

CLIL IN (LANGUAGE) TEACHER TRAINING

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Abstract

The article¹ traces out the current situation of teacher training in CLIL to highlight what training needs are required of teachers. Reference is made to data collected in a small scale research project that gives voice to those involved and the complexity of the CLIL situation is evidenced as background to the issue of teacher competences.

CLIL, teacher training, teacher competences

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The presence of CLIL on the European landscape has been on a constant increase since the new millennium and an awareness of the need to take action regarding the training of teachers has begun to make itself felt. Marsh (2002) discusses the issue and identifies a series of recommendations for promoting CLIL training:

Summary of Recommendations for teacher training in CLIL:

1. That exchange funding systems be specially geared (for example, through Comenius) towards supporting teachers (content and language) to visit, teach and job-shadow in CLIL/EMILE schools in other countries.
2. That CLIL/EMILE be used as an instrument for promoting teacher mobility. This would be facilitated if national agencies could provide special dispensations on harmonization and recognition of teacher qualifications, even if temporary, for CLIL/EMILE schools.
3. That recommendations be drawn up which indicate the required linguistic fluency of teachers according to Common European Framework of Reference scales in relation to linguistic load of specified types and use of DIALANG.
4. That initial teacher training systems which enable a trainee to specialise in both a content subject and a foreign language (for example, at primary level in Finland & Norway; and at secondary level in Austria & Germany) be examined and reported on with a view to pan-European extension.
5. That a trans-national higher degree programme be designed and implemented by key European centres of expertise in this field which could act as a catalyst in establishing a flagship academic programme for European CLIL/EMILE. This would then have a multiplier effect on trans-national initial and in-service education, and on research initiatives

Kelly and Grenfell (2004) in their Report on the profile of a European language teacher present CLIL training as an important element of foreign language teacher education (item 33 in the 'Strategies and Skills' category). The specification of *language teacher* reveals however a bias towards the situation of language teacher training in the UK and to other areas of Europe where teachers can be trained in two unrelated subjects. In many countries however it is not the (foreign) language teacher who teaches or will teach CLIL. This is the case of Italy where recent legislation (DM 10 settembre 2010, n. 249, article 14) specifies the need that non-language subject teachers be trained for foreign language medium instruction (FLMI) in the light of the Reform of the Italian high school where FLMI is made compulsory in the final (fifth) year of all *Licei* and *Istituti Tecnici* (with the exception of the *Liceo Linguistico* where FLMI in the first foreign language begins in the third year and FLMI in the second foreign language in the fourth year). In all cases FLMI is limited to the teaching of one subject only.

Item 33 in the Kelly Report

- Trainee teachers learn the methodologies and strategies for teaching another subject through the medium of a foreign language

- *Even if trainee teachers do not intend to specialise in this area, such training improves their language competence, encourages more comprehensive use of the target language in non-CLIL classes, and gives teachers ways of raising social, cultural and value issues in their foreign language teaching*
- *CLIL approaches encourage cooperation with colleagues from different disciplines.*

However, despite the importance of these documents, their influence does not seem to have filtered through to national levels where developments in CLIL at an institutional level seem to move more slowly than actual practice in schools.

1. A definition of CLIL

Knowledge of the extent to which CLIL is present in Europe would indicate the degree to which training is becoming a great necessity. In order to gauge the situation a first step would be to have a clear idea about what CLIL is. Let us take two definitions. The first one (Eurydice 2006: 8):

The acronym CLIL is used as a generic term to describe all types of provision in which a second language (a foreign, regional or minority language and/or another official language state language) is used to teach certain subjects in the curriculum other than the language lessons themselves.

lays emphasis on the *vehicular* function of the language - aspect which is most immediately grasped. The following definition (Marsh 2002: 15) however goes further and seems to capture the specificity of CLIL better:

CLIL and EMILE refer to any dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content.

