

# High School Student's Experience and Satisfaction with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

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UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA  
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**High school students' experience and satisfaction with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the M.A. in English Language and Literature and Pedagogy at the University of Rijeka

Supervisor: Dr. Branka Drljača Margić

Rijeka, September 2023

SVEUČILIŠTE U RIJECI  
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**High school students' experience and satisfaction with Content and Language Integrated  
Learning (CLIL)**

**Diplomski rad**

Diplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i pedagogije

Mentor: dr. sc. Branka Drljača Margić

Rijeka, rujan 2023.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis investigates high school students' experience and satisfaction with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in a private high school in Croatia. In addition, this study explores whether the length of the engagement in CLIL has an effect on their experience and satisfaction. It also looks into students' satisfaction with CLIL teachers and with the amount of foreign language used in CLIL classes, as well as thoughts on their English language proficiency. The results were gathered through a questionnaire. The findings reveal that students predominantly have positive experiences with CLIL and that they are mostly satisfied with it. The duration of their engagement in CLIL does not influence their level of satisfaction or overall experience. The students are also mostly satisfied with their CLIL teachers and with the amount of foreign language used. However, some did mention that their CLIL teachers require more training. Some students expressed a preference for using both Croatian and English in CLIL classes, while others advocated for an English-only policy. The research also reveals that the students perceive themselves as proficient in English, but they do not believe that all their peers share the same level of proficiency. In the Croatian context, this study provides an important insight into an underexplored area. Despite the apparent successful implementation of CLIL in the context under study, there remain certain aspects that could be improved, such as CLIL teacher training, students' language proficiency and combining the foreign language and mother tongue in CLIL classes.

Keywords: CLIL, high school students, experience, satisfaction, CLIL teachers, English, language proficiency, Croatia

## Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Theoretical background.....	3
2.1. Global English Unveiled .....	3
2.2. English in Education – Opening Linguistic Gates and Providing Linguistic Power... 4	
2.3. Defining CLIL .....	5
2.4. CLIL – Tale as Old as Time.....	7
2.5. CLIL – European Context .....	7
2.6. CLIL – Croatian Context .....	9
2.7. Benefits of CLIL.....	10
3. Previous Research on Students’ Perspectives and Experiences with CLIL.....	12
4. Methodology.....	16
4.1. Aim.....	16
4.2. Research Questions.....	16
4.3. Research Method .....	16
4.4. Pilot-study.....	18
4.5. Participants .....	19
4.6. Context.....	19
5. Results.....	20
6. Discussion .....	32
7. Conclusion .....	36
Literature .....	38
APPENDIX .....	42

# 1. Introduction

In today's world, the English language appeared as a powerful force, crossing borders and becoming a lingua franca of communication, education and business. English plays a significant role in almost all areas of our lives and because of this, its role in education has elevated to a new level. This led to an increased need for innovative pedagogical approaches which will facilitate both language learning and content comprehension. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) takes the lead among other similar approaches by representing the merging of language and subject matter into a unique educational experience.

English continues to assert its dominance as a language of opportunity and mobility. Proficiency in English has become equivalent with power and broadening academic and career prospects. This makes English important for gaining access to knowledge and international relationships. Implementation of English into the educational environment enhances intercultural understanding and paves the way for creating international networks thus promoting global citizenship. Because of this, it is not enough to just know the English language but rather, to use it in various contexts and ultimately master it. In that way, one is able to compete with the rest of the world. CLIL appeared as an innovative approach which enabled individuals to learn English in a dynamic and effective way thus gaining the competences needed for the world we live in.

CLIL proved to be an effective educational approach not just for English language teaching but for foreign language teaching in general. Because of its symbiotic relationship between language and content, it offers a deeper understanding of both domains. Through CLIL, learners advance their language and communication skills, and enhance their cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills. By promoting multilingualism, CLIL also promotes intercultural skills, which are vital for the world of diversity which we have come to know.

Learners which currently have or have had some experience with CLIL are quite important to participate in the relevant studies since their perspective can shed light on the areas which are in need of improvement. Even though the research that has been conducted on this topic has showed that learners are mostly satisfied and have positive experiences with CLIL, it is still a topic which requires more attention. This is especially the case with the Croatian context, which

remains insufficiently explored, leaving space for further investigation and in-depth exploration of its impacts and potentials.

The present study was conducted in order to address this gap. It aims to investigate high school students' experience and satisfaction with CLIL in one of Croatia's private high schools.

Firstly, a theoretical background that delves into the globalization of English, the importance of English in education, and defining CLIL in its European and Croatian contexts as well as its benefits is presented. Then previous research on students' perspectives and experiences with CLIL is described. This is followed by the explanation of the methodology of the present study, that is, its aim, research questions, research method, pilot-study, participants and context. Next, the results are presented to answer the research questions, which is followed by a discussion of the results, addressing the limitations and suggestions for further research. Finally, the conclusion will summarize key findings and point out some suggestions for improvement of CLIL in Croatia.



## 2. Theoretical background

This chapter provides an insight into the theoretical background of the globalization of English and its implications for language education. It primarily focuses on CLIL and its definition in the European and Croatian contexts. Furthermore, it explores various benefits that CLIL offers, from academic achievement to intercultural understanding.

### 2.1. *Global English Unveiled*

In a world which has become interconnected more than ever and rapidly changing, the English language appeared as a symbol of global communication and cultural integration. Rich in historical significance and heritage, English surpassed national boundaries and became the lingua franca of today. This section delves into the reasons behind this and its consequences.

English seems to have found itself “in the right place at the right time” (Crystal, 2003, p. 78). The reasons for this lay in both geographical-historical and socio-cultural factors. The historical spread of English began with pioneering voyages to South and North America, Asia and Antipodes. It continued on in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when colonial developments in Africa and the South Pacific took place and it reached a notable milestone when numerous newly independent states embraced it as an official or semi-official language during the mid-twentieth century. Now English is present in every continent as well as islands of the three major oceans – Atlantic (St Helena), Indian (Seychelles) and Pacific (various islands, such as Fiji and Hawaii) (Crystal, 2003). As for the socio-cultural factors, English proved to be a crucial part of economic and social well-being for people around the globe. It has made its way into very important aspects of everyone’s lives such as communication, the media, education, business, safety, entertainment, etc., and consequently became a language of convenience or rather something which can connect people. As Mashabela (1983) states:

learning and using English will not only give us the much-needed unifying chord but will also land us into the exciting world of ideas; it will enable us to keep company with kings in the world of ideas and also make it possible for us to share the experiences of our own brothers in the world . . . (p. 17)

Human communication and connection brought about the spread of English across the land and the oceans. The substantial increase in the number of people who speak English as a second or foreign language has played an important role for its transmission and prestige

(McKay and Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). Today, English serves as a bridge language and a common denominator, in other words, as a lingua franca among people who come from various linguistic contexts and who speak different first languages (Seidlhofer, 2011). Globalization and the spread of the English language have become processes that go hand in hand. It is the process of globalization that enhances the spread of English and places its status on a higher level (Graddol, 2006). It would seem that by speaking English, one possesses the key to the world. Because of this, it is safe to assume that globalization cannot be imagined without the English language as it is a requirement for gaining access to the world market and exchanging information on an international level (Crystal, 2003).

## *2.2. English in Education – Opening Linguistic Gates and Providing Linguistic Power*

Since English has become such a pivotal part of everyone's lives, it is no wonder that there is an imperative for people to actively pursue its acquisition and enhance their language skills. Kachru (1986) states that "knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin's lamp which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates and provides linguistic power" (p. 1). Because of this, there has been an increased demand to learn English. This has been promoted by governments and educational policies (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). The question now is whether traditional foreign language learning is sufficient for one to develop language skills for the world we know today (Heras and Lasagabaster, 2015). As a consequence, across the world in non-anglophone countries, there has been a change from English being taught as a foreign language to English becoming the medium of instruction (EMI) for academic subjects (Dearden, 2014).

EMI as a term has been used rather ambiguously around the world. Macaro et al. (2018) in their research review have found that EMI and its definition is quite problematic and inconsistent. In 12 out of 83 higher education studies, the term "content and language integrated learning" (CLIL) was used interchangeably with EMI. This was most common in Europe, where EMI was not only defined as CLIL but also as "integrating content and language in higher education" or "English-taught programmes." Since the 1960s, English has become a common medium of instruction in higher education for many countries (Crystal, 2003). As Lasagabaster et al. (2014) argue, EMI courses create an optimal environment that ensures integration of language and content acquisition, promoting successful learning experience. While there are

similarities between EMI and CLIL, there are also differences. Through EMI, the English language is used to teach another subject while CLIL does not only refer to the English language, but rather any foreign language. Furthermore, the main focus in EMI is teaching the subject content, and there are no specific language learning goals. On the other hand, in CLIL the language and content have a dual role (Blue, 2018). In other words, the subject matter and the language are not looked at as separate entities, but they are connected, and teachers need to possess knowledge of both to be able to successfully integrate them. The next section probes into the question of what CLIL is and how it is defined.

