

Drafting a New Strategy for CLIL in Europe

Recommendations from the policy workshop in Como 10-12 March 2014

Premise: The European launch of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in 1994 was both educational and political. A major political driver was to support means for raising levels of plurilingualism within European member states. The educational driver was to harness successes found in other parts of the world where an additional language is embedded across the curriculum, and to articulate a flexible operational framework for mainstream education.

Over the past two decades an increasing body of research has demonstrated that CLIL can enhance multilingualism and provide opportunities for deepening learners' knowledge and skills. CLIL has been found to be additive (one language supporting the other) and not subtractive (one language working against the other). It involves a process which is generally curriculum-driven with the language curriculum arising from the content curriculum.

CLIL has been seen to be a key lever in realizing some of the eight key competences for lifelong learning as recommended by the European Parliament in 2006. These competences, which combine knowledge and skills appropriate for life in the 21st Century, include communication in the mother tongue and foreign languages; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression. They are considered interdependent with emphasis in each on critical thinking, creativity and problem solving.

Why does CLIL work? The logic lies in the acronym: in delineating that *Learning* involves the *Integration* of both *Content* and *Language*, CLIL makes explicit the fact that the learning of any content must involve the learning of *the language associated with the content*. At the level of schooling, successful education in either a first or additional language requires that learners are equipped with the *language for thinking about the content*. When learning through CLIL, where an additional language is used, language-supportive resources, methods and activities are actively and coherently used to enable learners to use language purposefully. This support acts as a form of scaffolding enabling learners to effectively process information, negotiate understanding, and co-construct knowledge even where a cohort has a heterogeneous level of fluency in the vehicular language.

How can we optimize the potential of CLIL?

At the British Council facilitated *CLIL Policy and Practice* workshop at Lake Como in March 2014 there was general agreement that to optimize the potential of CLIL for 21st Century competence-directed education, some steps could be taken to establish *what CLIL is, what it is not, and what it can be*. **Section I** presents some General Recommendations upon which to articulate good CLIL practices. **Section II** considers the implementation of competence-based CLIL practices through the strands of Curriculum, Assessment and Professional Development. **Section III** includes additional recommendations on Coordination, Communication and Dissemination.

These sections approach questions such as how a CLIL curricula can be structured so as to provide outcomes and competences that are more versatile than those achieved through traditional learning paradigms; how such competences can be assessed; how professional development processes can strengthen the knowledge and skills of educators to implement CLIL successfully in everyday classroom practice; and how professional communities can be further nurtured across Europe.

General Recommendations

- 1. Define CLIL macroscopically.** To examine if widely used definitions such as ‘a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language with the objective of promoting content and language mastery to pre-defined levels’ (European Framework for CLIL Teacher Education, Council of Europe: ECML 2010), or ‘a general term to designate types of bilingual and immersion education’ (Eurydice 2012) remain fit-for-purpose.
- 2. Define CLIL microscopically.** To examine if it is worthwhile to have sub-definitions of CLIL which describe different models of CLIL practice across the educational spectrum.
- 3. Define the macroscopic benefits of CLIL.** To examine if the broader and often transversal benefits associated with CLIL programming can be linked to the operation and scale of specific CLIL models. The benefits may concern learners, educational organisations such as

school and colleges, sectors, regions or countries. They may relate to a broad range of competence and capacity-building endeavours ranging from social cohesion through to health and security.

4. Define microscopic benefits of CLIL.

To examine if the emergent evidence-base of successful CLIL practice is now sufficiently advanced so as to provide specific examples of learning and development objectives that learners should be able to achieve, and that could be used for localized and other forms of assessment, within the operation and scale of specific CLIL models. These objectives may relate to language and communication development, content learning, and competence-building, amongst others.

II. Curriculum, Assessment, Training & Professional Development

Recommendation 1: Conduct a meta-analysis of existing CLIL research

A meta-analysis could support development of a benchmarking database of curricula or programmes which illustrate CLIL good practice. A collection of case studies from a variety of contexts could provide insights into contextual experiences. This would provide data to guide essential decision-making on implementation and resources.

Recommendation 2: Develop a support mechanism for curriculum developers

There are generic features of CLIL curricula which are applicable across different contexts and educational sectors. A support mechanism would accelerate understanding and enhance quality assurance in the development of curricula and syllabuses particularly with respect to making content more easily comprehensible without reducing or simplifying content according to curricular guidelines.

Recommendation 3: Develop European competence guidelines

In present form the CEFR language levels do not capture the types of competence-building that is reported in CLIL programming, particularly with respect to the European Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. A framework either embedded into the CEFR, or

complementary to it, would enable competence-progression to be incorporated into CLIL educational provision which is developmentally-appropriate and context-sensitive. Such a tool would provide educators with useful guidelines for implementing a competence-based CLIL curriculum, enable both teachers and students to continuously assess progress, and offer test providers a pragmatic and relevant means for multilayer assessment.

Recommendation 4: Streamline Provision of CLIL Professional Development programmes

CLIL professional development programmes for teachers are now commonplace across Europe and sometimes operated by private and income-generation entities. Public money (European, national, regional) is often used by educators undertaking such courses. Embarking on quality benchmarking processes would be complex given the scale and breadth of these operations. A streamlining of provision would help guide future programme participants in decision-making on their training needs, and programme providers in responding to these. This would help ensure that programme participants benefit by gaining sufficient knowledge and skills-building in theory, language, practice, modes of operationalizing CLIL in schools, curriculum design and programme management.

Recommendation 5: Compensate CLIL teachers through rewards and incentives.

Since the development and adaptation of teaching and learning resources, alongside the effort and special competences required of CLIL teachers, requires increased workload such as extra administration and lesson preparation, a means of recognition for the increased workload needs to be provided for.

Recommendation 6: Inclusion of at least one subject taught through CLIL methodology and/or additional language learning into initial teacher education.

Dual track specialisations and/or inclusion of at least one subject taught through CLIL methodology and/or inclusion of additional language into initial teacher training would provide for developing a CLIL-competent teaching body. Promoting mobility through school placements in countries other than the home country would further benefit trainees' language skills and provide opportunities for broadening experience of teaching and learning practices.

Recommendation 7: Emphasis on methodologies and not only language development in both initial and in-service teacher education programmes

Good CLIL practices are widely reported as being based, in part, on socio-constructivist teaching and learning methods and activities. Any CLIL professional development should aspire to combine language development and methodological competence in interactive teaching and learning approaches.

III. Additional Recommendations: Coordination, Communication & Dissemination

Recommendation 8: Create a Europe-wide symposium for subject and language teachers to review how they present knowledge in their subjects, so as to stimulate and sustain interdisciplinary dialogue.

Recommendation 9: Raise awareness of CLIL and promote added value across Europe through TV, social media, reports, case studies, success stories and online resources which could illustrate CLIL best practice in different teaching contexts.

Recommendation 10: Develop a communication strategy for CLIL to optimize existing channels and networks and create new ones which will engage audiences, particularly principals, language teachers, and teachers of STEM (Science, technology, engineering and maths).