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Determinants of EFL learning success in content and language integrated learning

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates whether CLIL learners' high scores in English as a foreign language (EFL) can be attributed to three specific learner variables: 'EFL aptitude', 'EFL confidence' and 'international orientation' – and whether out-of-school EFL exposure has an effect. The study was undertaken in eight secondary school CLIL classes in four European countries: the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Hungary. The results showed a number of significant effects, both initially and after two years. In particular, learners' EFL confidence was found to have a stronger influence on L2 proficiency results than either EFL aptitude, involvement in the international world or the presence of English in society at large.

KEYWORDS

English-medium CLIL; EFL confidence; EFL aptitude; L2 exposure; international orientation

Over the last few decades, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become a well-established educational approach particularly in Europe where almost all countries have introduced it in some form, generally with English as the target language. Favourable effects mentioned in research frequently relate to EFL proficiency (Admiraal et al. 2006; Verspoor et al. 2015; Wolff 2007).

Individual learner factors, such as academic ability and aptitude to learn a foreign language, are prominent in the discussion of such favourable CLIL results. Research confirms that CLIL learners tend not only to be academically able but also above-average L2 learners. Wolff (2007: 21) claims that 'they process the FL more deeply and learn it more proficiently than traditional language learners'. Research findings on L2 effects from CLIL in the European context were reviewed by Dalton-Puffer in 2008, when research activities were in their early stages and reported the first interesting results. Listening and vocabulary were mentioned as areas of foreign language competence that were most likely to benefit from CLIL instruction. In a later study (2011), she found that spontaneous oral production in the L2 was the area where CLIL had the most noticeable effect.

It has also been emphasised that pupils selected for CLIL tend to have better EFL skills than their mainstream peers *before* they start learning in the CLIL class (Huibregtse 2001; Rumlich 2017). As schools in most European countries apply selection criteria relating to academic performance, linguistic skills and EFL motivation for admittance to CLIL classes, questions have been raised as to the effect of this selection on outcomes: if CLIL provides extra L2 learning opportunities for a select group of high achievers, then its impact on pupil EFL performance may be overestimated due to a lack of control for selection effects (Bruton 2011; Küppers and Trautmann 2013; Paran 2013).

The present study sets out to investigate whether EFL performance of pupils selected for CLIL in four diverse educational settings is affected by three learner variables: 'EFL aptitude', the natural

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ability to learn the English language; 'EFL confidence', the confidence with which pupils use the L2 in the classroom; and 'international orientation', which was considered to encompass a general interest in other languages and cultures, a sense of identification with target language speakers and a desire to use the target language for international communication, study and work. Additionally, we investigated the effects of the presence of the English language in learners' everyday life, notably in the media, which is often seen as supportive of young people's L2 English skills.

We selected for our study four European countries with different native languages and diverging English-medium CLIL approaches: the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary and Italy. In the four countries, the degree to which the target language is present in the media also differs, with the implication that out-of-school EFL exposure was not likely to be the same for all learners involved.

We analysed the effects of the three learner variables as well as the effect of the environmental factor on EFL proficiency results at participants' start in CLIL programmes in secondary schools in the four countries, and evaluated how these effects developed after two years' CLIL study.

English as a CLIL target language

EFL teaching in the European context has traditionally been delivered in a number of lessons a week in which the language was studied as a subject in itself, with set targets for specific L2 skills and knowledge areas (Van Ek 1976; Wilkins 1976). Practice of spoken skills has typically tended to be limited and with pre-defined goals based on the language needed in everyday situations. With the development of CLIL across Europe during the 1990s, studying other subjects in the curriculum through the medium of a foreign language was introduced into mainstream education, mostly in secondary schools preparing learners for university study. This reflected the growing dominance of English as a lingua franca, the language required for the globalising economy, allowing access to educational and professional resources. In CLIL education, learners are encouraged to look beyond national borders, in order to understand themselves and others in different cultures (Coyle et al. 2010). CLIL approaches often explicitly aim to develop learners with positive attitudes towards cultural diversity, who can become aware of the responsibilities of global, as well as local, citizenship (Bentley 2010).

In CLIL classes, content and language are taught and learnt together, and the foreign language takes on an instrumental role. Learners have to master a large amount of subject-specific vocabulary and grammatical structures, and to develop communication skills in order to express thoughts and feelings and to interpret facts and data. In addition, they have to develop what Marsh (2013) refers to as 'language awareness' moving from viewing the target language as just another object of study towards a greater understanding of how language generally is used in a variety of contexts.

In this dual-focused learning process the CLIL teacher needs to be aware of students' needs as to content as well as language learning. In Finland Seikkula-Leino (2007) investigated how successfully pupils learnt content in CLIL, with a view to motivation, self-esteem and confidence in language learning. She found that if CLIL involves language that is still beyond the pupils' current competence, mastering subject matter becomes a demanding experience with the inherent risk that learners feel incompetent and doubtful as to their L2 skills. Attitudes and feelings towards learning and their effects on outcomes have been discussed in recent studies (e.g. Otwinowska and Foryś 2015; Prüfer 2013). The results indicate that positive feelings towards CLIL and the target language strongly interact with learning motivation and positive results.

