

# CLIL: A New Approach to TEFL

**Manuel F. Lara Garrido**

In order to teach English effectively, an EFL teacher must subscribe to one (or more) of the current approaches to teaching English as a foreign language and incorporate its language-learning strategies and techniques into each of his or her lessons.

Though there is no one correct approach, most teachers usually find themselves more comfortable using one or the other of the approaches listed and described.

## STATE OF THE ART

So as to give some depth of understanding as to the evolution of ideas that has marked the emergence of newer and different approaches to language teaching, we have tried to place the following list of methodological approaches in chronological order.

- [Grammar Translation Method](#)
- [Direct Method](#)
- [\*\*The Reading Approach\*\*](#)
- [Audio-Lingual Method](#)
- [Silent Way](#)
- [Total Physical Response \(TPR\)](#)
- [Community Language Learning \(CLL\)](#)
- [Suggestopedia \(Suggestology\)](#)
- [\*\*Functional-notional Approach\*\*](#)
- [Communicative Approach](#)
- [Natural Approach](#)

### Grammar Translation Method

This approach was historically used in teaching Greek and Latin. The approach was generalized to teaching modern languages.

Classes are taught in the students' mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. Vocabulary is taught in the form of isolated word lists. Elaborate explanations of grammar are always provided. Grammar instruction provides the rules for putting words together; instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words. Reading of difficult texts is begun early in the course of study. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue, and vice versa. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

### Direct Method

This approach was developed initially as a reaction to the grammar-translation approach in an attempt to integrate more use of the target language in instruction.

Lessons begin with a dialogue using a modern conversational style in the target language. Material is first presented orally with actions or pictures. The mother tongue is NEVER, NEVER used. There

is no translation. The preferred type of exercise is a series of questions in the target language based on the dialogue or an anecdotal narrative. Questions are answered in the target language. Grammar is taught inductively--rules are generalized from the practice and experience with the target language. Verbs are used first and systematically conjugated only much later after some oral mastery of the target language. Advanced students read literature for comprehension and pleasure. Literary texts are not analyzed grammatically. The culture associated with the target language is also taught inductively. Culture is considered an important aspect of learning the language.

## **The Reading Approach**

This approach is selected for practical and academic reasons. For specific uses of the language in graduate or scientific studies. The approach is for people who do not travel abroad for whom reading is the one usable skill in a foreign language.

The priority in studying the target language is first, reading ability and second, current and/or historical knowledge of the country where the target language is spoken. Only the grammar necessary for reading comprehension and fluency is taught. Minimal attention is paid to pronunciation or gaining conversational skills in the target language. From the beginning, a great amount of reading is done in L2, both in and out of class. The vocabulary of the early reading passages and texts is strictly controlled for difficulty. Vocabulary is expanded as quickly as possible, since the acquisition of vocabulary is considered more important than grammatical skill. Translation reappears in this approach as a respectable classroom procedure related to comprehension of the written text.

## **Audio-Lingual Method**

This method is based on the principles of behavior psychology. It adapted many of the principles and procedures of the Direct Method, in part as a reaction to the lack of speaking skills of the Reading Approach.

New material is presented in the form of a dialogue. Based on the principle that language learning is habit formation, the method fosters dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases and over-learning. Structures are sequenced and taught one at a time. Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills. Little or no grammatical explanations are provided; grammar is taught inductively. Skills are sequenced: Listening, speaking, reading and writing are developed in order. Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context. Teaching points are determined by contrastive analysis between L1 and L2. There is abundant use of language laboratories, tapes and visual aids. There is an extended pre-reading period at the beginning of the course. Great importance is given to precise native-like pronunciation. Use of the mother tongue by the teacher is permitted, but discouraged among and by the students. Successful responses are reinforced; great care is taken to prevent learner errors. There is a tendency to focus on manipulation of the target language and to disregard content and meaning.

## **Silent Way**

This method begins by using a set of colored rods and verbal commands in order to achieve the following:

To avoid the use of the vernacular. To create simple linguistic situations that remain under the complete control of the teacher To pass on to the learners the responsibility for the utterances of the descriptions of the objects shown or the actions performed. To let the teacher concentrate on what the students say and how they are saying it, drawing their attention to the differences in

pronunciation and the flow of words. To generate a serious game-like situation in which the rules are implicitly agreed upon by giving meaning to the gestures of the teacher and his mime. To permit almost from the start a switch from the lone voice of the teacher using the foreign language to a number of voices using it. This introduces components of pitch, timbre and intensity that will constantly reduce the impact of one voice and hence reduce imitation and encourage personal production of one's own brand of the sounds.