### 2.3. *Defining CLIL*

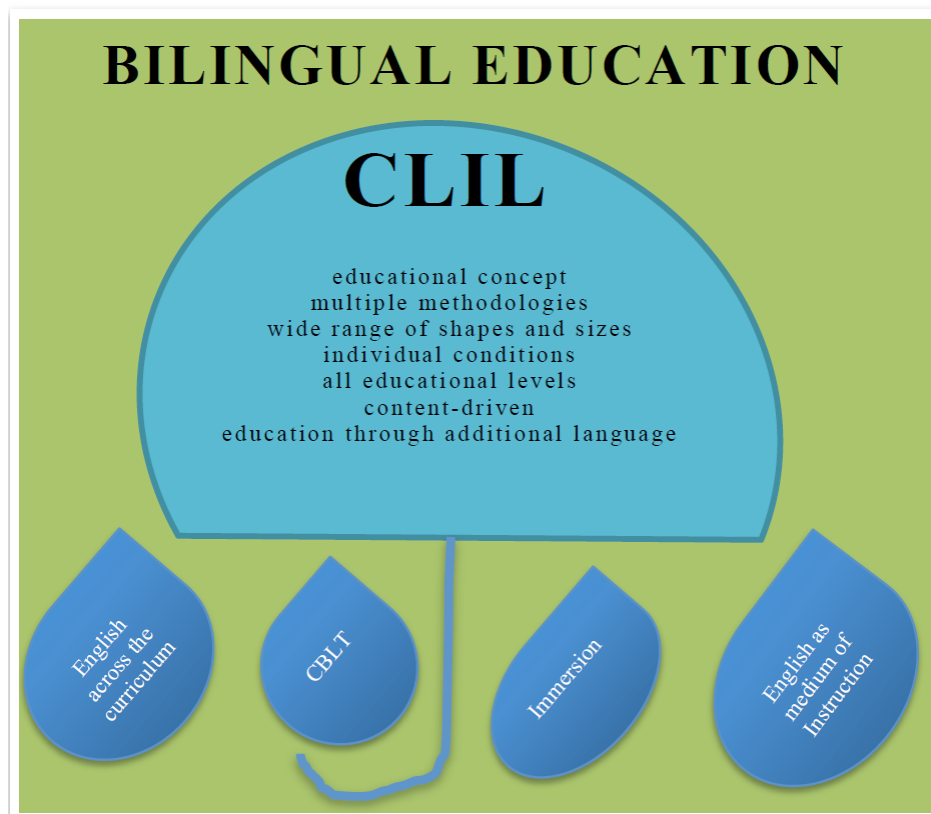
CLIL, as Coyle et al. (2010) define it, is “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (p. 1). In other words, the focus is not only placed on content but also on the language. Even though, the balance between the one and the other may not be the same from time to time, each is “interwoven” (Coyle et al., 2010). This term “interwovenness” is also used by Dale and Tanner (2012) who explained that being a CLIL subject teacher means interweaving language into a lesson and vice versa. Dalton-Puffer et al. (2007) describe a CLIL classroom as a place in which “the learner is pictured as being surrounded by the foreign-language bathwater which somehow stimulates the individual learning process much like hot water in a tub stimulates dermal circulation” (p. 3). In other words, foreign language serves as a tool to enhance the learning process. This is best described through the 4C’s Framework which stands for content, communication, cognition and culture (Coyle et al., 2010). Content is the subject matter, communication refers to learning and using the foreign language, cognition is related to the learning and thinking processes, and culture is a part of CLIL in which intercultural understanding and global citizenship are developed.

There are two kinds of CLIL depending on the level at which language goals are being achieved. First being the weak CLIL in which the focus is placed on learning the language and the second is the strong CLIL where the content has an advantage over the language (Ball et al., 2015). However, it is important to note that content is not taught in a foreign language, but rather, “with and through a foreign language” (Eurydice, 2006, p. 7). In other words, CLIL does not involve teaching content in a foreign language as a separate entity. Instead, it teaches content in an integrated way, embracing foreign language as a tool and medium of instruction.

McDougald (2018) explains, “the beauty of working with a CLIL-oriented curriculum is that language, content, and cognition can all be linked together” (p. 11).

CLIL exhibits a strong connection to various educational methods and incorporates certain aspects from them. These are, for example, bilingual education and immersion or content-based language teaching or English as an Additional Language (EAL), which do have some basic theory and practice in common with CLIL, but are not to be confused with one another since in their essence they are different (Coyle et al., 2010). The main distinction which separates CLIL from other educational methods is that CLIL is driven by content. Not only does it enhance the language learning process but also diverges from conventional language-teaching methods (Coyle et al., 2010).

To be able to visualise these distinctions between CLIL and other terms with which it shares some similarities, Gruber (2017) created an image which is called “The CLIL umbrella.”



*Image 1: The CLIL umbrella (Gruber, 2017, p. 13).*

The reason why CLIL is depicted as an umbrella lays in the fact that it incorporates a variety of practices and has become a generic umbrella for these bilingual teachings such as immersion, EMI, etc. (Marsh, D., 2002). What is important to note is that CLIL is primarily an

educational approach and not an educational programme (Gabillon, 2020). What sets CLIL apart from the established approaches like content-based language learning or bilingual education is its deliberate incorporation of contextualized context, cognition, communication and culture into the teaching and learning process or rather the previously mentioned 4C's Framework (Coyle et al., 2010). Because of all this, CLIL can be described as a distinct educational approach with its own features and specifications.

#### *2.4. CLIL – Tale as Old as Time*

Teaching content in a foreign language is a rather old practice which has existed for more than two thousand years. Coyle et al. (2010) reflect on the times of the Roman Empire and its expansion on to the Greek territory when families in Rome educated their children in Greek. They did it to guarantee that their children would not only acquire the language itself but also have the chance to benefit from the social and career prospects it would offer.

This can be compared with today's situation with the English language. As already mentioned, English as a lingua franca has become an imperative in the world we live today and knowing the English language opens up the doors to the world. However, gaining access to opportunities and success is not only linked with learning the English language but rather with any language for that matter. By learning a new language we are opening up new prospects for ourselves and that is one of the purposes of CLIL.

#### *2.5. CLIL – European Context*

In the European context, CLIL as a term was introduced in 1994 to encompass and enhance effective practices observed in diverse educational settings where instruction and learning occurred in a language other than the students' mother tongue (Marsh, D. et al., 2001). However, even before that, Europe had started to enhance the level of multilingualism in 1950s when a European Economic Community regulation in 1958 decided which languages would be official within the union. It was clear that the future of Europe would be characterized by linguistic diversity, requiring educational systems to exert increased endeavours in offering language education to a broader population of young people (Coyle et al., 2010). Then the European Education Council in 1976 outlined language-learning goals and advocated for the advancement of language instruction beyond conventional school systems. Just two years later, the European Commission proposed teaching in schools using multiple languages as the

medium of instruction (Coyle et al., 2010). This pivotal moment served as a beginning for the widespread adoption and growth of CLIL throughout the continent.

From that point on, CLIL gained significant importance as a prominent educational initiative within the European Union (Eurydice, 2006). In 2003, the European Commission made a recommendation stating that CLIL has a significant role to play in achieving the language learning objectives of the Union (European Commission Communication, 2003). CLIL's progress reached its peak in 2005 when the European Council issued recommendations stating that CLIL should be implemented across the entire European Union (Coyle et al., 2010). A year later, the first statistical study on the location and the way CLIL was being implemented in Europe was published and it became evident that since the introduction of the term in 1994, there has been a remarkable increase in the adoption of CLIL across various countries (Eurydice, 2006).

Coyle et al. (2010) list four main reasons for this:

1. families wanting their children to have some competence in at least one foreign language
2. governments wanting to improve languages education for socio-economic advantage
3. at the supranational level, the European Commission wanting to lay the foundation for greater inclusion and economic strength
4. at the educational level, language experts seeing the potential of further integrating languages education with that of other subjects.

This just further shows that implementing CLIL in educational environments brought about benefits on many different levels, from personal growth to the growth of the entire continent. As already mentioned, learning languages in this way opens up a window of great opportunities.

While it is important to emphasize that CLIL should not be equated with English language learning and instruction, the significant global interest in acquiring English skills has made it a widely chosen medium of communication in non-English-speaking regions (Coyle et al., 2010). However, it needs to be stressed that there are other countries where English is not the vehicular language of instruction. Prominent examples include the Canadian immersion movement in French, Basque trilingual programs that incorporate a heritage language and CLIL initiatives in the UK, which promote the learning of French, German and Spanish (Coyle et al., 2010). Furthermore, certain regions, such as Australia, emphasize the study of Languages Other Than

English (LOTE) through CLIL where Asian, European and heritage languages are used for instruction (Coyle et al., 2010). Gruber (2017) also mentions some acronyms similar to CLIL which are present around the world, such as Enseignement d'une Matière par l'Intégration d'une Langue Etrangère (EMILE; French), Content and Language Integrated Learning in German (CLILiG) or Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras (AICLE; Spanish).

## 2.6. *CLIL – Croatian Context*

According to the Eurydice's report (2006), Croatia was one of the rare countries where CLIL had not been implemented. In 2017, CLIL was present in almost all European countries, Croatia included, although only 1,1% of the children in Croatia were educated in a language different than the one they spoke in their households (Eurydice, 2017).

Eurydice's latest report from 2023 states that there are two types of most widespread CLIL programmes. The first is the one in which some subjects are taught in the language of schooling (the state language) and other subjects in a foreign language, and most educational systems with this type of CLIL combine up to three languages. The most commonly used CLIL languages are English, French and German, and Spanish and Italian to a lesser degree. Generally, English is the most learnt foreign language in Europe. In 11 European countries, Croatia included, more than 90% of students learn English at all levels of education (from the beginning of schooling until upper secondary school graduation) (Eurydice, 2023).

