CLIL Counterweights: Recognising and Decreasing Disjuncture in CLIL

Peeter Mehisto
University of London (United Kingdom)

Abstract

CLIL programme implementation often causes a certain dissonance or disjuncture for educators and other CLIL stakeholders as they work to shift from their current practices to those practices favoured by the CLIL approach. Many educators find it difficult to apply a multiple focus on content and language, as well as on cross-curricular integration, cognition, and reflection. The paper reports on the extent of those difficulties. It is based on a review of relevant CLIL, education, and management sciences literature, as well as on research currently underway into late CLIL programming in Estonia. The paper traces the causes of disjuncture such as a lack of knowledge about CLIL-specific strategies and their impact on learning; teacher belief systems; and, among others, the need for improved planning by teachers and government authorities. The interrelationships of various factors impacting on CLIL are identified. Multi-facetted, coordinated solutions are proposed.

Keywords: Content and language integrated learning (CLIL); disjuncture; stakeholders; professional learning communities; Estonia

1. Introduction

For students, CLIL holds the promise of big results. For adult stakeholders such as parents, teachers, school managers and government officials, CLIL programme implementation often causes disjuncture – a tension between one’s current way of doing things and a new approach. Disjuncture can serve as a learning opportunity or invoke defensiveness and rejection. The sense of disjuncture or dissonance can be rejected by holding on to current understandings or it can be decreased and harmony re-established through the exploration and application of a host of strategies that ultimately enhance pupil learning in CLIL.

Multiple factors influence CLIL. If these are not recognised, existing understandings will likely lead to an overemphasis of certain aspects of pedagogy and programme management at the expense of others. In order to maintain balanced programming, disjuncture needs to be recognised and used as a learning opportunity by CLIL stakeholders. This involves stakeholders engaging in self-reflection, stepping out of their comfort zone, and exploring the multiple factors that can potentially impact on CLIL. It also requires stakeholders jointly taking needed measures in order to improve student learning. These multiple factors influencing CLIL constitute a complex set of counterweights that play an important role in the delivery of well-balanced, quality programming.
This paper will define key terms. A very brief overview of the Estonian CLIL initiative will be provided, as the author’s own perspective is influenced by having worked with a broad range of stakeholders to develop that programme. Above all, the paper seeks to identify some key sources of disjuncture in applying CLIL methodology and constructive ways of overcoming resulting dissonance. This includes exploring multiple influences on programming and strategies for the delivery of quality CLIL. In addition, to researching related literature, the paper refers to recently completed and ongoing research into Estonian CLIL programming.

2. Key Terms

Disjuncture, according to Jarvis (2006: 7), ‘occurs at the intersection of the inner self and the outer world’ when we are no longer certain about how to behave. When faced with disjuncture caused by external sources, we can choose to reject the opportunity to learn what is being proposed, learn in a non-reflective way accepting the outside stimulus, and/or undertake thoughtful or reflective learning (Jarvis, 2006: 28-30). Changing the medium of instruction places increased organisational and cognitive demands on both educators and students. This has multifaceted implications for both groups and these implications need to be recognised, discussed and jointly addressed by these and other stakeholder groups.

Stakeholders, as a term now used in the stakeholder approach, were initially defined in 1963 in a Stanford Research Institute memorandum as ‘those groups without whom the organization would cease to exist’ (Näsi, 1995: 16 referring to Freeman, 1984). In 1984, Freeman expands on that definition creating what is widely quoted by stakeholder theorists as the classic definition of the term stakeholder – ‘any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of the organization’s objectives’ (Lépineux, 2005: 100). CLIL involves far more stakeholders than teachers and students. These stakeholders can work together in building successful programmes or they can work at cross-purposes impeding their development. A knowledgeable application of the stakeholder approach can help to better identify and manage sources of disjuncture that are likely to have programme-wide implications.

‘A professional learning community is an inclusive group of people, motivated by a shared learning vision, who support and work with each other, finding ways, inside and outside their immediate community, to enquire on their practice and together learn new and better approaches that will enhance all pupils’ learning. (Stoll et al., 2006: 5). Such a group of people, focused on how to meet the challenges of CLIL programming, can better recognise and profit from their own and each other’s disjuncture. A professional learning community can help reduce the number of people working at cross-purposes and build synergy among stakeholders for managing the CLIL change.
3. Estonian CLIL Context and Programming

Estonia re-established its independence in 1991. Its population is 1.34 million (Statistics Office, 2008). Ethnic Estonians comprise 68% of the populace, ethnic Russians comprise 26% and Ukrainians 3%. Estonian is the official state language.

As a legacy of the Soviet occupation and as a conscious decision to support first language education, there are, in addition to Estonian-language schools, Russian-language schools, and a scant few schools delivering education in English, Hebrew or Finnish. Approximately 77% of students attend Estonian-medium schools and approximately 23% Russian-language schools. All schools follow the same national curriculum.

