



CLIL METHODS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO PRIMARY CLASS PUPILS

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5744200>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 10th November 2021
Accepted: 15th November 2021
Online: 20th November 2021

KEY WORDS

*Content and Language
Integrated Learning
(CLIL), teacher, English*

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the importance of CLIL methods its historical origin. My aim has been to show why CLIL continues to establish itself as excellent educational practice, and how it can be introduced and developed across very different types of schools and classrooms. If a single blueprint for CLIL were feasible, then plenty of step-by-step guides would have been available years ago.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an approach where students learn a subject and a second language at the same time. A science course, for example, can be taught to students in English and they will not only learn about science, but they will also gain relevant vocabulary and language skills. It's important to note that CLIL is not a means of simplifying content or reteaching something students already know in a new language. CLIL courses should truly integrate the language and content in order to be successful – and success is determined when both the subject matter and language is learned.

Who is CLIL for?

CLIL can work for students of any age, all the way from primary level to university and beyond. So long as the course content and language aims are designed with the students' needs in mind, there is no limit as

to who can benefit from this teaching approach. However, it is most commonly found in primary and secondary school contexts.

Theoretical basis:

What are the main benefits of CLIL?

Many teachers see CLIL as a more natural way to learn a language; when a subject is taught in that language there is a concrete reason to learn both at the same time. And as students have a real context to learn the language in, they are often more motivated to do so, as they can only get the most of the content if they understand the language around it. Moreover, being content focused, CLIL classes add an extra dimension to the class and engage students, which is especially advantageous in situations where students are unenthusiastic about learning a language. CLIL also promotes a deeper



level of assimilation – as students are repeatedly exposed to similar language and language functions and they need to produce and recall information in their second language. Furthermore, it has the advantage that multiple subjects can be taught in English, so that students' exposure to the language is increased, meaning their language acquisition is faster. CLIL also encourages students to develop 21st Century skills, including the ability to think critically, be creative, to communicate and collaborate. Read more about 21st century skills in our post Seven essential 21st century skills for secondary learners.

What are the challenges of CLIL?

As CLIL is subject-focused, language teachers may also have to develop their own knowledge of new subjects in order to teach effectively. They must also structure classes carefully so that the students understand the content of the lesson, as well as the language through which the information is being conveyed. And when it comes to classroom management, educators need to be very aware of individual student understanding and progress. It's therefore important to consistently check and scaffold the materials to be sure both the language and content are being learned.

How can you apply CLIL to your class?

It's important to have a strategy in place when applying CLIL in your courses. One of the key

things to remember is that the language and subject content are given equal weight and that it shouldn't be treated as a language class nor a subject class simply taught in a foreign language. According to Coyle's 4Cs

curriculum (1999), a successful CLIL class should include the following four elements:

Content – Progression in knowledge, skills and understanding related to specific elements of a defined curriculum

Communication – Using language to learn whilst learning to use language

Cognition – Developing thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language

Culture – Exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepen awareness of otherness and self.

Using a number of frameworks can help you prepare your lessons and make sure activities are challenging, yet achievable for your learners. Bloom's Taxonomy, for example, classifies learning objectives in education and puts skills in a hierarchy, from Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

In the diagram below, you can see the levels increasing in complexity from the base up to the triangle's peak.

The framework shows how different tasks relate to different levels of assimilation. It's fairly intuitive, but applying this information to your lesson preparation is not always so straightforward.

That's where the helpful Blooming Verbs list comes in. The following chart shows you how different verbs can correlate to the different stages in the taxonomy, allowing you to formulate questions and design activities that develop your CLIL classes in a logical way. By using the verbs in the first



column you'll see how much they remember about a topic you have covered previously. Examples might include:

Can you name three different types of jungle animal?

Can you tell me how often a python eats food?

Can you describe what it's like in the rainforest?

You can then do the same for the subsequent stages of the taxonomy.

The verb chart can also help you design a class project or series of activities that follow a logical sequence using the "Students will be able to..." (SWBAT) framework. This will help you set clear objectives and check progress towards the end of a class, series of classes or course. Here's an example of how you can develop a set of objectives using the verb columns to help you navigate Bloom's Taxonomy:

SWBAT name 10 different animals that live in the rainforest

SWBAT predict what animals eat

SWBAT complete a simple food chain

SWBAT categorize animals into different classifications (mammal, reptile, fish etc.)

