

# Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): Conceptual Framework and Viability in the Indian Context

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## ABSTRACT

*The pedagogical experiments centring on language acquisition and content learning had, in the latter part of the previous century, resulted in methods that combined both. The synergy of combining content and language has proved to be beneficial to both these aspects. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is one of the successful models that has attempted this integration in the classroom. The discourses that evolve in the classroom as part of a content-centred curriculum lead also to language learning. The various theories related to language learning and the experiments in the European Union and Asian countries have approved the success and practicality of CLIL. This paper probes the basic nuances of CLIL as an ELT methodology and its viability in the Indian context.*

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a pedagogic approach in second language teaching, that combines the apparently disparate components of content learning and language acquisition in a single class. This kind of symbiosis broadens the scope of learning as a whole and hence it can be accomplished by traversing a few yards beyond the existing framework of teaching and learning. This integration of content and language has been much experimented in many parts of the world since 1990s and is now in a position to be accounted based on its implication as a methodology.

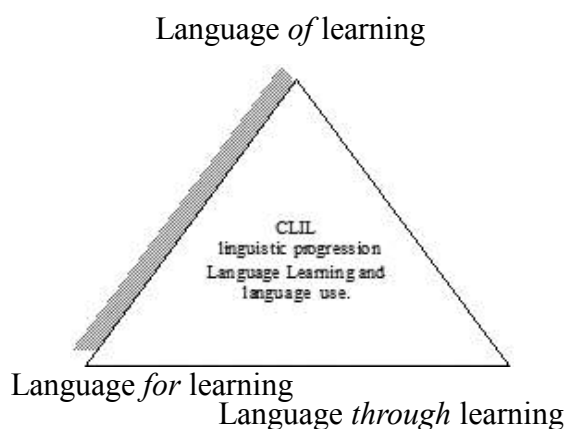
The term Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was first used in 1994 by David Marsh. It is defined as “a dual focussed educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and Language” (Coyle et al,

2010). European Union promotes CLIL as a suitable methodology which promotes the three languages formula and integrates diverse cultures, essential for the existence of the Union. CLIL was more a proactive programme for the integration of the Union. The European Union Commission for Education (EC 2005) had formally approved CLIL as a methodology which resulted in CLIL schools and CLIL teachers in Europe. This has also been adopted as an educational methodology in many parts of Asia including China, Malaysia and Thailand following its success in promoting content learning and language acquisition. This paper probes the basic nuances of CLIL as an ELT methodology, and its viability in the Indian context.

The “content” in CLIL broadly refers to individual subjects like Mathematics, History, Chemistry, or Engineering, which is

often the top priority in the teaching learning process. It need not exactly be the description given in the curriculum as such, but refers to the subject for learning which can be based on the curriculum adapted to support the needs of the class. It can be limited or divided into bits and can be supported by additional materials which is found suitable. “Content learning implies progression in new knowledge, skills and understanding” (Coyle, 2005: 5). It demands proficiency in the theoretical and practical aspects, as seen in the science and technological subjects, and requires the appropriate subject knowledge in Arts, Literature and Humanities. A person proficient in a particular subject or content area has the potential to communicate the ideas in seminars and presentations and “to manage the tasks that face them in their work in content areas” (Mohan 1979, 181).

“Language is our greatest learning tool” (Coyle 51) refers to the importance of language in content learning. The word communication used in this context refers to the acquisition of the target content language and its application in the different learning contexts. Communication is “interaction, progression in language using and learning”



(Coyle et al. 2010, 54). Language and communication in content classrooms are so essential that the lack of effective communication leads to largely nonverbal demonstrations in the classrooms, labs and workshops, which are detrimental to the learners in the long run. Functional language use is promoted in the classroom through interaction and activities which are purposeful and result oriented. The discourse in the classroom comprises instructional and regulative register which has a positive impact on both content learning and language acquisition.

The interaction, activities and active involvement in content learning directly impact Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) initially, and then proceeds to facilitate Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins 2000). These two language aspects involved in language acquisition and the role of CLIL in promoting demand particular attention. The Language *Triptych* put forward by Do Coyle (Coyle et al. 2010, 36) delineates the aspects of language learning in academic contexts.

Here are the three language aspects needed in a content classroom. Language of learning refers to the basic language needed to understand the content aspects. Language for learning refers to the language required to learn in a second language learning situation. Language through learning refers to the new language acquired through the process of learning.