During a census in 2000, 33% of Russians and 38% of Ukrainians reported fluency in Estonian (Statistics Office of Estonia, 2008). Despite significant investment into the expansion and improvement of Estonian-as-a-second-language teaching, the majority of high school graduates from Russian-language schools did not have sufficient Estonian language skills to be competitive in the job market or to continue their studies in institutions of higher learning without receiving considerable further instruction in Estonian (Pavelson, 1998: 212-213).

One strategy for addressing the issue involved the launch of a voluntary Estonian language CLIL programme in September 2000 for 134 seven-year-olds in four Russian-language schools beginning in Grade 1. Today, 2,644 students are enrolled in the early CLIL programme in 24 kindergartens and 14 schools. Students can enter the early CLIL programme in kindergarten or in Grade 1. On mutual agreement among participating schools, student selection is based primarily on a first come, first served basis.

The programme begins with total immersion in Estonian in kindergarten and Grade 1 leading to the introduction of Russian language instruction in Grade 2. By Grade 6, 44% of instruction is delivered through Estonian, 44% through Russian and 12% through English.

Inspired by the success of the early CLIL programme, a late CLIL programme beginning in Grade 6 was launched in four schools in 2003. By the spring of 2008, a total of 1,303 students were enrolled in the late CLIL programme in 20 schools. Based on mutual agreement among participating schools, student selection is decided primarily on a first come, first served basis and a minimum C+ average in Grade 5 Estonian Language Arts (Estonian as a second language).

In Grade 6, participating schools have agreed to offer 33% of instruction through Estonian. In Grade 7 and 8, they have committed to offer a total of 76% of instruction through Estonian, 12% through Russian and 12% through English. In Grade 9, in principle, a total of 60% will be delivered through Estonian, 28% through Russian and 12% through English. Both programmes are coordinated nationally by an Immersion Centre established by the Ministry of Education and Research. For further information on the Estonian CLIL programme see Asser and Mehisto (2007: 52-62).
4. Methodology

This paper will primarily explore one key aspect of CLIL methodology which is potentially a major source of disjuncture for educators – the multiple focus on content and language.

This key aspect of the methodology will be situated in related literature, resulting causes of disjuncture and related challenges will be detailed, causes of both explored, and possible solutions proposed. The paper takes as a given that the CLIL approach can be effective in supporting students in learning content and language on par with or better than students studying through their first language (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Baetens Beardsmore, 2002; Genesee, 2005, 2008; Lyster, 2007; Fortune and Tedick, 2008; García, 2008; Hamel, 2008).

4.1 Multiple Focus

In CLIL, there is a multiple and simultaneous focus on content and language. Language teaching/learning is integrated into content classes and content teaching/learning is integrated into language classes. The concept of integration permeates the methodology with many researchers and practitioners calling for an even wider application of this principle through cross-curricular approaches. Ideally, CLIL students are intellectually challenged to think critically about content and language in both content and language classes, look for relational links among subjects, and reflect upon the learning process.

4.1.1 Multiple focus as reflected in the literature

A multiple focus calling for the integration of content and language is widely accepted as essential to bilingual education and the CLIL approach including immersion practice. This is inherent in the term CLIL itself. Short (1991), although focusing on the integration of content and language for ESL, EFL and limited English proficiency (LEP) students, considers this multiple focus as appropriate for bilingual education. She also stresses the need to foster critical thinking. Braunger et al. (2005) point to the need for all teachers whether they are working through the medium of a first or second language to teach the language skill of reading, and describe how by teaching reading a subject teacher is also teaching his or her discipline. Braunger sees this as also supporting ongoing cognitive development.

The interrelationship between content (subject knowledge), communication (language knowledge), culture and cognition are summarised in the CLIL 4Cs Framework (Coyle, 2006). Mehisto et al. (2008) point to the need to articulate language, content and learning skills outcomes for all classes; to ensure that these outcomes are cognitively challenging; and that students work with teachers to reflect on outcome achievement. They also stress community building and meaningful communication.

Numerous CLIL researchers and/or practitioners, including in immersion, consider the dual focus on content and language as central to the methodology, and explore how to achieve an appropriate balance of these two central elements (Lindholm et al., 1998; Cloud et al., 2000; Cummins, 2000; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Marsh et al., 2001; Swain, 2001; Echevarria et al., 2004; Frosst, 2004; Lightbrown et al., 2006; Lyster, 2007; et al.). The concept of integration is taken a step further by Fortune (2000: 2-4), who expects teachers to organise the ‘curriculum around content-based thematic concept(s)’. Boynton (2005) and Little (2005a, 2005b) call for the use of cross-curricular thematic units in immersion programming. Baker (2006: 344) considers classroom ‘cross-curricular approaches’ as a requirement for promoting biliteracy development.
All of the above CLIL researchers and practitioners also consider cognitively challenging work to be a key element in successful programming. Thus, although there is general agreement on the need to integrate content and language, these two elements are usually discussed in a broader context that integrates CLIL with other principles of good pedagogy such as fostering critical thinking.

