

Interview

Over Two Decades in CLIL: An Interview with Tarja Nikula on Current Practices, Trends, and Research Directions

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Abstract

Dr. Tarja Nikula is a professor at the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. She received her PhD degree from this university in 1996. She has published widely in the field of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and has been involved in international research collaborations. She has co-edited the book *Language Use and Language Learning in CLIL Classrooms*, and recently the book entitled *Conceptualising Integration in CLIL and Multilingual Education*. Furthermore, she has co-edited a special issue with a focus on CLIL in *Language Learning Journal*. Her research interests include language learning and use, and disciplinary literacies in classroom practice. During a virtual interview on January 24, 2022, Dr. Huseyin Uysal chatted with her about her scholarship in CLIL. Dr. Nikula explained how she was involved in CLIL, and how it shaped her scholarship. Then, she shared her thoughts on CLIL implementation and on the future directions in CLIL research.

Keywords

Bilingual education, classroom discourse, content and language integrated learning, Finnish education, multilingualism in Europe

I appreciate this opportunity to hear your views, Tarja! I want to get us started with my first question. When did you first develop an interest in language teaching research? What personally motivated you to engage in language teaching as your research field?

I think the very first steps for that were laid down already when I was studying at the *University of Jyväskylä* in the eighties, because our university is heavily oriented to applied linguistics research. So, I learned a lot of interesting things about language learning and teaching, and then realized that this is something that I want to work on more. Then, when starting my PhD, I developed interest in pragmatics, in other words, in functional aspects of language: what people do with language, how they interact with it. That kind of a functional orientation, I think, has followed me ever since. My PhD was about pragmatic force modifiers, which refers to various hedging devices and sort of interpersonal modification

phenomenon and that kind of things. So, it was not about *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)*, at all.

What changed your research focus?

It was a very practical matter for me. I was hired for a project right after I finished my PhD. The purpose of that project was to do a national survey on CLIL education in Finland. CLIL was a very new phenomenon in Finland then. It had only been possible to offer education in other languages than the official languages for a few years back then. So, there was the need for sort of a follow-up survey on how the schools had found that and what kind of experiences they had. And that was a new learning experience for me. Then I really had to learn what CLIL was about. It was a very interesting time in Europe at the time, because CLIL was rapidly developing and gaining ground in different countries. I was doing that survey with *David Marsh*, who was one of the leading figures in European CLIL at the time. Then, I started to see connections between the type of interest that I had in foreign language learning and teaching from a pragmatic perspective, with attention to functionality of language learning and use. So, in a way, CLIL resonates with that interest, because it offers quite a different context for language learning and teaching compared to more traditional language classrooms. That was my story of how CLIL entered my life and my research life in particular.

How does CLIL work? Can you give me a brief definition of CLIL? How would you explain the essence of CLIL for those who hear it for the first time?

The difficulty in providing a specific definition is that there is not one single approach to CLIL. It is implemented in various ways depending on the context. But I think that duality in terms of seeking to foster both for language development aims and content learning aims is the essence of CLIL, the fact that the language to be learned is used as the medium of instruction. That way, it also offers opportunities for learners to acquire that language through its meaningful use. Maybe it is good to remember in this connection that, when talking about European CLIL in particular, the idea has never been that CLIL would replace traditional foreign language teaching. It is rather complementing it. So, at least in Finland, all the schools that are offering forms of CLIL are also offering formal language teaching, they thus coexist. So, to recap, I guess the essence of CLIL lies in the duality of content and language aims.

What is not CLIL? What are some common misconceptions about CLIL?

Something that first comes to my mind is that CLIL is not just a simple matter of switching the instructional language and saying that “Okay! We are doing CLIL by switching the language.” It needs to be accompanied by pedagogical decisions on what kind of help students need to be able to build up their knowledge about language and content simultaneously. So, it is very much about considering things like the phase of development of learners, what kind of strategies and pedagogies work for young learners, what kind of strategies work for older learners. Doing CLIL really needs a lot of planning and conscious reflection on what works in it, what not, and how to offer meaningful contexts for learners to use the language. Also, CLIL is, by definition, bilingual teaching, which means that the proportion of the first language and the second language needs to be consciously planned for. So, if you in the first language context introduce a foreign language, a question to consider is: What kind of principles do you have for using the two languages? All this, I think, needs to be planned for. That is the key in CLIL in my view.

