

Analysis of English Curriculum and CLIL Methods



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INTRODUCTION

The English curriculum is an essential component of education, providing students with the skills necessary to communicate effectively and confidently in both written and spoken forms. The project partners carried out an analysis of their English curricula to understand the goals, objectives, and overall effectiveness of their programmes, and to identify areas where their curricula may be falling short or where improvements can be made, such as in the areas of pronunciation.

The partners also wanted to compare their English curricula to each other's to identify areas of overlap and differences. Through this comparative analysis of the English curricula, the partners gained a broader understanding of how language learning is approached in different contexts, and used this knowledge to inform their own teaching practices. By sharing best practices and learning from one another, partners can develop workshop contents that meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and with varying learning styles.

Additionally, by examining the structure and content of the English curricula, we contribute to the development of strategies that can enhance student learning and engagement, ultimately preparing them for success in both academic and professional settings. The report will be disseminated to policy makers to support them in their work towards creating more effective and inclusive English curricula.

Analysis of English Curriculum

There are many different approaches to English language and linguistic teaching with the three most popular methods being:

- *Communicative language teaching (CLT),*
- *Genre-based pedagogy, and*
- *Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)*

The partner schools also stated using Competence Based Language Teaching (CBLT), an approach that focuses on "what learners are expected to do with the language," in addition to the aforementioned three popular methods of instruction. CBLT is tailored to the individual needs of the student as well as the demands of the given communication setting. The goal of this method of instruction is to provide students with the linguistic competence and cultural understanding to successfully accomplish predetermined goals in interpersonal communication.

Alternative Methods & Approaches of ESL

Other approaches to teaching/learning English as a second language include the following methods:

The Natural Approach is mostly used when getting used to speaking. Students are not forced to speak correctly right from the beginning, they are allowed to try, make mistakes and be corrected until they achieve the desired result. Results can be achieved only by practice, repetition and perseverance.

Competence-Based Method is the best way of explaining grammar with the goal being that the student has to understand the situation of the sentence in order to succeed in her/his lessons. Using this method repeatedly gives excellent results. Students start to differ in their aspect be it simple, continuous or perfect. They learn more by practice rather than by rules.

The Direct Method: The idea of learning a foreign language is by creating total immersion in the language. That is why everything is taught in the target language. This way students get used to the terminology and do not try to translate it into their language.

The Interactive Method is most useful while learning and teaching vocabulary and speaking skills. Students are triggered to speak, answer questions and express an opinion using their own words and assimilated patterns of expressing.

All project partnering schools mentioned that their teaching is very much learner centred with clear direction given as to what learners are expected to do and achieve within the learning of ESL.

ESL Based on Age and Educational Level

Across the partnering schools there are different age ranges for the teaching and learning of ESL and therefore different learning needs are to be met in relation to age, skill level and current knowledge of the language within the classroom.

ESL starts within all partnering countries at a Primary Educational Level, Grade 1 – 4 (Primary Education) which consists of an age range of 5 years to 9 years old, Grade 5-9 (Elementary/Middle School Education) which holds the age range 9 years to 14 years old and Grade 10 – 12 (Secondary School) which holds an age range of 14 years to 16 years old.

ESL in all partnering countries takes up 2-3 lessons per week on average where the above methods are utilised and students are assessed both in their needs and progress with the learning content being based on the Common European Framework of Reference for

Languages (CEFR): learning, teaching, evaluation, the principles of language learning and language learning levels.

Assessing Students Needs and Setting Goals

Students' needs must be assessed and taken on board throughout the learning process. It was mentioned multiple times that learning is very learner centred and the needs of students are assessed and monitored through uses of specific communication and contexts. A lot of activities are used to prompt students into immediately using linguistic knowledge to perform complex tasks and assess the outcomes and success rates of these outcomes.

Within lessons grammar course books are used based within a thematic approach which allows linguistic content to be integrated with cultural content.

Students are expected to be somewhat aware of the use of each grammar section right from the beginning of their learning. This way the realisation of speech and writing skills will happen naturally later on with direction from the teacher. Student engagement is also crucial to the progress and assessing individual student needs as if they do not participate within the learning activities for a long time they become at risk of losing interest and motivation.