The second type of CLIL programme which is present in 18 educational systems, including Croatia, is the one which combines the state language with a regional or minority language. For example, some subjects are taught in Croatian, while others are taught in a regional or minority language such as Hungarian, Serbian or Czech language (Eurydice, 2023). Furthermore, the strong type of CLIL is the most dominant in Croatian schools since the learning goals and outcomes are based on the subject's curriculum (Vodopija-Krstanović and Badurina, 2020). This means that the content is superior to the foreign language because CLIL teachers do not possess the required linguistic competences and metalinguistic knowledge to focus on the language and to be able to achieve language outcomes. Vodopija-Krstanović and Badurina (2020) also point to the fact that school-leaving examination is not tailored to CLIL instruction and has to be taken in Croatian.

The main issue with CLIL in Croatia today is that there is still limited information on the presence of CLIL since it remains significantly underrepresented in both primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, it is not available to everyone since it is generally more prevalent in private than in public schools, as is the case with the context of the present study (Secondary School of Andrije Ljudevita Adamića), which will be further described in the following sections.

### *2.7. Benefits of CLIL*

To be able to keep up with the ever-globalizing world, it has become crucial for educators to seek innovative approaches to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Because of CLIL's seamless integration of content knowledge and language acquisition, it has gained significant recognition. This section will explore some of the benefits of CLIL and its potential in promoting academic achievement, linguistic competence, cognitive development and intercultural understanding.

The benefits of CLIL are quite multifaceted. Pavesi et al. (2001) identify some of them:

- CLIL leads to greater engagement, fostering learners' motivation by immersing them in authentic and real-world content
- CLIL aids in bolstering self-confidence, elevating self-worth and builds learner autonomy through interactive and collaborative activities
- CLIL amplifies language proficiency by providing increased exposure to the target foreign or second language
- CLIL stimulates creative thinking processes by exploring innovative approaches to problem-solving and critical analysis.

One of the main benefits is the fact that CLIL offers students a chance to use foreign language in authentic communicative situations. In other words, it simulates real-world scenarios which equip students with the linguistic skills necessary to engage with authentic content effectively (Lasagabaster, 2008). Because of this, students actively participate in class. In fact, it has been shown that CLIL promotes increased engagement compared to L1 classes and diminishes stress by shifting the focus away from language forms alone (Heras and Lasagabaster, 2015). Students are not only being taught to speak the foreign language but to also think in it. As McDougald (2018) explains, students are given a chance to engage in L2



thinking and generate meaningful content in the L2, which results in a faster and practical acquisition of their L2 skills.

Integration of content and language creates a kind of support system since there is no pressure to be better at one or the other. Quite the opposite, it is through content that language is acquired and vice versa. This creates an environment in which CLIL learners are becoming more independent, self-organized and responsible (Wilhelmer, 2008). Seeing that content and language go hand in hand, it is necessary for learners to master them both. This becomes an integral part of their lives as they are engaged in interactions within their communities or society at large. These benefits are both apparent and subtle, since “students are able to use the content acquired in the target language immediately for real, authentic purposes, and to think in the new vehicular language” (McDougald, 2018, p. 13). Learning both language and content is not an easy task and it requires higher levels of thinking. Aliaga (2008) argued that CLIL students cognitively processed the foreign language at a deeper level. Furthermore, it has been proposed that CLIL could have a positive impact on the development of metalinguistic awareness (Marsh, C.J., 2009). This was proven in Chroma’s (2006) research where Czech law students compared legal texts in English and Czech through a linguistic approach. It has resulted in the enhancement of their metalinguistic awareness in both English and Czech.

As CLIL has been proven to be quite a beneficial educational approach with many advantages for its learners, this thesis aims to investigate whether those benefits are acknowledged by students in a Croatian high school offering CLIL. In other words, learners are a crucial part of the whole CLIL process, and what they think should be investigated.

### **3. Previous Research on Students' Perspectives and Experiences with CLIL**

Educational system can be compared to a living and breathing organism that goes through different changes, implementation of CLIL being only one of them. CLIL has been implemented in various educational settings across the world and the people mainly affected by it are teachers and students. As they are on the front lines, it is of great importance to explore the impact of CLIL from their perspectives. There is still not sufficient research that looks into this, and it seems that there is even less research about students' experience than the teachers'. Students' perspectives and experiences with CLIL are crucial. Not only are they able to provide insights into the learning processes, challenges and benefits of CLIL but they can also shed light on CLIL's effectiveness in terms of language proficiency and content comprehension. Ultimately, this can help the teachers but also other educational experts to see what changes need to be made in the CLIL programs, so that they adhere to the students' needs. Because of this, the following section looks into previous research that has investigated students' perspectives and experiences with CLIL.

When looking into the students' overall experiences and perspectives on CLIL, research that has been found shows that it is mostly positive. For example, Asomoza (2015) conducted qualitative research among 11 participants who were college students in their fifth semester. The purpose of it was to explore the issues participants faced with CLIL, their perception about CLIL courses, what they considered to be major challenges and benefits of CLIL and how they overcame those challenges. The results showed that students had a positive perception of the CLIL courses. However, they did mention some areas which were in need of improvement such as their classmates, teachers, materials and the learning environment. The main difficulty for them was academic writing, using academic genres and vocabulary. On the other hand, they thought the usage of the foreign language in various contexts and improving academic skills were the main benefits of CLIL. Coyle et al. (2010) looked into students' motivation related to CLIL classes in 11 schools in England and Scotland. It showed that half of the students had positive attitudes and that they were motivated to learn foreign language. It was also found that students were more motivated for their CLIL classes and that they had more fun during them. Students felt that CLIL classes were more engaging for them and that they experienced more cognitive challenges. Arribas (2016), on the other hand, carried out qualitative research among 403 participants attending four compulsory years of Spanish secondary education. More than

80% of the students did not consider CLIL to be useful, although they did see improvement of some skills, which will be talked about in the following sections.

The above findings pose a question of difference between CLIL students and non-CLIL students when it comes to language performance. Pierto-Arranz et al. (2015) found that CLIL students generally outperformed non-CLIL students on most tests. This could prove that CLIL classes are beneficial to students' development of their receptive skills, especially reading comprehension. Ultimately, it shows that CLIL students are exposed to lexical items that are not usually used in EFL classes. Similar results were presented for secondary school learners; CLIL students were compared to non-CLIL students in a story-telling task (del Puerto and Lacabex, 2013). CLIL students showed better fluency, lexis and grammar, they used a variety of words in the foreign language, and they resorted to their first language to a lesser extent than non-CLIL students.

It is also important to find out how CLIL students estimate their language skills, and if they see any changes, positive or negative, which resulted from their involvement in the CLIL programme. The research done by Oxbrow (2018) among 221 students from both primary and secondary levels in Gran Canaria, investigated students' perceptions of bilingual programmes and explored differences in their perception of CLIL according to their gender, level of education, context, number of years learning English and number of subjects taken in English. The participants expressed a positive attitude when it comes to their linguistic improvement in English, and their motivation for learning English increased because they were involved in CLIL classes. Not only did they show high levels of motivation for learning English but also for content learning. Students from Coyle et al. (2010) research emphasized that CLIL classes enabled them to have more opportunities to speak in authentic communicative situations, and they produced longer utterances since they were involved in more debates and discussions. When looking at specific improved skills, it was found that participants identified most improvement in listening and speaking, and participants who were third- or fourth-year students claimed that CLIL advanced their linguistic skills (Arribas, 2016). In Lasagabaster and Doiz's (2016) three-year longitudinal research, participants underlined the importance of the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) but also of vocabulary and grammar. However, grammar seemed to be the least important area among all age groups.

Some research investigated students' perspectives and experiences with CLIL based on their age difference. There was a similarity in the relationship between motivation and achievement in CLIL classes among different age groups (Arribas, 2016). Furthermore, in the

previously mentioned Lasagabaster and Doiz's (2016) longitudinal study, all age groups related the improvement of their language proficiency in English to their involvement in CLIL courses. When it came to group work, there was a significant difference between younger and older students. The study showed that younger students preferred group work much more than the older ones, but oral presentations were not favoured by either.

Another important aspect that has been looked into was students' attitudes towards their CLIL teachers and the amount of foreign language in CLIL classes. The participants from Asomoza's (2015) research seemed satisfied with their CLIL teachers and their level of proficiency in the foreign language. The only thing they expressed concern about was the fact that their teachers were not native speakers. Similarly, Oxbrow (2018) found that students highly rated their CLIL teachers on their proficiency and the four skills. In terms of the amount of foreign language used, the research conducted among high school students attending their last year investigated their perception of code-switching in CLIL classes (Zanoni, 2018). The study showed that students preferred when their teachers spoke only or mainly English. Furthermore, they favoured the teachers who used alternative strategies (synonyms or examples in L2) when they faced new contents or vocabulary. Still, they found code-switching to be useful in situations where complex concepts or vocabulary needed translation. They also added that code-switching was important when they were involved in group work with their peers since they considered that to be more natural. In the already mentioned Oxbrow's (2018) study participants expressed satisfaction with the amount of English they used in class, although there were some who wished for more English.