What are the principles and primary goal of CLIL? What does it involve for practitioners and learners?

Again, I think it depends on the context. If we think of CLIL in Europe, it started to emerge at a time when there was a lot of talk about the need to increase multilingual skills among European citizens at the time when European Union was forming. There was a sense of willingness to support European citizens to learn each other's languages. At the same time, there was a bit of dissatisfaction with the outcomes of traditional foreign language teaching. CLIL was, therefore, seen as an innovative way to promote multilingual policies within the European Union. That is why it was receiving a fair amount of political support. At the same time, there was growing research evidence on the benefits of teaching and learning bilingually. So, research background also had an influence on the spread of CLIL.

What are the strengths of CLIL?

Strengths of CLIL... I began by saying that CLIL is a very heterogeneous endeavor and needs to be planned according to the context. That can be seen either as a problem or as a strength. For me, personally, I see such adaptability as a strength because CLIL is not a programmatic vision or a specific bilingual program that can be exported as such across contexts. It always needs to be adapted to the situation at hand. So, I think that is one of the strengths.

When thinking especially about the early phases, the concerns in relation to CLIL were very much focusing on questions like: What kind of context for language learning does CLIL offer? Does it really support foreign language learning and acquisition? In response to such questions, there is now evidence from research that conveys quite a positive message as regards the favorable effect of CLIL, for example, on vocabulary size, grammatical awareness, language awareness in general, and learners' communicative courage. This is understandable given that offering CLIL instruction of course creates more opportunities for learners to engage with the language. But what I also found quite interesting when I was engaged in a research project where I compared EFL classrooms and CLIL classrooms was that when the conscious attention was not on language, such as in CLIL, that seemed to create more opportunities for learners to actually use the target language. So, by looking at classroom interaction in EFL and CLIL classrooms, I noticed some interesting differences in the amount of talk in the target language by students. That is one example of an effect that it can have.

What are the main pitfalls in the implementation of CLIL? How can educators meet these challenges? What is essential for a teacher to know before starting to teach by using CLIL?

I have emphasized the importance of planning. That is why I think one of the pitfalls would be to begin without a proper planning phase and without a shared vision of the aims of CLIL. As I said, there is a great deal of variation. Some schools might want to implement CLIL just to offer more opportunities for learners to be engaged in using the target language. For some schools, the aim might be fostering functional bilingualism. It is clear that if there are great differences in aims, also the forms of implementation, for example in terms of intensity of CLIL, need to vary. That is why I think lack of planning would be one pitfall. Another matter for successful CLIL is that, in my view it requires open discussion with the students about the aims for that kind of provision. Why are we doing this? What is the rationale for being taught through another language? I think that kind of discussion is also helpful.

An important consideration is that when we say CLIL, we need to think of what kind of teachers we usually refer to. At least in the European context, CLIL is very much content-driven. It is the same curricular subjects, such as history, physics or geography taught in another language, quite often English, with the curricular aims set for those subjects. What that means then is that CLIL teachers are usually content teachers. They have not, at least not in all countries, been educated to have double qualification as both content and language teachers—even though that is also the case in some contexts.

One consequence of CLIL teachers typically being content teachers that has been observed in research is that CLIL teachers quite often resist the idea of being language teachers. As content teachers, they may think that it does not belong to their core task. But I think attention to language is very crucial in CLIL teaching. If teaching happens in a foreign or an additional language, the content teachers are language teachers, because language is, of course, an inherent part of knowledge production and knowledge display in any subject. Such role of language, and what could be called language work, usually happens without much conscious attention by the teacher. That is why I think that it is fundamental for CLIL teachers to be aware of and to reflect on how they perceive their role as language teachers because it is true that they are not language teachers in the same sense as language teachers in traditional language classrooms, and yet they have their specific role in teaching the language of their subjects. That is actually the area that I have been very interested in during recent years.

