

What is the effect of Content Language Integrated Learning on pupil motivation to learn a foreign language?

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Abstract: With the 1+2 Language Approach manifesting in Scottish schools, it was important for me to undertake research into what teaching method could motivate learners to learn an additional language. Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is learning a language through another subject. I consider my research to be of importance and of benefit to educational establishments as it offers an alternative method to teaching languages. The findings of my research suggest that CLIL quickly created an engaging, motivational and enjoyable context for language learning. Resulting from this research project, I suggest that teaching languages through a CLIL approach is more engaging than traditional teaching modes.

Keywords: Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); primary school; motivation; 1+2 language policy.

Introduction

I decided to implement Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) into my classroom to help me to determine the effect that learning Italian through another subject would have on pupil motivation to learn another language. This methodology, more recently developed in the UK by Coyle (2009), dates back to 1994. The educational basis for the CLIL framework was to facilitate mobility across Europe to increase language proficiency; whilst the political basis is to provide frameworks to allow pupils higher levels of language competency (Marsh, 2015). Resultantly, CLIL has been further developed and established within educational systems since 1995 through programmes, legislation and professional initiatives (Marsh, 2015). Despite Coyle possibly being the leading advocate for CLIL within the UK, it is important to note that CLIL has been more widely accepted across Europe due to its reactivity to the various educational systems. For example, the CLIL push in Finland would not have been successful if governance was centralised and educator autonomy lessened (Marsh, 2015). Since Moujaes *et al* (2012) believe Finland to be the country to which others would look to with the aim of replicating its success; it seems a good idea to follow their example.

Coyle (2005) argues integrating content and language is a feasible strategy to achieve sustainability for the 1+2 approach to language learning that the Scottish Government is implementing (Scottish Government, 2012).

In response to recommendations from the Languages Working Group we have pledged to enable and encourage every child to learn two languages in addition to their native tongue – the 1+2 approach (Scottish Government, online)

In my school, the first additional language (L2) is Italian and the second additional language (L3) is French.

Research projects (OFSTED, 2011) suggest that many learners find modern language lessons to be challenging, irrelevant and boring. However, Coyle argues that CLIL provides different contexts for learning so creates accessible, relevant and interesting lessons. CLIL's purpose is to use language as a tool to develop new learning whilst simultaneously using new learning to develop language (Coyle, 2001). According to the European Commission Action Plan (2007), CLIL can make a major contribution to the Council of Europe's language learning goals through effective communication, through real contexts, which motivates learners to learn language (Eurydice, 2006).

Content and Language Integrated Learning – the Basics

CLIL is 'rapidly developing, high profile and continuously controversial' (Marsh, Marsland & Maljers, 1999). CLIL is 'a dual-focussed educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language' (EuroCLIL, 1994). Wolff (2012) believes CLIL has challenged the status quo that subjects should be taught as stand-alone. Integration is the key characteristic that differentiates CLIL from other language frameworks (Coyle, 2005 & 2008) such as the Canadian Immersion Programme and content-based instruction in foreign language learning (Coyle, 2008). The central theme from Coyle's (2006 & 2008) research and supported by Montalto *et al's* (2016) research, is that CLIL works on a continuum where both language and content have equal standing.

The Four Cs of CLIL

Coyle (2009) details the Four Cs of CLIL as *Content, Cognition, Communication and Culture*. Coyle's (2009) *Cognition* argues pupils should not be learning at a cognitive level lower than their ability. Therefore, it is important to teach them the language needed for specific situations. Dalton-Puffer (2008) argues that CLIL lessons should be adapted to pupils' language levels without being detrimental to their cognitive level.

With regard to Coyle's (2009) *Communication*, conventional language teaching builds on linguistic progression. CLIL does not follow this progression but rather teaches grammatical structures depending on the content to be learned, because more complex linguistic structures may be required for discussing, debating, justifying and explaining (Coyle, 2006). Furthermore, language develops through focus on function of language as it relates to the *Content* (Coyle, 2009). As explained by Coyle (2006: 5) CLIL immersion is when 'learning content matter determines the language to be used and learnt'.

As mentioned within Coyle, Holmes & King's (2009) key characteristics of CLIL, intercultural understanding is fundamental. Williams (1994) considers language learning different to other subjects resulting from its social nature, as it requires learners to adopt new social and cultural behaviours as well as learning new skills. Moreover, languages are embedded in culture resulting from communication, personal identity and social channels being important motivational factors (Dörnyei, 1994). Gardner (1985)

believes a prerequisite to acquire L2 is creating an L2 identity through creating cultural awareness, citizenship and global understanding.

