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# Do we all share the same goals for content and language integrated learning (CLIL)? Specialist and practitioner perceptions of 'ideal' CLIL pedagogies in the Netherlands

Evelyn van Kampen<sup>a</sup>, Jacobiene Meirink<sup>a</sup>, Wilfried Admiraal <sup>a</sup> and Amanda Berry<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching, Leiden University – Iclon, Leiden, Netherlands; <sup>b</sup>Faculty of Education, Monash University, Clayton, Australia

## ABSTRACT

In the past two decades, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has seen a surge in uptake, especially in European schools offering forms of bilingual education. This article reports a study investigating practitioner and specialist perceptions about the goals and practices of CLIL in the Netherlands, one of few countries where CLIL provisions are highly institutionalized at the national level. To investigate these stakeholders' perceptions about ideal CLIL pedagogies in an in-depth way, semi-structured interviews were held with seven CLIL practitioners and nine CLIL specialists. Inductive content analysis of the interview transcripts identified four themes relating to stakeholders' perceptions of ideal CLIL pedagogies: (1) Meta-goals; (2) Teaching resources; (3) Student output; and, (4) Feedback and assessment. The most important themes and sub-themes for each group are discussed in detail. In addition to providing a rich picture of 'ideal' CLIL pedagogies by key stakeholders in the Netherlands, the results also showed that, despite the level of institutionalization of CLIL in the Netherlands, specialist and practitioner perceptions of ideal CLIL pedagogies seem not to be fully aligned. The implications for teacher-education and CLIL policy in the Netherlands and other contexts are discussed.

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## KEYWORDS

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL); pedagogies; bilingual education; the Netherlands

## 1. Introduction

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is commonly broadly defined as a 'dual focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language' (Coyle, Hood, and Marsh 2010, 1). In the past two decades, CLIL has seen a surge in uptake, especially in Europe, where it is used most often in schools offering forms of bilingual education (Pérez-Cañado 2012). In these schools, students can study certain subjects in a foreign or second language. In practice, this means that, in most cases, *subject* teachers take on an additional role, teaching their subject through a foreign language. In some contexts, *language* teachers take on the additional role and become responsible for teaching subject matter (e.g. Primary Education in Spain) (cf. Pavón Vázquez and Ellison 2013). In this paper, CLIL is conceived in relation to Dalton-Puffer et al.'s (2014) conceptualization, which claims three prototypical characteristics: (1) CLIL languages are mostly major or minor *linguae francae*; (2) CLIL does not happen instead of foreign language teaching, but alongside it; and, (3) CLIL is timetabled as subject matter lessons.

**CONTACT** Evelyn van Kampen  e.van.kampen@iclon.leidenuniv.nl

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Consequently it is taught by subject matter-trained teachers and assessed as subject matter. Much has been published about what CLIL teaching approaches and activities ('CLIL pedagogies') ought to consist of (e.g. see Coyle, Hood, and Marsh 2010), however, in practice, CLIL includes many variants depending on the specific context in which it is implemented.

In the European context, the European Commission has invested CLIL with 'a major contribution to make to the Union's language learning goals' (European Commission Communication 2003, 8), specifically the goal that every EU citizen can speak at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue (European Commission 2009). However, in practice, few EU countries have actually made substantial investments into CLIL implementation, teacher education or research, so that explicit goals and precise curricular objectives are largely missing and CLIL continues to be carried forward in most cases through the practices of grassroots stakeholders (cf. Eurydice 2006 in Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, and Smit 2013, 271).

In European contexts where CLIL policy is not strongly directed at the national level, there is often a marked gap between CLIL specialists' or policy-makers' perceptions about what CLIL pedagogies should consist of and those involved with its day-to-day implementation. Perceptions are important because they may, for example, affect teachers' classroom practices (e.g. Borg 2003). Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, and Smit (2013), investigated teachers' and students' beliefs about language learning in CLIL at upper secondary colleges of technology in Austria. They argue the Austrian context can serve as a typical European case: as a result of a managerial void at the national level, CLIL is very much a grassroots endeavor, meaning that schools 'can and do offer the kind and extent of CLIL program that suits the school's resources and the students' or parents' needs' (271). They found lack of a shared goal of CLIL teaching that is commonly advocated by CLIL researchers and policy-makers, namely an explicit dual focus on subject-specific content *and* language. Rather, CLIL was viewed by the respondents in Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer and Smit's study as 'an extra provision of English [target language] practice, made more enjoyable by the absence of clear curricular aims and thus also forms of assessment for the language component of the class' (Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, and Smit 2013, 278). Although other studies exist about CLIL stakeholder perceptions in the European context (e.g. Infante, Benvenuto, and Lastrucci 2009; Mehisto and Asser 2007; Pladevall-Ballester 2013), they tend to focus on perceptions of experiences with actual CLIL programs, rather than perceptions about what ought to be the goals and practices of CLIL teaching.

In this paper, we address Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, and Smit's (2013) call for research into alignment between perceptions of stakeholders in a context where the implementation of CLIL is more fueled from above, that is, where policy-makers at the national level take on a much stronger role in managing CLIL. We do so by investigating the perceptions of stakeholders in the Netherlands, one of the few European countries where CLIL provisions are highly institutionalized at the national level. Specifically, we investigate the perceptions of two groups: CLIL practitioners (experienced CLIL teachers and CLIL coordinators) and CLIL specialists (researchers, teacher-educators and policy-experts) about 'ideal' CLIL pedagogies. We do so, as we consider that a shared knowledge base between these stakeholders is necessary to support the systematic development of CLIL, to support teachers in learning how to teach using CLIL, and to ensure a high quality of CLIL education is sustained.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. CLIL pedagogies

CLIL's broad definition and its use in varied contexts means that it is not associated with one specific form of pedagogy, but rather functions as 'a type of instruction that fuses the best of subject matter and language teaching pedagogies' (Morton 2010, 97). There has been extensive theorizing on the key traits which should characterize CLIL methodology and underlie its implementation (e.g. Madrid and Pérez-Cañado 2012; Pavón Vázquez and Rubio 2010). These include student-centered methodologies, learner and teacher roles, materials and evaluation in CLIL. We now present a synthesis of key literature about CLIL pedagogies and what they should include.

