

CLIL: Content based Instructional Approach to Second Language Pedagogy

Muhammad Afzal Awan

ELI, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Muhammad Aslam Sipra

JCC, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

The present paper accentuates the need for innovation in pedagogical theory and practice of the day. It elucidates the linguistic dilemma of the present times and identifies space for bilingualism and pluriculturalism. To make the readers acquainted with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), the authors corroborate the detailed theoretical framework by establishing links with growing trends of cross continent migration, rising globalisation and expansion of multicultural and multiethnic contexts in the educational arena. A brief prehistory of CLIL has also been explored to justify its birth in helping out the linguists and educationists in Europe and beyond. The paper delineates the theory of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) diagrammatically employing content, cognition and communication in a linguistic culture. It explicates the various nomenclatures, dimensions, functions and the developmental stages of CLIL pedagogy at the dawn of the new millennium. After exploring the theoretical, functional and futuristic facets of CLIL, it is concluded that CLIL is an apt, economical and timely framework of bringing diverse cultures and languages closer to one another and can help build cosmopolitan identity of learners in the Knowledge Age.

Key Words: Bilingualism, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), pedagogy, learners' identity, linguistic harmony, multiculturalism, pluriculturalism

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Introduction

Perhaps all what we learn at school of education and training revolves round the critical sense. Said (1994) says that a researcher is neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder but one whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés.

In the present study, it is argued that mere critical sense would be considered as cynicism if it does not end up with some possibility or some practical framework that may address the issue in question. Readers' attention is drawn to the alarmingly endangered predicament of many minority languages in the modern times. This article encompasses very briefly how the politics of language sets the scene for the second language acquisition (SLA) and how the researchers and practitioners across the world are striving to find ways and means by doing new experiments, especially in pedagogy, which may safeguard endangered languages.

Besides giving a comprehensive view of CLIL, its origin, its theoretical underpinnings, its functions and incapacities and future promise, the authors try to establish that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) may be looked at as the most recent and well-conceived model of pedagogy which has evolved logically from sundry previous theories and tested practices. CLIL can provide an immediate relief if not a panacea, to the falling health of many minority languages across the world. It can bring many languages closer to one another paving the way for pluricultural societies, and may result in a greater socio-political harmony. It may preserve the invaluable cultural capital contained in great variety of languages, too.

Linguistic Dilemma in our Times

One can hardly deny that the world we live in is not monolingual; about 60% of the people around the world are bilingual (Baker, 1998). More than 70 countries have English as their official language (Crystal, 1997). French enjoys official status in 30 while Spanish and Arabic are official languages in 20 states (Krauss, 1992). There are hundreds of languages typically among various states, just to quote a few, India, USA, Indonesia, Cameroon and Australia have 407, 176, 772, 279 and 234 languages respectively. The minority languages in these states are typically faced with four great threats:

1. Migration at large Scale
2. Formal Monolingual Schooling
3. Globalisation
4. Peculiar Language Politics adversary to Minority Languages.

The political, technological and social realities of the modern world have led and continue to lead to more contact between more people of different linguistic backgrounds than ever before (Puffer & Smit, 2007). Political upheavals in the mid 20th century and beyond resulted in creation of many new states. The colonisers left behind a messy linguistic scenario. The newly found states were faced with grave language policy issues. For some, the very choice of national language turned out to be an unmanageable issue. Pakistan can be a striking example which disintegrated in less than a quarter century due to a linguistic strife among majority and minority linguistic groups. The choice of medium of instruction is still a thorny issue among many post-colonial states even today.

The state of affair, on the other hand, in the first world countries is pretty different. A typical model in the developed world is, by and large, monolingual. Pattanayak (1986) maintains that monolingual orientation is cultivated in the developed world and consequently two languages are considered nuisance, three languages uneconomic and many languages absurd.

This scenario, in both the above said categories of countries, escalates political divide and problematizes the choice(s) of medium of instruction in schools. Language politics typically means controlling the minority languages (Kangas, 2000). Despite the glaring claims of multilingualism and *mosaic* clichés, even in the immigrant counties, such voices are not uncommon. Dunn (1987) identifies that bilingual education could result in at least partial disintegration of the United States of America. The research in both the domains of psycho and sociolinguistics on the one hand, and teaching practices on the other, are informing as it will be substantiated on the following pages that bilingualism and multilingualism are blissful and possess a great variety of socio-political, economic and educational benefits.