The Role of the Student

The role of the student is universally seen across these reports as someone who is receptive to the content and motivated to learn who can also make meaningful use of the information technologies and methodologies made available to them. By introducing the different teaching methodologies and approaches, as each partner contributed to above, it allows for every type of learner to be included in the lessons and fully immersed in the subject for a more effective learning outcome. Students are also expected to become self –directed learners, noticing where they may need extra assistance or focus within their learning and use 'Deep learning' to overcome these learning obstacles. They are required to learn alongside others through communication and cooperation and also provide feedback, both from 'student to student' and 'student to teacher' feedback.

The Role of the Teacher

The role of a teacher is seen as one who directs the teaching activity and uses technological means, as well as other tools, to help students achieve the educational and cognitive objectives and acquire skills for life. The teacher thus helps students to develop a true digital

competence, which consists not only in being able to use technological means, but also in knowing how to use them according to needs and purposes.

The role of the teacher is to explain, support and navigate them while learning and experiencing. He/she is there to advise and correct, observe and consult with the students providing useful feedback and clear expected results that need to be achieved.

According to the teacher training, it should be updated on a daily basis. There is always something to be learned – more explanations, new methods, games or approaches. The opinion of the partners is that native English speakers are most needed to support the teachers, because there is always the possibility that the language in use can be ambiguous, and even if all the rules are known, all the explanations are read, teachers can still come up against something confusing.

ESL Teaching Resources & Materials

With technology-based methods of teaching becoming more and more readily available, teachers are able to show students videos, songs, games, places, authentic material and a lot of other things connected to the topics or to the grammar structures being taught. It has been widely seen that this creates great motivation for students because it makes them overcome the separation between school and the outside world and makes them experience how the language, they are learning is a tool capable of bringing them into contact with the reality of other countries.

Moreover, with these technologies available students can read their digital books, can do the activities teachers show them, play games and do written online tests on specialised platforms such as [questbase.com](https://www.questbase.com) or [weschool.com](https://www.weschool.com).

The introduction of new technologies in schools, however, not only makes it possible to do more effectively or practically what would have been done anyway, but also offers opportunities to achieve a different way of teaching and learning making the teaching activity more interactive and engaging. Access to multimedia material certainly encourages greater involvement of students compared to the consultation of similar content in paper form; if interactivity is added to this, the student's attention is captured by the need to make choices and by the possibility of exploring different paths and solutions. Learning can therefore become a multisensory experience that requires both reading or looking at writings and images, still or moving, listening to sounds and, more and more often, also touching the surface of the media to interact with the content.

Another opportunity offered by the use of new technologies is the cancellation of physical distances because students can communicate with each other and with the teacher even from home or anywhere else.

Apps	Online Platforms	Books
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Duolingo ● Kahoot ● Memrise ● WordReference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ello.org ● Engvid.com ● Test-english.com ● Eslvideo.com ● Lyricstraining.com ● Esl-lab.com ● Easypacelearning.com ● Learnenglish.britishcouncil.org ● Onceuponapicture.co.uk ● Bbclearningenglish.co.uk ● Learnersdictionary.com ● Coolenglish.net ● Islcollective.com ● Tuttoinglese.it ● Talkenglish.com ● Tolearnenglish.com ● Wordwall.net ● AdobeSpark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cult Complete (Ed. Dea Scuola) ● Identity (Ed. Oxford) ● Microlanguages courses: A matter of life 3.0 (Ed. Edisco Editrice) ● Smartmech Premium (Ed. Eli) ● All about logistics (Ed. Trinity Whitebridge) ● Bit by bit (Ed. Edisco)

It was found across all partner organisations that interactive apps, websites and books are used and are an essential part of the lesson, because they work with the students of today.

All of this points to the fact that students enjoy this kind of instruction and are inspired by it to grow and improve their skills. Together, students and teachers can make slideshow presentations, video lectures, and other forms of media-rich learning materials, enabling for more engaging online classes for everyone involved.