CLIL in the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary and Italy

The countries in the present study each have their own approach to CLIL. They all offer English-medium CLIL; at the time of our data collecting, this was almost exclusively at secondary school, with primary CLIL being very much an exception. In each case, the number of CLIL lessons per week, teaching practice of integrating language and content and training of CLIL teachers differed. Dutch CLIL programmes show considerable uniformity as schools offering them are

under supervision of the European Platform for Education in the Netherlands, which has laid down certain standards that have to be met before a school is recognised as a CLIL school (see the 2013 brochure 'Bilingual Education in the Netherlands: a success story' issued by the European Platform). The content lessons with English as a target language take up at least 60% of the curriculum from the start of the first year of academically-oriented secondary school when pupils are generally 12. Most pupils are beginning EFL learners, having learned English only in the last two years of primary school.

The German CLIL concept can be characterised as a cautious approach (Wannagat 2007) even though regional variants differ. Germany consists of 16 states, each with its own educational policy and CLIL practice. Certain CLIL stipulations are laid down in curricular guidelines, such as the right of pupils to have CLIL content lessons not only in the foreign language, but also in their mother tongue. In most states in the western part of the country English is part of the curriculum from Year 3 at primary school when children are aged 8. The primary school leaving age is 10, and during the first two years at secondary school, prospective CLIL pupils receive extra EFL teaching in preparation for the CLIL lessons that start when they are 12. Only a small number of content subjects are involved in CLIL – typically, history, politics and geography, but also sports lessons – while supplementary lessons in the native language, German, are also offered. A different type of German CLIL practice is found in Berlin, a city state in the East participating in the present study. CLIL is practised here on a larger scale and with more extensive programmes to accommodate the vast international community.

Hungary needs special mention because of its L2 policy. As discussed by Dörnyei et al. (2006), political developments in Hungary have had a major effect on foreign language teaching. Russian used to be the compulsory foreign language until the change of political regimes and the Education Act of 1985 granted more freedom and students opted massively for other modern European languages, mainly German and English. Hungary joined the EU in 2004 and in the following years English not only became the first L2 in the school curriculum but also the language of instruction for a number of subjects in secondary education alongside German (Farkas and Kniesza 2002). Primary school curricula include foreign languages, mostly but not necessarily English. In order to overcome initial EFL gaps and to teach the target language thoroughly, most CLIL schools offer a preparatory year, popularly known as 'zero year'. This means that unlike in the CLIL approaches in the other three countries, the target language is learnt separately during this year. This is seen as a necessary preparation both to build general proficiency and to help pupils learn specialised vocabulary needed for content subjects. English-medium content teaching, often by native-speaker teachers, starts in the following year and takes up 50% of the curriculum.

In Italy, various approaches exist. Italian schools are linked in regional networks under the supervision of their Local Educational Authorities and CLIL practice varies according to region. Recent developments in Italian CLIL programmes are governed by 2010 legislation, which requires all secondary high schools (*Licei* and *Istituti Tecnici*) to teach a non-language subject through the medium of a foreign language in the final year. At the time of the first measurements of the present study, however, the Italian CLIL programme was in its initial stages, had a modular form and was highly selective. The teaching of a content subject by means of the target language was limited to a set number of modules which took up about 20% of the curriculum, a percentage that was increased in the following years. The preferred solution for teaching in the CLIL mode consisted in team-teaching, with the subject teacher and the EFL teacher cooperating in the classroom (Coonan 2012: 119). Secondary pupils do not receive special EFL teaching in preparation for CLIL; typically, they are beginning EFL learners with three years of English lessons at the usual *scuola media,* or *Scuola secondaria di primo grado*, the lower three-year secondary school.

The presence of English in society at large in the four countries

Language exposure, or the degree to which the foreign language is present in society at large, is seen as influencing the L2 learning process as it provides extra input in addition to formal learning at

school (Doiz et al. 2014). Even though English has the status of the world's lingua franca and is also the foreign language which is learnt the most in education, its presence in everyday life varies across the four countries. A major study by Berns et al. (2010: 20) mentions the fact that English is the daily language in most international companies in the Netherlands, and that 'job advertisements implicitly assume potential employees' English skills and only mention English proficiency when very special skills or near-native command is necessary. The Special Eurobarometer, a survey co-ordinated by the European Commission in 2012, mentions that 90% of the respondents in the Netherlands 'speak the English language well enough in order to be able to have a conversation' and 57% are able to follow television or radio news in English. English TV broadcasts are subtitled and dubbed programmes are unheard of in the Netherlands.

In Germany, Hungary and Italy, the English language is much less present. For Germany, the Eurobarometer indicates conversational skills in English for 56% of the population. English-speaking films are typically dubbed into German and television broadcasts exclusively in English are rare. As Berns, de Bot and Hasebrink discuss in their study (2010), the younger generation has a preference for English language music on the radio and online, but the debate on the share of German language music continues to be in favour of quotas to limit this.

