

CLIL in the Knowledge Age

As with Fuller's vision and the development of environmental sciences, CLIL developed as an innovative form of education in response to the demands and expectations of the modern age. Input from different academic fields has contributed to the recognition of this approach to educational practice. In an age characterized by 'quick fix' solutions, however, which may or may not lead to any form of sustainable outcomes, it is important to contextualise CLIL historically. CLIL is not merely a convenient response to the challenges posed by rapid globalization; rather, it is a solution which is timely, which is in harmony with broader social perspectives, and which has proved effective.

Fragmentation was very much a characteristic of the Industrial Age. Power blocks such as countries, societies and even educational systems operated according to territory, borders and boundaries. The Industrial Age was marked by strategies of position and physically based resources. But globalization and the emergence of the new technologies have moved us into a new era, the Knowledge Age. This has resulted in sweeping changes in how societies, and the educational systems that serve them, operate. In the Knowledge Age, the two main strategies are of movement and unlimited resources, because of the significance of ideas, creativity and intelligence. It is hardly surprising that such a seismic change in global culture pressurizes change within educational systems. Integration, convergence and participative learning are three key characteristics of Knowledge Age organizations which are influencing decisions on what, and how, we teach young people.

The key performance drivers of the Knowledge Age society are commonly cited as the 'Knowledge Triangle' (EURAB, 2007). This triangle integrates education, research and innovation, which are the core features for managing successful change and adaptation. These are also core issues influencing how we can reshape the ways in which we teach languages. When Graddol (2006: 86) describes CLIL as the 'ultimate communicative methodology', he points to one of the major differences between the communicative language teaching movement in the 1980s and the emergence of CLIL in the 1990s. Communicative language teaching was one step towards providing a more holistic way of teaching and learning languages, but for various reasons, especially relating to authenticity, has been insufficient in realizing the high level of authenticity of purpose which can be achieved through CLIL. Much CLIL classroom practice involves the learners being active participants in developing their potential for acquiring knowledge and skills (education) through a process of inquiry (research) and by using complex cognitive processes and means for problem solving (innovation). When the teacher pulls back from being the donor of knowledge and becomes the facilitator, as is often found in CLIL practice, forces are unleashed which empower learners to acquire knowledge whilst actively engaging their own and peer-group powers of perception, communication and reasoning.

As CLIL practice often preceded research (although some fundamentally important research was available through the 1980s and 1990s, drawing on the experience of Canadian immersion) it was some time before scientific validation of the approach could be made. But as research results became available (see Chapter 7), those involved with forms of CLIL increasingly came to the view that variants of this approach could be seen as providing education which goes beyond language learning. So, whereas in one situation the language may be the dominant focus, in another it may be the content, but in each there is a fusion resulting from the methodologies which can lead to positive educational outcomes. What separates CLIL from some established approaches such as content-based language learning, or forms of bilingual education, is the planned pedagogic integration of contextualized content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching and learning practice (Coyle, 2002: 45). This is explored in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

Source:

Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. [pp. 5-6]