Recommendations to Further Improve ESL Teaching/Learning

In relation to recommendations about the curriculum, teaching systems and classroom set up to produce a more effective teaching/learner outcome, all partners mentioned the number of students per class.

On average each class consists of approximately 20-30 students. The teachers have found that this does not always allow them to be able to speak English during the lessons and practice speaking and listening exercises which are crucial to language learning. By giving more space to the communication aspects, increasing the teaching hours of ESL, which are currently on average 3 per week, and leaving more time for the possibility of getting students to speak English, will only improve their communication skills and learning engagement and motivation.

It was suggested that classrooms be divided into two groups for ESL of about 10-12 students per group. This grouping can be decided according to the level of knowledge and skill level of each student for example.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Content and language integrated learning is an approach for learning content through an additional language, thus teaching both the subject and the language.

Learning via CLIL develops students' assimilation skills and the way they will use their vocabulary later. Speaking a foreign language has nothing to do with translation. Learning words and grammar without context does not make any sense. Students must be aware of the realisation of speech and the proper usage of words, their context and meaning. That is why CLIL methods are so beneficial. Teaching English as a second language with the CLIL method allows the student to get immersed in the foreign language itself, learning how to use whole phrases according to the context, not just separate words combined via translation. It broadens the whole picture of the foreign language and gives knowledge of different areas that will be needed while using the language at least as a communication tool.

The CLIL method has many variations, but they are all beneficial to students because they learn through content, create their own patterns, or learn ready ones, which may be used in many ways. Learning a foreign language is not only about vocabulary, but also mainly about culture and understanding others and how they think. Mastering foreign language thinking is the most essential tool for understanding and assimilating a foreign language.

Project partners stated that English teachers, who are graduated in Foreign Languages and Literature, and are not teachers of other subjects, are required to explain in English, vocabulary and topics related to the different specialisations depending on the school in

which they teach. For example, they find themselves explaining Computer Science, Chemistry, Mechanics, Electrical Engineering, Commerce, Cooking and Literature while not being experts in those subjects. This, of course, implies continuous study by English teachers as well as frequent contacts with teachers of those subjects as it is based on collaborative and cooperative working methods.

Teachers must provide students opportunities to use authentic academic English to understand content information. This inevitably means using a quality of English that might disturb them if they are used to approaching English language learning only grammatically. Rather than following a grammar progression, CLIL uses language purposefully, as needed, when needed. If teachers want their students to communicate their elaborate thoughts in English, then they must equip them with a quality of English that does justice to their ideas. They need age-appropriate English for first organising elaborate thoughts coherently and then for communicating their eloquent notions intelligibly. Language is the tool for thought and communication. The sooner students realise how useful this tool for their communicative progress, the more motivated they will be to master it.

Analysis of CLIL within the UK

In primary and secondary schools throughout the UK, English is both a separate subject and the medium of instruction. However, in view of the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in UK schools due to steadily rising proportions of EAL (English as an additional language) pupils, teachers are presented with a variety of challenges when integrating both content and language teaching to ensure that EAL pupils are able to access, engage in, and demonstrate their learning across the curriculum. This report provides a brief overview of the key challenges of integrating subject and language objectives in an EAL context and some potential solutions which lie in CLIL (Content and language integrated learning) theorisation and in the practical knowledge of teachers working to support pupils' learning of content through a second or additional language.

An English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupil is defined as any pupil 'who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and does not have a language in common with the teacher' (DENI 2020). In the UK, mainstream teachers are responsible for meeting the language and learning needs of EAL pupils in primarily content-driven lessons. However, a growing body of research highlights a perceived lack of teacher knowledge of the language learning process and of specific strategies (Franson 1999; Leung & Creese 2010; Oxley & de Cat 2019). Additionally, responding appropriately to a wide variation in pupils' English proficiency levels also poses a key challenge for teachers (Leung & Creese 2010; Hutchinson 2018; Strand & Hessel 2018). Many teachers also report a lack of awareness of how to differentiate subject content appropriately and where to locate appropriately differentiated resources (Arthur 2020). Similar challenges are also voiced by CLIL teachers in ESL and EFL contexts.