Space for Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Denying the significance of the learner's first language, on whatever pretext, is now marked as great disadvantage. Many countries are spoiling human capital for usually uninformed and ill-conceived language policies. For instance, only 6% of citizens view Portuguese in Mozambique which has been adopted as medium of instruction in schools as their first language (Benson, 2002).

One can imagine how this foreign language facilitates the learners in their learning pursuits. Heugh (2000) estimates that 75% of children fail in school in South Africa alone. It is widely attributed to language issues and not adapting classroom methodologies to the demands of learning through an additional language (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). The contemporary research is fairly supporting the use of mother tongue in language education (Swain, Kirkpatrick, Andy & Cummins, 2011). When the first language is not well developed, many children will lack foundation upon which to build second language conceptual skills (Cummins, 1990).

Mac Namee & White (1985) argue that learning of two languages immeasurably facilitates the eventual learning of a third language. They also suggest that young Canadians who have acquired and maintained their ancestral language are more likely to acquire a second official language and make it part of their adult lives in future. Cummins (1990) reports that minority language children acquire French more easily than children from monolingual background. Hence, exposing a child to multiple languages is supported by many research findings from 1969 to 2011 (Saif & Sheldon, 1969 ; Swain et al., 2011).

Diversity is a great bliss in many ways. Ekern (1998) points out that in our times, unity was achieved through diversity. Pluricultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual societies rise. He further asserts that the states that do not accept this trend are opting for conflict.

Therefore, both political and pedagogical challenges are inviting the theorists and practitioners to do newer experiments in theory and practice. The Canadian French immersion program in North America was brought forth to address the linguistic parity in Canada. It proved so effective that it influenced theorists and practitioners even beyond Canada. By 2006, the number

of young people undertaking immersion education in Canada was over 300,000 (Coyle, 2010).

After the success of the Canadian French immersion programme, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) model has emerged initially from Europe. CLIL is stemming very well in European schools and seeking enough support from the corridors of powers as well. As pointed out earlier, there is a dire need to integrate many languages in the flow of mainstream education for obvious political and educational reasons. Keeping in view the countries seeking immigrants rather than despatching them, Puffer (2007) has very legitimately summed up the rationale of this experience in Europe saying that we are witnessing a trend towards internationalisation and globalisation, putting pressure on education system to provide skills which will allow students to stand their ground in the international context.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

The term CLIL was adopted in 1994 (Marsh, Maljers & Hartiala, 2001). It refers to an educational setting where language other than the student's mother tongue is used as medium of instruction (Puffer, 2007). For Coyle and associates (2010), CLIL is an educational approach in which various language supportive methodologies are used that lead to a dual-focused form of instruction where attention is given both to the language and the content. CLIL is known by a great variety of acronyms in various languages. There are some fifty English-based terms that are used worldwide (Puffer & Smit, 2007). It also covers wide range of educational practices and settings whose common denominator is that a non-L1 is used in classes other than those labelled as 'language classes' (Snow et al., 1997).

One may safely claim that in certain countries, especially the former British colonies, CLIL or something like CLIL is being practiced without any systematic pedagogic practice in many cases without conscious awareness. For instance, all instruction in Pakistan, at higher level is done in English which is a foreign language. CLIL is hardly yet known as an established mode of practice. The subject teachers very often have no idea that they are indirectly developing language communication skills beside instruction of the subject content. Puffer & Smit (2007) contemplate that receiving schooling in a language other than their home language is an everyday experience for children and students in many parts of the world.

Nevertheless, it may be perceived through the body of literature on CLIL is that it is not an invention but an old practice of teaching subject content in a foreign language. For example, Latin was the language of instruction for the elite in Europe in the medieval times. In the past, this luxury was available to the elite only but CLIL experience in Europe has extended this facility to the public schooling for its wider educational and political value.

The question whether CLIL is for content or for the language has fairly been answered by Coyle & associates (2010) as they hold that CLIL is not simply another step in language teaching or a new development in content subject methodology. They see CLIL as a fusion of subject didactics leading to an innovation which has emerged as the education for modern times. They go on to say that CLIL is an approach which is neither language learning nor subject learning, but an amalgam of both is linked to the process of convergence. Convergence involves the fusion of elements which have been previously fragmented. Therefore, it is suggested that this teaching approach should be seen in its modern context when time is really money. Its dual focus saves

time and resources on the one hand and presents an amicable solution of the longstanding controversy whether language instruction is for the language or about the language.