Coyle (2007) proposed a holistic *4Cs Framework*, to guide the fundamental elements of CLIL pedagogy for teachers. This Framework identifies key components of CLIL, in any context, as the integration of: Content (subject of the learning); Cognition (cognitive level of the learning); Communication (language needed for students to: understand the content; participate in the learning activities; and, reiterate their learning); and Culture (fostering intercultural and subject-specific cultural understanding).

It has been argued that whilst the 4Cs Framework is useful in guiding understanding of *what* pedagogies ought to encompass, there needs to be more focus on *how* the integration of the various aspects can be achieved (e.g. Coyle 2015; Meyer et al. 2015). Genre-based pedagogy (e.g. see Rose and Martin 2012), from systemic functional linguistics (Halliday 1994) has been argued to be particularly relevant in addressing this concern. This pedagogy considers a key aspect of learning an academic subject to be that of becoming a user of the various text types or genres through which subject knowledge is constructed. Hence, it provides a way of genuinely integrating content and language instruction and makes explicit what subject-specific language is to be taught (Morton 2010). Relevant for CLIL contexts is Martin's emphasis (2009), that using subject-specific texts functionally presents certain challenges in foreign language learning as 'knowledge of the language in which genres are composed cannot be assumed.' In these contexts, 'discussing the relation of lexis, grammar and discourse structure to genre is inescapable' (Martin 2009, 16).

For teachers, the main difference between CLIL teaching and teaching the subject in the mother tongue is the fact that CLIL involves additional language learning objectives and specific opportunities for communication and language use (De Graaff et al. 2007, 606). Hence, characteristics of effective CLIL teaching performance are often derived from theoretical principles in second language acquisition (SLA). Westhoff's (2004) SLA penta-pie model, which was transformed into a CLIL observation tool for effective second language pedagogy by De Graaff et al. (2007), provides a useful synthesis of which SLA insights are considered essential for CLIL teaching. The model emphasizes that foreign language pedagogy should facilitate five aspects: (1) exposure to input at a (minimally) challenging level; (2) meaning-focused processing, including tasks in which students need to make sense of input; (3) form-focused processing, such as activities making students conscious of relevant specific language features; (4) opportunities for output production through teacher-student interaction and different forms of student interaction; and, (5) awareness and use of language learning strategies to compensate for students' comprehension and communication problems.

More general theorizing about key characteristics of CLIL methodology emphasizes pedagogical aspects associated with 'good teaching' generally. CLIL is grounded in constructivism and cognitive theory and, accordingly, student-centered teaching is considered a prerequisite for effective subject and language learning. Consistent with constructivist principles, CLIL favors active learning, not only in terms of teacher-student interaction but also student interaction through cooperative and collaborative work, to promote learner autonomy (e.g. Pavón Vázquez and Ellison 2013; Pavón Vázquez and Rubio 2010). This more social-constructivist, interactive and student-led approach requires teachers to take on the role of facilitators of learning, rather than knowledge donors (e.g. Madrid and Pérez-Cañado 2012).

A key aspect of CLIL methodology lies in the need for collaboration amongst CLIL teachers and language colleagues to promote integration (e.g. Pavón Vázquez and Ellison 2013). Support from the language teacher may be two-fold: providing linguistic support in an advisory capacity to CLIL teachers; and/or developing language skills in the language class that students will need when in the CLIL class (Pavón Vázquez and Ellison 2013, 76).

## **2.2. Policy and practices in the Netherlands**

Bilingual education in the Netherlands started as a bottom-up development in the early 1990s, initiated by school boards, teachers and parents that wanted to offer Dutch students a more internationally oriented education. Currently, approximately 120 (of 700) secondary schools offer a

bilingual stream, usually in parallel with a 'regular', non-bilingual, stream. Most bilingual schools offer Dutch-English education; a few schools situated in the border region offer a Dutch-German program. Following primary school, Dutch students enter one of three streams of secondary school: VMBO (pre-vocational education, 4 years), HAVO (general secondary education, 5 years), or VWO (pre-university education, 6 years). Initially, bilingual education was only offered at VWO level. However, it is now expanding to include different school types (HAVO and VMBO) and levels (primary and higher education). In bilingual secondary schools, there is a greater focus on CLIL teaching in the lower forms compared with the upper forms because all students need to complete the Dutch-language national exams in their final school year.

Whilst Dutch bilingual education started as a bottom-up development, it was institutionalized fairly quickly, and a key characteristic of the current context is its highly institutionalized nature. A government-financed agency, the EP-Nuffic, coordinates all activities related to bilingual education. All Dutch bilingual schools belong to the national Network of Bilingual Schools ('the Network'), which was set up in 1994. Members of the Network must comply with the Standards for Bilingual Education ('the Standards') (European Platform 2012) and a quality control process in the form of an accreditation framework.

The Standards are presented to schools in an accreditation framework containing forty-five indicators in eight categories: learning results; program quantity; program quality; international orientation; CLIL pedagogy; quality control; organizational preconditions; and, individual and team-based professional development. Twenty-three of the indicators are norm-indicators, outlining the minimum quality level that is required of all schools (De Graaff and van Wilgenburg 2015). Norm-indicators for both subject teachers and English teachers in a CLIL setting include: using English (the target language) effectively as the language of instruction; using diverse methods to facilitate student output; and, stimulating target language interaction among students. In addition, providing feedback about students' language use and making students aware of subject-specific language aspects are norm-indicators for subject teachers only. Finally, a norm-indicator for English teachers only is that they should pay attention to often occurring language problems during subject lessons, in cooperation with the subject teachers (European Platform 2013b in De Graaff and van Wilgenburg 2015). Every five years, accreditation committees appointed by the EP-Nuffic ascertain whether a school conforms to the indicators and, by extension, to the Standards.