Writing about learning in general, Illeris (2007: 50-123) sees the processes and dimensions of learning as also including content (knowledge, understanding skills) and interaction (action, communication and cooperation). Content, interaction, and learning are mediated by language, and as such require informed and thoughtful attention (Mercer, 2000), and this, in particular, in cases when teaching /learning is taking place through a second language. Illeris also argues for the need for learning to be reflective. Watkins (2005: 42 referring to Marzano, 1998) states ‘that thinking and reflection are key processes for the classroom’. Watkins also quotes Marzano (1998) as saying ‘meta-cognition drives learning’. Petty (2006 referring to Hattie, 2006; Marzano 1998; Marzano et al., 2001) stresses the need for learning goals to be visible, as well as challenging, and for students to be given feedback and opportunities to systematically review progress being made toward achieving learning goals. Not only is goal-setting important for planning and benchmarking progress, as well as fostering critical thinking about learning, it is a central factor in building and maintaining learner motivation (Gardner, 1985; MacIntyre, 2002).

Assessment is seen as pivotal for learning. The British Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) deems assessment as ‘central to classroom practice’(2007). They also point to the need for students to learn about how learning takes place and for assessment to be constructive taking into account the emotional impact of comments, marks and grades. Stobart (2008) details some of the potential negative impacts of assessment and refers to any form of assessment that restricts learning opportunities as unethical. Whether it is assessment, learning skills development, the fostering of critical thinking or taking into account the emotional impact of learning, situating CLIL in the complex landscape of good education helps to bring to light how many interconnected dimensions of education need to be taken into account when maintaining a dual focus on content and language in the CLIL context.

For first language programming as well, the integration of content and language has for decades been an espoused value in educational practice in several nations. The Language Across the Curriculum movement in the UK in the 1970’s and the English Across the Curriculum movement in Canada during the same time period are examples of this. Integrating content and language maintains a prominent position in educational discourse to this day. The British Curriculum and Qualifications Authority (CAQ) encourages the ‘embedding [of] aspects of English across the curriculum’ and ‘combining units from different subjects’. The Council of Europe (Languages of Schooling: Towards a Framework for Europe Conference, Strasbourg, 2006) is exploring the development of a framework for Europe, which, among other issues, is looking at supporting languages across the curriculum. The very existence of these movements attests to the value and complexity of integrating content and language.

It can be concluded that a dual focus on content and language learning is central to CLIL, and to education in general. However, to fully grasp those factors that can impact on learner outcomes in CLIL, discussions about CLIL need to be situated in the broader context of best practice in education, as this will help to more fully reveal the complexities of implementing quality CLIL education.

http://www.icrj.eu/11/article8.html
4.1.2 Difficulties faced in the implementation of a multiple focus

Teachers are often not in the habit of integrating both content and language, and as a consequence neither are students. Both groups may not recognise the benefits of integrating the two and may not possess the required strategies. Keeping content and language separate will lessen opportunities for cross-curricular integration, critical thinking and reflection, which in turn will make education less meaningful leading to less learning.

In CLIL literature, the integration of content, language and subjects is a major point of discussion. According to Lyster (2007: 1, referring to Snow, Met and Genesee, 1989) traditional teaching methods ‘tend to separate language development from general cognitive development.’ Lyster (2007: 26-27 referring to Swain and Carroll, 1987) goes on to state that in immersion programmes language and function (content) are kept quite distinct, and that it is rare for a grammar point under study in language class to be referred to during content classes and for language classes to employ ‘content-based activities allowing for a focus on form to be related to [content-associated] meaning’. Cummins (2000) points to ‘inaccurate French productions skills’ in Canadian immersion programmes, thereby identifying the challenge of ensuring high levels of language learning alongside content learning.

More recently, Gajo (2007: 563) raises the challenge of maintaining a balanced approach between content and language learning. He refers to a shift in Canadian research away from ‘subject to a more integration-centred perspective’ mostly in order to improve language proficiency and second language pedagogy. Gajo (2007: 578) goes on to conclude that the integration of content and language is not ‘self-evident’ and that it ‘requires considerable training for both teachers and pupils’. Coonan (2007: 627) identifies that the role of language learning ‘might not always be understood by the discipline teacher’ in Italian CLIL programmes. For immersion teaching to be effective ‘teachers need to understand their roles as both content and language teachers’ (Fortune et al., 2008: 85). These challenges are part of a larger context surrounding the implementation of cross-curricular integration in general. Kysilka (1998) describes cross-curricular integration as having its own set of challenges including confusion about the concept, a lack of belief in its potential and resistance to massive curriculum change.

