Getting started

A quick look at CLIL

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CLIL: What is it?

Some definitions

There is no widespread agreement on what the term CLIL means. One of the most often quoted definitions states that CLIL is 'a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of content and language' (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010). The definition is useful and succinct in that it helps a reader get an immediate general sense of a key aspect of CLIL – learning content through a language that is not one's first language. What that definition and many others do not offer are sufficiently clear parameters in reference to the goals of CLIL, time allotted for studying through the L1 and L2, the balance between content and language instruction, the defining characteristics of participating students, or pedagogical approaches used (Cenoz, Genesee and Gorter, 2013). What follow are a series of definitions, some of which do not fully align one with the other, but that are nonetheless used in diverse contexts. Ultimately, CLIL is context dependent. Anyone developing a CLIL programme may as an initial step wish to agree with key stakeholders on a definition of CLIL.

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In the ideal, CLIL is a dual-focused teaching and learning approach in which the L1[1] and one or more additional languages are used for promoting both content mastery and language acquisition to pre-defined levels.[2] At least two languages including the L1 are used to teach different high-status content subjects such as Mathematics and History. CLIL educators largely separate the L1 and L2 by teaching a given subject primarily through one or the other language. However, the L1 is used sparingly and judiciously by teachers teaching through the students' L2 and vice versa, thereby taking into account the fact that the L1 and L2 continually interact in the learner's mind. Concomitantly, content and language learning are systematically supported in both content and language classes. In the short and long term, CLIL aims to support students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds in developing age- and grade-appropriate levels of:

- L1 competence in reading, writing, speaking and listening comprehension
- advanced functional proficiency in all school content subjects, such as Mathematics and Science taught primarily through the L2 and in those taught primarily through the L1

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[1] The term 'L1' refers to a student's first and strongest language. For simplicity's sake, when referring to a situation in general, it is assumed that the L1 is also the society's dominant language. At the same time, it is recognised that for individual students from immigrant or minority backgrounds the L1 can be their second (L2) or even third language (L3).

- understanding and appreciation of the culture(s) of the L1 group(s), and of the L2 group(s);

At the same time, CLIL aims to promote:

- capacity for and interest in inter-cultural communication; and
- the cognitive and social skills and habits required for success in an ever-changing world (Mehisto, 2017).

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A form of planned bilingual education that uses L2 for less than 50% of instructional time for at least one year of instruction (Cummins, 2017).

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All types of provision in which a second language (…) is used to teach certain subjects in the curriculum other than the language lessons themselves (Eurydice 2006).

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CLIL is an approach or method which integrates the teaching of content from the curriculum with the teaching of a non-native language (Bentley, 2010).

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CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of content and language with the objective of promoting both content and language mastery to pre- defined levels (Maljers, Marsh, Wolff, Genesee, Frigols-Martín, Mehisto, 2010 as cited in Marsh et al.).

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The term Content-and-Language-Integrated-Learning (CLIL) refers to educational settings where a language other than the students' mother tongue is used as medium of instruction (Dalton-Puffer, 2007).

The different models of CLIL

- **Language-led**
- **Subject-led (modular)**
- **Subject-led (partial immersion)**

There is quite a wide variety of CLIL models, which are usually placed on a CLIL continuum and currently considered to be under the CLIL 'umbrella'. Efforts to present the models along a CLIL continuum have been made by a number of authors. Here are some of these efforts:

1. Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010) on CLIL

Coyle et al. differentiate CLIL models between those that have extensive instruction through the vehicular language (50% or more) and partial instruction which might be under 5% of the whole curriculum. (Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. 2010: 15). The authors clarify that the percentage of the curriculum might be drawn from a variety of subjects and perhaps in partial instruction even be a project-based modular approach.

For extensive instruction through the vehicular language, it is stated that the curriculum should be purpose designed with objectives that lead to high levels of content mastery as well as linguistic proficiency.

2. CLIL continuum by John Clegg (2006)

In this case Clegg defines the two ends of the continuum as 'soft CLIL' and 'hard CLIL'. In hard CLIL contexts we could place foreign-language medium classrooms.

Nevertheless, usually foreign-language medium classrooms (e.g. in English medium schools) do not really have dual-focus. A science teacher in an English medium school considers that his students can follow the lesson and function adequately in class. There is often a language entrance exam and the classes may also involve native speakers (CLIL in the Bulgarian context - see Task 2 of Teacher Training).

On the other end of the continuum, as soft-CLIL, Clegg considers classes which use language content but focus mainly on language, i.e. they might have a subject-based theme (e.g. volcanoes, pollution) but in reality the teacher will not assess progress or achievement in content knowledge or skills. The topic (content) is used in class but the main aim is language learning. This is however, content-based learning and does not have a genuine dual-focus. (http://e-clil.uws.ac.uk/images/docs/E-CLIL_TT_Handbook_EN.pdf)

3. The 4Cs of CLIL (Coyle 2007, Coyle, Hood and Marsh 2010)

Content – Communication- Cognition – Culture (or Citizenship / Community)

www.ecml.at/mtp2/clilmatrix/en/qmain.html

CLIL: what are the benefits?

According to Bentley (2010:6).'CLIL aims to:

- Introduce learners to new concepts through studying the curriculum in a non-native language

- Improve learners' production of the language of curricular subjects

- Improve learners' performance in both curricular subjects and the target language

- Increase learners' confidence in the target language and the L1

•Provide materials which develop thinking skills from the start

•Encourage stronger links with values of community and citizenship

•Make the curricular subject the main focus of classroom materials

CLIL: what does a lesson look like?

- CLIL: How to do it? (by the British Council)

- CLIL: A lesson framework (by the British Council)

- Planning a lesson (video by the Elapse project)

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