### **Language and Content Learning: Previous Experiments**

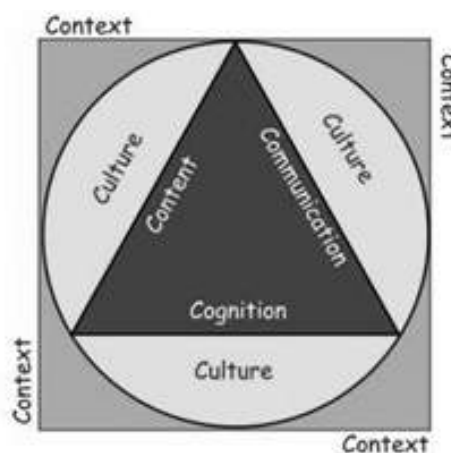
Language learning based on content evolved

from the immediate needs of the modern society. Mohan (2002: 303) observes: “As education throughout the world becomes increasingly multilingual and multicultural, we must look beyond the individual learning the language system and consider language as medium of learning, the co-ordination of language learning and content learning, language socialization as the learning of language and culture [...] and discourse in the context of social practice.”

But Language acquisition along with content learning is not a new methodology. “Two thousand years ago, provision of an educational curriculum in an additional language happened as the Roman Empire expanded and absorbed Greek territory, language and culture. Families in Rome educated their children in Greek to ensure that they would have access to not only the language, but also the social and professional opportunities it would provide ...” (Coyle 2010, 2). Social, cultural and economic aspects that prevailed in the world in the form of privatisation, globalisation, and migration have paved the way for this kind of a learning which is more a kind of infusion of content and language which resulted in a methodology like CLIL which is an “amalgam of both and is linked to the process of convergence” (Coyle et al. 2010, p. 4). This content based language acquisition has been best experimentally utilized by educational practitioners since 1960s, and with more theoretical basis after 1980s, when several methods came to be practised; like the Bilingual Integration of Languages and Disciplines (BILD), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Content-based Instruction (CBI), Content-based Language

Instruction (CBLI), Content-based Language Teaching (CBLT), English Across the Curriculum (EAC), English as an Academic Language (EAL), Foreign Language Immersion Program (FLIP) and Foreign Languages as a Medium of Education (FLAME).

CLIL has a lineage that can be traced to the Immersion programmes in Canada, Bilingual (Immersion) programmes and Sheltered Instructions in the US, and Content Based Learning, even though there are many differences in the different approaches. French Immersion programmes in Canada had the reason of the French minority upheaval for its origin where the immersion was later extended to other languages. Content became a rich source for language acquisition in these programmes. Then the scope and role of content as a valid component in language Immersion programmes gave impetus to many language development programmes and methodologies. Many of these took content as an input for language development, while some other methods had direct learning or immersion in the target language.



CLIL in its present form was launched in 1996 by UNICOM, University of Jyväskylä (Finland). It had an all-encompassing view about content-language learning, with its roots firm on the locality but with an international outlook. “The acronym CLIL is used as a generic term to describe all types of approaches in which a second language is used to teach certain subjects in the curriculum other than the lessons themselves” (Eurydice 2006, 8).

**Content and Language Integrated Learning: Basic Concepts**


Any discussion on CLIL should begin with the 4 Cs framework (Coyle, 2010).

This framework ‘integrates four contextualized building blocks (Coyle, 2010): Content (subject matter), Communication (language learning and using), Cognition (learning and thinking process) and Culture (developing intercultural understanding and global citizenship). All these factors exist in the realm of specific contexts of learning. The

primary difference between CLIL and other content based learning methodologies is the perfect integration of content and language.

Expression of meaning requires language and “... a focus on language would take advantage of students’ communicative problems, bringing in work on the lexis and the grammar they require to express their meanings” (Llinares and Whittaker 2009: 85). “...CLIL learners will need their language to be supported and developed in a cohesive way in order to be able to use language as a learning tool. This demands both subject teachers and language teachers to reconsider the role of language learning in CLIL and requires adoption of approaches which might not sit comfortably in either teaching repertoire” (Coyle, 56).

