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School Leaders' Perspectives on Content and Language Integrated Learning in England

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School Leaders' Perspectives on Content and Language Integrated Learning in England

This article investigates school leader perspectives on Content and Integrated Learning (CLIL) based on findings from an empirical research study undertaken in three state secondary schools in England, to investigate (CLIL). The article argues the importance of the role of senior leaders in developing and sustaining CLIL initiatives. Perspectives about CLIL from 12 leaders are presented using semi-structured interviews from three schools where different models of CLIL are practised: headteachers, senior leaders responsible for the school oversight of such programmes and curriculum leaders responsible for developing the work in specific subjects. This article offers a unique contribution to the field by its focus on school leaders' perceptions of and commitment to CLIL from their involvement in contrasting CLIL contexts in the self-improving school context of England. There are no existing studies that focus on senior leaders' perspectives in the secondary sector. In spite of numerous limitations presented by the current national policy landscape, the findings reveal that school leaders perceive CLIL to make a potentially strong contribution to the pressing school improvement agenda through acceleration of learner progress characterised by high levels of pupil concentration, effort, enjoyment and progress.

Key words: CLIL; school leaders; school improvement; motivation; innovation

School Leaders' Perspectives on Content and Language Integrated Learning in England

Introduction

The specific contribution of this article is to demonstrate school leaders' perspectives on how initiatives in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) can encourage learner gains and thereby contribute to school improvement set against a policy vacuum and lack of opportunities for teachers to develop new methodologies over many years. CLIL is an approach that has gathered momentum worldwide (e.g. EuropeanCommission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017; Nikula et al, 2016), yet in the UK few programmes exist, despite these programmes exhibiting the benefits found elsewhere in Anglophone-dominant contexts (e.g. Cross and Gearon, 2013). Here, senior leaders have an influence on the curriculum, so it is important to understand their views. Previous studies have approached the impact of CLIL pedagogy predominantly from teacher and learner perspectives; senior leaders' roles appear to have been largely overlooked. Although the focus here is on one Anglophone-dominant context, findings may be useful to other contexts where senior leaders have responsibility for the curriculum.

Drawing on data from a larger empirical study (Bower, 2014), this article investigates perceptions about CLIL of senior leaders in three state schools in England. Findings suggest that these senior leaders see such innovations as part of the solution to the drive to raise attainment for all learners. The article begins with an exploration of the introduction of CLIL in England as an 'alternative' pedagogical approach and a discussion of the distinctive nature of learning a modern language in the UK. It then clarifies leadership roles before turning to the study.

Background

The European context and the development of CLIL in England

CLIL is 'a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language' (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh 2010:1); it is a complex phenomenon which has many different forms (Coyle, 2007). CLIL has developed rapidly in Europe (British Council, 2014) as one means of meeting the European Commission's commitment to the learning of two additional languages in addition to the mother tongue (Commission of the European Communities, 2003).

Because of the global dominance of English, the prevailing climate in England for language learning is one of demotivation (Chambers, 1999; 2000; Lanvers, 2017). A lack of coherent national policy, together with a narrow restrictive curriculum defined by examination content and often perceived as irrelevant and insufficiently challenging by secondary school learners (e.g. Bell, 2004), has led to a marked decline in uptake of languages beyond age 14 to 47% (Tinsley and Doležal, 2018). Provision is not uniform: learners in schools in challenging circumstances are less likely to learn a foreign language even during the compulsory period. Identified barriers include the reputation for examinations being more difficult than those in other subjects (Bawden, 2019), 'pupils' reluctance to study a language' and 'the unsuitability of GCSE for all' (Tinsley and Board, 2016:8).

In contrast, promotion and subsequent growth of CLIL is clearly defined in the educational polices of other countries in Europe. CLIL manifests itself in different ways, for example, in France through 'sections internationales' established from 1981 and 'sections européenes' from 1992 (Eurydice, 2006). In Spain, CLIL provision exists in the six regions where regional languages are co-official with Spanish and in six other countries, CLIL provision is available in all schools. For example in Italy, learners in

the final year of secondary school must learn one curriculum subject through a foreign language (EuropeanCommission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017). In the Netherlands the national network for bilingual schools, where secondary CLIL programmes adhere to agreed standards, has continued to grow (Denman, Tanner, and de Graaff, 2013).