In this definition the key elements to draw attention to are the expression ‘dual-focused educational context’ and the reference to ‘learning’ as well as teaching. The definition allows us to draw a distinction between situations of second language medium teaching e.g., bilingual education and immersion programmes, and CLIL experiences. The former often refer to situations set up especially since the end of the second world war, sometimes on the basis of bilateral agreements, for the safeguard of minority languages or for the promotion of the learning of the language of a neighbouring country. At the time of their institution it was considered sufficient to immerse the pupil in the second language and language learning would come about automatically. Only later, through the work by Swain and Lapkin (1982), has it become clear that such an assumption cannot be made. However, it is on the basis of the first definition that the Eurydice Report (2006) has been able to indicate such a wide spread of ‘CLIL’ experiences throughout the Europe. In our view, it may not so much reveal situations of CLIL but rather situations of foreign/second language medium teaching. The second definition seems to reveal a sensibility towards issues *arising* from the second language medium teaching situations, namely that not only content but also the medium language have to be learnt (dual-focus). So in the second definition, there is greater attention towards the process of learning and therefore to the methodological issues associated with this. Thus,

anyone wishing to label his/her second language medium teaching situation as CLIL is actually making a promise – that language be learnt (not taught) through the content and that the content will be learnt (and taught) through the language, the one through the other, contemporaneously, in an integrated manner. Such a promise inevitably implies taking the methodological steps to do so. Thus, CLIL is not merely a question of language *medium*, it is above all a question of creating the conditions, methodologically and didactically, for content and language learning to take place through the medium language.

2. The CLIL teacher

The responsibility of the teacher is paramount in the above process. A key issue of course concerns who s/he is, for to know who the teacher might be allows us to gauge the existence of training needs over and above the professional profile already possessed. According to the Eurydice (2005) investigation into the situation of foreign language teaching in Europe, “in half of all countries specialist foreign language teachers are qualified to teach another subject” (p.59). The major implication here is that in half of all European countries teachers with a language competence adequate enough to teach a non-language subject matter in it and who possess knowledge and competencies related to language teaching methodology which are considerably useful for the CLIL context, are *not* available. Whilst certain countries (such as Germany, Austria, those in the Balkans and Baltic areas) would seem to be in a privileged position as to training needs, other countries, especially those of central Europe (including Italy – see above), have to face a far more difficult training situation, especially with regard to language. Teachers currently teaching in schools will have gone through school and university where foreign languages will not have received the attention that they do now and where almost certainly the oral dimension will have been sacrificed for grammar and perhaps reading. The result is a large-scale teacher population without the language qualifications required for quality CLIL teaching. To get round this obstacle, some countries turn to team teaching (it has been the case of Italy until recently) which has its advantages and disadvantages (Menegale, 2006).

It cannot be ignored that, especially at the higher levels of secondary education, teaching becomes more and more *ex cathedra*. This has consequences for CLIL: the *ex-cathedra* style is transmission-focused and requires of the teacher a level of oral competence in the medium language that s/he does not normally possess. Furthermore, from the point of view of the pupil, the *ex cathedra* mode privileges listening (and reading) at the expense of the other language abilities not allowing, as a result, sufficient active participation and personal construction of knowledge vis à vis the content. Thus for CLIL to meet its promise content teaching and teaching style need to be reconsidered.

2.1 Teacher competences in CLIL

CLIL teaching is not the sum of the characteristics of subject teaching and foreign language teaching put together. It has intrinsic features that require the teacher to rethink normal procedures and to set in place new ones. The diagram in Appendix 1 highlights some of these areas that need a rethink (collectively named the *CLIL 'C' Complex*), some aspects of which are briefly highlighted below to exemplify the additional dimensions that CLIL brings with it.

Context: just like any other programme, the conditions of the context - external (views of families, pupils, interest of local businesses), institutional (laws, regulations), school (staff

attitudes and support) - in which a CLIL programme is implemented influence the possibility of success it can have. In other words, the conditions indicate the extent to which the programme is rooted on firm ground. A good knowledge of CLIL principles and relational competences are essential for the CLIL teacher when exploring these conditions and establishing and maintaining contacts with all stakeholders, unused to this new learning environment.

Curriculum: with respect to the concept of curriculum, CLIL can be considered from various angles: i. CLIL and its position vis à vis the school curriculum, namely the extent to which it contributes to the overall educational goals of the school and the extent to which it shares the school ethos and is recognized as part of the school language policy (Coonan, 2006a). These aspects need to be made explicit; ii. CLIL and its position vis à vis the foreign language curriculum, namely the extent to which bridges or synergies are built between the two, both before and during the programme; iii. language education curriculum, namely the contribution CLIL can give to the development of the school's language education programme (if this exists) through the specification of relevant aims and objectives; iv. the CLIL curriculum itself which must be devised in keeping with i. ii. (and iii) above and in accordance with the epistemological nature of the school subject chosen. The CLIL teacher must know therefore how to create a web of interconnections between these different curricular levels to ensure that the CLIL experiences are firmly integrated into the school system and that the necessary synergies are in place to support the learning objectives.