To provide the support of perception and action to the intellectual guess of what the noises **mean**, thus bring in the arsenal of the usual criteria of experience already developed and automatic in one's use of the mother tongue. To provide a duration of spontaneous speech upon which the teacher and the students can work to obtain a similarity of melody to the one heard, thus providing melodic integrative schemata from the start.

### **Total Physical Response (TPR)**

James J. Asher (1977) defines the Total Physical Response (TPR) method as one that combines information and skills through the use of the kinesthetic sensory system. This combination of skills allows the student to assimilate information and skills at a rapid rate. As a result, this success leads to a high degree of motivation. The basic tenets are:

Understanding the spoken language before developing the skills of speaking. Imperatives are the main structures to transfer or communicate information. The student is not forced to speak, but is allowed an individual readiness period and allowed to spontaneously begin to speak when the student feels comfortable and confident in understanding and producing the utterances.

### **Community Language Learning (CLL)**

This methodology is not based on the usual methods by which languages are taught. Rather the approach is patterned upon counseling techniques and adapted to the peculiar anxiety and threat as well as the personal and language problems a person encounters in the learning of foreign languages. Consequently, the learner is not thought of as a student but as a client. The native instructors of the language are not considered teachers but, rather are trained in counseling skills adapted to their roles as language counselors.

The language-counseling relationship begins with the client's linguistic confusion and conflict. The aim of the language counselor's skill is first to communicate an empathy for the client's threatened inadequate state and to aid him linguistically. Then slowly the teacher-counselor strives to enable him to arrive at his own increasingly independent language adequacy. This process is furthered by the language counselor's ability to establish a warm, understanding, and accepting relationship, thus becoming an "other-language self" for the client.

### **Suggestopedia (Suggestology)**

In the late 70s, a Bulgarian psychologist by the name of Georgi Lozanov introduced the contention that students naturally set up psychological barriers to learning - based on fears that they will be unable to perform and are limited in terms of their ability to learn. Lozanov believed that learners may have been using only 5 to 10 percent of their mental capacity, and that the brain could process and retain much more material if given "optimal" conditions for learning. Based on psychological research on extrasensory perception, Lozanov began to develop a language learning method that focused on "desuggestion" of the limitations learners think they have, and providing the sort of relaxed state of mind that would facilitate the retention of material to its maximum potential. This method became known as "Suggestopedia" - the name reflecting the application of the power of

"suggestion" to the field of pedagogy.

One of the most unique characteristics of the method was the use of soft Baroque music during the learning process. Baroque music has a specific rhythm and a pattern of 60 beats per minute, and Lozanov believed it created a level of relaxed concentration that facilitated the intake and retention of huge quantities of material. This increase in learning potential was put down to the increase in alpha brain waves and decrease in blood pressure and heart rate that resulted from listening to Baroque music. Another aspect that differed from other methods to date was the use of soft comfortable chairs and dim lighting in the classroom (other factors believed to create a more relaxed state of mind).

Other characteristics of Suggestopedia were the giving over of complete control and authority to the teacher (who at times can appear to be some kind of "instructional hypnotist" using this method!) and the encouragement of learners to act as "childishly" as possible, often even assuming names and characters "in" the target language. All of these principles in combination were seen to make the students "suggestible", and therefore able to utilize their maximum mental potential to take in and retain new material.

## Functional-notional Approach

This method of language teaching is categorized along with others under the rubric of a communicative approach. The method stresses a means of organizing a language syllabus. The emphasis is on breaking down the global concept of language into units of analysis in terms of communicative situations in which they are used.

Finocchiaro, M. & Brumfit, C. (1983) establish the following units in order to analyse communication:

**Notions** are meaning elements that may be expressed through nouns, pronouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, adjectives or adverbs. The use of particular notions depends on three major factors: a. the functions b. the elements in the situation, and c. the topic being discussed.

A **situation** may affect **variations of language** such as the use of **dialects**, the **formality or informality** of the language and the **mode of expression**.

**Exponents** are the language utterances or statements that stem from the function, the situation and the topic.

**Code** is the shared language of a community of speakers.

**Code-switching** is a change or switch in code during the speech act, which many theorists believe is purposeful behavior to convey bonding, language prestige or other elements of interpersonal relations between the speakers.

## Functional Categories of Language

Mary Finocchiaro (1983, p. 65-66) has placed the functional categories under five headings as noted below: *personal*, *interpersonal*, *directive*, *referential*, and *imaginative*.

