

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Children develop concepts, dispositions and skills in relation to:

- Engagement, listening and attention (Oral Language, Reading and Writing)
- Sequencing and summarising (Reading)
- Engagement (Writing)

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has been defined as a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010, p. 1). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is the teaching of non-language content through the medium of a second or subsequent language—for example, teaching Maths through Irish or Physical Education through French. CLIL gives students greater exposure to the target language without overloading the curriculum. Research shows that “language learning is more effective when

it is combined with content learning in another subject other than the language being learned.”¹⁹ CLIL has been widely used throughout Europe and beyond to supplement the formal teaching of languages and to provide students with effective opportunities to practice their new language skills outside the language classroom. (The Languages Connect Strategy p 23 (2017 Department of Education and Skills))

CLIL refers to situations where subjects or parts of subjects are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content and the *simultaneous* learning of a foreign language. (Marsh, 2002, p. 15).

CLIL involves teaching another curriculum subject, or aspects of another subject through a second language which is not that of the learner’s mother tongue. This practice guide highlights important considerations in adopting CLIL where a subject is taught through Irish in a school in which English is the medium of instruction.



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This guide focuses on teaching aspects of a curriculum subject through Irish in schools where English is usually the medium of instruction. CLIL is recognised as a successful approach to language teaching and learning in Europe and internationally. Irish primary schools are a particularly favourable context for using CLIL as all primary teachers teach Irish.

Research evidence shows that language learning is more effective when it is combined with content learning in another subject other than the language being learned. CLIL has been shown to improve

students' language proficiency, without negatively impacting on the development of either the students' first language, or their performance in the subject area being taught. CLIL enables learners to encounter language in context and to use it for authentic communication.

CLIL views language as the vehicle for learning.

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Important considerations for adopting CLIL as an approach

For children

Successful acquisition of any language requires communication in the language. For this reason, it is essential that children learning through CLIL have regular opportunity to communicate through Irish. While children will use their mother tongue initially, children will eventually move toward using the target language over time, as they build up confidence and ability in the language. It is important (as with learning any language), that children are not continually corrected, so that they do not develop a negative attitude to the language. Inter-language (where children use English and Irish in the same sentence) is completely acceptable and rather than being detrimental to learning the target language, it actually helps children understand and use language structures and vocabulary. It would be accepted that children make a genuine effort to use the target language structures and vocabulary.

For teachers

For teachers, it may be the first time they have experienced teaching another subject through Irish. This presents its own challenges. In this context, teachers may experience frustration when unable to express themselves as they would in their mother tongue. However, teachers can accept that they themselves are learning too and it is acceptable that teachers may have to use some English in the initial stages and that they may not be able to teach through Irish for the complete lesson. Teachers may adopt a phased use of Irish and English until they themselves reach a thresh-hold, where they are comfortable teaching through Irish for the majority of the lesson.

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Choosing a subject suitable for CLIL

When choosing a subject suitable for CLIL, the following points may be considered helpful.

- Teachers need to consider the subjects which they themselves would feel most comfortable teaching through Irish.
 - Teachers can think about the subjects which lend themselves to communication opportunities. This may involve children naturally conversing with each other, solving a problem together, conveying meaning or making a point to a peer, without the teacher having to manufacture the language learning setting.
 - Teachers may need to consider how the children will communicate through the language and not just in the language. While the children will learn subject-specific terminology in Irish, they will also learn to communicate and operate through Irish in that subject.
- A whole-school approach to CLIL will involve deciding on a subject suitable to be taught through Irish. It also involves teachers discussing their willingness to get involved in the approach. Other considerations for a whole staff include language and concept building in the chosen subject across all class levels.



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Introducing CLIL: important points to note

- Language learning in CLIL needs to be considered according to two language types, as outlined below. Good planning for both language types is essential to successful consolidation of language learning.
- 1. Content obligatory language: This is the language that is specific to the topic in the lessons, e.g., teaching about the lifecycle of the frog would involve teaching subject specific vocabulary such as egg, tadpole, frog, etc.
- 2. Content compatible language: This is the more general language that learners need to use when learning about a topic. This language may be relevant in the learning of other topics or may already be known to learners, e.g., teaching about the lifecycle of the frog might involve using language such as then, after some time, finally.

A number of principles with regard to teaching the lessons are worth noting.

- (i) In the beginning teachers could accept questions from pupils in English but answer them in simple Irish.
- (ii) In the longer term, teachers might rephrase in Irish the questions posed in English by pupils.
- (iii) Discussions in English between pupils should also be permitted initially, but pupils should gradually be encouraged to use Irish.
- (iv) Group and pair work are vitally important to stimulate and allow for communication through the language
- (v) The new vocabulary and language structures needed for the content class should be taught and reinforced in the language class. Children should not be meeting the target language for the first time in the content class. Successful planning will ensure that language learning is built upon in each lesson.
- (vi) Information to be taught may need to be simplified in the target language and presented in a manner that facilitates understanding. Charts, diagrams, drawings, hands-on experiments, and the drawing of key concepts and terminology are all common CLIL strategies (Mehisto et al., 2008: 11).

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- (vii) Scaffolding learning is very important in CLIL, and the children's varying learning needs should be considered in differentiation.

