

Creative Teaching CLIL in the Secondary Classroom

An Introduction to CLIL

What is CLIL?

Content and Language Integrated Learning

*'Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual focussed educational approach in which an **additional language** is used for the teaching and learning of both the content and language. That is, in the learning and teaching 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. CLIL is not a new form of language education. It is not a new form of subject education. It is an innovative fusion of both.'* (CLIL- Coyle, Hood and Marsh, CUP 2010)

In Essence:

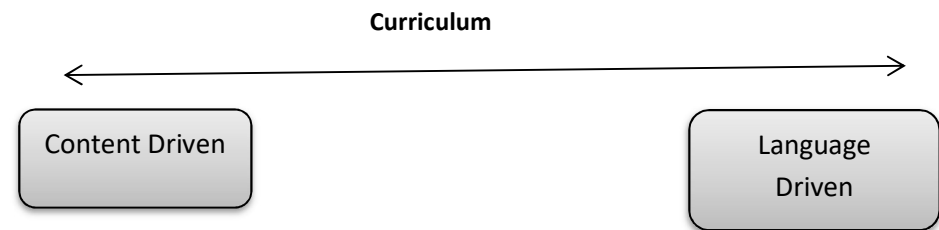
- Teaching a subject/content, e.g. science, maths, history, geography etc., using another language, e.g. English. *Content* is the focus *not* the *English*. Assessment should mirror this by testing the development of the students' *content* knowledge.
- Students should have a basic knowledge of English to be in a CLIL class, and/or have supporting language lessons if lower level. However, there is no need for proficiency.
- It has been taken on board by the European Commission so that students have two languages when they leave school. As such, secondary schools across Europe are being asked to create CLIL lessons and/or syllabus.
- It requires the subject (content) teacher to alter their usual methodology in order to encourage communication and help students understand lessons. Encouraging communication is common practise in

the ELT classroom. This requires collaboration between the content and language sectors of secondary schools to create CLIL lessons.

- Teachers need to 'scaffold' lessons, i.e. adapt lessons to create tasks suitable for the students' level of English. This will enable the students to learn about the subject (content) in the foreign language. 'Scaffolding' is common practise in the ELT classroom reiterating the need to work with ELT colleagues in school.
- CLIL is inherently motivational and is a learner training strategy as students find out ways to communicate in order to trade and gather information.

Are you teaching CLIL?

CLIL may be *content* driven (focussed on the subject being taught) or *language* driven (focussed on the language used to learn the subject). Both are perfectly valid and not at all mutually exclusive. They can work in mutual cooperation.



Total immersion does *not* mean the teacher or school are in fact using CLIL. Students in this type of bilingual environment would use the foreign language to communicate in and outside of class, and teachers would use materials in class designed for L1 learners in that foreign language, e.g. English text books. They have far greater contact time in English, but nothing is being done to actively teach the language. Lessons have not been adapted or re-written by content teachers and teachers have not had to change their style of teaching to be more communicative.

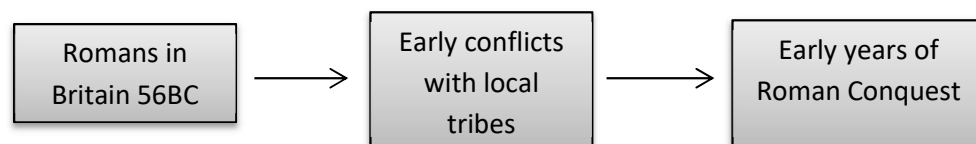
CLIL teachers need to:

- Adapt their methodology to teach content classes in a new way.
- Adapt lesson material by turning it into English and providing tasks which help students understand the content and communicate in a foreign language in class.
- Reduce *Teacher Talk Time* (TTT) in class and encourage *Student Talk Time* (STT)
- Create activities which are more task based, project like, interactive and, as such, learner centred.
- These materials focus more clearly on the role that language plays in the student's understanding of the concepts in the subject.

This means that content teachers begin to think about language and language teachers begin to think about content.

Sequencing in CLIL

In subject teaching concepts are taught in a horizontal, or vertical, sequences. This is *conceptual sequencing*. For example, a history syllabus may be organised as follows.



In a content heavy syllabus, the subject is then discussed for a month and not only an hour as it may be in an English class. People learn well this way. As such, the CLIL syllabus resembles this.

In an ELT, language focussed environment, the syllabus follows the language the students are expected to learn, i.e. present simple to past simple, then present perfect etc. The content is secondary to that. As such, the content is often, substandard or, at worst, incorrect. The topics are chosen by examiners and publishers who deem them relevant. They are brief, broad and may not motivate in the way that intense learning of content can.

The Structure of a CLIL Lesson.

In a content focussed syllabus, however, language is often taken for granted. The teacher doesn't consider what the students need to say or do in order to receive and exchange information. Indeed, they'll know the vocabulary being taught as this is often the focus, but not the grammar or functions needed to do so. 'Text Type' language for example, i.e. language relevant to specific types of texts such as CV language or scientific experiment words, is often regarded as just learnt in the content field. In the ELT field, it is understood that this language needs to be explicitly taught.

As such, a CLIL lesson is made up of three key parts along with cultural awareness raising, i.e. the 4Cs

- 1) Content – The *content* you will teach, e.g. the planets in a science lesson. (Concepts)
- 2) Cognition – The *language skills/cognitive aspects* used to teach the concepts, e.g. speaking, writing, critical thinking etc. (Procedures)
- 3) Communication – The grammar and vocabulary used in the lesson (*language*), e.g. adjectives, present simple, functions etc.
- 4) Culture – The link to the culture, environment, society you exist/participate in, compare/contrast with others, show interconnectivity and relationships between one another's cultures/environment

A CLIL Lesson notes: Join in the CLIL lesson then take notes on the 4 aspects.

Content: What was it?

Cognition: What skills did you use? What did your brain do?

Communication: What language did you use?

Culture: What did you learn about the environment and/or people around you and their relationship to other aspects?

Activity Types in CLIL

Look at the two different vocabulary activities. Discuss:

- Which activity is cognitively more challenging?
- Which activity is the most appropriate for building knowledge?
- Which activity offers the most opportunities for language use?
- When and for what would they use each activity?

CLIL is a great way of teaching language and content because...

- It is procedure rich. It is challenging and encourages learner autonomy, learner training and critical thinking (EC Competencies)
- Content is learned through memorable activities and tasks because they are communicative and interactive.
- A range of skills and language are used to learn content, therefore developing the whole student.