Content: the main point we highlight here concerning content regards content-related language issues: the need to be aware of the complexity and consequent possible difficulty of the language of the content, to have knowledge of the characteristics of the text types and genres characterising the school subject; to possess the skills to decline language objectives on the content – knowledge and skills a content teacher does not normally possess.

Culture: according to the European Commission, CLIL is an ideal 'site' for the promotion of intercultural competences and of European values. In line with this view, the CLIL teacher needs the skills to be able to re-decline content to include a European dimension.

Cognition: the plus value for language learning in CLIL is linked to the cognitive depth associated with subject-matter learning. Pupils think to learn (and learn to think) using the foreign language. Thus, from the language point of view, s/he does not merely learn a specific language (the language of Chemistry, for example), s/he also learns the language for learning Chemistry and for learning in general (cf. reference to CALP below). In this situation the teacher needs the skills to balance out the demands of the subject matter and the contemporary demands of the foreign language in order not to drain the pupil's attentive resources through cognitive overload.

Class: concepts like motivation and interest acquire special importance for a CLIL lesson on account of the added difficulty that learning subject matter through a foreign language poses and the potential it has for 'damaging' the pupils' self-confidence and self-image (Coonan, in print). The CLIL teacher must therefore possess the relational and teaching skills necessary to generate and maintain motivation and interest throughout the programme (Dornyei, 2002).

Communication: the needs identified by the CLIL teachers (par. 3.2 below) refer mostly to the aspect 'communication'. The success of the CLIL programme is linked to the way the materials 'communicate', to the way the teacher communicates, and to the possibilities the

pupils have to communicate. These aspects of communication must be managed by the content teacher and may require a sharp change in teaching style to do so.

Conflict and collaboration: in CLIL programmes, normally compartmentalised areas (separate subjects) meet and to some extent merge. The overlap must be managed to avoid feelings of ‘invasion’ on the part of the content teacher by the foreign language teacher, especially in situations of team teaching (Coonan, 2006b).

Control: control can be seen from two perspectives in CLIL: assessment *of* learning procedures and assessment *for* learning procedures which present features that are new to a content teacher (cf. below) and for which skills are needed; and evaluation of programme procedures requiring skills in monitoring or even action research in order to gauge the efficacy of the programme.

CLIL represents a new teaching and learning environment and as we have seen just very briefly the competences needed are linked to this special environment.

4. Teacher training in CLIL

A small-scale research project² involving five countries (France, Belgium, Italy, England and Spain) was set up in 2008 to investigate just how institutions in some countries in Europe are facing the issue of teacher training for CLIL competences. From the data collected certain tendencies in teacher training for CLIL can be noticed if the new millennium is taken as a dividing point.

4.1 Provision

Most CLIL teacher education courses were launched after the millennium and those that existed before were mostly university postgraduate courses (four were identified). This is a very limited number if one considers the role that university institutions play in most countries in teacher education (both initial and in-service). With the new millennium other providers have appeared. These are local/regional education institutions and networks of schools. Through them the quantity of provision has increased overtime but at the same time the length of the courses has become shorter (e.g., from a 600h university course to a 12h course held by a network of schools). Alongside this appearance, the role of the university has changed also. Whereas in the pre-millennium period the universities not only provided but also decided (on content, structure, etc.), a new tendency sees the education authorities or schools (or both together) deciding alone or commissioning the university for tailor-made courses to suit their specific needs. This has led to the existence of a more situated approach to teacher training in CLIL: the providers go out to the schools and meet the teachers (who know each other and work together) on their own ground. The idea also of ‘a priori’ structured course content is now flanked by more flexible approaches where professional development is elaborated ‘in itinere’ and ‘in situ’ with the teachers as they experiment. These changes have consequences: whereas in the pre-millennium period the courses were

² The project was conducted for the CLIL Cascade Network (CCN) and the results delivered at the CLIL Tallinn Conference 24-25 October 2008. Twenty questionnaires were received from respondents. Given the small-scale nature of the research, it is possible that the picture drawn may not do justice to some of the countries. Also to be recalled that only five countries were involved so the picture drawn refers only to them.

