

9 Maximising the value of CLIL through teacher education and development

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Objectives

By means of a review of the international research literature, this chapter outlines the various benefits of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). After discussing Malta as a case study of a country where CLIL is gradually being implemented through teacher training, this chapter explores the necessary teacher education and development provisions that need to be in place in order for pre- and in-service teachers to be fully equipped with the knowledge, skills and beliefs necessary to effectively harness CLIL's potential.

The value of CLIL

CLIL is a term coined in 1994 by David Marsh, who helps to define it as “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content *and* language. That is, in the teaching and learning process, there is a focus not only on content, and not only on language” (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010, p. 1). A teacher may choose to place emphasis on either one but language and content remain interconnected.

Many countries in Europe and beyond are seeking to enhance young people's proficiency in a second and foreign language by means of CLIL. Dalton-Puffer and Nikula (2014) define CLIL as “an educational approach where curricular content of subjects such as biology or history is taught to students through a language that is neither their first language nor the dominant medium of instruction in the respective education system” (p. 117). Since its emergence in the 1990s, CLIL has revolutionized language teaching and learning in Europe and is now a staple part of primary, secondary, and tertiary education in a range of countries. CLIL is influenced by an educational philosophy that places emphasis on “the process rather than on the product, the *learning by doing* approach and the quest for relevant and meaningful activities with an apparent non-linguistic goal and a problem-solving character” (Acosta Corte, 2012, p. 622). However, Cenoz (2013) points out that most CLIL research devotes “attention to language rather than content [and] reflects the general trend in Europe where CLIL has attracted mainly scholars in Applied Linguistics, English language teacher educators and practitioners. This does not have to be seen as a problem because research is needed from different perspectives and the language learning perspective is very relevant in an increasing multilingual and multicultural world” (p. 389).

The link between CLIL and multilingualism is a significant one given that as an approach it does not entail the imposition of just one language to the exclusion of all others. Whilst learning content subjects, students are encouraged to improve their proficiency in the target language/s. Internationally, this is most usually English, however, it does not mean that in CLIL contexts where English is being used the learning of other languages is pushed out of the curriculum. In fact, Ruiz de Zarobe (2013) argues that “despite the hegemony of English as a global language, CLIL has been conceived to enhance language competence and communication in an evergrowing multilingual society” (p. 233). Moore and Dooly (2010) conclude their study on interaction in CLIL classrooms by saying that “although the shift in European higher education toward teaching nonlanguage subjects through the medium of a foreign language would appear to favor monolingual practices and be detrimental to local languages, our data reveal that participants' plurilingual repertoires can flourish in classroom interaction, creating a favorable framework for performing a range of activities that would seem to enrich the collective learning process. Such activities include metalinguistic reflection, problematizing and negotiating nonlinguistic knowledge, and constructing appropriate discourse from the point of view of the

participants” (p. 77).

The fact that the target language in the majority of CLIL classrooms around the world is English is probably a result of language-in-education policies that seek to endow young people with competence in the global language. Ruiz de Zarobe (2013) explains that “despite implementation differences in the international scenario when responding to CLIL, a common goal will also be found to apply throughout the different contexts: most countries try to find a coherent answer to the need for language competence and communication in this globalized world, with the knowledge of languages as a key factor for job opportunities and promotion” (p. 233). Nonetheless, participating effectively in a globalized world requires more than just competence in English. It is for this reason that language-in-education policies should aim to expand young people’s linguistic repertoire as fully as possible by consolidating the learning of other languages in addition to English.