The Standards (European Platform 2012) also include a specific Competency Profile for Bilingual Teachers ('the Profile'), which outlines the competencies expected of teachers. Table 1 provides an overview of the competencies mentioned in the Profile. Table 1 shows that CLIL is the expected teaching approach for Dutch bilingual education. Related to CLIL, Coyle's (2007) 4C's Framework is referred to in defining 'the CLIL objectives' (1.3). Reference is also made to the role of subject-specific discourse, specifically in making students aware of the linguistic aspects of their subject (4.9) and being able to point out the characteristic aspects of the CLIL approach to their subject (6). From the Profile, the role of culture is also notable. This stems from the aim of Dutch bilingual education – not just to improve language competence, but equally to improve students' global understanding – their so-called 'European and International Orientation' (EIO) (1.5; 1.6; 2.5).

Although bilingual education is highly institutionalized, it is currently not directly funded by the EP-Nuffic or the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Small subsidies are available for schools starting out with bilingual education, but a bilingual school's primary source of funding are the parents, who are asked to make a yearly contribution (European Platform 2013a). Moreover, although the Standards place heavy emphasis on bilingual teachers being well-versed CLIL teachers, there is not yet a standardized education program for CLIL teachers working in the Netherlands. Most CLIL teachers in the Netherlands are not native speakers of English; neither do they have a background in language pedagogy (De Graaff et al. 2007). To meet the language proficiency requirements (at least B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language), most non-native teachers follow a Cambridge English course, with the aim of achieving their Cambridge English First (B2), Advanced (C1), or Proficiency (C2) degree. Teacher-education specifically related to CLIL pedagogies

**Table 1.** Overview of Competency Profile for Bilingual Teachers (European Platform 2012).

Category	Competence (The bilingual teacher ...)
1 Curriculum	
1.1	Develops cross-curricular learning plans with other subjects
1.2	Works on projects together with other language teachers and/or subject teachers
1.3	Develops a curriculum with a view to attaining the CLIL objectives (the 'CLIL objectives' are defined as the 4Cs: Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture)
1.4	Helps pupils develop information-finding skills
1.5	Coordinates international cooperative projects, with a view to the development of intercultural skills
1.6	Seizes opportunities to incorporate topical international events into class
2 Selection of teaching materials	
2.1	Is able to find suitable teaching materials (considered 'suitable' are materials that fit subject as well as language teaching objectives, and match the level of the pupils)
2.2	Selects suitable teaching materials
2.3	Is able to adapt suitable materials and/or learning tasks in accordance with the pupils' language proficiency level
2.4	Offers a variety of materials
2.5	Selects materials with a view to providing an international perspective
2.6	Is able to attain the national core objectives for his or her own subject by using authentic materials in the target language
3 Assessment	
3.1	Sets assignments and tests to evaluate the target language curriculum
3.2	Sets assignments and tests to evaluate the pupils' progress with regard to language as well as the subject area
3.3	Is able to assess whether underachievement in tests is caused by language problems or gaps in the pupil's subject knowledge/skills
3.4	Uses assessment criteria aimed at subject knowledge as well as language proficiency
3.5	Takes the pupils' language proficiency levels into account when setting tests
4 Didactic approach	
4.1	Is able to determine whether problems with learning tasks are caused by language problems or by problems with the subject itself
4.2	Uses educational approaches that encourage language production
4.3	Encourages classroom interaction
4.4	Recognizes frequently occurring language problems and passes this information on to the language teacher
4.5	Encourages pupils to develop language learning strategies
4.6	Uses a variety of communication strategies – negotiation of meaning in particular – to get the subject matter across
4.7	Encourages the pupils' language proficiency by offering different forms of feedback
4.8	Adjusts his or her own language usage to that of the pupils, with the aims of encouraging them to improve both their subject knowledge and their language acquisition
4.9	Makes pupils aware of specifically linguistic aspects of their subject
5 Language proficiency	Is proficient at least at level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language for all five skills
6 Knowledge of CLIL	Is able to point out the characteristic aspects of the CLIL approach to his or her own subject

is more diverse. Most teachers working in bilingual schools have not had pre-service education in CLIL methodology, but typically they receive in-service CLIL education. One reason for this is that CLIL teachers are often recruited from the non-bilingual section of their school, hence they do not have a background in language education. There are several types of in-service CLIL education available to teachers: workshops of varying lengths, courses held abroad and short courses offered at a higher education institution. In-service education is provided by independent consultants, higher education based CLIL teacher-educators or by school-based teaching staff who are highly experienced in CLIL. CLIL educators typically have a background in foreign language teaching or teaching in a CLIL context.

A small but growing minority of CLIL teachers has completed pre-service teacher-education focusing specifically on CLIL. Some Dutch universities of applied sciences offer a minor study in CLIL teaching, while university-based Master programs in teaching offer a dedicated CLIL-track where students receive seminars about CLIL methodology and conduct teaching internships in a CLIL context. Finally,



in-service bilingual teachers are also exposed to informal CLIL education, through attending CLIL conferences, and participating in teacher learning communities and national workshops. Thus, CLIL teachers in the Netherlands have quite varied backgrounds in terms of their CLIL education.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research question

The motivation for this study emerges from the above situation that there is a gap in our knowledge about how CLIL specialists and practitioners perceive the goals and practices of CLIL pedagogy in a context where CLIL is highly institutionalized at the national level. In order to support more effective teaching and learning in CLIL, it is important to know more about perceptions of key stakeholders related to these goals and practices. In this way a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of a shared knowledge-base can be achieved. To this end, the following research question guided the current study: 'What are specialist and practitioner perceptions of the goals and practices of "ideal" CLIL pedagogies in the context of bilingual secondary education in the Netherlands?' We chose to focus on 'ideal' pedagogies, as a way to direct participants' thinking about *desirable* practices rather than *all* practices. We opted for a small-scale descriptive qualitative study to investigate specialist and practitioner perceptions in an in-depth way.

