Author(s): Skinnari, Kristiina

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Research Article

CLIL Challenges: Secondary School CLIL Teachers' Voices and Experienced Agency in Three European Contexts

Kristiina Skinnari, *University of Jyväskylä*

kristiina.skinnari@jyu.fi

ABSTRACT

This qualitative interview study focuses on CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teacher agency in three European contexts, Austria, Finland and Andalusia, Spain. The aim of the study is to understand how individual CLIL teachers experience their agency when encountering challenges in their work and to demonstrate the multifaceted quality of their agency. The study employs the Listening Guide method (Gilligan, 2015) to listen to the voices of three secondary school subject teachers from three diverse contexts. The analysis shows that CLIL challenges both empowered and disempowered the teachers depending on how meaningful they found their work and what their possibilities to act were in their specific contexts. Some of the teachers' CLIL experiences were similar, for instance, struggling alone with lack of support. However, these challenges did not affect the teachers' agency in a straightforward way. In spite of the seemingly comparable challenges, the teachers described their unique experiences and ways to cope with the demands of their work in different ways. For example, using two languages or making their own materials was for some invigorating and for others problematic. In addition, during the interviews individual teachers also reported about their experiences in various ways, explaining, elaborating and balancing their thoughts with varying expressions of agency. Particularly significant for the teachers' experiences of agency appeared to be the beginning of their CLIL career, however, their initial experiences of agency did not endure. The study shows that CLIL teacher agency is multivoiced, dynamic and often vulnerable.

Keywords: Teacher Agency, Teachers' Voices, CLIL, secondary school, The Listening Guide method

Teaching content subjects in part through a foreign language (CLIL) can be a challenge for content experts in secondary schools around Europe (e.g., García López & Bruton, 2013). CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) "is a term used especially in Europe for forms of bilingual education where an additional language, in most cases English, is used as the language of instruction in non-language school subjects" (Nikula, 2016, p. 1). Although CLIL is not a recent educational innovation in many European contexts, it is still growing in scope and scale. Because of this, many teachers still encounter it as a novelty and often as a major change in their work (Bonnet & Breidbach, 2017). Studies from diverse contexts have shown how CLIL teachers transform, adjust and often struggle in their demanding task (e.g., Moate, 2011a). However, "their daily struggles and personally ambivalent stances have hardly been examined" (Codó & Patiño-Santos, 2018, p. 479.). CLIL teachers, who teach their subject also in their first language (L1), can experience the extra challenge of teaching through a second or a foreign language (L2) as positive or negative. Either way, these challenges affect their experienced and enacted teacher agency, defined as a teacher's sense of self (Vähäsantanen, 2013) and as the teachers' active contribution to shaping their work and its conditions (Biesta et al., 2015). Rapidly changing educational contexts set continuous demands on teachers who are the actual implementers of educational policies in the classroom. For these reasons, teachers' roles and agency have become central issues in education and educational research (Yang, 2015). It is therefore crucial that research actively seeks to understand CLIL teachers' voices to better understand the challenges of their work (Moate, 2011b). This is important both on the macro level of implementing regional or national education policies and on the micro level of individual teachers' deeply experienced realities where their voices resonate their personal stances, histories and contexts in diverse ways.

Most often, the studies focusing on CLIL teacher experiences have been conducted in one specific country or region, and there are fewer comparative studies that explore various CLIL settings. This qualitative interview study investigates the experienced agency of three secondary school History teachers in three European contexts: Austria, Finland and Andalusia, Spain. All of the participants taught their content subject partly through English, which was a second or foreign language to two of them, as one of the teachers was a native speaker of English. Separate CLIL studies from different contexts have shown teachers' struggles with related issues. However, teachers seem to respond to the seemingly similar challenges individually. This study aims at illustrating the individual and dynamic quality of CLIL teacher agency by focusing on the teachers' experiences of the CLIL-specific challenges they encountered in their work.

To listen to the CLIL teachers´ voices and to trace similarities and differences in their experienced teacher agency, the Listening Guide method (Gilligan, 2015) was employed for the analysis of the interviews in addition to thematic analysis. The Listening Guide method is a form of narrative analysis that employs multiple interpretive readings of data to "listen for two or more different "voices" threaded through narratives in interview data" (Sorsoli & Tolman, 2008, p. 495). The Listening Guide method was especially suitable for the analysis of this study that specifically focused on tensions, contradictions and multiple voices in the interview data.

