

Recommendations from the invitation-only policy workshop in Como 10-12 March 2014 to draft a new a strategy for CLIL in Europe

Premise: CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning - was debuted as an acronym in the mid-1990s and is revealing itself to be much more than *learning some content and a little more foreign language*. An increasing body of research is demonstrating that CLIL very naturally provides teachers ways to cultivate not only multilingualism and academic competence, but also students' skills in interpersonal communication, critical-thinking and literacy in both the mother tongue and foreign languages. Not only is the CLIL approach extremely useful for intensifying language exposure, it also enhances student (and teacher) motivation. CLIL enables learners to acquire curiosity and develop their interaction skills, along with promoting a number of the **eight key competences of lifelong learning** that the European Commission indicated are key for the citizens of today. These key competencies are embodied in life skills such as “learning to learn”, “problem solving”, “digital competence”, “social and civic competence”, “initiative-taking”, “entrepreneurship”, “cultural awareness and self-expression” and “communication in foreign languages”.

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*: if we agree with the common saying that “fuzzy writing reflects fuzzy thinking” then *tidy thinking* would require *language which is clean, clear and correct*. Therefore, at the level of schooling, the first step towards successful education can be identified as equipping learners with the *language for thinking about the content*. However, since students must learn unknown content through a language that is foreign, CLIL-teachers naturally change their approach to instruction: not only do CLIL-teachers ensure that the language of instruction is comprehensible, they also seek alternative modalities of input. CLIL-teachers incorporate visuals, graphics, imagery etc. into active and interactive task-based learning processes which prompt students to use language purposefully to critically think through information, negotiate understandings, and co-construct knowledge.

How can we optimize the CLIL-potential?

At the British Council led *CLIL Policy and Practice* Meeting at Lake Como in March 2014 there was general agreement that to optimize the potential of CLIL for 21st century competence-directed education, some foundation steps must be taken so to establish *what CLIL is, what it is not, and*

what it can be. **Section I** below presents some General Recommendations upon which to ground CLIL good practice. **Section II** then considers the implementation of competence-based CLIL good practice through the strands of Curriculum, Assessment and Professional Development. How can the CLIL curricula be structured so as to provide outcomes and competences that are far and beyond those achieved through traditional learning paradigms? How can such competences be assessed? Most importantly, how can traditional professional development programmes for teachers be reinforced so that teachers can easily harness the potential of CLIL in their everyday classroom practice? Some additional recommendations are presented in **Section III**.

I. General Recommendations

In general the meeting agreed that there is a need to be clear on the definitions and benefits of CLIL in schools across Europe. Please see below.

1. Define CLIL macroscopically. It is necessary to obtain a general shared understanding of what CLIL is and is not: When, why and how is CLIL different from or similar to the Canadian immersion model or the US sheltered instruction model? And how much do such differences vary and reflect cultural and linguistic differences across Europe? Once CLIL is defined, we can create some overarching principles regarding CLIL good practice which will unify CLIL across a variegated Europe.

2. Define CLIL microscopically. Is CLIL in primary education the same as CLIL in secondary or even tertiary education? Do certain subjects lend themselves more readily to being taught through the vehicle of a foreign language? Which types of CLIL-contexts lead to successful learning and competence building and in which is CLIL less successful?

3. Define the macroscopic benefits of CLIL. In which contexts has CLIL been promoted as a priority in mobility programmes for students and teachers? How has CLIL been optimized for the benefits it can bestow, such as enhancing social inclusion in education through multilingualism? We need to show that, as instruction is through a foreign language, the CLIL process engages learners of a range of abilities, including those less academic, thus promoting the cognitive development of all learners involved.

4. Define microscopic benefits of CLIL. If CLIL was used effectively in all secondary schools, this would enable students to take their school leaving certificate in at least one subject in a foreign language. This would assess the students' ability to demonstrate their

understanding of the content and reward them for the appropriate use and understanding of features of key subject-based discourse.

II. Curriculum, Assessment, Training & Professional Development

Recommendation 1: We recommend that an analysis of existing CLIL reports is undertaken to create a database of curricula or programmes which illustrate CLIL good practice. A collection of case studies from a variety of CLIL countries will provide insights into contextual experiences. This would provide data to prescribe minimum language levels for teachers; identify when and how CLIL can be implemented effectively and delineate assessment techniques.

Recommendation 2: Develop a support mechanism for curriculum developers. This would assist them in making their national curricula more **language-sensitive**. Curriculum developers should understand how the principles of CLIL can be incorporated so as to make content more easily comprehensible without reducing or simplifying the national content curriculum.

Recommendation 3: Develop a European competence portfolio

Since CLIL can contribute significantly to many of the “eight key competences of lifelong learning” it would be useful to develop a European competence portfolio which is independent of the CEFR language levels. Whilst microscopic standardisation may not be possible across the EU28, it may be possible to agree on learning outcomes that reflect “competence-progressions” which are age-appropriate and context-sensitive. Such a framework would provide teachers and educators useful guidelines for implementing a competence-based CLIL curriculum, enable both teachers and students to continuously assess progress, and provide test providers a concrete and relevant assessment grid. Together, these will contribute to multilayer assessment of/for learners, teachers and the whole school, and thus help assure quality.

Recommendation 4: CLIL Professional Development programmes should:

- a) inform teachers on research regarding the impact of CLIL at the language and content interface.
- b) unite subject teachers and language teachers in a discussion on the benefits and potential of CLIL for both Content-education and Language-instruction.

c) incorporate management issues and consider CLIL implementation a whole-school approach that relies on transdisciplinary collaboration so that curriculum design and development becomes a process which is shared amongst teachers.

Recommendation 5: Compensate CLIL teachers through either rewards or incentives.

Since the development and selection of support material will inevitably involve increased workload such as extra administration, lesson preparation.

Recommendation 6: All pre-service teacher training to include at least one foreign language.

Recommendation 7: Pre-service courses to include at least one subject taught with CLIL methodology. Ministries and national teacher training agencies should be guided in this.

Recommendation 8: CLIL teacher training should place strong emphasis on teaching skills which promote learner-centred approaches. CLIL teachers must understand how CLIL can be mainstreamed to include all learners.

III. Additional recommendations

Coordination, Communication & Dissemination

Recommendation 9: Create a Europe – wide symposium for subject teachers from across Europe to review how they present knowledge in their subjects. This would address the issue of culture in CLIL – the culture of how knowledge is acquired.

Recommendation 10: Raise awareness of CLIL and promote the added value of CLIL across the EU. This may be executed via TV, social media, reports, case studies and success stories and online resources which could illustrate through short films CLIL best practice in different teaching contexts (e.g. see such an example on IWB use <http://www.itilt.eu/>).

Recommendation 11: Develop a communication strategy for CLIL to optimize existing channels and networks and create new ones which will engage audiences, particularly heads, language teachers and teachers of STEM (Science, technology, engineering and maths network).