However in England, fragmented national policy (Hagger-Vaughan, 2016) and isolated initiatives instigated or supported by various governments to promote CLIL, have led to a less targeted and sustained approach– in spite of the success of the pedagogy demonstrated by national enquiries, (Dearing and King, 2007; Nuffield Foundation, 2000) and the publication of national guidelines for CLIL (Coyle, Holmes,& King, 2009). Hence, at times CLIL has been developed as independent initiatives through Language Colleges[1] (1995–2010) and at others through national initiatives such as the Content and Language Integrated Project (CLIP) 2002–5 (Wiesemes, 2005), Anglo-French bilateral secondary projects 2007–2011 and Anglo-French bilateral primary projects 2001–2011 (Driscoll and Rowe, 2012). Consequently, in the absence of what Evans (2007) calls an overarching policy and ongoing funding to sustain initiatives in the long term, nor a common initial teacher education (ITE) curriculum to embed CLIL in teacher education, growth of CLIL has been limited.

Elsewhere critics (e.g. Bruton 2011; 2015) question the extent to which CLIL *per se* may be responsible for reported learner gains. Van Mensel et al. (2019) for example found socio economic background to be a factor in CLIL enrolment and Paran (2013) questions the suitability of CLIL for learners of all abilities. Pérez Cañado (2019) recently challenges such concerns. Here, in line with UK practice, CLIL involves *all* learners in two settings and there is random selection in a third setting in

[1] Language Colleges, a joint private and government scheme, enabled 216 schools to specialise in modern foreign languages. They received extra funding and promoted languages within the community. They were abolished by the coalition government (Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties) in 2010.

which learners come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, hence any potential elitism is minimised. England then, has an unusual national profile in terms of CLIL (Moate, 2011) and this is also true of school leadership. The next section considers how school leadership is organised in England and explores the climate in which school leaders innovate, before contextualising the programmes leaders have instigated in this study.

A climate of accountability*:* leaders in a self-improving school system.

In England, levels of school management are illustrated in table 1.

<INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>

Schools are held to account by Ofsted, an independent government department, responsible 'for inspecting and regulating education and training for learners of all ages' (Politics.co.uk, 2018). The national school improvement agenda aims for all schools to be 'good schools' (Sammons, 2008; Spielman, 2017). Improvement in how students learn is shaped by the ways in which schools themselves develop as learning organisations (Hargreaves, 2011; Hirsch, 2003; Kanter, 1994). Macro management of schools in England is in significant transition as a result of the government's White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (Government, 2010b). The consequential drive has been to move all schools away from local authority control towards independence as individual academies or clusters of schools known as 'academy chains' to facilitate what Hargreaves, (2011: 29) describes as 'co-development of professional practice' from within the system by leaders across and within school alliances and networks. These developments have enabled teachers, as well as senior leaders, to lead across organisational boundaries as well as within their institution (Boylan, 2016). However, opponents to the shift to self-improving systems in national policy, (e.g. Ball, 2017),

suggest that educational policy that focusses on economic competitiveness to the detriment of the broader social purposes of education is a retrograde step. Policies such as performance benchmarking together with financial independence create competition between institutions that may leave all but the most successful schools light in innovations such as CLIL – and competing schools unwilling to share. Therefore, although the self-improving school system can facilitate improvement from within, tensions may limit cross-network development (Ball, 2017; Greany and Waterhouse, 2016).

In England, statutory responsibility for the curriculum varies between different types of schools that currently exist but must provide 'a broad and balanced curriculum' (Government, 2002; 2010a). Headteachers have some flexibility to innovate within the constraints of the national curriculum. Indeed, ‘keeping up with external best practice and innovation' is one of the three national curriculum assessment principles (DFE, 2014). Paradoxically, accountability measures for all schools including government regulation (cited as a barrier to effectiveness by heads in Micklewright et al. (2014) and a stringent schools inspection regime (e.g. Waldegrave & Simons, 2014) may deter the majority of leaders, even of academies (Gilbert et al., 2013) from taking risks with curriculum innovation. Within this climate there is little room for creativity and experimentation with new pedagogies such as CLIL. Confident school leaders then, particularly those operating at meso level, are critical for successful curriculum innovation in such contexts and therefore their perspectives are of interest.