BACKGROUND

CLIL Teachers' Challenges

Compared to mainstream education in only one language, CLIL challenges teachers by adding to their workload (Banegas, 2012; Bonnet & Breidbach, 2017; Moate, 2014). CLIL teachers often teach at least partly in a language that is a foreign or a second language for them and for most of their students. This often requires more planning and preparation of materials. It also involves negotiation of meaning, scaffolding language, checking understanding and employing collaborative working methods in the classroom. Furthermore, the working methods and materials used in CLIL are often different from those used in L1 education and may need to be tailored according to the learners' needs (Bovellan, 2014; Griva et al., 2014).

Studies from various contexts show that CLIL teachers find their work challenging and often struggle with their target language skills, methodological issues and the time constraints of balancing both language and content teaching (e.g., Coyle et al., 2010; Moate, 2013; Ó Caellaigh et al., 2017). This is particularly evident in contexts where CLIL

education has been imposed top-down by policy makers or school administration and the teachers lack autonomy, control and sense of ownership in their work (Bonnet & Breidbach, 2017). Target language requirements may also put stress on secondary school teachers who in many contexts are content experts having no expertise in the target language or knowledge of language pedagogy (e.g., Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016). Moreover, CLIL teachers not only need language skills, content knowledge and CLIL-specific pedagogical knowledge and skills concerning the integration of language and content. Becoming a CLIL teacher also involves changes in identity and agency (Moate, 2011b), which means that the teachers need tools and support for building up their new identity (Bonnet & Breidbach, 2017). Furthermore, teachers who are the central actors in implementing CLIL, should also be involved in planning and decision-making (Banegas, 2012), which, however, is not always the case.

In their study on primary school EFL teachers' CLIL teaching practices and experiences in Greece and Cyprus, Griva et al. (2014) found out that the teachers' experiences of integrating language and content were both positive and a negative. Though generally seeing CLIL as a positive educational change, the teachers expressed their uncertainty or frustration about how to implement CLIL (see also Ó Ceallaigh et al., 2017 in the Irish context). Secondary school CLIL teachers' challenges may be even greater than those of the primary school teachers since they are often subject experts without training in language pedagogy or CLIL methodology. Initial feelings of insecurity were also shared by the upper secondary school teachers in the beginning of a CLIL program investigated by Moate (2011b) in the Finnish context. The various studies from different CLIL contexts show that the challenges of the CLIL teachers appear to be quite similar, especially at the onset of the CLIL programs.

CLIL in Austria, Finland and Andalusia, Spain

Expanding international CLIL research and the recommendations of the European Council concerning language education in Europe (Eurydice, 2006; Pérez-Vidal, 2013), have raised awareness of CLIL education and promoted it as an educational innovation especially effective in language teaching and learning. Yet, European CLIL programs vary contextually concerning the goals, the content subjects, the amount of the target language use and the teachers (see e.g., Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016). A common feature is that most often the target language is English. At the time of collecting the data for this study in Austria, Finland and Andalusia, the Austrian and Finnish CLIL implementations could be described as bottom-up programs where individual schools, districts or teachers offer CLIL outside mainstream education without much national curricular guidance, control or administrative initiatives and support (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2011; Nikula & Järvinen, 2013). In addition, the teachers in these two countries have traditionally been quite independent in their work. Quite the contrary, in Andalusia, CLIL had been launched as a top-down decision by the administration, and as a result, there has been an accelerated growth of programs (Pérez-Vidal, 2013), where many teachers have been told to start teaching bilingually, most often in Spanish and English (see e.g., Lorenzo, 2010). Furthermore, by the time of conducting the interviews, the regional government of Andalusia (Junta de Andalucía) had decided that the requirements for the teachers´ L2 language proficiency would be raised in near future.

In all three contexts, learning English has been the most important reason to set up CLIL programs. This has been the specific educational agenda of many Spanish regions with the aim of raising communicative competence of the students (Pérez-Vidal, 2013). In Austria and Finland, where English is also learned in out-of-school contexts, most CLIL schools select their students (Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016) and due to that many CLIL programs have an elitist reputation. Only in Austria, it is quite common that secondary school teachers have a double qualification both in their content subject and in a language subject. This is seldom the case in Finland or Spain, where the secondary school subject teachers are content experts and have to acquire and demonstrate their L2 competence in different ways outside of their teacher education.

