

Similar to the trend in Europe, two main domains have been in focus in the research analysing immersion programmes in Canada. In the first place, as Genesee puts it, the *product* or *summative* aspects of programmes (Genesee 1987: 184). The work has concentrated on the investigation of the *language and content dimension* of different types of programmes. Analyses include extensive enquiries into the quality of language learned as well as its relationship to academic and social skills in the native language, through measurements of receptive and productive skills, with the objective of identifying strengths and weaknesses in programmes, and the effects of programme variables on student achievement. On the other hand, research has focused on the *qualitative study of bilingual education* through the analysis of different programmes, such as Johnson and Swain (1997) or Bernhardt (1992). This is *process* research, oriented to probing immersion teachers' beliefs, behaviours and strategies used in bilingual programmes, alongside students' behaviours. The relative scarcity of research in this second strand has been noted by Genesee who expressed his concern over: "The virtual absence of information concerning the *pedagogical and linguistic strategies* used by immersion teachers" (1987: 18). Lacking such information, we are poorly prepared to train teachers in the most effective instructional strategies, a programme of research to investigate how teachers integrate academic and language instruction is called for.

In the first strand of research, and since the days of the initial programmes, several studies have given a comprehensive evaluative picture of the outcomes of their programmes. Lambert and Tucker (1972) evaluated the first model with a high success rate. In subsequent publications Canale and Swain (1980), then Cummins and Swain (1986), Genesee (1987), Harley *et al.* (1990) and Bialystok (1991) in several synthesis reports have come to an overall conclusion that indicates the need for introducing specific changes to the programmes. Immersion students seem to acquire remarkable proficiency, near-native, in the language in which they are taught and simultaneously perform in academic areas such as reading and writing at equal or superior levels to peers educated in

monolingual settings, yet there is a weakness in their productive skills, spoken and written, in grammatical and sociolinguistic competence, which remains from grade 6 to grade 12, as Pellerin and Hammerley (1986) and Lyster (1987) studies revealed. The proposals for change have been in the direction of suggesting the overall general experiential approach to learning be balanced with more analytical approaches, that is, introducing approaches that focus on form (see Harley *et al.* 1990).

2.3. Integrated programmes: The desirable future

The findings of Canadian research are extremely revealing for the design and implementation of programmes in Europe. A word of advice should be taken under consideration in the sense that an additional explicit analytic component in otherwise communicative modes of instruction, as CLIL approaches are, can only prove beneficial. Indeed, second language acquisition research has shown the limitations of implicit instruction unless in substantial amounts, particularly as far as adult learners, who can already benefit from an explicit focus on form, are concerned (DeKeyser 2002, 2007). That meaning and form oriented instruction is simply superior to either one of the two individually seems undeniable nowadays (Hulstjin 1989; Robinson 1995). Communicative modes of instruction are characterised by a focus on meaning and communication, which is established by genuine interaction between the teacher and the learners generally through pair/group work interaction, a creative non-restrictive use of language, and via opportunities for the negotiation of task topics. In turn, focus-on-form is characterised by the fact that attention is drawn towards language forms in order to develop linguistic *awareness* which may result in *uptake* and subsequently *intake* (DeKeyser 2002). The four dimensions or principles of the European construct of integrated approaches presented in the first section of this chapter only add further support to the argument for an integration of a focus on form in an otherwise communicative mode of instruction.

It is this issue that the study presented in the following section seeks to address, in order to throw some light on the nature of CLIL classroom approaches to form. With the purpose of identifying the extent to which current experiments with CLIL are missing out on the opportunity of modelling themselves on the results of research indicating the need for attending to form, it analyses teachers' input and interaction strategies and the relative presence of episodes where the focus of teaching/learning is the content of the lesson, and those whose focus is the language itself.

3. A pilot study on teachers' strategies in CLIL classrooms and focus-on-form

On the basis of the evidence so far, the question stated above led to the design of a preliminary exploratory study conducted within the ALPME project. A representative sample of integrated lessons conducted in the Autonomous community of Catalonia, Spain

are analysed with the objective of exploring teachers' input and interaction strategies in relation to the communicative nature of teaching and the presence of focus-on-form episodes[4]. The study aims to address the following questions:

1. Are the CLIL lessons analysed Communicative?
2. Do lessons contain the desirable amount of input in the target language and of high quality?
3. Do they also include instances of focus-on-form?

