

Book Review

The CLIL trajectory: Educational innovation for the 21st century iGeneration

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Einstein believed that a great thought begins by seeing something differently, with a shift of the mind's eye. CLIL is such a novel way of perceiving language learning through content and language osmosis. This new approach is recording a burgeoning interest and popularity, but still some questions linger there: How did it come out? Which are the underlying decision-making processes? What is its future? *The CLIL trajectory: Educational innovation for the 21st Century iGeneration* is out there to satisfy your curiosity around these issues. It is a realistic journey into the paths of CLIL, delineating a multidimensional approach to language learning. The book unfolds the history and future of CLIL in a series of six chapters which are subtly interconnected.

Chapter 1 gives a definition of CLIL by bringing out a political (i.e., mobility across the EU) and educational orientation (i.e., improvement of competences) which has been crystal clear since its launch. CLIL integration into school or university curricula aims to improve the quality of learning in a globalized world where newfangled practices can move education forward. The author tackles in

detail the variation of CLIL application, evaluation and certification among European countries as fruit of the *European action plan for education* for promoting the “mother tongue + 2” motto. In other contexts though, such as in the USA, the European CLIL meets its homologous approach, that is the SIOP (*sheltered instruction observation protocol*) model which is implemented in sheltered instruction methodology (Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012). Cross implementation will by all means refine international educational norms.

Chapter 2 unravels the European history of CLIL by casting a focus on two vital elements: “quality” and “European dimension”. These concepts are embedded in a wide range of programs (e.g., Leonardo Da Vinci, Socrates, etc.) that purport to give an impetus to new learning practices through the use of new technology, teacher exchange, and student mobility. Marsh refers to this process as “knowledge transfer”, which in turn leads to the so-called *Cirque du Soleil* phenomenon. Such a synergy of expertise and traditions is momentous for bringing about innovative practices. Indeed, since the classical times the purpose of education has been that of turning mirrors into windows, that is transcending one’s limited vision and expanding ideas into a wider audience.

Chapter 3 addresses the contribution of CLIL to the process of inclusive learning. Marsh points out that CLIL, as a new educational plan, has an inclusive orientation taking advantage of versatile learning theories (e.g., multiple intelligences, zone of proximal development, etc.). An analysis of the ancillary role of CLIL follows which focuses on examining its impact on young people with different needs and interests, or those who face learning problems due to social, psychological or other reasons. The CLIL-like practices significantly assist integration of immigrant learners in mainstream education by mitigating problems that are caused by lack of knowledge of local native languages (Agolli, 2015). The chapter reaches the conclusion that the role of CLIL in all of these contexts is beyond question deeply sociopolitical and educational.

Chapter 4 peruses the notion of *language awareness* which is seen as a move from *form* to *meaning*. It is important to understand that “language does not just reflect thought, it construes it, and with different construals, new awarenesses arise” (Larsen-Freeman, 2015, p. 492). The author dwells on the role of CLIL in developing language awareness of both teachers and learners. This new awareness traced in CLIL is part and parcel of what Larsen-Freeman calls *second language development* (SLD) rather than using the traditional term *second language acquisition* (SLA). CLIL is a paradigm of SLD, for it cultivates a holistic development of learning through mixing up content and language areas and galvanizing linguistic, cognitive and psychological elements. The pivotal idea of the chapter is that combining different languages and methodologies which underpin content areas creates a kind of knowledge that augments metacognitive understanding.

Chapter 5 raises a further interesting issue: Is neuroscience related to CLIL and how? The author puts forward the idea of the *tryptic* “mind – brain – education”. Different researchers stand by the idea that bilingual learners face problem-solving processes more successfully than the monolingual ones and that the bilingual mind is more flexible. Other renegade thoughts on the issue offer different, colorful and synthetic perspectives (Pavlenko, 2014). The author explores the concept of *hypertext mind* which can be nurtured through CLIL by activating all digital literacies that new generation, or *digital natives* (Prensky, 2011), possess. Marsh argues that CLIL can spur a new kind of mind mapping that makes use of language switching, intercognitive thinking, problem-solving and feedback. Education that cultivates critical thinking can much more effectively cope with learning disorders such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc. This is intertwined with research results in the field of bilingual education which reveal its power in confronting problems with dementia.

Chapter 6 concludes that vision along with action can bring about change and evolution in the world of education. Innovative practices like CLIL improve learning and transform insiders’ mentality and personality. Marsh views it as a form of educational investment in many countries and stresses that the future of CLIL is propitious as it is an organic, collaborative and realistic approach. It is a fact though that some educators, overwhelmed by a sense of fear in the face of the unknown, perceive CLIL as a menace for their professional existence (Di Martino & Di Sabato, 2012). Even amid some decision-makers one can observe reluctance in embracing new ideas or approaches, but as the saying goes: “I can’t understand why people are afraid of new ideas. I’m frightened of old ones”. What is emphasized in this chapter is that CLIL, as a new educational wrinkle, cannot compromise with prescriptivism and should be supported by avant-garde practices or practitioners.

On the whole, this book reads easily and constitutes a macro-analysis of CLIL, identifying all the steps for its in-depth understanding and implementation. Such a retrospective and introspective analysis through an inside and outside outlook gives food for thought for policy-making that should promote innovations. Well-conceived, well-planned and well-supported innovations should be at the core of modern, effective and alternative education which will always remain the answer to social and economic challenges.

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