Insider Views of CLIL in Primary Education: Challenges and Experiences of EFL Teachers

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Abstract

The present study attempted a comparative exploration of EFL teachers' views in relation to integrating the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach in the context of Greek and Cypriot primary education. It is considered that the provision of curriculum content in a second/foreign language (L2/FL) can be advantageous in terms of enhancing both subject knowledge and target language competence, and improving motivation for learning. In total, 248 Greek and 100 Cypriot Teachers of primary education filled in the questionnaire, which comprised five sections: a) the teachers' CLIL experience, b) characteristics of CLIL, c) competences needed by CLIL teachers, d) integrating CLIL into the curriculum, e) training provision. The findings indicated that the teachers in both contexts acknowledged the challenge of integrating CLIL and its beneficial role in promoting mastery of both the FL and content, however, the data highly supported the teachers' need for training in CLIL teaching.

Introduction

Introducing the CLIL approach at all educational levels has been one of the priorities of the EU in acknowledgement of its considerable benefits, reported in the Action Plan for Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity (2003: 8). It was as early as in 1995, when it was suggested that certain subjects should be taught in the students' first foreign language (FL) to promote linguistic diversity (European Commission 1995: 47). Few recent studies can be found on CLIL and EFL teachers, identifying their perspectives on CLIL and providing an account of their conceptions of CLIL language teaching and its demands. It is with this aim that the study has been initiated, to explore the concept of CLIL education on the part of EFL teachers and provide a set of principles and ideas for designing CLIL specific training. More specifically, it aims to ascertain the EFL teachers' perceptions and experience, if any, of CLIL teaching practice, including an identification of the most difficult aspects of CLIL, in which they necessitate training so as to be able to offer effective integration of both content and language in the CLIL classroom.

CLIL definition

CLIL is an umbrella term employed to refer to educational settings where instruction takes place in a foreign or second language (de Graaff et al. 2007) with the aim to promote the learning of both a FL/L2 and other curricular

content at the same time (Navés y Muñoz, 2000, p. 2). In fact, CLIL is "a powerful pedagogic tool which aims to safeguard the subject being taught whilst promoting language as a medium for learning as well as an objective of the learning process itself" (Coyle in Marsh 2002, p. 37).

According to Eurydice (2006), CLIL presents "a special approach to teaching in that the non-language subject is not taught in a foreign language, but *with* and *through* a foreign language" (ibid, p. 8). Thus, in the CLIL classroom, the focus is not solely on promoting the learners' progress in the FL/L2, but on developing a context which encourages making use of it and in this way, further developing it along with the non-linguistic content (Coonan, 2007; Pavón Vázquez, 2010).

CLIL has much in common with other language-led approaches such as the Canadian immersion education, content-based instruction, English for Special Purposes (Tedick & Cammarata, 2012) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Georgiou, 2012). However, what differentiates it from the learning approaches mentioned, is the concept of integrating language with curricular content (the Marsh Report CLIL/EMILE - The European Dimension: Action, Trends and Foresight Potential (2002). Moreover, CLIL has rapidly spread in diverse educational contexts, a fact which has resulted in the emergence of a range of models, all of which have been developed to cope with the specific demands of these contexts (Georgiou, 2012). Being flexible and transferable across contexts, the CLIL approach can be adopted in different types of schools and with different learners, encouraging experimentation on the part of the teachers on the basis of the demands of their own settings (Holmes, 2005). However, as CLIL is responsive to the context in which it is being developed, it is dependent on "a range of situational and contextual variables" (Coyle, 2008, p. 1).

The advantages of CLIL as an educational practice

CLIL implementation is considered to offer a learning context in which using the FL/L2 takes place in a meaningful, authentic, relevant and interesting way (Korosidou & Griva, 2013), immediately rather than simply 'rehearsing' and waiting for years before there is an opportunity to use the language beyond their learning context (Georgiou, 2012, p. 496). Furthermore, CLIL is a useful educational tool to promote multilingualism in the European Union, featuring in a series of declarations (European Commission, 1995, 2003).

According to Gimeno, et al. (2013), introducing CLIL can be advantageous in terms of the following aspects. In particular, it:

- "builds intercultural knowledge and understanding,
- improves language competence and oral communication skills,
- develops multilingual interests and attitudes,
- provides opportunities to study content through different perspectives,
- allows learners more contact with the target language,
- does not require extra teaching hours,
- complements other subjects rather than competes with them,
- diversifies methods and forms of classroom practice,
- increases learners' motivation and confidence in both the language and the subject being taught" (ibid, 2013, p. 5).

It is, therefore, important to make every effort so as to retain the major principles of CLIL, which also comprise the basic requirements for its success. After all, it cannot be ignored that there is an indisputable need for a shared understanding about CLIL pedagogies (Coyle, 2008), therefore, the development of a specific CLIL methodology (Abendroth-Timmer et al., 2004) is a good starting point.

The most highly accepted theoretical framework for CLIL has been proposed by Coyle (2005) and identifies four building blocks for effective CLIL practice, which are common across many CLIL research projects (Coyle, 2007, 2008). These are *Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture*, and are often referred to as the 4Cs Framework (Coyle, 2005), a pedagogic framework comprising a useful tool for CLIL teachers (Coyle, 2007). The 4Cs framework accounts for the integration of content learning (content and cognition), language learning (communication and cultures), and the "interrelationship between content (subject), communication (language), cognition (thinking) and culture" (Costa & D'Angelo, 2011, p. 6).

According to Coyle (2006), having grown out of classroom practice, the 4Cs Framework has led to a rethinking of the roles of language learning and language using. More specifically, it is suggested that:

"it is through progression in knowledge, skills and understanding of the content, engagement in associated cognitive processing, interaction in the communicative context, developing appropriate language knowledge and skills as well as acquiring a deepening intercultural awareness through the positioning of self and 'otherness', that effective CLIL takes place". (ibid, 2006, p. 9).

The teacher's role within CLIL

 Although CLIL is regarded as an innovative approach with indisputable benefits, the challenge of effective CLIL implementation remains, with the teacher, who is also a non-native speaker of the FL used, being a defining feature of CLIL implementation (Dalton-Puffer 2011; Mehisto, Frigols & Marsh 2008). Thus, many difficulties can be adhered to the fact that CLIL teachers often do not know what is expected from them, lack awareness regarding CLIL related issues, and thus, are not adequately trained to cope with the new issues raised by CLIL (Banegas, 2012, p. 47).

The CLIL perspective also calls for changing the overall teaching strategy since "planning CLIL lessons requires a different approach from tried and tested practice embedded in either subject disciplines or foreign language study" (Coyle, 2006, p. 11). Moreover, verbal input should be accompanied with activities practising the four language skills, receptive and productive, through authentic input sources, visuals, multimedia aids and internet-based resources as such resources are considered to support CLIL teaching (Banegas, 2012).

Besides introducing educational materials, which clearly focus on the role language plays in understanding content related concepts on the part of the learners, is called for (Marenzi et al., 2010). As regards these materials, it is imperative that their selection and sequencing takes into consideration the students' linguistic and cognitive demands in line with the CLIL Matrix (Coyle, Hood, and Marsh, 2010, p. 43), Mohan's knowledge framework for tasks and activities (Mohan, 1986, pp. 25-46) and Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). It is this way that effective teaching of both subject content and language can be attained rather than merely teaching non-linguistic content in a FL (Dale, Van der Es, & Tanner, 2010).

A framework for CLIL training

According to Coyle (2009, p. 130), CLIL is at a 'dangerous moment' and unless CLIL specific training is offered, the whole CLIL teaching venture is most likely to turn into an experience which is "time-consuming, ineffective, and frustrating". Therefore, it is strongly argued that CLIL principles have to be clearly identified so that teachers involved in CLIL are adequately supported in their effort to deliver an effective CLIL program (Costa and D'Angelo, 2011). In addition, CLIL training should maintain a focus on developing the teachers' practical skills in teaching CLIL classes (Banegas, 2012) through reflective tasks and group-work activities in order to realize the sociocultural nature of CLIL (Moate, 2010). On the same line, it is vital to establish the

necessity for close collaboration between subject and language teachers, which in essence can enhance the CLIL potential (Stukalina, 2011, p. 13).

In particular, CLIL INSET modules should according to Banegas (2012, pp. 49-50) and Hillyard (2011, p.6-8) provide input and focus on: a) what CLIL is, including definitions, aims, benefits; b) curricular models of the CLIL approach and the CLIL Matrix; c) CLIL content selection and rationale based on approaches from Sociocultural Theory and Multiple Intelligences; e) how knowledge about second language acquisition (SLA) can be applied in the CLIL classroom; d) CLIL lesson planning, preparation and implementation in the CLIL classroom; e) CLIL task types and purposes; f) language, grammar, vocabulary, cognitive and metacognitive strategies in CLIL; g) promoting cultural awareness through CLIL; h) assessment and evaluation procedures and tools to ensure learning outcomes.