Competence may increase motivation with a CLIL methodology due to greater involvement resulting from the use of real-life contexts (Pavesi *et al*, 2001; Montalto *et al*, 2016). Thus pupils can practice what they learn as they go along (Marsh, 2000), whereas learning a language out of context can be difficult (Montalto *et al*, 2016). Additionally, Muñoz (2015) believes pupils should learn in a 'communicative and holistic way' therefore interactive contexts which use spontaneous speech are vital as it simultaneously exposes learners to structure and function of the language (Pavesi *et al*, 2001). Exposure to target language structures without explicit awareness can be termed the 'language bath' (Dalton-Puffer, 2008). Through the 'language bath' pupils begin to think in the target language and therefore create new strategies for acquiring the language (Navarro, 2012). This provides pupils with the opportunity to use the language as they learn which challenges the misconceptions that pupils must wait until they are good enough before they use the language (Marsh 2000; Pavesi *et al*, 2010; Navarro, 2012 and; Zydariß, 2012). The various benefits of CLIL are summarised in Figure 1.

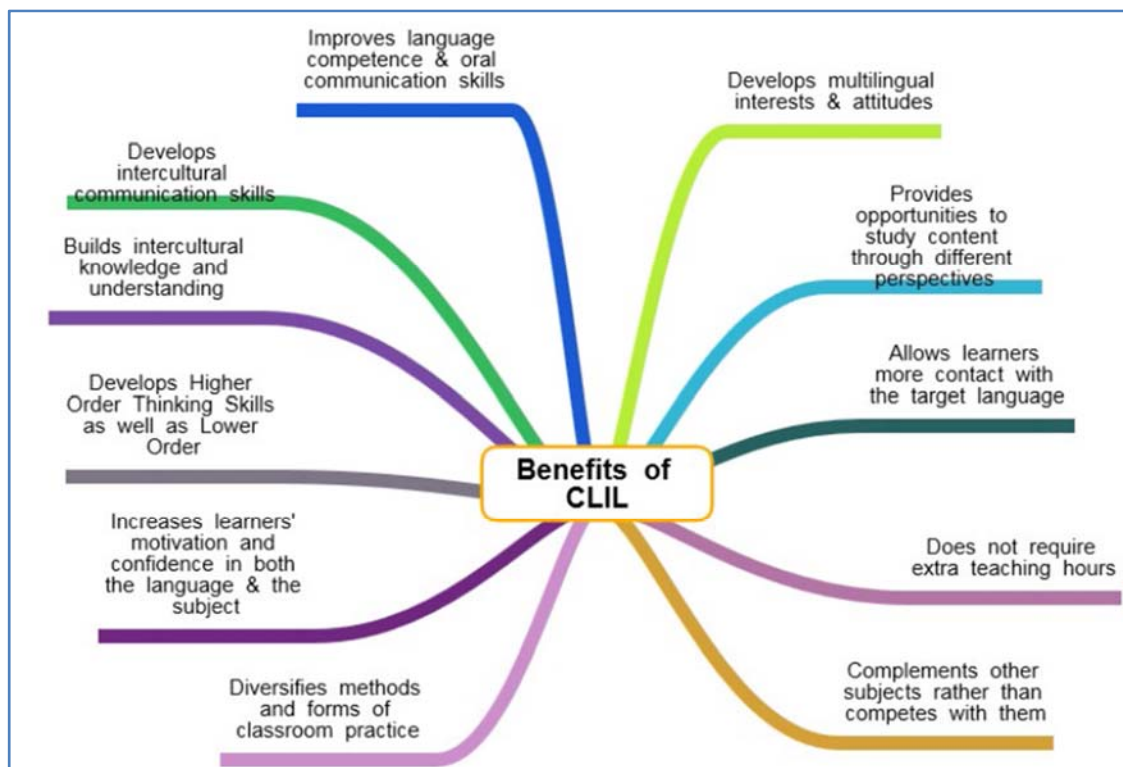


Figure 1: The benefits of CLIL (Source: Montalto *et al*, 2016: 10)

Motivation to Learn a First Additional Language (L2)

The teacher's role in L2 motivation is significant. Dörnyei (1994), Oxford & Shearin (1994), Williams & Burden (1997) and, more recently, McFarlane (2004) have researched into teacher-specific motivation. Dörnyei's (1994) initial research argues that

teaching methods (such as being emphatic, consistent and accepting), personality and pupils' desire to please the teacher are all features of teacher-specific motivation. Later research expands on teacher behaviours, commenting on traits such as enthusiasm, high expectations and relationship building as key factors in L2 motivation (McFarlane, 2004 & Dörnyei, 2001).