In spite of this restrictive climate, a minority of school leaders in England have implemented CLIL into their curriculum. They have done so in response to the societal and cultural advantages of learning a language set against the prevailing demotivation towards language study and the statutory need to increase learner competence and

thereby the numbers of students entered for examination. However, because of the underlying barriers outlined previously, together with a lack of teacher supply and training, although projects such as CLIP and subsequent individual school programmes were successful (Coyle, 2011), there are currently only a handful of secondary schools in England in which CLIL is embedded as part of the curriculum for some learners (Bower, 2017a; Coyle, 2011). This is regrettable because results from the limited research available in England (Bower, 2017b; Coyle, 2011; Hunt, 2011) demonstrate similar significant linguistic, cultural and learner motivation gains to those in other countries, for example: Finland (Seikkula-Leino, 2007); France and Germany (Dooly, 2008); Spain (Lasagabaster, 2011; Lorenzo, 2010). Although studies elsewhere have questioned positive results (e.g. Rumlich, 2017; Sylvén, 2013), this has not been the case in England.

The nature of CLIL involves cross-curricular collaboration between language teachers and colleagues from different subject areas (Lyster & Ballinger, 2011; Méndez García & Pavón Vázquez, 2012), which, within the narrowing of the national curriculum in the UK secondary sector due to the focus on raising attainment and testing (Baker, 2002; Berliner, 2011), may be problematic.

Hence in England not only are we in a particular situation with CLIL, but also with school leadership. In the light of this, examining the perspectives of senior leaders at different levels is illuminative both in understanding their views of the benefits of CLIL and also of the support that it needs to be sustainable. Perspectives on CLIL pedagogy were not investigated here, but this might be an area for future research.

This study investigated the views of three levels of leadership: headteachers, other senior leaders and middle leaders. Table 2 illustrates their roles in school and the CLIL initiative. None of the senior leaders were language teachers. The nature of an

innovation may influence who drives it – here, because of CLIL's pedagogical nature, middle leaders are sometimes operating at a higher level of leadership in aspects of CLIL innovation than their formally designated level; their views are therefore pertinent. In some instances the middle leaders (level 3) also teach CLIL. However, views about classroom teaching from the micro level of management of learning have been reported elsewhere (Bower, 2017b).

<INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>

The remit of these roles varies between institutions in the UK and differs from those in other countries.

Senior leader perspectives from other studies

A systematic search of Education and ERIC databases 2000–2017 for 'stakeholder' and for 'senior leader perspectives on CLIL' revealed two studies exploring school leaders' views about CLIL. An Estonian study on programme management that included views from principals and vice principals, identified the central management of and training for CLIL programmes as vital to the programme's success (Mehisto and Asser, 2007); a Queensland study included programme directors' perspectives as well as teachers on CLIL pedagogies (Smala, 2013). In Queensland programme directors, whose role includes the oversight of bilingual programmes, operate individual programmes with no umbrella support, in a national climate where second language learning is not prioritised. The isolation of programmes here has similarities with the situation in England. A search of linguistic journals revealed a study of the role of leadership in the implementation of CLIL in English in three Catalan schools involving three principals, three middle leaders and eight teachers (Soler et al., 2016), which called for more research about aspects of CLIL leadership. In other CLIL studies (e.g. Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, & Smit, 2013), the term 'stakeholders' commonly includes

learners, teachers and sometimes parents, however no other existing studies focus specifically on senior leaders' perspectives in the secondary sector. This is surprising because the importance of senior leaders in innovation in such contexts where schools enjoy autonomy cannot be underestimated. The next section turns to the study and its context.

The study

Data are drawn from a larger qualitative study about the impact of CLIL on learner motivation (Bower, 2014). Here interviews with leaders have been analysed to explore the perspectives of leaders of CLIL. Two schools in this study were selected through purposive sampling of schools with established, CLIL programmes. A third school was selected to represent institutions in the process of introducing CLIL. There are few CLIL schools in England and the researcher was linked with the schools through national networks and professional development initiatives. The scope considers leaders' perspectives rather than the ways in which they chose to implement the methodology.

Each programme has a different model for CLIL but involved learners of all abilities. Pseudonyms have been used. Firstly, Ash School has a curriculum strand for one class in each of the three lower secondary year groups (ages 11–14); learners undertake Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), Information Technology (ICT), registration and French in French for three years with their form tutor, who is also a language teacher. In English schools students are organised by form groups; their welfare and progress are overseen by a 'form tutor', a teacher who sees them daily and formally records attendance. Although a CLIL school-based curriculum strand programme with a dual focus on both content and language (Coyle et al., 2010), Ash School uses the term 'immersion' rather than CLIL. I therefore use 'immersion' when

reporting data from this case study. In Ash school learners opt into the programme prior to entry. Secondly, Beech School has a subject strand where each week all learners in the first two years of secondary school (ages 11–13) study geography for one lesson in French or German and one lesson in English. Some learners are taught CLIL geography by a geography specialist and others by a language teacher. Finally, all learners in Cedar School undertake CLIL interdisciplinary modules of history and science in the third year of secondary education (ages 13–14), taught in part in language lessons by their language teacher. Schools varied in age range designation and catchment and had few characteristics in common, however all were under local authority jurisdiction. The settings and interviews undertaken are summarized in Table 3.

<INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE>

Method

Semi-structured transcribed interviews were conducted with 12 key staff across the three levels of the leadership structure, including six senior leaders: headteachers and senior leaders and six middle leaders: heads of department and lead teachers in order to explore the reasons for their commitment to CLIL (table 2). For the larger study the Process Motivation Model (PMM) was used to provide a framework for investigating CLIL in a variety of settings (Bower, 2017a). In this article I focus specifically on the data related to leaders' perspectives under the following themes that they were asked to comment on: (a) the impact of CLIL on learner gains, (b) the perceived elements of CLIL that enhance learner engagement and (c) their views on perceived barriers to CLIL. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. The number of interviews

corresponded to the number of leaders of CLIL in each school; the headteacher, the senior leader overseeing CLIL, the head of department and the lead teacher (s) were interviewed in each context. I selected semi-structured interviews to generate similar questions for comparability purposes, whilst allowing some differentiation in questioning, to best understand the relevant views of each individual, and thereby, represent them as fully as possible (Merriam, 2002). Questions were reviewed prior to the data collection by participants who subsequently reviewed transcripts for accuracy.

The questions were also informed by a previous study (Bower, 2006) and categories were reviewed by expert peers. They were derived drawing on the school improvement agenda, constraining forces identified in literature and the content of the modern languages' curriculum. Data was coded in the following a priori categories from the PMM: intercultural awareness, relevant content, use of the target language, cognitive challenge and attitudes towards learning and supplemented by an emergent code during analysis: impact on progress and attainment (Bryman, 2004). The analysis was supported by repeated reading of the data and reviewed by expert peers during the selection from transcripts and analysis stages. Ethical regulations with the requisite safeguarding procedures were followed (British Educational Research Council, 2011).

Results

In this article I focus particularly on the data from the senior leaders, summarised in table 4 and organised in the following three sections: the impact of CLIL on learner gains; enhanced engagement and finally barriers to CLIL.

<INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE>

1. The impact of CLIL on learner gains

In all three schools accelerating progress and raising attainment were salient drivers for senior leaders. In Cedar School, where the project was embryonic and initially based in language lessons, the headteacher supported CLIL as a means of improving motivation in languages.

The AHT explained:

> ...if there's anything we feel benefits the students in terms of bringing progress on ... then we would embrace it.
>
> (AHT, 18.6.13)

Ash and Beech schools, where the programmes involved part of the curriculum, reported enhanced learner attainment across the curriculum. They were able to provide internal evidence that learners involved in CLIL attained higher grades across the curriculum at examination aged 16 than those who had not taken part. In Ash School in-school monitoring of learners' progress in the initial immersion group and that of a control group in English, maths and science revealed that immersion students 'out-perform the control group in every indicator, quite significantly' and this was mirrored in each subsequent cohort(VP2, 8.11.12). Similarly, in Beech School the deputy head (17.4.13) noted:

> We now have strong evidence from our current Y9 and Y10 groups [ages 13–15] that immersion has had a significant impact on raising attainment in MFL; many current Y9 students are making exceptional progress in their controlled assessments.

In Beech School all interviewees held the view that the CLIL programme had raised the profile of the school and attainment across the curriculum for those taking part (HT, 19.3.13). The head of German noted that the idea should be reinforced that:

> it [CLIL] does raise attainment across the board, it doesn't detract from, it doesn't water down … the other subjects, and it does lead to an increase in attainment and student engagement…
>
> (HOG, 18.4.13)

In the following sections, leader' perspectives of this engagement and consequent learner gains beyond attainment that demonstrate the value of such pedagogical innovations, will be explored.

Progress beyond attainment.

The impact beyond attainment was evidenced in all three settings. The headteacher (8.11.12) in Ash School, for example, when referring to Y9 immersion learners' comprehension and communication skills [ages13–14], explained:

> It [learners' comprehension skills] is better than a Y11 student [age16]. If you get a Y11 student and you compare the two, both at grade C level, in terms of being able to communicate there's no comparison.

