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Teaching content and language together

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1. What is CLIL?

The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their proper name.

Chinese proverb

Before reading the chapter, think:

✓ What are the benefits of teaching a non-language subject in a foreign language?
✓ What are the risks?

In this chapter you will find an introduction to teaching content through a foreign language.

THE BACKGROUND

Since the 1990s, European institutions (the European Commission and the Council of Europe), concerned with the construction of Europe, have been considering the state of language education in member states. One of their main objectives is to promote a multilingual Europe in which all citizens can use their own language as well as two others.

All EU citizens, by the time they leave compulsory schooling, should be able to speak two languages other than their mother tongue.

A DEFINITION

The acronym CLIL, coined in Europe in 1994, stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning. Once established, it became a powerful tool for promoting language learning.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), in which pupils learn a subject through the medium of a foreign language, has a major contribution to make to the Union's language learning goals.


The essence of CLIL is integration. A CLIL lesson is therefore neither a language lesson nor a subject lesson given in a foreign language. CLIL is an educational approach in which both curricular content – such as Science or Geography – and a foreign language are taught together.

CLIL is a means of teaching curricular subjects through the medium of a language still being learned, providing the necessary language support alongside the subject specialism.

Graddol (2006)

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. That is, in the teaching and learning process, there is a focus not only on content, and not only on language. Each is interwoven, even if the emphasis is greater on one or the other at a given time.

Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010)
What do students learn in a CLIL lesson?

- **Students learn language** while they are in content classes (Natural Science, Social Science, Arts and Crafts, Music, etc.), as they need to understand and use the language to understand and use the content.

- **Students learn content** as this is the main objective in content classes. To facilitate this, strategies are provided for ensuring a thorough understanding of the content.

Students use languages to learn and learn to use languages.

For Ball (2013), this well-known CLIL slogan is a powerful equation, because it brings school departments together, and it often results in a potent exchange of skills.
CLIL MODELS

Nowadays the term CLIL refers to a whole spectrum of teaching strategies in which content and language are taught together, ranging from total immersion to 'language showers'. A commonly shared idea of what CLIL is does not exist, but in all the different variants there is a founding principle: content and language are integrated.

*There is no one model for CLIL – after all, successful learning has to take account of the contextual variables which impact on different school and community settings.*

Coyle (2015)

CLIL may happen in a number of different contexts: from intensive to extensive courses and from individual course units to the entire school year. This flexibility is evident when we analyse the intensity and the amount of time devoted to teaching content in a foreign language. CLIL allows low and high intensity exposure to the foreign language.

- **Low intensity:** the foreign language is only used for a few hours per week (it may include 'language showers' – 20 or 30 minutes talking per day – or subjects only partially given in the foreign language).

- **High intensity:** from total immersion in intensive modules lasting several months, in which a subject is taught all the time in the foreign language, to subjects where the instructions are only partially given in the foreign language.

CLIL embraces **all sectors of education**, from pre-primary to adults. It may involve project work, examination courses, drama, puppets, chemistry experiments or mathematical investigations.

In short, CLIL is **flexible and dynamic**. Topics and subjects (foreign languages and non-language subjects) are integrated in a mutually beneficial way, so as to provide value-added educational outcomes for the widest range of learners.
WHY DOES CLIL WORK?

CLIL works because students learn both language and content. There is some evidence that CLIL learners outperform non-CLIL learners of the same age not only in fluency (Bret, 2011).

Research has shown that there are three essential conditions for learning a language:

- Long-term exposure to the language.
- Possibilities of interaction.
- Attention to the content of the message.

Long-term exposure to the language. Considerable exposure to naturally-occurring language is necessary for ensuring the achievement of a good level of competence in the foreign language. CLIL lessons contribute to increasing the amount of exposure to the foreign language.

Acquiring a foreign language is a long process. It requires the learner to go through necessary stages of ‘imperfect’ knowledge before mastering the various aspects of the foreign language. Any CLIL approach guarantees a considerable increase in the amount of exposure to the foreign language.

Possibilities of interaction. Learners need to have access to spontaneous speech, preferably in an interactive context where they can obtain plenty of information on the structure and function of the foreign language.

As can be seen from schools where CLIL is already in operation, CLIL calls for an interactive teaching style. This means that students have a greater opportunity to participate verbally in the foreign language by interacting with their teacher and classmates. In this way, learners can experiment and try out new language. They are forced to expand their linguistic resources to cope with the demands of content learning.
Attention to the content of the message. CLIL provides plenty of opportunities for incidental language learning – the kind of learning that occurs when the learners' attention is focussed on something different from that which is being taught. Incidental language learning has been shown to be very effective. It positively complements the intentional language learning which typically occurs in the more traditional language classroom.

Using the foreign language to grasp non-language content requires a depth of processing which leads to improved language acquisition. Learning is, at least partly, a problem solving activity and CLIL requires learners to solve problems via the foreign language.

When using a foreign language to learn a non-language subject, a wide range of cognitive processes are activated in the new language. Children acquire foreign language competence by learning, thinking and communicating non-language content. This is what normally occurs in native language acquisition.