#### 3.2. Sample

Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate specialist and practitioner perceptions of ideal CLIL pedagogies. The choice was made to interview a small, purposefully selected set of stakeholders. For practitioners, although we had a potentially very large pool to choose from (120 schools as described above), we sought CLIL practitioners with extensive experience and leading CLIL roles in their schools and nationally. We specifically chose to focus on this group in order to provide as rich a picture as possible about perceptions related to ideal CLIL pedagogies by those driving the teaching, the making of teaching materials and contributing to CLIL teacher-education programs. We selected these practitioners with the help of the EP-Nuffic, who provided us with a list of national bilingual subject coordinators and a list of highly experienced CLIL coordinators in schools. Moreover, we used the program booklet of the most recent National CLIL Conference to identify experienced practitioners who had led a workshop related to CLIL teaching. From this we composed a shortlist of potential practitioner interviewees. For CLIL specialists, we selected participants from existing teacher-education programs focusing on CLIL and from researchers and policy experts having published about CLIL. To enable us to place the information from the Netherlands in a larger context we also included several leading international CLIL academics. In total, eighteen CLIL specialists and practitioners were identified and were sent an email inviting their participation in an interview about ideal CLIL teaching practice. Sixteen of the eighteen selected CLIL experts (nine CLIL specialists and seven CLIL practitioners) agreed to participate. Since participants were selected because of their reputation, we regarded them as informants (i.e. sources of data) and not as representatives of the entire population of CLIL practitioners or CLIL specialists (Lichtman 2006).

Table 2 provides information about the CLIL-related roles of the specialists. Three of the specialists were current teacher-educators, specifically involved with educating pre-service and/or in-service teachers in the Netherlands for teaching using CLIL. Five of the specialists were involved with conducting research about CLIL. Three of these were national-based and two were internationally established CLIL specialists. The remaining specialist was a Dutch bilingual education policy expert.

Table 3 provides information about the CLIL-related roles and teacher-education backgrounds of the practitioners. Four of the practitioners were, in addition to their teaching role, national bilingual subject coordinators. The three other practitioners were, in addition to having CLIL teaching experience for their subjects, CLIL coordinators at their school or had leadership roles in developing CLIL at

**Table 2.** CLIL specialists.

Specialist	CLIL specialist role	Based in the Netherlands (NL)/abroad
1	CLIL researcher	Abroad
2	CLIL researcher	Abroad
3	CLIL researcher	NL
4	CLIL researcher	NL
5	CLIL researcher	NL
6	CLIL teacher-educator (Independent)	NL
7	CLIL teacher-educator (University of Applied Sciences)	NL
8	CLIL teacher-educator (University)	NL
9	CLIL policy expert	NL

their school. The practitioners taught a wide range of subjects, from more language dense subjects (such as Social Studies or Biology) to less language dense subjects (such as Mathematics or Physical Education). As can be seen in Table 3, the CLIL-related teacher-education of the practitioners was quite varied, ranging from none (practitioner 5) to in-service courses. None of the practitioners had completed a pre-service CLIL course. Also noteworthy is that three out of the seven practitioners were native English speakers.

### 3.3. Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore perceptions of specialists and practitioners about ideal CLIL pedagogies in an in-depth way. The interviews started with an introduction about the research in which interviewees were informed that their audiotaped interview would be transcribed and anonymized. The interview consisted of three broad questions: (1) What makes CLIL teaching practice unique?; (2) What are ideal conditions for CLIL teachers?; and, (3) What does ideal CLIL pedagogy look like to you? The interview structure was kept deliberately open to allow us to explore perceptions and the interviewees were encouraged to reflect and elaborate on their responses. We included 'ideal conditions for CLIL teachers separately from 'ideal' CLIL pedagogy to encourage participants to think beyond the boundaries of their current professional 'space' (practice, academia). The interviews took place between April-July 2014, either at the institution where the interviewee worked ( $n = 7$ ), at that of the first author ( $n = 3$ ) or via Skype ( $n = 6$ ). The average duration of the interviews was approximately 60 min (ranging from 35 to 75 min). The interview transcripts were used for the analysis.

### 3.4. Analysis

The interview data was analyzed using inductive content analysis. First, a sub-set of two practitioner and two specialist interview transcripts were randomly selected. The first and second authors of this paper read these interviews thoroughly to identify themes. Themes were considered relevant if they pertained to perceptions about what CLIL pedagogies should consist of. The authors first identified

**Table 3.** CLIL practitioners.

Practitioner	Nationality	CLIL Teaching roles	CLIL-related teacher-education
1	British	English and Drama teacher/CLIL Coordinator	CLIL Coordinator course offered by university (while in-service)
2	Dutch	Biology teacher/ national subject coordinator	No specific CLIL education. Several CLIL workshops at school
3	Dutch	Physical Education teacher/CLIL Coordinator	In-service CLIL education
4	Dutch	Mathematics teacher/ in-school CLIL teaching development	CLIL course offered by university (while in-service)
5	Dutch	Drama teacher/ national subject coordinator	No specific CLIL education
6	British	Fine Arts teacher/ national subject coordinator	No specific CLIL education. Several CLIL workshops at school
7	American-Dutch	Social Studies teacher/ national subject coordinator	No specific CLIL education. Several CLIL workshops at school



these themes individually, and then discussed these to establish a list of common themes. Following the identification of these themes, all quotations about a specific theme were compared with one another. New aspects identified within each theme were listed as sub-themes and the content of each sub-theme was described. After completing this process together for the first four interviews, the first author used the established codebook to code the remaining interviews. If new sub-themes were identified, the above-described process was repeated and the first four interviews were re-analyzed for evidence of these themes.

The second author of this paper conducted an audit procedure as a validity check on all four identified themes. The second author was asked to examine the Results section for the selected themes and to assess if (1) information was omitted which was included in the collected data, and (2) information could be traced back to the collected data. This resulted in two minor changes. Firstly, in one of the sub-themes of *Teaching resources*, a distinction was made between learning outcomes and motivational outcomes. Secondly, in one of the sub-themes of *Student output*, a distinction made between different tasks was found to be redundant and therefore combined in the sub-theme 'Tasks'.