Teacher Agency in Educational Change

Teaching is agentive by nature as teachers are responsible for planning, initiating and organizing classroom activity (Pappa et al., 2017b). Teacher agency is both experienced and enacted and consequently can be defined both as a

teacher's sense of self (Vähäsantanen, 2013) and the teachers' active contribution to shaping their work and its conditions (Biesta et al., 2015). Sociocultural understanding takes into account both individual and social perspectives in defining teacher agency as an individual's potential to act in a social context that is also shaped by the individual (van Lier, 2010). Teachers' sociocultural agency, in this understanding, is affected by wider contextual aspects that involve policy-makers and other authorities and stakeholders (Pappa et al., 2017b). Teacher agency is especially contested in educational change and transformation (Lasky, 2005). In this study, the sociocultural context is reflected in individual CLIL teachers' voices in the interviews.

CLIL teaching implicates educational change, at least for an individual teacher who starts teaching in a CLIL program (Pappa, 2018). In encountering educational changes, teachers are not mere followers, but active agents who need to be listened to and given the chance to "reject, accept or modify the proposed change" (Yang, 2015, p.14). Educational changes affect teachers' activity but they also require teachers themselves to transform (Bonnet & Breidbach, 2017). Fullan (1991) sees teachers as active agents in their own work and professional development who need to construct their own meanings and roles when they face difficulties caused by educational changes. However, these changes can also be seen as a positive and motivating force in the teacher profession (Hargreaves, 1994). In general, the word "challenges" can be understood in a twofold way: "as a feeling or declaration of disapproval or dissent" or as "something that requires thought and skill for resolution" (Challenges, 2019). These definitions refer both to the feeling of agency and agentive activity.

Teacher agency has been the focus of studies in diverse contexts. In their qualitative study, Pappa et al. (2017b) investigated Finnish CLIL teachers' agency from the sociocultural perspective as part of the construction of teacher identity. They interviewed fourteen primary school or kindergarten teachers and found out that the tensions and resources for teachers concerned both the teachers' personal features and their sociocultural environments. From a very different top-down context in Argentina, Banegas (2012) recommended in his article on CLIL teacher education that CLIL as an innovation needs to involve teachers in decision-making to be successful. Codó and Patiño-Santos

(2018) conducted an ethnographic case study on secondary school CLIL teachers' working conditions in Catalonia from a critical sociolinguistic perspective. Their research showed how the CLIL teachers encountered challenges "as the social actors in charge of implementing new language policies" (p. 494). All of the above studies have investigated CLIL teachers' challenges or agency in any one context. Comparative studies are needed to understand what is context-specific or universal in CLIL teachers' work. Although CLIL implementations are often locally flexible, wider comparisons can raise the awareness of the "cross-contextual transferability" (Abello-Contesse et al., 2013) of CLIL and contribute to the development of CLIL programs and teacher education.

The concepts of agency and voice often have been used to reveal unequal power relationships between groups of people and empower oppressed people, for example in child studies or feminist studies (e.g., Esser et al., 2016; Showden, 2011). Making the participants' voices heard can enhance their agency by increasing their action potential or by raising their self-awareness and their awareness about their possibilities to act. Employing these concepts into teacher studies is especially relevant in the times of educational changes that are often implemented top-down but require activity of the individual teacher. The general task of this study is to understand how individual CLIL teachers experience their agency when encountering challenges in their work.

METHODS AND DATA

The purpose of this qualitative interview study is to describe CLIL teachers' experiences of their agency when encountering challenges in their work in three different European contexts. More specifically, the study focuses on the following research questions:

1) What CLIL-related challenges have the secondary school CLIL teachers experienced in their work?

2) How do the participants see that those challenges have affected their teacher agency?

3) What kind of teacher agency do the teachers display in the interviews?

Interviews

The three interviews used in this study have been selected (see below) from a larger pool of twelve semi-structured CLIL teacher interviews that were conducted for the ConCLIL project (2011–2014, funded by the Academy of Finland) during spring 2013 in Austria, Finland and Andalusia. For the purposes of this study, the selected three interviews were examined in depth and supported by findings from previous studies. The participants in the larger study were secondary school subject teachers of history, geography or science who partly taught their subject through English, which was a foreign language to most of the teachers. Three of them were native speakers of English.

The original purpose for collecting the interviews was to study secondary school CLIL subject teachers' beliefs on integration and the role of language in CLIL especially in their subject (see Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016). Teacher agency was one of the themes of the interviews and it specifically related to the following interview questions:

- What do you find most challenging in your work as a CLIL teacher?