Teacher training for CLIL should also consider the competences of teaching through a FL. A brief nevertheless insightful account of the teacher competences required for successful CLIL teaching to be attained through CLIL INSET training is provided by Mehisto, Frigols, and Marsh (2008, pp. 232-236) and includes adequate familiarization with a methodology for integrating both language and content along with the ability to: a) create rich and supportive target language environment; b) make input comprehensible; c) effectively use teacher-talk; d) promote student's comprehensible output; e) attend to diverse students' needs; and f) improve accuracy.

Furthermore, Hansen-Pauly (2009) provided a theoretical framework, which can serve as a basis concerning critical issues of "education and competence" which apply to any subject taught and need to be considered for CLIL teacher training. The framework was based on the following areas: context and culture, learner needs, planning, multimodality, interaction, subject, evaluation, cooperation and reflection (Hansen-Pauly, 2009).

The study

Rationale and purpose of the study

The needs of CLIL teachers have to be recorded (Curtis, 2012) as they lie at the heart of every educational venture and therefore, in delivering successful CLIL training courses for teachers, thorough needs analysis procedures are necessitated (Ruiz-Garrido & Fortanet-Gómez, 2009) in order to identify and address the factors which are of major significance in attaining quality assurance in CLIL (Coyle, 2007). It is this way that the teachers' training needs are shaped by the participants themselves and CLIL training can meet the teachers' demands.

Among the identified issues which are regarded to affect CLIL success and need to be addressed through teacher development were: a) lack of knowledge with regard to the aims of effective CLIL courses (Mehisto (2008, p. 99-100); b lack of content and language knowledge which influence the outcome of CLIL courses (Butler, 2005); c) lack of formal training on bilingual education methodologies (Pena Díaz & Porto Requejo, 2008); d) lack of training in the special skills and methods and techniques needed in the CLIL classroom (Baker, 2006, p. 307) e) lack of CLIL instructional materials (Lyster & Ballinger, 2011), which suggests a greater workload for CLIL teachers (Maley, 2011); f) inappropriate balance in the integration of content and language supported by methodologies and materials (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008). Considering all the above, an attempt was made to identify Greek and Cypriot EFL teachers' perspectives on CLIL, providing an account of their conceptions of CLIL teaching and how they cope with its the demands. CLIL programs have become common place in many European countries (Austria, Finland, Portugal, Spain - all subjects in the Basque country, and the Netherlands). However, it is only recently that CLIL has been introduced in Greek and Cypriot education.

In Greece and Cyprus, English has been the dominant FL in the curricula of primary and secondary education for years (Griva, Chostelidou & Panteli 2013). In Greece, English as a foreign language (EFL) has been a compulsory subject in the primary school curriculum from the 3rd grade onward (Official Gazette: Law 1325/16-9-2001) while it has been introduced on a pilot basis from 1st grade onwards in a number of schools in the year 2011-2012. In Cyprus, the introduction of the teaching of English in primary education and in particular, at the 3rd and 4th grade took place in 1992 (Decision, 37458).

The present study provides a comparative account of English language teachers' views in relation to the integration of CLIL in the language classroom in Greek and Cypriot primary education. The major objectives of the study were to provide answers to the following issues:

-   What are the EFL teachers' attitudes to different aspects of CLIL?
-   What are the teachers' experiences in CLIL?
-   Are they aware of the benefits of CLIL?
-   What key competences can support the development of a rich CLIL learning environment?
-   Are the EFL teachers ready to implement CLIL in their classrooms?

Method

The participants. Both Greek and Cypriot EFL teachers were involved in the study. The sample consisted of: a) 248 Greek Teachers of Primary Education with about half of them (45%) being MA holders. Concerning their teaching experience, 50% of the total number of the Greek participants had been employed in the public sector for 1-10 years while the rest for more than 11 years. b) 100 Cypriot Teachers of Primary Education with about half of them (43%) being MA holders. As regards their teaching experience, 46% of the Cypriot participants had been employed in the public sector for 1-10 years and the rest of more than 11 years.

The instrument. The questionnaire, which was used as the basic instrument for conducting the study, was administered in the Greek language and comprised 60 items with a focus on the following 5 thematic sections: a) EFL Teachers' profile and CLIL experience (9 questions), b) CLIL characteristics (20 questions), c) Competences needed by CLIL teachers (10 questions), d) Integrating CLIL into the curriculum (15 questions), e) needs-based CLIL training provision (6 questions).

The research instrument included 'Likert-type' questions which asked the teachers to choose from the following response options "much, fairly, little, not at all" for questions that fall into the basic areas of 'CLIL characteristics' and 'competences needed by CLIL teachers'. They were also asked to: a) choose from the response options "agree-disagree-don't know" for questions that fall into the area of integrating CLIL into the curriculum, b) rank the items related to their CLIL training needs (point 1 was for high priority ranking).

Results

Familiarity with the CLIL approach

Concerning their familiarity with the CLIL approach, 37% of the Greek EFL teachers stated familiar with it while the respective percentage for the Cypriots was 27%. It should be noted, however, that both Greek (63%) and Cypriot teachers (73%), in their vast majority, were not familiar with the CLIL approach.

As for the teachers' sources of information about CLIL, the Web was most highly ranked by the Greeks (74.3%) along with conferences (42%) while the Cypriots stated that it was primarily other teachers or advisors (50%) who had informed them, with conferences (40%) being ranked next (Figure 1).
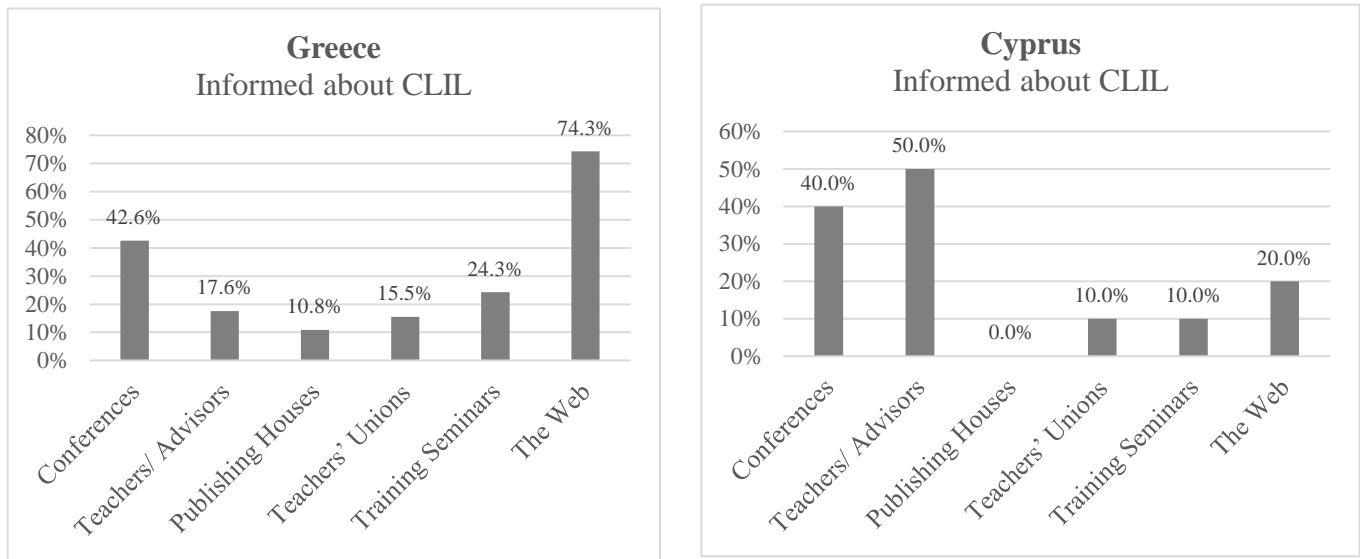
Figure 1. Familiarity of Greek and Cypriot teachers with the CLIL approach

As regards the implementation of CLIL in their classroom, it was only 9% of the teachers in Greece who had such experience and only 2% of the teachers in Cyprus. It should be noted that it was MA holders both in Greece and Cyprus who showed more familiarity with the CLIL approach.

Willingness to implement CLIL

With respect to the teachers' willingness to implement CLIL in the future the Cypriots tended to be more reluctant as it was 52% of them who were willing to undertake such venture, compared to 71% of their Greek colleagues. Once again, it was MA holders who stated more willing to implement CLIL.