Theoretical Underpinnings of CLIL

It should be acknowledged that CLIL has emerged through the evolutionary process. Leaving the classical conception of teacher as imparter and student as recipient of knowledge, the constructivists e.g. Bruner say that learning is an individual cognitive act whereas Brown, Collins, Duguid and others agree that cognitive apprenticeship supports learning in a domain by enabling students to acquire, develop and use cognitive tools in authentic domain of activity. Apart from these theoretical premises, CLIL is, in our view, a brain child of post-method and most recent language pedagogy known as Communicative Approach. It seeks its validity from Vygotskian view of learning by doing. It was Vygotsky who opened the door for Sociology to join Psychology whatever its level was in his time. It is but relevant to state that very function in child's cultural development appears twice; first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child which is intra-psychological (Alex & Boris, 2003).

With his illustrious coinage Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky bounds the learning to happen when social interaction and scaffolding that is often offered by teachers, combine and allow for the full or maximum learning potential of the learner to become functional. Similarly, we can verify a strong theoretical connections right from Piaget to Gardner and beyond, behind the CLIL philosophy and practice. To avoid any digression, it is relevant here to highlight some other facets of CLIL methodology.

Authenticity of content and authenticity of purpose and treatment of content in an authentic manner have been debated a lot. Graddol (2006) describes CLIL as an ultimate communicative methodology. He points out that communicative language teaching movement of 1983 lacked authenticity that is fulfilled by CLIL. Long (1983) holds that an important process of teaching is the principle of the negotiation of meaning in authentic interaction. At the dawn of the new millennium, it is noticeable that our educational practices are combining psychology, sociology and innovation in pedagogy. Likewise, Coyle and associates (2010) rightly claim that CLIL is not merely a convenient response to the challenges posed by rapid globalisation, rather it is a solution which is timely, is in harmony with broader social perspectives and proved effective.

In a nutshell, CLIL is the latest and perhaps the most refined form of educational model that has logically taken shape by integration of previous bilingual models, SLA theories and lived experiences in pedagogy. What separates CLIL from some established approaches such as content based language learning or form of bilingual education, is the planned pedagogic integration of contextualised content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching and learning practice (Coyle, 2005). Figure 1.1 shows how a typical CLIL lesson integrates the above said elements in classroom practice. This model has been named as 4Cs Framework:

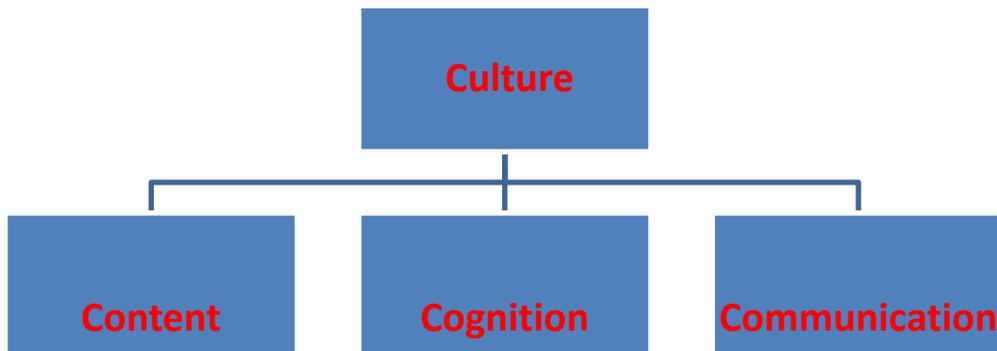


Figure 1.1. (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010)

Functions of CLIL

For sure, the content is at the forefront in CLIL. It relieves the pressure of learning an additional language in the strict academic terms. The beauty of employing the content lies in great flexibility of choices. It is the context that determines which content to bring into practice in the classroom may it be geography, secretarial practice, troubleshooting of computers and the list goes on.

Language as such is used as a vehicle and that is perhaps the most acceptable role assigned to language in the broader educational as well as social sense. As referred to earlier, CLIL functions on the principle of learning by doing. It relieves the learner of the scary feeling of learning grammar, syntax, phonology and register for the sake of them. Nothing is devoid of situational context, so every class activity in CLIL model is generic and engaging. Indeed, the overall approach in CLIL is simply communicative. Stern (1983) had long ago said with reference to Canadian French Immersion programme and the Welsh Bilingual Project that even in quasi-foreign language situation, a communicative strategy can be an effective means of language teaching. He further points out that it creates in a school setting the field conditions of language learning through communication.