Finally, CLIL relies on intrinsic motivation. This means that the learners are involved in interesting and meaningful activities while using the foreign language. When learners are interested in a topic, they are motivated to acquire language to communicate. Language learning applies to what is going on in the classroom and satisfies immediate needs. Knowledge of the language becomes the means of learning content.

To sum up, CLIL is based on language acquisition rather than enforced learning. Learning is improved through increased motivation and the study of natural language seen in real-life situations.
Before continuing reading, think:

- Answer in your notebook:
  - ✓ What do I know about CLIL?
  - ✓ What do I want to know about CLIL?

- At the end of the chapter, you will have to think again:
  - ✓ What have I learnt about CLIL?

Here are some CLIL concepts:

- ✓ The 4 Cs.
- ✓ LOTs.
- ✓ HOTs.
- ✓ Language triptych.
- ✓ BICs.
- ✓ CALPs.
- ✓ Scaffolding.
- ✓ TPR.
- ✓ KWL chart.
- ✓ Venn diagram.

Other CLIL concepts:
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If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples, then you and I will still have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea, and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.

Bernard Shaw

Before reading the chapter, think:

✓ What are the benefits of working with a language and culture assistant for my students?
✓ What are the benefits for me?
✓ Is there a downside?

In this chapter you will find some tips to make the most of your assistant’s stay.

WHAT IS A LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ASSISTANT?

A language assistant is a native-level speaker of a foreign language who supports the school’s teachers with conversation practice. The tasks of a language assistant are different from a teaching assistant and include encouraging oral practice of the foreign language; explaining the culture of their home country; helping in other subjects such as Science, Arts, PE; acting as a role model for correct pronunciation and grammar; and collaborating with teaching staff in creating teaching materials and planning.

Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport
Public schools appoint language assistants through the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte) and the Departments of Education (Consejerías de Educación) of the different regions of Spain (comunidades autónomas), and private or charter schools through other programmes. The language assistants come from the European Union, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Language assistants' applications are evaluated based on a list of conditions that are indicative of a candidate's potential for successful participation in the programme.

Placements last one academic year: generally from the beginning of October until the end of May.

What is required to participate?

✓ To be a passport-holder from an English-speaking country.
✓ To be a university graduate (minimum BA or BS at the end of the academic year preceding the start of the programme), or be a junior or senior.
✓ To be in good physical and psychological condition and pass a background check.
✓ To have basic communication skills in Spanish.

Adapted from http://www.mecd.gob.es/dctm/ministerio/educacion/actividad-internacional/consejerias/eeuu/auxiliaresusa/faq.pdf?documentId=0901e72b8108b1b8

WHY DO CANDIDATES CHOOSE SPAIN?

Language assistants are rewarded by instructing classes in their mother tongue and spreading their culture among Spanish children. They find Spain to be a historically interesting country that offers an enjoyable lifestyle.
2. The role of language assistants in the school and in the classroom

WHAT ARE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES?

Language assistants work under the direction of teachers, who guide them in choosing activities to undertake, while giving them the opportunity to develop new ones. Teachers familiarise language assistants with the language programme offered at their institution and inform them of various activities organised around language learning. Working with a language assistant is a perfect opportunity for students to immerse fully in the language and try to communicate with someone in 'real life'.

According to Spanish regulations regarding the role of the language assistant, the following aspects could be considered essential.

The role of language assistants

Language assistants may:

✓ Teach cultural aspects.
✓ Represent their country as a language and culture ambassador.
✓ Develop the students' oral skills.
✓ Assist teachers in the classroom.
✓ Help maintain the teachers' fluency and update their vocabulary (up to 2 hours/week).

Adapted from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Guía del tutor, 2017-2018
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

There are several benefits when a language assistant interacts with a class of students. A language assistant can be:

- **A cultural resource.** Language assistants can share experiences and stories of life in the country where the target language is spoken. By inviting students to compare their experience of life in Spain with that of the target-language country, language assistants can play a significant role in giving students an understanding of other cultures. Pen-pal projects and student exchanges often arise from this. The language assistant can include authentic materials, such as photos of their hometown, family members or their old school to use in group conversations. Students will be able to learn in a meaningful way while finding out about the culture of another country.

- **A source of spontaneity.** The ability to speak with confidence is emphasised in the curriculum. However, opportunities for spontaneous talk in the classroom are not always available.

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The role of language assistants

Language assistants may not:

- ✓ Take complete responsibility for the classroom.
- ✓ Take responsibility for assessment.
- ✓ Take responsibility for evaluation and grading.
- ✓ Take responsibility for preparation and correction of exams.
- ✓ Take responsibility in terms of discipline.

Adapted from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, *Guía del tutor, 2017-2018*
Other than helping students produce, prepare and practise dialogues, language assistants can help students participate in more authentic exchanges. Examples include meeting and greeting students, participating in classroom activities using simple expressions in the target language. These exchanges mean that students get to use the target language for real communicative ends and build their speaking confidence in the process.

- **A way to support students individually or in small groups.** Language assistants can focus on small groups or on one-to-one sessions. For students who do not have the opportunity to go on holiday to a foreign country, having a language assistant in the classroom might be the first opportunity they have to talk to a native speaker. Assistants might assist students individually to prepare for their speaking exams, practising their answers and giving feedback on accuracy or pronunciation, for example.

