

THE IMPORTANCE OF USING A “CLIL” METHOD IN TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This article provides a teaching method of the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). CLIL is widely spread in European countries, for learning content through an additional language (foreign or second) as a consequence of teaching both the language and the subject. In this methodology utilized in bilingual programs, particularly in science education, that provides student not only with communicative and linguistic benefits, however additionally, incorporating subject matter expertise with Content and Language Integrated Learning, which pertains to the acquisition of English language skills.

Keywords: CLIL, English language, European countries, linguistic benefits, foreign languages

Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning is a dual-focused educational approach for learning and teaching with the objective of promoting both content and language mastery to predefined levels (Marsh et al. 2010). From 1990s CLIL came out one of the integrative multidisciplinary convergence, that requires varied research approaches. Eurydice (2006) observes that one of the first pieces of legislation regarding cooperation in CLIL is in 1995 Resolution of the Council, it indicates that encouragement of innovative methods of teaching classes in foreign language. Coyle, Holmes and King (2009:14) summarize the characteristics of CLIL, that it involves to learning environments which have potential to offer diverse teaching and learning goals and experiences. This resulted in the integration of the best practice based on suitable, meaningful and pertinent content.

Each of the European Commission report is distinct. There was a lack of existing research to comprehensively study and elucidate the integrated language learning across Europe before 2002. Prior to 2006, a similar lack of research existed regarding the teaching of languages to students in European educational institutions and the resulting inclusion trends. The same was applicable to understanding the contribution of multilingualism to creativity in relation to languages before 2009. These reports were pioneering and innovative, and were commissioned by European Commission to address the knowledge gaps in these specific areas. Similarly the remaining two encyclopedia articles are original, centered on content and language integrated learning as a cross-disciplinary endeavor.

In these days, we are entering an era where the added value of language learning, combined with the development of interconnected electronic literacy, is increasingly significant. This report outlines various factors that are identified as driving innovation, including the neurological, cognitive, motivational, and social aspects of learning. The publications within this thesis predominantly focus on the majority of these driving forces, particularly by connecting research from diverse disciplines to teaching and learning practice.



The aim and extent of the research

This thesis examines the knowledge, cognitive processes, and instructional practices of teachers who teach academic subjects in a foreign language at a secondary school in Spain. The research is conducted within the framework of a Bilingual Education Project (referred to as the BEP) jointly administered by the Spanish Ministry of Education and the British Council. It focuses on the practices and perceptions of four teachers in a secondary school participating in this project. This study is part of a broader research program investigating the phenomenon of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) in Europe. Briefly, CLIL involves teaching academic subjects through the medium of a second or foreign language. Over the past fifteen years, this approach has garnered increasing attention in Europe at the policy, practitioner, and research levels.

In the broader European context under consideration in this study, CLIL is regarded at the EU policy level as a crucial component of the Union's efforts to enhance plurilingual competence among its populace. The EU's 2004-6 action plan for promoting language learning and language diversity highlights that CLIL plays a significant role in advancing the Union's objectives for language acquisition. It is emphasized that CLIL can offer valuable opportunities for students to put their newly acquired language skills into immediate practice, rather than learning them solely for future application (European Commission 2003:19).

CLIL is perceived as a fundamental strategy for fostering a more multilingual citizenship within the EU and has been introduced with varying levels of political and economic backing in numerous EU member states. However, a persistent challenge that arises is the issue of adequacy preparing and training CLIL teachers. It is crucial that teaching staff possess the appropriate language proficiency and receive methodological training for this approach to be effectively implemented. This presents a challenge at the policy and program implementation levels since the ambitious aspirations for CLIL implementation across Europe cannot be achieved without an adequate number of trained teachers or sufficient in service professional development for existing teachers.