**Personal** = Clarifying or arranging one's ideas; expressing one's thoughts or feelings.

**Interpersonal** = Enabling us to establish and maintain desirable social and working relationships:  
Enabling us to establish and maintain desirable social and working relationships.

**Directive** = Attempting to influence the actions of others; accepting or refusing direction.

**Referential** = talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment in the past or in the future; talking *about* language (what is termed the metalinguistic function: = talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment in the past or in the future; talking *about* language (what is termed the metalinguistic function).

**Imaginative** = Discussions involving elements of creativity and artistic expression

## **Communicative Approach**

All the "methods" described so far are symbolic of the progress foreign language teaching ideology underwent in the last century. These were methods that came and went, influenced or gave birth to new methods - in a cycle that could only be described as "competition between rival methods" or "passing fads" in the methodological theory underlying foreign language teaching. Finally, by the mid-eighties or so, the industry was maturing in its growth and moving towards the concept of a broad "approach" to language teaching that encompassed various methods, motivations for learning English, types of teachers and the needs of individual classrooms and students themselves. It would be fair to say that if there is any one "umbrella" approach to language teaching that has become the accepted "norm" in this field, it would have to be the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. This is also known as CLT.

The Communicative approach does a lot to expand on the goal of creating "communicative competence" compared to earlier methods that professed the same objective. Teaching students how to use the language is considered to be at least as important as learning the language itself. Brown (1994) aptly describes the "march" towards CLT:

"Beyond grammatical discourse elements in communication, we are probing the nature of social, cultural, and pragmatic features of language. We are exploring pedagogical means for 'real-life' communication in the classroom. We are trying to get our learners to develop linguistic fluency, not just the accuracy that has so consumed our historical journey. We are equipping our students with tools for generating unrehearsed language performance 'out there' when they leave the womb of our classrooms. We are concerned with how to facilitate lifelong language learning among our students, not just with the immediate classroom task. We are looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture. And our classroom practices seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks learners to reach their fullest potential."

CLT is a generic approach, and can seem non-specific at times in terms of how to actually go about using practices in the classroom in any sort of systematic way. There are many interpretations of what CLT actually means and involves. See Types of Learning and The PPP Approach to see how CLT can be applied in a variety of 'more specific' methods.

## **Natural Approach**

Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell developed the "Natural Approach" in the early eighties (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), based on Krashen's theories about second language acquisition. The approach shared a lot in common with Asher's Total Physical Response method in terms of advocating the need for a "silent phase", waiting for spoken production to "emerge" of its own accord, and emphasizing the need to make learners as relaxed as possible during the learning process. Some important underlying principles are that there should be a lot of language "acquisition" as opposed to language "processing", and there needs to be a considerable amount of "comprehensible input" from the teacher. Meaning is considered as the essence of language and vocabulary (not grammar) is the heart of language.

As part of the Natural Approach, students listen to the teacher using the target language

communicatively from the very beginning. It has certain similarities with the much earlier Direct Method, with the important exception that students are allowed to use their native language alongside the target language as part of the language learning process. In early stages, students are not corrected during oral production, as the teacher is focusing on meaning rather than form (unless the error is so drastic that it actually hinders meaning).

Communicative activities prevail throughout a language course employing the Natural Approach, focusing on a wide range of activities including games, role-plays, dialogs, group work and discussions. There are three generic stages identified in the approach: (1) Preproduction - developing listening skills; (2) Early Production - students struggle with the language and make many errors which are corrected based on content and not structure; (3) Extending Production - promoting fluency through a variety of more challenging activities.

Krashen's theories and the Natural approach have received plenty of criticism, particularly orientated around the recommendation of a "silent period" that is terminated when students feel ready to "emerge" into oral production, and the idea of "comprehensible input". Critics point out that students will "emerge" at different times (or perhaps not at all!) and it is hard to determine which forms of language input will be "comprehensible" to the students. These factors can create a classroom that is essentially very difficult to manage unless the teacher is highly skilled. Still, this was the first attempt at creating an expansive and overall "approach" rather than a specific "method", and the Natural Approach led naturally into the generally accepted norm for effective language teaching: Communicative Language Teaching.

## **MY NEW APPROACH: Content-based Approach (CBA)**

There is much scientific research on how we learn languages, which now gives us greater understanding of the role of 'acquiring language' in relation to learning language.

Infants and young children can be very good at acquiring languages when they are used in the home, and this is one reason why people sometimes think that we learn languages best when we are very young. Older children and adults tend to be taught languages, usually in language learning classrooms. Successful language learning can be achieved when people have the opportunity to receive instruction, and at the same time experience real-life situations in which they can acquire the language.

