

'Speaking French Alive': Windows on CLIL and immersion

Kim Bower

Language World April 2014

To what extent does Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as a language-based project approach promote pupil motivation in the teaching of MFL in secondary schools in England?

Focus

Findings from:

- theory
- resulting methodological framework
- overview of results from three schools
- what can be learned?

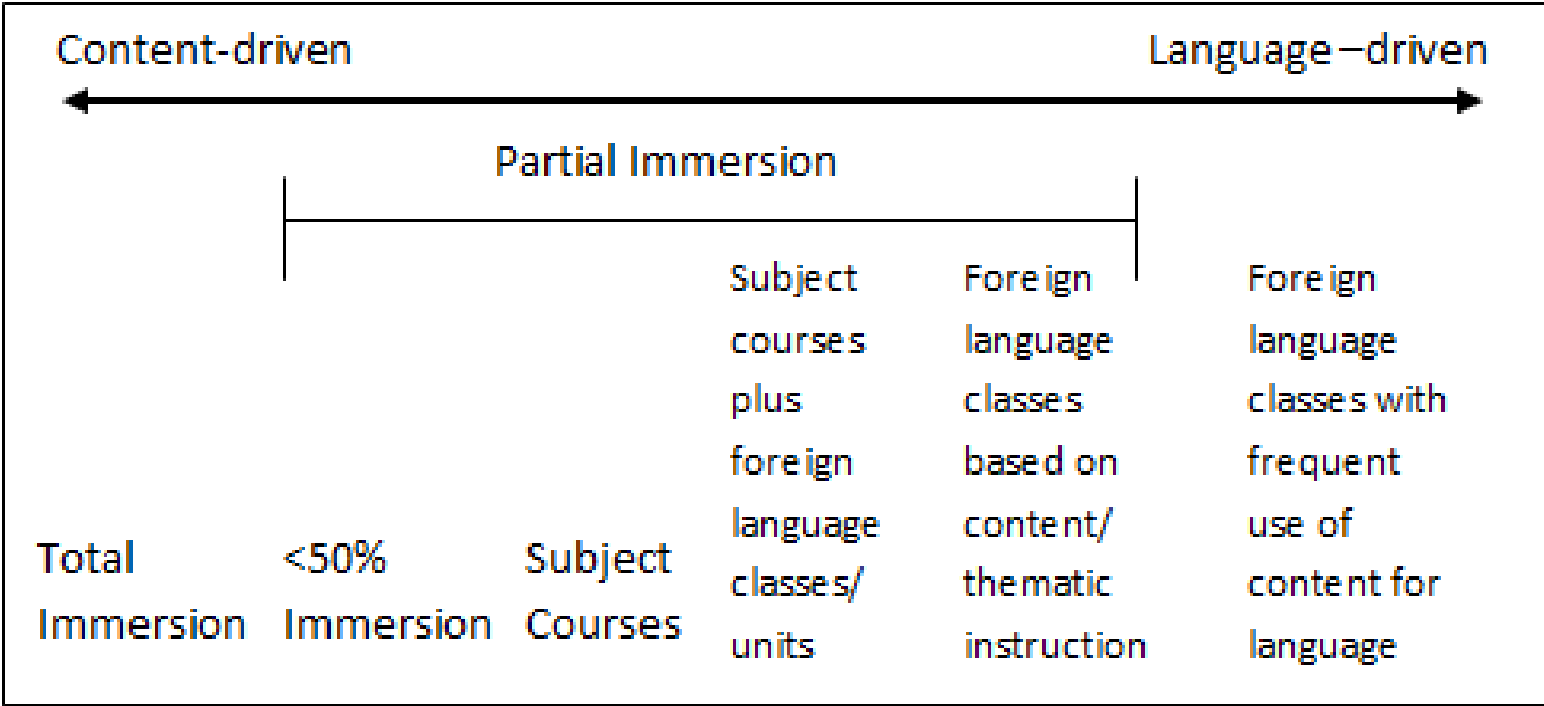
Definition: CLIL

'CLIL is a dual-focussed teaching and learning approach in which the L1 and an additional language or two are used for promoting both content mastery and language acquisition to pre-defined levels'

(Maljers, Marsh, Wolf, Genesee, Frigols-Martin, Mehisto, 2010)

Lesson objectives are therefore about **content** and **language** that will enable **learning of the content**.

