



# Analyzing The Scope Of English As A Medium Of Instruction For Language Learning Through Content And Language-Integrated Learning Approach

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## Abstract

India is a country of diversity. India's varied culture, tradition, and linguistic character is unique and it is challenging to preserve and promote its socio-cultural and linguistic heritage in a constantly changing world. To preserve India's multilingual character various initiatives have been taken by the government. Policies have been made, but the implementation of those policies is a challenging task with the diverse needs of people belonging to different communities and speaking more than 121 languages. The present paper is an attempt to analyze content and language integrated learning approach (CLIL) as a pedagogical approach for language learning in the Indian context where English is considered as the second language and often used as a medium of instruction in education. Various research studies have proven the benefits of using CLIL in the classroom but there are challenges of implementing the same. There is a need to integrate language learning with content to enhance students' critical thinking skills with language proficiency. Equipping teachers with mastery in content knowledge as well as language proficiency, and the development of content materials enriched with inputs for language learning, there is a possibility to implement the CLIL approach in Indian classrooms to support English language learning while preserving the multilingual diversity of the nation.

## Keywords

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), Multilingual Education, Medium of instruction, Second Language learning

**The future doesn't just happen, it is shaped and modeled by our actions.**

**David Marsh**

## Introduction

With a population of over 1.3 billion people, India is a diverse country with a unique blend of ethnicity, socio-cultural diversity, religious diversity, and the richest linguistic diversity. There are 121 languages and 270 mother tongues, as per the 2011 Census Report. There is a need to protect, preserve, and promote all the languages and dialects of the nation as a social and cultural heritage. Promoting multilingualism is very important from the point of view of preserving it as a cultural heritage. However, the importance of English as a global language cannot be overlooked. There is a difference in the pattern of schooling in urban and rural

India. Children in urban areas get early exposure to the English language as the medium of instruction, but children in rural areas lack sufficient exposure to it, which also impacts their higher education and future employment. To establish a balance between English and regional languages, innovative and effective pedagogical approaches are needed which can supplement the three-language formula proposed by different education policies in India.

The medium of instruction at the school level is always a debatable issue in a country like India where 121 languages are spoken by 10,000 or more people, however, 96.71 percent of people speak one of the 22 languages scheduled in the Indian constitution as their mother tongue. So, it becomes a tedious task for the policymakers and the implementing authorities to make and implement a strict language policy that can serve both the purpose of preserving language identity and fulfilling the global demand for language proficiency.

### **Content and language-integrated learning (CLIL)**

CLIL is a well-known acronym that was coined by David Marsh, a member of a team working in the area of multilingualism and bilingual education at the Finnish University of Jyväskylä in 1994 (Marsh, Maljers & Hartiala, 2001). Marsh in 1994 defined CLIL as an approach that integrates subject content, and language learning with dual-focused goals (Marsh, 1994). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an approach used in education in which a second language / or a language other than the mother tongue is used for teaching both content and language. The CLIL approach is based on four key dimensions i.e. socio-cultural, educational, content, and linguistic dimensions (Perez Vidal, 2004a). This approach focuses on not only content but also on language learning (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). This approach is a form of bilingual education that is characterized by the interaction between content (non-linguistic subject matter) and language (non-native language) (Perez Vidal, 2013).

CLIL is a program in which language and content teaching are integrated, approaches of CLIL would depend on the system of education or the level at which it is employed and the strategy is determined by a country's educational system and the sociolinguistic environment in which it is implemented (Renau & Marti, 2018).

There are different ways in which children learn, everyone has their learning styles which may vary greatly from person to person. It becomes difficult for the teachers to accommodate the varied learning styles of children. The reason is quite obvious that a teacher or a school has to standardize their processes and teaching learning strategies within and outside the classroom to fit the learning styles and needs of more than 40-50 students in each classroom, who come from different socio-cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages at home and having very different learning needs and interests. There might be a possibility that their learning needs might not be completely consistent with the school's approach. This may impact the learning of different subjects.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a strategy that entails learning subjects like history, geography, mathematics, and various other subject contents in another language which is not native to the learners (foreign language or a second language). CLIL has the potential to significantly improve the language with learning content of different subjects simultaneously. It would also instill a positive 'can do' attitude among learners towards learning. CLIL is a framework for bringing multiple cultures and languages into closer proximity, and it will help in establishing learners' global identities in today's knowledge age (Awan & Sipra, 2018).

CLIL provides a natural way of language learning where children use another language in such a manner that the focus solely remains on the learning content. CLIL incorporates language instruction integrated with other course content. CLIL classroom teaching focuses on two objectives: one is subject or content and the other is related to the language. This is why CLIL is also referred to as dual-focused education.