So, what knowledge do teachers require in order to increase their effectiveness in integrating content and language learning? The principles which underpin good practice for EAL teaching correspond with those underpinning a CLIL approach and are based on key theories relating to language acquisition. It is imperative that teachers are able to build a knowledge base from which they can develop strategies to support pupils' language acquisition through subject learning activities. Krashen (1985) contends that language input must be supported with contextual cues such as real objects, visuals and gestures and modified to support language acquisition. Furthermore, Krashen's 'i+1' hypothesis emphasises the importance of not oversimplifying input and pitching it at a level which is slightly above the learner's current level of proficiency. Swain (1985) also argues that 'pushing' or actively encouraging pupils to participate in communicative activities is crucial for second language acquisition as it allows them to negotiate meaning and practise using their speaking and writing skills. There is also a strong consensus in EAL and CLIL literature that support for a first language will enhance and not hinder the development of English language acquisition.

Examples of good practice relating to EAL pupils' language development and academic achievement are gradually emerging through recent case studies in the UK where teachers have applied theory to practise successfully (IOE 2009: Arnot, Schneider et al. 2014; Cameron & Besser 2004)

So, what can be learned from teachers who are successfully integrating content and language learning in multilingual classrooms in the UK? Much can be learned and applied in other CLIL contexts, particularly in relation to three key areas: Understanding pupils' language development needs, differentiating the learning process and differentiating curriculum content. To understand pupils' language development needs, many teachers report using the CEFR framework successfully to track pupil progress and plan lessons with a dual focus by incorporating the 'can do' statements for each CEFR level. To differentiate the learning process, experienced teachers also recognise the importance of peer reinforcement and social interaction and therefore prioritise collaborative strategies in the classroom including strategic grouping, planned talk-time before writing, a focus on project-based work and 'buddy systems' where pupils are paired to support each other in using and developing English.

Teachers also report using a variety of creative ways to contextualise language input particularly for pupils with lower levels of English proficiency, including short videos, visual posters, communication fans and using visual games to practise and reinforce key vocabulary. Many teachers also recognise the importance of making use of pupils' home languages in pair discussions and by encouraging them to keep 'key word dictionaries' to reinforce academic vocabulary. Teachers who report being able to differentiate subject content successfully often draw on key theories linked to CLIL and EAL good practice, particularly the quadrant framework proposed by Cummins (2000) where activities can be categorised by the amount of contextual support and degree of cognitive demand. Through using Cummin's (2000) framework, teachers are able to reflect on the language demands of the curriculum or subject, decide how much contextual support is needed and plan accordingly. Some teachers also report using a variety of digital resources to differentiate curriculum content including online e-books with visual support and videos related to their subject.

In conclusion, to achieve successful integration of language and content objectives in any CLIL context, there is a critical need for the sensitisation of teachers to the processes of second language learning as well as exchanging knowledge and resources in order to find additional ways to support pupils.

Analysis of CLIL in Italy

In Italy there are a lot of different types of Secondary Schools depending on the level of specialisation. For this reason, English teachers, who are graduated in Foreign Languages and Literature, and are not teachers of other subjects, are required to explain in English, vocabulary and topics related to the different specialisations depending on the school in which they teach. For example, they find themselves explaining Computer Science, Chemistry, Mechanics, Electrical Engineering, Commerce, Cooking and Literature while not being experts in those subjects. This, of course, implies continuous study by English teachers as well as frequent contacts with teachers of those subjects as it is based on collaborative and cooperative working methods.

Nowadays the majority of English teaching books used in secondary schools contain different pages dedicated to CLIL and so to different topics, especially those studied in that type of school. CLIL can be used to complement EFL lessons and if students have queries about content, it is acceptable to direct them to the content expert. It is also useful to collaborate with the colleagues of non-linguistic disciplines to see when and how some CLIL lessons could be used during the year in order to potentiate students' interest in content; in this way students see that English is useful for accessing knowledge which is relevant to their studies.