Defining terms: immersion, partial immersion and CLIL



Range of Content Based Learning Settings for MFL Learning in England.
adapted from Met, 1998 and Lyster and Ballinger, 2011.

CLIL models Coyle et al. 2010

- Primary models A 1-3
- Secondary models B 1-5
 - B1: Dual-school education
 - B2: Bilingual education
 - B3: Interdisciplinary module approach
 - **B4: Language-based projects (language teacher takes primary responsibility for the CLIL module)**
 - B5 Specific-domain vocational CLIL
- Tertiary (HE) models C1-3

Language and school-based models of CLIL in England (B4)

Source: adapted from Coyle et al., 2010:21-22

Language-based projects based on link with a school in a TL speaking country

- Dual-school education school exchange
 - 1: CLIL language is partner school's L1
 - 2: Language exchange school based CLIL lessons
- Dual-school education
 - CLIL study visit
 - Language based field study

Language-based projects based on links with other curriculum areas

- Subject module
- Interdisciplinary module

School-based projects

- Subject strand
- Curriculum strand

Source: adapted from Coyle et al., 2010:21-22

Process motivation model for investigating CLIL in the classroom in England

- **Learning environment:** learner, teacher, course specific
- **Learner engagement:** perceived value of activity; attitudes towards learning; perceptions of learning; engagement in learning tasks
- **Learner Identities/Self:** self concept, mastery

Source: adapted from Williams and Burden 1997; Dörnyei, 1994a and Coyle, 2011

Data collection

- Review of documentation about each school
- Pilot of questions for interviews and questionnaire
- Questionnaire sent to a Y8 CLIL/immersion group
- **3 day visit to each school:**
 - recorded interviews with teachers, heads of department, senior leaders and headteachers
 - recorded pupil focus groups: 2 per school
 - 'naturalistic ' lesson observation: to provide colour and thereby a richer picture

Summary of case study CLIL models for this study

School	Project type	Curriculum involved	Description
Ash School 11-16	Curriculum Strand	ICT, PSHE, Tutor group for three years Year 8 group	Learners study a number of subjects through the CLIL language often in KS3 as there are no current alternatives to examinations in English. They may also use the TL for registration and form period.
Beech School 11-18	School-based project	Subject strand of Geography in French Year 8 group	Learners study a curriculum subject, taught in the CLIL language with planning input and/or teaching input by language and content teachers.
Cedar School 11-18	Language-based projects based on links with other curriculum areas	Subject module of History and Science in French for 9 lessons Y9 group	Learners engage in a module from a content subject, taught in the CLIL language with planning input and/or teaching input by language and content teachers.

Findings

Teachers' perceptions: Ash School

- High expectations
- Highly developed listening and concentration skills
- Students are more interested and motivated in learning languages
- Positive attitudes
- Students are using language for real purposes
- More willing and able to use language spontaneously
- Students often make more progress in a range of subjects and not just the CLIL subjects
- Attainment is therefore higher across subjects at GCSE
- It's a lot of work
- It's worth it

Students' perceptions

- High expectations
- Enjoy languages (Ash School, some in Beech and Cedar Schools: 'Normal German's fun, but this is better.' (*Beech*))
- Think they are important
- Most think they are making good or better progress (contrast to Jones & Jones 2001)
- Interested in the foreign culture and countries where the language is spoken
- More independent learners

... in our form room there are a couple of quotes and stuff, ... one quote ... said 'for every language you learn, you learn a new life or something.' And I can sort of relate to that because French is really different from English and learning French is like stepping into a whole other world.

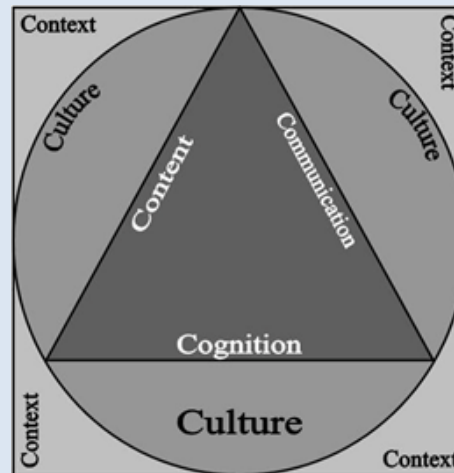
- Asked what he enjoyed the most about using French in registration, one boy responded:
'speaking French alive'.