CLIL in Croatia and its implementation is still not a well-researched area. However, more recent research on this topic was conducted by Gućec (2019), whose aim was to see how Croatian students reacted to CLIL lessons, if they had any issues understanding the content and if they were motivated. In this research one mathematics CLIL lesson in Graz was compared to one science CLIL lesson in Zagreb. It was found that both lessons were successful and that the students benefited from them. Croatian students were quite motivated, and they had no problems with understanding content and unknown words. Another research worth mentioning is the one done by Badurina (2016), whose aim was to look into teachers' perspectives on CLIL and explore their experiences of teaching content by using a foreign language. This research is important because it was carried out in the same high school in which the present research was conducted – Secondary School of Andrije Ljudevita Adamića. There were eight participants in total and it was a case study which involved one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The results

suggested that teachers faced more difficulties than perceived advantages. Major challenges for them were finding the materials, correlating the curriculum with the National Curriculum Framework, and assessment. They also added that they needed support in teacher training and more collaboration within the school, as well as national institutions, CLIL coaches and supervisors. The teachers also expressed their uncertainty about their role as CLIL teachers because they received little guidance, they had no supervision and they lacked information about other schools that offer CLIL in Croatia. These results are quite valuable for the present research since it will be quite useful to see whether there are any similarities or differences between teachers' and students' experiences and perspectives on CLIL within the same educational environment.

From the analysed research it can be seen that students' perspectives and experiences with CLIL are mostly positive. They see its value, notice improvement in their language proficiency and linguistic skills, and are satisfied with their teachers and with the amount of foreign language used in CLIL classes. Furthermore, these positive attitudes are expressed equally among different age groups. However, it can be noticed that more recent findings are necessary, especially in Croatia. As previously mentioned, looking into students' thoughts and stance on CLIL would be quite beneficial for the evolution of CLIL in Croatia. Hence, the aim of the present research is to investigate students' experience and satisfaction with CLIL in one of Croatia's private high schools which offers a CLIL programme.

## 4. Methodology

This chapter depicts the methodology of this research. Firstly, it explains the main aim and poses five research questions. Then, the research method is described, including a short description of the conducted pilot-study. After that, the chapter provides details on the participants under study. Lastly, the research context is briefly outlined, providing an overview of the setting in which the research took place.

### 4.1. *Aim*

The aim of this study was to investigate high school students' experience and satisfaction with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

### 4.2. *Research Questions*

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is high school students' experience of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and are they satisfied with it?
2. Does the length of engagement in CLIL affect high school students' experience and satisfaction with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)?
3. Are high school students satisfied with their teachers in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes?
4. What is students' opinion and perception regarding the use of English and their mother tongue in CLIL classes?
5. Do high school students think they are sufficiently proficient in English?

### 4.3. *Research Method*

The data were collected by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in Google Forms and has three sections. It was distributed to the participants through their e-Classrooms. They used their mobile phones to access the link to the questionnaire, which was posted in their e-Classroom, and it was available to everyone. The time of completion was about

10 minutes. The questionnaire was written in Croatian to assure that each participant would be able to understand all questions since the participants were at different levels of proficiency in English.

The first section of the questionnaire contains an introductory part with the following information: a) the aim of the research, b) how long it takes to complete the questionnaire, c) that it is anonymous, d) that all of the instructions are listed within the questionnaire, and e) that they can withdraw from the study at any moment. Since it was distributed in an online space, there were no consent forms, and the participants were asked to choose “Yes” or “No” for the following statement: “I agree to participate in this research.”

The second section comprises the questions regarding the participants’ background information, that is, their sex, grade of high school they are currently in, self-estimation of knowledge in English on a scale from 2 to 5, and CLIL subjects they had or currently have. For the estimation of their knowledge in English, number 1 was left out because we did not regard it to be an option.

The third section consisted of 25 questionnaire items in total, inquiring into the participants’ experience and satisfaction with CLIL, out of nine were Likert scale agreement statements, four frequency questions, one quality question, nine open-ended questions, one multiple-choice question and one yes/no question.

Likert scale agreement statements covered the usefulness of CLIL classes, students’ motivation, development of language skills, the use of first (Croatian) and second (English) language in CLIL classes, opinion on teachers in CLIL classes and language proficiency of both teachers and students. Participants had to choose a number from 1 to 5 depending on how much they agree with a particular statement where 1 was “completely disagree” and 5 “completely disagree”. Four statements were followed by an open-ended question in order to get a more detailed insight into why participants opted for a certain value on the scale. For example, the statement “I am satisfied with the amount of the foreign language in CLIL classes.” was followed by “Please explain your answer to the question above.”

To further look into the use of first and second language in CLIL classes, there were two frequency questions. For both questions, participants had to choose a number from 1 to 5 (1 standing for “never” and 5 standing for “always”) depending on how often they used Croatian or English in certain situations in CLIL classes. The situations were “class participation”, “communication with teachers”, “communication with other students”, “pair or group work”,

“oral presentations”, “written assignments” and “oral assignments.” In the third frequency question, participants had to choose a number from 1 to 5 to estimate how often teachers used English in CLIL classes. Lastly, participants had to estimate how often their level of English language proficiency was considered when they were assessed. This question was also followed by an open-ended question “Please explain your answer to the question above.” to probe into why participants chose a certain value and to see if there were any differences in their answers.

The one quality question in the questionnaire dealt with the overall students’ experience with CLIL classes. Participants had to choose a number from 1 to 5, 1 standing for “bad” and 5 standing for “excellent.”

Apart from open-ended questions which served a purpose of further elaboration on Likert scale or frequency questions, the questionnaire also included open-ended questions where participants had to list some advantages of CLIL classes and some challenges or weaknesses they were faced with in CLIL classes, as well as to write their suggestions for improvement of CLIL classes.

Participants had to choose “Yes”, “No” or “I cannot estimate” for the multiple-choice question “Do you think the teachers should focus more on the English language per se?”, and this question was followed by an open-ended question in which participants had to further explain why they chose a particular answer. The yes/no question was “Were there any challenges or weaknesses that you were faced with in CLIL classes?” and if they answered affirmatively, they had to explain their answer through an open-ended question.

#### *4.4. Pilot-study*

Before distributing the questionnaire, a pilot-study was conducted with three students from Secondary School of Andrije Ljudevita Adamića who have experience with CLIL classes and have recently graduated. The pilot-study was conducted to determine whether the instructions were clear enough and if the participants understood the questions in a way in which they were expected to. The respondents had difficulty only with the yes/no question “Do you think the teachers should focus more on the English language per se?”, after which the option “I cannot estimate” was added.



#### *4.5. Participants*

There were 60 participants in this study, 24 male, 26 female, nine of them did not want to say and 1 participant defined themselves as “they/them.” All of them were grammar school students from Secondary School of Andrije Ljudevita Adamića whose ages ranged from 14 to 18 years. Most participants (18; 30%) were in the fourth grade, 15 (25%) in the second grade, 14 (23.3%) in the first and 13 (21.7%) in the third grade. Half of them (30; 50%) estimated their level of knowledge of the English language to be excellent, 17 (28.3%) assessed it with a 4, seven (11.7%) with a 3, and three participants opted for a 2 (5%). There was also one participant (1.7%) that estimated their knowledge to be between 3 to 4, and two participants (3.3%) estimated their knowledge between 4 and 5. The CLIL subjects that they had had or had were Arts, History, Informatics, Ethics, Geography, European civil society, Psychology, Sociology, and Politics and Economy

#### *4.6. Context*

The study was conducted in the private Secondary School of Andrije Ljudevita Adamića in Rijeka, Croatia. The school was formed in 2005 and it offers a 4-year programme at the secondary level that prepares students for higher education on a general level, but it also offers programmes for a physiotherapist and a pharmacy technician. CLIL was introduced in 2014 as a part of the European project “Multilingual education – improving language learning and intercultural skills.” Members of the English Language and Literature department from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, participated in this project as evaluators and consultants. CLIL classes were implemented in 2015. They were held in English, German and Italian, and there were eight subjects in total: Music Art (in German and Italian), Fine Arts, History, Politics and Economy, Informatics, Ethics and Psychology (in English). Music Art in German and Italian was an elective subject, and it was thought through a CLIL programme until 2021, when the new curriculum was implemented. Now, the school offers CLIL classes only in English for eight subjects (Informatics, Ethics, Fine Arts, Psychology, Geography, History, Politics and Economy and European Civil Society).

## 5. Results

The following section presents the quantitative results obtained from the questionnaire. Firstly, the results were generally analysed to examine students' experience and satisfaction with CLIL and then the age difference was taken into account to determine whether it has an impact on students' experience and satisfaction with CLIL. Since the questionnaire was conducted in Croatian, all of the questions and answers were translated into English by the author of this thesis.

Regarding the statement "Taking CLIL classes is useful.", 41.7% (25) of the participants completely agreed with the statement, 30% (18) partially agreed, 16.7% (10) neither agreed nor disagreed, 11.7% (7) partially disagreed and no one completely disagreed (mean value = 4.02). When it came to the participants' motivation for CLIL classes when compared to their motivation for other classes, most of the participants (15; 25%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement "I am more motivated for CLIL subjects than for other subjects." Thirteen of them (21.7%) completely disagreed with the statement and 14 (23.3%) partially disagreed, and equal number of participants (9; 15%) partially and completely agreed, thus leading to a mean value of 2.78. More than half of the participants (33; 55%) completely agreed that taking CLIL classes develops language skills, 15 (25%) partially agreed, eight (13.3%) neither agreed nor disagreed, four (6.7%) partially disagreed and no one completely disagreed (mean value = 4.28).