CLIL has been shown to lead to enhanced language proficiency. In her review of CLIL research in Europe, Pérez-Cañado (2012) found that “significantly higher [target language] levels have been reported for CLIL tracks than for conventional language classes” (p. 329). When Moore (2011) compared CLIL and mainstream L1 learners in terms of collaboration as demonstrated in turn-taking patterns, she “found that not only were the CLIL learners collaborating more, they were also collaborating more effectively” (p. 545). Some of the reasons for this could be that “CLIL learners are actively employing enhanced interactive collaboration as a means to improve L2 talk” and that they “are becoming better communicators all-round – even in their L1” (Moore, 2011, p. 545). Méndez García and Pavón Vázquez (2012) describe how “the CLIL programme in Andalusia is positively and profoundly affecting the linguistic and cultural profile of the teachers and learners involved” (p. 589). In particular, “students tend to work harder and better with the foreign language; they are reported to exhibit higher language awareness and to have a less inhibited response to its use” (Méndez García & Pavón Vázquez, 2012, p. 589). Moreover, CLIL “presents an enormous potential when it comes to understanding concepts and notions which are not self-evident in the vocabulary and linguistic patterns of a given language, but which are better understood by means of another linguistic code” (Méndez García & Pavón Vázquez, 2012, p. 589). Pérez-Cañado (2012) reports that “students with average [foreign language] talents and interest have also been shown to benefit from CLIL instruction, so that this sort of program seems to make language learning more accessible to all types of achievers” (p. 330). It is clear that as an approach CLIL can lead to substantial improvement in language proficiency and this explains why it is implemented widely in various educational systems throughout the world.

Besides showing that CLIL is responsible for developing learners’ language competence, various studies have found evidence of additional benefits. These include increased motivation in CLIL classrooms (Merisuo-Storm, 2007; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009; Lorenzo, Casal, & Moore, 2010). Hunt (2011), in fact, points out that “Learners...responded well to the CLIL lessons; the majority enjoyed the lessons, the activities and the resources; they were clear about the learning objectives and felt that they made progress; and they liked learning through another language” (p. 377). Despite acknowledging the need to study a series of individual and contextual variables, Doiz, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2014a) indicate that CLIL students are more motivated than EFL students. In addition to motivation, “CLIL is liable to provide learners with the instruments to make significant gains in knowledge about otherness, to develop intercultural attitudes and skills and to achieve some level of critical cultural awareness so that their own social practices and motivations are viewed as one, and only one, possible way of interpreting and making sense of the world” (Méndez García, 2013, p. 282). Such non-linguistic outcomes are fundamental as they facilitate the language learning process and enable learners to develop a positive attitude towards the learning of not only the target language but even other languages they might come across within and outside of school.

The Maltese context

In Malta, the National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) recommended that at primary level English should be used to teach mathematics, science and technology while at

secondary level English should be used to teach these and other technical subjects. However, when the National Minimum Curriculum was superseded by the National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012), the latter omitted these recommendations and failed to include a language-in-education policy. The latter is a policy that expresses the beliefs and attitudes of a society or institution in relation to the value of languages in education, doing so via an official document or in more tacit ways (Liddicoat, 2013). Farrugia (2013) explains that in Malta there exists a “debate on the appropriate use of language for mathematics and other academic subjects for which Maltese technical language has not been established officially, due to the traditional dependence on English for these subjects” (p. 573). This ongoing debate pits those in favour of using English for the teaching of technical and other subjects against those who champion the use of Maltese for the teaching of such subjects. The former argue that using English is beneficial because it facilitates the learning of the second language, discourages code-switching, supports progression to academic levels where English is the medium of instruction, and embraces the participation of growing numbers of non-Maltese speakers in the classroom (Farrugia, 2013). Those against the idea of using English for the teaching of other subjects claim that the L2 discourages learner participation, causes difficulty in understanding technical subjects, creates discomfort for teachers who lack confidence in speaking English, and undermines the status of Maltese as a living language (Farrugia, 2013).

A language-in-education policy based on empirical evidence gathered from the Maltese context and taking into account relevant international research findings would help to allay some of the above concerns and guide teachers in their efforts to enhance learners’ English language proficiency. Evnitskaya and Morton (2011) affirm that “Greater understanding of interaction in CLIL classrooms can surely contribute to the much needed effort to improve teacher preparation for CLIL” (p. 124). Similarly, more research is required in relation to how English is being used in primary and secondary classrooms in Malta as this will feed into teacher education and development. Currently, many content teachers in Malta are using the L2 to teach a variety of subjects without fully exploiting this opportunity for language teaching purposes, as would happen in CLIL. Research would also help to determine how to implement CLIL more effectively. Talking about CLIL in Australia, Turner (2013) points out that prior to a programme’s implementation it is “important to gain community support for language learning. This includes both parental support and the support of relevant education authorities, administrators and teachers” (p. 403). For this reason, CLIL should be incorporated into a language-in-education policy that while informed by solid research is drawn up in consultation with the main stakeholders. Once it is ascertained that CLIL is the right approach to adopt in trying to develop learners’ competence in English then it is essential that provisions be made for the teaching of Maltese and other languages so that they are allowed to thrive and enrich learners’ linguistic repertoire. Moreover, the implementation of new educational policies and approaches must be accompanied by adequate training for the instruments of change within the classroom – teachers.