All participants at Ash school noted that the programme impacts positively on relationship and group dynamics. Referring to the immersion group, the VP (7.11.12) explained that:

> some staff have felt ... they were a much easier group, but ... were they an easier group to start with? No, they were a mixed ability group that came into the school the same as any other Y7 (group).

Leaders at all levels acknowledged the impact of enhanced linguistic skills which were being transferred to other subjects across the curriculum. The vice principal at Ash School explained the value of the programme in generating progress that goes beyond attainment from her observation:

> It's not easy,... and there's a lot of hard work and dedication goes into it, but it's well worth it in the end, because the children do make amazing progress; … it's something intangible as well, and because it's intangible you can't describe it, but … you feel the atmosphere and the enthusiasm and the progress.

In Beech School, the head teacher (HT, 19.4.13) stated that on arrival he was unsure about whether the programme would work but explained:

> I'm persuaded, both by the hard-edge data and also by the softer edge, the responses that we're getting from students, and the numbers of students that we're getting to follow modern languages through into KS4 [ages 14–16] and KS5 [ages 16–18], And we ... can identify the children who are getting better value added outcomes in KS4 as a result of having had two years of CLIL … not only the standards gains, but we're getting enjoyment gains… and confidence gains. We're one of the only schools in the area that runs three languages at KS4 and KS5.

He noted that the programme '*improves outcomes*' in terms of standards, enjoyment and confidence gains.

2. Enhanced engagement

In this section results pertaining to leaders' views about *how* CLIL can impact positively on learner engagement and as a result improve learner outcomes will be presented. Findings are categorised by the themes that emerged from the data analysis in the following order: intercultural awareness, relevant content and attitudes towards learning.

Leaders in all three schools noted that learners demonstrated a deep understanding and appreciation of intercultural awareness, characteristic of CLIL (Coyle et al., 2010). For example, the head of department in Cedar School (HOD, 17.6.13) noted learners' interest in and 'empathy with' French perspectives of living in occupied France.

Both senior and middle leaders reported the value of using new age-relevant content. The head of department in Cedar School (HOD, 17.6.13) reflecting on the reasons why the space module in French would be relevant to learners explained:

> they're giving opinions about something they're bothered about, rather than ... how much pocket money they've got.

She also noted that a module on the solar system previously taught in the year 7 science curriculum had proved less effective with the top set, because they had remembered learning the content in science (HOD, 17.6.13).

The target language is often de-contextualised in more traditional language lessons and learners are unable to see how it relates to them. In CLIL lessons, the target language has a purpose because it is essential for learning. The vice principal (7.11.12), referring to use of the target language in registration and curriculum subjects noted, '...I think they will see more relevancy ...because they're using it for everyday living as well, as opposed to learning a topic'.

High levels of cognitive challenge, characteristic of good progress, were considered to be a principal facet in the success of CLIL by all leaders interviewed at Ash School. In response to whether there is a greater cognitive challenge, the vice principal explained:

> There is, naturally, yes (pause) given what they have to absorb. …I'm no expert in how the brain functions, but, if everything is being fired off to actually be more aware when you're learning via another language, then surely that has a knock-on effect on any lesson you're in, and that's what we've found.
>
> (VP, 7.11.12)

Challenge was usually reported to be a motivator, but also a demotivator where work was so difficult that it led to demotivation. As the lead teacher in Beech School pointed out

(19.4.13), ‘there’s a thin line between demotivation and challenge’. The head of German in Beech suggested that 75% of the pupils in his Y7 German geography group tried hard, attributing the lesser effort of the remaining 25% mainly to their general level of effort in school. In Cedar School the head of department (18.6.13) suggested that for the CLIL modules, learners, 'have to think, and ... one of the big things in our schools is resilience and ... they have demonstrated a lot of resilience' and later added:

> I think that it’s not given on a plate to them – they’ve got to work it out for themselves. And they might get less than I expected but actually more than they would do in a normal lesson.

In Ash School, the vice principal (7.11.12), for example, suggested learners were:

> more positive, they see more relevance in learning a language than the average student would, and they have a more positive attitude towards it ...

Here, motivation is perceived to be maintained throughout lower secondary (ages 11–14), principally because of the goal of the early exam entry of GCSE age 14, usually undertaken age 16. Parental pressure to achieve is also an extrinsic factor (HOD, 6.11.12). The vice principal felt the teacher's positive approach and enthusiasm contributed to intrinsic motivation (VP, 7.11.12). In the next section two perceived constraints are reported.