Preferred content subjects

When asked about the preferred content subjects to implement the CLIL approach, the Greek EFL teachers opted for History (67%), Geography (71%) and environmental studies (41%). For the Cypriots it was History (29%), Physical Education (21%) and Mathematics (19%), which however, received lower percentages (Figure 2).
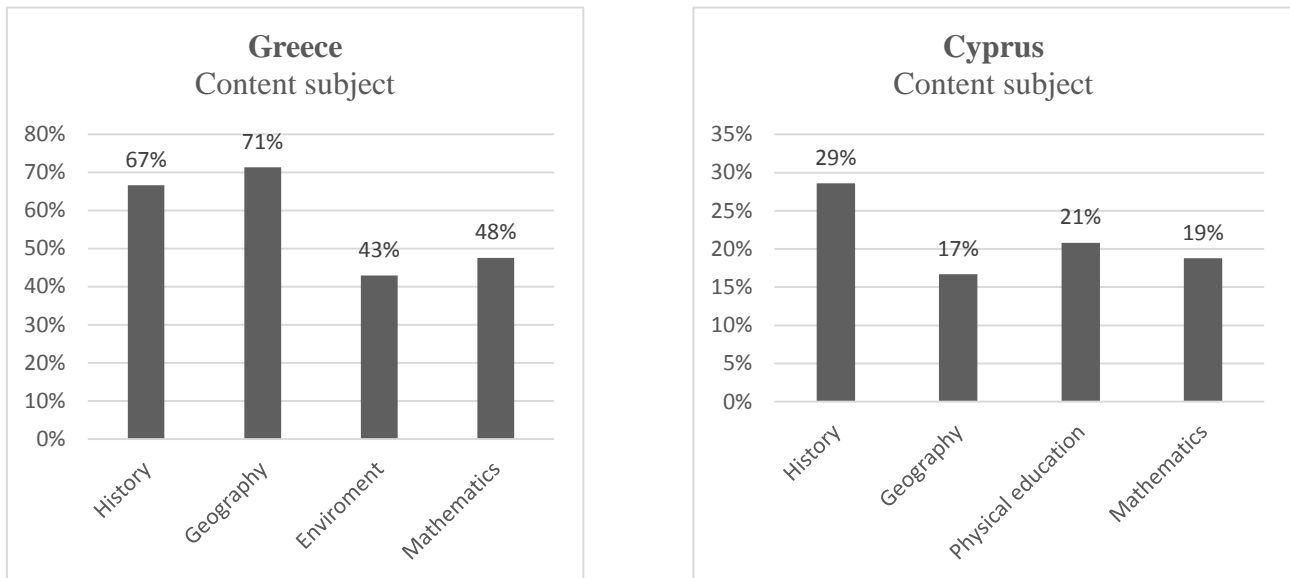
Figure 2. Greek and Cypriot teachers' preferred content subjects

The reasons for implementing CLIL in the Greek and Cypriot primary school context

The reasons for implementing CLIL for the Greek teachers were advantageous aspects of CLIL such as: encouraging active participation, enhancing students' motivation, making teaching more attractive as well as developing learning styles and strategies (Figure 3). The Cypriot Teachers' reasons were similar, however, with higher percentages of uncertainty (Figure 3).

The Greek teachers. Concerning the Greek EFL teachers, the majority of them were in agreement regarding the beneficial nature of CLIL in promoting the students' active participation (74,9%) while a relative limited percentage of them (3.3%) did not share this belief and another 21.8% stated that they were not aware.
On the same line, a considerably high percentage of the EFL teachers supported the argument that CLIL enhances their students' motivation (70.4%); 8.6% of them did not seem to agree with this statement, while 21% of them stated not being aware of such beneficial CLIL aspect.
Moreover, a significant percentage of the EFL teachers believed that the CLIL approach can make teaching more attractive (68.3%), a limited percentage of them did not seem to agree (3.3%); 28.4% of them, a noticeable percentage, were not aware of the potential of the CLIL concept.
In addition, a significant part of the teachers stated their belief that CLIL can promote learning styles and strategies (66.3%). A lower percentage of them seemed to disagree (6.2%) on the matter, while a considerable part of them declared that they were not aware of CLIL benefits (27.6%).
As regards the belief that CLIL is easy for the learners only one out of three Greek EFL teachers were in agreement (33.3%), a slightly higher percentage of them (35.8%) disagreed, whereas it was 30.9% who stated that they didn't know.

The Cypriot teachers. As regards the reasons for implementing CLIL, the majority of the Cypriot teachers (58%) identified the beneficial impact of the CLIL approach in making their teaching attractive. However, a considerably high percentage (42%) declared their uncertainty.
On the same line, almost half of them (48%) acknowledged the beneficial impact of CLIL on students' motivation, another 8% were not in agreement with this belief while a significantly high part of the Cypriot teachers (44%) were not aware of such CLIL potential.

46% of the Cypriot teachers agreed that implementing CLIL can have a positive effect on the students' learning styles and strategies. Nevertheless, a limited percentage of the Cypriot teachers (2%) disagreed, while more than half of them (52%) were again not aware of this beneficial aspect of implementing CLIL in the context of primary education.

As regards the impact of CLIL on active participation in the classroom 39% agreed, 2% disagreed while the majority of them (60%) lacked awareness. Similarly, in relation to the argument that CLIL is regarded as easy for the learners only 10% of the Cypriot EFL teachers were in agreement, whereas a small percentage of the participants (12%) did not agree. It was again the vast majority of them (78%), who stated not being aware.
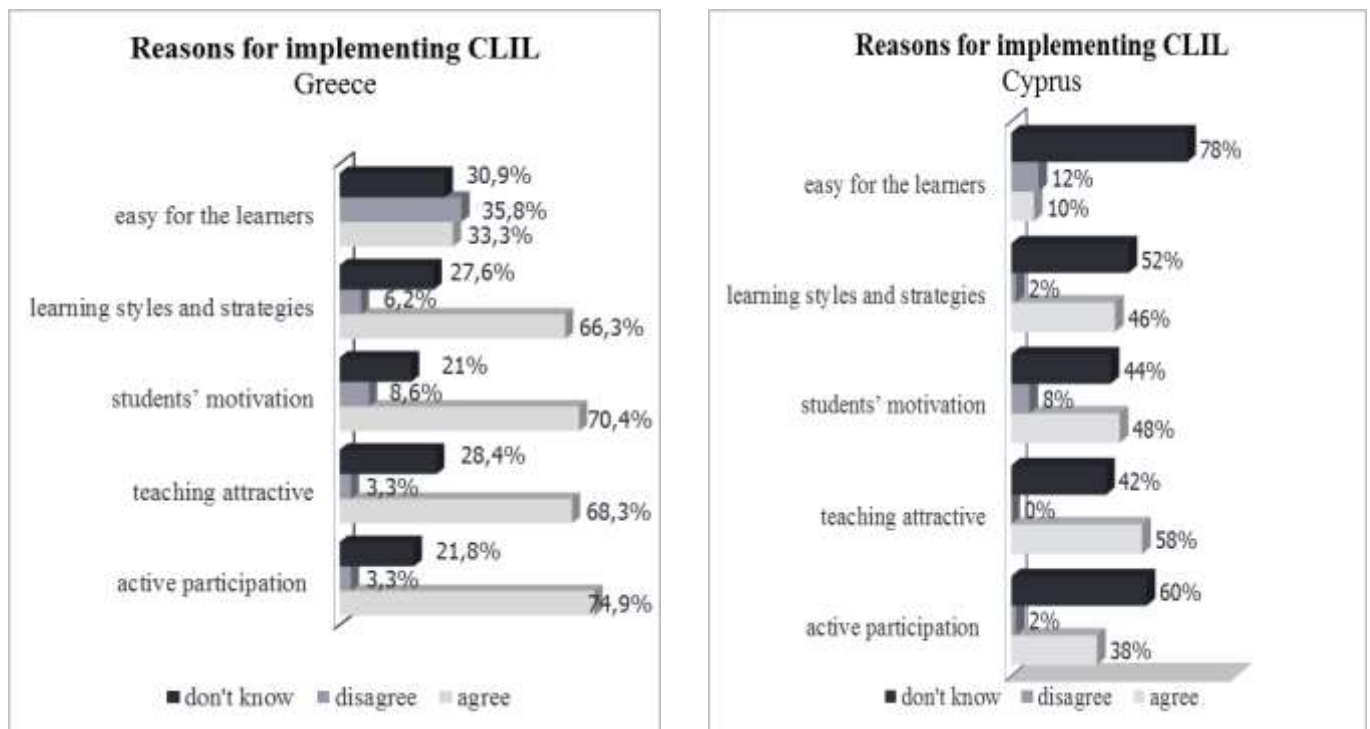

Figure 3. Reasons for implementing CLIL for the Greek and Cypriot teachers

On the same line, implementing CLIL due to its merits in promoting both, language learning and content along with learning skills was supported by both the Greek and Cypriot teachers, however, with a higher degree of uncertainty by the latter (Figure 4).

The Greek teachers. The greatest majority of the EFL teachers stated their agreement that CLIL promotes content learning (78.2%), a mere 6.6% did not share this belief, while a quite small part of them (15.2%) declared not being aware. An equally high percentage of them indicated their agreement as to the statement that CLIL promotes content and linguistic skills (71.6%), whereas only a limited part of the teachers (7.4%) were not in agreement and another 21% did not know about the issue.

On the same line, 69.1% of them agreed that CLIL can promote language learning; 4.9% disagreed while 25.9% were not aware. Almost half of the EFL teachers surveyed (46.5%) identified with the belief that CLIL presents an optimal approach for mixed ability classes; 29.2% did not identify with this view; 24.3% stated that they did not know.

About a third of them, also suggested that CLIL can be implemented at the 5th and 6th grade of primary education (30.6%) while it should be noted that the percentage of those opposing this view is much higher (40%) and another 29.4% stated unaware.

A more limited part of the Greek teachers reported that they were in agreement with implementing CLIL in junior high school (23.3%) while it is striking that almost half of them (49.85%) opposed such implementation and about a third of them (26.9%) stated not being aware (Figure 4).

