

CLIL in Higher Education

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CLIL in Higher Education

Towards a Multilingual Language Policy

Inmaculada Fortanet-Gómez

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*To the loving memory of my father,
Antonio Fortanet (1934–2012),
a model of perseverance and optimism*

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Introduction

Multilingual education has been studied from many perspectives, although few studies have focused on higher education. This book aims to offer a different view of multilingualism by presenting a contextualised case of a multilingual language policy taking the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. CLIL seems to have been gaining support in recent years as a new approach to multilingualism. There have been some studies on its implementation, although most of them have presented experiences or partial perspectives on this topic without any deep theoretical foundation. The aim of this book is to deal with multilingualism in higher education from a global perspective in a coherent single-authored volume. The book starts with a general overview on multilingualism and multilingual education. In Part 2 several aspects of multilingual education are discussed, considering the previous literature. Finally, a case for an application of multilingualism to higher education is presented in the form of a proposal for a multilingual language policy for Universitat Jaume I.

Universitat Jaume I is situated on the eastern coast of Spain, in the Valencian Community autonomous region. It was created in 1991 and has been bilingual in Spanish and Valencian from the start. In bilingual regions like the Valencian Community, higher education institutions (HEIs) play an important role in the preservation and promotion of the local language. Most universities in bilingual areas have traditionally maintained language policies which describe the relevance of the local language and the role the university must have in promoting and particularly developing it as a language of the academy in tuition, research and also in administration.

English, as is stated in its statutes, has always been considered a working language at Universitat Jaume I, since it is essential in many fields of research as well as in the workplace for many graduates. However, up to now the use of this language has not been officially monitored. A new language policy is needed in order to include English as a third language of instruction and to

redefine its uses alongside those of the two official languages, Valencian and Spanish. Valencian is the language of cultural identity of the university and has to be promoted in all areas. Spanish is the state language, also still the majority language. It does not need to be promoted, but its correct use is a duty and constitutional right of all Spanish citizens. English, as stated before, is a working language. Its use has to be encouraged in the areas and situations where it is needed, particularly for international relations in teaching, research and administration.

Like many universities in Europe, Universitat Jaume I has been considering the possibility of introducing English as a language of instruction for several years. In the last five years the university has designed new study plans following the Bologna Agreement; 2010 was established as the deadline to harmonize European university studies. During this process, a university directive established that 12 of the 240 credits for all new study plans should be taught in English. This was a turning point for the introduction of English as the third language of instruction in undergraduate studies.

Moreover, multilingual language policies are being implemented or are in the process of development in several universities in the Spanish higher education system where English is being introduced as the second or third language of instruction. There seem to be many factors suggesting that this is the right moment to design a new language policy for Universitat Jaume I. In the past few years I have found myself playing a significant role in the development of a multilingual language policy for the university. In order to guarantee its success I started a thorough review of previous research on multilingualism, multilingual education and language policies, especially at the higher education level. A research project was eventually designed with the aim of producing an analysis of the current situation at Universitat Jaume I and the possibility of accepting and supporting a multilingual language policy there. The final aim was to provide some solid recommendations for this policy.

The first chapter in this book is devoted to multilingualism. The reason why it has been included is because it is necessary to understand the background and the reality of multilingualism before tackling the question of how to implement a multilingual language policy at a university.

I have started with definitions of the two main types of multilingualism: societal and individual. The characteristics of societal multilingualism refer to the social status of the languages, the association of multilingualism with certain geographical locations, the policies of language use and language planning, and the associations the members of a social group make between languages and cultural identity.

Individual multilingualism refers to an individual choice to know and learn several languages. The dimensions reviewed here relate to the individual characteristics of the multilingual, such as relative competence in both or each language, the cognitive organisation of languages, the age and order of acquisition, the context when and where each language was acquired, the social and cultural status given to each language by the individual, and the cultural identity assigned to each language. Most dimensions of both societal and individual multilingualism can be measured, and the research techniques most often used are also presented in this chapter.

The next section is devoted to the linguistic characteristics of multilinguals, the aspects that differentiate them from monolinguals. These include plurilingualism, transfer and interference, the accommodation or adaptation of one's speech to that of the interlocutor's, the possibility of choosing the most appropriate language for each communicative event, or the use of code-switching, loans, borrowings or mixing several languages in the same communication event. The contribution of this chapter to the research part of the book is to provide a basis for the identification of the societal and individual characteristics of multilingualism that can be found at Universitat Jaume I. This identification will help to establish the characteristics of the sample of the study and hence of the population.

Chapter 2 reviews multilingual education. It starts with a comprehensive definition, and continues with the factors that condition multilingual education. Three types of factors are described: sociopolitical factors, such as those of former colonies; individual factors which may hinder success in multilingual education, such as the socioeconomic situation of families, the academic ability of the learner, age, the level of command of the languages before entering school; and pedagogical factors which affect the ways of teaching and learning languages, such as programmes that focus on the meaning and other programmes that focus on the form of the language, time of exposure to the several languages within and outside school contexts, and teaching by means of a specific subject or in immersion programmes.