## 4. Results

This section reports specialist and practitioner perceptions of the goals and practices of 'ideal' CLIL pedagogies identified through the content analysis. As a result of the first step of the analysis, four themes were identified: (1) Meta-goals; (2) Teaching resources; (3) Student output; and, (4) Feedback and assessment. Each of these themes contains three to six sub-themes. Tables 4–7 contain an overview of the different aspects mentioned by the interviewees per theme and sub-theme, and the absolute frequencies of specialists and practitioners that mentioned these. Absolute frequencies are useful in terms of providing an indication of which aspects of sub-themes were considered more or less important for each group. However, we interpret the absolute frequency results with caution as, in addition to the unequal number of interviews in the groups (7 practitioners and 9 specialists), the specialist interviews were generally longer and covered more sub-themes. Per theme, we discuss (aspects of) sub-themes that were mentioned by more than one-third of the participants from each group (three or more practitioners; four or more specialists; made bold in the Tables). We discuss the results separately for each group to allow us to present clearly the aspects of CLIL pedagogy most emphasized by each group.

### 4.1. Meta-goals

#### 4.1.1. Specialists

As shown by Table 4, specialists referred frequently to meta-goals of CLIL teaching. As such, specialists ( $n = 5$ ) explicitly mentioned that a goal of CLIL pedagogy is foreign language teaching. Moreover,

**Table 4.** Meta-goals of CLIL teaching.

Sub-theme	Description	Practitioners ( $n = 7$ )	Specialists ( $n = 9$ )
Foreign language	Meta-goal is to focus on foreign language teaching	1	<b>5</b>
Student-centered	Meta-goal is to provide student-centered teaching	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
Apprentice	Meta-goal is to apprentice learners into subject-specific discourse	0	<b>7</b>
discourse	Meta-goal is to apprentice learners into general academic discourse	0	3
Subject teacher	Meta-goal of subject teacher is to have both content and (related) language goals	2	<b>8</b>
	Meta-goal of subject teacher is to have content goals only. The target language is the means through which the content is taught	1	0
English teacher	Meta-goal of English teacher is to focus on the language needed in subject lessons	0	<b>6</b>
	Meta-goal of English teacher is to focus on English for academic purposes	0	3
Global understanding	Meta-goal is to develop students' global understanding	2	<b>4</b>

**Table 5.** Resources for CLIL teaching.

Sub-theme	Description	Practitioners ( <i>n</i> = 7)	Specialists ( <i>n</i> = 9)
Tailor-made	Teaching resources are tailor-made so the content and language level are just-challenging for students	1	3
	Teaching resources are tailor-made activities through which students unconsciously learn content and language together	2	1
	Teaching resources are tailor-made, motivating activities	<b>4</b>	2
Multi-modal	Teaching resources are multi-modal	1	<b>6</b>
	Teaching resources contain a lot of visualization	2	2
Authentic	Teaching resources are authentic	2	3
	Teaching resources, including the general school environment, are authentic	1	2
Wordlists	Teaching resources include subject-terminology wordlists	<b>4</b>	1
	Teaching resources need not include subject-terminology wordlists	0	2
	Teaching resources include academic wordlists	1	2
Cross-curricular	Teaching resources include cross-curricular projects co-developed by English and/or subject teachers from various disciplines.	2	<b>5</b>

most specialists (*n* = 7) mentioned that student-centered teaching is a prerequisite for effective CLIL teaching.

Most specialists (*n* = 7) emphasized that an overall goal of CLIL pedagogy should be to apprentice students into subject-specific discourse in the target language, to, as Specialist 7 stated: 'think, speak and write like a subject specialist.' Six out of the seven specialists mentioned that, whilst apprenticing students into subject-specific discourse in the target language should be a main goal of CLIL pedagogy, in practice there is insufficient focus on this aspect in teacher-education programs. They emphasized that this has led to a current situation where most teachers are not explicitly aware of the typical forms of discourse used in their subject, aside from the target language equivalent of subject-specific terminology.

Regarding the role of CLIL subject teachers, nearly all specialists (*n* = 8) explicitly mentioned that teachers should have both content and (related) language goals. Although specialists mentioned

**Table 6.** Practices to stimulate student output in CLIL teaching.

Sub-theme	Description	Practitioners ( <i>n</i> = 7)	Specialists ( <i>n</i> = 9)
Activate	Stimulate student output by activating students' prior content and language knowledge	1	2
Teacher-student interaction	Stimulate student output by teacher adjusting their language to the level of their students	1	<b>4</b>
	Stimulate student output by teacher explaining things in a variety of ways	2	3
	Stimulate student output by teacher maintaining sustained interaction with student(s)	1	<b>4</b>
	Stimulate student output by teacher's classroom management ability in the target language	1	3
Student interaction	Stimulate student output by ensuring that students have various opportunities to interact	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
	Stimulate student output through collaborative group work	<b>3</b>	2
	Stimulate student output through students communicating with students from schools abroad	2	<b>4</b>
Tasks	Stimulate student output by tasks whereby students need to speak the target language	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Stimulate student output by tasks whereby students need to write in the target language	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
	Stimulate student output by creative tasks	<b>4</b>	1
Scaffolding	Stimulate student output through providing students with both content and language scaffolds	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
	Stimulate student output through providing students with very specific tasks	2	1
Classroom language	Stimulate student output by allowing only the target language to be used in the classroom	<b>5</b>	3
	Stimulate student output by making use of translanguaging	0	2

**Table 7.** Feedback and assessment for CLIL teaching.

Sub-theme	Description	Practitioners (n = 7)	Specialists (n = 9)
Feedback on language	Feedback on students' language use is provided by all teachers	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
	Feedback on students' language use is not provided by subject teachers; subject teachers focus only on providing feedback about content	1	0
	Feedback on students' language should only be provided if students then have the opportunity to try out the feedback themselves	0	2
	Feedback on language form should be provided by all teachers	0	1
	Feedback on language form should only be provided by English teachers	0	2
Assessment of language	Always include a language component in assessment	<b>5</b>	3
	Never assess students' language use	1	0
	Assess language in written tasks by underlining students' written language mistakes	2	0
	Assess language in written tasks by assessing textual aspects	0	1
	Assess students' effort to use the target language by including effort marks on report cards	<b>3</b>	0
Stimulate student reflection	Stimulate student reflection by providing students with clear assessment criteria	1	1
	Stimulate student reflection by making use of peer feedback	1	2
	Stimulate students to reflect on their own learning	1	1

both content and language goals, they gave precedence to *content* goals, as explained by Specialist 3: 'the language goals are a means to achieve the content goals in as good or a better way than in an L1 class'.

