



## CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) APPROACH

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### **ANNOTATION**

*This article investigates Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English as a Medium Instruction (EMI) as one of the best approaches in integrating English when teaching other subjects. It also studies the differences and similarities between the two approaches.*

### **Key words**

Content and language integrated learning, English as medium instruction, teaching, learning, integrating English into other subjects, CLIL and EMI, teaching approaches, content based instruction.

The content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach appeared in the 1990s. As it has been mentioned, it is an approach based on content-based instruction and it involves the integration of both language and content instruction. This approach allows ESL students to acquire their academic development while practicing and improving their language proficiency (Marsh, 2009). It can be used in primary and secondary schools, as well as in universities following different approaches, for example, a language or a content subject, depending on the needs of the educational center. Several studies by scholars, such as Zwiers (2006), Schleppegrell and de Oliveira (2006), Coyle et al. (2010), and Lasagabaster (2011), investigate several methodological issues regarding the use of a second language as the medium of instruction when content subjects are taught. These studies also explore the

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effectiveness of theoretical and practical issues involved in teaching and learning content through a foreign language to improve student motivation.

Carrio-Pastor (2008) points out the importance of collaboration of both language teachers and content teachers when designing materials, even they can collaborate and coordinate in the same classroom.

The instructor should consider some aspects in a CLIL classroom. Bruton (2011, 2013, 2015) observes that CLIL might cause students' division between the ones who succeed and the ones who cannot succeed in a CLIL classroom. According to Bruton (2011, 2013, 2015), usually the students who cannot benefit from the CLIL approach are the ones, whose mother tongue is very different, or they do not have foreign language support. For this reason, Sasajima (2013) affirms that teachers tend to design activities that are not too difficult because some students are not proficient in English.

Nevertheless, many researchers, including Hüttner and Smit (2014), Rea Rizzo and CarbajosaPalmero (2014), Yang (2016), Carrió-Pastor and Romero Forteza (2019), Lasagabaster (2019) defend this approach, despite some criticisms. They emphasize the benefits of CLIL, and why national governments support the approach. These researchers highlight that in a CLIL classroom content acquisition as well as foreign language learning is improved, motivation is developed, and higher professional status can be gained in the case of English.

Carrio-Pastor (2021) argues that in CLIL, both a content teacher and a language teacher should design the methodology applied, but in most cases, only content teachers conduct CLIL classes and do not pay attention to the language that matters, which is the main problem.

- English as a Medium of Instruction

Educational institutions adopt the EMI approach to teach subjects taught in English. For them, choosing the EMI approach is a way to attract more international students and it gives them a chance to increase academic cooperation and international mobility (Kyeyune 2003; Doiz et al. 2012).

EMI is usually applied to university teaching, but it is also used to teach subjects in English in secondary, primary, and pre-primary schools. This might be because many parents think



that subjects conducted with EMI benefit their children more than mother-tongue traditional teaching.

Many researchers have supported the adoption of the EMI approach. Dearden (2015), for example, studies the use of EMI in non-Anglophone countries, where the researcher analyzed 55 countries identifying some key aspects. The outstanding aspect of this research is to train English teachers so that they can become good EMI teachers. In turn, content teachers, too, can be trained in language skills following the example applied in CLIL (Carrio-Pastor, 2021).

Many research studies conclude that the EMI approach is suitable as well as positive for both the institutions and students since having EMI-based degrees is beneficial for both parties. Students are observed to be highly motivated and universities benefit from incorporating international value (Carrio-Pastor, 2021). The majority of researchers support the way the EMI approach has been applied to attract international students as well as to internationalize degrees in many educational institutions.

According to Carrio-Pastor (2021), CLIL has been replaced by EMI since students become more proficient in English, acquiring language skills and practicing it at the same time without having to learn.

- Differences and Similarities of CLIL and EMI

One of the characteristics of CLIL and EMI approaches is that they have gained a great deal of popularity, as a result, certificates in these skills are offered by many institutions. Lecturers and professionals who work in a CLIL or EMI context can take the courses for certificates to be qualified so that they can improve their skills on content and language teaching, use specific vocabulary in bilingual education, as well as communicate much more effectively in English with students from different nationalities and cultures. Carrio-Pastor (2021) states the main difference between these approaches is that CLIL refers to any foreign language learning while EMI includes only English learning. According to the researcher (Carrio-Pastor, 2021), CLIL is mainly used in primary and secondary schools and EMI in universities.

Dearden (2015) explains the difference between CLIL and EMI as in the following: "Whereas CLIL is contextually situated (with its origins in the European ideal of plurilingual competence for EU citizens), EMI has no specific contextual origin. Whereas CLIL does not



mention which second, additional or foreign language (L2) academic subjects are to be studied in, EMI makes it quite clear that the language of education is English, with all the geopolitical and socio-cultural implications that this may entail. Whereas CLIL has a clear objective of furthering both content and language as declared in its title, EMI does not (necessarily) have that objective". Language and content acquisition are included in the CLIL approach while in EMI, language acquisition is not prioritized, and English is used as the language of instruction only. If students' needs are taken into consideration, the use of EMI and CLIL for different establishments (primary and secondary schools and universities), seems to be decided wisely from the point of natural evolution. In theory, university students are much more proficient in a foreign language since they have already studied English during the years in primary and secondary education. For this reason, the EMI approach could be well suited and implemented in university contexts. However, CLIL students in primary and secondary schools are to be trained in both content and foreign languages since they are not proficient enough yet.

Graham (2018) analyzed research studies on EMI and CLIL that were carried out during the period 2008-2018, to assess the content and language outcomes of the experiments. According to the analysis, CLIL and EMI subjects do well or better than non-CLIL-EMI subjects do.

Both EMI and CLIL approaches are similar in a sense when considering them as forms of bilingual education. However, as mentioned before, CLIL refers to teaching content through any foreign language while EMI involves teaching content to proficient students in English. In addition, the perception of teachers' roles can be different in these approaches. It is known that teachers use a foreign language in both approaches and keeping this in mind, they practice English when teaching content, but the aims of the lesson could be different. When applying CLIL, instructors teach both subject content and language whereas in EMI instructors teach only content speaking a foreign language.

The methodology used in both approaches should be based on these differences mentioned, meeting students' specific needs at the same time, this could create some challenges for both students and teachers. For example, students can benefit from EMI subjects when they are proficient enough in English, having a level of at least C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2011). Only then, they



can communicate in a specific context in a foreign language and learn. When students are not proficient in a required level, they face problems not only in understanding the content but in language proficiency as well. Consequently, it makes the students in EMI classes discouraged and demotivated from acquiring content as well as English. This is why Carrió-Pastor (2021) believes that students' language proficiency should be taken into account when applying EMI or CLIL approach in the educational system. The researcher states that in the case when students are not proficient in a foreign language that is being used, then the CLIL approach should be applied to avoid demotivation and to reinforce communication strategies in that language. If students have certain required proficiency, then it is time for educational institutions to offer EMI subjects and courses with well-trained teachers in this approach (Carrió-Pastor 2021).

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