### **Historical Evolution of CLIL**

Education in a language other than the learner's first language is not a new concept, it is as old as the concept of education itself. When people from diverse linguistic groups live together in a global setup it becomes natural to educate them using different languages as the means of instruction. The term "Content and Language Integrated Learning" (CLIL) was coined by David Marsh in 1994. CLIL is a term that is often used as an umbrella term describing different ways of integrating language as the medium of instruction. CLIL expands beyond the natural content and language integration process and fosters simultaneous learning of language and content, however, its effectiveness depends on the context in which it is used. CLIL is a

competency-based teaching strategy which is becoming popular in European school systems. The phrase "Using language to learn and learning to use language" sums up the concept of teaching language as well as subject content. CLIL curriculum promotes the development of interpersonal skills, cultural sensitivity, and language and communication proficiency which are the list of competencies in demand (CLIL, n.d.). CLIL as an approach has evolved from the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach which focuses on the active involvement of learners in the communication process during the teaching-learning process to enhance their language proficiency. In the same way, CLIL emphasizes standard language uses in teaching specific content in specific contexts and encourages the authentic and standard use of language in real-life communication processes.

The integration of subject and language learning has its origin in bilingual and immersion programs. Canada became the forerunner in bilingual education during the 1960s and 1970s, which was followed by some European nations including Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden which started promoting multilingual education (Hanesova, 2015). Content-Based Instruction was (CBI) focused for bilingual education, which emphasized specially on subject-specific content with language acquisition. "Content-based instruction refers (CBI) to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 204). The primary objective was to learn a second (L2) or third language (L3) or even an additional language (AL). Students learn about the subject or content using the language they are trying to learn, rather than in their native language. By using that new language as a tool for developing knowledge in a particular subject, students develop linguistic ability in the target language (Lin, 2016). There is a difference between the communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and Content-Based Instruction. CLT is more focused on language teaching as it is a language-driven approach whereas CBI focuses on content for being a content-driven approach. But as there is a strong emphasis on communication and interaction during the instruction process, this approach is different from traditional methods of teaching where only content is the focus for the whole teaching-learning process. Both approaches supports bilingual/multilingual education.

From its initial roots in bilingual programs, CLIL has evolved into a competence-based teaching strategy that combines language learning with content understanding, improving both subject knowledge and language competency. The balance between language and content education, context, and implementation of CLIL are the aspects that determine its impact as a language learning approach.

## **Benefits of CLIL for the teaching learning process**

### **Benefit for Learners**

Deeper Understanding: CLIL approach creates a link between the learned concepts and first and second language of the learners, which enables deeper understanding of concepts. It also promotes metalinguistic abilities, and allows students to reflect on language and meaning. CLIL approach focuses beyond only language learning, and students are provided with the opportunity to learn meaningfully and connect their language use to other areas of the curriculum (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

Learners are encouraged to reason the working of language by learning the content in the second language. The understanding of content taught through CLIL is not just limited to learning vocabulary and grammar but it helps in the development of total language proficiency. CLIL helps in the development of all four (LSRW) language skills i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing among the learners.

CLIL promotes critical thinking ability among learners. Learners get motivated to see the connections between different curricular areas. Students also learn life skills related to language uses, which is essential for their future growth.

Various research has proven that people having knowledge and proficiency of multiple languages possess better cognitive abilities. CLIL provides an opportunity to experience a new language, new culture, new form of art and literature. It also trains for future endeavors.

Coyle et al. (2010) emphasized that the content used in CLIL aids not only in the acquisition of knowledge and competence but also in the development of learners' understandings by creating individual interpretations. In the CLIL approach learners are introduced to learning ways that are connected to their real-life experiences which provides a natural setting for knowledge and language acquisition (Madhavaiah, 2019)

## Benefits for Teachers

CLIL approaches Improve language teaching because it incorporates content with the language lessons, which helps in developing cognitive abilities for critical thinking with language proficiency. Teachers may focus on the functional nuances in second language learning which might not get addressed in the regular language class.

Teachers get an opportunity to integrate content related to diverse disciplines and topics while implementing CLIL in the classroom. This holistic approach of considering both language and content simultaneously provides benefits to learners in language learning, different concepts from different disciplines, and enhances the overall learning experience.

So, CLIL is beneficial for cognitive development, the development of metalinguistic abilities, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. It provides teachers with an opportunity to establish an engaging and integrated learning environment. CLIL provides scaffolding, efficient instruction, and stakeholder engagement with set priorities for teaching-learning process (Mehisto, Frigols, and Marsh 2008).