- What do you enjoy most in your work?

- Who supports you in your work? How?

All the interviews were conducted in English, audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Participants

On the basis of a thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2011) in the larger study, the teachers could not simply be labelled as agentive or non-agentive, but their agency appeared to be more complex and varying. The three interviews for this study were selected by their seemingly different quality of teacher agency. The three teachers are introduced in Table 1.

Table 1. *The Interviewed CLIL Teachers Selected for this Study*

Teacher	Country	Subject	Years of experience in CLIL	Native speaker/ Non-native speaker
AT	Austria	History	8	NS
FT	Finland	History	11	NNS
ST	Andalusia, Spain	History	6	NNS

Analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2011) was first employed by repetitive readings to track teacher agency in the oral narratives, focusing on the challenges of CLIL, on the teachers' positions and experiences as CLIL teachers and on their reported activity. Also the teachers' positive and negative language was assessed. As the data were thematically organized, it became evident that issues related to teacher agency frequently emerged throughout the interviews, often initiated by the teachers themselves. Based on this analysis, ten themes were discovered: entrance to a CLIL program, resources at the beginning of the career, overall experience, working alone, choice, meanings for CLIL, language, career opportunities, resources and challenges. After conducting the thematic analysis, some teachers appeared to be more agentive in their work than others, but not in a consistent way. Following this, three teachers were selected for this study (see above). Although all of them had more than five years of experience in CLIL teaching, only one of them appeared to be very confident in his work, whereas the two others showed more insecurity in CLIL teaching. This could partly be explained by the fact that the self-reliant teacher was a native speaker of English. The teachers described their contexts in quite an expected manner: the Spanish teacher reported on the top-down implementation of bilingual teaching in Andalusia and the Austrian and Finnish teachers explained the relative freedom in their working conditions. It is obvious that one

teacher from each context cannot represent all the CLIL teachers of their country. However, the aim of this study is not to generalize teacher experiences but to delve into the personal and dynamically varying quality of their individual experiences.

For the purposes of this study, the earlier themes were grouped under three more general topics that focused on the teachers' challenges: (1) beginning to work as a CLIL teacher, (2) lack of recognition and support, and (3) positive and negative challenges. These themes will be further elaborated in the analysis. To gain a deeper and more detailed understanding on the multifaceted quality of teacher agency in the interviews, the Listening Guide method (Gilligan, 2015) was employed to further analyze the interviews of the three selected teachers.

The Listening Guide Method

The Listening Guide method is a method of psychological analysis that focuses on voice, resonance and relationship in interview narratives. To analyze these voices, repeated listenings with different foci are employed (Gilligan et al., 2003). Sequential listenings direct attention to different aspects of expression and as a result, a multi-layered understanding of a person's experiences can be constructed (Brown & Gilligan, 1991).

The first step, or listening, pays attention to the narrative and the context where it is set. The second step focuses on the speaker's first person voice by underlining every "I-statements" used to form "I poems" where the speaker associates the topics to him/herself. The next step of the analysis is to listen to any contrapuntal voices and statements containing multiple meanings, which includes other's voices that are contradictory to the first person voices of step two. The last step of the analysis is to form an interpretation as a synthesis of the previous listenings (Gilligan et al., 2003).

In this study, the first step was conducting the thematic analysis. Next, attention was paid to the pronouns used by the participants in the interviews. In the three interviews, statements including the pronoun "I"/"my" were listed to form the "I-poems" against which any single I-statement could be seen in comparison to a) other I-statements, and b) the statements with other pronouns, especially when contrasted with third person pronouns "(s)he" or "they".

Special attention was paid to the tensions that could be detected in those readings. The changes in the tone of the single statements were tracked by a reading that focused on internal harmony or conflict of the statements in the "I-poem". For example, the participant could first tell that (s)he is happy or satisfied and in another I-statement claim to be angry or frustrated with the same or related issue. The final step was to compose a synthesis of the individual teachers' experiences and voices under the chosen themes. All of the three selected teachers' I-poems were formulated from their interviews, but in the analysis, only parts of the poems have been selected for the excerpts to illustrate the theme.

RESULTS

The results of the study will be presented under three themes extracted from the content analysis of the teachers' interview narratives. These themes are (1) beginning as a CLIL teacher, (2) lack of recognition and support, and (3) positive and negative challenges. The teachers' experienced challenges were at the focus when the participants described the beginnings of their CLIL careers and the lack of recognition and support in their current work situation. In their responses to the challenges, the attention shifts to the agency of the individual teachers. The similarities and differences of the contexts are reflected in the teachers' narratives throughout the analysis.