How teachers benefit

Teachers can also derive benefit from integrating academic content into their language lessons. Some language instructors may feel apprehensive about introducing other subjects, particularly if they lack confidence in their ability to teach those subjects. However, integrating content into language lessons does not necessitate that teachers be experts in the subject matter, as they are essentially teaching the language of geography, science, or other disciplines. Inclusion of content can enhance the engagement and enjoyment of lessons, adding variety to lesson planning and delivery. Additionally, it can help rejuvenate students' learning experience and offer a fresh perspective. By creating a dynamic and integrated classroom setting, both educators and students can gain from a more stimulating and gratifying learning environment. Moreover, incorporating CLIL connect into lessons can aid teachers develop their own subject knowledge and become more well-rounded educators. Teaching CLIL lessons can help teachers develop their language-teaching skills by adapting their strategies to meet the needs of teaching subject content. Teachers implementing CLIL should have a good comprehension of language usage and be competent in using language as a teaching tool. It is crucial for teachers with limited linguistic skills to adjust their content and instructional approaches accordingly. In essence, CLIL allows educators to utilize the links between language and subject-related content to enhance the effectiveness of teaching. Often, CLIL can boost students enthusiasm for learning the material is presented by teachers.



Additionally, initial concerns regarding the negative impact of CLIL on the acquisition of subject matter were quickly dispelled by research demonstrating that teaching subjects through a foreign language does not impede the assimilation of content. Moreover, there is evidence indicating that learning content in CLIL contexts can be even more effective.

These findings indicate that the enhanced cognitive effort required to learn content through a foreign language can result in CLIL students becoming more proficient learners. This is because "linguistic problems... often prompt intensified mental construction activity resulting in deeper semantic processing and better understanding of curricular concepts" (Dalton Puffer, 2008: 143). Mental construction, scaffolding, the development of lower and higher-order thinking skills (LOTS and HOTS), student-centered learning, and attention to diversity and multiple intelligences in the classroom are all fundamental components of CLIL methodology.

Examples of CLIL development in selected Europeans countries

The Netherlands:

The Netherlands was among the first countries to enact the development of European plurilingualism and bilingual education in response to the Maastricht's Agreement in 1992. By 2007, approximately 300 schools were classified as bilingual schools.

Finland:

Finland was also an early responder to the challenge of CLIL, particularly within Jyväskylä, with the Ministry of Education recommending the expansion of CLIL as early as 1989. The positive results of an experiment in 1990 and new education legislation led to the introduction of Swedish immersion classes in 1992, followed by French, German, and Russian language classes in subsequent years. By 1996, CLIL programs were implemented in 251 Finnish schools, with schools having the freedom to choose how to apply CLIL.

Hungary:

Hungary's history of bilingual education and CLIL began with teachers and parents initiating primary CLIL programs in 1989, which continued to develop over the years. The first experiences with teaching subjects through a foreign language can be traced back to 1987. By 2001, there were 25 primary CLIL programs in Budapest and 60 in the countryside, accounting for 6% of all primary schools in Hungary. Initiatives for CLIL teacher training and curriculum development further solidified the presence of CLIL in Hungary

Czech Republic:

The evolution of CLIL in the Czech Republic emerged through initiatives from the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports, the National Institute for Education, and the National Institute for Further Education in the 1990s. In line with the EU Action Plan on Languages, the Czech national plan for education offered CLIL education opportunities for teachers through pre-service and in-service training. The National Institute for Education provided support for CLIL through the production of online materials. The Socrates project called TIE-CLIL also contributed to the development of CLIL modules.

Germany:

The history of implementation of CLIL in German schools goes back to the first bilingual German-French programmes in the 1960s. Similarly to the European countries, CLIL programmes in English languages started to spread in the 1990s and fully developed in 2000.

Poland:

In Poland, as well as in other countries such as Hungary, the practice of CLIL in education has been implemented under the term bilingual education. Its origins can be traced back to the 1970s, but it gained even more popularity after the revolution in 1990. Initially, the first schools



offering bilingual programs were higher secondary schools. Following the educational reform in 1999, CLIL was also introduced in lower secondary schools.