3. Barriers to CLIL

The headteacher at Beech School raised the constraining nature of the then forthcoming national curriculum as something likely to prevent others adopting CLIL:

> the traditional nature of the curriculum that we’re about to be offered does allow an element of flexibility and freedom for academies to deliver it in the way that they

> wish, but doesn't seem to actively encourage it
>
> (HT, 19.4.13)

Headteachers reported that committed teaching staff with appropriate training are fundamental and difficult to replace. For example, the head teacher at Beech School (HT, 19.4.13) noted:

> the biggest problem is, what happens when Mary [the deputy head] gets promoted? ... the most important [thing], is a succession plan ... there is a gap in our delivery.

Referring to other colleagues involved in the programme he continued:

> It's whether there [is] somebody who would have the whole school leadership of this, the ability to take it on and the time to take it on. I think there are enough people to deliver it, but to manage the whole school planning and the visible delivery of the outcomes to myself, to governors, to parents, and more importantly, the children.

This demonstrates the fragility of CLIL because of the dependence on individuals. These constraints have been raised because of the bearing they have on the following discussion. Further affordances and constraints pertaining to the implementation of the programmes are reported elsewhere.

Staff in all schools involved suggested that the support of the management team was fundamental. In Beech School the deputy head, the CLIL programme's strongest advocate, referring to the management team, noted that leadership support has 'got to be robust too'. The deputy head (DH,17.4.13), went on to explain that in her first year, having just introduced the programme she faced:

> a new head teacher, who had never come across this in his life, and [who] had staff coming to him and saying, 'get rid of it' because they didn't like it, and he must have been in a terrible quandary, I've got this bonkers deputy who's put this in, and

> I've got all this staff dissension. The easy thing to do would be to walk away from it.

The deputy head suggested that in terms of getting leaders and parents on board, 'the key thing is to show the impact' via the data. The headteacher (19.4.13) remarked that the deputy head did 'have a job to do to persuade people that this was a good idea' but suggested that people now would say:

> we don't know what we would do without this, it's a normal way in which we can make the curriculum memorable and interesting and challenging.

In the next section, findings from the research will be discussed.

Discussion

In a national context of prevailing demotivation for language learning, senior leaders, it would appear, view their CLIL programme as part of the solution to the raising attainment agenda whilst acknowledging some of the challenges that introducing CLIL can create. The reasons leaders begin a commitment to CLIL are varied. It may originate in strategic goals (exam success) as well as societal goals but it appears to be sustained by the perceived pedagogical benefits to learners generated by learning in this way.

At the meso level, leadership was well established in each context. It is interesting that headteachers and a senior leader in each context understood the impact on school improvement that CLIL was making, or could make (Cedar School), and fully supported the programme. This supports Soler et al. (2016) findings. Without this support it may not be possible to implement and to sustain innovations in the face of pressures such as accountability measures, the narrow curriculum, initial resistance from staff, pupils or even parents. As an illustration of this and of the prevailing

innovation-limiting political climate, within a year of this study, the deputy head at Beech School was promoted to headship and established CLIL elsewhere; a new headteacher was also appointed. However, as a result of their departures, within two years Beech School's programme ended. This serves to demonstrate the fragility of CLIL and the fact that the pool of potential leaders and teachers with this specific knowledge and experience is still limited in England. Senior leaders it would seem are indeed instrumental to sustaining CLIL in an innovation-limiting culture of accountability. The next section will discuss affordances and constraints arising from issues that emerged from the data.

Affordances

Leaders' perceptions of CLIL's impact on motivation and achievement

In all three diverse settings senior leaders attribute learners' raised motivation, engagement, progress and attainment to CLIL. As exemplified in this study, in CLIL lessons, in line with other Anglophone-dominant contexts (e.g. Coyle, 2011; Cross & Gearon, 2013; Wiesemes, 2009), leaders report that learners are taught age-relevant subject content and concepts achieving optimal cognitive challenge increased intercultural understanding and citizenship and real use of the target language. Higher order processing skills (Anderson et al., 2001) are much more frequently required than in traditional language lessons. This contrasts starkly to the basic content and resulting lower cognition levels of traditional language learning in the early stages of acquisition, which often focus on acquiring transactional language, perceived by adolescents as 'inconsequential' (Coyle, 2000, 162). According to these senior leaders, the level of motivation generated by this approach, brought a depth of engagement that has the potential to stretch, challenge and inspire all learners thereby contributing to the school improvement agenda of enhanced attainment (Spielman, 2017). This would seem to

contradict concerns raised in other contexts (e.g. Bruton, 2011; 2015; Van Mensel et al., 2018) that selection may play a significant role in higher outcomes.