Further away from the anglicised society of the Netherlands are Italy and Hungary, geographically but also in other respects. From a linguistic point of view, the Italian and notably the Hungarian language are remoter from English than Dutch and German, which are both of Germanic origins. The Eurobarometer mentions Hungary and Italy as two of the countries where respondents are least likely to be able to speak any foreign language. The survey shows that in Hungary, 20% of respondents had conversational skills in English, while in Italy the percentage was 34%. English is hardly present in the media in either country. In Hungary, restrictive laws for the use of English in the media apply and Hungarians live in a relatively 'dubbed' world as the main TV channels offer shows which are translated into Hungarian (Pétery 2011). English has a similarly limited presence in Italy (Doiz et al. 2014) where English-medium broadcasts are also scarce in the media and television programmes are dubbed. If people in countries with dubbing practice want to watch a film in English, they have to search for it on the Internet or on DVDs.

The present study

As already mentioned, adequate EFL proficiency is necessary for pupils to achieve satisfactory school results in CLIL classes. In a previous study (Goris et al. 2013), we found that pupils selected for CLIL in the Netherlands, Germany and Italy had significantly higher EFL scores than mainstream learners, both initially and after two years. In a second study involving the same population (Goris et al. 2017), we noted the fact that CLIL learners tended to have greater confidence in their ability to use the English language than mainstream learners, with more positive attitudes towards the international world. In the present study, we study CLIL learners in four diverse educational contexts (the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary and Italy), focusing on the impact of the two affective variables identified in our previous study (Goris et al. 2017), i.e. 'EFL confidence' and 'international orientation', together with EFL aptitude and the contextual factor of out-of-school exposure to English, in particular in the media. The research questions were as follows:

(1) What are the effects of the learner variables EFL aptitude, EFL confidence, international orientation and the environmental variable out-of-school exposure on CLIL pupil entry levels of EFL proficiency?
(2) What are the effects of these variables on EFL proficiency growth in the first two years of CLIL in classes at secondary schools preparing for university?
(3) To what extent are there differences across the four countries?

The research

Participants

The eight schools participating in the present study were all academically-oriented secondary schools, typically preparing students for university study. In the Netherlands, the acronym *VWO* (*voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*), and the term *atheneum* and *gymnasium* are used for this type of school; in Germany they are known as *Oberschule* or *Gymnasium,* in Italy the *ginnasio* and various types of *licei* exist and in Hungary the *gimnázium.* The schools all had classes with a CLIL programme for which selection criteria were applied. Each of the schools took part in the present research with an English-medium CLIL group. Table 1 shows the distribution of the participant pupils. Learners in the Netherlands and Germany all had had two or more years EFL training at primary school; Italian learners had had EFL lessons during 3 years at the *scuola media*. In theory, Hungarian pupils were the only ones that could have had no primary school EFL training as this was not compulsory or usual at the time, but in practice, such beginners were seldom found in an English-medium CLIL class. We agreed with the Hungarian teachers that no complete beginners would participate in our study.

As the duration of primary school varies across countries, so does pupil age at the start of secondary education. In the Netherlands, children generally start secondary school at 12, which is also when they start of CLIL. In German states in the western part of the country, secondary education starts at 10, while the CLIL programme starts two years later. In the states situated in the East and Berlin, the primary school leaving age is 12; pupils from CLIL primary schools mostly in Berlin are already experienced CLIL learners, whereas those from regular primary schools start CLIL as part of secondary education. In Italy pupils are 14 when they enter the type of upper secondary education of their choice, after completion of the *scuola media,* while in Hungary the pupils enter the *gimnázium* at 15. Table 2 presents an overview of the CLIL conditions and EFL teaching in the participating schools.

Instruments

In order to answer the research questions, participants first completed a comprehensive EFL proficiency test at the start of the CLIL programme. For the purposes of this research, we defined the construct of 'L2 proficiency' as an integration of knowledge of words, expressions, insight into the rules of the target language and an ability to understand its written texts. We therefore selected from standardised tests as constructed by the British Anglia Examination Syndicate, designed for international use at various levels of secondary education, a number of pen-and-paper tasks focusing on grammar and text comprehension. For idioms we used assignments that were suitable for pen-and-paper use from the ESL/EFL Test Net, which at the time could be downloaded from http://www.english-test.net/esl. For receptive vocabulary, we used the 'English as a foreign language vocabulary test', developed by Meara (1992). A more advanced but basically similar test was administered after two years. In order to distinguish between the various language components, we conducted a separate analysis for each sub-part of the tests.

A questionnaire was also administered to gauge EFL aptitude, EFL confidence, international orientation and out-of-school L2 exposure. This was completed by participants at the end of their first term at secondary school. The questionnaire was presented in English. In view of the fact that they were all beginning EFL learners, we took great care in formulating the questions in simple language, and

Table 1. Distribution of CLIL pupils ($N = 162$).

	n	Age	Male	Female
The Netherlands	37	12.3	19	18
Germany	42	12.6	21	21
Hungary	39	15.0	15	24
Italy	44	14.3	30	14

Table 2. CLIL in the Dutch, German, Hungarian and Italian participant schools.

	The Netherlands		Germany		Hungary		Italy	
CLIL offered since:	School 1 2000	School 2 1998	School 1 1991	School 2 1999	School1 1988	School 2 1987	School 1 2003	School 2 1998
***Admittance to CLIL programme based on*:**								
Entrance test				x	x	x	x	x
Primary school reports	x	x		x	x			
Motivation	x	x	x					
Subjects taught by:								
Subject teacher	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Team teaching: EFL + subject teacher							x	x
***Subject teacher L2 training*:**								
Dual qualifications (EFL + subject)			x	x				
Extra EFL training	x	x			x	x	x	x
Native speaker subject teacher					x	x		
CLIL lessons per week								
Year 1	16	15	5	8	0	0	2	6
Year 2	16	15	7	10	12	14	5	9
EFL lessons per week								
Year 1	5	3	4	5	19	16	3	3
Year 2	4	2	4	5	2	5	3	3

discussed learner comprehensibility with their respective English language teachers before administering the tests.