The Cypriot teachers. As regards the majority of the Cypriot EFL teachers, they were in agreement concerning the beneficial nature of CLIL in promoting both content and linguistic skills (50%); a mere 2% of them did not share this belief while a significantly higher percentage 48% stated that they were not aware.

On the same line, a part of Cypriot teachers supported the argument that CLIL promotes language learning (40%), a very small part of them (4%) did not seem to agree with this statement and a considerably higher percentage (56%) stated not being aware of such beneficial CLIL aspect. Similarly, some Cypriot teachers agreed with the statement that CLIL promotes content learning (38%), with a limited percentage of them (6%) not being in agreement with this statement; again a considerably higher percentage of more than half of them 56% were not aware of such CLIL aspect.

Moreover, a lower percentage of the teachers agreed on the potential of the CLIL approach to be implemented with mixed ability classes (24%), another much lower part of them did not seem to agree (6%) while the vast majority of them, a noticeable percentage (70%), stated that they were not aware of such CLIL potential.

As regards the belief that CLIL can be implemented with 5th and 6th grade primary school students, 14% of the total number of the Cypriot teachers were positively oriented, while 16% opposed this prospect and in their vast majority (70%) they did not seem to be aware. Considering the implementation of CLIL in junior high school only a limited part of the teachers were in agreement (6%), a much higher part of them (28%) disagreed; it should be noted that it was again the majority of them (66%) who stated that they did not know (Figure 4).
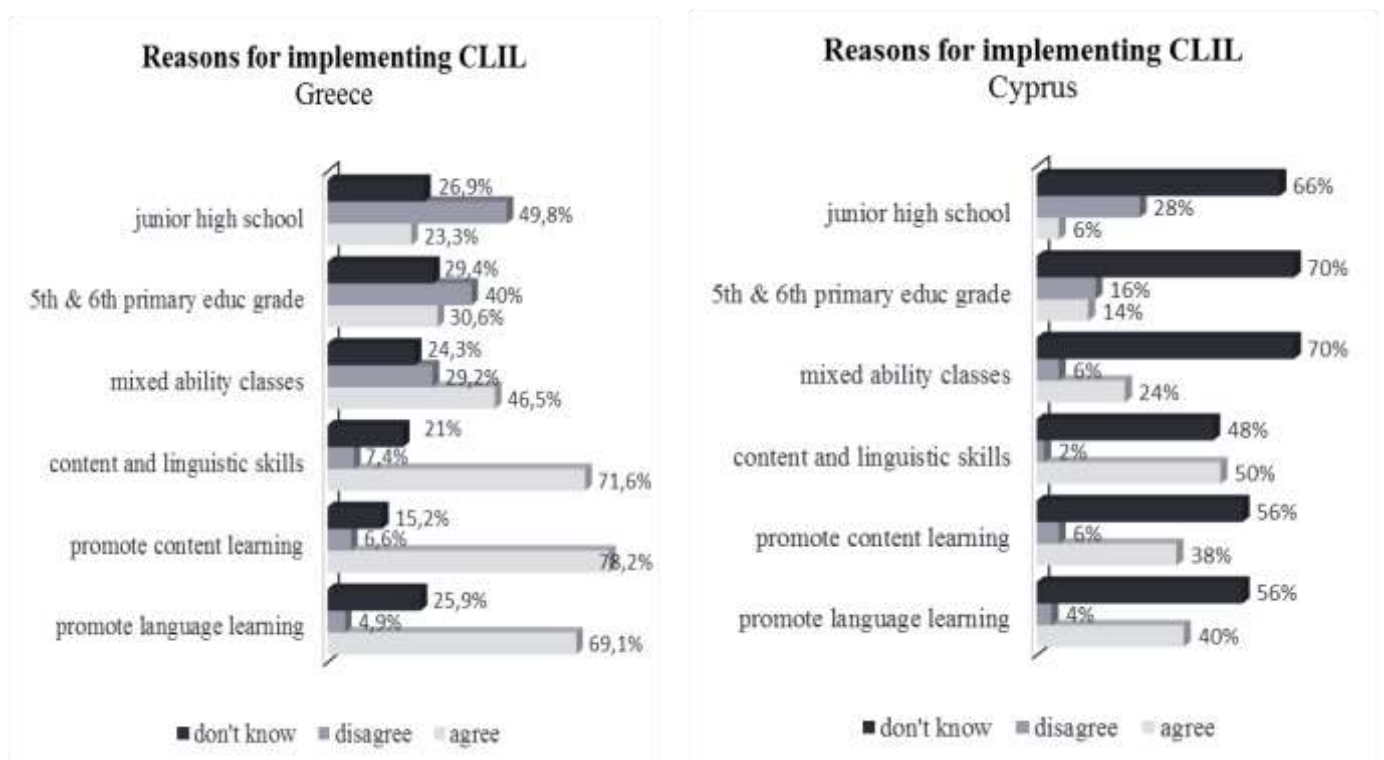

Figure 4. The reasons for implementing CLIL for the Greek and Cypriot teachers

Concerning the teachers' reasons for implementing CLIL, statistically significant differences resulted in relation to teaching experience. The more experienced teachers, with over 11 years of experience, declared a higher degree of uncertainty about the reasons for CLIL implementation (Table 1).

Table 1. Statistically significant differences in relation to teaching experience

Chi-square test	Reasons for Implementing CLIL	More experienced teachers
X2 = 12.847, df=4, p<0.050	CLIL can promote active participation and regulation of learning	
X2=16. 036, df=4, p<0.005	CLIL can stimulate students' motivation	Declared uncertainty "Don't know" to a higher degree
X2=23. 824, df=4, p=0. 000	CLIL can be easy for the learners	
X2=27. 108, df=4, p=0. 000	CLIL can be introduced to mixed ability classes	
X2=21. 421, df=4, p=0. 000	CLIL can be contextualized with respect to the curriculum of 5th & 6th grade in primary education	Showed a higher degree of 'agreement'

Furthermore, statistically significant differences resulted in relation to formal qualifications. Particularly, the teachers who hold a master's degree showed a higher degree of agreement concerning the good reasons for implementing CLIL (Table 2).

Table 2. Statistically significant differences in relation to formal qualifications

Chi-square test	Reasons for Implementing CLIL	Formal qualifications
X2=27. 936, df=2, p=0. 000	CLIL can promote active participation and regulation of learning	
X2=35. 796 df=2, p=0. 000	CLIL can make language learning/ teaching attractive	
X2=34. 036, df=2, p=0. 000	CLIL can build on students' motivation	
X2=11. 036, df=2, p<0.005	CLIL can address multiple learning styles and strategies	
X2=11. 036, df=2, p<0.005	CLIL can be easy for the learners	MA holders showed a higher degree of 'agreement'
X2=46. 036, df=2, p=0. 000	CLIL can promote language learning	
X2=37. 506, df=2, p=0. 000	CLIL can promote content learning	
X2=36. 936, df=2, p=0. 000	CLIL can promote the development of content and linguistic skills	
X2=15. 227, df=2, p=0. 000	CLIL can be introduced to mixed ability classes	

Advantageous aspects of CLIL approach

Concerning the advantages of the CLIL approach, both the Greek and Cypriot teachers were positively oriented towards the advantageous aspects of CLIL such as enhancing motivation, providing attractive learning conditions, and developing cognitive skills among others.

The Greek teachers. As regards the way the Greek EFL teachers perceived the distinct characteristics of CLIL, the vast majority of them stated that they either strongly agreed or agreed (93.4%) with the motivational element that CLIL brings into the classes. It is worth mentioning that only a limited part of them (6.6%) indicated either strongly disagree or disagree. The same percentages as to both categories were assigned to CLIL promoting the development of cognitive skills along with accuracy and fluency.
Moreover, a significantly high part of the Greek EFL teachers also agreed on the potential of CLIL to make learning more attractive (92.6%) with only a small percentage of them (7.4%) indicating their disagreement. A

somehow lower percentage of them (90%) considered that CLIL is beneficial for all learning styles and promotes strategy development, whereas it was 10% of them who did not identify with this view.

In addition, similar percentages were assigned by the Greek EFL teachers to the statements that CLIL is believed to promote multiple intelligences (87.7%) and knowledge of content subject (86.4%) with the negative statements having received 12.3% and 13.6% respectively (Figure 5).

The Cypriot teachers. The Cypriot teachers also acknowledged the distinct characteristics of CLIL, assigning, however, somehow lower percentages. More specifically, a considerably high percentage of them agreed that CLIL makes learning more attractive (87.5%) and provides motivation to learning (87.5%), while 12.5% of them did not share this view.