- **A source of creativity.** Many educators are talking about WAGOLL (What A Good One Looks Like). This technique uses example texts for speaking and writing that help students identify good features of a text and compare them to their own. Language assistants are a fantastic source of WAGOLL materials. For example, they can write and record tailored, up-to-date listening materials and prepare role plays of the type that interests students. They can come up with new games or might even design flashcards, board games, fishing games, bingo or other type of games.

- **A source of continuing professional development.** Contact with language assistants is not just valuable for students, but also for teachers. As staff have limited opportunities for conversation in another language, language assistants can help maintain teachers' fluency and help update their vocabulary. They can also help staff develop their knowledge and understanding of cultures in different countries.
3. Collaborative models to incorporate a language assistant in the classroom

Working together to create value while sharing virtual and physical space.

Rosen

Hibler (2001) mentions that according to recent studies the scenario of team teaching has grown in the past decades and it has resulted in positive results for all involved (e.g. content teachers, language assistants, native speakers and students). When there is clear cooperation between the teacher and the language assistant, when interacting with the same group of students at the same time, there are different roles that this team might perform. Robinson and Schaible (1995) identify six models of collaboration in the classroom.
The teacher takes responsibility for instructing the entire class, while the language assistant goes around the room and monitors student understanding, making sure they stay on task (Robinson, 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If one of you is...</th>
<th>The other can be...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Lecturing.</td>
<td>✓ Checking for understanding with an individual student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Checking for engagement – walk around and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Gathering data – record engagement, materials, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Reinforcing good behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Setting up for next activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Echoing key words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Using proximity for behaviour management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Asking clarifying questions to individual students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Providing kinesthetic tools, manipulatives, aids and props.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Managing ICT devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Making sure worksheets are being completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Conferencing individually with students about progress, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Keeping binders or other organisational tools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teacher is in charge of lesson content and the language assistant is responsible for providing follow-up activities on related topics or on study skills (language).

| COMPLIMENTARY/SUPPORTIVE MODEL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>If one of you is...</strong></th>
<th><strong>The other can be...</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Teaching content.</td>
<td>✓ Clarifying, paraphrasing, simplifying or recording content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Pre-teaching specific study or social skills and monitoring students' use of them.</td>
<td>✓ Teaching the academic content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Working with students who require reteaching of a concept.</td>
<td>✓ Working with the rest of the students on enrichment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this model students are randomly divided and both teacher and language assistant are in charge of teaching the same materials with their corresponding group.

**PARALLEL MODEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If one of you is...</th>
<th>The other can be...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Checking for understanding.</td>
<td>✓ Checking for understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Preparing for one side of a debate.</td>
<td>✓ Preparing for the opposing side of the debate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Circulating checking for comprehension while students are engaged in their work.</td>
<td>✓ Circulating checking for comprehension while students are engaged in their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Providing instruction or presentation.</td>
<td>✓ Providing instruction or presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Reviewing homework and providing feedback to students.</td>
<td>✓ Reviewing homework and providing feedback to students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Reteaching or pre-teaching.</td>
<td>✓ Monitoring as they work on practice materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Facilitating silent reading.</td>
<td>✓ Previewing upcoming information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Reading a test aloud.</td>
<td>✓ Invigilating a test silently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Explaining a new concept.</td>
<td>✓ Conducting role play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Explaining a new concept.</td>
<td>✓ Modelling a concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Explaining a new concept.</td>
<td>✓ Asking clarifying questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This model is similar to the parallel model, but students are divided according to their learning needs, level or other criteria (exam preparation, for example).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIFFERENTIATED MODEL</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>If one of you is...</strong></td>
<td><strong>The other can be...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Introducing the new content to the whole class.</td>
<td>✓ Leading small group handwriting practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Conducting large group instruction.</td>
<td>✓ Preparing for the external exams with a small group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Working with the large group.</td>
<td>✓ Reading with a small group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This model refers to the situation when both teacher and language assistant actively share instructions. This may also mean that one of them may present the new material to the students while the other constructs a concept map on the board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If one of you is...</th>
<th>The other can be...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Explaining a new concept.</td>
<td>✓ Conducting role play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Asking clarifying questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Making last minute copies.</td>
<td>✓ Reviewing homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Providing a study or test-taking strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Writing on the board.</td>
<td>✓ Lecturing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Reading aloud.</td>
<td>✓ Calling on students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Lecturing.</td>
<td>✓ Modelling note taking on the board/overhead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Writing key points on the board or laptop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Asking clarifying questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Pulling up an online site to support instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ Both teacher and language assistant share the reading of a story/text so that students hear two voices.
This model is a type of **team teaching model** in which teacher and language assistant work together in designing the course and then teach the material together (with both people speaking). They exchange and discuss ideas in front of the learner. This approach is according to Brinton, Wesche and Snow (1989) a significant approach in language education. It is designed to provide second language learners instruction in content and language.

**Before continuing reading, think:**

- Which collaborative model do I usually use?
- Which model will I use in my next lesson?