Dörnyei & Csizer (cited in Dörnyei, 1998) summed up numerous research-based models of L2 motivation and presented them in a list of Ten Commandments for motivating language learners:

1. Set a personal example with your own behaviour
2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom
3. Present the tasks properly
4. Develop a good relationship with the learners
5. Increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence
6. Make the language classes interesting
7. Promote learner autonomy
8. Personalise the learning process
9. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness
10. Familiarise learners with the target language culture

Hurdles and Worries of CLIL Implementation

As a teacher, I can understand some of the hurdles and worries that other teachers may encounter when implementing a new style of teaching.

I did have some reservations over pupil engagement and progression, as I had two pupils who did not want to be in the classroom whenever a language lesson was in progress. I felt that if these pupils engaged in language learning through CLIL then my research had made a positive impact on these pupils. In addition, I heard the common misconception that "everyone speaks English anyway". Through using CLIL, I hoped that I would be able to help dispel this myth, as the usefulness of learning another language can often be undervalued.

The main thing that I found to be of benefit to me and my class is that I had the courage to tell my class that I was trying something new for research and let them know that I was not entirely confident in my teaching of CLIL. Apart from watching videos, my own research and professional dialogue with Do Coyle and my university mentor, I had not experienced CLIL before; therefore, I was learning alongside my class. I found this growth mindset to be useful as it showed my class that I was willing to try something new in the hope that it would have a positive impact on my pupils. It showed them that I was willing to learn alongside them and I think this endeared them to the research project.

Research Methodology

With respect to the 1+2 policy, Italian is L2 within my school. However, this was only a recent change therefore most learners would not have been at as high a level of proficiency as may be expected for Curriculum for Excellence second level language learners.

My research started in March 2017 and lasted for approximately six weeks in a primary 7/6 classroom, with pupils aged between ten and twelve. The school resides in an area of Scotland that features in decile one, quintile one in the Scottish Index for Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2016). This means that the school is in an area of Scotland with high levels of poverty and deprivation. My class had twenty-one pupils, thirteen boys and eight girls. Two of my pupils were bilingual, one male and one female. All learners participated in CLIL lessons; however, only eighteen learners completed questionnaires and participated in focus group discussions.

The methods I chose for this research project were focus groups, questionnaires and a reflective journal. My reasons for choosing to keep a reflective journal were the low levels of confidence of some pupils as well as basic communication skills, i.e. talking and listening, to be a challenge for many pupils within the school. Also, as some learners were demotivated in language learning, the reflect journal provided me with the opportunity to note thoughts and observations of these pupils, to reflect upon later. The reflective diary also served to support evidence from conducted focus groups and questionnaires.

After some research, I chose focus groups rather than interviews as Punch & Oancea (2014) consider focus groups to be a more relaxed and comfortable method of data collection for participant. Using their research, I conducted the focus groups in the classroom to aid pupils' feeling at ease and I used language that is appropriate to the pupils' levels. I found that the background noise of the classroom created a natural setting for most pupils to discuss clearly their viewpoints on CLIL and motivation to learn a language. The focus groups consisted of approximately five or six pupils. Knowing my pupils, I ensured the focus groups included friendship groups so that learners felt more comfortable when discussing their thoughts and opinions.

I chose questionnaires to compliment the focus groups as it provided input from the individual (Anderson & Arsénault, 2005) thus eliminating the possibility of bias or influence from others (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Although Blankenship (1949) argues that providing responses can influence participant response, I felt this was the best option for my class. In addition, to overcome any misunderstandings from questions I talked through the questionnaire with participants question by question. This provided the opportunity for participants to request any clarification if needed. Furthermore, the questions were sequenced in a logical manner to allow for a continuous thought process giving opportunity for detailed answers as Blankenship (1949) believes that the order of questions creates the opportunity to make replies more accurate if it stimulates real thought.

Research in Practice

To implement the CLIL lessons I took a focus on art, as I knew my class were keen on this subject and considered it fun. I chose to use Italian abstract art so that learners did not feel disadvantaged if they found drawing a challenge. Abstract art was also a good way to introduce colours and shapes to pupils. Describing and designing their own abstract art created a context for learning colours, numbers and shapes that made the lessons more relevant to pupils.