The constructive theories in education state that the cognitive and thinking aspects involved in CLIL enrich those aspects of a learner. It will have an “impact on conceptualization ...enriching the understanding of concepts and broadening conceptual mapping resources” (Coyle

	<i>Type of CLIL</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Context</i>
Soft CLIL  Hard CLIL	Language-led	45 minutes once a week	Some curricular topics are taught during a language course.
	Subject-led (Modular)	15 hours during one term	Schools or teachers choose parts of the subject syllabus which they teach in the target language.
	Subject-led (partial immersion)	About 15% of the curriculum	About half of the curriculum is taught in the target language. The content can reflect what is taught in the L1 curriculum or can be new content.

2010). There is a constant shift on the part of CLIL teachers to involve skills like remembering and understanding (Lower Order Thinking Skills) and applying, analysing, evaluating and creating (Higher Order Thinking Skills), given in Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson et al, 2001). "The complexity for the CLIL teacher lies in providing a learning environment which is supportive, language-rich and language-accessible, whilst working with cognitively challenging and appropriate content" (Coyle, 56). Multilevel tasks catering to different levels of thinking skills from the same chunk of content given can be a test of the skills of CLIL teachers. "CLIL is concerned with the creation of new knowledge not simply repackaging what is already known in alternative codes" (Coyle, 56). This creation of personal knowledge in the classrooms is the result of interaction and activities in the classrooms. "CLIL learners make new personal meanings in another language" (Dale 2012). The conclusion to these aspects can be seen in the following statements which blend what is termed as Content and Language Learning.

- Language is a matter of meaning as well as form;
- Discourse does not express meaning: it creates meaning;
- In acquiring new knowledge, we acquire new language and meaning.

(Mohan and van Naerson 1997)

A number of benefits of CLIL are pointed out in recent researches. Liz Dale (2010) has pointed out several benefits of CLIL: 1) CLIL learners are motivated. 2) They develop

cognitively and their brains work faster. 3) They receive a lot of input and work effectively with that input. 4) They learn in different ways. 5) They develop intercultural awareness. CLIL offers a natural environment for language learning. "It is this naturalness which appears to be one of the major platforms for CLIL's importance and success in relation to both language and subject learning" (Marsh 2000). A research made by Lasagabaster (2008) pointed out that CLIL learners made greater advancement in learning English language than non-CLIL learners.

The range of CLIL exposure to students has been a topic of debate. It has resulted in naming the various exposures as Soft CLIL and Hard CLIL

### **Practising CLIL**

The language and subject teachers have their distinctive roles in CLIL classes. If it takes to team teaching the collaboration extends through designing the course, transacting the content and language elements, evaluating the concepts acquired, language skills and final analysis of the teaching-learning system. The subject teachers can help develop the language and vocabulary of the learners while dealing with the content aspects. The language teacher works with the preparation of language aspects and can act as an evaluator, co-teacher and motivator. If teaching is done in their respective classes then the language teacher can contribute to learning of content-based vocabulary, frequently used structures needed in the content class and even a bit of Content Based Instruction (CBI) which can supplement content learning.

One cannot definitely say CLIL should follow these steps during preparation, transaction and evaluation phases. This absolute freedom provided in CLIL settings can be truncated or elaborated by the language teacher in determining the ability and limitations of the learning community and learning situations and facilities of the region. Some stages like having a shared vision of CLIL, analysing and personalizing the CLIL context, planning a unit in terms of the 4 Cs including authentic material and monitoring and evaluating CLIL in action (Coyle, 2010) have to be incorporated. The content obligatory and content compatible languages have to be clearly dealt with in the planning and transaction phases. Coyle (2005) puts forward the Lesson Observation and Critical Incident Technique (LOCIT) process which is continuous evaluation with the help of professionals and colleagues. Liz Dale (2010) has given a process description in CLIL classes which is a balanced approach involving activating previous learning, guiding understanding (transacting the content), focus on language (dealing with content-specific language elements), focus on speaking, focus on writing and assessment, review and feedback. The role of CLIL teachers is to acclimatize the students to the content and its language involving the different phases as per the context. Learning in CLIL milieu is natural, progressive and happens at a subconscious level. The background set is in the form of facilitating teachers and scaffolding (Wood, Burner Vygotsky (1978)). The teachers set the background for the learners to construct their own learning. Here the personal needs and abilities of the learners are also taken into

account whereby the different skills and cognitive ability (Multiple Intelligence, Howard Gardner 1983) are also dealt with. So the CLIL in classrooms will be diverse and congenial for learning in all its aspects.