## Ways of implementing CLIL

1. Planning CLIL Lessons: To make the process of language learning meaningful it should be done in a context, which involves choosing a topic from a subject area like Science, social science, art, etc. For integrating language teaching with content, meaningful texts, and passages should be identified with relevant vocabulary and grammar.
2. Language can be best learned through active engagement of learners in the learning process. A content-rich language learning environment should be created to give proper exposure to both the subject content and the target language while implementing CLIL.
3. Another important task for teachers is to cater to the individual needs of the learners and design learning tasks as per the learning styles of the learners. Various learning activities should be planned to develop all four (LSRW) language skills.

Active learning through positive language experiences and the development of cross-disciplinary skills should be the focus while implementing CLIL. Cognitive functions can be enhanced by assigning challenging tasks to the learners and organizing activities that are contextualized for the specific subject (Bentley, 2010).

## Example of implementing CLIL through a lesson to teach Climate and Weather Patterns in grades 4-5

Through the lesson, students learn the weather phenomena, with the types of clouds, level of precipitation, different zones of climate with all the other features of different weather and climatic conditions. For the same students will be required to collect data about the weather and write journals to present the findings. To describe the weather conditions, students would be required to use specific language to describe all the important elements of weather. They will learn and use vocabulary related to weather and climate. So engaging students through different activities for integrated learning of language and content would be the teachers' focus, which could be done through using a variety of reading, writing, speaking and performing activities.

The following points should be kept in mind while planning for CLIL lessons

- i. It should always align with curriculum goals.
- ii. It should encourage higher-order thinking skills among learners with language proficiency.
- iii. Students' active engagement should be done through activities specialized for developing different language skills like listening, Speaking, reading, and writing.
- iv. A multidisciplinary approach should be focused on enhancing contextual understanding.

## When applied as the medium of instruction in the Indian context, CLIL may offer several advantages.

A three-year project CLIL@India (2016- 2019) co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ program (a European Union-led program for supporting education, training, youth, and sport in Europe), was dedicated to develop a bilingual education model by introducing CLIL. The focus was to integrate this innovative pedagogical practice to preserve the multilingual character of India.

English is considered as a second language in India. Linguistic diversity in India needs innovative language teaching-learning methods and approaches that are more efficient than the traditional methods of grammar-translation. There are various other language teaching methods and approaches but CLIL is different from other methods as it not only focuses on language only but it also integrates language with content and context, which is an added benefit for the learners.

Implementing CLIL as the medium of instruction in the Indian context may enhance language proficiency among learners by promoting multilingualism and creating a meaningful learning environment. Bilingualism offers several advantages, including economic, cognitive, and health benefits such as improved communication skills for Employment possibilities and scope for higher education in reputed organizations (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008).

### **Challenges regarding the implementation of CLIL in the Indian context**

1. Teachers may not be trained enough to teach other subjects in a second language as they might not be proficient in the second language if they did not get enough exposure to the same.
2. Non-availability of sufficient teaching-learning materials for CLIL integration- Teachers may not find appropriate content materials rich in language inputs for CLIL.
3. Most CLIL teachers are not adequately trained, and they usually teach in a foreign language using traditional methods rather than CLIL.
4. Teachers need assistance in enforcing their CLIL principles in practice.
5. While implementing CLIL it becomes necessary to assess and evaluate both content knowledge and language skills simultaneously which is a tedious task. It becomes more challenging to assess the language gains and associate it solely with CLIL as regular language classes might have significant effects on language learning. To ensure the proper evaluation, intense planning is needed from the teachers' end.
6. To give a balanced input by integrating both language and content in the classroom, is a time-consuming and complex process than planning regular classroom instruction.
7. The impact of the CLIL approach on an inclusive learning environment is also a less explored area, as stated by (Busse, 2011) there is a need to explore more about the effect of CLIL on special needs children.

There is a need to address these concerns by providing proper training and support to the teachers to make them efficient enough to integrate CLIL while teaching by using English as a medium of instruction. There is a need to create a balance between languages and subject content for better output (Renau and Marti, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

Knowing different languages has cognitive and neurological benefits which helps in developing the ability to adjust to different social and cultural environments (Marian and Shook, 2012). The multilingual nature of Indian society calls for an approach in the education system that can equip the learners with an understanding of different Indian languages and also proficiency in English as a lingua franca. It is necessary to include various languages in the school curriculum to support and preserve the multilingual character of India (Saraf, 2014).

CLIL is a pedagogical approach that focuses on language learning with knowledge acquisition in real real-life contexts while ensuring meaningful learning, critical thinking, and deeper understanding among learners. Knowing the multilingual character of learners is very essential for planning different pedagogical processes. Knowing the linguistic characteristics of learners may help teachers create an environment of collaboration among them and their students to foster and support language learning (Mishra, 2022). There is a need to search more about the compatibility of the CLIL approach in Indian classrooms for implementing it as a substitute for using any other language, only as a medium of instruction. In conclusion, the implementation of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach can be a practical step towards preserving India's rich and diverse multilingual heritage.

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