more theoretical, the tendency now is to create courses that are more practical in nature. Technology (blended asynchronous learning) is also beginning to play a role in course delivery although this seems to be more associated with University provision. On paper the descriptions of the courses seem to reveal an attempt to engage the participants in creating their own knowledge and develop their own competences. Expressions such as *reflective*, *action research*, *task-based learning*, *problem solving*, *collaborative constructivist*, *professional dialogue*, *pragmatic* reveal the theoretical underpinnings of the course structure that is in keeping with the move towards the more situated-type of training following a reflective model (e.g., Wallace, 1991)

Two aspects however are important for their absence: very little attention is given to the language issue in CLIL – very few courses attempt to combine methodology and language elements with specific subject disciplines; the lack of a practicum: students learn to create materials ('work as plans', Breen, 1989 cited in Ellis, 2003: 5) but are rarely seen using them ('work as process', Breen, *ibidem*) so the dynamics of classroom teaching in CLIL and all associated issues are not monitored.

3.2 Needs

Parallel to the questionnaire (above) the small scale research project also proposed to investigate what practicing teachers³ of CLIL (with varied backgrounds with respect to training) thought their training needs were. The interviews were conducted around 4 macro areas: language, methodology, materials, assessment. What follows are the main thematic threads that the interviews reveal.

A. Language area

From the point of view of CLIL foreign language competence, three aspects are highlighted:

- i. the need for work experience abroad to improve language skills;
- ii. the need to possess a language competence that is specific to and required by CLIL situations – and this does not merely refer to language for specific purposes;
- iii. the need to be linguistically flexible. A metaphor was used to highlight the predicament of the conscientious CLIL teacher who meticulously prepares his/her lesson (precisely because s/he is not flexible) by comparing him/her to a skier who can only go down the main ski strip but is unable to go off course. The lack of flexibility that this metaphor highlights can obviously seriously hamper the success of a CLIL lesson as any teacher must be able to follow up unforeseen diversions from the lesson plan, especially if provoked by pupil curiosity.

Another two aspects of language in the CLIL lesson were highlighted: i. the subject teacher's lack of understanding of the role of language in learning. 'Normal' training⁴ received by a non-language subject teacher does not normally focus on this issue. It is probably not wholly considered in the training of (foreign) language teachers either as attention tends to focus on issues of language and *language* learning rather than on the role of language in learning in general. The CLIL teacher becomes acutely aware of the issues associated with this as soon as teaching and learning must pass through a non-native tongue (both for the teacher as well as for the pupil) and of the need to possess strategies for facing the problems; ii. the need to work out the role and the balance between the subject teacher and the foreign language

³ Five non-language subject teachers from the five countries involved in the CCN project were interviewed.

⁴ This was a point raised by the Italian interviewees. It may be the case that training courses in other countries actually contemplate this issue.

teacher working in team teaching. This is an issue in those countries where team teaching takes place (cf. conflict, par. 2.1 above) and where a different language is associated with the two teachers. An imbalance in the active roles of the teachers can lead to an imbalance in the use of the two languages.

B. Methodological area

CLIL is eminently a methodological and didactic issue and, depending on the 'entry situation', certain aspects will need overhauling. However, the interviewees highlight only certain aspects which they feel as important and perceive as a need despite their previous training and their accumulated experience in the field. The needs (divided into 'know how' and 'know that') highlighted are:

- a. know-how to get learners to speak;
- b. know how to create exercises and activities;
- c. know how to use strategies to overcome problems of comprehension;
- d. know that CLIL requires a change of mind set.

Point a. Getting pupils to speak in a foreign language is a problem that most foreign language teachers face every day. The problem is related to pupil reluctance (it is face-menacing) as also to the inadequacy of the strategies adopted (e.g., types of questions asked) and the activities proposed (cf. point b) and it is probable that these conditions also exist in the CLIL classroom. However, alongside the consequences that this situation has on the potential for the development of the linguistic and communicative competence of the pupils (Coonan, 2008) – recall the promise that CLIL makes concerning language learning - there is another that involves the learning of the content and regards the concept of 'speaking to learn' (and also 'writing to learn' – aspect however not highlighted). Learning through speaking is an important aspect of a lesson as it allows the pupil to gauge his personal understanding of the content, to manipulate it in new ways and thereby gradually gain mastery over it. As a result of the cognitive processes brought into play during this learning process, the pupil's language and communicative competence gain in quality as he gradually acquires the language for learning or, to use Cummins' term (cited in Baker, 1996), a cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).