What this means is that rather than talking about language skills in general it may make more sense to ask what kind of specific language skills are required in different subjects? As one of my Spanish colleagues has put it, we need to think what kind of “language muscles” are required, or need to be practiced, in each subject. And I think that is really an important area to consider. I think students need to be directed in this, not just left on their own to be immersed in the language of the subjects.

What sort of assessment tools and strategies are used in CLIL classrooms? How can they be structured to align with the spirit of CLIL?

This is both a very difficult and important question. To begin with, there is a growing awareness that assessment has a very important role in CLIL. It is a hot topic currently because in the true spirit of CLIL, assessment should be both about content mastery and mastery of the means with which content is expressed. I know there is a lot going on in assessment research at the moment. Researchers are trying to come up with ways of assessment that could explicate what learners need to know and learn in terms of content and language so that both could be looked at simultaneously. Something that is worth considering in this connection is to create awareness of the types of discourse functions that learners need to learn in given subjects. By discourse functions, I mean things like describing, providing definitions, explaining, reporting. If these kinds of functions are required from learners when handling the content, these functions should also be scaffolded and supported in teaching.

When we think about assessment, I think what is really the key here is engagement in dynamic assessment, assessing and providing feedback and support throughout the process of learning and providing ongoing feedback in the process. That is very crucial. But I am afraid I will not be able to offer a good example of an integrated assessment that would fit in all subjects or in all educational contexts. But what is crucial, as I said, is to think about the key functions of language that are needed in each subject and then plan for ways to make that language visible or explicit in teaching and assessment.

You are part of the *Trans-CLIL* project with Ana Llinares and worked on implementing CLIL in transition from primary to secondary schools. You were also involved in earlier projects *ADiBE* and *ConCLIL*. Could you share some information on your take-away from these projects?

If we start from these three projects that you mentioned, I think something that unifies all those projects is that they have been seeking for a better understanding of what content and language integration means. The first of these was *ConCLIL* project that I led from 2011 to 2014. The very notion of integration was at the heart of this project. It brought together a team of researchers from different European countries. We were engaged in conceptual work around integration. What we argued for in the 2016 volume that

was published as an outcome of this project was that integration is a very complex matter that needs to be approached from at least three perspectives. The first is that of curriculum and pedagogical planning. I was already referring to this earlier because integration, of course, does not just happen automatically. So, planning is a key factor there. Another is the perspective of what happens in terms of integration at the level of concrete classroom practices, and how those support simultaneous content and language learning. But then a crucial intermediary level in-between is formed by the participant perspectives. What are teachers' beliefs and perceptions of integration? What are learners' beliefs of integration? Both will have an impact on what is done in classrooms. Very often, what is at issue in these beliefs is some kind of need for reorientation in what we mean by language and its learning because CLIL brings along functional and disciplinary literacy perspectives to language learning. There is a need to dwell into these to gain a better understanding of teachers' perceptions on integration.

The cooperation in the *ConCLIL* project was really the background for my involvement in the projects led by *Ana Llinares*. In addition to *Trans-CLIL* project, there have been a couple of other projects led by her in Madrid. Those have focused on and have done a great deal in increasing understanding of the development of academic language competence through, for example, exploring both learners' transition from primary to secondary education and how they longitudinally progress through secondary education in both high- and low-exposure CLIL tracks. For me, personally, what has been very valuable in these projects is the way they have used systemic functional approaches and combined those with operationalizing the construct of cognitive discourse functions that *Christiane Dalton-Puffer* has developed. Such a combination offers great insights into how we could better describe and monitor students' progress in ways that merge content and language learning objectives. This is where the projects have been really important in my view. The *ADiBE* project, with attention to diversity in bilingual education, is the most recent one I have been involved in. The project is led by *Marisa Pérez Cañado* from the *University of Jaén*. It focuses on attending to diversity in bilingual education, both by exploring teachers', students' and parents' perspectives in six different countries, and by developing a resource bank of materials for cross-curricular projects, designed in cooperation with the participating schools, that pay particular attention to divergent learner needs in CLIL, taking those into account in ways that foster inclusiveness in CLIL.