Constraints

Despite its benefits and the resulting support from leaders, a number of barriers were raised by interviewees. All leaders acknowledged issues around teachers' training needs for appropriate linguistic skills and subject knowledge development. There is a need for in-service training that provides methodological understanding so that practitioners understand why they are doing what they are doing and how it works. This is well documented across the field (e.g. British Council, 2014) as in other bilingual education contexts (e.g. Tedick et al., 2011). In the short term, to breach the gap in pedagogical knowledge, teacher educators may have an important role to play in introducing CLIL methodology and practice. Some resources exist in teacher education, for example ECILT training (Hunt, 2011). Institutions within the developing self-improving system may potentially draw on such resources.

Interestingly, interviewees were confident of CLIL's positive impact on learner progress, without apparently fully understanding how and why this might be achieved. For example, there were no references to the 4C's Framework (Coyle, 2007) in two of the schools. Perhaps this lack of pedagogical understanding in leaders may have contributed to the slow uptake of CLIL in England compared to that elsewhere in Europe and to its demise when key staff move on. Even in Ash School where the benefits were well-established and participants reported CLIL to be valued by all the staff, a lack of deep methodological understanding was found. In a school development system in which training comes from within, such lack of pedagogical understanding may be of greater significance. To sustain projects, incoming leaders and teachers require training to acquire the specific knowledge underpinning the innovative practice.

It is potentially significant that none of the leaders were involved in leading across boundaries by sharing good practice and training others in other settings as envisaged in the 2010 White Paper (Government, 2010b), even though two of the schools were geographically close. The two established programmes had held open days as part of language college status and similar programmes. This had allowed exchange but had stopped short of the collaboration that involves creating something new together (Kanter, 1994) characteristic of Hargreaves (2011) disciplined innovation. As a result, the programmes were successful, but isolated. It will be interesting to see whether within the macro alliances of the new self-improving school system, leaders from such innovations do cross boundaries so that cross-curricular language learning is enabled to develop across England as one curriculum initiative.

The latest National Curriculum (DFE, 2013) offers the *opportunity* to develop skills through, for example, the focus on literary texts. Senior leaders however considered that the new curriculum failed to *encourage* innovations such as CLIL, despite it being one way of enabling learners of all abilities to be motivated and to achieve in modern languages – thereby ensuring that more learners attain a qualification in a modern language. In spite of the case for transforming language learning set out in the national Nuffield review (2000) and the promising resulting strategy for languages (DfES, 2002), barriers echoing those found in this study have not yet been fully overcome, arguably due to the absence of a coherent national policy. However, as teaching alliances in England mature, the opportunities for cross school leadership and collaboration in such innovations that leads to Kanter's (1994) co-creation of new value are increasing. To be successful, these programmes would need to be supported by colleagues with a cogent grasp of the pedagogical theory: understanding why something

works is critical if it is to be further developed effectively both in-house and across institutional boundaries.

Leaders' perspectives about any drawbacks of CLIL were limited. In light of studies elsewhere that have raised, for example concerns regarding elitism, (e.g. (Bruton, 2011; 2015); Van Mensel et al. (2019)) this is interesting. Challenge to professional integrity (Moate, 2011) that can demotivate teacher practice was not evident in the findings. This may be because the few teachers involved were confident in this approach and had opted to be involved. Underachievement of learners such as that found in Sweden (Sylvén, 2013) was also absent. This may relate to the nation-specific CLIL profile of England– in these schools, learners of all abilities enter their language national exams at least one year earlier than their peers and revert to English for the curriculum subject. Cognitive challenge in all contexts was usually found to be optimally high. However, further research is needed similar to Pérez Cañado's (2019) recent study of learners across ability and socio-economic spectrums, but that also includes the perspectives of senior leaders. It would be particularly interesting to further investigate CLIL contexts in which motivation to learn a language is traditionally problematic e.g. Anglophone-dominant contexts, particularly those with compulsory models.