Point b above highlights an issue which may be more felt in certain countries than in others as a result of the methodological and didactic style adopted – more or less experiential, more or less transmission-focused – and therefore the tradition (in the normal language of the school) of (not) using a variety of tasks to promote learning. It may also be linked to the specific training a content teacher receives – training that may not highlight the issue of activities (formats, internal structure, outcomes, etc.: cf. for example the work by: Bygate, Skehan and Swain, 2001; Crookes and Gass, 1993a; 1993b; Ellis, 2003; Robinson, 2001) as instead often characterizes the training of foreign language teachers. The importance highlighted of activities is linked to the situation of materials in CLIL teaching: materials do not exist and the teachers find themselves in the position of having to make their own (Coonan, 2007a; Coonan, 2007b).

Point c: CLIL brings out into the open an issue that is underestimated when teaching through the normal school language – that of comprehension. Unlike the 'normal' situation, in a CLIL lesson the medium language is, in the great majority of cases, a non-native tongue for the teacher as well as for the pupils; it is natural therefore for the teacher to be preoccupied by the obstacles to learning (and to teaching) that the foreign language can potentially pose. However, as the content teacher (unlike the foreign language teacher) is not normally trained

for issues of this nature⁵, s/he may not possess the (non) verbal strategies or teaching strategies to make the input easily accessible – thus the reason for the issue being highlighted. The content teacher respondents however also highlight the fact that content teachers wishing to embark on CLIL must know that CLIL requires a change of mindset and of work practices – it is their own experience that shows this. In our view this is a very important aspect to underline as it implies a teacher who has the desire to change, flexibility for change, and the willingness to invest time and persistence in the effort required.

C. Materials area

Given the paucity of CLIL materials teachers need to be able to adapt and transform authentic documents for the specific needs and aims/objectives of the course and of the lessons. The respondents suggest possible ways for the content teacher to acquire this competence:

- possibility of working with language teachers;
- opportunities for joint work between content teachers to develop and discuss about materials, websites and their exploitation;
- creation of specific CLIL websites on content areas, publish periodicals for different subjects; periodical newsletter on different subject area themes.

There is no doubt that the issue of materials is important – more important than the input itself as it is the way the input is couched (so the teachers say) that is responsible for the impact (positive or negative) the input itself has on the learners. Thus the way the materials communicate and the learning routes that are proposed are the result of the teachers' ability – thus their training needs in this area.

D. Assessment area

As one respondent put it “assessment is a big problem, whether CLIL or not”. CLIL therefore adds difficulty to difficulty, especially in those situations where the modes of assessment adopted are not always congenial to CLIL learning (e.g., take the Italian *interrogazione* for example - pupils talk at length on a topic through questioning by the teacher. Whilst such a format might be suitable for more proficient levels of oral language competence it would be more difficult to adopt with the lower levels as the pupil would be unable to demonstrate content learning on account of language difficulties). In fact the added difficulty of CLIL assessment is brought about by the need to assess learning that is conducted through a foreign language as well also to assess the foreign language learning itself. Content teachers are not normally trained for this challenge. In fact, although the *interrogazione* mentioned above is an oral format, it is only used for assessing content knowledge. The content teacher does not use it to assess the pupils from the point of view of oral language proficiency. Indeed the teachers do not know how to assess oral language. Also, having to assess both dimensions, brings to the fore another new problem that concerns the balance that content assessment and language assessment should have in the overall mark.

⁵ This is of course a generalization. Given the recent increase in immigrant children in schools in many countries in Europe one would presume that issues are now a staple part of initial teacher training programmes. However, the teachers being involved in CLIL are for the most already in service and it can be presumed that their initial training did not include reference to these aspects.

4. CLIL competence grid

From the descriptions provided of training courses⁶ (cf. Appendix 2: a list of objectives of the training courses. It is clear that in some cases the objectives are declined in more detail than others) in the questionnaire survey, it is not possible to understand the extent to which the courses actually meet the needs indicated above. Apart from knowledge, the CLIL teacher needs ‘know how’ in many areas – something that comes out clearly from the needs analysis (but appears rarely in the specification of the objectives).

In the light of the need to provide indications to teacher education institutions called upon to train CLIL teachers, the CLIL Cascade Network has declined training needs in terms of competences and relative skills in the form of a Grid⁷ (thus capturing the need for ‘know-how’) which can be used as a check list for training in CLIL. The elements specified are intended to be relevant to all forms of CLIL but a particular competence may take on more or less importance according to the level at which CLIL is being implemented (primary, secondary, vocational, higher education), the degree of immersion (proportion of CLIL/language of schooling) aimed at and, we would also add, the nature of training already received. The Grid is available on the CCN site⁸.