In observing a total of 25 early CLIL lessons (Grades 1-5) in four schools in Estonia Asser and Mehisto (2005) found that language and content goals were rarely (1-3 times out of 25) stated during the observed lessons. These classes were taught by class teachers responsible for teaching most subjects in the curriculum. Although goals were generally not stated, the researchers concluded, based on high levels of student engagement and the focused nature of lessons observed, that goals were established spontaneously or intuitively and drove the learning process. In approximately half of the lessons observed, teachers were seen to focus on both language and content learning. However, stating goals or outcomes is likely to help make learning outcomes and process more visible for the students (Hattie, 2008). It can help students develop the habit of goal or outcome-setting, and foster student and teacher reflection on learning and the learning process. It can make it easier for the learner and the teacher to maintain a dual focus on both content and language, and to better manage thinking about and learning of both.
The author of this paper is currently undertaking research in the four late CLIL schools in Estonia that launched programming in 2003. The research includes among other elements, lesson observations, interviews with school managers, and the administering of questionnaires to students, teachers and parents. The primary focus of the research is on Grades 8 and 9. In order to avoid observing the same teachers teaching several lessons, some Grade 6 and 7 classes were observed as well. Fifteen lessons were observed in the first school and 12 lessons in each of the other three schools. In three of the schools many of the CLIL lessons were taught in Russian (students’ L1), as opposed to in Estonian (students’ L2). Head teachers in these three schools stated that they had difficulty in finding sufficient numbers of qualified staff who could teach through the medium of Estonian. In the fourth school, as several teachers were absent from school on a training course at the same time that the observations took place, some CLIL classes were rescheduled as Russian language classes.

Of the 51 lessons observed, 30 were taught through the medium of Estonian, 7 through Estonian and Russian, 13 entirely through the medium of Russian, and one through the medium of English. Goals were declared in 5 of the 37 CIL lessons taught through the medium of Estonian or through Estonian and Russian. No planned learning outcomes were articulated during CLIL classes. No CLIL teachers stated both language and content goals. This implies that the dual focus on content and language, which is the essence of the CLIL approach, is likely not being applied in a systematic manner by teachers. At the very least, students in the observed lessons were not being made aware of what is expected of them both in reference to content and language learning. Consequently, students are less likely to maintain a consistent, dual focus on language and content. Even in cases where goals were declared, greater precision in articulating them could have been brought to bear. As a case in point, in a Grade 8 Science class the goals were written on the blackboard in Estonian as follows:

Insects – who are they and what are they like?
1. internal and external features
2. comparing insects with spiders

Although one can surmise the goals of the lesson from the above example, the wording is not typical of goal or outcome statements. Greater precision in using the language of planned learning outcomes could bring greater clarity to these statements. For example:

Planned learning outcomes

You will be able (verbally and in writing):
1. to list at least 5 defining characteristics of insects;
2. to describe their internal and external features;
3. to list similarities and differences between insects and spiders; and,
4. to do all of the above using the language of scientists.

Such an exercise in precision holds the potential of providing the teacher with a framework for thinking more critically about planned learning outcomes. Greater precision in outcomes could help students better understand what is expected of them. It could also provide the students and the teacher with a clearer basis for assessing learning and the learning process. The articulation of learning outcomes that pertain both to language and content could support students maintaining a dual focus on both language and content.
In 22 of the above 37 cases, the theme of the CLIL lesson was stated, e.g., ‘Today we are studying, Europe’s location, borders and size’ (see Figure 1). This particular theme statement also gives a strong indication of what the student will need to learn. However, most theme statements were more vague, e.g., ‘Today’s theme is variations and rondo music.’ A somewhat similar tendency was observed in lessons taught through Russian and English. Of the 14 lessons observed, the theme was stated in seven lessons, e.g., ‘We are learning about Tolstoi today.’ It appears that no goals or outcomes were stated during any of these lessons. The author’s limited proficiency in Russian is a mitigating factor. Both classes taught through Estonian and Russian appeared driven by the content required by the national curriculum. Yet, stating the theme of a lesson is not as likely to foster student involvement or create a framework for discussing and thinking critically about progress in learning what is prescribed by the national curriculum, as would be the case if teachers were to state and discuss planned content and language learning outcomes. Furthermore, CLIL teachers in the same Estonian study indicated in a questionnaire that they set both content and language goals every day (42% of respondents) and more than twice a week (42% of respondents). The same teachers indicated sharing learning goals or outcomes with students every day (15% of respondents), more than twice a week (50% of respondents) and sometimes (31% of respondents). This data coupled with the lesson observation data seems to indicate that teachers may not fully understand the distinction between the terms theme, goal, and learning outcome.

Although no CLIL content teachers articulated language goals, in 15 content lessons, teachers were observed taking measures to support language learning. Translation was used in nine of those lessons and often regularly throughout each of the classes, sometimes effectively, and at times, ineffectively. A Physical Education teacher regularly translated Estonian language instructions into Russian despite the fact that most students began to follow directions as soon as they had heard them in Estonian and prior to hearing the Russian translation. In a Maths class, a teacher read out a question in Estonian, six students immediately raised their hands to answer the question and the teacher, nonetheless, began to translate the question into Russian. She continued to translate the remaining questions as well, without first determining whether students understood the Estonian language questions or not. Using translation as a primary language learning strategy is counter to the CLIL approach. Extensive translation of classroom discourse has a tendency to eliminate the need for learning the CLIL language, as key information can be obtained through the L1. In cases where students already understand enough L2 to comprehend classroom discourse, it can simply be a waste of time.
By contrast, one teacher was observed using translation in a judicious and strategic manner – once to maintain pacing during a lesson where several attempts to explain the meaning of a word using the target language had failed, and on another occasion to help a student doing board work who appeared to be unable to move forward. In both cases, the use of the L1 was targeted and brief, allowing the class and the individual student to continue in the CLIL language. The teacher provided an L1 linguistic scaffold only after scaffolding in the L2 failed to achieve the desired result. This classroom culture was focused on functioning in the L2, which is cognitively more demanding than functioning in the L1, but provided the opportunity for using the L1 when it was needed to maintain the momentum of content learning. This is what Martin (2003) and García (2009) would consider a more modern view of bilingual education where the strategic use of the L1 in L2 content classes is accepted, yet not overused. However, here the language learning may not have taken hold as it was not returned to after the use of translation. The language that had been an obstacle to content learning could have been reinforced by listing it on the board for future reference.