Regarding the role of an English teacher in a CLIL setting, a majority of specialists ( $n = 6$ ) emphasized that, ideally, the CLIL English teacher should focus on the language needed in other subject lessons. Most of these specialists remarked that, although this was their ideal, it was very difficult to practically realize, because as Specialist 2 aptly summarized, 'We are tribal animals and stepping across the [subject] borders of these sub-tribes we belong to is really difficult for us.'

Finally, whilst several specialists ( $n = 4$ ) mentioned developing students' global understanding as being a key pedagogic goal in the Dutch context through the EIO requirements, this was not perceived to form part of ideal *CLIL* pedagogy. As Specialist 6 stated: 'in Holland the culture element is also important – that the kids become global citizens etc. But I don't think that's part of ideal CLIL teaching.'

#### 4.1.2. Practitioners

As shown by Table 4, practitioners infrequently referred to meta-goals of CLIL teaching. The only aspect mentioned by several practitioners ( $n = 3$ ) was that student-centered teaching is a prerequisite for effective CLIL teaching.

### 4.2. Teaching resources

#### 4.2.1. Specialists

As shown by Table 5, specialists emphasized two aspects related to CLIL teaching resources. First, specialists ( $n = 6$ ) asserted that resources should be multi-modal, meaning different types of input (e.g. film, sound, text) should be used. Second, specialists ( $n = 5$ ) emphasized that CLIL teaching should, ideally, include cross-curricular projects co-developed by English and/or subject teachers from different disciplines.

#### 4.2.2. Practitioners

Practitioners emphasized two different aspects related to CLIL teaching resources. First, practitioners ( $n = 4$ ) mentioned that ideally teachers should design motivating activities for students. To illustrate, Practitioner 6 described a caption game she<sup>1</sup> uses: 'I show students a picture and get them thinking

about what the caption might be. It generally gets quite silly, students making fun of art masterpieces. But by doing that they are playing with the language.' Interestingly, all three native-speaker practitioners emphasized that producing tailor-made, motivating resources required operating 'outside of the box' of traditional teaching in the Netherlands, which is largely textbook-based.

Second, practitioners ( $n = 4$ ) emphasized the use of wordlists to teach students relevant subject-terminology in the target language. The ways in which practitioners envisioned using wordlists ranged from 'providing students with a list of relevant terms for them to refer to and use during class' (Practitioners 3 and 5) to 'asking students to use all the Personal Idiom File words they had written down during classes in a newspaper article' (Practitioner 1).

### 4.3. Student output

#### 4.3.1. Specialists

Specialists often referred to *Student output* in their views of ideal CLIL pedagogies. As Specialist 7 explained:

You can't see thinking, you can't measure thinking, the only thing you can measure is the way they talk and the way they write about what they know and that's why I think there should be lots of speaking, lots of writing and lots of interaction.

Specialists emphasized that teacher-student interaction is key to stimulating student output, specifically noting two main aspects of this interaction. First, several specialists ( $n = 4$ ) emphasized that it is key for teachers to go beyond the typical three-turn interaction with students, where the teacher asks a question, a student answers the question, and the teacher ends the interaction through correcting or affirming the student's answer. If teacher-student interaction only follows this pattern, then many opportunities for language development are missed. Second, several specialists ( $n = 4$ ) emphasized that teachers should adjust both their formal and informal language to the level of their students.

Regarding the sub-theme *Student interaction*, most specialists ( $n = 6$ ) emphasized the need for students to have opportunities to interact with each other to generate student output. Moreover, several specialists ( $n = 4$ ) emphasized the importance of students communicating with school students from abroad.

In the sub-theme *Tasks*, most specialists ( $n = 6$ ) placed emphasis on teachers providing students with tasks requiring them to write and speak in the target language. Moreover, specialists ( $n = 5$ ) emphasized scaffolding of tasks to facilitate student output.

#### 4.3.2. Practitioners

Practitioners frequently mentioned *Student output* in their views of ideal CLIL pedagogies. Student interaction was considered a key way to stimulate student output. Several practitioners ( $n = 3$ ) emphasized the need for students to have various opportunities to interact with each other. Moreover, several practitioners ( $n = 3$ ) emphasized the importance of stimulating student output through collaborative group work. To illustrate, Practitioner 1 described an activity whereby students form a human timeline: 'I give them sentences written on a slip of paper. They have to discover, through talking to each other, where they should go in the timeline and what the timeline is about.'

Regarding the sub-theme *Tasks*, practitioners emphasized the need for both written tasks ( $n = 5$ ) and spoken tasks ( $n = 4$ ). In addition, practitioners ( $n = 4$ ) asserted that providing students with creative tasks is a key way to stimulate output. For example, Practitioner 2 explained that she asks students to imagine they are a CO<sub>2</sub> molecule and to make clear, by means of making a poster, what happens to them as they travel through the human body.

Several practitioners ( $n = 3$ ) emphasized using scaffolding of tasks to facilitate student output. Practitioner 6 described how she solved an over-reliance on certain words in students' written reports:

Instead of just saying, 'find two photographs and write your comparison', I said: 'write down eight key descriptive words for each photograph.' Then we used various online thesaurus facilities to generate three more words for each word they had written down. So then I said: 'now write your comparison, using only the new words you've discovered.'

In the sub-theme *Classroom Language*, most practitioners ( $n = 5$ ) emphasized that, with the exception of the first months of bilingual education, only the target language should be used in the classroom. However, several practitioners mentioned that getting the students to only use the target language was often challenging, citing examples as: 'the students speak Dutch behind my back' (Practitioner 3), and 'the students speak Dutch to me whilst I speak English to them' (Practitioner 5).