CLIL in principle is not teacher-fronted rather student-oriented and more precisely project-oriented which requires social interaction in the classroom. During this interaction, the classroom turns into a street where all aspects of pragmatic register naturally come into practice. This is how CLIL resolves the enigma of learning a foreign language what Van Lier (1988) contends that foreign language learning is not difficult but learning it in the classroom. The metaphor of language bath associated to it gives it another cozy sensation. CLIL gives the use of language a purpose over and beyond learning the language itself. It is what Puffer & Smit (2007) believe is often absent from typical language instruction.

Learning environment is of pivotal importance in all forms of learning, be it content or language or whatever. The problem with the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was its lack of life applicability. Its content was largely literary in nature and objective was so called mental exercise. Direct Method (DM) turned to be teacher-fronted and too complex and faster in pace for the grip of average or slow learners. The task-based learning left the questions which task

and why but CLIL offers both purpose as well as rationale of its practice for all the major stakeholders i.e. students, teachers and schools.

It is but relevant to refer to Cummins' notion of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Competence in Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Both are but the ideal requirements to enable the learner to become confident user of language simultaneously (Cummins, 1979). Therefore, there is a dire need to strike a balance between the form and flow of language. Puffer (2007) observes that CLIL classroom appears to be a clever and economical way of turning classrooms into streets. It is perhaps a must in the teaching site where there is no street out there to practice the target language typically in TEFL teaching scenario. CLIL is one way of integrating BICS and CALP on the one hand and on the other hand gaining the willing suspension of disbelief which means the toils of the foreign language learning are left behind.

Every new pedagogical experience poses challenges to teachers. In CLIL' naturalistic approach, it is mandatory for the teacher to scaffold projects to ensure complete engagement of learners with respect to their knowledge and ability. It is imperative for teachers to design the content in such a skilful manner that it can achieve the dual purpose CLIL aims at. There is a dire need to bring the subject teachers and language teachers in close collaboration for the result-oriented curriculum planning and instruction. CLIL curriculum allows for gaining new knowledge of the content as Mohan and Naerssen (1997) rightly contend that as we acquire new areas of knowledge, we acquire new areas of language and meaning. In many ways, CLIL offers an amicable settlement of the teaching language for its knowledge and/or use.

Enigma of Form and Meaning in Language Instruction

This is one of the most interesting debates in SLA theory and practice. It seems that research and practice are more attracted to communicative approach in teaching in the most recent history. Approaches to foreign language learning have also moved from orientations almost exclusively directed to grammar and translation to more eclectic approach geared to learning how to communicate in second or foreign language (Van Esch & St. John, 2003).

There is a position taken by many that classrooms are widely considered to be places where languages cannot be learnt owing to lack of focus on meaning and stress on form (Puffer, 2007). Some learning is stimulated by teaching but much of it may be independent of teaching (Stern, 1983). This way, the profession of English as a foreign language (EFL) turns out to untenable (Van Lier, 1988). Still there are a few stronger and legitimate voices in favour of teaching form of language without which effective use of language will possibly remain incomplete and imperfect.

Canale and Swain (1980) made their mark in furthering the question of competence and performance basically put forth by Chomsky. They contend that it is very hard to accept language learning as mere an ability to get the meaning across. Savignon (1972) also joins them in a number of aspects and endorses the suspicion of fossilisation if the early and timely correction of grammatical errors is consciously ignored. Savignon (2004) suggests that teaching of form (grammar) is not CLIL. While Swain (1996) holds that content teaching needs to guide students' progressive use of the full functional range of language and to support their understanding of how language form is related to meaning in subject-related material. She further reiterates that

integration of language, subject-related knowledge and thinking skills require systematic monitoring and planning.

Mohan (1986) has to say if form is divorced from function, there is no functional grammar if language is divorced from discourse, there is no account for language as medium of learning or for content learning. The question is how to reconcile with form and meaning in CLIL classroom setting. The decisive role should be given to teacher who has the acumen to manipulate the language and the content to kill two birds with one stone (apologies to environmentalists for using this idiom). Content must be manipulated pedagogically if its potential for language learning is to be realised (Klapper, 1996).

The opinion of Van Lier (1996) moderates the issues still further by expressing that we should not let ourselves be trapped inside a dichotomy between focus on form and focus on meaning but rather use the term focus on language. He sums up the debate saying that in practice it becomes impossible to separate form and function neatly in the interactional work that is being carried out.