Even though there may be differences in how the brain works as a child grows older and becomes an adult, a key issue in 'picking up' languages relates to the opportunities we have for learning languages. This is where **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)** or **Content-based Approach (CBA)** can be of interest. One reason why very young children seem so good at picking up language is often to do with the naturalness of the environment around them. A language classroom, where learners go through the often difficult process of sorting out sounds, structures, grammar or vocabulary is rarely natural.

What CLIL can offer to students of any age, is a more natural situation for language development which builds on other forms of learning. This natural use of language can boost a youngster's motivation and hunger towards learning languages. It is this naturalness which appears to be one of the major platforms for CLIL's importance and success in relation to both language and other subject learning<sup>1</sup>.

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1 Derived: Marsh & Langé, [Using Languages to Learn and Learning to Use Languages](#). TIE-CLIL:Milan

**CLIL** has become the umbrella term describing both learning another (content) subject such as physics or geography through the medium of a foreign language and learning a foreign language by studying a content-based subject. In ELT, forms of CLIL have previously been known as **Content-based Approach (CBA)**, **Content-based instruction (CBI)**, **English across the curriculum** and **Bilingual education**.

Cummins writes of 'contextual embedding' of learning and of scaffolding for learners to help them succeed in the language of education and learning. The amount of background we provide to learners may influence the extent to which they will succeed in the learning context. Language is one important element of this support. Scaffolding itself is a useful term since it reflects the structural support that visuals can offer learners working in subjects in a foreign language. It is also a useful analogy for describing the language support sheets at the heart of CLIL. Good CLIL practice and materials, then, are full of scaffolding through visuals and language support.

CBI or CLIL approach is comparable to **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**, which usually is for vocational or occupational needs, or **English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**. The goal of CBI is to prepare students to acquire the languages while using the context of any subject matter so that students learn the language by using it within the specific context. Rather than learning a language out of context, it is learned within the context of a specific academic subject.

As educators realized that in order to successfully complete an academic task, second language (L2) learners have to master both English as a language form (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) and how English is used in core content classes, they started to implement various approaches such as **Sheltered Instruction** and **learning to learn** in CLIL classes.

While **Sheltered Instruction** is more of a teacher-driven approach that puts the responsibility on the teachers' shoulders by stressing several pedagogical needs to help learners achieve their goals such as teachers should have the knowledge of the subject matter, the knowledge of instructional strategies to comprehensible and accessible content, the knowledge of L2 learning process, and the ability to assess cognitive, linguistic and social strategies that students use to assure content comprehension while promoting English academic development; **Learning to Learn** is more of a student-centered approach that stress the importance of having the learners share this responsibility with their teachers. Learning to learn emphasizes the significant role that learning strategies play in the process of learning.

Research on second language acquisition has shown that considerable exposure to naturally-occurring language is necessary to ensure the achievement of a good level of competence in the L2. On the other hand, CLIL calls for an interactive teaching style. This means that students have more opportunities to participate verbally by interacting with the teacher and other fellow-students using the L2. In this way learners can try out what they know of the foreign language. Learning is at least partly a problem-solving activity and CLIL requires learners to solve problems through the foreign language.

### **Connection of CLIL to previous TEFL Approaches**

In the Middle Ages, the teaching of Latin and to some extent Greek were implemented by using the language taught as a means of instruction. Some children enjoyed a private tuition and the communication between the master and his pupil also took place entirely in the TL (Latin).

In later years, the direct method in LT fully exploits the intralingual techniques, since classroom instruction is conducted exclusively in the TL. In the XIXth century, the initiative was developed by C. Marcel (1793-1896) and F. Gouin (1831-1896). It was considered that L1 learning could be a good

model to be reproduced with the TL learning. They emphasise the importance of meaning in learning and try to present the language in a context that makes their meaning clear.

More recently, Terrell (1977) and Krashen and Terrell (1983) have developed a natural approach, where the entire class period is devoted to communicative activities. This approach aims to develop basic personal oral and written communication skills:

- The general goal is communication skills.
- Comprehension precedes production.
- Production emerges without forcing it, after a silent period.
- Learning activities must promote subconscious acquisition rather than conscious learning.

In relation to the **Communicative Approach (CA)**, we can see how CLIL roots in the CA. The CA proposes to work with motivated activities, topics and themes which involve the learner in authentic communication. In general, the techniques used by the CA are predominantly holistic and global, experiential and nonanalytic.