 Also, they agreed that CLIL has the potential to promote accuracy and fluency (82.5%) whereas 17.5% of them disagreed. Similar percentages were assigned to the belief that CLIL serves different learning styles and strategies (80%) and multiple intelligences (80%) while two out of ten of them were not aligned with this view (20%). Lower percentages were cast on the potential of CLIL to develop cognitive skills (77.5) and enhance content knowledge (70%) (Figures 5 and 6).
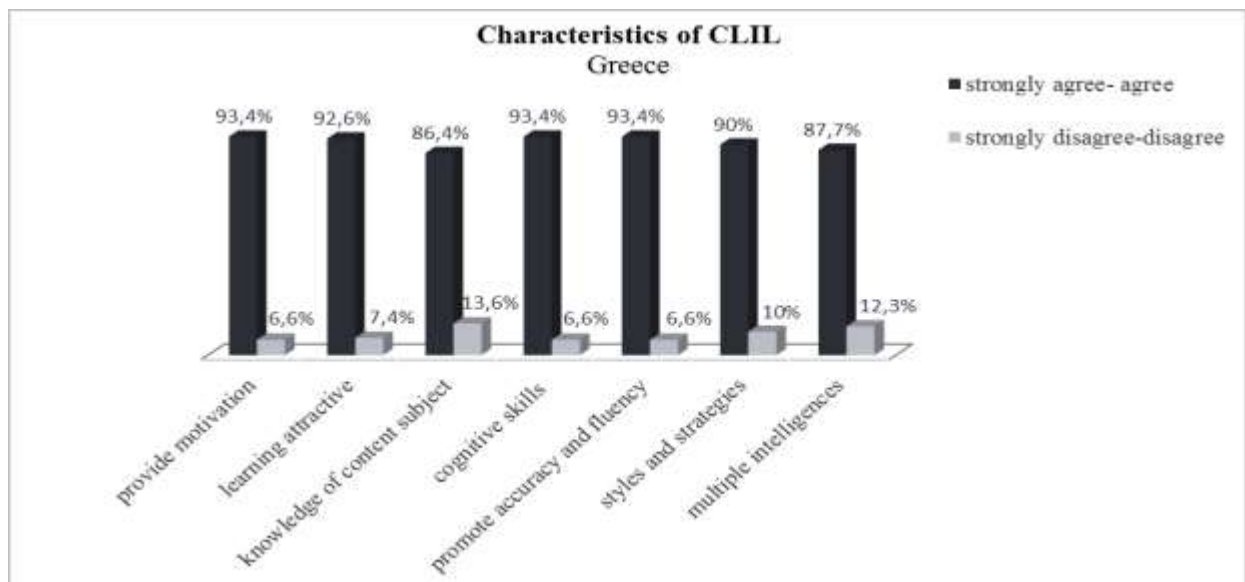

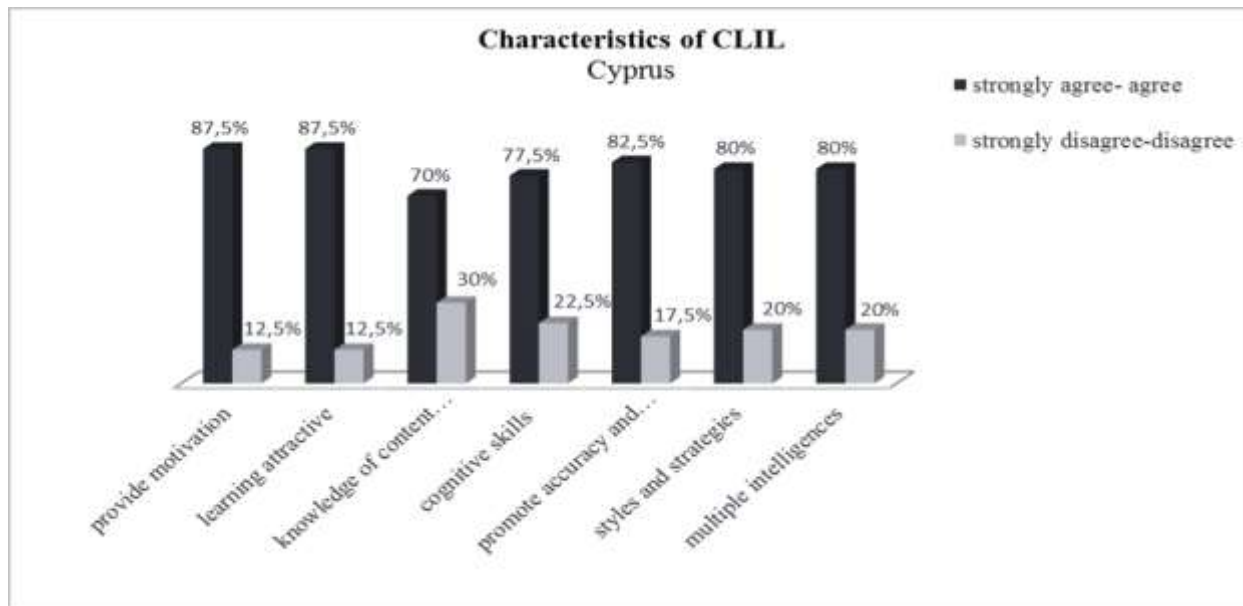**Figure 5. Greek teachers' standpoints of the advantages of CLIL approach**

Figure 6. Greek and Cypriot teachers' standpoints of the advantages of CLIL approach

It is noteworthy, that statistically significant differences resulted in relation to the teachers' formal qualifications, since the teachers who do not hold an MA degree showed a higher degree of disagreement concerning the advantages of the CLIL approach (Table 3).

Table 3. Statistically significant differences in relation to formal qualifications

Mann-Whitney U Test	Characteristics of CLIL method	No formal qualifications
Z=4. 840, p=0. 000	can provide motivation to learn the FL for real-life purposes	
Z=4. 263, p=0. 000	can make language learning/ teaching attractive	
Z=4. 538, p=0. 000	can provide in depth knowledge of content subject	
Z=3. 840, p=0. 000	can enhance the development of cognitive and metacognitive skills	
Z=4. 674, p=0. 000	can promote accuracy and fluency along with creativity	
Z=3. 787, p=0. 000	can address multiple learning styles and strategies	
Z=3. 379, p<0.005	can promote multiple intelligences	
Z=4. 522, p=0. 000	can be more effective in mastering the TL	Non-MA holders showed a higher degree of disagreement
Z=4. 899, p=0. 000	can enhance communicative competence in the TL	
Z=4. 576, p=0. 000	can promote confidence in terms of both the TL and content subjects	
Z=2.469, p<0.050	can develop the learners' metacognitive strategies	
Z=3. 663, p=0. 000	can create CLIL resources that embed the core features of CLIL is a time consuming process	
Z=-2.054, p<0.050	can be ineffective for students of lower level competence	
Z=-3.136, p<0.005	can negatively influence competence in relation to content due to limited comprehension	
Z=-3.655, p=0. 000	presents an innovative teaching practice	

Positive influence of CLIL on learning

On the same line, both the Greek and Cypriot teachers agreed on the positive influence of CLIL on learning.

The Greek teachers. The great majority of the Greek EFL teachers (90%), highly agreed on the positive influence of CLIL on learning. Their vast agreement was recorded as follows: promoting curricular and extracurricular learning (94.3%), presenting an innovative teaching practice (91.8%), enhancing metacognitive strategies (91.8%), promoting students' confidence (90.9%), mastering the target language (90.1%) and enhancing communicative competence (88.1%) (Figure 7).

The Cypriot teachers. The Cypriot teachers also highly regarded the CLIL potential it terms of the following aspects, however, lower percentages were recorded on their part. In particular, promoting confidence in the language learning process was voted by the great majority of the participants (85%).
They also agreed on the importance of the following aspects assigning equal percentages to CLIL being an effective approach in mastering the target language (82.5%), enhancing communicative competence (82.5%), promoting curricular and extracurricular learning (82.5%) and presenting an innovative teaching practice (82.5%). Enhancing metacognitive strategies was ranked a little lower (80%) (Figure 8).
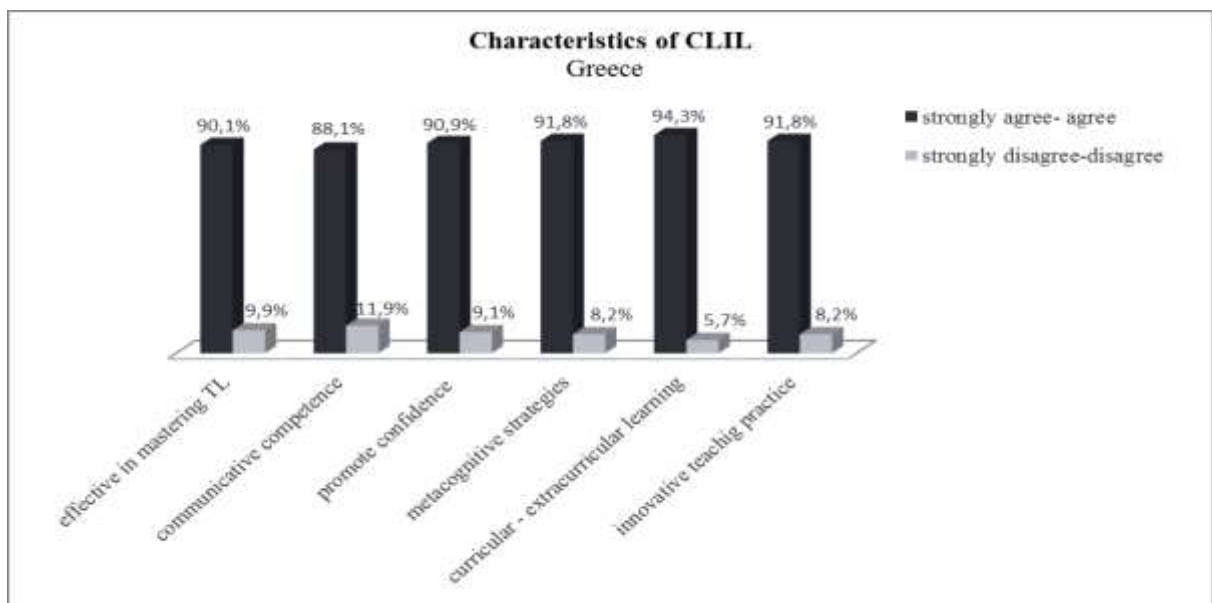