The next section takes account of the main achievements that can be expected from multilingual education programmes: language achievements, literacy achievements and content achievements. This chapter also includes a review of the main models of multilingual education institutions and programmes that have been implemented in recent years in different parts of the world, and which have contributed to new forms of multilingual education. The models reviewed are: the language across the curriculum approach, originally developed in the UK in order to improve the English-language proficiency of learners at all levels of education, and which has had a strong influence on other later approaches; languages for specific purposes, also

developed originally in Britain and later in the United States, and eventually applied to teaching English as a foreign language; content-based instruction, linked initially to students with limited English proficiency in the United States, mainly immigrants, and which later has had an impact on other approaches such as immersion programmes or CLIL; and immersion programmes, developed in Canada to teach French to English-speaking children, and which is considered to be the approach which has had the greatest influence on CLIL.

The final section of Chapter 2 introduces CLIL as yet another variety of multilingual education, one which draws from the experience of the approaches described so far. This section looks at CLIL from several perspectives – focusing on higher education, but also taking in ideas, research and experiences related to other approaches. This chapter will be the basis for establishing the type of multilingual education that will be presented in the study in the third part of the book.

Chapter 3 deals with the sociopolitical context and focuses on several factors that condition language policies, ranging from economics to situational, operational and outcome factors. In this chapter, the reader can also find a review of national and international policies, as well as the internal provisions of universities regarding multilingualism, and how they may have an influence on the implementation and success of multilingual education. In the last section of this chapter, several language policies of universities from all over the world are analysed, especially those developed in the Catalan universities which have a social and cultural environment which is closer to that of Universitat Jaume I. The next three chapters examine what I have considered the three key components of any multilingual education approach: the language component, the pedagogical component and the human factor.

Chapter 4 deals with the language component as a target product and medium of instruction. The chapter starts by focusing on university languages at three levels: local, national and international languages. Looking at cases where English is one of those languages, there is a dilemma as to whether the native language or the lingua franca should be used as a teaching medium. The next section discusses whether multilingual education should focus on the language of communication (BICS) or on the language of academic cognition (CALPS). There have been many studies about academic discourse in university classrooms and about the language of research. These are important contributions to the success of multilingual education, since language is the means used to learn and to disseminate research, and it is in language use where some of the major difficulties may be found. A review of these studies and their main findings can provide interesting insights into

the major characteristics of the classroom and research genres; these will be of interest to teacher trainers, who can find in this research some materials they need for their courses.

Chapter 5 deals with pedagogy. Higher education teaching pedagogies deserve special consideration. In this chapter I start by describing the basic learning principles in higher education which explain how learners build on previous knowledge in order to achieve transformative learning. Secondly, I deal with discipline conventions and practices. After this, some language learning approaches are reviewed, and I finally describe how all these pedagogies and approaches contribute to the specific pedagogy of CLIL.

The teachers' profile will be a focus of interest in Chapter 6, where we explore the characteristics and roles of academic staff, both content and language teachers' profiles, as well as team teaching and multiple language inputs, all related to the CLIL approach. Several options for needs analysis and the resulting teacher training programmes are also presented. In addition, the roles of the administrative staff are considered.

These three chapters have significantly contributed to the research put forward in Part 3, especially regarding the design of the questions on language in the questionnaire and the determination of the profiles of students, lecturers and administrative staff. Chapter 5 has also been very insightful for the interest group discussions on the implementation of multilingual education, particularly CLIL, in the context of the pedagogies applied today in higher education.

Part 3 introduces the research on Universitat Jaume I. Chapter 6 begins with a description of the institutional and social context of Universitat Jaume I and a justification for the study. The section on method describes how questionnaires and interviews have provided us with information in order to make a 'linguistic mapping' of the population of Universitat Jaume I, including students at undergraduate and graduate level, lecturers and administrative staff. The factors that have been analysed include: the degree of multilingualism among university members and the languages involved; the languages mainly used and the relationships established with identity; how and when individuals have learned these languages; and the perceptions and attitudes they have towards the languages they know and use. These factors provide a profile of the university community members which is used as a point of departure for the proposal of a multilingual language policy. The other two sections in this chapter describe on the one hand the external institutional context, and on the other hand the internal factors that condition a language policy in this university.

All this information is used to propose guidelines for a multilingual language policy for Universitat Jaume I. It is recommended that the policy takes

the form of a plan; the languages selected for this policy should be Valencian and English, in addition to Spanish. This selection is justified in the first part of Chapter 9. Then I explain the objectives of the plan and the expected outcomes, taking into account the present circumstances. Furthermore, I also provide some guidelines about the communication plan to disseminate the advantages of the multilingual language policy and how multilingual education could be implemented.

I hope the readers of this book – researchers, students or policymakers – find it interesting and useful, and can easily adapt it to their university-specific contexts.