The tests we used to measure EFL aptitude were based on Carroll and Sapon's (1959) Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT). They define language aptitude as comprising four cognitive abilities: phonetic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, rote learning ability, and inductive learning ability. In the introductory manual the test was described as a means to predict 'how well, relative to other individuals, someone can learn a foreign language in a given amount of time and under given conditions'. The MLAT-Elementary (or MLAT-E) test was developed specifically to measure language aptitude of American children in grades 3–6. For our research, we used the following parts of the MLAT-E: Hidden Words, relating to phonetic coding ability or the ability to associate sounds and symbols; Finding Rhymes, testing the ability to discriminate between speech sounds; and Matching Words, testing grammatical sensitivity or the ability to recognise the function of a lexical element in a sentence. In Hidden Words, students had to choose the nearest definition of a disguised word from four options (e.g. smmr = season). In Finding Rhymes, a word rhyming with the prompt had to be selected (e.g. 'rain' = lane, not 'vine', 'keen' or 'fine') In Matching Words, pairs of sentences were presented and students had to find a word in the second sentence corresponding in grammatical function to an underlined word in bold in the first sentence (e.g. g. 'Our English teacher gave **us** a very difficult test' = 'I sent *my friends* a postcard when we were on holiday').

'International orientation' and 'EFL confidence' were measured by means of responses on a 6-point Likert scale to statements in English. The international orientation scale (24 items) drew on Gardner (1985) together with MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) definition of 'willingness to communicate'. For EFL confidence (5 items), the statements were based on Gardner's (1985) concept of integrative motivation, which encompasses attitudes towards the L2 community - a favourable attitude towards L2 speakers is seen as helpful for the language learning process - along with Dörnyei and Skehan's (2003) concept of linguistic confidence.

Out-of-school exposure to the English language was operationalised as exposure to English language through TV broadcasts and pop songs. Even though the English language is present in all four countries, a major divide seemed to be between countries where films and TV programmes are dubbed versus subtitled in the national language, along with the presence of pop songs in English. The questionnaire items for international orientation, EFL confidence and out-of-school L2 exposure are shown in the Appendix.

Procedure

The data were collected in two rounds. At the start of their first school year, the participants completed the first EFL proficiency test as well as the EFL aptitude test and the questionnaire gauging international orientation, EFL confidence and out-of-school exposure to the English language. At the end of their second school year, they took the second EFL proficiency test. The test leader, a university researcher, informed the pupils about their participation in the university research project. They were told that taking part was anonymous and that their answers only served the research purpose. Completion of the proficiency test and questionnaire took one lesson period each.

Analysis

The mean scores and standard deviations of EFL aptitude, EFL confidence, international orientation and out-of-school L2 exposure were processed for each country. Likert type items were assumed to be assessed on a (quasi-)interval level to enable the calculation of total scale scores. Mean scores and standard deviations were also computed for the EFL proficiency components of vocabulary, grammar, idioms and reading comprehension for each of the four countries and for both Test 1 and Test 2. ANOVAs were then conducted to measure, first, the interaction effects at entry level, i.e. to what degree did the four variables influence EFL results at the start of the CLIL programme? Then ANOVAs of the repeated-measures design were conducted to measure effects of the four variables on increases in EFL proficiency scores two years later. Finally, a regression analysis was conducted to ascertain more information about significant effects.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the four variables are shown in Table 3. EFL aptitude scores were between a maximum of 50 and a minimum of 0 while EFL confidence and international orientation scores are the average response on the Likert scale of 6 (1 = disagree/low, 6 = agree/high). Scores for out-of-school exposure are given separately as watching TV and listening to pop songs. These latter scores correspond to the average of minutes per day pupils reported spending on these activities.

EFL aptitude scores did not vary greatly across the four countries: all pupils had roughly the same level of talent for EFL learning: F (3,158) = .98, p = .404. The Dutch scores were slightly higher than those in the other three countries, but there were no significant differences. As for EFL confidence, the Netherlands and Germany seem to be similar as do Hungary and Italy.

The ANOVA results showed significant differences between the countries: F (3,158) = 4.36, p = .006; by conducting post-hoc Bonferroni tests, these differences were found to be between the Netherlands and Hungary (p = .038) and the Netherlands and Italy (p = .013). Significant effects were also found for international orientation: F (3,158) = 11.09, p < .001. The post-hoc test showed significant differences between Germany and the Netherlands (p = .001), between Germany and Hungary (p = .006) and between Germany and Italy (p < .001). The Italian learners

Table 3. Scores on key variables.