Conclusion one: progress

- In each model, where teaching was effective, the **cognitive challenge involved in CLIL was found to raise engagement, attainment and motivation of the learners.**
- **key elements:** optimal challenge, new, age relevant content and a supportive and co-operative classroom
- **progress:** all abilities made **at least good**, often exceptional progress. The **level of language** at which they were working, their **fluency, confidence** and **intercultural understanding** were **significantly higher** than in similar groups learning languages in the more traditional way and **as a result, pupils were more motivated.** (School Improvement agenda)

Conclusion two: deep intercultural awareness

- Pupils demonstrated a **deeper understanding and appreciation of intercultural awareness** than is often seen in language lessons. This deepening of intercultural awareness is fundamental to CLIL



The 4Cs Framework (Coyle et al. 2010:41)

- The findings illustrate depth of intercultural awareness that CLIL can bring, that pupils are interested and engaged by this aspect of language learning and therefore more motivated.

...It would be nice if we are studying the language to know a bit more about the country and what people are like there (14-year-old boy) Jones' (2000: 158)

Cedar School:

when you're learning French, you learn France's perspective rather than Britain's perspective ... it changes your view on what's happened because you're learning about different people and like how they went through the [war].

On the importance of learning about how others live:

'It gives you a better view of people's situations'; 'it helps you respect ...'; '...get empathy'; '...you realise how hard some people's lives are'; 'it gives you ... a moral view of life' and 'makes you a better person'.

Conclusion three: attainment

- CLIL has a **positive impact** on **achievement** and **motivation** where the teaching is effective.
- Pupils and teachers: high levels of **concentration**, **engagement** and **effort** in lessons.
- Most pupils: **learning a language is important** or **very important**; most perceived themselves to make **good or better effort** in class and at home.
- **Enhanced pupil attainment across the curriculum.** Ash and Beech School (school data)
- Ash: enhanced Y8 current attainment compared to the rest of the year group;
- Beech: reported higher Value Added outcomes in KS4 as a result of pupils having had two years of CLIL.

Conclusion four (specific to immersion strands)

6hrs+/week

- **strong relationships** and levels of **cooperation** with each other in the group and with the teacher
- high levels of learner **fluency and levels of competency**, which develop rapidly.
- Both lead to greater **pupil engagement** and **motivation**.
- Relatively small impact on other groups/curriculum