3.1. The data

The study was conducted on a small sample of primary and secondary education content lessons in 3 different school programmes in Catalonia, selected so as to include content lessons taught through the medium of English –as opposed to English lessons with some content in them– from different geographical locations and including both primary and secondary levels. English is used almost exclusively as the medium of instruction by teachers. In the case of the secondary classrooms, the lessons meant that learners received additional hours of exposure to the hours of the conventional language programme in the school curriculum. This was not the case of the primary classroom, where, in contrast to the other classes, there is not a conventional language teaching component in the curriculum. As Table 1 shows, the corpus included 3 videotaped lessons, in 3 different state-run schools, in 2 different provinces in Catalonia (Barcelona and Lleida). They involved 2 secondary schools and 1 primary school, and dealt with Science subjects: Physics, Biology and Geometry, respectively. The column on the right states the number of hours in the multilingual school programme. The second column on the right the number of hours added to the conventional language programme, additionally, ages, grades and subjects are also displayed in the rest of the columns to the left respectively.

Table 1. *Corpus analysed*

Lessons	Grade	Age and Number of students	English instruction	CLIL instruction
Geometry (Land C)	6 Pr.*	11/12 (20)	-	1020 hours
Physics (C)	4 ESO*	15 (18)	500	+150
Biology (C)	4 ESO	15 (12)	500	+60

Note: * = Mandatory subjects, the rest are eligible.
+ = Hours of exposure added to English instruction.

A professional technician videotaped the lessons in the presence of this researcher, who acted as an observer. Recordings were then transcribed and analysed as explained below.

3.2. The analysis

For the purpose of the analysis, an adaptation of the categorization used by Bernhardt's (1992) study of Canadian immersion programmes was used. Bernhardt's study was found to be simple, comprehensive, and tapping on teachers' focus-on-form moves as opposed to meaning, the objective of this study. Once the selected samples of CLIL instruction were orthographically transcribed, they were segmented into internal moves or strategies following the resulting categorisation shown in table 2. Thirteen different teachers' strategies are grouped in the table as either "Language input or language output" strategies, "Managing strategies" or "Other strategies". The first group includes techniques used to make oneself understood, techniques to adapt meaning to learners' features, both implicit and explicit, techniques to adapt language, as in language addressed to babies or foreigners (that is modified input as conventionally found in teacher-talk, baby-talk or foreigner-talk), techniques to check comprehension on the part of learners, techniques to ask for clarification in relation to content, explicit focus-on-form moves, explicit moves to encourage students' output production, and code-switching into the L1 for better understanding of meaning on the part of learners. The second group of "Managing strategies" includes references to content, to lessons or parts of lessons, or to materials. "Other strategies" include references to other subjects in the curriculum.

Table 2. *CLIL teachers' strategies. Adapted from Bermhardt (1992:4)*

LANGUAGE INPUT AND OUTPUT STRATEGIES	
1. MEANING	Content comprehension input: Techniques to convey the meaning for comprehension.
2. ADAPTATION OF MEANING	Learner-cued instruction: teacher's adaptation to the learners' abilities, styles, interests or needs, involving the learner, implicit or explicit.
3. ADAPTATION OF LANGUAGE	L2 input techniques used to help understanding: simplified teacher-talk, repetition; reading; reading and writing; games and songs; non-verbal cues.
4. COMPREHENSION CHECKS	Visual, physical or verbal, in the L1 or L2.

5. CLARIFICATION REQUESTS CONTENT	Clarification request for content.
6. CLARIFICATION REQUESTS FORM	Clarification request for form.
7. FOCUS ON FORM	Explicit out-of-content teaching of the L2. Sentences generated to focus on a grammar point, reference to phonics, presentation of lexis, negative feedback.
8. OUTPUT	L2 output encouragement: scaffolding, translation of L1 to L2 words, expectations of comprehension before speech.
9. CODE-SWITCHING	Into L1 to improve understanding.
MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	
10. SYLLABUS	Reference to content taught, or to be taught.
11. LESSON	Instructions for activities. Mention of the lesson's structure, boundary markers between activities and subactivities.
12. MATERIALS	Mention of materials production or evidence of it.
OTHER STRATEGIES	
13. INTERDISCIPLINARY	More than one subject is taught.