- Communicative syllabuses tend to focus more on the message of the content than on the single formal aspects of the language used. In this sense it is message orientated as is the CBT.
- Opportunities for authentic language use are sought.
- Learning the TL through the TL. The language class is considered an ideal setting to develop communication through the TL, so classroom instructions and management are conducted in the TL.
- Relevant topics. The CA often seeks substantive topics which satisfy the student's interests and needs and that have some educational relevance.
- Semantic emphasis. The emphasis that the CBA puts on the semantic aspects is also rooted in the CA that emphasises the expression of meaning, concepts and ideas above all.

### **Influence of the language teaching through cross-curricular contents**

The language across the curriculum movement has influenced L2 instructional theory and practice. This movement puts a great emphasis on the teaching of the L1 across the curricular subjects (Maths, Science, Geography, History, etc.).

The Spanish reform also introduces the teaching of crosscurricular contents (transversalidad curricular) (civic education, health education, etc.) through the TL. That has often implied some emphasis on contents.

### **Connection with ESP movement**

CLIL also connects with the **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)** movement, which aims to satisfy the students' needs and interests. The content and aims of teaching are determined by the requirement of the learner.

The content is restricted to fit the learner's purposes, selected according to his/her interests, developed through themes and topics according to his/her needs and focused to satisfy his/her communicative needs.

### **Similarities with bilingual education programs**

The CBA uses the TL as the means of instruction and, through it, a variety of curricular subjects are



taught. This is a common feature of bilingual education programmes. Two well known examples are the bilingual programs in Canada (Genesee, F., Lambert and Tucker, 1972; Swain, 1972; Swain and Lapkin, 1981, Stern, 1984) and in the USA (CDE<sup>2</sup>, 1990).

These programs work according to the following principles:

- A great emphasis must be put on thinking, communication and problem solving.
- A rich content in all curricular areas, including history, science and literature should be presented.
- They must be content based and emphasise central concepts, patterns and relationships from each discipline.
- They must provide a holistic view of learning by integrating and connecting the curricular areas.
- The approach followed in the presentation and organisation of contents must be sequentially and spirally organised, so that the concepts, skills and topics introduced in the first stages are cyclically exploited and treated in later stages.
- Variety of teaching strategies. It is recommended to use a wide range of techniques and strategies which satisfy the variety and diversity of students.
- The skills and information provided must be relevant for the students, so that it keeps relation with the real life situations that the students may encounter in society.

## Relation with the Cognitive Academic Learning Approach (CALLA)

The CBA keeps important similarities with the CALLA, designed by Chamot and O'Malley (1994). The CALLA, the same as the CBA, integrates language and content for L2 instruction as follows (1994: 10):

- The content topics are aligned with an all English curriculum.
- Practice is provided of the topics that the students will encounter in grade level classrooms.
- Beginning with science instruction is recommended because this context, rich in discovering and hands-on techniques, easily supports the academic language development.
- Another content subject that can be introduced is mathematics, currently involved in solving word problems.
- Social studies is the third content subject introduced in a CALLA programme.

## What are the dimensions of CLIL in the classroom?

CLIL takes various forms in Europe. It is seen as a special opportunity for language learning, for the acquisition of content subject knowledge and competences and for cultural and intercultural learning. It entails trans-national similarities and local differences within the parameters set up by national education policies.

Having this in mind, a successful CLIL lesson should combine elements of the principles below:

1. **CONTENT:** Progression in knowledge, skills and understanding related to specific elements of a defined curriculum.
2. **COMMUNICATION / LANGUAGE:** Using language to learn whilst learning to use

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2 California Department of Education

language. The key is interaction, NOT reaction.

3. **COGNITION / LEARNING:** Developing thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language
4. **CULTURE:** Exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepen awareness of otherness and self.
5. **TRANSNATIONAL:** Prepare for internationalisation, access International Certification, ETC.

The implementation of CLIL in Spain , would have clear advantages:

1. Flexibility in curricular design and time-table organisation: CLIL connects different areas of the learning curriculum into a meaningful and economic use of study time.
2. Quantity of exposure: Using foreign languages as the medium of instruction of content subjects may be the only way of providing enough exposure to those languages in order to guarantee successful learning of two additional languages.
3. Quality of exposure: CLIL calls for an interactive teaching style. This means that students have more opportunities to participate verbally by interacting with the teacher and other fellow-students using the L2.
4. Motivation for learning: CLIL relies on intrinsic motivation, that is, the learners are involved in interesting and meaningful activities while using the language.
5. Boosting the career perspectives: CLIL is part of an approach geared towards internationalisation of the students.
6. Integrating linguistic and cultural diversity: Studying a subject through the language of a different culture paves the way for understanding and tolerating different perspectives.

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