If I try to summarize the take-away from these projects, I think there is really a trajectory involved in first focusing on questions of what integration is and how we conceptualize it, and then making use of this knowledge for describing and monitoring student progression in academic language competence. And then finally, we try to understand what kind of strategies would be needed to scaffold diverse set of learners in the acquisition of these academic language competencies.

What are your thoughts on the overall success in implementing CLIL in Finland? Do you see bilingualism or multilingualism as a feasible goal for mainstream education in Finland?

This is a very big and important question. I mentioned the need to always contextualize CLIL. When we talk about CLIL in Finland, it is important to realize that even though CLIL has become an established part of education in Finland, it still tends to be offered more in bigger towns and cities where it is easier for schools to cater for a trajectory and a pathway in CLIL provision between educational levels, from primary to secondary levels. CLIL is thus simultaneously an established but not a very large-scale phenomenon in Finnish education. But then, the question of fostering bilingualism and multilingualism... I think that leads us to the key question of what exactly we mean by bilingualism and multilingualism. I think if we start from thinking of bilingualism and multilingualism from the perspective of a set of bilingual and multilingual resources that language users can draw on flexibly for different communication purposes, rather than thinking of those in terms of full bilingualism or full multilingualism, whatever that

would mean, I see bilingualism as certainly a feasible call. Also, the so-called traditional foreign language teaching has an important role in fostering skills in several languages and in supporting bilingualism and multilingualism. However, I think the added value of CLIL in comparison to language teaching lies in the opportunities it offers for the development of multilingual academic language competencies. Your earlier question on what kind of goals we set for CLIL is also important when considering bilingualism and multilingualism because, as I said earlier, some schools may argue that functional bilingualism is their goal for introducing CLIL, and others might formulate their aims more modestly.

When I think of that first survey conducted on CLIL in Finland in the mid-nineties, what came out quite strongly was that parents actually were quite an important driving force early on the implementation of CLIL especially as regards CLIL in primary education. That, I think, has a lot to do with the fact that CLIL is quite often offered through English in Finland and parents tend to think of skills in English as a pre-requisite for their children and for their children's future lives. So, from that perspective, the overall perceptions of CLIL have been quite favorable among parents.

At the same time, it is worth remembering that Finland is a small country with its two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, which are not widely used around the world. Education in these languages is, therefore, an important value for both parents and educational institutions. This also shows in the fact that rather than being very extensive, CLIL programs in Finland usually mean that certain subjects are taught through the CLIL language, others through Finnish/Swedish. Also, the national core curriculum for education outlines that forms of bilingual education should aim at good and versatile skills in both the school's instructional language and the target language.

We see a popular demand in CLIL in mostly EU countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy. How common is CLIL in English-speaking countries? Why should an American school adopt CLIL?

To start from your point that CLIL is often offered in European countries... I think it is important here to remember that the status of English as an international language has been a major driving force for the spread of CLIL. In fact, its predominant role as the most common instructional language may lead us to question how well CLIL has succeeded in supporting European multilingualism given that it is mainly offered in English. But at the same time, the experience has also shown that schools that start with CLIL programs in English are also willing to experiment with offering CLIL in other languages. So, it seems to have that kind of a triggering role, as well. As regards CLIL in English-speaking countries, I know that there are initiatives currently, for example in the U.K., that use CLIL approaches to foster interest in foreign language learning. In the Australian context, they have also had forms of bilingual education for quite some time. Those have now quite often been discussed under the CLIL label, for example in the context of schools that use the approach to provide support for teaching and learning of various community languages.