CLIL Beginnings

The interviewed teachers had differing backgrounds and they had started to teach through English for various reasons. The teachers' experienced agency became evident in their reports on choice and ownership when starting their CLIL careers.

The 'I-poems' where the interviewee I-statements were listed, revealed dynamic and sometimes even dramatic changes in their senses of agency. For example (1), data excerpts were selected from the Spanish teacher's I-poem, formulated on the basis of his interview to show how the expressions of agency varied in the teacher's narrative about the beginning of his CLIL career.

(1) I saw not much future at [previous work place]

I already <u>knew</u> that I want to do in this section

I was hopeless [language exam results were not

adequate]

I was in a very high position [in other language tests]

then I gave bilingual teaching up

I asked again

I know that I'm doing things that many people are

not able to do

I see myself as a kind of <u>veteran</u> in this business (ST)

In the teacher's I-statements, the struggle to get a position in a CLIL school shows dramatic changes of agency, from hopelessness to pride. This teacher showed strong agency in his persistence to get into the bilingual program in spite of the obstacles he faced. In the Spanish context, the interviewed teachers reported many challenges that originated from the top-down implementation of CLIL. Another Spanish teacher (S3) phrased his situation as a teacher in the bilingual section "it's <u>their</u> idea but it's <u>my</u> work". For the Spanish teacher in this study, one of the greatest challenges had been the L2 requirements at the entrance of the program.

The Austrian teacher (AT) reported having been the motor and pioneer for introducing and implementing CLIL in his school. When asked the question "What are the main reasons for starting CLIL in your school?" the teacher answered:

(2) <u>Me</u>! Because I wanted to do it and then I thought it might be a good idea […] I can just show them what <u>I</u> wanted to do (AT)

This teacher's strong agency and ownership of the CLIL program were emphasized by the confident use of the first person pronouns. As a contrast to his own strong agency, the teacher reported about the professional challenges and lack of confidence of some other teachers (they).

(3) I've come across people who do it because they've been asked to do it and very obviously don't want to do it, they don't feel confident, especially with their English, it's a waste of resources (AT)

Similar challenges were also heard in an interview of a Finnish teacher who described the beginning of her CLIL career:

(4) I was asked and I say ok, I'm gonna try […] I do anything that is part of the job. The headmaster was told that these, these CLIL students are coming from, to our school, we <u>had</u> to do it, in a way, something, so it (.) I don't know, <u>had</u> to, or in a way […] I couldn't get <u>first</u> education and then start to work (FT)

Since the teacher was asked, she at least seemingly had some agency in making the choice. However, her choice was socially and emotionally affected by feelings of responsibility. 'The headmaster was told' and 'we had to do it' show lack of agency and support also from the headmaster's part. Responsibility orientation represents weak agency, which is in contrast with the enthusiasm and strong pioneer agency reported by the Austrian teacher.

In these teachers' narratives, there were different storylines. Some teachers had been insecure in the beginning of their CLIL careers, but they now reported that they had become empowered as they gained more experience or support from the community. On the other hand, there were others who had started from a very agentic position and on the way encountered challenges which had made them more unsure and doubtful about the future of the program or their position in it.

Lack of Recognition and Support

All of the interviewed CLIL teachers reported that they had a greater workload in their CLIL teaching than in non-CLIL courses. However, many teachers reported that this extra effort was not recognized or rewarded, for example, by paying the teachers more salary. This is shown in data excerpt 5 where contrasting 'I' and 'we' with 'he' (the headmaster) shows a strong agentive position in spite of the lack of support. I stands for the interviewer and T for the Austrian teacher.

(5) I: so, are you given any extra time for that?

AT: <u>no, no, no</u>, there's no payment <u>whatsoever</u> for what we do here. I mean, if I <u>didn't</u> do it, or if we didn't do it, the payment would be exactly the same. The problem with paying teachers is that, no matter

what you do, you get the same money, yeah, if I did <u>nothing</u>, I just did read from the school book, I'd get the same amount of money.

I: where do you get <u>support</u> then, or do you <u>need</u> support?

AT: do we need <u>support</u>?