Language learning in the Estonian content classes for Russian speaking pupils was supported in other ways as well. Two teachers used recasting, and one explicit correction by having students repeat corrected answers modelled by the teacher. In two lessons, teachers deconstructed words and provided linguistic prompts. For example:

Student: What does ‘piirneb’ (to border) mean?
Teacher: What does ‘piir’ mean?
Student: Border
Teacher: So what does ‘piirneb’ mean?
Student: to border.

In this example, the student is being encouraged to think critically and to find the answer himself. The teacher provides a scaffold by asking what the root of the word means. This clue is sufficient for the student to be able to answer his own question. The content teacher also modelled a strategy for deconstructing words to understand their meaning, thus potentially fostering greater learner autonomy in language learning. However, most content teachers were not observed using this strategy, and most teachers who used one or more of the above language support strategies used a limited number of those strategies.

Just as linking content and language helps to make learning more meaningful, so do other cross-curricular links. In the Estonian late CLIL study, one Grade 6 language teacher integrated content and vocabulary from Science class into her Language Arts class having students first recall the topic of their previous Science lesson and then play a warm-up game that involved that topic by having students name animals that live in Estonia. However, this was the exception to the rule as no other efforts to make cross-curricular links between subjects were observed. In Estonian Language Arts classes, no other examples of content-based activities supporting content class goals were observed. However, several teachers did draw links to students’ lives and their community. For example, in a Grade 9 Estonian Language Arts class, students were asked to scan Estonian language newspapers and identify articles pertaining to nature, education, entertainment/leisure, weather, sports and the police. After completing the assignment they were asked to pick two articles that interested them the most, and report on what they read according to a framework provided by the teacher. The exercise was clearly connected to the students’ community and used authentic materials from the community. Yet, during other lessons observed drawing links between learning and students’ lives was not widespread.

As previously stated, meta-cognition and the fostering of critical thinking skills drive learning. Echevarria (2004: 88 referring to Gall, 1984; Watson and Young, 1986) states that of the 80,000 questions asked by teachers annually, 80% are at the ‘Literal or Knowledge level’. Of the observed 37 Estonian language CLIL lessons, 27 included some questions that moved beyond the
factual level and encouraged critical thinking. For example, in a Grade 9 music class students were asked by the teacher to analyse in writing the music used in a film shown during a lesson by being asked:

Is there only music or are there other sounds? Which other sounds?
What (music) is in the background, what is in the forefront?
Does it (the music) describe the main character? What is the main character like?
Is there only music?
If there is only background music, why is it there?
Does it characterise, sleeping or running?
Why is it necessary?

These orally presented questions scaffolded the students’ thinking, providing clues about how to analyse the music in a film. The assignment helped students to move beyond a factual level to compare and analyse. Additional scaffolding could have been provided to encourage further critical thinking about language and content. For example, a written framework structuring a deeper analysis about the background music and a word bank to support students in using a wider range of vocabulary or discourse structures could have supported language growth and stretched student thinking yet further. In more than half of these 27 lessons, there was considerable room for increasing the cognitive engagement of students. Rare were follow-up questions directed at one student. Rare were requests for students to explain their reasoning. Further, nine of the 37 lessons taught through the medium of Estonian or Estonian and Russian, included some form of reflection at the end of the lesson on what was learned. Generally, this consisted of summarising key learning points.

T: What was today’s theme?
S: music
T: What else?
S: styles of music
T: Yes, we were reinforcing vocabulary. (Teacher recounts what they did.)
T: Did we meet our goal today?
Several students: Yes

In this example from an Estonian Language Arts class, the teacher pro forma meets the requirement of returning to the goals of the lesson, but critical thinking is not fostered, and no discussion of the learning process takes place. Students simply say in chorus ‘yes’. Deeper order application of the principle of discussion about what learning has taken place and the learning process were not observed in this or any lesson. The consequence is a lost opportunity for meaningful student engagement in discussion about and involvement in planning their learning.