The core elements of CLIL, adaptation and interaction, according to its level of proper execution can make or mar the success of CLIL. Adaptation refers to the preparatory part which comprises the selection of material appropriate to the level of students and learning situation and organizing it to facilitate CLIL. It shall give ample opportunity for an active learning of content and language. If the content teacher is not adept in facilitating language learning, he can get the help of a language expert. Getting the materials and teaching aids ready before the class is an important aspect. Interaction is the key to success in a CLIL class. "Social constructivist theories of learning emphasise that learning is a social, dynamic process and that learners learn when interacting with one another" (Dale, 2012). The difference between a traditional class and CLIL is the extent of time allotted for interaction in the latter class. Student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction in the vernacular language amount to the grasp in the target language and group learning, pair learning and individual activities have their specific role in a progressive manner of learning. Language used in this kind of more than a simulated manner in the classroom, where learning itself becomes the motivating factor, encourages students to exert themselves to the task allotted to them resulting in identifying and creating their own knowledge.

The language teaching part of CLIL draws from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and makes use of CLT activities or tasks in the classroom. Activities that motivate and arouse the learners' interest can be used. Gap exercises with missing information, words and sentences are very effective in CLIL which saves a lot of time. Grid exercises, guessing the result or end, brainstorming, vital visuals, graphic organizers, interactive PowerPoint presentations, interviews, running commentary, academic word list, bingo, mind maps, word puzzles, sorting exercises, role plays, class magazines, and recreation of a text are common practices in the classrooms. These tasks should ultimately lead to an active interaction in the class which leads to learning. The information gap exercises stimulate learner interaction, and interaction leads to effective content and language learning.

CLIL assesses both the content and the language skills of the learners. There is a shift towards the learner-centred assessment experimented by many teachers. Here the learners are free to assess their colleagues. They have to prepare the rubrics for assessment based on different aspects of learning. Formative and summative assessments can be used. "CLIL learners perform better when a range of assessments tools are used" (Dale 2012). Needs analysis and portfolio assessment can be used to direct the course of learning.

### **Scope of CLIL in India**

English is the language of higher education in most of the study programmes in India, a language preferred evidently due to utilitarian

implications. This language has legitimately claimed its role in the multicultural and multilingual context of the nation. The execution of the three-language formula in India, often considered effective in ensuring more meaningful communication within the country, is not challenged by the CLIL model. The positive environment for enhancing communication skills in English, Hindi and a vernacular language and for using them for academic purposes is strongly implied in the educational system, but seems to have fallen much short of the target. The reason is often that the content of core subjects, though designed to be transacted preferably in English (as most of the content textbooks are prepared in English) following a Content-Based, 'immersion' model, is often taught in the mother tongue, with the teacher playing the role of a translator. The unfortunate result is the dual inadequacy and incompetence in the two targeted aims, content learning and proficiency in the second language.

For instance, the scope of learning Social Studies in Hindi and Science in English can be experimented in classrooms in a CLIL background. This will require a shift from the existing scenario of learning and the ideology of learning as mentioned in the beginning. The statement "...all teachers are teachers of language ..." (Bullock 1975) is not an encroachment on the definite and demarcated role of the content or language teacher. On the other hand, it brings about a meaningful change in the roles of the content teacher and the language teacher in the classroom, facilitating learning which "is both an individual and social activity" and "supporting cognitive processing" (Coyle, 56). This does not imply the shifting of

responsibility of the language teacher to the content teacher, or even diminishing in the role of the language teacher as such. It is more in the direction of adding further dimensions to the roles currently played by the content and the language teachers, in terms of their further empowerment in wider areas of knowledge and improved linguistic ability as the case may be.

### Conclusion

CLIL methodology, with its synthesis of content and communication, is based on the concept that these two are inseparable, and this synergy accounts for its success in the classrooms. It is seen as a methodology that fits into the current system of education with its myriad demands to be accomplished within a short span of time. The learners are highly motivated as the learning process itself emerges as a motivating factor. The affective factors which hinder learning is minimised in the classrooms, when learning is accomplished with learner autonomy. The teachers facilitate learning by scaffolding and providing meaningful input which results in creative interaction and student talk in the classrooms. The cultural aspect of learning which is incorporated into the system makes CLIL local in its planning and execution, combining subject and linguistic knowledge with intercultural awareness.

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