



Writing Development in a Dual Language Immersion Program

Fernando Rubio

Lucía Rubio

University of Utah (United States)

The state of Utah is a leader in Dual Language Immersion (DLI) education in the United States. There are currently around 50,000 students enrolled in DLI programs from 1st to 12th grade. In DLI programs in the U.S., students receive instruction in English and an L2 with at least 50% of instructional time allocated to core content instruction in the L2. The benefits of these instructional models for overall proficiency development have been widely reported (e.g., Watzinger-Tharp, Rubio & Tharp, 2018; Watzinger-Tharp, Tharp & Rubio, 2021). However, the research is split regarding the effectiveness of content-based language learning to develop the productive skills, specifically writing. While some research indicates a positive effect of content-focused instruction on writing (e.g., Gené-Gil, Salazar-Noguera & Juan-Garau, 2015), other studies point to only limited benefits (e.g., Llinares & Whittaker, 2006). The present study follows the development of accuracy and complexity in the written production of middle school learners (6th-9th grade) in a Spanish DLI program. After a brief overview of overall levels of proficiency achieved in writing at the different levels, we provide a more in-depth look at the development of complexity (both holistically and at the phrasal level) and accuracy based on a corpus of writing produced by a randomly selected group of 50 learners. To conclude we address implications for assessment and teaching based on the findings of this study.

Keywords: *Linguistic development, Immersion learning, Complexity, Accuracy.*

References

- [1] Gené-Gil, M., Juan-Garau, M. & Salazar-Noguera, J. (2015). Writing development under CLIL provision. In M. Juan-Garau & J. Salazar-Noguera (Eds.), *Content-based Language Learning in Multilingual Educational Environments* (pp. 139-161) Berlin: Springer.
- [2] Llinares, A., & Whittaker, R. (2006). Linguistic analysis of secondary school students' oral and written production in CLIL contexts: Studying social sciences in English. *Vienna English Working Papers*, 15 (3), 28–32.
- [3] Watzinger-Tharp, J., Rubio, F. & Tharp, D. S. (2018). Linguistic performance of dual language immersion students. *Foreign Language Annals* 51(3), 575-595.
- [4] Watzinger-Tharp, J., Tharp, D. S. & Rubio, F. (2021). Sustaining Dual Language Immersion: L2 Outcomes in a State-Wide Program. *The Modern Language Journal*, 105(1).