SWBAT recommend ways to protect an endangered species

SWBAT create a new habitat for an endangered species of their choice

In this way you will be able to scaffold your materials to ensure that your students are supported step by step while learning subject matter and achieving language learning objectives. Lately, the CLIL method

of teaching has become incredibly popular, mainly due to the growing interest in educating bilingual children. If you're still unfamiliar with it, CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning, and it's a fabulous language immersion method that aims at teaching subjects such as science, history, geography and art to students through a foreign language. David Marsh, Do Coyle and Philip Hood codified the principles of CLIL, namely dual-focused education, using language across the curriculum and making content king. Unlike traditional language teaching strategies, CLIL promotes education through construction rather than instruction. It's aiming for fluency, not accuracy. Why Implement the CLIL Method of Teaching? CLIL is a fantastic method to empower students of all ages and levels of fluency. By teaching CLIL lessons, you're giving students the tools to grow, acquire and activate cross-disciplinary skills by using a language different from their own. It's also a great method to promote positive attitudes towards language learning from an early stage. Students won't be corrected on every single error they make. Instead, they'll be encouraged to keep talking and learning in the language, which lets them feel good about their ability to communicate from the get-go. CLIL supports critical thinking and collaboration skills. Students won't be spoon-fed their language lessons, but rather they'll need to pay attention, observe and learn the language by learning about other subjects in that language. They can look to their peers to support them in this process. Concretely, if you're teaching native English students, you won't be spending time discussing subjects like history and math in USE. They'll learn these subjects



while learning a new language, say French or German. This will allow your students to learn a wide range of subjects, develop their knowledge of Francophone or Anglophone cultures, and learn either language naturally. That's because the CLIL curriculum balances bilingual education and language learning. Rather than being the focus of teaching, language becomes a tool for communication. Repeated exposure and stimulation helps students to assimilate the language while learning content that will greatly expand their horizons and promote curiosity.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS: How to Implement the CLIL Method of Teaching in Any Classroom

1. Rethink Your Syllabus

First, you should start by considering how to work CLIL into your syllabus. Incorporate cross-disciplinary themes. A great CLIL syllabus should replicate any traditional subject lesson syllabus. Rather than thinking of yourself as a language teacher, imagine that you're a subject teacher. The main difference is that your students will learn this subject in another language. Here are some examples of subjects you could teach:

Literature in French

Mathematics in Chinese

Philosophy in German

Art in English

Physical Education in Spanish. To this effect, it's important to research the subject matter ahead of time. Don't hesitate to work together with the school's subject teachers

for feedback and insight on what the students already know. Make sure that you highlight key concepts and proper terminology. This will facilitate assimilation and reinforce recently acquired knowledge, hence benefiting their language and subject studies. Work by themes. If you feel that this may become overwhelming and unsustainable in the long term, fear not! You can use CLIL as a single lesson for one language class—you don't have to teach CLIL all the time, but it can instead be part of your varied teaching arsenal. You may rotate between subjects so you only teach the subjects that you're most comfortable with. This helps to create targeted lessons that are packed with information. The idea is to cover a lot of ground and help students to accumulate as many vocabulary words related to the subject matter as possible. Here are some great theme ideas for teaching art in a foreign language:

"Whistler's Mother": History and analysis of a major work of art

The art of the Renaissance: Masters and key artwork

Sketching comics: Key principles and theories

Symbolism in still-life paintings: Hidden meanings and importance in art

Contemporary art and dissidence: Li Wei in communist China

As you see, a good CLIL lesson covers a specific topic, concept, movement or theory at length to promote effective learning. Complement it with follow-up assignments, discussions, readings and coursework so students can digest content and conduct their own research.