Figure 7. Greek teachers' views on the positive influence of CLIL on learning
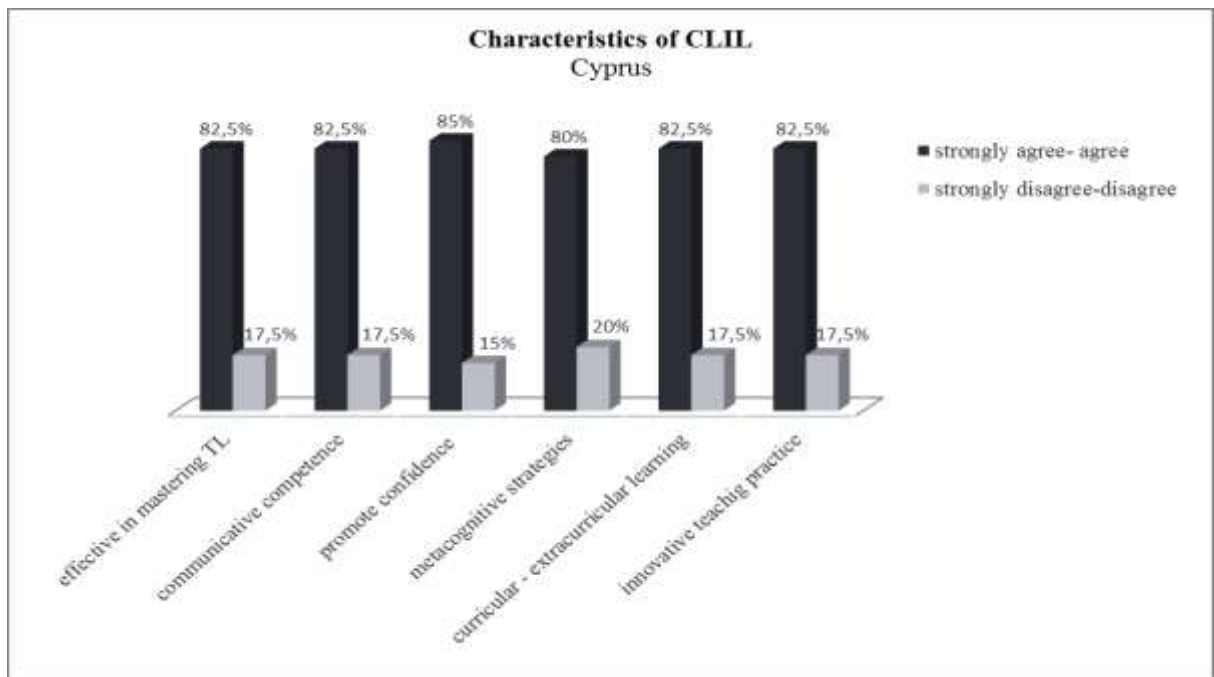
Figure 8. Cypriot teachers' views on the positive influence of CLIL on learning

Discouraging aspects of CLIL

In relation to aspects which are considered to present obstacles to CLIL implementation, it is surprising that the Cypriot teachers were more positive towards CLIL and did not agree on the discouraging aspects of its implementation such as ineffectiveness for lower level students, and primary education students.

The Greek teachers. Despite acknowledging the advantages of CLIL, the Greek EFL teachers reported on aspects they considered as negative in terms of its implementation. It should be noted that these aspects received significantly high percentages. In particular, nine out of ten of them agreed that it is bulky to design CLIL tasks (91%). Also, a very high percentage of them (90.2%) put forward that CLIL teaching is a time consuming process. Moreover, a considerable part of them stated that it is difficult to collect content material for CLIL courses (82.4%), regarded CLIL ineffective for lower level students (81.4%), and a negative influence on students' language competence (80.2%). A considerably high percentage was assigned to the belief that CLIL is considered as ineffective for primary education students (67.6%), and content based knowledge may suffer (67.3%) due to the dual focus on both content and language knowledge (Figure 9).
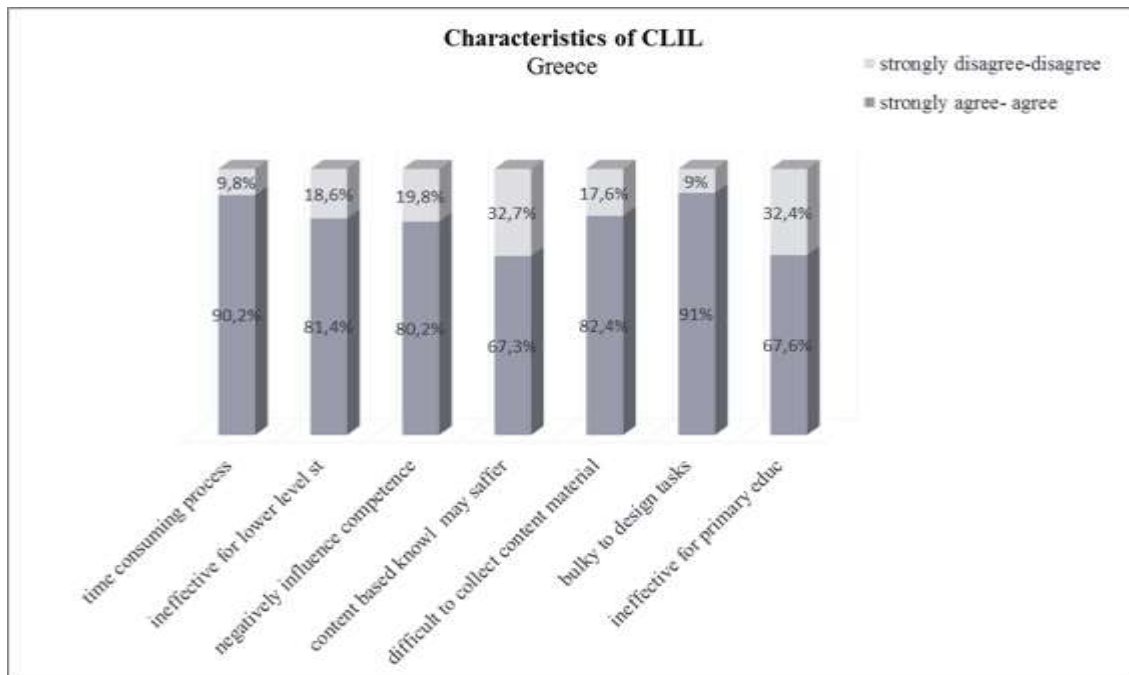
Figure 9. Greek teachers' views on the discouraging aspects of CLIL on learning