It seems to me that compared to the European context, it is more common in English-speaking countries that CLIL is offered by language specialists and in language classrooms rather than by content teachers across the curriculum. Then, addressing the question of why an American school should adopt CLIL... If we see multilingualism as an asset for individuals and societies, I think making use of some kind of bilingual approaches such as CLIL might be beneficial from that perspective in any context. For example, Spanish-English bilingual education comes to my mind as an example of bilingual education in the U.S. context whether or not it is discussed under the term of CLIL. Maybe something worth thinking about also in English-speaking contexts is that CLIL does not have to be an all-or-nothing matter. It can begin with small-scale experiments and from that perspective, I think, regions with multilingual populations might find it worthwhile to explore with CLIL-type provisions to see what kind of benefits it can offer.

***Content-Based Instruction (CBI)* is the closest instructional program that I can think of in the U.S. context. Comparing it with CLIL, how would you describe its similarities and differences? What makes CLIL a unique model?**

You are right. There are also other models and concepts relevant to and comparable with CLIL... You mentioned *content-based instruction*. Another one is *immersion education*. When reading research literature, there are sometimes controversies about which of the terms should be the umbrella term and which ones should fall under that umbrella. I think it is always good to bear in mind that different terms and models have emerged in different times and in different socio-political contexts, some in contexts of schools searching for best ways to serve minority or multilingual student populations, others in largely monolingual contexts searching to promote multilingualism. In my view, whether the term is CLIL or CBI, they share similar issues as far as pedagogical classroom realities are concerned. For that reason, I personally do not see such a big difference between these models. What I have found useful, at least in the context of Finland, is to foster forms of cooperation between researchers working in CLIL scenarios, those working in immersion education, and those working with mainstream classes that have Finnish-as-a-second-language learners because at the level of pedagogical practice, they in fact deal with very similar questions and realities. For example, a key question for all is how to support learners for whom the instructional language is not the first language. What kind of pedagogical approaches, for example, or scaffolding, would be beneficial? That is the reason why I would rather see similarities between these different labels than think of them as something completely different and representing different ideas.

In English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in the U.S., we often talk about scaffolding as a key strategy. What is the role of scaffolding in a CLIL classroom?

I would say that scaffolding also has a crucial role in CLIL because of the intertwined notion of content and language. As I said earlier, the idea of the interdependency of content and language certainly calls attention to the role of language in learning. Different language practices in different subjects and areas of specialization should be explicitly attended to by scaffolding to avoid a scenario where learners would be expected to socialize into subject-specific practices on their own rather than consciously be guided towards them. That is why I think scaffolding is very much at the heart of CLIL, as well.

In recent years, one of the most significant trends in CLIL research has been the social factors in educational opportunity. What is the contribution of CLIL research to the social justice efforts for inclusivity, equity, and fairness in education?

This is again a very big and important question. I think there is more and more awareness of these factors nowadays, and of the importance of considering on what conditions and for whom CLIL works and why. I have mentioned several times already that English is the predominant CLIL language, and that the prestige attached to English is quite often an influential factor for CLIL being a form of education that is sought after. Especially if there is a lot of demand for it, schools often opt for some kind of admission procedures for CLIL programs. The ensuing student selection obviously raises concerns from the perspective of equality, inclusion and access. That has been debated quite a lot in Europe. Is CLIL a form of prestigious education or should it be something that can be offered for all? Does it increase gaps in educational attainment, or can it be used to narrow them? Especially in the early stages of CLIL, the very idea of CLIL was attached to the idea of mainstreaming bilingual education. But of course, what this calls for is pedagogical expertise that can answer to needs for differentiation and forms of support for all learners.