In summary, many teachers see themselves as content or language teachers, instead of perceiving themselves as teachers of both content and language. Moreover, difficulties surrounding the integration of content and language are likely compounded by the challenges of cross-curricular integration which include confusion about the concept of integration, a lack of belief in its potential and resistance to change. Based on research in Estonia, the terms ‘theme’, ‘goal’, and ‘learning outcome’ also appear not to be fully understood by teachers. Teachers could benefit from developing a wider range of strategies for integrating content and language. In particular, setting learning outcomes for content, language and learning skills, and discussing progress made in achieving these with students requires additional attention. Content teachers need to increase the repertoire of strategies for supporting language learning, as do language teachers in supporting content learning. Further supporting students in developing critical thinking skills is also required. Addressing these issues is central to supporting students in improving their learning.
4.1.3 Root of the challenges in applying a multiple focus

Neither education nor language learning literature sufficiently stresses the integration of both content and language. The same is the case with teacher training. Many CLIL teachers in post elementary programmes hold a subject-focused mindset. They may not recognise the disjuncture resulting from CLIL programme implementation or reject the need for change based on their understanding of the teacher’s role as an expert in a specific subject, and based on a lack of understanding of the role of language in content learning. They may also lack teaching strategies for maintaining a dual focus on content and language. As well, the articulation of learning outcomes is a challenge for many educators and education systems. This is likely to be an obstacle to the planning of teaching and learning. National or regional examinations may also exert undue negative influence on classroom practice. Moreover, teachers are expected to carry the lion share of the burden associated with the CLIL change. As CLIL constitutes a major change, it also requires knowledge of how to best manage change. Finally, the role of a host of other stakeholders besides teachers in CLIL education is not fully comprehended and these stakeholders generally do not work in a sufficiently coordinated fashion to assume their full share of responsibility in supporting the management of the multi-year change process initiated by the development of CLIL programming.

The integration of subjects including of content and language does not hold a prominent place in educational literature in general. Child (2004: 432) states that the ‘curriculum represents the interaction of all the activities aimed at assisting pupils in reaching specified educational objectives.’ These broad objectives, according to England’s Education Reform Act of 1988 (Part I, Chapter 1, Article 1.2) are to prepare ‘pupils for the opportunities and experiences of adult life’ where knowledge and skills gained in school through the study of several disciplines will often need to be applied in a synthesised manner. Yet, Child does not specifically focus on the integration of subjects or subject knowledge and related skills.

Although Petty (2006, referring to Hattie, 2006; Marzano, 1998; Marzano, et al., 2001) stresses the importance of goals setting and claims that ‘relational links are the glue that fixes learning in the memory’, he does not stress the importance of creating cross-curricular links and fostering the integration of several subjects. Neither does he stress the role of language in all learning. Scrivener (2005) in his guide for English language teachers does not give significant attention to the integration of other subject matter in English lessons. A review of a random selection of professional academic journals such as the Canadian Modern Language Review or the International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism will more often than not show a greater focus on specific aspects of language learning or content acquisition, as opposed to a dual focus on content and language.

As a case in point, Ohta (2005) offers, for language learning purposes, a useful adaptation of Lev Vygotsky’s definition for the ‘zone of proximal development’. Vygotsky (1978: 86) defined this zone as ‘the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.’ Writing about adult L2 learners Ohta (2005: 505-506 referring to Ohta, 2001a) offers the following adapted definition of the ZPD which states:

the ZPD is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer.

Ohta (2005: 506) herself is critical of the definition stating that it ‘assumes a classroom instructional setting’ and ‘ignores the impact’ of using L2 materials. More problematically, the
definition de-contextualises the language learning process separating language learning from content learning, and possibly leaving the impression that language is best done without content learning. Also, the cognitive challenge of problem solving in Vygotsky’s original definition has been abandoned.

It is apparent that pre-service and possibly in-service training are unlikely to include an integrated approach modelling and expressly teaching the integration of content and language, and the integration of several content subjects. European Union CLIL teachers are rarely required to have specific CLIL certification or rarely receive extensive pre-service training (Eurydice, 2006: 41-48). Many CLIL teachers are often trained on the job (Met, 2008 referring to the USA). Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect the majority of teachers to be highly proficient at the integration of content and language, let alone to view themselves as teachers of both content and language.

Whereas, elementary school teachers often teach most subjects in the curriculum to their classes, middle and high school teachers tend to be subject specialists. Elementary school teachers are thus more likely to arrive naturally at integration. By contrast, specialists are likely to see themselves as teachers of their disciplines. High school content teachers ‘seldom see themselves as language teachers’ (Genesee, 2008: 34).

During the initial years of developing the late CLIL programme in Estonia, the author and his colleagues annually observed dozens of lessons. In the debriefing sessions that followed the observations, content teachers were heard saying time and time again ‘I am not a language teacher. I teach maths (history, physical education, etc)’ or ‘I am a history or maths teacher.’ Also, language teachers expressed a reticence to incorporate texts and materials from content classes into their lessons.

Thus, many teachers appear to have a mindset that does not readily leave room for taking on an expanded role as both a teacher of content and language. At least in this respect, they may have what Dweck (2006) refers to as a ‘fixed mindset’. Giving up an already acquired understanding is likely to be a strain (Illeris, 2007: 43), and teachers may be unwilling to take on a new role. However, it is also possible that many content teachers do not recognise that content acquisition is inextricably tied to language learning and that ‘every content lesson needs to be a language lesson’ (Met, 2008: 69).