Teachers must provide students opportunities to use authentic academic English to understand content information. This inevitably means using a quality of English that might disturb them if they are used to approaching English language learning only grammatically. Rather than following a grammar progression, CLIL uses language purposefully, as needed, when needed. Teachers should instil in their pupils an English standard commensurate with the sophistication of their students' ideas if they want their students to be able to articulate such concepts effectively in English.

Although teachers' goal is to help students master academic English, they cannot present complex content through long texts written in academic English. It is therefore necessary to transform complex texts into easier texts. Then students have to extract information from images, maps, or graphs and to complete small tasks and in this way, students will achieve both content learning objective and language learning objective. In addition, since students have to think critically, listen carefully, negotiate, debate, speak and collaborate with others to agree on a final product, these activities help develop critical thinking skills and collaborative problem-solving skills.

In conclusion, we may say that CLIL gives students the context to use language in meaningful ways and to think about complex notions. By transforming texts into tasks, we shift the focus away from the act of teaching towards the process of learning, prompting us to cultivate 21st century competences and encourage transdisciplinary reasoning.

Analysis of CLIL in Bulgaria

CLIL is solely used in English classes here at our institution. We do not educate our students on diverse subjects in English. Despite the fact that our English textbooks provide several CLIL lessons. We think they're crucial for the growth of pupils' English skills.

When learning a foreign language, one must get immersed in the culture, history, literature etc. to fully understand and be able to use the language properly.

Students' vocabulary and ability to assimilate new information is strengthened through CLIL instruction. Understanding other languages has nothing to do with translating. It is pointless to study vocabulary and grammar rules in isolation. That is why the CLIL method is so beneficial. Students and teachers alike are challenged to think in a second language through the use of the CLIL approach. Assimilation of any language is impossible without it. There is more to language than just words, such as culture and history.

Learning through content can give many opportunities for the learner:

- In terms of the cultural benefits of learning a new language, nothing beats student exchanges. To truly integrate into the family, the student must master the foreign language. Since the language barrier is now gone, he or she can put their language talents to good use. Learning a language in its native environment helps students pick up on slang, realia, and other idiomatic expressions that aren't taught in the classroom. The experiential nature of learning this vocabulary makes it particularly robust.
- Bloom's taxonomy is effective because it allows students to learn at their own pace while still benefiting from the guidance of a teacher.
- Students that regularly engage in meaningful project work demonstrate greater levels of critical thinking and collaborative learning as a result.

Students benefit from the multiple iterations of the CLIL approach because they are able to learn through content, generate their own patterns, and/or acquire existing patterns that may be applied in a variety of contexts. Learning a new language is not just about memorising words; it's also about gaining insight into a new culture and discovering new ways of thinking. The most important skill for learning a new language is the ability to think in that language.

The CLIL approach is being used successfully in our classes. When students are immersed in the culture and way of thinking of the foreigners, they begin to grasp the logical structure of the language.

Analysis of CLIL in Latvia

In Latvia, the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been known since the late 90s of the 20th century. For a long time, it was mostly associated with bilingual education, which was implemented in ethnic minority schools organising simultaneously the educational process in the learners' mother tongue and the state official language - Latvian, gradually increasing the proportion of the latter.

Since 2010, CLIL methodology in Latvia has referred not only to ethnic minority education, where the Latvian language is used as a second language to learn academic content, but also to schools with Latvian as a language of instruction. Today, bilingual education in Latvia is understood as learning in a language other than a mother tongue, integrating the acquisition of the non-linguistic academic content and a language. Such experience is already being implemented in some educational institutions in Latvia and several teachers have mastered the CLIL methodology in courses organised by the European Social Fund, the British Council in Riga and the Latvian Language Agency and National Education Content Centre.

Each school may determine the specific aims of CLIL provision combining use of the state language (Latvian) with a foreign language (English, German or French) when drawing up its curriculum. In primary education, teachers specialising in foreign languages and those who have completed the relevant in-service courses are qualified to teach another subject in their specialist language. In lower and upper secondary education, a subject teacher may use another language in the teaching process.