New Roles of Teacher and Learner

Guided by the principle of using the language to learn and learning the language to use, CLIL seems to us guided by Vygotskian theories on the one hand and follows the lines envisaged by Freire on the other. Freire (1972) presumes that without dialogue there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education. Through this dialogical engagement learner-teacher and learner-learner, interactions spring up and create the naturalness. to the basic action plan of a CLIL classroom where learners ask questions as well as answer questions which may result in meaningful communication involving linguistic register to use the target language as a vehicle. On professional front, a CLIL teacher may not be assigned a very lofty role of transformative intellectual (Giroux) or agent of change (Brown) as such, but certainly needs to have a caring attitude, ability to take a light-hearted approach and talent of creating life-applicable situations in the classroom to make the authentic communication happen (Bowering, 2007). A great expertise is also required to make due corrections and focusing on form very tactfully lest the motivation should be affected at any stage.

The most heartening element of CLIL is its capacity to promote non-native speaking second language teachers. Marsh (2005) holds that some of the most suitable CLIL teachers are those who speak the majority language as their first language and the CLIL language as their second language. This is how CLIL protects and promotes majority and minority languages at the same time. It allows for benefiting from all linguistic groups in a schooling system and achieves cross-linguistic and intercultural harmony and mutual respect for all languages in the social context.

CLIL and Learning Motivation

Regarding motivation in learning, Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura (1989) express that an ideal motivation will exist when all the learners with their mind and bodies are completely involved, their concentration is very deep. They know what they want to do, they know how well they are doing, they are not worried about failing; time passes very quickly and they lose the ordinary self-

conscious (worries of daily life).

If we examine the CLIL in action (Fig. 1.1), it is evident that this ideal is achievable if the teachers who conduct CLIL classes enforce the real spirit of CLIL pedagogy. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of CLIL is its ability to dispel the impression of academic learning from the minds of learners. This creates greater and deeper involvement. In CLIL, a situation is provided in which the attention is on the activity in action not on the language itself. Anything we get involved in for the sake of it, turns out to be easier and more enjoyable. Here lies the great strength of CLIL pedagogy because motivation in learning is indeed the most valuable thing in education.

The second most appealing element of CLIL is its pleasant surprise. Imagine any meal of an absolutely different taste that may be served once a week amid the routine meals which are eaten every day. Exposing school children to a new target language may have a sense of fascinations to practice it in class and they would sing/play and repeat its words and phrases even beyond the classroom. This fact is supported by keen observations. Brumfit (1991) maintains that children naturally use their mother tongue with any other person who knows it. When children find themselves in the company of others, particularly their peers who speak other languages, they will certainly and naturally make an effort to understand and use the new language.

CLIL is innovative and carries a lot of fascination; that is why it is kicking off well in Europe and being welcomed in other parts of the world. Training of teachers and planners may allow them to retain and multiply the learning motivation still further.

CLIL as Tool of Intercultural Understanding

Almost every student of Linguistics knows that language and culture are synonymous and integral parts of each other. Inviting a language in the form of CLIL in any kind of schooling system is to allow the culture-specific world views to find their place there. Minority languages and cultures cannot be represented by so called cultural festivals which are usually held in schools of immigrant countries once or twice a year. Dress shows of a culture or painting exhibitions can hardly be compared with linguistic representation of a culture in a schooling system.

Apart from plentiful meta-cognitive benefits of allowing the minority and majority languages, CLIL is instrumental in bringing diverse languages and hence cultures, closer to one another. CLIL widens the horizons of thinking. It allows the learners peep into other cultures and makes room for various world views to let the students reflect upon their own language and culture. This is how a sense of vitality of all languages and of course cultures is nourished.

Some Limitations of CLIL

As pointed out earlier, CLIL is not the panacea of all the linguistic concerns of our times. It is just one step to the right direction. CLIL is going through a phase of experimentation. The question of striking balance between content and language is still relative and depends on many contextual factors. Some CLIL programmes are pre-dominantly language-driven and some are pre-dominantly content-driven depending on the context, the school and the curriculum focus (Brinton et al., 1989; Stryker & Leaver, 1997). Puffer and Smit (2007) agree that the major focus in Europe is on content but of course, all the countries do not have the similar scenario in which to enforce CLIL.