I: I mean, where do you get support, you don't get <u>monetary</u> support but what kind of support do you <u>get</u>? like from the headmaster, or, um [are the teachers

AT: the headmaster] the headmaster thinks <u>yes</u>, it's a good bragging these kids to sell our school, but he doesn't do <u>anything</u>, yeah, he doesn't want to get involved, it has to be done [it's taken for granted, yeah (.) but that's ok, I'm not

I: yeah, but that, the other teachers, are the ones you work with [or

AT: yes] <u>some</u> teachers, some teachers, some teachers <u>do</u> it, they are <u>interested</u> in it, they are <u>curious</u> yes, they <u>do</u> it, now it again, but there's always a fear, am I doing <u>enough</u> (AT)

A similar lack of recognition was expressed by the Spanish teacher:

(6) I work more, I am better, I know more but every single year I get less and less and less (ST)

Salary was reported to be a very concrete way to show appreciation or the lack of it. The teachers' agency was also contested by either having guidelines that were too rigid, or no guidelines at all which left teachers feeling alone and with minimal guidance. In data excerpt 7, the Spanish teacher contrasts 'us' and 'them' as he tells about the requirements of his work that came as imperatives and did not leave space for the teacher's own agency.

(7) The truth is that more <u>laws</u>, more <u>directives</u>, more <u>instructions</u>, finally what they do is tie, our <u>hands</u> are tied up […] I <u>definitely</u> think that they should give <u>us</u> more autonomy […]should also trust <u>more</u> on <u>us</u>, so that we teachers, that we have autonomy also […] I think that people who decide are people who are mainly in their offices and they don't really know what's going on…they should trust more on us (ST)

In the Finnish and Austrian contexts some teachers expressed that their work was not recognized and that they were insecure in their work because they were not given adequate instructions or guidelines. Pedagogical freedom can enhance teacher agency by allowing more possibilities for choice but it could also diminish teacher agency by lowering confidence and facilitating feelings of being abandoned. In example (4), the Finnish teacher already expressed a lack of support from the headmaster of the school. An example from this teachers 'I-poem' (data excerpt 8) shows weak agency in CLIL teaching that she does not find personally very meaningful.

(8) I was asked

I do anything that is part of the job

I couldn't get first education and then start to work

I was the only teacher who teach CLIL in History

I didn't enjoy

I don't enjoy

I had to find these things myself

I've never been very good at languages

I have to do…I have to teach everything in English

I don't know, I don't know, I don't know

I felt more unsure of myself

I don't think so that I continue [only with CLIL

classes]

maybe I'm lazy

I don't know, I don't understand (.) I can't say a thing

(FT)

In spite of her obviously weak agency in relation to her CLIL teaching, this teacher was an experienced History expert and she expressed strong agency and confidence when telling about her subject knowledge in teaching through her L1. She also voiced a strong doubt of the effectiveness of CLIL, as seen in excerpt 9.

(9) I think that it, it's not a very good <u>reason</u>, it's just (.) things come and go, some, sometimes it's fashionable to do in, <u>Russian</u>, or <u>whatever</u>, but do you know, I don't need, I have <u>never</u> heard <u>good enough</u> reasons to explain why <u>this</u> is so great idea

(.) yeah, so maybe it's such   fashionable, of course the English, it's the international, it's our native language in a way nowadays, so it's an important language, but I don't think any kind of pedagogical, pedagogic reasons would, reasons for that (FT)

The Finnish teacher's agency was expressed most strongly in her critical attitude towards CLIL. This reflected the lack of support from the head of the school and the fact that she did not have a colleague to cooperate with in her school community.

Positive and Negative Challenges

All of the teachers in the three contexts reported having met challenges in their CLIL teaching, often comparing it to mainstream L1 teaching that they had found less demanding. As a result of the challenge, some of the teachers found CLIL teaching more interesting, as seen in excerpt 10 from the Spanish teacher's interview.

(10) It was challenging, it was challenging. This was the first time that I was doing that and the truth is that preparing materials, speaking English all the time, speaking or explaining things in English, were kind of (.) nice for me, so I guess that if I had been teaching every single year the very same things in Spanish all the time that (.) might become kind of boring very easily […] this is much more interesting job (ST)

The same difficulty of not having ready-made materials that the Spanish teacher mentioned in excerpt 9, was faced by the Finnish teacher. She, however, had not overcome the challenge in a similar way, as seen in data excerpt 11.