Most of the participants are also satisfied with the amount of the foreign language used in CLIL classes; 24 of them (40%) completely agreed with the statement "I am satisfied with the amount of the foreign language in CLIL classes." and 16 (26.7%) partially agreed (mean value = 3.98). This statement was followed by an open-ended question "Please explain your answer to the question above." The participants who partially or completely agreed explained that they are satisfied because they like the English language, they think that it is useful for everyday life, and they are taught new words which will be useful for them in college. The participant 42 said: "The amount of foreign language in CLIL classes was quite sufficient. The identity and the importance of the mother tongue was not lost and the foreign language was acquired." In addition, four of them mentioned that CLIL classes can help out some who are not so good at the English language. They also added that teachers used Croatian language when something needed further explanation, and that they approved of that. For example, the participant 34 said: "I am satisfied with the amount of foreign language because there are people

who don't really understand what is being talked about, so it is better that every now and then Croatian is used for explanation." There were 15 participants (25%) who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and most of them opted for this answer because each CLIL class as well as CLIL teacher seems to be different. As the participant 14 explained, "Some use it a lot, others don't. If the goal is to speak the foreign language as much as possible, then I am not satisfied because it is mostly used at a mediocre level (this does not refer to all teachers). To me, of course, it is easier and better to use it less because it makes no sense to partially use the English language in class and learn a lot less than if it were in Croatian." There were only five participants (8.3%) who partially disagreed, and they said they would prefer if the English language were used more. For example, the participant 44 said: "Teachers usually switch to their mother tongue when dealing with more complex issues, to avoid struggling in communication. I think that's exactly when they should try to continue explaining in English, so that we are faced with a challenge and in that way actually learn something by stepping out of the comfort zone."

The statement "I prefer when teachers use both their mother tongue and the foreign language in CLIL classes." scored a mean value of 3.85. Most of them (22; 36.7%) completely agreed, 18 of them (30%) partially agreed, 12 (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed, five of them (8.3%) partially disagreed and three (5%) completely disagreed with the statement. The participants who completely or partially agreed explained that it was better to combine the two languages because it led to better communication and understanding, it helped out with complex topics or vocabulary involved and it was useful for students who were not as skilled in English as others. The participant 44 noted: "When teachers constantly talk in English, sometimes it sounds forced or they seem absent, and then I am glad that they switch to Croatian to maintain contact with the students or to explain something in a more logical way." As for the three participants who completely disagreed, they argued that they would like for the classes to be completely in English, so that they could learn something new or to improve their skills.

Most participants (22; 36.7%) completely agreed with the statement "Teachers encourage us to use foreign language more than our mother tongue in CLIL classes.", 19 (31.7%) partially agreed, 15 (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed, three (5%) partially disagreed and only one participant (1.7%) completely disagreed. This question scored a mean value of 3.97. Most of them (25; 41.7%) completely agreed and 19 of them (31.7%) partially agreed that teachers try to provide many examples and explanations in CLIL classes to make content comprehension easier, while 20% (12) neither agreed nor disagreed, three of them (5%)

partially disagreed and one participant (1.7%) completely disagreed (mean value = 3.97). They also agreed either completely or partially that teachers are skilled in the foreign language, most of them (24; 40%) partially agreed and 22 (36.7%) completely agreed. No one completely disagreed, only one participant (1.7%) partially disagreed and 13 (21.7%) neither agreed nor disagreed (mean value = 4.12). When asked to elaborate on their answers, most participants explained that their teachers were sufficiently proficient in the foreign language. Some argued that there were instances where teachers had some difficulty explaining something in English, or that they sometimes used the incorrect tense, read or explained some words incorrectly, but that they were able to explain the content of their class quite well.

When asked about other students and their foreign language skills, most of the participants (24; 40%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement “Students in CLIL classes are skilled in the foreign language.” There were 23 participants (38.3%) who partially agreed and only five participants (8.3%) completely agreed, while seven of them (11.7%) partially disagreed and one participant (1.7%) completely disagreed (mean value = 3.4). The majority of the participants explained that they could not agree or disagree with the statement since some students were quite skilled and even used the English language as if it were their mother tongue, while others were not so skilled. The participant 43 said: “Some even refuse to use the English language because they are uncomfortable or they don’t feel like it, but they cannot learn unless they speak. Some rare ones really make an effort even if they are not so good at it.” On the other hand, the participant 44 had an opposite opinion, and said: “I think in most cases students speak even better than teachers because of the globalisation and English in our day-to-day social media. Of course, there are exceptions.”

<b>Likert scale agreement statement</b>	<b>Mean value (M)</b>
“Taking CLIL classes develops language skills.”	4.28
“Teachers in CLIL classes are skilled in the foreign language.”	4.12
“Taking CLIL classes is useful.”	4.02
“I am satisfied with the amount of the foreign language in CLIL classes.”	3.98

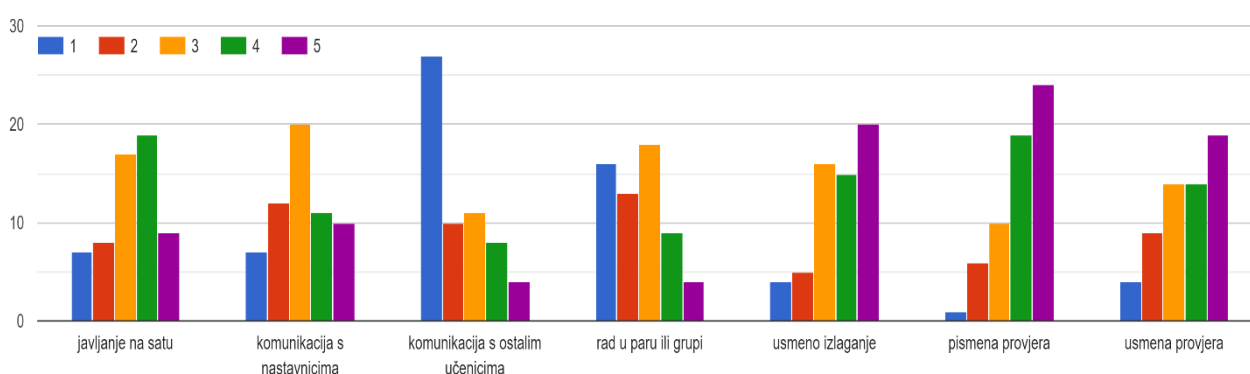
“Teachers encourage us to use the foreign language more than our mother tongue in CLIL classes.”	3.97
“Teachers try to provide many examples and explanations in CLIL classes to make content comprehension easier.”	3.97
“I prefer when teachers use both their mother tongue and the foreign language in CLIL classes.”	3.85
“Students in CLIL classes are skilled in the foreign language.”	3.40
“I am more motivated for CLIL subjects than for other subjects.”	2.78

*Table 1: Likert scale agreement statements – from the highest to the lowest mean value*

There were two frequency questions for which the students had to determine on a scale from 1 to 5 (1=never; 5=always) how often they use English and Croatian in specific situations. For class participation, most participants (19; 31.7%) said they very often use the English language, 17 (28.3%) said they sometimes use it, nine (15%) said they always use it, eight (13.3%) said they rarely use it and seven (11.7%) said they never use English (mean value = 3.25). To communicate with teachers most (20; 33.3%) noted that they sometimes use the English language, 12 (20%) said they rarely use it, 11 (18.3%) said they very often use it, 10 (16.7%) said they always use it and seven (11.7%) said they never use English to communicate with teachers (mean value = 3.08). However, when it comes to communication with their peers, 27 (45%) of them said they never use English, 11 (18.3%) said they sometimes use it, 10 (16.7%) said they rarely use it, eight (13.3%) said they use it very often and only four (6.7%) said they always use it (mean value = 2.2). For pair or group work, most (18; 30%) said they sometimes use the English language, 16 (26.7%) said they never use it, 13 (21.7%) estimated they rarely use it, nine (15%) said they use it very often and just four (6.7%) said they always use it (mean value = 2.5). For oral presentations, written and oral assignments, most participants said they always use the English language, especially for written assignments where 24 participants (40%) said they always use it, 19 (31.7%) said they use it very often, 10 (16.67%) said they sometimes use it, six (10%) of them said they rarely use it and only one participant

(1.7%) said they never use the English language for written assignments (mean value = 3.98). As for oral assignments, most (19; 31.7%) said they always use English, 14 (23.3%) said they use it very often and an equal number of the participants (9; 15%) said they sometimes or rarely use it and four (6.7%) said they never use it (mean value = 3.58). Furthermore, when asked to determine how frequently they use English for oral presentations, 20% (33.3%) said they always use it, 16 (26.7%) said they sometimes use it, 15 (25%) very often use it, five (8.3%) rarely use it and four (6.7%) never use it (mean value = 3.7).

Odredite od 1 do 5 koliko često koristite strani jezik u sljedećim situacijama na CLIL nastavi, pri čemu broj 1 označava nikad, a broj 5 označava uvijek.



