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PUTTING THE CLIL PROGRAMME INTO PRACTICE

In the following paragraphs the implementation of CLIL will be looked at from different perspectives: the institutional needs, the views of teachers and learners, the classroom situation and methodology.

◆ The Institutional Environment

◆ Why CLIL at any level?

Each school needs to adopt those methods within the CLIL approach which would best suit the respective objectives. In order to know which methods are most suitable it is necessary to examine the potential and constraints within the school, the needs of the beneficiaries, and the types of outcome which could be achieved.

In the primary and secondary sectors the initiative for introducing CLIL is very often bottom-up, in that demand often comes from parents, pupils or teachers. This grassroots movement is very significant because it reflects scientific and socio-political discussion of recent years on widespread visions of the future, in particular with respect to the skills required of young people as they enter the workforce.

Parents appear to be increasingly of the view that their children need to be linguistically multi-skilled if they are to be successful in their own lives during “this variable and unpredictable” new age.

In addition to hoping that CLIL might develop their child’s additional language skills, parents also mention that it might also provide these children with broader world views and encourage them to approach cultural diversity more readily than otherwise. It appears that some parents see CLIL as a method by which to update schools for the modern era.

Planning

- ◆ should be institutionally-based, involving administrative and teaching staff. Special attention should be paid to the role of the target language teachers in the process.
- ◆ should allow for voluntary involvement by teaching personnel.
- ◆ can benefit from co-operation with regional interest groups in the public and private sectors.

- ◆ can benefit from individual teachers networking on a national or trans-national basis with counterparts teaching similar or related subjects.
- ◆ should take into account the potential for establishing relationships with counterpart institutions and teachers in countries of the target language or others, e.g. for exchanging teaching material.
- ◆ should be viewed in terms of institutional ethos, curricular integration and a systematic progression of CLIL availability.

◆ **Why CLIL at primary level?**

In some primary schools, CLIL might be realized as small-scale "language showers" in which children undergoing first or second grade instruction are exposed to some form of additional language exposure.

Children at this age learn additional languages fairly easily once the right methodology, often in the form of games, songs, or rhymes, is applied. In this way the oral competence of children, in particular, may be enhanced, providing a sound basis on which more formal foreign language teaching, or continued CLIL can later build on.

For some schools the introduction of CLIL is linked to their school profile. Parents decide to send their children to a primary school which offers CLIL because their children have been to a kindergarten or pre-school class in their locality which operates to a greater or lesser extent in foreign languages.

Such parents may wish their child to be able to continue with such additional language exposure.

◆ **Why CLIL at secondary level?**

At the secondary level, CLIL and formal language teaching are of growing importance. CLIL adds to the common aim of deeper language proficiency and encourages students to take a closer look at intercultural topics. The initiative for CLIL at secondary level may come from the schools themselves, from parents or pupils. The profile of a school plays an important role here in acting as an important force for adopting CLIL.

◆ **How much and for how long should learners experience CLIL?**

CLIL can be small-scale, for example one lesson per week, or 90% of all teaching hours in a year. It may be used for certain themes or modules and not necessarily whole subjects. For example, it may not be so much a matter of a whole history course being taught in an additional language, but rather one module, for example European history, which might be one of eight themes in a year's course.

CLIL may be carried out over a short period of time, or over many months, or possibly years. At its briefest, CLIL may be used for a period as short as a week, whereas others may use this method for an entire year or more.

One possible success factor is to have learners continuously exposed to the approach through small-scale adaptation. The most common degree of exposure can be considered a form of “language-enriched (also known as language-enhanced) teaching“ in which the target language is used in the learning process for certain subjects/themes, but in which the learning of content is paramount, with acquisition of the foreign language considered a bonus.

The approach will depend on the choice of subject and the level of implementation. In some localities recommendations are made as to the most suitable subjects for CLIL, but very often the key issue lies with the staff who are able and willing to teach through this approach.

◆ **Learners and Teachers**

◆ **Selecting pupils and students**

The CLIL approach is commonly geared to a sense of enhancing access to opportunity, as in providing a higher degree of “egalitarianism“ with regard to access to opportunities for attaining additional language skills. In this perspective, foreign languages, for example, are not only considered useful for a small elite who are considered “linguistically gifted“, or who are otherwise already internationally networked, but also for the general school population.

For example, in some models, it has been found that grades attained in previous instruction in the foreign language or mother tongue are not of key significance for selection purposes.

It can be seen that teachers often hope to establish some form of homogeneity of linguistic skill in the CLIL class intakes. But, interestingly, even where the intake profile is largely similar it is clear that a child who performs poorly in certain forms of “language test“ could outperform others when using the language “as a tool“ in a learning environment.

The question of selection is of less importance when CLIL is not used extensively, or when the subject which uses CLIL is more practical than academic (e.g. physical education).