#### **4.4. Feedback and assessment**

##### **4.4.1. Specialists**

Overall, compared with the other themes, specialists discussed aspects of CLIL pedagogy related to *Feedback and assessment* far less often. The only aspect mentioned by more than one-third of specialists was that all CLIL teachers should provide students with feedback about their language use ( $n = 5$ ).

##### **4.4.2. Practitioners**

Practitioners emphasized two sub-themes related to *Feedback and assessment*. First, regarding *Feedback on language*, several practitioners ( $n = 3$ ) mentioned that CLIL teachers should provide students with feedback about their language use. Two of the three practitioners remarked that feedback about language should always be framed in a positive manner. Interestingly, apart from this comment, none of the practitioners who mentioned feedback specified *how* teachers should provide feedback on language. One of the three practitioners emphasized that in her perception of ideal CLIL pedagogy, providing students with feedback about their language use is essential, but that she was unsure about how to do this effectively because there had not been much focus on this topic in her in-service CLIL education.

Second, regarding *Assessment of language*, most practitioners ( $n = 5$ ) mentioned that it is ideal to always include language in assessment. However, two of these five practitioners also indicated that they were unsure how to realize this in practice. One explained that teachers at her school often felt insecure about their own ability in the target language and therefore felt uncomfortable correcting students' written work. Moreover, regarding assessment of spoken English, several practitioners ( $n = 3$ ) emphasized the motivating aspects of including effort marks on report cards to encourage students to speak the target language at all times.

### **5. Discussion**

In this study, we investigated the research question: 'What are specialist and practitioner perceptions of the goals and practices of "ideal" CLIL pedagogies in the context of bilingual secondary education in the Netherlands?' In this section, we reflect on the nature and extent of a shared knowledge base between the specialists and practitioners interviewed, on the one hand, and the perceptions of stakeholders and literature about CLIL methodologies, on the other. To this end, we first discuss the degree of alignment between specialist and practitioner perceptions, offering an interpretation for this. We then proceed to discuss alignment between the main themes and sub-themes identified and existing literature about CLIL pedagogies.

#### **5.1. Alignment between practitioners and specialists**

##### **5.1.1. Shared perceptions**

Alignment between specialist and practitioner perceptions of the goals and practices of 'ideal' CLIL pedagogies was particularly evident in the following areas. In the theme *Meta-goals*, both groups

mentioned that student-centered teaching is a prerequisite for effective CLIL teaching. *Student output* was the theme most often referred to by both groups. As such, both groups emphasized the need for students to have various opportunities to interact with each other to generate output. Moreover, both groups emphasized that teachers should provide students with tasks requiring them to speak and write in the target language. Furthermore, scaffolding of tasks to facilitate student output was emphasized by both specialists and practitioners. Finally, compared with the other themes, there were notably fewer sub-themes discussed by both groups related to *Feedback and assessment*. Within this theme, both groups emphasized that CLIL teachers should provide students with feedback about their language use.

### 5.1.2. Differences in alignment

The results clearly show that the perspectives of specialists and practitioners were not always aligned. This was particularly evident in the following areas. Firstly, specialists referred more to *Meta-goals* than did practitioners. This is illustrated well by the fact that none of the practitioners, but most specialists emphasized the goal of apprenticing students into ‘speaking, thinking and writing’ like subject experts in the target language. Moreover, nearly all of the specialists, but only a minority of practitioners explicitly mentioned that a meta-goal of CLIL subject teachers should be to have both content and (related) language goals. Furthermore, regarding the role of an English teacher in a CLIL setting, it is interesting that only the specialists explicitly referred to this aspect and mentioned that, ideally, the English teacher should focus on the language needed in subject lessons.

Secondly, the theme *Teaching resources* showed some clear differences related to which sub-themes were considered most important by specialists and practitioners. Whilst specialists placed emphasis on CLIL resources being multi-modal and including cross-curricular projects, practitioners placed emphasis on *motivating* tailor-made resources and the use of subject-terminology wordlists.

Thirdly, although both groups mentioned the theme *Student output* frequently and there was alignment on several aspects, there were also differences. Specialists placed more emphasis on sustained teacher-student interaction and on teachers adjusting their language to the level of their students than did practitioners. Also, more specialists emphasized students communicating with school students from abroad. Practitioners placed more emphasis on stimulating student output through collaborative group work, creative tasks and by exclusive use of the target language in the classroom than did specialists.

Finally, although both groups mentioned relatively fewer sub-themes related to the theme *Feedback and assessment*, practitioners mentioned more detail than specialists. For example, in addition to providing feedback on language, practitioners also emphasized the importance of always including a language component in assessment and assessing students’ efforts to use the target language through effort marks on report cards.

Differences in perceptions between the two groups regarding certain aspects may be explained by two main reasons. Firstly, the two groups come from very different professional contexts. Although we asked all interviewees to describe their ‘ideal’ CLIL pedagogies, both groups interpreted this question in different ways. Specialists answered the question more in terms of what they would like to do but cannot because they are not in practice contexts, whereas practitioners answered the question more in terms of what they see as possible but may not be able to regularly achieve. We draw this inference from the specialists using more language associated with ‘should’ and practitioners drawing more on exemplary examples from their own practice.

A second reason may relate to their different educational backgrounds. For example, it is not surprising that specialists discussed more meta-goals of CLIL teaching as generally practitioners have not followed a detailed teacher-education program about CLIL methodology – their professional development has been generally more of a ‘how to’ type of development consisting of tips and strategies.



## 5.2. Alignment with literature

Aspects of all four essential components of Coyle's (2007) 4Cs framework were mentioned, although not always by both groups. *Content* was generally referred to as leading in determining language goals. *Communication* was mainly referred to in the context of teaching students the language needed to understand the content, but far less in terms of teaching students the language needed for them to take part in the learning and/or reiterate their learning. *Cognition* was referred to mainly in terms of engaging students with higher-order tasks, for example through the creative tasks emphasized by practitioners. *Culture* was mainly referred to by specialists in terms of subject-specific culture – of getting the students to 'think, talk and write' like subject experts. Whilst interviewees mentioned that a focus on developing students' global understanding is specific to the Dutch bilingual context through the EIO requirements, they also made clear that they did not consider this to comprise an ideal CLIL pedagogy.