To begin with we participated in lessons based on Italian abstract art and learned the shapes and colours within each art piece. I would point to shapes and colours naming them in Italian with pupils repeating for pronunciation. Then I would question them on the shapes and colours in Italian, always using the same sentence structure so that pupils could begin to understand the structure used and how to respond. Some pupils would respond with just the shape or colour, whilst others tried to respond using the words within the question to structure their answers. I think it is important to be accepting of the different responses, as all pupils will respond in the way they are most comfortable. For me the most important aspect is that they have understood what I have said and given a response, be this non-verbal, one word or a sentence. The important thing is to be consistent in pronunciation and repeating a full response so that learners hear it often and will eventually apply this in their own responses.

Once pupils had learned the names of shapes and colours, we then played memory games. For example, pupils challenge each other to find the shape or colour first after hearing it in Italian. Sometimes I would say the Italian words and sometimes it was other pupils. As my class consisted mainly of boys, the competitive aspect worked well as an engagement tool. Some boys even suggested games to play. For example, two of my demotivated learners suggested sending one or two pupils outside the room and removing a flashcard, and then the pupils outside the room had to identify the flashcard that was missing in Italian. I also provided learners with pairs cards for them to match. I then questioned them on the shape and colour of some of the cards to determine their understanding.

After pupils had learned the words and applied their knowledge to memory games, they attempted to describe abstract art using colours, shapes and numbers. To begin with, we did this orally and as a class, before moving onto written description. I provided scaffolds for the written description through vocabulary displayed around the room. Once this had been done, pupils had the opportunity to design and describe, orally or written, their own abstract art.

Findings

Figure 2 shows pupil responses to questions referring to target language learning and use within the classroom after the implementation of CLIL.

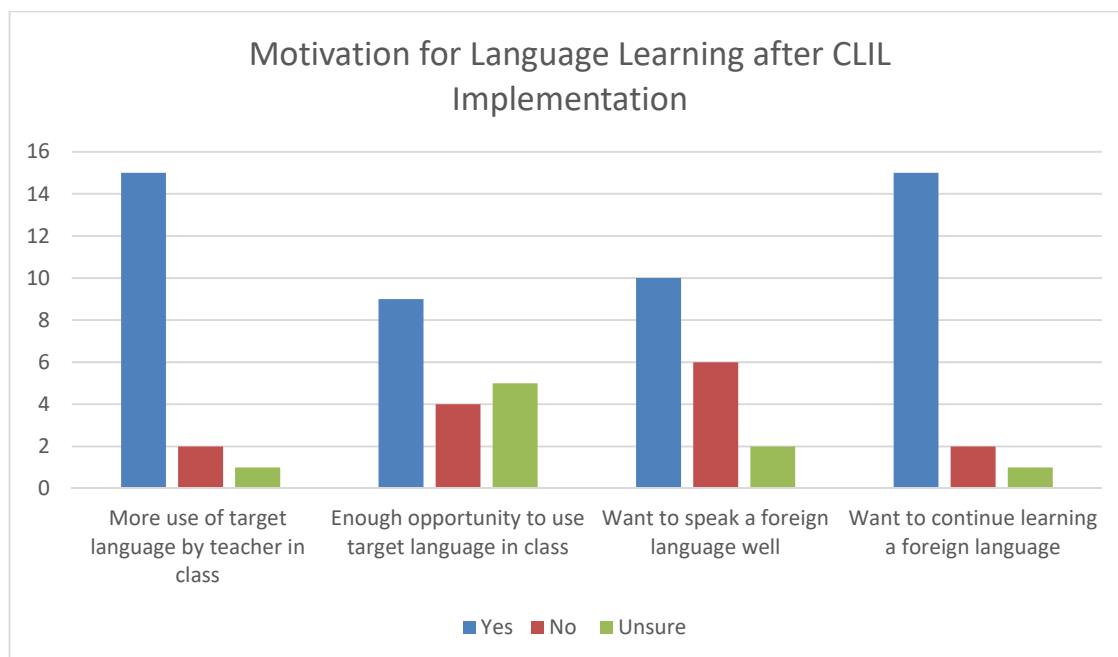


Figure 2: Pupil Responses on motivation for language learning after CLIL implementation

Table 1 shows some comments pupils gave when discussing language learning before and after the implementation of the CLIL methodology.