2. Focus on Tasks in the Classroom

Like the traditional monolingual classroom, CLIL promotes collaborative work and the acquisition of multidisciplinary, task-based skills. This gives students a clear purpose and the motivation to learn and complete the task to the best of their ability. It also rewards their ability to use their own personal knowledge to succeed in the classroom. Better yet, CLIL encourages the acquisition of oral and practical skills rather than the theory through real-life activities. Great CLIL activities promote teamwork and encourage students to become key participants in the classroom. Activities, in this respect, are fantastic tools of learning in CLIL because they integrate language and content, and they promote learning by doing. This helps students to communicate key concepts in the target language in real-time and in real situations. Some great CLIL activities include:

Presentations: One student takes the center of the stage to introduce to the rest of the classroom a tangential theme related to the subject you've been discussing. Encourage them to use graphics, images and multimedia material, and to prominently write keywords on the blackboard so their fellow classmates can take notes. **Role-plays:** Students impersonate major figures and stakeholders to give life to a concept or theme they've learned in the classroom. Ask them to prepare the reenactment ahead of time by working together to write and memorize a mini-play around this theme. Recap by letting the class interact with student-actors to ask questions about the subject matter. **Science experiments:** These are fantastic tools to help your students discover science, chemistry and biology,

and have fun along the way! Ask a subject teacher from your school to come and supervise if you're unsure about certain elements, and don't forget to pre-teach important concepts and words so students know what to do during the experiments. **Cooking classes:** What better way to motivate students and strengthen the bonds between teachers and learners than food? An essential part of culture, society and language, food helps to bring the class together—and cooking is where it all starts. Start by selecting a recipe and discuss it in class ahead of time. Then ask students to compete and make their own versions of the recipe. They can customize presentations, add different spices and mix together ingredients that inspire them. Then recap in class and ask students to discuss, taste and compare their productions. The end goal is to de-compartmentalize knowledge between subject and language classes, so students can apply new information to their entire school curriculum, and even outside the classroom!

3. Choose the Right Moments to Give Feedback

Feedback and motivation is at the heart of any language class. After all, errors are opportunities to teach and learn!

However, minimal feedback and maximum positivity are essential parts of CLIL. The goal is to boost your students' ability to communicate while also allowing them to focus on learning subject lessons. Along the way, you'll build their positive vibes for the target language and culture. So, the best strategy is to aim for communication rather than accuracy when your students speak. Concretely, you don't



want to interrupt students during activities, even when their language may not be completely accurate. This will break the flow of the activity and may even cause students to lose their confidence. Rather, take notes and try to recap each activity by giving students language- and content-related feedback. So that this benefits all the students, try to give feedback before the entire class rather than to students individually. Use the same principles for writing activities. Let students express themselves and write freely, but try to identify frequent, specific misunderstandings and mistakes, and then use your next class to address them. Write down words and expressions on the blackboard, and use colors to circle specific letters or accents to watch out for. Ask for feedback from students, monitor results and adjust accordingly. Implementation varies from classroom to classroom, so it's up to you to take the pulse of the class and reshape your CLIL syllabus and activities.

4. Teach Grammar in Context. We—along with our students—often have the tendency to think of a foreign language as a subject rather than as a medium. In conclusion, as you bring CLIL to your classroom, keep in mind that the CLIL method isn't about having students learn about the language, it's about having them use the language. In this respect, listing endless grammar rules is rarely effective. Students often keep making the same mistakes over and over and often freeze rather than using the words and communicating. To correct this, make sure that students learn grammar in context based on the topics they study and through constant exposure to the language.

Revise and recycle grammar periodically to let students observe the language. This allows them to pick up grammar, syntax and conjugation naturally so that they can use it throughout class sessions. When introducing grammar, include charts, documents and pictures that demonstrate a use of the rule prominently. You could also present some authentic materials, such as newspaper articles or documentary clips, that use the grammar while also teaching something related to a subject. You can find authentic examples of the target language all over the internet, most notably videos including native speakers from FluentU. Have students read or watch and try to pick up on any patterns, or anything that seems different (if you're teaching a new topic). Then, discuss the vocabulary or grammar lesson you have in mind. After that, watch the video again and allow students to piece together the meaning of the language lesson you've discussed. Rather than having students do cut-and-dry grammar exercises, grade their usage of grammar in context. Ask students to produce their own work by writing an article, participating in a debate, creating a web page with text and pictures or creating a radio broadcast featuring news, interviews and various recordings from fellow students discussing the subject. After they've completed this, you can focus on correcting and providing feedback on grammar usage in particular. Now that the CLIL method of teaching holds no secrets for you, we're sure that you'll have no problem improving your students' abilities in the target language.



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