The *ADiBE* project that I just mentioned is very much focusing on these questions. What should we

do to differentiate instruction? What are the ways to support different types of learners? There is also interesting research going on relating to the question of social justice and equity. One example is a study conducted in the context of Spain, which explored the correlation between students' socio-economic background and their performance in subjects such as Spanish, English, and history, both in CLIL and non-CLIL schools. They found a staircase effect in the performance of students in non-CLIL schools in that those from higher social class backgrounds were obtaining better results. Interestingly, students in CLIL schools were obtaining equally high results regardless of their social and economic backgrounds, with the lower-class students seeming to benefit most from CLIL provision. The researchers call attention to the pedagogical practices in CLIL as a possible explanation for these findings. Studies such as this show that there are many interesting avenues to explore with regard to the question of exclusivity, equity and fairness in CLIL. I think we are not there yet to provide any definitive answers, but it certainly is a fruitful area to explore further.

After more than two decades devoted to CLIL research, what is the most essential advice that you can give to CLIL teachers?

Something that I have found to be very beneficial is that CLIL teachers, rather than working on their own, seek forms of cooperation with their colleagues. The importance of shared discussions and sharing experiences with other teachers has been shown to be an important factor in terms of developing CLIL teaching. Many teachers have also found CLIL an enriching experience for their professional development. I find it quite interesting that many CLIL teachers that I have interviewed have mentioned that engaging with CLIL and teaching through a foreign language have also helped them in their teaching. For instance, CLIL has provided insights into language-aware teaching that are also beneficial in other contexts. So, a piece of advice that can be given to CLIL teachers is that teaching through another language and engaging with colleagues while doing so may enrich their work. Another form of cooperation that I would like to advocate for is the one between content and language experts. My impression is that it is not always the case that language teachers would have a specific role in CLIL teaching. I think for many CLIL schools, this kind of connection between content and language teachers would be very fruitful.

My next question is about teacher preparation. What kind of implications does your research in CLIL classrooms provide for teacher educators?

I guess I am coming back to the importance of awareness-raising, because when I have observed CLIL classroom interaction, it seems obvious to me that whenever something is taught, there is a great deal of what could be called "language work", but it is not necessarily thought of in those terms by teachers. Therefore, it really needs opening up what it means in practice that every teacher is a language teacher of his or her subject. I think it would be very important to include such notions in teacher training programs so that rather than keeping the role of language in learning at an abstract level, teachers would be offered some kind of concrete examples of practices to draw on for scaffolding content and language at the same time.

What are some possible ways for CLIL teachers and researchers to collaborate?

I think we need shared forums for dialogue and joint reflection to ensure the two-way process of research informing practice and practitioner insights informing research. One candidate area for such cooperation would be to reflect and exchange thoughts on what constitutes subject-specific language learning and meaning-making and how best to support it in teaching. I would also be advocating for action research

by teachers themselves. Perhaps this dialogue with researchers could be something that triggers their interest in exploring something in their own practice. For example, in the research center that I work in, we have quite a few teachers doing their PhDs on some aspects of their own teaching.

What is missing from the CLIL research? What would you like to see happening?

What I would like to see more of is multidisciplinary research because quite often, CLIL research has been driven by language learning experts and applied linguists. It would be really important to systematically engage both language experts and content experts. So, this is one area where I think we could do more to really foster collaboration. Something that I also find important is to engage in forms of longitudinal research so that we would be better able to answer the kind of questions that you raised earlier. What are the benefits and drawbacks of CLIL? How can it support student learning? What does successful implementation of CLIL require? There are signs that longitudinal CLIL research has started to appear and I am very happy about that. But I think we still need a lot more of it to better understand the processes and complexities involved. As I said earlier, many factors need to be considered when administering CLIL. This is why it is important to engage in longitudinal research endeavors that would seek to address these complexities and account for teacher perceptions, student perceptions and educational policies, just to name some examples. So, multidisciplinary collaboration and longitudinal research would be the two first things that come to my mind in this respect.

How do you see CLIL developing as a research field within the next decade?

