



CLIL AS AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an innovative approach to language teaching that develops both subject knowledge and language skills at the same time. The article defines advantages of CLIL in language teaching, integrating content with language learning, CLIL provides meaningful and authentic learning situations that increase learner engagement, critical thinking, and communication. Studies show that CLIL improves language skills, especially writing, vocabulary, and interaction, when learner-centered strategies are used. Overall, CLIL goes beyond traditional language teaching by focusing on real-life communication and interdisciplinary learning, making language learning more effective and meaningful.

Keywords: Communication, engagement, content, integration, input, output, language, learning, meaningful, subject.

Introduction

In recent years, language education has increasingly moved beyond traditional methods that treat language as an isolated subject. Globalization, multilingualism, and the growing need for learners to use language meaningfully in real-life contexts have encouraged educators to adopt more integrated and learner-centered approaches. One such approach is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which combines the teaching of subject content with the simultaneous development of language skills. Rather than focusing solely on grammar and vocabulary, CLIL promotes language learning through meaningful engagement with academic or thematic content.

CLIL is widely recognized as an innovative approach to language teaching because it places language in an authentic communicative context. Learners

acquire a new language while studying subjects such as science, history, geography, or mathematics, allowing them to develop both cognitive and linguistic competence at the same time. This dual-focused approach supports deeper learning, as students are encouraged to think critically, solve problems, and use the target language as a tool for understanding and expressing complex ideas. As a result, CLIL enhances motivation and learner autonomy while fostering higher-order thinking skills.

Furthermore, CLIL aligns with modern educational goals that emphasize interdisciplinarity, communicative competence and lifelong learning. It prepares learners not only to master a language but also to apply it effectively in academic and professional contexts. Despite its many advantages, the successful implementation of CLIL requires careful planning, appropriate teacher training, and suitable materials. Coyle, Hood, and Marsh succinctly defined CLIL as “a dual-focus educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language¹” (2010, p. 1). Similarly, Wolff (2007, p. 16) defined it as “any educational situation in which an additional language and therefore not the most widely used language of the environment is used for teaching and learning of subjects other than the language itself.²” In other words, CLIL is “a generic umbrella term which would encompass any activity in which ... both language and the subject have a joint curricular role” (Marsh 2002, p. 58)³. CLIL is, then, a way of combining subject learning and learning a language that is not the mother tongue of the learners; ‘two for the price of one’ as Bonnet (2012) put it⁴.

We consider that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an educational approach in which a foreign or second language is used as the medium of instruction to teach both subject content and language simultaneously. In CLIL, learners acquire language skills while studying non-language subjects, such as science, history, or geography, so that content learning and language learning are integrated and mutually reinforcing.

¹ Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: Content and language integrated learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

² Wolff, D. (2007). *CLIL: Bridging the gap between school and working life*. In D. Marsh & D. Wolff (Eds.), *Diverse contexts-converging goals. CLIL in Europe* (pp. 15–25). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

³ Marsh, D. (2002). *CLIL/EMILE – The European dimension: Actions, trends and foresight potential*. Brussels: European Commission

⁴ Bonnet, A. (2012). *Towards an evidence base for CLIL: How to integrate qualitative and quantitative as well as process, product and participant perspectives in CLIL research*. *International CLIL Research Journal*, 4(1), 66–78.

We can suggest the following CLIL activities for language learners:

1. Activating for CLIL: Competition: quickest or most; Questions; Scrambled sentence; Red and green cards; Props or visuals; Video clip; Internet; Spider diagram; Placemat; KWL; Predict, observe and explain; Sentence;

2. Input: Finding materials online, Using pictures and asking questions, Interview, Hands on experiments or experiences, Mind the gap, Spot the words, Make a gapped text;

3. Encouraging speaking output: hot air balloon debate, the controversial questions, taboo guessing game, Elevator pitch, Talking about talking;

4. Encouraging writing output: I am a..., The story of....., Dicotgloss, Three picture story, Class magazine, Encyclopedia entry, False friend, High or low demands; Correction code;

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) improves language skills by creating meaningful, authentic, and cognitively rich learning conditions. Instead of teaching language in isolation, CLIL integrates it with subject content, which leads to more effective and lasting language development.

Meaningful context for language use- in CLIL classrooms, learners use the target language as a tool to understand subject content and solve problems, rather than simply studying it in isolation. Vocabulary and grammar are introduced and practiced within authentic, content-based situations, which enhances both retention and accuracy. By embedding language in real tasks and academic contexts, CLIL shifts the focus from language as an abstract subject to language as a practical means of communication, allowing learners to develop fluency and confidence while engaging with meaningful content.

