

Editorial: Fostering a plurilingual curriculum: from theory to practice

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This special issue is drawn out of the ‘plurilingualism in School’ day held at Collège Sévigné, in Paris, France, December 2024. A day where academics, teachers, researchers and government stakeholders came together, to discuss plurilingualism in school and articulate connections between theory and practice.

The school is a pioneer in bilingual education in Paris, France and offers a bilingual curriculum with equal access to English – French. It is a rich context where teachers and students enter in constant dialogue, reflect and innovate.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) principles are at the core of Collège Sévigné’s metamorphosis into a plurilingual school nearly a decade ago. Sévigné’s higher education department (founded in 1885) and almost as old as the school itself (founded five years earlier, in 1880), makes it possible to combine innovative teaching practices with theoretical underpinnings. This makes it both a school and a place for reflexivity. Action research is active and encouraged in Collège Sévigné which enables teachers to act as researchers who constantly reflect and strive to improve their own practice. The collaborations between higher education institutions and Collège Sévigné allow for the development of a fruitful dialogue between higher education academics who are experts in their field and teachers in our school. In this way everyone benefits.

In this issue we have curated two sections to this special issue to allow the space for dialogue between higher education experts and teachers in the field and discuss theory and practical

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applications. To this end there are two sections to the special issue: one of peer reviewed articles and one of reflective accounts of teachers based on their experience in plurilingual classrooms.

In the research section, Van de Craen considers implicit learning an underexposed factor in the research on the effectiveness of CLIL in the search for a general, overarching CLIL theory. Such a theory should focus on learning and the brain and should be part of the training of CLIL teachers to increase their insight into learning processes. The article offers a snapshot of current CLIL research in the context of plurilingual education. It is at once diverse, stimulating and thought-provoking.

Aude Laloi, Frédéric Isel & Béatrice Godart-Wendling offer an empirical study on the understanding of language acquisition in primary school children, in a French-English CLIL school in Paris. Children tend to develop the understanding of implicitness throughout primary school and this equally well in both the school and the target languages. In other words, the CLIL approach enhanced the implicit acquisition of the target language.

Finally, Sarah Beal discusses the emotional engagement of young students in a CLIL classroom in a bilingual primary school in France. Emotional well-being of young learners in bilingual settings is a relatively new topic of growing interest. The adopted qualitative focus group study demonstrates the importance of researching young learners in the classroom allowing young learners to find their voice. The author also suggests solutions to engage learners through translanguaging and ensuring the development of metalinguistic awareness.

In the reflective part, Matthew Court shows how a teacher can transform from a monolingual to a bilingual or even multilingual mindset, with the necessary passion, creativity and perseverance.

Jennefer Cole demonstrates how AI can significantly improve English writing skills of 16/17-year-olds students, predominantly French-speaking, in a CLIL context. This work adds to the growing body of research studying writing in a CLIL context (see, for example, Dafouz 2021, Montoya 2022, Van de Craen 2024). Apart from valuable positive results, the author raises the interesting question: what about the handwritten versus typed text controversy? So far, this is an unsolved problem involving cognitive and technical aspects of writing, both in the first and second language.

Sébastien Malagnoux's article closes this issue with an emerging pedagogical practice: translanguaging in the French International Baccalaureate. Since the influential work of Garcia and Wei (2014), the idea of translanguaging as a pedagogy in plurilingual education has continued to attract growing interest. Malagnoux emphasizes the importance of translanguaging as a shared means of understanding and communication.

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