	The Netherlands		Germany		Hungary		Italy		
Pupil factors	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*
EFL aptitude	36.19	5.04	33.81	10.79	34.82	8.72	33.02	8.95	.98
EFL confidence	4.49	.76	4.26	1.05	3.86	1.06	3.80	1.04	**4.36***
International orientation	3.14	.54	2.61	.57	3.05	.58	3.32	.65	**11.09***
Environmental factors	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*
Watching TV	80.27	61.71	17.24	36.28	45.33	48.35	13.68	21.58	**19.72***
Listening to popsongs	90.24	68.71	70.12	65.22	78.21	65.41	54.64	67.65	2.04

were more internationally orientated than their peers in the other three countries, while the German learners scored lowest.

As for out-of-school L2 exposure, considerable differences were observed, within and between countries as well as within groups of learners. As might be expected in view of the fact that English-medium television broadcasts are frequent in the Netherlands, the time spent on watching TV was highest among Dutch students. Surprisingly, the Hungarian figures were higher than those for pupils in Germany and Italy. A possible explanation is the effect of the increased interest for the English language in Hungarian society, which is also marked by the intensive L2 programme of the first year of the participating *gimnázium* schools. The ANOVA showed significant effects: F (3,158) = 19.72, $p < .001$; the post-hoc test showed they were between the Netherlands and Germany ($p < .001$), the Netherlands and Hungary ($p = .004$), the Netherlands and Italy ($p < .001$) and also between Hungary and Germany ($p = .026$) and Hungary and Italy ($p = .007$). Listening to pop-songs in English scored high in all four countries, but again highest in the Netherlands. There were, however, no significant differences between countries.

Scores for EFL proficiency tests

The EFL test scores in each of the four countries at the start of the CLIL intervention (Test 1) and again after two years (test 2) for vocabulary, grammar, idioms and reading comprehension are shown in Table 4. As not all tasks in each sub-part had the same number of items in Test 1 and Test 2, we could not measure progress numerically for each sub-part. For vocabulary, it was straightforward: each test consisted of 180 items, which means a score range from 0 to 180 and a numerical growth. This was also the case for idioms: the idioms tests had 6 items each, so a score range from 0 to 6. For grammar, things were somewhat different: Test 1 had 66 items while test 2 had 20 items. Therefore, we calculated score means and compared these to give the score growth. As with grammar, the reading comprehension tests comprised different numbers of items: Test 1 had 3 open questions and 5 multiple choice while Test 2 had 3 open questions, 5 multiple choice and 4 additional items in which a word from the text had to be filled in, which we combined with the multiple choice questions in the scores. As scoring multiple choice questions differs from scoring open questions, we preferred to use Z-scores – standardised scores that can be compared with all other scores in the group – to measure progress. For this reason some results for reading comprehension are negative when the score means of the country are below the population average.

The test results varied considerably, both within and across countries. The initial test scores showed significant differences between groups for vocabulary: F (3,158) = 3.50, $p = .017$; for grammar: F (3,158) = 10.35, $p < .001$; for idioms: F (3,158) = 5.69, $p = .001$ and for reading comprehension: F (3,158) = 4.48, $p = .005$. Both the Dutch and German scores for vocabulary were significantly higher than those in Italy ($p = .029$ and .047 respectively), while for grammar the Dutch scores were significantly lower than those in Germany ($p = .002$), Hungary ($p < .001$) and Italy ($p = .016$). For idioms the Dutch scores were significantly higher than those in Hungary ($p < .001$) while in Germany reading comprehension scores were significantly higher than in Italy ($p = .012$).

Score growth after two years showed significant differences between groups: for vocabulary: F (3,158) = 3.88, $p = .010$; for grammar: F (3,158) = 20.59, $p < .001$; for idioms: F (3,158) = 5.95, $p = .001$ and for reading comprehension: F (3,158) = 16.23, $p < .001$. In Hungary the score growth for vocabulary was significantly greater than in Germany ($p = .006$). In the Netherlands, score growth for grammar was significantly greater than in Germany and Hungary ($p < .001$ and .014 respectively) while the Hungarian and Italian grammar scores showed a significantly greater growth when compared to those in Germany (for both $p < .001$). Significant differences in score growth were also found for idioms; in Hungary they increased more than in Germany ($p = .002$) and in Italy ($p = .009$). As to score growth for reading comprehension this was significantly greater in the Netherlands, Hungary and Italy than in Germany ($p < .001$).

Table 4. EFL proficiency scores from Test 1 and Test 2.

	The Netherlands				Germany				Hungary				Italy			
	Test 1		Test 2		Test 1		Test 2		Test 1		Test 2		Test 1		Test 2	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Vocabulary	136.65	16.63	156.38	10.51	134.93	24.68	140.90	20.55	128.97	35.57	155.36	13.24	117.07	39.21	133.09	21.67
Grammar	.57	.14	.72	.09	.69	.15	.58	.21	.75	.14	.79	. 14	.67	.13	.74	.15
Idioms	2.59	1.21	3.97	.87	2.05	1.27	2.57	1.48	1.49	1.21	3.31	1.36	2.16	1.03	2.86	1.36
Reading comprehension	−.33	.96	.31	.93	.55	1.07	−1.27	1.91	.39	1.95	.29	1.21	−.59	2.27	.70	1.33

Effects on EFL proficiency results and growth

To answer the first research question, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to measure the effects of the four variables on the Test 1 EFL proficiency scores for vocabulary, grammar, idioms and reading comprehension. A second ANOVA, to answer the second and third research questions, measured their effects on EFL proficiency growth over the first two years of CLIL and the differences between countries. The results are shown in Table 5.