Often innovative ideas have great appeal but enforcing theories is never without a challenge. Teaching content in a foreign (alien) language cannot be taken as easy way easy go. If we are given a choice to learn something in our native language over a foreign language, our natural and convenient choice, of course, would be our own mother tongue. Practically, it is observed that courses taught in a foreign language may take far larger time for coverage because the pace of learning is slowed down. In many countries where English, French and Spanish languages have colonial roots, learners may have advantages of parallel, identical diction and lexical cognates out there to assist them. CLIL is interesting, innovative, refreshing and a fascinating activity yet it is not without challenges both for teachers and learners.

It also poses a challenge to teachers who have been categorised as language teachers and subject teachers in the past. There are suspicions among teachers of science and that of languages as to whose role is being snatched and whose importance is being minimised. In this age of micro specialisations, it is not easy to exchange or merge roles. However, concepts of learning communities and collaborative approaches in teaching and learning are being gradually accepted.

Future Implications

Education tends to adapt slowly. For instance, it takes 15-20 years to change an educational practice (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). The changes being witnessed at the dawn of new millennium are emerging with the speed of lightning. Instead of traditional transfer of knowledge, collaborative creation of knowledge is required.

There is hardly any room left for cultures and languages to grow in isolation. There is a dire need to give our generation a cosmopolitan identity which shows tolerance of race and gender differences, genuine curiosity towards willingness to learn from other cultures, and responsibility towards excluded groups (Hargreaves, 2003). Through globalisation, increasing immigration and through media, world communities are coming closer and closer to each other. Certain rigidly confined countries such as China and former communist countries are also opening up.

It is to be noted that the European Union have signed agreements to expose their children to at least two more languages other than their own. It dispels the impression that CLIL is just the promotion of majority languages such as English and French. It is linked with various bilingual models which have made their mark in language theory and practice such as The Canadian French Immersion programme. Bilingualism and multilingualism are no more mere clichés rather accepted realities. The Commission of European Communities says about multilingual policy that it strengthens life chances of citizens. It may increase their employability, facilitate access to services and rights and contribute to solidarity through enhanced intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. Approached in this spirit, linguistic diversity can become a precious asset, increasingly so in today's globalised world.

Therefore, it is quite observable that the greatest investment is being made across the world in the three fields:

1. Information Technology
2. Media
3. Human Resource Development

For all these disciplines to flourish, great responsibility rests on the shoulders of linguists and educators to create space for more and more languages to find their due place in the ongoing flow of education and training. CLIL-like experiments can be extended to larger number of countries for the obvious benefits especially for counties which are largely depending on English as medium of instruction, official language and language of trade commerce and international relations.

CLIL experiment is beneficial for the Eastern European countries which are creating space for their economies within the region and beyond. This model is equally useful for immigrant countries which are not likely to remain monolingual any more. The case of developing nations as pointed out in the beginning, requires far greater consideration towards holistic growth of minority languages beside the majority, national language or the languages they have adopted as medium of instruction in schools for one good reason or the other.

Conclusion

CLIL is the outcome of evolutionary process from theories of learning blended with modern notions of communication and supported by the contextual factors such as immigration, globalisation and language politics. It is bound to succeed because it blends subject knowledge, technology, future preparation, cognition, motivation, authenticity of context as well as purpose, economy of time and resources and above all an instrument of transforming diverse societies into pluricultural communities. Pedagogically, CLIL comes very close to an ideal teaching environment where teachers allow learners to think through and articulate their own learning, classes are interactive and dialogic in nature, cooperative learning is promoted and by doing so the dual purpose of transfer of knowledge related to content as well that of language is skilfully achieved.

Seeing the emerging demand of language as means of communication in the Knowledge Age and especially the value of science education which is least theoretical now in nature, we foresee promising victories for CLIL in both developing and the developed countries. The most striking of all the promises of CLIL can be dubbed as pluricultural harmony.

About the Authors

Muhammad Afzal Awan holds Masters in Second Language Education from Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. He is a Faculty at English Language Institute (ELI), King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, KSA. He is interested in bilingualism, CLIL, and SCT.

Dr. Muhammad Aslam Sipra is an Assistant professor of English at King Abdulaziz university, Saudi Arabia. He has been teaching English language for more than 23 years. He earned his PhD in Applied Linguistics, and in addition, holds MA English Language & Literature and MA TEFL degrees. He is on the editorial board of renowned international, peer-reviewed refereed journals. His main professional interests include bilingualism, second language acquisition and learning, CLIL, phonology, teaching methods and e-learning.

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