Development of all four language skills- CLIL supports the development of all four language skills by integrating them naturally into content-based learning. In terms of listening, learners are exposed to explanations, videos, and peer discussions related to the subject, which enhances comprehension through authentic input. Speaking skills are strengthened through group work, discussions, and presentations, allowing students to express ideas and opinions confidently. Reading is developed as learners engage with subject-related texts, such as articles, charts, and diagrams, while practicing strategies like skimming, scanning, and inferencing. Finally, writing is fostered through tasks such as summaries, reports, and project work, with a focus on clarity, structure, and the use of appropriate academic language. By engaging all four skills in meaningful,



content-based contexts, CLIL ensures learners develop balanced and functional language competence.

Increased exposure to target language – CLIL enhances language learning through increased exposure to the target language, both in terms of quantity and quality. Learners spend extended periods engaging with the language as they study subject content, which provides consistent and meaningful input. Key vocabulary is repeated across lessons, reinforcing retention and understanding, while visuals, diagrams, and other forms of scaffolding support comprehension. By combining prolonged exposure with contextual and visual support, CLIL ensures that learners internalize language more effectively and are able to use it confidently in real communicative situations.

Interaction and communication- CLIL strongly emphasizes interaction and communication by creating a collaborative learning environment. Through pair and group work, learners are encouraged to negotiate meaning, share ideas, and solve problems together in the target language. This interaction allows students to receive immediate feedback from both peers and teachers, helping them correct mistakes and refine their language use. By actively communicating in meaningful contexts, learners develop both fluency and accuracy, while gaining confidence in using the language for real purposes.

Reduced language anxiety- Another way CLIL improves language learning is by reducing language anxiety. By shifting the focus from the formal aspects of language to the meaning of the content, learners concentrate on understanding and engaging with subject material rather than worrying about mistakes. This approach allows students to use the target language more freely, lowering anxiety and encouraging them to take risks in speaking, writing, and interacting. As a result, learners become more confident and motivated, which supports more natural and effective language development.

Besides that, scholars and researches mentioned the following ideas about implementing CLIL to develop language learners' language skills.

David Coyle, Philip Hood, and David Marsh are foundational researchers in CLIL studies. Their work highlights that students in CLIL programs demonstrate significant improvements in language proficiency across listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, because CLIL provides an immersive and meaningful

context for language use alongside content learning⁵. María Lasagabaster and Aintzane Doiz reported that learners in CLIL programs display higher levels of motivation and engagement, which strongly contributes to improved language learning outcomes, particularly in speaking and other communicative skills⁶. Griva and Kasvikis found that CLIL projects and activities enhanced learners' target language skills, particularly in writing and communicative tasks, when integrated with meaningful instructional strategies. Their findings suggest that integrating content and language through purposeful activities encourages learners to use the target language authentically, promoting deeper engagement and improved communicative competence. This highlights the importance of well-designed CLIL instruction that combines subject content with interactive, learner-centered methodologies to maximize language learning outcomes.

There are some benefits of CLIL in language teaching:

- To support the development of both linguistic skills and content knowledge via an integrated, content-based approach;
- To develop learners' language skills and competence;
- To employ innovative technologies to enhance foreign language acquisition;
- To support partnership and cooperative engagement among teachers and students;
- To promote English as a vehicle for acquiring knowledge and for communicating ideas;
- To foster understanding and appreciation of different cultural perspectives;
- To integrate English-medium teaching and learning methods into additional classroom activities.

In conclusion, CLIL offers significant benefits for language teaching by integrating language learning with content knowledge in a meaningful and purposeful way. It supports the development of learners' linguistic competence while enhancing subject understanding, encourages the use of innovative technologies, and promotes cooperation among teachers and students. Moreover, CLIL positions English as a tool for learning and communication, fosters cultural awareness, and extends English-medium instruction beyond traditional classroom

⁵ Alla Shykun. Content and language integrated learning: enhancing language acquisition and content understanding. *International Science Journal of Education and Linguistics*.2023; 2(4):39-44

⁶ Lasagabaster, D., & Doiz, A. (2016). CLIL and motivation: The effect of individual and contextual variables. *Language Learning Journal*, 44(2), 137-150.



practices. Overall, CLIL represents an effective and holistic approach that enriches both language education and learners' overall academic development.

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