For the initial measurement a number of significant differences were found. EFL aptitude was significantly correlated with grammar in all four countries: F (1,161) = 20.83, $p < .001$. There was a slight but significant linear regression: β = .039, $p < .001$.

The confidence learners had in their ability to use the English language, EFL confidence, produced several significant initial effects on EFL proficiency results and greater linear regression. A significant effect was found for vocabulary scores: F (1,161) = 19.80, $p < .001$. Effect sizes were small and varied per country: R^2 for the Netherlands was .222, for Germany .029, for Hungary .420 and for Italy .101. Linear regression analysis also indicated significance: $\beta = .42$, $p < .001$. Across all four countries, greater confidence led to higher vocabulary scores, even though there were significant differences: F (3,138) = 2.94, $p = .036$. Regression results for the Netherlands were: $\beta = .47$, $p = .003$; for Germany: $\beta = .17$, $p = .28$; for Hungary: $\beta = .65$, $p < .001$; for Italy: $\beta = .32$, $p = .035$. In the Netherlands, Hungary and Italy learners with more confidence in their English language skills reached higher vocabulary scores than in Germany.

A significant initial effect of EFL confidence was also found for grammar: F(1,161) = 12.42, $p = .001$; $\beta = .28$ and for reading comprehension: F(1,161) = 8.21, $p = .005$; $\beta = .29$. and this was the case for all four countries and with average effect sizes of $R^2 = .073$ for grammar and .083 for reading comprehension. There were significant differences between the countries: F (3,138) = 4.02, $p = .009$. The effect sizes varied and were smallest in the Netherlands ($R^2 = .019$) and Germany ($R^2 = .001$) and slightly larger in Hungary ($R^2 = .162$) and Italy ($R^2 = .133$). Regression results also varied: the Netherlands: $\beta = -.14$; Germany: $\beta = .03$; Hungary: $\beta = .40$, $p = .01$; Italy: $\beta = .37$, $p = .015$. In Italy and Hungary EFL confidence has significantly more influence on scores for idioms than in Germany and the Netherlands, while in the Netherlands we even found a negative effect: more confidence led to lower scores for idioms. A possible explanation is that learners in the Netherlands feel over-confident: they can understand pop songs and TV broadcasts, hence feel less inclined to spend time studying idioms.

International orientation and the environmental variables did not produce significant effects: the fact that pupils in CLIL classes feel attracted to the international world, listen to pop songs or watch English TV had no significant effect on their EFL scores. However, correlation analysis of the constructs showed several significant results. Five correlations were significant, even though small: EFL Aptitude and EFL confidence ($r = .18$, $p < .05$); EFL Aptitude and Watching TV ($r = .19$, $p < .05$); International orientation and Listening to pop songs ($r = .19$, $p < .05$); EFL confidence and Watching TV ($r = .33$, $p < .01$); Listening to pop songs and Watching TV ($r = .23$, $p < .01$). These results suggests that learners with more EFL aptitude and confidence also watch slightly more English TV broadcasts, while an international orientation goes hand-in-hand with listening to pop songs.

The second ANOVA aimed at analysing the effects of the four variables on EFL proficiency growth in the first two years of CLIL. There was a significant difference between countries as to the degree to which grammar scores developed: F (3,161) = 2.78, $p = .044$. In the Netherlands they increased significantly more than in Hungary and Italy, while in Germany, the scores for grammar decreased. The pupil and environmental constructs showed various effects. International orientation and the environmental variable did not produce significant effects on the growth of English proficiency scores over the two years. Results were highly similar across the four countries, irrespective of differences in CLIL concepts or the presence of English in society at large.

EFL confidence proved to be a much stronger influence. We found a significant effect on the growth for vocabulary: F (1,138) = 4.27, $p = .041$. The effects varied across countries: F (3,138) = 3.21,

Table 5. Comparative survey of effects.

		Vocabulary				Grammar				Idioms				Reading comprehension			
		Initial		Growth		Initial		Growth		Initial		Growth		Initial		Growth	
	df	*SS*	*F*	*SS*	*F*	*SS*	*F*	*SS*	*F*	*SS*	*F*	*SS*	*F*	*SS*	*F*	*SS*	*F*
Pupil factors																	
EFL aptitude	1	2624.85	3.65	187.89	.53	.27	**20.83***	.03	2.36	3.45	2.71	.00	.00	7.42	2.78	3.47	1.78
EFL confidence	1	14225.77	**19.80***	1505.98	**4.27***	.161	**12.42***	.02	1.51	.90	.71	3.58	3.07	21.88	**8.21***	2.89	1.49
International orientation	1	53.02	.07	80.87	.23	.04	3.15	.00	.01	1.67	1.31	1.54	1.32	.60	.23	.74	.38
Environmental factors																	
Watching TV	1	371.49	.52	436.35	1.24	.02	1.20	.00	.02	.57	.45	.01	.01	6.61	2.48	5.02	2.58
Pop songs	1	1214.91	1.69	112.32	.32	.04	2.95	.02	1.42	.74	.58	4.01	3.44	1.98	.74	6.37	3.27
Country	3	210.44	.10	266.04	.25	.03	.67	.09	2.78*	3.33	.87	2.36	.68	6.21	.78	13.36	2.29
Pupil factors* country																	
EFL aptitude	3	1472.65	.68	1109.17	1.05	.06	1.4	.04	1.05	5.81	1.52	11.44	3.27*	8.25	1.03	1.79	.31
EFL confidence	3	6330.91	2.94*	3394.99	3.21*	.01	.24	.01	.42	15.37	4.02*	7.63	2.18	6.11	.76	16.48	2.82*
International orientation	3	2369.18	1.10	822.06	.78	.02	.38	.03	.76	1.36	.36	2.73	.78	3.03	.38	.99	.17
Environmental factors* country																	
Watching TV	3	4035.34	1.87	1690.54	1.60	.02	.50	.01	,38	9.39	2.46	5.18	1.48	2.66	.33	4.90	.84
Pop songs	3	1578.94	.73	1015.86	.96	.10	2.44	.05	1.53	1.84	.48	4.74	1.36	3.04	.38	5.30	.91
Df error:138																	
R^2-model			.38				.52				.28				.24		