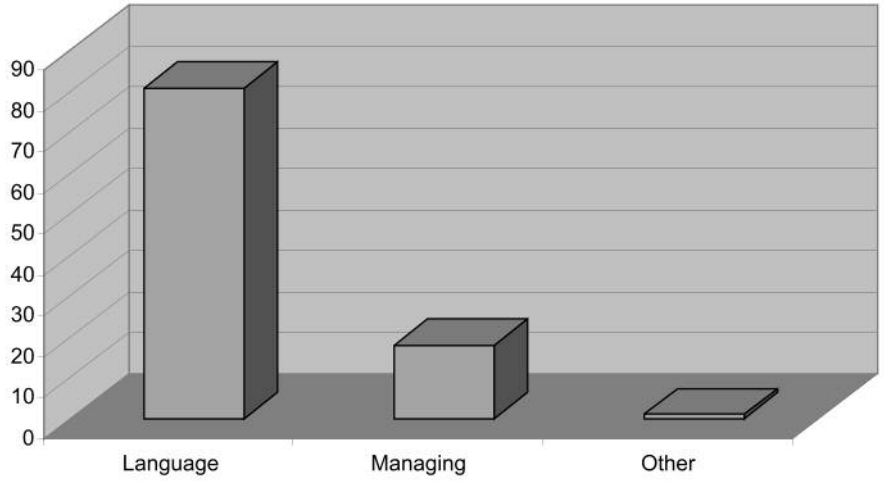
Percentages of moves within each category for the whole selected corpus were drawn in order to establish the number of instances (tokens) of each different strategy for all samples grouped together.

4. Results and discussion

Results are summarised first by categories, then by strategies. Hence, firstly, figure 1 shows the percentage of moves within each of the three categories, that of "Language input and output", "Managing strategies" and "Other strategies": 81%, 18% and 1%, respectively.

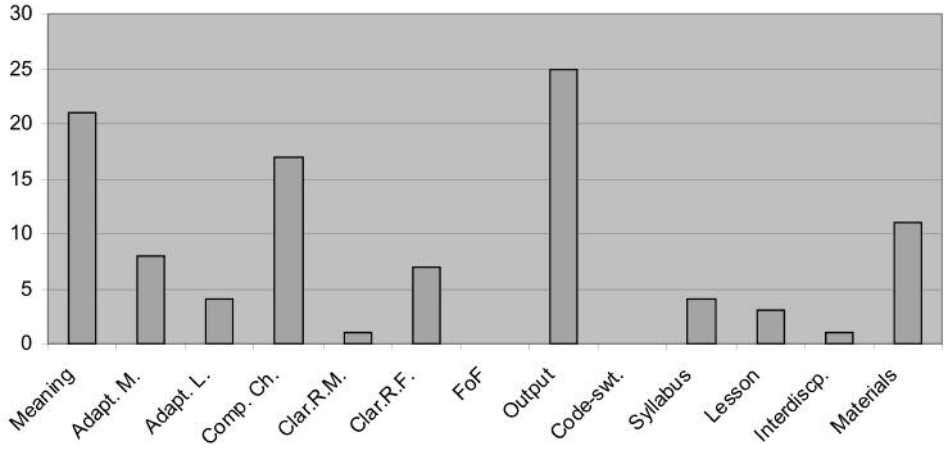
As can be seen in the graph, most teacher talk is devoted to the first category, "Meaning", an expected result as in fact it is the one with a larger number of strategies included. It would seem as if teachers' strategies concentrate on the interactional level of the classroom, rather than on the managerial level. This in turn suggests that lessons have a well-established routine, which is followed with little explicit verbalisation on the part of the teachers.

FIGURE 1. *Distribution of Language and Management strategies in percentages*



Secondly, figure 2 below shows the results for each of the 13 strategies. A group of 4 strategies has the highest number of instances, above 10%, namely OUTPUT, (25% of tokens out of the total number in the sample) used to encourage learners' oral production, MEANING (21%), used to refer to content, and COMPREHENSION CHECKS (17%), used to check and help learners' understanding. These are in the "Language input and output category".