Conclusion

Senior leaders with educational vision confident to innovate in their curriculum in spite of the prevailing climate of ubiquitous accountability were found to have an instrumental role in sustaining these CLIL programmes through to maturity. Given these relentless accountability pressures and the prevailing context of demotivation for language learning in England, it is significant that leaders perceive CLIL to be part of the whole school solution to addressing national priorities in spite of concerns expressed about policy, curriculum and training. The current languages policy vacuum and

national changes in school management bring the wider sustainability of innovations such as these into question. The self-improving school system has the potential to facilitate the sharing and development of pedagogies like CLIL within and across institutional boundaries within a network of schools, though is less likely to reach across competing network boundaries. Paradoxically then this limitation of the self-improving school system may be the greatest constraint to national roll-out. Perhaps consideration of the idea of a national body able to drive CLIL forward by convincing senior leaders of its merits, one that transcends network barriers is a pressing outcome of this study, if this pedagogy is to reach its full potential in English schools. As explored in this article, England has peculiarities in terms of national profile. In other contexts, the role of leaders in CLIL may work differently, but this study may speak to other contexts by raising questions about the value of innovations such as CLIL from a leadership perspective.

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Tables

Table 1

Management of Learning in the UK

Level		
Macro	educational governance level	self-improving school system
Meso	institution level	management of school
Micro	classroom level	implementation on ground

Table 2

Summary of Leaders and Roles

Meso level of leadership	Leader	Leadership role	Priorities and roles in this study	Responsibilities
1	Senior leader	Headteacher (HT)	• head of school • leads school improvement • i/c management of the school • ultimate responsibility for teaching and learning, curriculum, progress and attainment	• ultimate responsibility • understands potential gains • liaison with governors[2] and overseer of CLIL
2	Senior leader	Deputy Head (DH) /Vice Principal (VP)	• deputises for headteacher • delegated responsibility for all or part of curriculum /aspects of school leadership from headteacher • little or no teaching	• oversees CLIL • visible leader/ advocate with parents, pupils, staff, governors; (inc. presentations to parents and governors)
2	Senior leader	Assistant Head teacher (AHT)	• senior leader • delegated responsibility an aspect of school leadership from headteacher • some teaching	• oversees curriculum (Cedar school) • supports development of pilot
3	Middle leader	Head of department (HOD)	• leads ML curriculum • i/c ML teaching and learning: organises ML timetable, classes, teachers and resources • teaches	• assigns teachers • i/c teaching and learning • is responsible for ML progress including CLIL • may oversee CLIL (Cedar school) • may teach CLIL (Cedar school)
3	Middle leader	Head of German	• leads German curriculum	• assigns teachers • i/c teaching and

[2] Governors provide strategic leadership and accountability in schools. The board of governors has three key functions: overseeing the financial performance of the school; and making sure its money is well spent and holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils.

		(HOG)	• i/c German teaching and learning: organises German timetable, classes, teachers and resources in liaison with HOD • teaches	learning of German • is responsible for German progress including CLIL • may teach CLIL (Beech School)
3	Middle leader	Lead CLIL teacher (LCT)	• no wider leadership responsibility except CLIL • teaches	• leads CLIL in one or more year groups and/or one or more languages • teaches CLIL

Table 3

Summary of CLIL Models, Learners and Interviews

School	Project type	Curriculum	Leader Interviews
School Ash* 11–16 Inner city, high FSM, almost all EAL	Curriculum Strand	ICT, PSHE, Tutor group for three years in French Year 8 group of 28	3x 60 mins.: vice principal; head of dept.; lead CLIL teacher 1x 30 mins. interview with headteacher
School Beech 11–18 Leafy suburb, almost all white, few EAL	School-based project	Subject strand of geography in French Year 8 group of 27	4x 60 mins. interviews: deputy head; head of German; 2 lead CLIL teachers 1x 20 mins. interview with headteacher

School Cedar 11–18 Faith school c. 50% white, 50% Ethnic minority heritage, EAL above average	Language-based projects based on links with other curriculum areas	Subject module of history and science in French: 9 lessons Year 9 group of 30	2x 60 mins.: assistant head teacher; head of dept. 1x 45 mins. interview with headteacher

Notes
FSM: Free School Meals (deprivation indicator)
EAL: English as an Additional Language
ICT: Information Technology
PSHE: Personal Social Health Education (PSHE)

*Pseudonyms have been used

Table 4

Summary of Leaders' Views

Impact on progress and attainment	• accelerated progress and attainment across the curriculum • increased progress beyond attainment
Enhanced engagement	• new, age-relevant content • use of the target language for real purposes • optimal cognitive challenge • positive approach to learning languages
Constraints	• staffing • national curriculum