*$p < .05$.

$p = .025$. The effect sizes were for the Netherlands: $R^2 = .071$, for Germany: .001, for Hungary: .315 and for Italy: .000. Linear regression analysis also showed variety and indicated for the Netherlands: $\beta = -.27$; for Germany: $\beta = .03$; for Hungary: $\beta = -.56$ and for Italy: $\beta = .02$. This means that in Hungary and the Netherlands, the regression results were negative: pupils with more confidence showed a decrease in vocabulary scores. This may be because of a ceiling effect; in these two countries, vocabulary scores were already very high at the first test so further growth might have been unlikely. EFL confidence also showed significant differences in effects per country for reading comprehension score growth: F (3,138) = 2.82, $p = .041$. The effect sizes, however, were small: R^2 varied from .085 for the Netherlands, .024 for Germany, .001 for Hungary and .089 for Italy. Linear regression analysis indicated for the Netherlands: $\beta = -.29$; for Germany: $\beta = .16$; for Hungary: $\beta = .02$; for Italy: $\beta = -.30$. Dutch and Italian results were negative: more confidence led to a smaller score increase, similar as in cases of over-confidence. This is not easy to explain. Pupils may lose interest in reading texts as they grow older, find the subject boring or take comprehension questions too lightly.

EFL aptitude affected the increase of scores for idioms with significant differences across the four countries: F (3,138) = 3.27, $p = .023$. Again, effect sizes were small: R^2 for the Netherlands was .005, for Germany .030, for Hungary .057 and for Italy .001. Regression for the Netherlands was: $\beta = -.07$; for Germany: $\beta = -.17$; for Hungary: $\beta = .29$; for Italy: $\beta = .03$. In Hungary, an aptitude for EFL learning related more strongly to increased scores for idioms than in the other three countries. A possible explanation lies in the fact that the Hungarian pupils spent considerably more time in the EFL classroom during the 'zero' year, in which the target language is studied intensively. Undoubtedly they had to study a greater amount of idioms, unrelated to their own native language, for which they may have had to rely more on their language aptitude than pupils in the Netherlands and Germany.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to analyse if the specific aptitude for, and attitudes towards, EFL learning of starting CLIL learners might be related to their EFL proficiency results, and if this is similar in divergent CLIL contexts. This proved to be the case only with EFL confidence. Learners with greater confidence in their English skills at the start of CLIL tended to make significantly more progress in vocabulary and reading comprehension, and this was the case in all countries. Aptitude was found to show a limited effect on initial tests of grammar but this effect disappeared in later tests. As we have discussed, the environmental factor of out-of-school exposure showed positive correlations and may be seen as a side contribution to learner confidence and aptitude.

To conclude, the main finding of the present study is related to the effect of EFL confidence - the confidence with which pupils use their English language skills – which we found to have effects both initially and after two years. Even though there were certain differences between countries, learner EFL confidence appeared to have a more significant influence on EFL results than aptitude for learning English. It is plausible that pupils may have had to demonstrate at least some aptitude for learning English in order to gain admittance to CLIL classes, and this may explain why aptitude appeared to have little discriminatory influence on growth in EFL scores. Even when CLIL is selective and relies on language learning aptitude, our findings suggest that learners with confidence in their EFL skills benefit the most from the CLIL environment: the CLIL classroom considerably enhances the effect of such confidence.

The findings of the present study need, of course, to be interpreted cautiously in the light of a number of limitations. Firstly, in relation to the measurement of EFL aptitude, only the traditional language aptitude tests developed in the 1960s and 1970s (such as the MLAT) were easily available to us at the time of data collection. They were intended – either in their original English forms or in translations – for participants with the same native language while we used the English version with learners from four different native language backgrounds for whom English was an L2. The development of tests based on a novel concept of foreign language aptitude, in which participants are expected to learn elements of a new, artificial language not resembling any one language or linguistic

family (Grigorenko et al. 2000) – was still fairly recent when we collected our data. Little was known about the findings of such tests in educational practice, after a long period of limited interest in language aptitude research. As our specific focus was on aptitude for learning English, and with participants from four different native languages, we chose to use parts of the original English version of the MLAT-E, ensuring that the language used was simple and likely to be understood by our participants. There has, however, recently been 'renewed enthusiasm for aptitude research across the multiple disciplines of educational psychology, second language acquisition and cognitive neuroscience' (Wen et al. 2017), and we would welcome the development and validation of an instrument specifically for EFL aptitude in an international context.