The Cypriot teachers. When asked to identify some of the negative aspects in relation to CLIL implementation, the vast majority of the Cypriot EFL teachers declared that CLIL is ineffective for primary education (77.5%) while 22.5% of them did not share this view. Three out of four of them also reported that CLIL presents a time consuming process (75%) and it is bulky to design tasks (75%); 25% were not in agreement with this belief. Also, a significant percentage of the Cypriot teachers put forward that CLIL can negatively influence the learners' language competence (62.5%) along with the apparent difficulty in collecting appropriate content material (62.5%), whereas 37.5% of them did not identify with these aspects. Furthermore, the majority of the participants revealed that CLIL can potentially make content based knowledge suffer (55%) and that they regarded it as ineffective for lower level students (52.9%) (Figure 10).
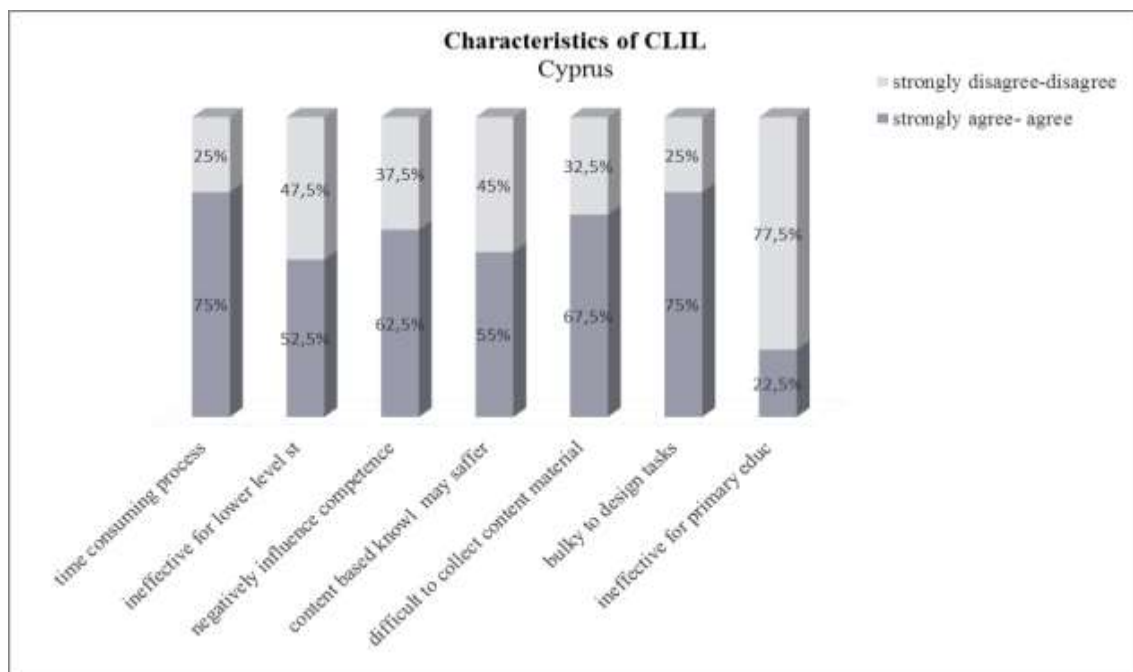
Figure 10. Cypriot teachers' views on the discouraging aspects of CLIL on learning

Concerning the discouraging aspects of CLIL, statistically significant differences resulted in relation to teaching experience, since the less experienced teachers disagreed with the negative aspects of CLIL implementation (Table 4).

Table 4. Statistically significant differences in relation to teaching experience

Kruskal –Wallis Test	Characteristics of CLIL method	Less experienced Teachers
H (2) =9. 833, p<0.01	can be ineffective for students of lower level competence	
H (2) =8. 833, p<0.05	can negatively influence competence in relation to content due to limited comprehension	Showed a higher degree of 'disagreement'
H (2) =8. 833, p<0.05	The students' progress in content-based knowledge may suffer compared to students attending regular classes	

Skills necessitated for CLIL teaching

The vast majority of the Greek teachers agreed on certain aspects of teachers' skills necessary for implementing CLIL with the Cypriot teachers assigning somehow lower percentages.

The Greek teachers. As regards fundamental aspects of teachers' skills related to efficiently implementing CLIL, all the Greek EFL teachers surveyed were much in agreement. In particular, all of them (100%) unanimously reported on the needs for the design and use of appropriate materials. Equally high percentages were assigned by them to maintaining a triple focus (99.2%) and being flexible in introducing innovative approaches (99.2%) with only a minor part of them stating their disagreement (0.8%). Also, significantly high percentages were cast on the need for teachers to possess subject-specific field competences (98.4%) and be able to identify key concepts of content in the thematic area (98.4%), whereas only 1.6% stated that they were not in agreement with these teacher competences (Figure 11).

The Cypriot teachers. Concerning the views of Cypriot EFL teachers in relation to fundamental aspects of teachers' skills related to efficiently implementing CLIL, the vast majority of them were in agreement as regards the design and use of appropriate materials in CLIL contexts (90.9%), maintaining a triple focus (90.9%), possessing subject-specific field competences (90.9%). It was only a minor part of them 9.1%, whose statements indicated that they were not in agreement with the necessity for CLIL teachers to have skills and competences related to the abovementioned aspects. On the same line, the greatest part of the Cypriot teachers acknowledged the need for flexibility in introducing innovative approaches (90.7%), with only 9.3% of them stating their opposition (Figure 11).
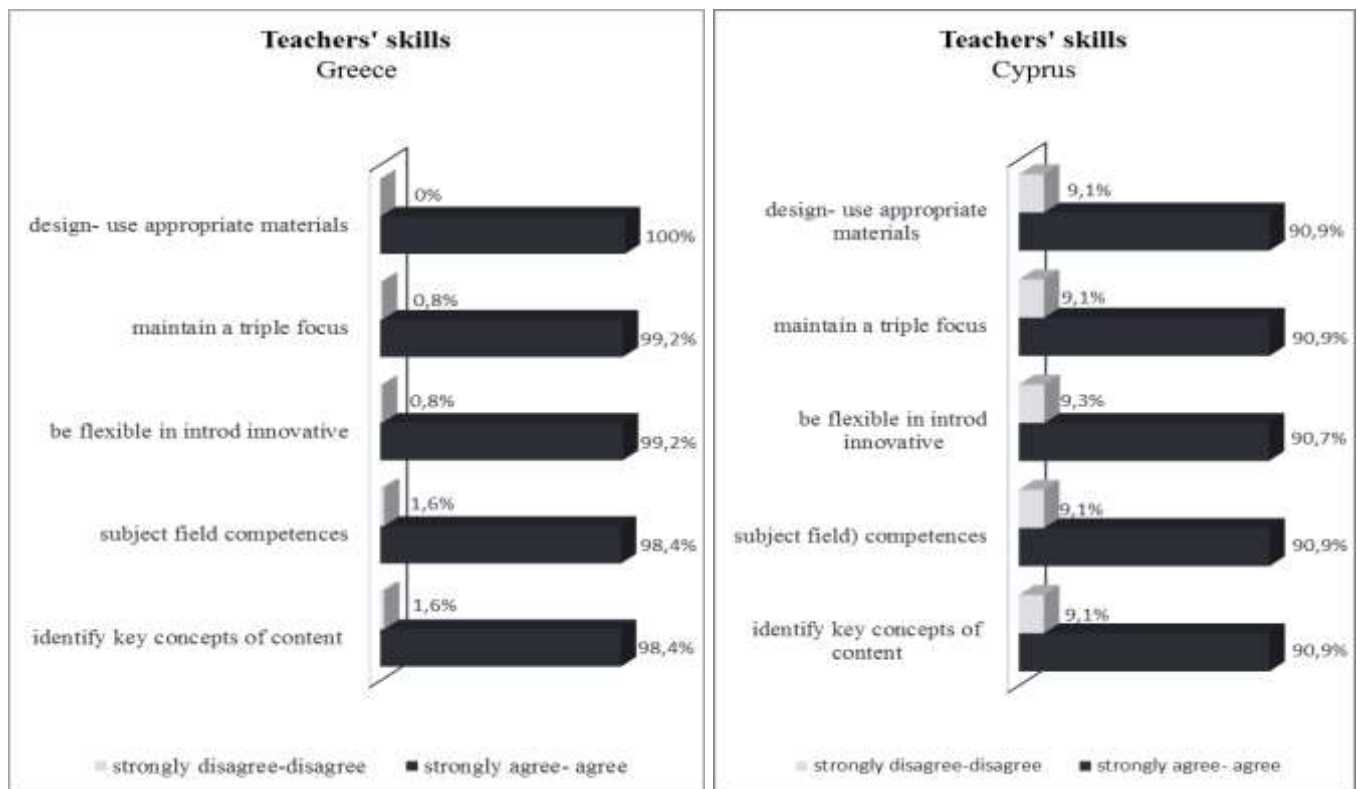
Figure 11. Aspects of teachers' skills for CLIL approach

Also, the vast majority agreed on certain aspects concerning teachers' skills for implementing CLIL, such as identifying students' needs, introducing formative and summative assessment, deploying multimodal blended learning approaches and cooperating with colleagues.

The Greek teachers. On the same line, almost unanimously the Greek EFL teachers underlined the need for designing CLIL modules (99.2%) while adapting content to the students' needs was also highly regarded by a very high percentage of them (97.5%). In addition, the vast majority of them strongly agreed or agreed on the significance of deploying multimodal approaches in CLIL (96.7%), introducing formative and summative assessment (96.7%), with only a small part (3.3%) stating their disagreement. Cooperation with colleagues within the CLIL context was also highly valued by a considerable part of them (95.1%) (Figure 12).

