From Ancient Rome to Modern Europe: Tracing the Origins of CLIL Approach

Ravi Prakash Jalli, M.A.
Research Scholar, National Institute of Technology Warangal, India
jr720121@student.nitw.ac.in

Dr. B. Spoorthi, Ph.D.
Assitant Professor, National Institute of Technology Warangal, India, Email:
spoorthi.b@nitw.ac.in
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Abstract

An innovative approach that considerably contributed to the advancement of language teaching and learning is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL is defined as an approach to teaching and learning a subject and a language together. The focus in the CLIL approach is equally distributed between content (subject) and language. Though there have been studies on the effectiveness of CLIL in various contexts, research on the origins of CLIL is scarce. Moreover, studying the history of CLIL can help us better understand its current state. Therefore, the primary objective of this paper is to explore the origins of CLIL, from ancient Rome to modern Europe. In addition, the paper also discusses various definitions of CLIL. A systematic review method has been incorporated to carry out the study. The findings of the study could inform future research in language teaching and learning about the origins of CLIL.

Keywords: Origin of CLIL, Approaches and Methods, Language Teaching and Learning, Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Introduction

There has been a quest to find the 'best' method which can yield optimal language learning outcomes. Since the dawn of the 'methods era', which started approximately in the late 19th century and continued till the end of the 20th Century, there have been multiple methods and approaches that came with the promise of transforming the field of language teaching and learning; from the grammar-translation method which started in the late 19th century to the recent Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Though

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:4 April 2025**
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no one method or approach has ever completely revolutionized language teaching and learning, they have significantly contributed to the advancement of the field, providing new insights into how language could be taught and learnt (Tickoo, 2004).

One such approach that considerably contributed to language teaching and learning is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the impact of CLIL on language teaching and learning has baffled even its earnest supporters. Though there have been studies on the effectiveness of CLIL in various contexts, research on the origins of CLIL is scarce (Hurajová, 2015; Muñoz Benito, 2020; Brunton, 2013). Moreover, studying the history of CLIL can help us better understand its current state (An, 2021). Therefore, the primary objective of this paper is to explore the origins of CLIL, from ancient Rome to modern Europe. In addition, the paper also discusses various definitions of CLIL. A systematic review method has been incorporated to carry out the study. The findings of the study could inform future research in language teaching and learning about the origins of CLIL.

Definitions of CLIL

The term **Content and Language Integrated Learning** (CLIL) was coined in 1994 (Coyle et al., 2010). David Marsh (2000), the pioneer of CLIL defines it as a dual-focused approach to "learning subjects or special modules through another language" (p. 6). In other words, CLIL is the integration of language learning with other subjects. A study conducted by the CLIL Compendium Research Team in 2001 identified CLIL as "the synergy resulting from communication orientation on the language, the content, and the interaction as it takes place within the classroom" (Marsh et al., 2001, p. 51). This definition depicts how CLIL encompasses both conversational language and academic language; combining both Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2001). Another study conducted by the Eurydice European Unit defines CLIL as the "teaching of a non-language subject through a foreign language," (Eurydice, 2006 p. 64). According to Do Coyle et al. (2010), CLIL can also be defined as "a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language," (p. 1). In layman's terms, CLIL is an approach to teaching and learning a subject and a language together. The focus in CLIL is equally distributed between content (subject) and language (Coyle et al., 2010).

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In the area of language teaching and learning, CLIL is considered the offspring or the "ultimate dream" of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach (Bruton, 2013, p. 587). According to Diane Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson (2011), there are two versions of CLT: a 'weak' version and a 'strong' version. The weak version of CLT focuses on providing learners with opportunities to use the language, which Howatt (1997) describes as "learning to use English" (p.279). On the other hand, the strong version advocates the principle of "using English to learn" (Howatt, 1997, p.279). Larsen-Freeman and Marti Anderson (2011) state that CLIL belongs to the latter version of CLT and "is not exclusively a language program, but instead it integrates the learning of language with the learning of some other content" (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, P.174). The content of CLIL can be any academic subject like mathematics, science, music, etc. CLIL is built on the core principle that the learning of a second/foreign language is optimal when learnt through subject-specific content (Richards and Rodgers, 2011).

Origin of CLIL

Learning a subject through a second/foreign language by itself is not a new concept. History has recorded many instances of education through a non-native language. Around 2000 years ago, after the invasion of the Greek Territory by the Roman Empire, education took place in an additional language. The Roman families who lived among the Greek-speaking communities had their children educated in Greek in order to increase their social, educational, and professional opportunities within the Greek territories. As a result of rapid globalization, a similar kind of situation emerged in Europe in the late 1980s and early 1900s (Coyle et al., 2010).

The convergence of economic and social forces along with prevailing globalization impacted the language choices of the people. Most of the regions in Europe became 'linguistically distinctive' which drove the European Union to learn from the success of the Canadian Immersion Programme in the 1970s and 1980s (Eurydice, 2006). After examining the exigency for a new educational approach, a resolution was approved by the Council of the European Communities and the Ministers Of Education, in a meeting held on 9th February 1976. The resolution proposed the implementation of research on "the need for the setting up of schools in which teaching would be in more than one language." (EC, 1976, p. No C 38/2). This resolution laid the foundation for an approach to teaching in an additional language, which

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over a decade had gone through different transformations and emerged as CLIL (Eurydice, 2006).

In 1995, CLIL gained significant popularity with the European Commission's publication of the document titled "The White Paper. Teaching and learning. Towards the Learning society" (EC, 1995, as cited in Pavesi et al, 2001; Muñoz Benito et al., 2020). In 2005, the European Union Commission for Education solemnly declared CLIL as an approved methodology which in turn led to the formation of CLIL teachers and CLIL schools throughout Europe and in many countries in Asia including Malaysia, Thailand, China, etc. (Lal & Arun, 2017). In 2010, a concrete theory of CLIL methodology was published by Do Coyle, Philip Hood and David Marsh.

The Advent of CLIL in Language Teaching and Learning

Since CLIL amalgamates both content learning and language learning, theories pertaining to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) play as much role as general learning theories. The advent of CLIL, in the domain of language teaching and learning, is often associated with the epoch of the 'cognitive revolution'. The shift, from behaviourist ideologies to principles of cognition and communication was led by Jerome Bruner, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky. Their work immensely contributed to the advancement of constructivist perspectives on language teaching and learning. This was further perpetuated by other language teaching and learning theories like multiple intelligences, learner autonomy, learner awareness, language-learning strategies, etc. (Do Coyle, 2010). In addition, approaches like Communicative Language Teaching, English Medium Education (EME), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purpose (ESP), the Canadian Immersion Programs and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) laid the foundation for the development of CLIL (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards and Rodgers, 2011).

Conclusion

This paper discussed various definitions of CLIL and explored the origins of CLIL starting from language learning in ancient Rome to contemporary Europe. After a systematic review of the available literature on CLIL, it has been observed that research on CLIL in the Indian context is scant. Though there has been substantial research on the effectiveness of CLIL in European and Southeast Asian contexts, the studies conducted in the Indian context are very

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limited (Anuradha & Viswanathan, 2019; Luanganggoon, 2020; Hurajová, 2015; Lal & Arun, 2021). Therefore, the scope for research on CLIL in the Indian context is significantly high.

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