Slovakia:

In Slovakia, the development of CLIL began in response to positive feedback from teachers regarding the ITV (Integrated Thematic Teaching) program. Although the ITV program, originating from the USA, did not initially include languages, it effectively trained teachers in integrating subject disciplines.

The initial form of teaching subject content through a foreign language (English, German, French, and Spanish) in Slovakia was through bilingual education. However, teaching bilingually in bilingual schools, which involved teaching at least 3 school subjects exclusively in a foreign language, was deemed too demanding for all schools and their students. Therefore, in order to extend the benefits of bilingual instruction to as many learners as possible, a CLIL method was developed in Slovakia shortly after 2000.

In 2008, the Slovak National Institute for Education initiated a 5-year experiment with CLIL called "Didactic Effectiveness of CLIL in Teaching Foreign Languages in Primary Education." This experiment explored the potential implementation of CLIL on the primary level, beginning from the first grade. The experiment confirmed that this approach is feasible and identified both positive and negative outcomes that require further development.

Field-specificity in CLIL teaching

A significant observation is the difference in the utilization of scaffolding methods between the natural sciences such as science and geography, and the social science subjects. This distinction can be clarified by the historical background and characteristics of these subjects, including how they have evolved, been practiced, and taught over time as mentioned by Nikula and colleagues in 2016. Natural sciences typically offer various supportive resources, while social sciences tend to provide fewer of these materials, a sentiment echoed by Author 1, Colleague 1, and Colleague 2 in 2018. This disparity results in natural sciences being more easily comprehensible due to the contextual clues they provide. Social science education, on the other hand, tends to focus more on extensive discussions that are led by students, involve fewer Initiating, Responding, Evaluating (IRE) patterns, and include more referential questions. This approach encourages longer periods of student dialogue and enables students to elaborate more on their thoughts.

Research methodology

For the first objective, a content analysis was conducted on various sources like articles, books, and websites. Questionnaires and interviews were employed for the second objective to understand the teaching practices utilized by teachers. Additionally, questionnaires were used for the third objective to identify the learning practices of students. Interviews were also conducted to support objectives 2 and 3. Objective 4 involved analyzing data from objectives 1, 2, and 3 to create a model for content and language integrated learning, validated by twenty expert teachers.

Instruments:

The content analysis involved 354 items related to language and content teaching in math, science, and social studies, from which key themes were derived to form the foundation for questionnaires distributed to teachers and students. Interviews with program managers and subject teachers were based on these themes to gain insights into monitoring and teaching practices.

Participants:



This study involved 128 teachers and 306 students from three Catholic schools in Thailand with English programs. The teachers were native English speakers from Britain, America, and the Philippines, sharing similar teaching backgrounds and qualifications.

Results:

Objectives on instructional methods in content subjects, revealing 8 key themes crucial for successful English programs teaching math, science, and social studies. among the schools and teachers.

Conclusion

This research utilized existing literature as a basis to develop a framework for studying scaffolding in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). The study involved observing twelve hours of CLIL teaching to identify scaffolding strategies used by three teachers in science, geography, and social science subjects. The results revealed that these CLIL teachers employ various scaffolding strategies, particularly focusing on aiding comprehension by bridging familiar and unfamiliar knowledge, utilizing supportive materials, and explaining academic language. While they assist students in task completion by building upon their ideas, there was limited evidence of promoting metacognitive skills. Variances were also observed in how scaffolding is approached in natural sciences versus social sciences. One notable implication from the findings is the significance of context, highlighting differences between CLIL and English Language Learning (ELL) teachers in their scaffolding methods. The coherence among CLIL teachers and students facilitates better comprehension scaffolding, although there is room for improvement in supporting task-solving activities. Overall, the study suggests that content teachers extend support to students even without formal language teaching backgrounds.

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