

# **Implementing CLIL: Challenges and Opportunities**

**Alan Dobson**

**Stirling August 2018**

# Outline

**Coping in a multilingual world**

**The rationale for CLIL**

**Challenges and Opportunities**

**Some factors promoting effective CLIL**

**Good practice in teaching and learning**

# CEFR Global Scale Level B2

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

# Key questions

- What kind of language education should be provided?
- To what extent can it, or should it, be 'bilingual'?
- What is the place of CLIL?
- What are the challenges and the opportunities?
- What are the factors most likely to bring success?

# Bilingual education: a definition

**Bilingual education** ... refers to the use of two [or more] languages of instruction at some point in the student's school career. Each language is used as a medium of instruction to teach subject matter content rather than just the language itself.'  
(Cummins)

# CLIL: a definition

‘CLIL refers to situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language.’ (Marsh)

# Some Features of CLIL

- Usually starts in secondary (but this is changing)
- May not involve more than one content subject
- May not be offered to all classes in age group
- May be offered intermittently (e.g. one-term modules on particular topics)

# Some Features of Bilingual Education

- A range of subjects
- From an early age
- Additional time provided
- All classes in the age group
- Sustained over a number of years



# CLIL, EMILE, AICLE

The French and Spanish acronyms, EMILE and AICLE, imply a difference of perspective:

- *Enseignement de Matières par Intégration d'une Langue Etrangère (EMILE,)* i.e. TEACHING
- *Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lengua Extranjera (AICLE),* i.e. LEARNING

# Challenges and Opportunities

- The needs of the 'content' subject(s)
- Teacher competence in English
- Possible impact on L1/the national language
- Conversational v. Academic language

# Content subject(s): some key questions

- Which subjects should be delivered through English?
- Are some more difficult to deliver through English?
- Do some offer more scope for 'hands on' experience and visual support?
- How can teaching content through English be sustained as the demands increase: primary – secondary – HE?
- Identify the content subject to be taught and then find dually-qualified teachers, or vice versa?
- Upskilling issues?

# Impact on L1

(...) extensive research conducted on the outcomes of bilingual education in contexts around the world (...) shows well-implemented bilingual programs are highly effective in developing strong L2 skills at no cost (...) to students' abilities in the dominant language (L1)'

(Cummins)

# Conversational v. Academic Language

## BICS and CALP

- **BICS** (basic interpersonal communication skills) used in everyday face-to-face settings
- **CALP** (cognitive academic language proficiency) - used as a tool for learning, problem-solving etc

# **Some factors promoting effective CLIL**

Whole school factors

Curricular Planning

## **Good practice in teaching & learning**

Generic good practice

Linguistically-focused good practice

# Whole School Factors

- Management support e.g. provision of time for preparation and meetings
- Close collaboration between language and content teachers (+ team-teaching?)
- CLIL-specific professional development
- Good communication with parents about what CLIL involves

# Curricular Planning

Balance between:

Teacher-centred and student-centred activities

Focus on meaning and focus on form

Experiential and analytic approaches



# Generic good practice

High expectations

Clear lesson objectives

Effective organisation

Clear instructions and explanations

Variety of activities

Smooth transitions between activities

Active Involvement of all students

# Linguistically-focused good practice (1)

Attention to accuracy, esp. where meaning could be affected

Feedback to promote precise and appropriate use of words

Opportunities to manipulate newly acquired language (e.g. paraphrase, summarising)

Encouraging the use of extended utterances

# Linguistically-focused good practice (2)

Helping students to:

Focus on key words e.g. through cloze exercises

Understand definitions

Become more aware of levels of formality

Work with a range of genres

Deploy the passive voice (e.g. for science)

Express particular relationships, e.g. comparing and contrasting

Develop more sophisticated writing through e.g. 'scaffolding'

# Linguistically-focused good practice (3)

Promoting integration with the 'content' subject(s),  
e.g. by:

Using a range of methods and activities from other disciplines, such as enquiry skills (surveys, polling etc)

Employing a range of authentic resources, such as reference books, documents, realia and websites

# Conclusion

- CLIL is not a panacea; expectations need to be managed
- Offers an interesting and rigorous learning experience, when thoughtfully implemented
- Common features of good practice emerging
- More evidence on outcomes needed
- Build from the bottom up
- Progression and Transferability issues merit further reflection