◆ **What are typical learner expectations?**

Students at secondary level have been found to think that they would need to work harder in CLIL classes than might be the case in corresponding first language education, but with few considering this to be an insurmountable or even long-term problem. Students certainly often expect their foreign language skills to develop, with the main focus being on oral skills.

Secondary level students have also been found to consider it quite appropriate for a non-native-speaking teacher to teach a subject in a foreign language. Some students even comment that having a native-speaker teacher can make them more anxious about target language use in the classroom, and consider the non-native-speaking teachers to be more understanding about the effort required for successful learning of both content and language.

◆ **Who are the teachers implementing CLIL?**

In some countries the norm is for CLIL teachers to be dual-qualified, which occurs as an integral part of initial training (e.g. in Austria and Germany secondary teachers may qualify in subjects such as English and history, French and geography). Generally, the teachers of CLIL are non-language subject teachers or language teachers, with neither group having had initial (pre-service) education in CLIL. Although there is much discussion about offering initial teacher education in CLIL, there is growing interest in in-service teacher development programmes such as DIESeLL.

During processes of experimentation, teachers have found that CLIL is about far more than simply teaching non-language subject matter in an additional language in the same way as through the first language. CLIL is not a matter of simply changing the language of instruction. Rather, it is set of methodologies in which the dual-focused orientation of the learning of the subject and language is realized.

CLIL teachers say that working with this approach may not only be of benefit to the learners, but also the teachers themselves. It has been found that although teachers may find CLIL to be demanding, they may also consider it professionally rewarding.

◆ **What level of target language competence does the teacher require?**

There is clearly a consensus opinion that in order to teach through a foreign language, the teacher him or herself should have a good command of the language itself.

It is quite evident that a CLIL teacher needs to be as good at using the target language as his/her subject and level require.

At primary level, where children's receptive skills are particularly acute in CLIL environments, it is considered essential that the teacher be a good model of the target language.

At secondary level differing skills are needed. Whilst subjects such as mathematics, physics and chemistry can be learned to a great degree, for example, according to knowledge of core terminology in the target language, others such as psychology may require a particular type of versatility of linguistic usage. When it comes to the clarification of very specific problems, code switching between the mother tongue and the target language should be done according to need. Code-switching should not be viewed as a weakness in the way the approach is implemented. Rather it should be viewed as a positive and intentional feature, itself a direct consequence of the methodology.

Effective CLIL teaching is rarely teacher-centred, but based on communication between teachers and students at various levels. Therefore it is important that CLIL teachers know how to implement and monitor student-centred activities in their classrooms.

◆ **Is a target language native-speaker the ideal person for CLIL?**

It is problematic to assume that a native speaker teacher of the target language would be the most suitable professional to teach through CLIL solely by virtue of his or her linguistic and cultural background. Successful CLIL teaching means more than questions of linguistic competence: mastery of the content, knowledge of language barriers and thresholds, the ability to adapt the speed of one's teaching to the situation in the classroom are but a few examples of CLIL competencies. In the CLIL classroom the teacher is generally not the sole model of target language usage. The other pupils in a class equally act as models when they speak or write in the language, unless of course the teacher is only lecturing in a non-interactive manner. CLIL teachers use a variety of media to bring the target language into the classroom. Depending on the CLIL method adopted, sometimes the objective of using the approach is to show the pupils that they can manage to think and communicate intelligently in the target language, even if deficiencies are evident.

Modern classrooms increasingly have groups comprising young people of different mother tongues, heritage or home languages. Linguistic awareness and reflection on one's own language skills (in the mother tongue and the target language) thus gain more and more significance when we consider teacher competencies for CLIL. This feeling for the differences and stumbling blocks which the learners

might face on various levels may be more easily identified and observed by non-native content teachers in some respects.

◆ **What is the role of the target language teacher?**

An ideal approach involves the subject, additional language and mother tongue teachers all carrying the responsibility for implementing CLIL successfully. The inevitable changes which many forms of CLIL are likely to bring into a school should be the concern of all staff involved. Once the additional language teacher is at the heart of the CLIL operation, the students will probably benefit most in terms of the opportunities provided for language development. It is evident that lack of co-operation between language and content teachers can only hinder the meaningful development of CLIL within a given school.

◆ **In the Classroom**

◆ **Looking at the Situation**

◆ **Group size**

Handling the individual needs of students reportedly becomes problematic when group size exceeds c.25 learners. Some teachers note that large groups diminish the willingness of certain types of students to actively participate in the learning context. Over time such students may then become alienated from the CLIL process, and contribute in a manner which is detrimental to the interests of others.

◆ **Scheduling**

Students clearly report that CLIL lessons are more demanding, and thus tiring, than equivalent education in the majority language. Obviously it is fair to assume that the more a learner is exposed to CLIL, the less this is likely to be the case, but with partial exposure to CLIL, it can be advantageous to have the lessons spread out and not blocked together.