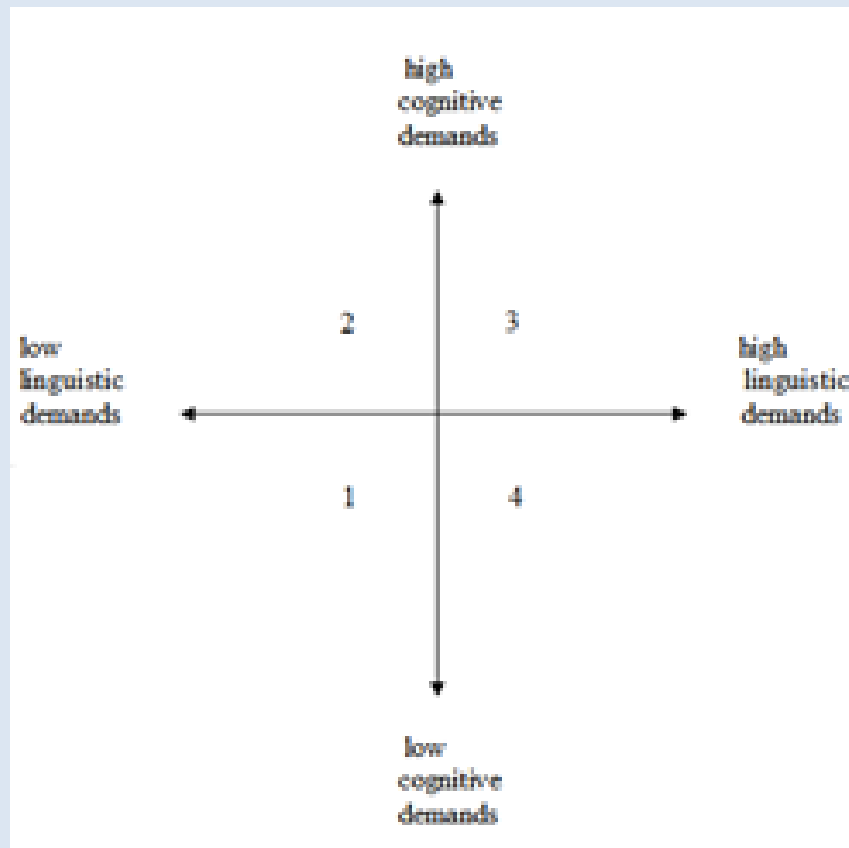
The principal disadvantages

- language teacher, rather than subject specialist, delivers ICT
- number of classes dependent on the number of language teachers available
- replacing the immersion tutor in terms of relationship, should they leave during the three year KS3

Conclusion five: high cognitive and linguistic demands

- Pupils more **interested** and found **greater relevance** in CLIL course content than in usual language lessons (Coyle 2000; 2011; Coyle et al. 2010).
- cognitive and linguistic demands can both be high
cf. many KS3 language lessons (Coyle 2000).

CLIL Matrix



I don't necessarily want to learn about what's in people's pencil cases, but I like learning about world things that you can actually say and would be useful to you in French

Learner, Beech School

for me, the really clear difference for the children is when they are doing something which clearly links to another subject, you don't need to spend any time whatsoever on the relevance. The relevance is there for all to see

Head teacher, Cedar School

Conclusion six: using the TL for real purposes

- pupils appreciated **using the language for real purposes**
- pupils **proud** of what they had achieved.
- The target language is often de-contextualised in language lessons and pupils are unable to see how it relates to them. **In CLIL lessons, the target language has a purpose because it is useful for learning and therefore the language is perceived by the pupils as useful to them.**
- Where CLIL is taught effectively it can lead to **significant increases in confidence** with the foreign language.
- In all 3 schools pupils rarely used the TL when talking with each other: area for development. Spontaneous talk usually more frequent in CLIL.

Well, I'm kind of proud that I can talk about different matters and argue about different things that don't really have much to do with French ... in French.

'Yes the French actually comes naturally to you the longer you're in French immersion'.

I'm proud that I can understand what people are saying, like the first day when you came in ... you talked about how you were going to record us, and don't panic. I never understood the whole thing that you said, but a few words, I put them together and I was able to understand what you were saying.

Conclusion seven: independent learners

Learners in all 3 school contexts appreciated:

- group work
- researching information
- working on extended pieces of work

Rarely found beyond a superficial level in more traditional ML lessons

Conclusion eight: enhanced skills across curriculum

- Teachers and pupils acknowledge the impact of enhanced linguistic skills which were transferred to other subjects across the curriculum:

'Yes, it's all subjects I would listen better [in]. It improves our concentration.'

Progress was noted by these learners in:

- **'being able to speak and have good pronunciation',**
- **'how much we are learning throughout this past year',**
- **'... now I can go on in sentences',**
- **'higher listening skills',**
- **'writing French',**
- **'cooperating', 'communicating',**
- **'learning to cope with other cultures' and 'confidence'.**

Conclusion nine: optimal challenge

- optimal challenge
 - high concentration levels
 - exceptionally well-developed listening skills
 - boredom rare
 - any confusion not demotivating

Confusion often used with positive states, e.g.:

'confident, interested, confused, enjoying the lesson and achieving because sometimes with some words I am confused with the differences' (girl)

'interested and confused because I love trying to learn French. I find it harder to learn History and French at the same time'.(boy)

Where challenge was too great

‘there’s a thin line between demotivation and challenge’
(CT1, 19.4.13)

In two of the schools, **some** pupils talked of **‘zoning out’** and **‘going into their own world’**, being **‘bored’** when unable to understand

'fed-up, bored and slipped into a coma because I fell behind in class and couldn't catch up'.

Fed-up, bored and suicidal because the lesson was too hard for me to keep up. Everyone else knew what to do so I just messed around.

Conclusion ten: transferability; fuzzy generalisations

A fuzzy generalisation carries an element of uncertainty. It reports that something has happened in one place and that it may also happen elsewhere. There is a possibility but no surety. There is an invitation to “try it and see if the same happens for you”. Bassey (1991:51)

To set up a new project:

- you need a motivated individual, who may have limited knowledge of CLIL, but who has leadership support
- where the individual is an effective teacher with deeper understanding of CLIL, development is more likely to be secure, and remain a long term goal
- support from SMT although deep knowledge and understanding of CLIL are not essential

Lessons were more effective where ...