In Estonia, many of the teachers who were initially not prepared to take on the dual role of content and language teacher stated that ‘getting through’ the curriculum without taking on extra responsibilities was already a significant challenge. Fortune (2008: 89), who has studied immersion teachers in the United States, posits that content teachers are concerned that time spent on language may detract from content learning. She also identifies (referring to Silver, 2003:20) similar concerns among pre-service immersion teachers in Singapore.

These examples imply a lack of awareness of how maintaining a dual focus can foster both content and language learning, and in the long-term save time and contribute to increases in student achievement. It is also probable that many teachers have a limited repertoire of strategies for integrating content and language. Current research by the author of this article shows that the 15 content teachers observed supporting language learning relied on a very limited number of strategies to do so, and these strategies were generally applied in one manner, indicating a possible lack of understanding of how to use these strategies in a variety of more targeted ways.

Moreover, schools and school systems do not appear to be sufficiently supportive of the integration of language and content, and the integration of several subjects. In interviewing the eight school managers (head teachers and their deputies) in the four late CLIL schools currently
under study in Estonia, the head teacher and her deputy in one school detailed, in separate interviews, how they fostered the integration of several subjects during the first year of programming. Among other subjects, they mentioned Science and Estonian Language Arts. They felt their hard work brought big returns and that students benefited greatly from this strategy. During the second year of the programme, teacher resistance was so great that the school managers simply abandoned the goal of subject integration. Both managers felt that student achievement declined. During the third year of programming, the managers found the energy to insist on and to support teachers in integrating several subjects. Both stated that student achievement once again improved. Managers at the other three Estonian schools currently under study did not detail ways in which they supported the integration of content and language or subject integration.

The two Estonian school managers, who detailed their struggle with the integration of language and content, stressed the need for a school to receive external support. Both of these managers considered the Immersion Centre’s support as essential. Integration of content and language, as well as several subjects were stressed during training sessions organised by the Centre for teachers and school managers. Moreover, teaching materials developed under the aegis of the Centre sought to foster subject integration. Both school managers felt it important that the schools not be left alone in trying to meet this challenge. Indeed, the challenge of integrating content and language appears to be so significant and has endured for decades in a broad range of jurisdictions that some form of additional organised support appears to be called for.

Asser and Mehisto (2005) surveyed teachers and school managers in the first four schools which launched the national early CLIL programme in Estonia in 2000, to determine those factors that these two groups considered as having contributed to the success of the early CLIL programme. Many of the factors identified by teachers were external to the school. Of the 41 teachers working in the programme, 26 returned anonymously completed questionnaires. Eighty-eight (88%) of respondents stated that the support of the Immersion Centre and its management of the programme were very important, or important, CLIL programme success factors. Training opportunities organised by the Immersion Centre were scored by 96% of respondents as important or very important, and Centre-produced teaching materials scored at 95%. (See Figure 2.)

![Graph showing programme success factors according to 26 teachers in four schools](http://www.icrj.eu/11/article8.html)
During the same research study, the eight schools managers reported during separate interviews that they considered support by the Immersion Centre as very important (7 respondents) or important (1 respondent) to the success of the programme. Teacher training, teacher training materials and independent research into the programme, which were all organised by the Centre, were also considered important or very important success factors by all eight school managers (Asser et al., 2005). Again, this underlines the importance of schools receiving external support in launching CLIL programmes.

In most jurisdictions, one will not find a central agency specialising in CLIL programme management that is empowered to coordinate the efforts of CLIL stakeholders; that is sufficiently funded to deliver or organise training for teachers, school managers, inspectors, government officials and other CLIL stakeholders; that produces learning materials; that funds needed research; and, that raises public awareness about the programme. The Estonian Immersion Centre, which was established based on the advice of Canadian and Finnish CLIL teachers, school managers and local government officials, who decried a lack of coordination in their own jurisdictions, appears to have been worth the effort. Yet, as the current study of the Estonian late CLIL programme appears to show, much work remains to be done to support school managers and teachers in ensuring that language learning is supported in content classes and vice versa. Thus, even with a coordinated effort by a well-funded national agency, that develops required learning materials and that delivers CLIL training, the challenges presented by the integration of content and language are not easily met.

In addition to the need for school managers and systems to support the integration of subjects, and content and language learning, it appears that some generic planning skills need further development. Teachers and education systems can find it difficult to express learner outcomes in general. Gahala (1996) details challenges faced in articulating outcomes in the United States. Outcomes are often expressed in terms of knowing and understanding, which do not necessarily provide sufficient direction. For example, a cursory review of England’s Department for Schools, Children and Families, and QCA Stages 1 and 2 student outcomes reveals many learning outcomes which are vague and difficult to understand in terms of what students must be able to do:

Children:
- ‘understand the difference between right and wrong’;
- ‘know the importance of choosing the right pet, and understand the responsibility involved in providing a suitable home for a pet.’