Secondly, when designing the EFL tests, a limitation lay in the fact that we had to take four diverging educational contexts into account, in which previous EFL training as well as the age of pupils at the start of the CLIL trajectory differed considerably. Uneven EFL levels were inevitable, which is why we combined assignments for various L2 levels. Our keynote was to measure vocabulary, grammar, idioms and text comprehension as separate constructs in both tests. We succeeded only partially in matching the tests for numerical comparison as it was difficult to find assignments of a similar format for more advanced levels. The pre-intermediate and intermediate tests that served as our source mainly offered proficiency assignments with a combined focus on linguistic concepts, so not for idioms and grammar as separate entities. We decided to use fewer items for grammar, which resulted in a shorter test with comparison in score percentages for results for grammar. For text comprehension the question formats also differed slightly in more advanced tests, which led to similar adaptations.

Thirdly, we wish to make the readers aware of the fact that our data were collected between 2007 and 2009, when CLIL was in its early stages and predominantly highly selective. In the meantime, the approach is being introduced at all levels of secondary and primary education. Recent studies have discussed that CLIL effects are subject to context (e.g. Denman et al. 2018). Moreover, teachers in CLIL classes have had more years of practice and received more training in the methodology of teaching their subject by means of and together with a foreign language, in addition with raising their EFL skills. This may affect pupil EFL performance and affectivity, so that our results of ten years ago cannot be fully generalised to the present.

Finally, we recognise that the present study is a small-scale one, thus limiting its generalisability. Moreover, we were not able to compare the effects of our constructs between CLIL classes and mainstream classes acting as a control. However, four very diverse CLIL contexts were investigated, and across these four countries, CLIL was found to provide a positive learning environment particularly for learners with confidence in their EFL skills. These learners in particular showed significant growth in EFL proficiency over their first two years of CLIL. Though this is to be celebrated, it nonetheless raises the question of what can be done to enable learners who lack such confidence to benefit from CLIL. In view of the fact that CLIL is increasingly being considered for a larger group of learners across Europe this seems a particularly relevant concern. Learners in CLIL classes are generally motivated for learning. As Dale and Tanner (2012) discuss, 'they blossom and feel challenged because they are learning both a subject and a language' (11). According to the authors, a strong sense of achievement is felt when learners experience their progress in L2 skills, which helps them develop into confident L2 speakers. For CLIL teachers this implies that providing conditions for favourable learning is essential for learners to build self-confidence. CLIL teacher training programmes have stressed the importance of scaffolding content and practising language as a way of facilitating the learning process (Ball et al. 2015; Bentley 2010) thus helping learners experience feelings of success. The concluding thought of this discussion is therefore, that teacher perceptiveness to the needs of the less confident learners and strategies to improve their performance are crucial to developing confidence.

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Appendix. Items for international orientation, EFL confidence and out-of-school L2 exposure

Six-point Likert scale for International orientation and EFL confidence items

(1) This is absolutely true for me
(2) This is almost true
(3) This is a bit more true than untrue; more than half true
(4) This is a bit more untrue than true; less than half true
(5) This is almost untrue
(6) This is absolutely untrue for me

International orientation

(1) I am good at languages
(2) If I know English I can get to know other cultures and peoples
(3) I need it for later studies
(4) I want to know more about the lives of the English speaking nations
(5) I want to write letters and e-mails to friends in foreign countries
(6) I would like to work in a foreign country
(7) If I know English I can learn more about what is happening in the world
(8) I want to be like the English or Americans
(9) I would like to make friends with foreigners
(10) It will help when I am on holiday in a foreign country
(11) I will get a better job if I can speak English
(12) I would like to learn as many foreign languages as possible
(13) I want to read English books and newspapers
(14) It must be wonderful to live in America
(15) It is interesting to learn more about English and American people
(16) I would like to live in England
(17) Most of my friends also want to learn English

(18) I think America is a wonderful country
(19) English people are friendly
(20) Some of the most important people in our town are from England or America
(21) On the whole you can trust English people
(22) Later, after I have left this school, I will go on studying English
(23) I would like to get to know more American people
(24) On the whole I like English and American people

EFL confidence

(1) I can easily write a text or a small story in English
(2) Our English lessons are difficult
(3) I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak English in the classroom
(4) I feel uneasy whenever I must read or write an English text
(5) I always feel that the other children in my class are better at English than I

Out-of-school L2 exposure

Below are activities and situations in which you can use English in everyday life, at home or in the street. The questions are made to give us an idea of how often you are in contact with the English language, on a normal day or in a normal week, especially when you are not at school. This is probably not the same on every day. Therefore we ask you to write down the **average** time.

(1) Do you watch television programmes in English in your free time? (e.g. films, soaps, the news) How many minutes per day on average?
    - I watch programmes in English: with subtitles ___ minutes per day/ without subtitles ___ minutes per day
(2) Do you listen to pop songs in English in your free time? How many minutes per day on average?
    - I listen to pop songs in English about ___ minutes per day