The Cypriot teachers. On the other hand, the great majority of the Cypriot EFL teachers stated their strong agreement or agreement concerning the following aspects of teachers' skills and competences in CLIL settings, all of which received the same percentage. More specifically, cooperation with colleagues (90.9%), deploying multimodal approaches (90.9%), introducing formative and summative assessment (90.9%), and adapting content to students' needs (90.9%) gained the highest percentages. On the other hand, designing CLIL modules received a slightly lower percentage (90.7%) (Figure 12).
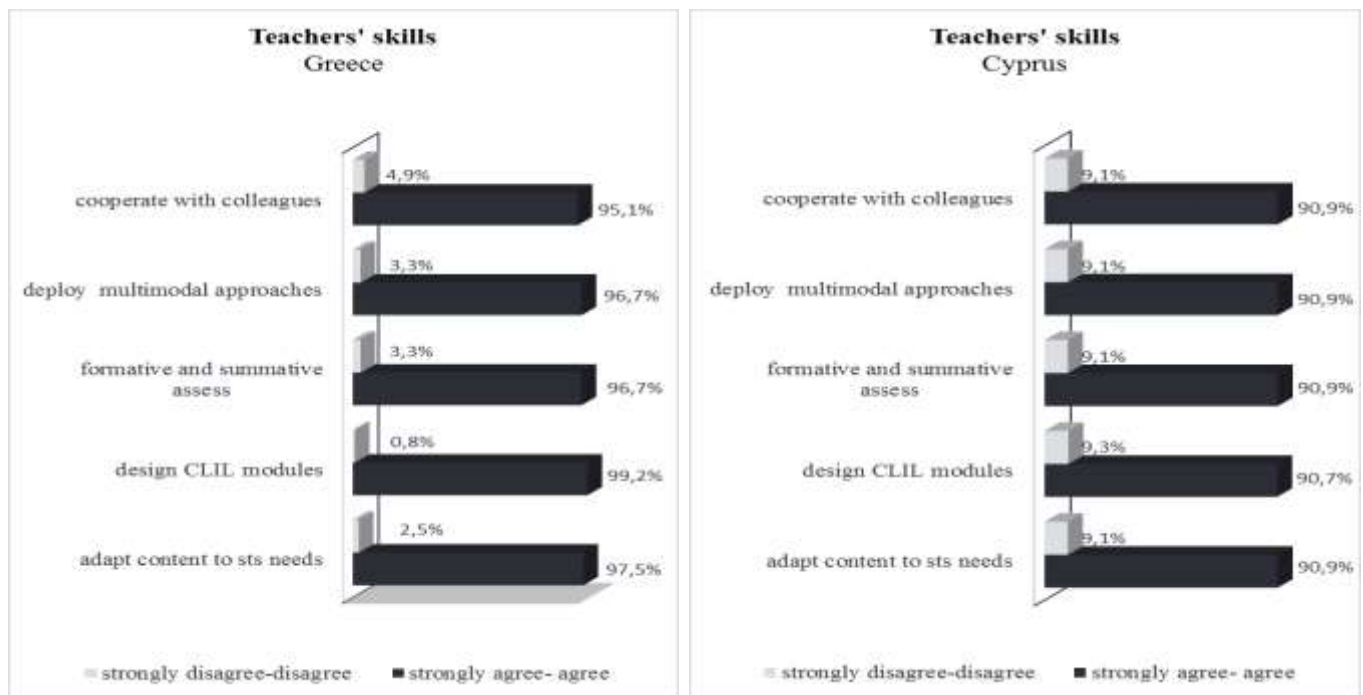
Figure 12. Greek and Cypriot teachers' views on skills necessitated for CLIL teaching

Statistically significant differences revealed in terms of the skills necessitated for CLIL teaching, by the less experienced teachers, who showed a higher degree of agreement (Table 5).

Table 5. Statistically significant differences in relation to teaching experience

Kruskal-Wallis Test	Teachers' skills	Less experienced teachers
H(2)=10.315, p<0.010	Identifying key concepts of content subjects and make them accessible to learners	
H(2)=13.336, p<0.005	Defining their own pedagogical and content (subject field) competences	
H(2)=10.495, p<0.010	Willing to work within change models & flexible in introducing innovative teaching practices	Showed a higher degree of 'agreement'
H(2)=10.315, p<0.010	Maintaining a triple focus on content, language and learning skills	
H(2)=7.7.58, p<0.050	Designing and use cognitively and linguistically appropriate learning materials	
H(2)=10.495, p<0.010	Identifying the appropriate content to be taught & design CLIL modules and lessons within the curriculum	

Moreover, statistically significant differences in terms of the skills necessitated for CLIL teaching were identified concerning non-MA holders, who showed a higher degree of disagreement (Table 6).

Table 6. Statistically significant differences in relation to further studies

Mann-Whitney U Test	Teachers' skills	No formal qualifications
Z=-2.232, p<0.050	adapting content to be taught to the learners' needs	
Z=-2.775, p<0.010	using formative and summative assessment strategies to support content, language and learning skills development	The teachers who do not hold a master degree showed a higher degree of disagreement
Z=-2.775, p<0.010	deploying blended learning approaches in the CLIL classroom	
Z=-2.765, p<0.010	cooperating with colleagues so as to reflect on and improve learning	

Perceived teachers' needs for CLIL training

When teachers were asked about whether they felt competent to implement CLIL, the great majority of Cypriot teachers (94%) admitted that they were not well trained to teach CLIL, while an equally significant number of the Greek teachers admitted their training insufficiency (73%).

Reporting on their perceived needs for CLIL training, the Greek Teachers highly ranked their need for training in:
- designing and using cognitively and linguistically appropriate learning materials to address the learner' needs (42.3%),
- adopting and making use of the various means and teaching techniques in line with the CLIL approach (31.1%). On the other hand, being provided with CLIL-specific learning resources was their least favorite option (1.7%) (Table 7).

Table 7. Perceived Greek teachers' needs for CLIL training

The Greek teachers' needs…	1	2	3	4	5
to design and use cognitively and linguistically appropriate learning materials to address the learner' needs	42.3%	25.3%	22.4%	5.0%	5.0%
to maintain a triple focus that supports content, language and learning skills development	19.9%	34.4%	34.0%	5.0%	6.6%
to adopt and make use of the various means and teaching techniques in line with the CLIL approach	31.1%	27.0%	22.8%	14.9%	4.1%
to use formative and summative assessment strategies to support content, language and learning skills development / to articulate CLIL-specific assessment needs and goals, and to develop and implement related assessment tools	5.0%	6.6%	14.9%	43.6%	29.9%

to be provided with CLIL-specific learning resources	1.7%	7.5%	6.6%	30.7%	53.5%

The Cypriot teachers on their part indicated need for training in terms of:
- maintaining a triple focus that supports content, language and learning skills development,
- adopting and making use of the various means and teaching techniques in line with the CLIL approach.

On the same line with the Greek teachers' training needs, being provided with CLIL-specific learning resources was low ranked (2.4%) (Table 8).

Table 8. Perceived Cypriot teachers' needs for CLIL training

The Cypriot teachers' needs	1	2	3	4	5
to design and use cognitively and linguistically appropriate learning materials to address the learner' needs	21.4%	26.2%	21.4%	23.8%	7.1%
to maintain a triple focus that supports content, language and learning skills development	42.9%	23.8%	28.6%	4.8%	16%
To adopt and make use of the various means and teaching techniques in line with the CLIL approach	23.8%	31.0%	21.4%	16.7%	7.1%
to use formative and summative assessment strategies to support content, language and learning skills development / to articulate CLIL-specific assessment needs and goals, and to develop and implement related assessment tools	7.1%	11.9%	23.8%	42.9%	14.3%
to be provided with CLIL-specific learning resources	2.4%	7.1%	7.1%	11.9%	69.0%

Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to investigate the role of CLIL as an educational practice from the Greek and Cypriot teachers' perspective. Through their responses it was indicated that EFL teachers in both contexts, the Greek and Cypriot educational context, considered CLIL as a multi-faceted approach in the school curricula in general and the language classroom in particular, providing an alternative context for language learning and using. They also admitted that CLIL is a flexible and dynamic approach, in terms of the integration of foreign languages and non-language subjects, which takes place in a mutually beneficial way so as "to provide value-added educational outcomes" in relation "to the quality of the learning experience" as regards "the widest possible range of learner" population (Coyle, 2006, p. 3).

They acknowledged the challenge of integrating CLIL in their class, by highlighting the following advantageous aspects of CLIL (Gimeno et al., 2013): promoting language learning and content along with language learning skills, enhancing students' motivation, making teaching more attractive by encouraging active participation, as well as developing learning styles and strategies.

The participants agreed on certain aspects of the teacher's skills necessary for implementing CLIL, such as identifying students' needs, introducing formative and summative assessment, deploying multimodal blended learning approaches and cooperating with colleagues. However, they seemed uncertain or even frustrated about the way they should teach in the CLIL class. This is because they are not aware of the methodological changes required in CLIL contexts, since they have been trained to teach by employing these methods, which is in accordance with the findings of previous studies (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p.134; Pavón & Rubio, 2013, p.70). For this purpose, both the Greek and Cypriot teachers highly supported their need for training in CLIL approach and developing these competences. It is all these issues which need to be addressed through devising a framework for CLIL teacher training, which can help towards improving and updating the modes of teaching of both content and foreign languages, and educational practice in general (Muñoa Barredo, 2011, p. 10).

Such teacher training framework is suggested to encompass certain aspects, such as developing content knowledge in terms of syllabus content and skills, and CLIL methodology "especially in terms of output from students" (Hillyard, 2011, p. 5), as well as establishing a mutual collaboration between content teacher and foreign language teacher towards the common objective (Pavón & Ellison, 2013), by including both theoretical and practical aspects of content-based language instruction (Banegas, 2012), and analyzing "examples of good CLIL practice" (Banegas, 2012, p. 50). After all, it should not be ignored that CLIL is an evolving concept (Coyle, 2006) therefore, training is necessary to help language teachers to keep up with the new developments identified in the field (Hillyard, 2011).

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