There are two state schools in Latvia which offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in English - Riga State Gymnasium No. 2 and Riga State Gymnasium No.1

Another way to use a foreign language in the education process is close cooperation between the subject teacher and the foreign language teacher:

1. Cooperation between the subject teacher and the English language teacher in the form of:
 - a. joint lesson planning or material development,
 - b. English language teacher's consultations on language use,
 - c. team teaching.
2. Teacher cooperation in the form of:
 - a. joint lesson planning or material development,
 - b. subject teachers' consultations with the English language teacher on language use,
 - c. team teaching,
 - d. preparing learners in English language classes for the comprehension of the subject.

3. A lesson is run by the subject teacher in English, organising the acquisition of the subject matter and the language. The relationship between the English language teacher and the subject teacher is consultative in nature.
4. The English language teacher uses some material connected with the subject matter and provides cross-cultural knowledge. The emphasis is put on the language teaching rather than content. The English language teacher cooperates with different subject teachers to learn about topicalities in their subjects.

In general, Latvia recognises the manifold benefits of CLIL instruction. Enriching the content of language learning makes it more challenging and motivating for language learning. It can contribute to improving learners' language skills and subject knowledge, developing diverse learning strategies and learners' cognitive abilities, as well as promoting multiculturalism and intercultural understanding. CLIL helps to achieve the present-day education goals and objectives; it blends smoothly into the education system, addresses and fulfils topical educational needs.

Despite the benefits of CLIL-based instruction, it requires the optimisation of language and non-linguistic subject teaching, balancing the teaching of both aspects so that learning is as deep as it would be if the subject were delivered in the learners' mother tongue. Thus, training of teachers for CLIL teaching methodologies is crucial.

There are a number of reasons why CLIL has not been introduced broadly in the school system:

1. Subject teachers and learners lack adequate foreign language skills,
2. There are not enough teaching/learning materials,
3. Some teachers object to the dominance of English,
4. There is a lack of support from the administration of some schools.

Nevertheless, although CLIL has not become part of mainstream education in Latvia yet, the teachers who have acquired and use it consider that the classes which are content-driven with a dual focus on teaching both the non-linguistic subject and a language and which promote cross-cultural awareness are necessary to provide for the educational needs of the 21st century.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementing CLIL requires a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach that involves ongoing professional development, resources, and support for teachers. Based on our findings, we listed a range of recommendations:

- Policymakers and those responsible for developing curricula should provide mandatory professional development to help mainstream teachers better address the language and learning requirements of students who are learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) in content-based classes. Teachers need to be able to understand and adapt curricula, as well as locate appropriate resources.
- CLIL should be integrated into the curriculum and language teachers should be provided with the necessary resources and training to deliver CLIL lessons.
- Resources that support the use of authentic academic English in the classroom should be provided.
- Teachers should be equipped with tools to simplify complex texts for students.
- Curriculum activities should be designed in a way that promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the classroom.
- Introduce CLIL instruction in other subjects as well, not only into English lessons.
- Reduce the number of students in order to incorporate more speaking activities

It would be also beneficial to provide ongoing support and mentorship for teachers as they implement CLIL, offering incentives to encourage teachers to participate in professional development, and involving EAL students and their families in the development and implementation of CLIL programs.

In addition to providing recommendations for policymakers and curriculum developers, the project partners are also working on developing a variety of CLIL lesson plans for different CEFR levels, ranging from A1 to C1. These lesson plans will be made available on the project website, which will provide educators with a useful resource for implementing CLIL instruction in their classrooms.

The lesson plans are being designed to support teachers in integrating language learning and content learning in a meaningful and effective way. Each lesson plan will include a range of

activities and materials that are designed to engage students in the subject matter while also developing their language skills.

The lesson plans have been designed to prioritise arrange of speaking exercises to facilitate the development of students' pronunciation skills.

By making these lesson plans available online, the project partners are hoping to reach a wider audience of educators and provide them with the tools they need to implement CLIL instruction in their own classrooms. This will not only benefit EAL students but also all students, as CLIL instruction has been shown to improve language proficiency and content knowledge for all learners.