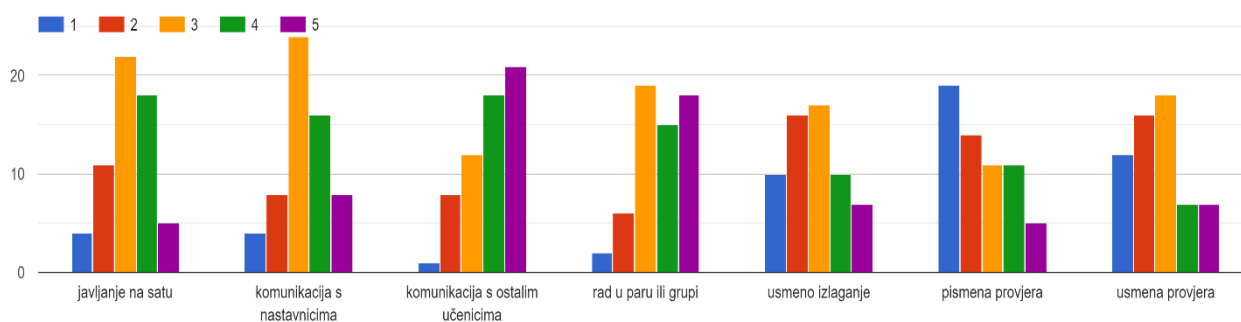
*Graph 1: Usage of the English language in certain situations in CLIL classes (class participation; communication with teachers; communication with other students; pair or group work; oral presentations; written assignments; oral assignments)*

Usage of the English language in certain situations in CLIL classes	Mean value (M)
Written assignments	3.98
Oral presentations	3.70
Oral assignments	3.58
Class participation	3.25
Communication with teachers	3.08
Pair or group work	3.50
Communication with other students	2.20

*Table 2: Usage of the English language in certain situations in CLIL classes – from the highest to the lowest mean value*

On the other hand, when asked about the use of their mother tongue in the same situations the results were as follows. Most (22; 36.7%) said they sometimes use Croatian to participate in class, 18 (30%) said they use it very often, 11 (18.3%) said they rarely use it, five (8.3%) always use it and four (6.7%) never use it (mean value = 3.15). Twenty-four (40%) said they sometimes use Croatian to communicate with their teachers, 16 (26.7%) use it very often, an equal number of the participants (8; 13.3%) said they both rarely and always use it while four (6.7%) participants never use Croatian (mean value = 3.27). When they communicate with other students, most (21; 35%) always use Croatian, 18 (30%) use it very often, 12 (35%) use it sometimes, eight (13.3%) rarely use it and only one (1.7%) participant never uses it (mean value = 3.83). When they are working in pairs or groups, 19 (31.7%) of them said they sometimes use Croatian, 18 (30%) said they always use it, 15 (25%) use it very often, six (10%) rarely use it and two (3.3%) participants said they never use Croatian (mean value = 3.68). For oral presentations, 17 (28.3%) of them said they sometimes use Croatian, 16 (26.7%) rarely use it, 10 (16.7%) participants said they never use it while other 10 (16.7%) said they use it very often and seven (11.7%) always use it (mean value = 2.8). When they have written assignments, most participants (19; 31.7%) reported they never use Croatian, 14 (23.3%) rarely use it, equal number of participants (11; 18.3%) said they use it both sometimes and very often and only five (8.3%) participants said they always use it (mean value = 2.48). For oral assignments, 18 (30%) said they sometimes use Croatian, 16 (26.7%) said they rarely use it, 12 (20%) said they never use it while seven (11.7%) participants said they use it very often and another seven (11.7%) said they always use it (mean value = 2.68).

Odredite od 1 do 5 koliko često koristite materinski jezik u sljedećim situacijama na CLIL nastavi, pri čemu broj 1 označava nikad, a broj 5 označava uvijek.



*Graph 2: Usage of the Croatian language in certain situations in CLIL classes (class participation; communication with teachers; communication with other students; pair or group work; oral presentations; written assignments; oral assignments)*

<b>Usage of the Croatian language in certain situations in CLIL classes</b>	<b>Mean value (M)</b>
Communication with other students	3.83
Pair or group work	3.68
Communication with teachers	3.27
Class participation	3.15
Oral presentation	2.80
Oral assignment	2.68
Written assignments	2.48

*Table 3: Usage of the Croatian language in certain situations in CLIL classes – from the highest to the lowest mean value*

When they were asked to determine how often teachers use the foreign language in CLIL classes on a scale from 1 to 5, 36 (60%) said they use the foreign language very often, 12 (20%) said they sometimes use it and 11 (18.3%) participants said they always use it, only one (1.7%) participant said they never use it (mean value = 3.93). To determine how often language proficiency is taken into account when they are being assessed, the majority of the participants (20; 33.3%) said it is sometimes taken into account, 16 participants (26.7%) said that it is almost always taken into account, six (10%) said always while 11 (18.3%) determined that it is almost never looked at and seven (11.7%) said never (mean value = 3.38). Most participants mentioned that the teachers allowed them to express themselves in Croatian when they noticed that they are struggling and that it seemed that the use of a foreign language was not that important for assessment. In other words, they emphasized that content knowledge was the important factor and not language skills. They also said that some teachers pointed out mistakes if they were made but they did not lower the grade because of it. However, the participant 10 said: “For example, when you give a presentation in Croatian, you automatically get a lower grade”, and the participant 39 said: “It is important to use foreign language in class.”



<b>Frequency question</b>	<b>Mean value (M)</b>
How often do teachers use foreign language in CLIL classes.	3.93
How often is language proficiency taken into account during assessment.	3.38

*Table 4: Frequency questions – from the highest to the lowest mean value*

For the question “Do you think that teachers should focus more on foreign language?” most (27; 45%) could not estimate, 28.3% (17) said that they should focus more and 26.7% (16) said they should not. Those who said they should focus more explained that English language was important for their everyday lives and that by paying more attention to it, teachers could help students develop better skills. They also mentioned that the whole point of CLIL classes was to use foreign language, which is why it should be the focal point of a lesson. However, others argued that there should be a balance between the content and the foreign language. The participant 33 said: “There is no need, English is everyone’s good side and we all know it well. Only some technical terms present a problem, but then teachers additionally explain them in Croatian.” In addition, they said there should be more emphasis on the content than on the language. As the participant 53 explained, “Well, I mean school-leaving examination is in Croatian if we think about informatics, art or ethics.”

Most participants (21; 35%) said their experience with CLIL classes was excellent and 20 of them (33.3%) regarded it above average, 12 (20%) said it was average, six (10%) said it was below average while only 1 participant (1.7%) said their experience was bad (mean value = 3.9). In an open-ended question where they had to name some benefits of CLIL classes, the majority of them said enhancing foreign language skills. They also added that CLIL classes were easier than other classes and that they were more fun and interesting. Furthermore, some participants mentioned that they learned some specific and technical vocabulary in CLIL classes, which they consider to be useful for their future. For example, the participant 38 said: “Enhancing the knowledge of professional language which will be helpful in the future (college and work abroad).” Another benefit of CLIL classes that was brought up was communication in English, which the participants consider to be useful because of their learning the language directly through communication, which is similar to real life interactions. The participant 3 explained: “More vocabulary and grammar are used. In addition, we practice using the second

language for real life interactions with foreigners.” They also argued that communication in English made them more self-confident, as the participant 33 said: “Constant usage of English language, enhancement of language skills, breaking boundaries and overcoming fear of speaking in front of an audience.” Lastly, participant 44 highlighted the fact that there were more materials available in English and that they were of better quality, such as YouTube videos or schematic displays. They also mentioned that “some subjects (for example, informatics) are quite suitable to be taught in English because of their content. Because of that, I am able to easily understand and use English.”

There were fewer participants (16; 26.7%) who said that they had come across some challenges or weaknesses in their CLIL classes than those that had not (44; 73.3%). When asked to list some of the challenges they faced, almost all of them mentioned that the most difficult part was the vocabulary, learning new words and expressing themselves in the foreign language. This also resulted in difficulties with understanding the content of certain subjects, which then led to what the participant 14 explained: “I am less active in class and I have issues with oral presentations or assignments.” The participant 23 also mentioned that “sometimes certain teachers make students feel uncomfortable and create tension, which they should relieve.” On the other hand, the participant 53 said: “It is challenging when I don’t understand a certain word in English. Sometimes it is difficult even though the teachers translate it.” Furthermore, the participant 38 emphasized the fact that CLIL subjects are held in Croatian when they prepare for their school-leaving exams. It takes more time to prepare for school-leaving exams for CLIL subjects since the exams are in Croatian and students learn the content mostly in English.

Finally, the participants had a chance to write some suggestions for improvement of CLIL classes. Five participants said that they would like to have more CLIL subjects. The participant 58 said that they would like to have Mathematics and Physics in English. Some also suggested that they would like for CLIL subjects to be elective subjects. A lot of them also want to place more attention on students and their language skills, to make sure that everyone understands what is being talked about and that adjustments are made when there is more complex language involved, so that it is suitable for everyone. They also mentioned that they would like to be encouraged more to use the English language in class and for the students to be more involved, as the participant 35 explained: “Involve students more (providing examples, quizzes, student presentations).” There were two participants who added that they would like to use more digital tools in CLIL classes. The participant 6 said: “Use more technology in class since everything on our computers or phones is in English.” Three participants reflected on their

teachers by saying that they need more education to provide better and easier explanations, and the participant 45 suggested “investing in formal education of the teachers.” The participant 14 had two very clear suggestions: “1) Everything that is said in class must be translated into Croatian, especially if it’s something important; and 2) Exam questions should be in Croatian, and students should be given the possibility to write their responses in either English or Croatian (bearing in mind that students should try to use English as much as possible). The same goes for oral assessment/presentations.”