◆ **Acoustics**

CLIL teaching should be in classrooms which have reasonably good acoustics because of the greater impact that background noise may have on learning outcomes than might be the case in mother tongue medium education.

◆ **Methodology**

The main difference between CLIL and teaching in the mother tongue is the fact that CLIL involves additional language learning objectives. Instruction thus has a double focus because apart from a pupil learning the content, there should be a corresponding aim regarding development of target language skills. This double focus is not reached simply by changing the language of instruction from one language to another. There is a consensus opinion that realisation of the potential of CLIL can only usually be achieved through specific methodological adaptation.

◆ **Visuality**

An increase in visuality, commonly reported in CLIL, is largely dependent on the subject involved. For example, drawing/art is considered to be already so visual that the use of CLIL involves little change. It is thus understandable that some teachers consider this to be a particularly suitable subject for CLIL.

Other subjects which are considered more “conceptual” as opposed to those which are traditionally considered to be more “academic” than “practical”, reportedly show substantial change of methods in terms of visuality when taught as CLIL. The main change from how the subject might be taught in the mother tongue concerns the use of illustrative materials to support learning.

◆ **Speed of instruction**

The Speed of instruction is also an important factor in CLIL. Rapid teacher monologue is clearly not conducive to good CLIL practice. This is linked to information processing time and other aspects of cognition.

◆ **Simplifying instruction**

According to some CLIL teachers, the use of the target language results in instruction becoming more simplified than when teaching through the mother tongue. Simplification is seen to have both positive and negative attributes. Some teachers consider that simplification makes teaching more efficient. Thus in the CLIL environment it does appear that instruction is commonly considered to focus more on the essential, and is carried out with a higher degree of clarity. Whether this entails an impoverishment of the learning context remains a contentious issue.

Some teachers may often feel that they lose something in terms of depth of instruction because of the use of the additional language.

Students on the other hand report that the most positive thing about CLIL is the fact that “instruction is more concise and subject matter is often handled more tightly”. They also appear to appreciate the fact that CLIL often requires an explicitly stated and recognised degree of learner autonomy.

◆ **Redundancy**

A regular feature of the CLIL classroom is the role of redundancy, that is expressing the same thing several times through, for example, repetition or paraphrasing, and thus formulating the same information in different ways.

Redundancy is particularly useful in order that pupils have several opportunities to process the same information. Thus it is viewed as a positive attribute of the CLIL classroom. Its use may also account for the perceived slow-down in covering content within a lesson.

◆ **Comprehension checks**

Teachers need to pay specific attention to identifying those issues which learners find problematic in terms of both conceptualization and language. Thus whereas the teacher needs to allow for comprehension checks and to incorporate these into the learning process, the learners need to take responsibility for making it clear when comprehension falters - and all of this needs to be done using a double-plane approach, which caters for both the conceptual and linguistic levels.

◆ **Teacher or pupil-centredness?**

Focus on learner-centred methods incorporated with greater learner autonomy is a popular trend in European education of the 1990s. This shift in approach has come at the same time as the introduction of CLIL. Thus, it may be hard sometimes to separate the two as in suggesting that CLIL encourages greater use of learner autonomy. Clearly the two are heavily inter-related.

CLIL generally requires use of interactive teaching methodologies. But this is not a clear-cut issue. Emphasis on teacher or pupil-centred methods naturally depends on what is aimed at in each teaching situation. From the point of introducing the content efficiently, teacher-centredness may sometimes be optimal. However, it is because CLIL includes language learning objectives that it is essential that pupils have opportunities to use the language in a meaningful way.

◆ **Mixing languages**

The amount of target language usage found in European secondary schools may range from 25-90% when considered in terms of those modules or courses which are defined as being carried out as CLIL.

Learners are generally sympathetic to the inclusion of mother tongue usage in the course of learning because they will understand that CLIL is not a matter of instruction in one language or the other, but a matter of finding the right blend for maximizing learning.

There is a very clear difference between code-mixing (switching languages within one sentence or utterance) and code-switching (in which the switch from one language to another takes place and is clearly recognized by all involved).

◆ **Communication within the classroom**

The key question for any CLIL teacher to address is: who communicates in the classroom, how much and how?

By using appropriate methods, teachers can elicit a broad range of types of communication which allow the learner to develop his/her pragmatic skills in using language strategically in order to achieve aims and objectives (role plays, discussions, pair work, statements etc).

◆ **Teaching materials**

Implementing CLIL means – particularly at the beginning - a considerable amount of extra preparatory work. This is partly due to the fact that suitable teaching materials are often not available. In some languages however there is an abundance of materials, in others less so. The Internet, attached to a quality printer, can increasingly be used to identify and access a range of materials.