Visual Organisers

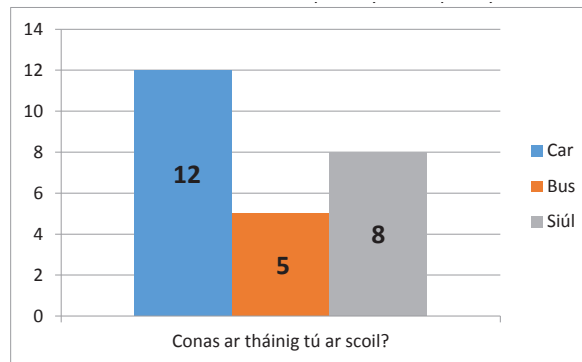
Visual organisers can help to present information to second language learners in a manner that supplements their language comprehension skills. They can be used in content lessons for many purposes, as can be seen in the examples attached. They can help to show the order of events in a story, classify information, show similarities and differences, etc. They can be used at different points in a lesson to aid recall, to create links and to summarise information. Visual organisers can act as a scaffold for learners as they develop their second language skills. A wide variety of visual organisers is available through an internet search.

Visual Organisers for use in CLIL Lessons

1. A timeline can be used to show events in a story in chronological order.



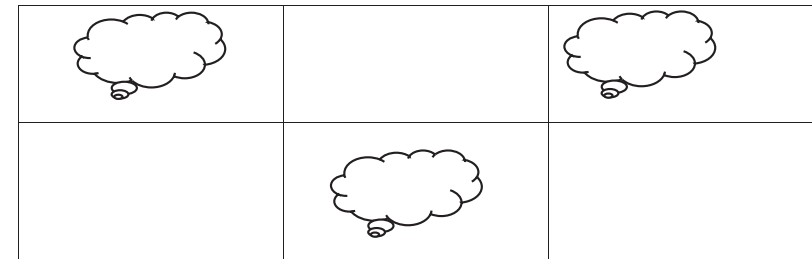
2. A bar chart can be used to show quantity or frequency



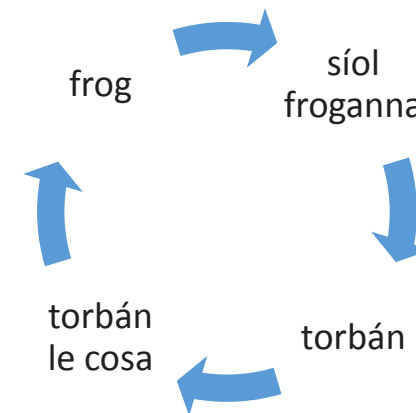
3. A table is useful for classifying information.

| Ainm | Aois | Rang |
|-------|------|-------------|
| Séan | 11 | Rang a Cúig |
| Máire | 8 | Rang a Dó |

4. A story board can be used to plan different events in a story. Speech bubbles can be used where there is dialogue or thought bubbles to capture ideas.

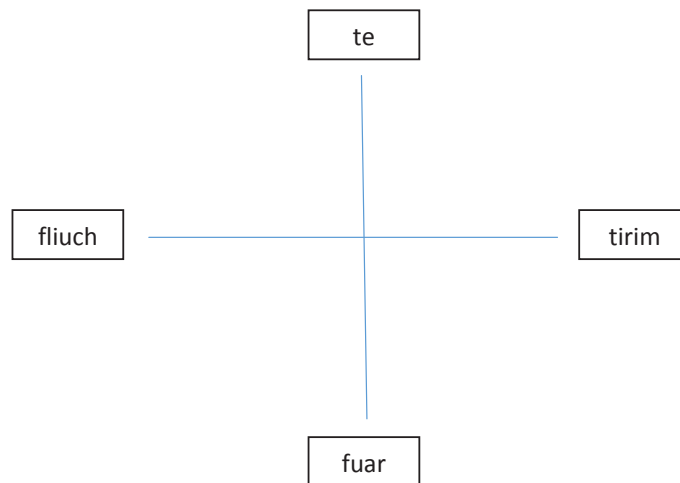


5. A cycle can illustrate in diagrammatic form events that happen repeatedly, e.g., animal lifecycle. This diagram could be enhanced using labelled images.

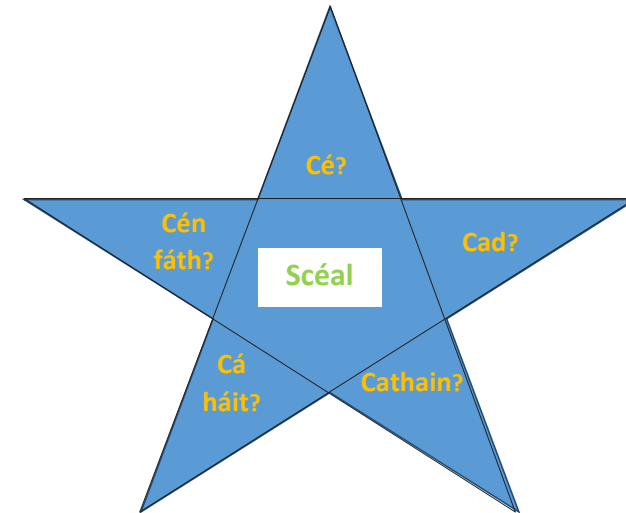


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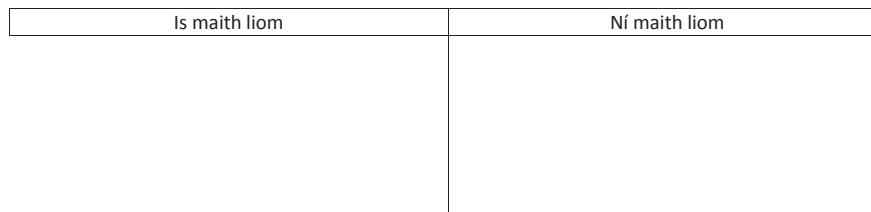
6. A quadrant shows the relationship between different variables.



8. A star shape with Who? Why? What? When? Where? Questions can help children in recalling the events of a story or in composing their own story.



7. T-charts can show two contrasting variables such as advantages and disadvantages, arguments for and against in a debate.



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