To investigate whether the length of engagement in CLIL affects high school students’ experience and satisfaction with it, the participants’ answers from the first to the fourth grade were analysed separately. Three Likert scale agreement statements, one quality question and one yes/no question were analysed to examine their mean value, number and percentage. These specific questionnaire items were selected because they looked into the participants’ opinion on the usefulness of CLIL, their motivation, their satisfaction with the amount of the foreign language used in CLIL classes, their overall experience with CLIL and if there were any challenges or weaknesses during CLIL classes that they were faced with.

The first Likert scale statement was “Taking CLIL classes is useful,” and from *Table 5* it can be seen that the participants overall partially agreed with it. The highest mean value can be observed in the answers from the participants in the second grade (4.27), while the lowest mean value is present in the third grade (3.92). As for their motivation for CLIL subjects in comparison with motivation for other subjects, the participants from all grades neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement “I am more motivated for CLIL subjects than for other subjects.” Again, the highest mean value is calculated in the second grade (3.20), while the lowest in the third grade (2.46). The participants from the third grade had the highest mean value (4.15) for the statement “I am satisfied with the amount of the foreign language in CLIL classes,” and the lowest is found among first graders (3.86). Overall, the participants from all grades partially agreed with the statement.

The participants from all grades considered their experience with CLIL classes to be above average. In *Table 5* it can be seen that the highest mean value is seen in the fourth grade (4.13), while the lowest is in the third grade (3.77).

<b>Questionnaire item</b>	<b>First grade (M)</b>	<b>Second grade (M)</b>	<b>Third grade (M)</b>	<b>Fourth grade (M)</b>
“Taking CLIL classes is useful.”	3.93	4.27	3.92	3.97
“I am more motivated for CLIL subjects than for other subjects.”	2.86	3.20	2.46	2.82
“I am satisfied with the amount of the foreign language in CLIL classes.”	3.86	4.07	4.15	3.97
Experience with CLIL classes.	3.86	3.93	3.77	4.13

*Table 5: Mean value for three Likert agreement statements and one quality question from first to the fourth grade of high school*

When they were asked whether they were faced with any challenges or weaknesses in CLIL classes, there were from three to five participants from each grade who answered affirmatively to this question. The number of participants who answered either affirmatively or negatively to this question is also similar in all grades. Around 70% of the participants from each grade did not face any challenges or weaknesses, while around 20% to 30% of the participants said they did. In the second and third grade there was an equal number of students (N=4) who answered affirmatively to this question. In the fourth grade there was the highest number (N=5) of participants who were faced with some challenges or weaknesses, while in the first grade there was the lowest number (N=3).

<b>Were there any challenges or</b>	<b>First grade (N; %)</b>	<b>Second grade (N; %)</b>	<b>Third grade (N; %)</b>	<b>Fourth grade (N; %)</b>

<b>weaknesses that you were faced with in CLIL classes?</b>				
<b>Yes</b>	3; 21.43%	4; 26.67%	4; 30.77%	5; 29.41%
<b>No</b>	11; 78.57%	11; 73.33%	9; 69.23%	12; 70.57%

*Table 6: Number and percentage for a yes/no question from first to the fourth grade of high school*

## 6. Discussion

The results of this research show that high school students have mostly positive experiences with CLIL and that they are satisfied with it. They think that CLIL classes develop language skills and that it is generally useful to be educated in the English language. However, they did not show more motivation for CLIL subjects than for the subjects in Croatian. These findings differ from those found in Coyle et al. (2010) research, where the participants expressed a higher level of motivation for their CLIL classes. In the present research were also fewer participants who faced challenges or weaknesses in their CLIL classes, which further indicates that they do not find CLIL classes difficult and that they mostly enjoy them. This can also be observed in their answers where the participants listed some benefits of CLIL classes. They said that CLIL classes were easier, more fun and interesting. If the responses related to benefits and challenges of CLIL classes are compared, occasionally it can be seen that what one group of participants finds beneficial, the other considers to be a difficulty. For example, most participants said that CLIL classes enhanced their foreign language skills, they learned vocabulary which will be useful for their future education, and they added that CLIL classes offered them authentic communicative situations. On the other hand, the most challenging part of CLIL classes for those who described struggles was vocabulary and learning new words. Because of that, they had problems communicating in class during oral presentations or oral assignments, and they were less active. Their answers are in line with the answers from the participants in Asomoza's (2015) research, where they listed similar benefits (foreign language use in different contexts and improvement of academic language skills) and challenges (learning new vocabulary).

As for the length of engagement in CLIL and its effect on high school students' experience and satisfaction with it, it can be observed that there is little to no difference between different age groups. They all generally agreed that CLIL classes were useful, that they were satisfied with the amount of the foreign language used in CLIL classes, and they generally had a positive experience with CLIL classes. Furthermore, participants from all grades showed that they were not more motivated for CLIL subjects in comparison with other subjects. The number of participants that faced some challenges or weaknesses in CLIL classes was quite similar. From all this, it is evident that the length of their involvement with CLIL does not affect their experience or satisfaction with it. This was also seen in Arribas' (2016) and Lasagabaster and Doiz's (2016) research, where there was a consistency in their respondents' answers across all age groups.

The students are also mostly satisfied with their CLIL teachers. They think that they are skilled in English, they find them helpful in terms of them providing examples and explanations to make content comprehension easier and they think their CLIL teachers encourage them to use the foreign language more than their mother tongue. However, concerning suggestions for improvement of CLIL classes, there were several participants who said that their teachers needed more education, and that teacher professional development needed more careful consideration. As the teachers in Badurina's (2016) research expressed, they required support in teacher training, guidance and supervision because they felt insecure about their role as CLIL teachers. Some participants mentioned that their CLIL teachers sometimes struggled when they needed to explain something in English or misused a tense or a word when teaching. None of the participants expressed a disappointment regarding their CLIL teachers not being native speakers, as was the case in Asomoza's research (2015). Similarly, to Asomoza's (2015) and Oxbrow's (2018) research, they were satisfied with the teachers' proficiency in English.

Students expressed their satisfaction with the amount of foreign language used in CLIL classes, but they also preferred when their teachers used both their mother tongue and foreign language in class. When they explained their answers, participants said that the amount of foreign language used was quite sufficient. The parallel use of both languages was considered to be useful when something needed further elaboration. According to Zanoni (2018), participants found code-switching useful in situations where complex terms occurred in class. However, it seems that each CLIL class as well as CLIL teacher is different and the balance between Croatian and English is not the same. Some teachers tend to use English more while others are more prone to Croatian. Because of that, there were some participants who noted that they would like more English to be used in class, and some wanted CLIL classes to be completely in English. A number of Oxbrow's participants also showed a need for more English in class even though they were mostly satisfied with the amount used (2018). Regarding the frequency of the use of foreign language and mother tongue in certain situations, when students are assessed, through written and oral assignments or oral presentations, foreign language is used more often than mother tongue. However, student language proficiency in their assessment does not seem to be an important factor. The participants explained that their language skills were sometimes considered, but content knowledge was more important. The teachers would allow them to switch to Croatian if they saw that they encountered problems expressing themselves in English. On the other hand, one participant mentioned that they could get a lower grade for presenting something in Croatian. The students' responses show that the amount of

foreign language used varies according to the situation. In classroom communication, they either use English or Croatian, as they do when they communicate with their teachers or are involved in pair or group work. However, when they communicate with other students, they are more prone to using Croatian. As Zanoni's (2018) participants explained, using their first language while doing pair or group work came more naturally. The number of students who did or did not wish for their teachers to focus more on the foreign language was similar. On the one hand, they thought the foreign language should be the most important part of a CLIL lesson and that focusing more on it would be beneficial to their language development. On the other hand, they explained that they were quite skilled in English, so there was no need for any additional emphasis on the language. Furthermore, they pinpointed the fact that their school-leaving examination is in Croatian, which makes the use of Croatian in CLIL classes relevant. In addition, one participant suggested that everything should be translated in Croatian and that they should be able to choose either English or Croatian when they are being assessed. The results show that while they are satisfied with the amount of foreign language used, there is a split between those who would prefer if more foreign language were used and those who wish for a balance between the mother tongue and foreign language. This is somewhat different from Zanoni's (2018) research, where participants favoured those teachers who spoke mostly or only the foreign language in CLIL classes.

In regard to students' language proficiency in English and whether they think it to be sufficient, most either thought their knowledge was excellent or above average. However, when they expressed their opinion on other students and their language skills, they could not firmly state their stance. This is because, as they themselves explained, each student is different. While there are those who are so proficient in English that they sound as if it were their first language, there are those who struggle with it, which can be related to the above results indicating that the students expressed a wish for a balance between Croatian and English used in CLIL classes. In other words, some students have difficulties expressing themselves in the foreign language, while others would like the foreign language to be used more often or always. In addition, some students who consider themselves sufficiently proficient think that there is no need to use the foreign language more. It can be observed that they think that their language proficiency is sufficient but when it comes to estimating their peers' proficiency, they are not quite sure. Along the same lines, Asomoza (2015) reports that the participants in their study noted that their classmates were not as proficient as they should be.



Regarding further research, it could focus on the elaboration of some topics analysed in the present study. For example, it could investigate the reasons why a particular language is used more or less often in certain situations. Also, future research could further probe into the topic of students' motivation for CLIL classes in comparison with their motivation for classes in Croatian. Additionally, it would be interesting to see whether those who think that the foreign language should be used more often in CLIL classes are those who estimate their knowledge to be excellent or above average or if the opposite is the case. Further research should also include an observation of CLIL classes, as well as a comparison of various CLIL contexts. Finally, a comparison of CLIL classes in different languages and students' satisfaction with them should be conducted.