In recognition of the value of CLIL for teachers in Malta, in 2014 a training programme was developed so that all primary school teachers can gradually familiarize themselves with this approach. This training is meant to enable them to teach different subjects in English while exploiting the teaching of content to develop their students’ language knowledge and skills. In order for CLIL to become fully entrenched in the Maltese educational system, this training programme will need to be extended to secondary school teachers as well as teacher-trainees.

Teacher education and development

Teacher education and development consists of training programmes aimed at pre- and in-service teachers that focus on enhancing subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Moreover, these programmes seek to develop teachers’ beliefs and attitudes as well as their language awareness and proficiency. If an educational system or institution adopts CLIL as an approach, teachers need to be provided with training on how to use it effectively in the classroom. Training

would have to address teachers' methodology, assessment literacy, English language proficiency, and language awareness.

Methodology

CLIL is not just about using the target language to teach non-language subjects. Showing teachers how to exploit content lessons in order to teach language is crucial given that CLIL can help develop learners' proficiency and metalinguistic awareness. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010) maintain that "the future needs of CLIL programmes demand a more planned course of action concerning both teacher formation and in-service teacher support" (p. 371). They consider it "necessary to provide future teachers with training not only in the specific subjects but also in the methodology that will allow them to teach these subjects effectively in a foreign language" (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010, p. 371). Moate (2011) affirms that CLIL can present "a valuable opportunity for teachers to reconsider their established pedagogical practice. For this reconsideration to lead to enhanced practice teachers need a pedagogical blueprint to guide decision-making and a community ready to offer this support" (p. 344). Reporting on the implementation of CLIL at a Spanish university, Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012) found that teachers appreciated the opportunity to practise and improve their English fluency through CLIL but were not interested in receiving CLIL training. For this reason, Aguilar and Rodríguez (2012) recommend that CLIL training should be tailor-made according to teachers' specific needs. This would perhaps help to convince them that such training "can enrich the learning *and* the teaching experience, and that they can incorporate strategies that are not excessively demanding (in terms of time or effort)" (Aguilar & Rodríguez, 2012, p. 194). Koopman, Skeet and de Graaff (2014) found that CLIL "teachers' rationales for their language related classroom actions suggest a lack of a theoretical basis" (p. 134) and for this reason they recommend that prospective teachers ought to be provided with training on L2 pedagogy. As part of this training it would be extremely helpful if teachers were provided with a good grounding in the focus-on-form approach. This is the act of making learners aware of the form of a language feature as part of communicative language practice. Long and Robinson (1998) point out that "during an otherwise meaning-focused classroom lesson, focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features...triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production" (p. 23). Focus on form is distinguished from focus on forms, which is the attempt to teach learners discrete grammatical points. Training CLIL teachers on form-focused instruction seems to be necessary given that a review of CLIL studies shows that learners' "pronunciation, syntax, writing (accuracy and discourse skills), informal and nontechnical language, and pragmatics remain largely unaffected, perhaps owing to an insufficient focus on form in CLIL classrooms" (Pérez-Cañado, 2012, p. 330). Such pedagogical training is fundamental given that CLIL requires practitioners to act as language teachers when delivering content lessons.