The relevance of genre-based pedagogy (e.g. Morton 2010) was only mentioned explicitly by specialists, who emphasized that a key goal of CLIL pedagogy should be to apprentice students into subject-specific discourse in the target language. However, the specialists who mentioned this aspect emphasized an insufficient focus on this in teacher-education programs that has led to a situation where most teachers are not explicitly aware of the typical forms of discourse used in their subject, aside from terminology.

All five aspects of Westhoff's (2004) SLA penta-pie model were mentioned, but in varying levels of detail. *Providing exposure to input at a (minimally) challenging level* was mentioned by fewer than one-third of practitioners and specialists, but practitioners did emphasize that input should be *motivating* and specialists emphasized the need for multi-modality. *Meaning-focused processing* was especially referred to by practitioners in terms of providing students with collaborative and creative tasks. *Form-focused processing* was hardly referred to. It was emphasized by specialists advocating sustained teacher-student interaction but otherwise hardly mentioned. Providing students with feedback about their language use was emphasized by both groups, but with little detail about *how*. *Opportunities for output production* was mentioned frequently by both groups, especially in terms of providing opportunities for student interaction, and providing students with a variety of spoken and written tasks. Finally, both groups specifically mentioned *Awareness and use of language learning strategies* through providing students with content and language scaffolds. Regarding more general 'good teaching' characteristics, both groups emphasized that student-centered teaching is a prerequisite for effective CLIL teaching.

Finally, the importance of collaboration between CLIL teachers and target language teachers working in a CLIL setting (e.g. Pavón Vázquez and Ellison 2013) was only mentioned by specialists, who emphasized the goal for English teachers to also focus on the language needed in subject lessons. However, most of these specialists also remarked that this is very difficult to realize because, in practice, there is limited interaction between teachers from different disciplines.

Thus, overall a high degree of alignment existed between the main themes and sub-themes identified and the existing literature about CLIL pedagogies. However, a few aspects were either mentioned by only a minority of practitioners, or were mentioned by interviewees as being difficult to practically realize. These include teaching students subject-specific discourses, providing feedback on students' language use, and collaboration between CLIL and target language teachers. Given that these aspects of CLIL pedagogy are also competences expected of bilingual teachers in the Netherlands, it appears that, in practice, facilitating students' acquisition of the target language is not always realized in the ways mentioned in the Standards.

## 6. Implications

We recognize that the sample size means that we cannot generalize the outcomes of this study to the broader CLIL population of specialists and practitioners in the Netherlands or internationally.

However, by interviewing a small, purposefully selected set of stakeholders we were able to build a rich, in-depth picture of ideal CLIL pedagogies (given that the practitioners were highly experienced and the specialists established), and now draw some implications and considerations for teacher-education and CLIL policy in the Dutch context, and also more broadly.

In the context of the Netherlands, a first implication of our study is that a need exists for pre-service and in-service teacher training in CLIL methodologies that includes not only 'how to' activities but also useful frameworks for connecting CLIL practices with pedagogical models of CLIL. Whilst practitioners in this study hold a good understanding of aspects considered essential to CLIL pedagogy, they often lack practical knowledge about how to realize these aspects in practice. Especially providing feedback about language and assessment of language were areas where the practitioners felt they did not possess sufficient knowledge due to their limited CLIL education. This is especially noteworthy given the expert status of these practitioners. If this is the case for them, we infer the rest of the CLIL teaching population are probably struggling to at least the same degree. Hence, increased focus on these topics in CLIL teacher-education seems necessary.

Moreover, there is a need for CLIL specialists to consider how to teach subject-specific discourse in ways that are helpful to practitioners. The goal of apprenticing learners into subject-specific discourse in the target language was mentioned exclusively by CLIL specialists in this study. Practitioners generally only mentioned subject-specific discourse in the narrow sense of focusing on subject-specific terminology in the target language. Given this situation, we believe there is a role for teacher-education to focus on making ideas from genre-based pedagogy more practical and accessible for practitioners. For example, in CLIL teacher-education more emphasis could be placed on the specificities of the genres of individual subjects and how to incorporate these into teaching.

A main implication also emerges for Dutch CLIL policy in the context of bilingual education relating to the role of the English teacher in a CLIL setting. The Standards envision a role for English teachers to address the language needs in other subjects. However, in our study this role was only explicitly mentioned by the specialists, who also noted the practical limitation that, in most cases, teachers are still very 'territorial beings', with respect to their subject-specific territories. If this role of the English teacher is to be practically realized then both policy-makers and schools need to clarify the role and its expectations.

Related to contexts outside the Netherlands, an implication of our study is that, despite the level of institutionalization and a more top-down CLIL policy, there is no guarantee that policy will find its way to the grassroots practitioners. This is well evidenced by the differences in alignment between the specialists and practitioners in our study and the differences between Dutch official CLIL policy and practice. Grassroots contexts, as described by Hüttner, Dalton-Puffer, and Smit (2013), have the potential to widely spread good CLIL practices, but also risk mismatches with the official goals of CLIL. It seems there is a role for teacher-education as a connecting factor in both contexts, for example though more specific education for teaching in CLIL contexts (as also shown by Pérez-Cañado 2016), but also more bottom-up input from practitioners regarding the content of these CLIL education and/or professionalization programs.

Addressing these implications, we believe, can contribute to serving to further bridge the current gap between theory and practice in CLIL and therewith ensure a high quality of CLIL education is sustained.

## Note

1. 'She' is used to cover male and female.

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## Notes on contributor

*Evelyn van Kampen* is a PhD candidate at Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching.

*Jacobiene Meirink* is an Assistant Professor at Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching.

*Wilfried Admiraal* is Professor and Director at Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching.

*Amanda Berry* is Professor at the Faculty of Education, Monash University.

## ORCID

*Wilfried Admiraal*  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1627-3420>

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