A possible limitation of the present research is a relatively small number of the participants to draw any general conclusions about CLIL in Croatia or wider. The results mainly apply to the context in which the research was conducted, although they are mostly in line with the previous research on this topic. Another limitation is the fact that the students' language proficiency was not objectively tested to identify the level of their language command and its impact on the students' responses.

## 7. Conclusion

The findings indicate that high school students generally have positive experiences with CLIL, and they express satisfaction with it. Furthermore, based on the results, it is clear that the duration of their engagement in CLIL has no impact on their overall experience or satisfaction with it. They are mostly satisfied with their CLIL teachers, and consider them to be skilled in the English language. They appreciate their teachers giving examples and explanations which facilitate content understanding. They are also satisfied with the amount of foreign language used in CLIL classes. However, it is important to note that some of them express a preference for the parallel use of their native language and the foreign language during class while others prefer foreign language use only. Lastly, when it comes to their own language proficiency, students believe it to be satisfactory, but they hold some doubt about their peers' proficiency.

High school students' motivation for CLIL subjects appeared not to have surpassed their motivation for other subjects. However, from this type of quantitative research, it is not possible to determine the reasons behind this. What can be excluded is their dissatisfaction with CLIL since their answers expressed a high level of satisfaction. Even though the students are generally satisfied with CLIL, some challenges that they face during CLIL classes should be considered. It would seem that the most challenging aspect revolves around vocabulary and acquiring new words. The way new words or vocabulary are introduced in CLIL classes should be looked into in order to improve the learning experience for both teachers and students. Another area which needs improvement in CLIL classes is the education of CLIL teachers. Despite the students' satisfaction with their CLIL teachers, they did mention that their CLIL teachers struggle when something required an explanation in English. The success of CLIL greatly depends on the CLIL teacher's sufficient proficiency both linguistically and methodologically (Zanoni, 2018).

However, it is important to note that a successful CLIL class is not only dependent on CLIL teachers but also on the students. Their level of proficiency is crucial for them to be able to engage actively with the content, to comprehend complex concepts and effectively participate in class activities. Without this, students are not able to fully benefit from CLIL. While the students under study find their language proficiency in English to be excellent or above average, when they reflect on their peers they are not as confident. As it was the case with the motivation, when they evaluated their classmates' language proficiency, they could not provide a strong opinion. This further indicates that students' language proficiency plays an important role in CLIL classes, and it determines its successful implementation.

An additional area, which proved to be quite debatable, is the amount of foreign language used in CLIL classes. Despite the students being satisfied with it, results showed that there seem to be different opinions on this topic. It would seem that in order to advance CLIL classes, there should be some general rules as to when and how mother tongue and foreign language should be used. Students are content with the current level of foreign language usage but there is also a division between those who seek balance between mother tongue and foreign language and those who desire an increase in foreign language use. The question which arises is whether this split between different opinions is determined by their language proficiency or not. Perhaps they would want their CLIL classes to be only in English if they themselves were proficient enough, or it could be the opposite. Nonetheless, it might be beneficial to alternate between both languages as that would help out those students who are not as proficient, at least in their earlier years of education. Furthermore, this switch between languages could be important because of their school-leaving examination, which is in Croatian. CLIL classes are not adjusted for these exams, which determine high school students' future, and that is something which should be further investigated and improved.

The results of this research as well as the students' suggestions could serve as a guide for different schools which already offer CLIL classes or for those which consider implementing CLIL. The current research captures the perspective of one of the most significant stakeholders of CLIL –students. Their voices should be heard more often since they are the ones who should benefit from CLIL classes the most. Considering the Croatian context, this represents an important insight into an area which has been insufficiently investigated. Even though the context where the research has been conducted seems to have successfully implemented CLIL, there are still some areas for improvement. Besides, there is not only one key which will open the door to successful CLIL implementation. Each educational environment is different, as are its participants. However, by further investigating and looking into this area, we might be able to exploit CLIL's full potential.

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## APPENDIX

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### High school students' experience and satisfaction with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) ✕ ⋮

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Hvala vam što ste pristali sudjelovati u istraživanju koje ispituje vaš opći dojam o integriranom usvajanju stranog jezika i sadržaja odnosno o Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) nastavi.

Upitnik je u potpunosti anonimn te imate pravo odustati od ispunjavanja istog u bilo kojem trenutku. Za ispunjavanje upitnika trebat će vam otprilike 10 minuta. Sve upute se nalaze unutar upitnika.

---

Suglasan/na sam sudjelovati u ovom istraživanju. \*

Da

Ne

---



Osnovne informacije

Opis (po izboru)



Spol \*

- Ženski
- Muški
- Ne želim se izjasniti
- Ostalo...

Koji razred srednje škole pohađate? \*

- Prvi
- Drugi
- Treći

Molim vas, procijenite svoje znanje engleskog jezika od 2 do 5, pri čemu broj 2 označava dovoljan, a broj 5 označava odličan. \*

Tekst kratkog odgovora

Molim vas, navedite koje predmete trenutno pohađate ili ste pohađali u nižim razredima prema CLIL programu. \*

Tekst dugog odgovora

Iskustvo i zadovoljstvo s CLIL nastavom.



Opis (po izboru)

Pohađanje CLIL nastave je korisno. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
uopće se ne slažem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	u potpunosti se slažem

Više sam motiviran/a za CLIL predmete od ostalih predmeta u školi. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
uopće se ne slažem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	u potpunosti se slažem

Odredite od 1 do 5 koliko često koristite strani jezik u sljedećim situacijama na CLIL nastavi, \*  
pri čemu broj 1 označava nikad, a broj 5 označava uvijek.

	1	2	3	4	5
javljanje na satu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
komunikacija s...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
komunikacija s...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
rad u paru ili gr...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
usmeno izlaga...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
pismena provje...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
usmena provjera	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Odredite od 1 do 5 koliko često koristite materinski jezik u sljedećim situacijama na CLIL nastavi, pri čemu broj 1 označava nikad, a broj 5 označava uvijek. \*

	1	2	3	4	5
javljanje na satu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
komunikacija s...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
komunikacija s...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
rad u paru ili gr...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
usmeno izlaga...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
pismena provje...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
usmena provjera	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

Pohađanje CLIL nastave razvija jezične vještine u stranom jeziku. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
uopće se ne slažem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	u potpunosti se slažem

---

\*\*\*

Odredite na skali od 1 do 5 koliko se često nastavnici koriste stranim jezikom na CLIL nastavi, \*  
pri čemu broj 1 označava nikad, a broj 5 označava uvijek.

	1	2	3	4	5	
nikad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	uvijek

---

Zadovoljan/na sam količinom stranog jezika na CLIL nastavi. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
uopće se ne slažem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	u potpunosti se slažem

---

Molim vas, objasnite odgovor na prethodno pitanje. \*

Tekst dugog odgovora  
.....

---

Draže mi je kada nastavnici koriste i materinski i strani jezik na CLIL nastavi. \*

---

1 2 3 4 5  
uopće se ne slažem      u potpunosti se slažem

---

Molim vas, objasnite odgovor na prethodno pitanje. \*

Tekst dugog odgovora  
.....

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Nastavnici nas potiču da se služimo stranim jezikom više nego materinskim na CLIL nastavi. \*

1 2 3 4 5  
uopće se ne slažem      u potpunosti se slažem

---

Nastavnici se trude davati što više primjera i objašnjenja na CLIL nastavi kako bi olakšali razumijevanje sadržaja na stranom jeziku. \*

1 2 3 4 5  
uopće se ne slažem      u potpunosti se slažem

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\*\*\*

Nastavnici na CLIL predmetima vladaju stranim jezikom. \*

1 2 3 4 5  
uopće se ne slažem      u potpunosti se slažem

Molim vas, objasnite odgovor na prethodno pitanje ili dajte dodatni komentar. \*

Tekst dugog odgovora  
.....

Učenici na CLIL predmetima vladaju stranim jezikom. \*

1 2 3 4 5  
uopće se ne slažem      u potpunosti se slažem

Molim vas, objasnite odgovor na prethodno pitanje ili dajte dodatni komentar. \*

Tekst dugog odgovora  
.....

☰

Smatrate li da bi se nastavnici trebali više fokusirati na strani jezik? \*

- Da
- Ne
- Ne mogu procijeniti

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Molim vas, objasnite odgovor na prethodno pitanje. \*

Tekst dugog odgovora

.....

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Odredite od 1 do 5 koliko se vladanje stranim jezikom uzima u obzir pri ocjenjivanju, pri čemu \* broj 1 označava nikad, a broj 5 označava uvijek.

- |       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |        |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------|
|       | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |        |
| nikad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | uvijek |

Molim vas, objasnite odgovor na prethodno pitanje. \*

Tekst dugog odgovora

.....



Odredite od 1 do 5 svoje iskustvo pohađanja CLIL nastave, pri čemu broj 1 označava loše, a broj 5 označava odlično. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
loše	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	odlično

Što biste naveli kao prednosti pohađanja CLIL nastave? \*

Tekst dugog odgovora

Postoje li neki izazovi ili negativnosti s kojima ste se susreli na CLIL nastavi? \*

Da

Ne

Ukoliko ste potvrdno odgovorili na prethodno pitanje, molim vas navedite koji su to izazovi ili negativnosti.

Tekst dugog odgovora

Molim vas da ovdje napišete svoje prijedloge za unaprjeđenje CLIL nastave. \*

Tekst dugog odgovora