Any CLIL teacher is going to face difficulty in adapting materials if they are not linguistically-aware to such an extent that they can determine, for example, readability levels. Alternatively they need to work closely and fairly continuously with language specialists (e.g. target language teachers) in order to be able to accurately judge the linguistic demands of specific texts and genres.

If they do make materials themselves then attention needs to be paid to quality of language, degrees of authenticity and so forth.

But ready-made sources - from the target language country - are not necessarily the solution to all problems. They may not be adequate in terms of content and/or linguistic competence of the students.

A decisive question in this context concerns financial support to help to set up a collection of good teaching materials in the target language and provide access to a wide variety of sources as well as a well stocked library.

Many teachers report that they use more written materials in CLIL than in corresponding mother tongue instruction. CLIL students have been noted to report that required out-of-class reading assignments could be heavier in CLIL than in mother tongue instruction. This is possibly due to teachers wanting to make up for lost time during lessons or possibly insecurity about linguistic skills in the target language.

CLIL learners will need to be taught how to read in the target language, unless the exposure to that language is very low.

If texts are in the target language then it is essential that the CLIL teacher is trained in assessing text length and complexity in relation to the time required to carry out a specific reading task.

◆ **CHECKLIST FOR INTRODUCING CLIL**

◆ **Getting Started**

◆ **Aim and selection of a CLIL approach**

- ◆ Who is involved with implementing CLIL?
- ◆ What criteria will be used to select students for courses on the CLIL programme?
- ◆ What are the reasons for doing this?
- ◆ What will be achieved by using CLIL?
- ◆ What form of CLIL will be implemented?

◆ **Evaluating objectives**

- ◆ How will evaluation be monitored?
- ◆ Who is responsible for monitoring outcomes?

◆ **Institutional environment and communication**

- ◆ Who is responsible for planning the CLIL approach?
- ◆ What is the role of teachers in the policy-making process?
- ◆ How closely do staff members work with each other?
- ◆ How good is the current relationship between teachers and administrators?

◆ **Promotion of CLIL**

- ◆ How will parents and students be briefed on CLIL?
- ◆ Who is responsible for providing and updating information?

- ◆ What other interest groups should be informed about the CLIL programme?

◆ **Implementation**

◆ **Financial resources and investment**

- ◆ What extra finance would be required for implementing CLIL?
- ◆ How can resources be accessed?
- ◆ What capital investment is required by the institution?

◆ **Facilities**

- ◆ How can library facilities and self-study centres be made available/used more efficiently?
- ◆ How accessible are materials from other countries and institutions?
- ◆ How can staff and students gain access to teaching and self-study materials?
- ◆ Are staff and students trained in the use of computers and the Internet?
- ◆ Do they have free access to the Internet and can they use it effectively?
- ◆ What extra equipment would be needed for classroom use?

◆ **Networking**

- ◆ What networks could be formed with professionals outside the school?

◆ **Choice of subjects**

- ◆ What subjects can be taught using a CLIL approach?
- ◆ What is the reason for teaching a particular subject using a different language?
- ◆ To what extent will CLIL be used?
- ◆ Will the CLIL courses require any extra teaching hours?

◆ **Staff**

- ◆ What cooperation and support can be expected among staff members when introducing CLIL?
- ◆ How many teachers are currently willing and able to implement CLIL?
- ◆ Would subject teachers receive extra financial support for teaching in another language?
- ◆ How many extra teachers might be needed?

- ◆ What qualifications would new teachers be expected to have?
- ◆ What possibilities exist for visiting staff or “teaching assistants“ from outside the school?
- ◆ Will current teaching staff be expected to obtain further qualifications?
- ◆ What extra training might current staff need for the CLIL programme?
- ◆ Would there be a “tutor“ system for new or current staff?
- ◆ What is the role of the target language teacher?
- ◆ Are there ways in which subject teachers, target language teachers and mother tongue teachers can cooperate more efficiently in terms of timetables and work loads?

◆ **Student selection**

- ◆ At which level is the introduction of CLIL most suitable?
- ◆ What are the criteria for selecting students/whole classes?
- ◆ What level of language skills will students be expected to have?

◆ **Teaching materials**

- ◆ What materials will be needed?
- ◆ How can they be obtained?
- ◆ To what extent should teachers produce their own materials?
- ◆ Where do students find material for self-study?

◆ **Evaluation and assessment**

- ◆ What methods of assessment are most suitable for the CLIL environment?
- ◆ If necessary, how should language and subject assessment be separated?
- ◆ Will reports/certificates state that students have been in CLIL classes?
- ◆ Will reports/certificates be bi-/plurilingual?

◆ **Consolidating and developing CLIL**

- ◆ How many years has the student been exposed to CLIL (from kindergarten onwards)?
- ◆ Are there networks with other plurilingual programmes inside and outside the school?