

Bernd Klewitz

**Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL):
A Methodology of Bilingual Teaching**

NOTA BENE—
BILINGUALISM AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOG

- 1 *Bernd Klewitz*
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A Methodology of Bilingual Teaching
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Bernd Klewitz

**CONTENT AND LANGUAGE
INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL):
A METHODOLOGY OF
BILINGUAL TEACHING**

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered why bilingual education has become increasingly popular with young families and even influences their choice for later and better schooling? And why the expectations of effective and successful language learning are connected with interest in language programs that allow for more focus on authentic topics and intriguing themes rather than on grammar and vocabulary training? The story of acquiring foreign languages at the same time as studying relevant and real-life events and issues sounds, at least at first sight, like trying to square the circle.

But the story of bilingualism is neither new nor spectacular. It has been around since times immemorable and even the Romans had to learn Greek to usurp their neighbor's culture and rule the Aegean region. Yet acquiring modern languages nowadays is not a question of dominating another culture or ruling other people, but rather learning about their perspectives and ideas in an inter/trans-cultural way and meeting in a Third Space—to be discovered later in this narrative. So how can we make sure that students will be able to access the necessary information in a language other than their own? How do we support learners to achieve the aims and objectives set to them and help them move forward in their Zone of Proximal Development, which will be outlined further below? And how will they be empowered to develop their own linguistic and critical thinking skills without renegeing on the challenges involved? The solution to this puzzle comes from balancing the two bilingual goals in a Content and Language Integrated Learning process. The acronym CLIL gives direction and priority in the interplay between subject matter and discourse function with “**language as the dress of thought**” — a well-known saying since Dr. Johnson's 18th century.

Thus, the methodology of CLIL in question here would best be described as a **blueprint of integration** itself, namely that of content and languages in a combined teaching strategy. The worldwide growth of bilingual programs inside and outside of school contexts has raised different expectations of students and instructors as far as successful and effective language learning is concerned. These

reach from more exposure to the target language (and better marks as a result) to deeper content-based studies (generating higher levels of critical thinking). And this is also why an **Integrated Methodology** needs to cover content-based issues as well as teaching strategies and learning theories, since for the first time such programs endeavor to deal with two teaching objects at the same time, albeit in a well-defined sequence of which may be called “*language follows content*”. The way to deal with didactic, content-related questions without neglecting methodological procedures involves different perspectives and comprehensive approaches in selecting appropriate topics and related discourse concepts. In other words, the task at hand requires a dual way of organizing the linguistic dimension of teaching subject matters in another than the native language—in our case for social sciences, history and geography. The assumption is that this approach will work for other content subjects (*Sachfächer*) as well, because the **didactic-methodological issues** involved are the two sides of the same coin like in content and language.

At the same time, a **theory of practice** is needed to enable practitioners to decide at which side of the coin they need to look first and after certain stages in the teaching/learning process, the aforementioned Zone of Proximal Development (according to Vygotsky 1962). In the definition of Do Coyle, a long-standing proponent of CLIL from the University of Aberdeen, a theory of practice:

emerges when the teacher begins to articulate his or her implicit knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning. The teacher’s implicit knowledge becomes explicit through this process—that is, the teacher is aware of his or her knowledge (theory of practice) and can begin to actively develop this. The starting point for a theory of practice is the teacher’s own professional beliefs (Coyle 2010: 45).

The multifaceted pathway in this Integrated CLIL Methodology (**ICM**) will take you from theoretical assumptions and collated knowledge about Second Language Acquisition (SLA) to practiced and proven concepts in Teaching Foreign Languages (TFL) as **one** of the foundations of bilingual programs. The other side of the same coin will have to be minted by the content subject (*Sachfach*) core

curricula or educational state standards (Common Core), depending on the target country.¹ As much as our students profit from the language and content awareness of what they are required to study, best practice in the teaching community can rely on the conscious implementation of the findings in language research and subject matter. But only the combination with effective teaching strategies, as epitomized in functions of scaffolding and direct instruction of Visible Learning will eventuate effective and sustainable learning processes.

Bilingual programs, immersion situations and CLIL itself, however, are foremost concerned with people and the younger, learning generation; therefore, a good starting point for bilingual didactics and methodology is provided by dismantling the myths and legends of bilingualism, especially as they occur in dealing with young children and growing-up adolescents. Various hypotheses have been tried and rejected, enlivened and surpassed, from the black boxes in behaviorism, the famous Universal Grammar right up to constructivist learning theories and the findings of neuro-biological research. In this, surprisingly, the almost old-school sounding controversy between **nature versus nurture** “won’t go away” (at least according to Steven Pinker), but from all these theories and more or less proven assumptions interesting conclusions can be drawn for applying relevant ideas to the implementation of CLIL programs or modules. Worth noticing are also quite profound discrepancies due to cultural differences in the target countries, but CLIL has emerged as a global pedagogical concept and there is no reason one should not appreciate diverging practices and learn from their advantages and fallacies.

The **building blocks** of bilingual approaches, shared by an ever-growing bilingual community, are at the center of a common core of CLIL teaching strategies: be it the 4 Cs Framework, bridging BICS to CALP, the Language Triptych, the Bilingual Triangle and

¹ In some terminology (e.g. the United States) there is a distinction between the Common Core, indicating what students need to know and are able to do, and the curriculum outlining how students will learn it. Pedagogy in Europe formulates along similar lines with didactics delineating the **what**, methodology the **how** of learning (for more details see chapter 6, footnote 62).

the Third Space of inter/transcultural competence or the Task Design Wheel in a taxonomy of cognition. All these features of multi-perspective learning support bilingual lesson planning and scaffold the development of discourse strategies in CLIL programs. In this they also create windows in the traditional foreign language classroom of TFL without necessarily forestalling the inclusion of the students' native language (L1) additionally to the target language (L2) as the vehicular language of teaching and communication. The precise relationship between L1 and L2 remains open to debate in the light of contradictory research findings and the interpretation of "bi" in bilingual programs.

Apart from honing inter/transcultural skills, a further common ground between TFL and CLIL can be found in literature studies with **Literary CLIL** as a particular focus of this methodology. Whether conceived as a content subject in its own right (*Literaturkurs*) or transferred from traditional language teaching as an enrichment of CLIL-content, selection criteria of high "L" or (popular) low "I" are needed and study designs for literary analysis and criticism have to be developed. Different genres are presented to open up this new domain for bilingual teaching and allow for the inclusion of music, poetry as well as the established fields of short stories and novels. Literature remains a concern for CLIL, because—taken content subject curricula word-for-word—its implementation is still exceptional. In this context, the primacy of content might shed a new light on the differences between TFL and CLIL indicating a potential fusion of both approaches without replacing one by the other—a discussion taken up in the desiderata and challenges posed by CLIL.

On the practical side—bearing in mind the theory of practice—the tools and skills of CLIL deserve special emphasis in that they make the concept work, and whether using a *worksheet compass* or *learnscape* as *advance organizer*, focusing on *task-based teaching* or embracing the *Visual Turn* they can be studied in their application in ten sample CLIL modules. These and, for that matter, all chapters are presented with a section of "*review—reflect—research*" that invite further trying out and finding out the essentials of a teaching concept that is not only increasingly popular but also

meets the needs of modern language instruction allowing for new and changing perspectives in a contingency of linguistic and content-based version of seeing learning through the eyes of our students – the *Visible Learning* paradigm. It is hoped the *vignettes* introducing each of the ten chapters will whet the reader's appetite and be able to highlight the gist of information and discussion points presented.