(11) I: what did you find most challenging, what was the hardest thing

FT: a: (.) everything, to find (.) enough materials because we haven't any books for that, so I had to find these things myself and print from internet and try to make them work and also the language that, I've never been very good in languages, never spea- never been in Britain, for example (FT)

   The teachers balanced between external challenges and their sense of agency in personal ways. Just as the Austrian teacher mentioned about the CLIL programs, "It's

individuals who do it and try to keep it alive". For some of them, challenges were perceived in more positive ad even empowering ways, but only on the condition that they had found their own ways to overcome the difficulties. Finding their own "CLIL voice[s]", gaining positive CLIL experiences and being seen and recognized for their work was very important for these three CLIL teachers' sense of agency. The Austrian teacher represented strong personal agency in spite of having to prepare his own materials, and his voice is even stronger when contrasted to some other teachers' experiences in his school community:

(12) But many teachers follow the school books and they think they have to so that. And I said if it works to me, I'd do without the school books, they know we won't have school books that forces the teachers to create their own material. How much time that requires? (AT)

Comparing his own choices and ideas to the others' ('I' versus 'they') or to the instructions provided by his department, emphasized the teachers' personal agency and voices. Collegiality and community support were represented by using the pronoun 'we' whereas the external challenges were set by 'them'. At first sight, the I-poems of the teachers expressed their general disposition towards their work and their confidence or insecurity in it. A closer look at the individual I-statements, however, conveyed controversial experiences and varying agency in relation to different aspects of CLIL teaching.

DISCUSSION

Teacher agency is crucial for the success of CLIL implementations (Moate, 2011a). To better understand the quality of CLIL teacher agency and teachers' experiences affecting that agency, this study looked at the challenges reported by three individual teachers in three European contexts. Although there were contextual differences concerning, for example, who had initiated the CLIL program and what requirements for CLIL teachers there were in any given context, some of the challenges were common for all of the teachers. One of these was an expressed lack of support, especially from the heads of schools and policy makers. Like earlier studies have shown, many CLIL teachers experience a lack of support in the transitional period when a new CLIL program is launched

(Pappa et al., 2017b; Codó & Patiño-Santos, 2018). Although this study similarly suggests that the beginning of a teacher's CLIL career can be precarious, it also shows that many experienced CLIL teachers still experience new challenges. These can be related to difficulties in the CLIL community, changing resources or to the individual teacher's doubts about the meaningfulness or efficacy of CLIL.

In spite of the widely varying types of contextual challenges, teachers from diverse contexts had experienced independence and empowerment in their work after having figured out their own way of teaching CLIL and making their own classroom choices. Some teachers reported developing their own practices and not following guidelines that they found impractical. For teacher agency, it was crucial that the teachers had found personal meaning for their work and believed that CLIL was effective. They could tackle even severe difficulties if their students had shown enthusiasm and positive development in the CLIL lessons, as was seen in the Spanish teacher's interview. On the contrary, the Finnish teacher explained that she had never understood the idea of CLIL, which made her struggle in her work. Conversely, she displayed a confident and agentive attitude when talking about teaching through her L1 in the mainstream classroom.

There seems to be a lot of uncertainty about CLIL teachers' work due to external and internal factors. These can be either unclear or demanding working conditions, lack of support from the school head or colleagues, missing resources or personal doubts about individuals' own capabilities or the meaningfulness of CLIL. The challenges could be mitigated if knowledge and experiences, and also the difficulties, were shared in open dialogue and cooperation in teacher communities (see also McDougald, 2015; Moate, 2014). Studies on individual teachers' experiences can reveal the downsides of CLIL teaching and help the teachers recognize similar issues in their work, but also empower and encourage them to develop their working conditions. Although CLIL programs necessarily need a whole community to function, these networks include different roles and diverse experiences of individuals at different positions and stages of their careers. There is not one stereotype for a CLIL teacher. The quality of CLIL teaching can be developed by providing appropriate individualized support for teachers at different phases of their careers. This support could include tailored in-service training and mentoring at the workplace that respond to the needs of individual teachers and whole teacher communities. Furthermore, teachers need both pedagogical CLIL-specific knowledge and resources for building their identities as CLIL teachers (Bonnet & Breidbach, 2017). It would also be fruitful to address CLIL teacher challenges early, for example, in pre-service teacher education to avoid "sink-or-swim" experiences in the beginning of new teachers' careers.