Assessment literacy

Developing CLIL teachers' assessment literacy seems to be necessary for them to operate more effectively when designing and using various kinds of assessment. Assessment literacy is defined as "the ability to design, select, interpret, and use assessment results appropriately for educational decisions" (Quilter & Gallini, 2000, p. 116). According to Coombe et al. (2009), "without a higher level of teacher assessment literacy, we will be unable to help students attain higher levels of academic achievement" (p. 15). Providing teachers with adequate training in assessment is crucial, especially since such training has been associated with an improvement in student outcomes (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). DeLuca, Chavez and Cao (2013) argue that "pre-service teacher education has a critical role to play in promoting assessment literacy in beginning teachers and in providing a foundation for teachers' continued learning about assessment throughout their careers" (p. 123). In-service training should build upon teachers' knowledge and skills in relation to assessment and should consist of hands-on involvement rather than just being made up of reading material and brief training sessions (Black, Harrison, Hodgen, Marshall, & Serret, 2011, p. 463). Besides equipping CLIL teachers

with the necessary knowledge and skills to design and use assessment effectively, training should also seek to develop their beliefs and attitudes in relation to assessment. Enabling teachers to reflect on their beliefs is crucial if they “are to differentiate their initial ideas about assessment from the ideas they are being asked to accept, to challenge them and to integrate aspects of these new ideas into a new set of beliefs” (Vandeyar & Killen, 2006, p. 44). Hence, in order to adequately develop teachers’ assessment literacy it is important to target their knowledge, skills and beliefs.

English language proficiency

English language proficiency is an individual’s ability to use English in a competent manner. In a seminal article on the nature of language proficiency, Harley, Cummins, Swain and Allen (1990) suggest that the “emphasis on communication in language teaching is expressed in attempts to develop students’ sociolinguistic and discourse competencies in addition to their grammatical competence” (p. 8). Proficiency incorporates usage of English for a variety of purposes in different registers and domains. L2 training is even more necessary in the case of CLIL teachers, given that most often CLIL lessons are the preserve of non-native English speaking teachers. Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010) point out that “A high percentage of the teaching staff in immersion programmes is made up of native speakers who have an excellent command of the language of instruction, whereas this is not usually the case in CLIL programmes” (p. 371). However, when Llinares and Lyster (2014) compared immersion teachers with CLIL teachers they found that the latter “seemed to be more conscious of the language aspect, using didactic recasts and avoiding conversational recasts” (p. 191). One of the explanations they give for this is that “the teachers were non-native speakers of English and, as learners of English themselves, were perhaps sensitive to language issues” (Llinares & Lyster, 2014, p. 191). This confirms an earlier study by Diniz de Figueiredo (2011), who found that “teachers’ bi/multilingual skills were used to help students build metalinguistic strategies” and they acted as role models of successful language learners thus challenging “the ideological assumption that native speakers are the only or the best models for language learners” (p. 428). Language training is paramount given that it helps teachers who happen to be non-native speakers of English to operate more effectively in the classroom by exploiting the knowledge, skills and attitudes they developed as L2 learners.

Teacher language awareness

CLIL teachers need to be provided with training aimed at developing their teacher language awareness (TLA), which can be defined as a teacher’s understanding of the mechanisms of language. According to Andrews (2007), this consists of “an appropriate base of knowledge and understanding about language (in particular, the target language) and how it works” by means of which “the teacher is able to provide the precise amount of knowledge in a form that creates no barriers to comprehension” (p. 7). TLA is considered a vital part of practitioners’ professional competence. Their knowledge about language enhances the language teaching and learning experience by enabling them to adequately address students’ needs. It also has the potential to improve teachers’ language proficiency. TLA training plays a significant role in equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge base and confidence for them to engage in effective language teaching practices.

Conclusion

The main value of CLIL is its potential to enhance students’ English language proficiency in a highly engaging manner. CLIL enables them to learn different subjects in English while exploiting their engagement with content to develop their language knowledge and skills. CLIL provides students with more hours of exposure to and practice in English on a daily basis. However, to maximize the value of CLIL it is paramount that teachers are provided with the necessary training at pre- and in-service levels. This training should not just be restricted to building teachers’ knowledge of methodology but should aim to develop their assessment

literacy, English language proficiency, and language awareness. It is only by targeting these different areas of competence that CLIL teachers can be equipped to operate effectively in the classroom.

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