- teachers had access to training and advice from experienced CLIL practitioners
- teachers understood the methodological concepts of CLIL
- assessment focussed on content

In Beech School language work and content work were well coordinated where ...

- language teachers were trained and supported by a subject teacher experienced in CLIL
- the teacher taught both the CLIL Geography and the language lessons

10 Key findings

1. the need for support from senior leadership
2. (and 3) the importance of **liaison between subject and language departments** in developing appropriate and **age-relevant content** that **builds on prior learning**.

The motivating impact of

4. a supportive, co-operative learning environment
5. relevant content
6. optimal challenge
7. effective use of the target language
8. increased intercultural awareness
9. pupil understanding of meta-cognition
10. the need for teacher training in both CLIL methodology and subject knowledge

Researcher's perspectives: results from the subject and curriculum strand data

- Support of SMT is important
- Teachers need to want to be involved
- Teaching doesn't have to be outstanding
- Where students are taught more frequently together by one teacher, relationships are exceptionally well-developed and this impacts the learning climate positively
- Student attitudes are usually more positive and the level of language students operate at is significantly higher than non-CLIL groups
- We need clear national policy based on a sound philosophical approach of the need for, and the pedagogy of, learning of languages
- A CLIL resource pack for ITE tutors might be a useful tool for informing trainees and sharing with colleagues in school

Advice to schools introducing a similar project

With evidence-based, small-scale volunteer-led process, so that a small number of children could be seen to be gaining considerably, without the staff who are delivering it becoming overburdened; such that its attractiveness was evident to both those who are reluctant or those who are interested but not convinced, so, as with anything that's new in a school, you have to look for those people who are going to be enthusiastic pioneers. A few allies, a few trusted allies, and it has to have a leadership team [support].

Head teacher, Beech School

Recommendations from the study

1. **Expansion of CLIL:** one way of enabling pupils all abilities to be motivated and to achieve
2. **A coherent national policy, reflecting European policy,** based on a sound philosophical approach of the need for, and the pedagogy of, learning of languages [Evans (2007) and Macaro (2008)].
3. **INSET for teachers** that provides methodological understanding
4. **Resources for teacher educators**

Food for thought ...

Morally it creates a bit of an issue, doesn't it? If you identify that that methodology is clearly having a wider impact than just languages, then how can we utilise that across the piece?

Headteacher

(Bower, 2006:76)

Where can I find out more information?

- Future for Languages as a Medium of Education: **FLAME** www.all-languages.org.uk/flame headed by Kathy Wicksteed
- Some CLIL schools have open days see Flame website.
- Bilingual Schools Project: 2011/12 one year of funding for a 2-year project (TA)
- Links into languages (linked up awards)
- European Centre for Modern Languages: ECML
- '*CLIL*' Coyle,D., Hood P.' & Marsh. D. CUP (2010)

References

- Bower, K. (2006). "An analysis of pupils' and teachers' views on the use of 'immersion' techniques in the teaching of modern foreign languages at one secondary school", unpublished Masters dissertation.
- Coyle, D. (2011) *ITALIC Research Report Investigating Student Gains: Content and Language Integrated Learning*. University of Aberdeen, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Edinburgh.
- Coyle, D., Hood, H., and Marsh, D. (2010). *Content and Language Integrated Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (1994) Motivation and Motivating in the Foreign Language Classroom. 78, 3: 273-284.
- Jones, B., and Jones, G. (2001) *Boys' performance in Modern Foreign Languages. Listening to learners* London: CILT.
- Lyster, R., and Ballinger, S. (2011) Content-based language teaching: Convergent concerns across divergent contexts. *Language Teaching Research*.
- Met, M. (1998) Curriculum decision-making in content-based language teaching., in J. Cenoz and F. Genesee, (eds.), *Beyond bilingualism: Multilingualism and multilingual education*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters: 35-63.
- Williams, M., Burden, R., and Lanvers, U. (2002) 'French is the Language of love and Stuff': student perceptions of issues related to motivation in learning a foreign language. *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(4): 503-528.