An especially challenging phase in a CLIL teacher's career appeared to be the entrance to a CLIL program. The pioneering teachers who had a strong personal involvement and investment in starting the CLIL program in their schools, showed strong ownership over it. However, their agency was also challenged by a lack of support or recognition at different stages of their careers. As seen in the Austrian teacher's narrative, negative experiences can separate "us" from "them" in a school community. Those teachers who had been asked or told to participate in CLIL, showed weaker initial agency, but some of them had later been empowered by finding their own way of doing CLIL or by becoming convinced of the benefits of CLIL.

Some teachers expressed in the interviews that the challenges they encountered were discouraging and diminished their agency as actors and decision makers. In Andalusia, where CLIL was implemented as a top-down process, the participating teacher described the demands of his work, such as tightening language requirements, the students' poor target language skills and the teachers' lack of freedom in making decisions concerning their work. It is evident that this decreased the Spanish teachers' activity potential. However, the he displayed a strong agentive voice in both criticizing the policy makers and expressing his personal opinions and choices. This shows that in spite of contextual challenges, CLIL teachers can experience and exert their agency in various ways (see also Mifsud & Vella, 2018). The Finnish and Austrian teachers, who had plenty of freedom in their work to make choices concerning their teaching, reported the laissez faire attitude held by their program heads. Although these teachers might have enjoyed their pedagogical freedom, they also told about lacking proper guidelines, recognition and support for their work, which could diminish the experienced meaningfulness of their work and inhibit their teacher agency.

This study shows how CLIL teacher agency changes dynamically reflecting the teachers' experienced challenges. It also suggests the sociocultural understanding of teacher agency, in the sense that it is not a straightforward issue that can be understood merely as a personality trait of an individual teacher or as a predictable reaction to existing contextual factors (Yang, 2015). Accordingly, both individual and contextual aspects are entwined in the complex experiences of agency of CLIL teachers. More complexity is added to these experiences by adding the dimension of another language and the integration of language and content. This study is in line with the previous CLIL studies (Banegas, 2012; Codó & Patiño-Santos, 2018; Pappa et al., 2017b) showing how the demands of CLIL teaching results in contested CLIL teacher agency. It contributes to the former studies on CLIL teacher agency by examining CLIL teachers from three different contexts.

The Listening Guide method has been employed in this study to complement content analysis and to contribute to a more profound understanding of the teachers' individual voices. It helps to illustrate the complex nature of the CLIL teachers' experiences by teasing out tensions, cracks and contradictory tunes in their narratives. One limitation of this study is the small number of participants as it has only shown a narrow perspective to the experiences of CLIL teachers by showcasing three History teachers in three contexts. Although sometimes similar, their experiences cannot be generalized to illustrate CLIL teachers' experiences and challenges all over the world. Therefore, combining a larger comparative study with more participants from each context with the micro perspective of individual teachers' experiences, would give a more reliable picture of the current situation of the CLIL teachers around Europe. Furthermore, more research is needed to show how CLIL teachers in even more diverse contexts, also outside Europe, manage to tackle their work-related challenges and construct a teacher agency that enables them to act and find their work meaningful. In this demanding work, the teachers should not be left alone.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative interview study investigated how CLIL-related challenges were experienced by three secondary school CLIL teachers from different contexts and how those challenges had affected their teacher agency, according to the teachers' accounts. The first two research questions concerned the challenges of CLIL and their effect on teachers' work, as experienced by the participants. Furthermore, the study inquired what kind of teacher agency the participants displayed in the interviews. The participants had experienced the same difficulty of not perceiving enough support, especially at the beginning of their careers. However, the teachers responded to these challenges in different ways. Some of them found the challenges invigorating, others, frustrating and overwhelming. In the teachers' narratives, they reported overcoming even severe difficulties if they had found their CLIL teaching to be meaningful. In any single interview, the teachers' agency varied dynamically when they reported on the challenges they had confronted and about the support or lack of support they had received or confronted. Regardless of the many similar challenges in all of the contexts, CLIL teacher experiences and agency were diverse and complex. In sum, it can be concluded that the teachers responded to CLIL challenges with their personal experiences and agency that, however, were also dependent on contextual factors (see also Pappa et al., 2017a).

Notes on the author

Kristiina Skinnari is a PhD in Applied Linguistics and currently works as a university teacher at the University of Jyväskylä, Department of Language and Communication Studies in the LAMP (Language Aware Multilingual Pedagogy) Teacher Education program. Her research interests are bilingual and multilingual education, teacher education, and teacher and learner identity and agency.

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