



# Reforms and Initiatives Applied to The Field of Higher Education and CLIL Integrated Learning

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**Abstract:** The comparative analysis begins by examining the distinct teaching approaches employed in Russian and English language instruction. In Russian educational settings, the grammar translation method remains prevalent, emphasizing rigorous grammatical instruction and the translation of texts between languages. This approach is deeply rooted in the Russian educational tradition, where accuracy and depth of knowledge are highly valued. Conversely, English language instruction, particularly in English-speaking countries, is often dominated by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL). These methods prioritize the development of communicative competence, encouraging students to engage in real-life language use through interactive activities and tasks.

**Keywords:** English language instruction, Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based learning (TBL).

**Introduction:** The term CLIL was created in 1994 by David Marsh as a methodology similar to but distinct from language immersion and content-based instruction. The idea of its proponents was to create an "umbrella term" which encompasses different forms of using language as the medium of instruction. The methodology has been applied in a business context in many countries and widely accepted as an effective approach. In Italy, for example, it is being used as an accelerated method to teach management concepts in English to business people. Among CLIL's proponents and practitioners there is Maurizio Morselli, a Human Resources professional and Executive Coach, who believes that "this hybrid immersion approach produces a lot more immediate results and it appeals to self-motivated adult audiences who possess a basic

knowledge and understanding of the target language". While being certainly interesting and providing a precious model of good practice, this experience shows that "there is validity in the belief that CLIL is an elite phenomenon. It comes as no surprise that one of the current strands of international CLIL research stems indeed from the urgency to address issues of power and inequality. The heterogeneity that has characterised the implementation of CLIL since its inception in Italy risks exacerbating this situation, with areas of the country that are more developed both linguistically and socio-economically reaping the greatest benefits of the approach."

CLIL is fundamentally based on methodological principles established by research on language immersion. This kind of approach has been identified as very important by the European Commission because: "It can provide effective opportunities for pupils to use their new language skills now, rather than learn them now for later use. It opens doors on languages for a broader range of learners, nurturing self-confidence in young learners and those who have not responded well to formal language instruction in general education. It provides exposure to the language without requiring extra time in the curriculum, which can be of particular interest in vocational settings." This approach involves learning subjects such as history, geography, managerial skills/concepts or others, through an additional language. It can be very successful in enhancing the learning of languages and other subjects, and helping children develop a positive attitude towards themselves as language learners.

The European Commission has therefore decided to promote the training of teachers to "...enhancing the language competences in general, in order to promote the teaching of non-linguistic subjects in foreign languages".

CLIL objectives are varied, but among the most relevant ones the following can be pointed out: To improve the educational system. To establish the necessary conditions that will allow students to achieve the appropriate level of academic performance in CLIL subjects. To improve students' proficiency in both their mother tongue and the target language, attaching the same importance to each. To develop the intercultural understanding. To develop social and thinking skills.

CLIL advocates claim that this educational approach: Improves L1 and L2 development. Prepares students for the globalized world. Increases students' motivation to learn foreign languages. Promotes the learning of a more extensive and varied vocabulary.

Enhances students' confidence in the target language. Improves language competence in the target language, CLIL being more beneficial than traditional foreign language teaching courses. Helps develop intercultural competence.

The multiplicity of terms used to refer to instructional approaches for the integration of content and language learning (immersion, CBI, CBLT, CLIL, EMI) can be a source of confusion in EIL studies, although they all commonly share the purpose of additive bilingualism via a dual focus on content and language learning. Debate continues about the extent to which immersion, CBLT, CBI, and CLIL are different, similar, or the same. Some argue that CLIL represents an appropriate umbrella term that can be used to house various approaches towards content integration (e.g., immersion is a type of CLIL), where terms can be used interchangeably (e.g., CLIL and CBI are the same concept with a different name). However, others argue that CLIL and CBI represent very different concepts, where CLIL represents the intersection between content and language from the content perspective (i.e., CLIL happens in content classes), while CBI is an attempt at responding to the content needs of learners in language classes.

The similarities (and variability) between approaches lead to circular arguments about whether the key features of one approach are also shared by others (e.g., immersion and CLIL), and therefore they are indistinguishable. In some ways, this is an inevitable result of terms being used outside of academia, by educators applying ideas from one context to another, and the lines of demarcation become more unclear as approaches are transported to different countries and contextualized to meet different learning situations.

In EIL studies, different terms have been associated with different regions, such as CLIL, which is associated with Europe, and was "purposefully coined" by European educators and researchers attempting to influence language policy and ideology. CLIL represented a deliberate attempt to develop a European model for additive bilingual education. However, policy makers, educators, and researchers from international contexts have started to apply and develop CLIL approaches in distinctly non-European situations, and the term is now widely used within the wider international foreign language learning community.

Over the years, CLIL has demonstrated countless benefits for learners, boosting both their academic performance and personal development.

Regarding academic outcomes, research has shown that CLIL helps students improve their proficiency in the target language by using it in real-world contexts, which

enhances their vocabulary and grammar skills.

Students involved in CLIL programs often achieve higher levels of understanding of the subject matter, contributing to their overall cognitive growth and success in school.

But the advantages of CLIL go far beyond academic results: it's truly transformative for personal growth as well. By tapping into students' interests and passions through engaging content, CLIL helps combat students' weak attention spans and makes the learning experience more dynamic.

As they dive into complex topics in a foreign language, they gain a serious confidence boost, realizing they can handle challenges and take risks.

And the best part? They get to do it all together!

CLIL methodology, in fact, prioritizes group work and collaboration: students are often invited to explore topics while working in teams. This collaborative environment is fertile ground for developing their communication and social skills.

But CLIL doesn't stop there — it also broadens students' horizons, exposing them to diverse cultures and perspectives. In the long run, this intercultural awareness allows them to see the world through new lenses.

CLIL is not just about learning a new language; it's about using that language as a medium to learn other subjects. This approach is particularly effective in multilingual and multicultural classrooms, where students can benefit from enhanced cognitive skills and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The method is versatile and can be adapted to various educational levels and subjects, making it a valuable tool in modern language education.

As a pioneer in language teaching solutions, we at Sanako have observed the growing interest in CLIL and its potential to revolutionize language education. Our mission is to support educators in implementing effective language teaching strategies, and CLIL is a prime example of an innovative approach that aligns with our goals.

One of the primary benefits of CLIL is its ability to enhance language proficiency while simultaneously deepening subject knowledge. Students are exposed to the target language in a meaningful context, which helps them acquire vocabulary and language structures more effectively. This dual focus can lead to improved academic performance in both the language and the subject being taught.

Another significant advantage of CLIL is the development of cognitive skills. Research has shown that learning through a second language can enhance

cognitive flexibility, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking skills. These cognitive benefits are not limited to language learning but extend to other areas of academic and personal development.

CLIL also promotes cultural awareness and sensitivity. By learning content through a foreign language, students gain insights into different cultures and perspectives. This cultural exposure fosters a more inclusive and global mindset, preparing students for the increasingly interconnected world. At Sanako, we believe that such skills are essential for fostering a more open and trusting society.

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