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⁶ Information on eight courses was received.

⁷ Grid elaborated by Bertaux, Coonan, Frigols and Mehisto for the Project: CLIL Cascade Network, 135377-2007-FI-KA2-KA2NW.

⁸ <http://ccn.infoweb.as.tietotalo.fi/English.iw3>.

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Appendix 1

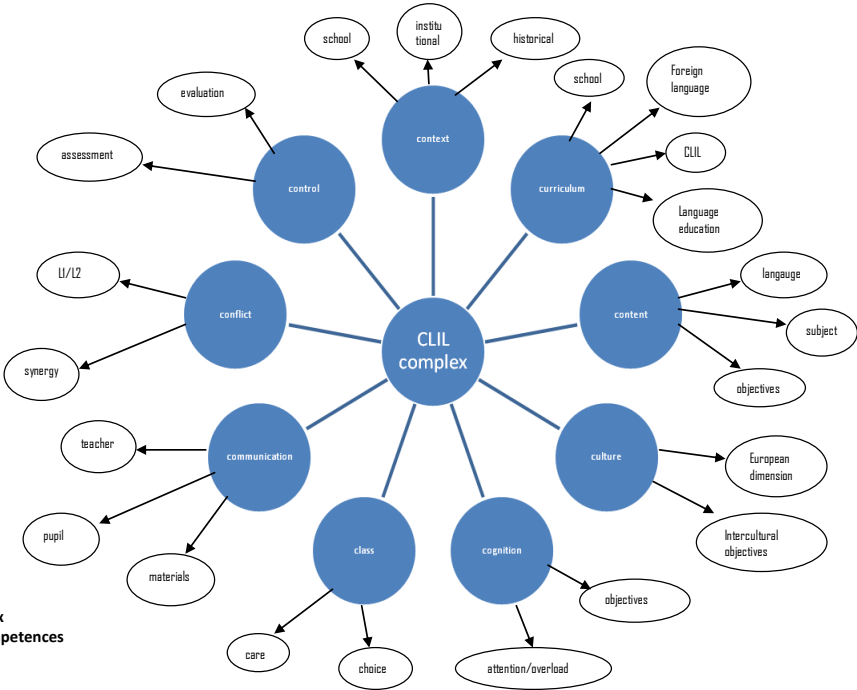


Figura 1 CLIL 'C' complex for teacher competences

Appendix 2

Examples of goals and objectives taken from eight CLIL teacher training courses examined

1. Goals and objectives

Increase teachers' knowledge of subject content.
Develop teachers' knowledge of content-related lexis.
Provide material and information for CLIL planning
Show teachers how to become a CLIL teacher (microteaching)

2. Goals and objectives

Create a group of CLIL trainers with the knowledge and competencies concerning CLIL issues especially in the fields of planning and methodology

3. Goals and objectives

Prepare the trainees for their exam
Provide basic knowledge of programmes, forms of teaching, resources, exchange programmes,
Work in a team
Collaborate with the language teachers
Pluridisciplinary approach
Intercultural competences

4. Goals and objectives

Train a CLIL teacher with the knowledge and competencies in all the most important issues concerning the CLIL learning and teaching environment

5. Goals and objectives

The course aims to provide training in the field of CLIL (Content and language Integrated Learning).

6. Goals and objectives

Better understand the cognitive and linguistic demands of the pupils in CLIL
Acquire a reflective attitude towards their practice with the view to increasing teaching strategies that enhance the pupils learning in CLIL
Encourage the development of an informal network for teacher co-development

7. Goals

Autonomous use of the internet for the realization of teaching modules
Collaborative work in small groups online
Be able to create team teaching modules using ICT and the internet

Aims

Use internet for finding material on line useful for creating teaching modules
Recognize, analyze and use the structure of CLIL; modules
Create a wide range of CLIL modules for all types of schools to experiment in class

8. Goals

Improve CLIL teaching experimenting with CLIL modules
Re-organize the curriculum of the L2 and the other school subjects
Create a virtual CLIL community

Aims

Experiment with already existing CLIL modules
Transfer techniques of cooperative and collaborative learning to the CLIL class
Reflect on the evaluation of CLIL activities and create instruments of evaluation