Table 1: Pupil comments before and after CLIL project

Pupil Comments before CLIL Implementation	Pupil Comments after CLIL Implementation
<i>It is good to learn and learn different languages, but it wasn't enjoyable</i>	<i>This is the best Italian lesson we have done</i>
<i>Everyone speaks English anyway</i>	<i>...changing the subject up a bit...</i>
	<i>I enjoyed the lesson because it was something new and exciting</i>
	<i>For me it's a wee bit harder because I am already learning two different languages. So, for me I don't like that*</i>
	<i>Yes, I enjoyed. You get to do fun art while doing it [learning Italian].</i>

*This was a comment from a bilingual learner who felt she had enough to learn with her native language as well as learning English. A second bilingual learner agreed on this point.

From the pupil responses and comments it appears that there was an increase in motivation for almost all pupils after the implementation of CLIL. This method appeared to be particularly beneficial to the two participants who had previously been greatly disengaged and unmotivated to learn Italian. Specifically, the implementation of CLIL gave all pupils a focus and content for learning which allowed them to achieve a task

whilst using various levels of vocabulary and sentence structures. Most pupils want to continue learning Italian because of CLIL giving the learning of the language a purpose through using a context to which pupils could and relate. This fully supports the research by Coyle (2006), Wolff (2012) and Marsh (2015) with respect to using a content to aid language learning.

I think the positive impact CLIL had on motivating my class, its effectiveness across Europe and the expectation of making learning more relevant to learners is vital knowledge for teachers and management teams. I believe it would be beneficial to mention this style of language teaching in some of the Scottish policy papers so that teachers and management teams can begin to implement it within their classroom and schools. Considering Scotland's educational policies are to include skills for life and work, whilst engaging learners in real-life contexts; and teachers complaining of an overcrowded curriculum, I think CLIL is a feasible and enjoyable way to achieve all these action points.

Limitations of Research

I believe the main limitation of this research project is the size due to time constraints. Furthermore, it was a small research project, carried out in only one area of Scotland with only one primary class. Thirdly, as the methodology of this research project took the form of a mixed-methods approach, but mainly qualitative in design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007) this presented another limitation. This is due to a qualitative form of research depending highly on individual perception, opinion and experience, which will vary from participant to participant. Moreover, the subjectivity of myself in this form of data collection is possible. However, I tried to limit this through using quantitative methods to triangulate findings. I am hoping to implement this style of research again with various stages within primary schools. For future, I would create a clearer framework for implementing lessons and gathering data, although this would still be a challenging aspect of the research project due to the changeability of primary school days. In addition, I would have amended the questionnaire to focus more on motivation to learn a language thus eliminating the extra information that was not necessarily vital to my research. Lastly, I would have conducted more focus groups to gain a more informed understanding of pupil motivation to learn a language before, during, and after the implementation phase of the CLIL method within the classroom. A final limitation is that I have no CLIL training therefore the quality and structure of CLIL may not have been to its highest degree. However, I have presented my research to teachers in Scotland through the Scottish Association for Language Teachers (SALT) and hope I have motivated and encouraged them to try CLIL within their classroom.

Recommendations

Despite limitations such as sample size, my subjectivity and my lack of training, this research would be significant to the wider community as it could provide opportunities for pupils to engage more willingly in foreign language learning. Due to the small scale

of the enquiry, further research on CLIL could be carried out across school learning communities. This would provide opportunities for teachers to participate in professional dialogue as well as observe one another teach to increase and develop ideas. It would also be beneficial for CLIL teachers to create a bank of resources that could be shared among establishments to aid all, especially those who want to try CLIL for the first time. As I had the opportunity to discuss the project with a leading researcher in CLIL, Do Coyle, it was commented on the need for languages to be integrated for the policy of the 1+2 Approach (Scottish Government, 2012) to be feasible and achievable. Therefore, another essential point that I recommend is for schools or local councils to integrate CLIL into their policy.

Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to identify the effect learning Italian through CLIL had on pupil motivation. The research project aimed to develop an understanding of how learning content can determine the language required to communicate and how this may affect motivation to learn a foreign language, in this case Italian. Moreover, the key aspect of this research project was to draw on the experiences and opinions of those who matter most in education, the pupils. The findings suggest that CLIL had a strong impact on motivation to learn a language at that moment in the classroom. Pupils found the lessons much more engaging and enjoyable thus were more likely to participate in learner activities. Furthermore, CLIL created more opportunities for pupils to talk in the target language, which is essential for progression. The use of CLIL appeared to have a positive effect on pupil motivation. Thus, it is essential in this ever-changing global world, that schools incorporate innovative teaching strategies, such as CLIL, to encourage language learning in their pupils. In doing so, educators are effectively equipping pupils for the globalised and multi-cultural world in which we live.

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