This is an interesting question because my personal experience has been that the more I engage with questions of content and language integration in CLIL, the less it is about CLIL as such and the more it is about any form of education. The matters of content and language integration, I think, are very relevant to all forms of education. However, they tend to become more readily visible in bilingual education contexts and the insights gained through CLIL research may also benefit education more generally. Therefore, what I am expecting in the future is more dialogue between CLIL and other strands of research interested in language and content interdependency and disciplinary literacies. I know that there is growing interest in disciplinary literacy perspectives, which do not only include language, but also other semiotic means of meaning making. So, a kind a coherent picture of integrated content and language learning and teaching is something to be sought for in the future, with CLIL research contributing to other research strands.

I am going to ask you my closing question. You have a distinguished career and are actively involved in CLIL research. What do you see as a contribution that you can still make in the field?

What an interesting question! Thinking back to what I have said, I think I would like to be involved even more in the type of interdisciplinary research I was referring to earlier. Something that I would find particularly interesting is to explore the relevance of existing theoretical frameworks of content and language integration for teachers to address matters of subject-specific language and literacies as part of their professional practice. Also, I would like to learn how their experiences and professional expertise can inform theory. You asked a question earlier regarding how research and practitioners should inform each other, I think that is one of the areas where I would like to focus more in the future and be engaged in projects that involve both researchers and practitioners.

When thinking back to my career as a CLIL researcher, I think the inquiry I have been engaged in all through these years tries to understand the ways in which CLIL challenges the taken-for-granted

notions of language learning and teaching. Reflecting on that process would be really important and interesting to me for personal reasons, but also more generally to make sense of how CLIL research has developed over the years, how we have started from more language-focused approaches and have moved towards more disciplinary literacy perspectives that highlight the importance of meaning-making in different subjects. I think those represent quite different orientations to language and its learning. I do not know whether I will ever have time or chance to do it, but it would be really fascinating to explore that trajectory.

Huseyin Uysal is a visiting assistant professor at *Knox College*, the United States. He received his undergraduate degree in English Language Teaching from *Mehmet Akif Ersoy University*, and his master's degree in Linguistics from *Ankara University*. In 2021, he earned his PhD degree in Curriculum and Instruction, specializing in ESOL/Bilingual Education from the *University of Florida*. He taught at various higher education settings in Turkey, Colombia, and the U.S. His scholarship is driven by the values of social justice and grounded in understanding power, identity, and inclusivity in linguistically and culturally diverse schools. He positions himself within the critical and constructivist paradigms by advocating for long-term English learners in the U.S. schools. Some of his research interests include fairness, justice, and equity in language testing, test-taker perspectives on assessment practices, and English learner reclassification. He is serving as the co-chair of the *Advocacy Committee of Illinois Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages–Bilingual Education*, and the co-chair of *Test-Taker Insights in Language Assessment SIG of International Language Testing Association*.

Tarja Nikula is a professor at the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the *University of Jyväskylä (JYU)* in Finland. She earned both her master's degree in 1989 and PhD degree in 1996 from JYU, specializing in interlanguage pragmatics. Her research interests include pragmatic and interactional aspects of language learning and use, multilingual classroom practices, and disciplinary literacy orientations to content and language integrated learning. She has published widely in these areas. For example, she has co-edited the volumes *Language Use and Language Learning in CLIL Classrooms*, and *Conceptualising Integration in CLIL and Multilingual Education*. Together with Christiane Dalton-Puffer, she has co-edited a double special issue on CLIL for *Language Learning Journal* and with Josh Prada on translingual and multilingual pedagogies for *E-JournALL: EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages*. Her academic experience includes serving for ten years as the director of the Centre for Applied Language Studies at JYU. She has also been director of *RECLAS - Research collegium for language in changing society*, a JYU research profiling area in applied language studies, and is currently co-directing a multidisciplinary JYU profiling area *MultiLEAP - Multiliteracies for social participation and in learning across the life span*. She has led an international research project *Language and content integration: towards a conceptual framework (ConCLIL)* and is the leader of the Finnish team in research project *ADiBE - CLIL for all: attention to diversity in bilingual education*, coordinated by the *University of Jaén*.