FIGURE 2. *Distribution of strategy types in percentages*



One strategy MATERIALS (11%) within the "Managing strategies" category is also higher than 10%. Following this, the remaining strategies are present in much lower numbers. Some within a range of between 10 and 5: ADAPTATION OF MEANING to the learners' level, needs, styles and interests (8%) and CLARIFICATION REQUEST FORM (7%). Then ADAPTATION OF LANGUAGE and references to SYLLABUS and LESSON appear in the lower range, of between 5 and 1 (4 and 3% respectively), where the strategy with a minimal presence of a 1%, CLARIFICATION REQUESTS MEANING is to be found. There are no instances of CODE-SWITCHING or FOCUS ON FORM or of interdisciplinary reference.

To summarise, what the previous figures indicate is that teachers' moves are devoted in the first place to encouraging students' output, and to referring to the content matter of the lessons, and, only in second position, to a somewhat lesser yet still high degree, to checking understanding of that content. In third position come mentions of materials and further adaptations of the difficulty of the content to the students' level. In a fourth position and last in the row come references to other parts of the lesson or syllabus, focus on form, and an interdisciplinary approach and requests for clarification.

If we now try to address the questions stated at the beginning of this section, the results in relation to the first question indicate that the lessons are rather communicative as features of communicative teaching are present. Indeed, they are: a) highly focused on meaning, b) genuine questions are asked, c) there is opportunity to use language in non-restrictive ways; d) there is opportunity for negotiation. The video recordings and classroom observations allow us to certify that pair and group work are an integral part of the lessons.

In relation to the second question, it can also be stated that the quality and amount of both the teachers' input and the learners' output are high as a result of the communicative nature of the lessons: 21% of the strategies are explanations of the content matter of the lesson, hence are focused on meaning. The amount of output is also high, in fact the highest in percentages (25%). Consequently, it can also be assumed that teachers are encouraging learners to speak. No CODE-SWITCHING is found which means that input is only given in English. The high number of times that teachers check students' understanding, the third strategy in percentages (17%), would also suggest that negotiation of meaning in communication is enhanced. The fact that there are 7% REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION in relation with content adds evidence to topic negotiation. The frequent reference to materials seems to indicate a practical approach in the explanations given. Finally and most importantly, in relation to the third question, no FoF strategies are used: language is seen as the means to communicate, not an end in itself.

5. Conclusions

The growth of multilingual programmes in Europe, reflecting both social policies and an increasing social interest in languages has only begun. No matter how well the rationale for those programmes is established, and how carefully programmes are

designed and implemented, there is a need to turn to previous experience in other contexts to learn the lessons they can teach us. Extensive research carried out in the Canadian immersion programmes shows the key role played by focus-on-form in the communicative interaction taking place in integrated pedagogy. The CLIL lessons analysed show significant concern for meaning, but not for form. If our small sample is representative of more extensive practices, there seems to be a need for introducing FoF approaches to complement current practices in CLIL teaching, as Lyster (2007) has emphasised. Further empirically driven research evidence is necessary in this domain not only to restate the benefits of multilingual approaches, but also to help find the adequate paths and pedagogical strategies for the best possible learning outcomes and returns of an extremely innovative, yet equally challenging approach to education which is gaining ground in the European Bologna era.

NOTES

1. This is the term we used in 1997 in the European Language Council's Thematic Network Project on the Area of Languages N. 9 (BILINGUAL EDUCATION) DG XXII in those years.
2. We would like to mention the Biannual Conference on ICL organised in Maastricht (Maastricht University Language Center) in its last two editions as an example of tertiary education research on the matter.
3. I would also like to refer to a series of projects locally funded: the ARTICLE project, funded by the Catalan Government.
4. The data collection for this exploratory study was conducted and funded with the support of the Advanced Level Programme in Multilingual Education (ALPME) a CDA European Commission project coordinated by this author (www.upf.es/dtf/recerca/allencam/alpme). I thank the ALPME partners for their support and collaboration. I would also like to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the Foreign Language Resource Center in the City of Barcelona run by the Catalan Government for allowing me to contact the different programmes involved in the Orator Scheme at the time of data collection. Last but not least the schools' headmasters and mistresses, teachers and learners in the classes analysed whose names remain undisclosed for the purpose of anonymity and without whom this study would not have been possible.

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