Watkins (2005: 93) refers to the first example above as a ‘sort of depersonalised understanding’. Knowing and understanding are vague concepts and difficult to measure. In order to personalise such an outcome, it may be more useful to have children state their core values and explain why they chose those values, and to analyse choices they have made or would make based on those core values.

However, if teachers, school managers and education systems themselves are facing challenges in setting goals, this is likely to contribute to a situation where teachers and students may be missing the benefits to be gained from thorough planning and the articulation of those plans. As the old adage states, if you do not know where you are going, it is hard to get there. The need for educators to carefully plan learning in CLIL programmes gains credence from (Short, 1991; Cloud, et al., 2000; McConnell, 2005; Genesee, 2008; Fortune, 2008; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2008).
As for students, Watkins (2005: 80) reports on a study by Atkinson (1999) that reviewed GCSE results in England, and found that students who ‘plan the least have just 30 per cent of the scores of pupils who plan most’. The study also found that context was an essential element. Schools adopting a collaborative approach were found to have more motivated students. This is in line with Gardner’s (1985) socio-educational model that claims four elements are essential in defining student motivation – a goal, a desire to achieve the goal, positive attitudes, and effort. Establishing clear learning outcomes for content and language can only help to facilitate learning, as can a cooperative work culture.

Another multilayer obstacle to simultaneously focusing on content and language learning may be the impact of regional or state examinations, and a lack of understanding in how the dual focus can lead to improved examination results, and the creation of a climate where teachers would feel safe in applying new learning gained from training about how to focus on both content and language.

Met et al. (1997: 263) believe that immersion teachers feel a responsibility first and foremost to achieving content objectives as designated in prescribed curricula and to ensuring that their students achieve at the same level as non-immersion students. These content objectives and their achievement, in general, are often measured through high-stakes national, state, provincial or regional testing.

Current research into late CLIL in Estonia, although incomplete, indicates that significant numbers of teachers and school managers are concerned about national examination results, and that this is impacting heavily on classroom practice. Stobart (2008) details the negative ‘backwash’ created by high-stakes tests in several nations and how this can actually impede learning. Scott (2000: 1) claims that the introduction of national testing and a national curriculum, among other factors, have contributed in England to a situation where teachers have ‘begun to lose the ability to think critically about the processes which they initiate, and to experiment in situ’. Watkins (2005:13 referring to Deci and Yan, 1982, and Deci et al., 1982) reinforces this view as he points to a situation in England where teacher agency (the capacity for acting or for exerting power) is reduced and where students are seen as ‘vessels into which curriculum is delivered.’ Teachers may fear that by focusing on both content and language, they may adversely impact on examination results. When it comes to focusing on both content and language, it appears that many teachers are simply choosing a route of ‘rejection and non-consideration’ (Jarvis, 2006: 28) of new learning. An exploration of a new approach, where content will receive additional attention in language classes and language in content classes, is rejected in favour of ‘covering’ the curriculum and teaching to the national exams.

As a case in point, during the current process of conducting late CLIL lesson observations in Estonia, many teachers spoke to the author of national examinations, and how pressed they felt for time. During the recent interviews with the Estonian school managers, all school managers expressed concern with examination results. In Estonia, several teachers appeared to have a mindset that did not leave room for language teaching or in the case of language teachers for content teaching. This seems to be driven by a fear that spending time on language in a content class will detract from content learning and, in turn, lead to lower examination results. Language teachers expressed a fear that focusing in on content class materials would detract from language learning and lead to lower examination results. Finally, content teachers did not appear to have an understanding of a wide range of language learning techniques that support content learning, and that, if applied, can lead to improved examination results. Moreover, no school manager offered the safety of a carte blanche for teachers to experiment for a period of a year or two with new strategies for integrating content and language without fear of reprisal for possible reductions in student examination scores.
Furthermore, in a climate of over-regulation and where examination results dominate, Stobart (2008: 136, quoting Darling Hammond, 1994) writes that ‘a lack of knowledge about the possibilities for teaching and learning, combined with a lack of organizational capacity for change’ are fundamental obstacles to change. The challenges of instituting educational reforms and change are widely documented (Fullan, 2001 and 2007; Harris et al. 2003; Davies, 2007; Stoll et al., 2007; et al.). Scott, (2000: 127) states that ‘institutional arrangements are stubbornly resistant to change’. CLIL stakeholders need to be aware of the complexity of managing educational change. In describing the changes required when launching CLIL programmes, Marsh (2002) points to multiple variables that should be considered. Further, Mehisto (2007) details a host of complex changes that need to be managed while implementing CLIL and he points to some of the pitfalls to be avoided such as tensions that may develop between CLIL and non-CLIL teachers. CLIL is so complex a task that it can malfunction. As a case in point, due to a lack of proper planning, teacher language proficiency, teacher training and funding among other reasons, CLIL has been seen to hamper content learning in the late immersion programme in Hong Kong (Marsh et al., 2000, Hoare and Kong, 2008).

What is clearly evident is that helping teachers to expand their practices is a complex and multilayered challenge involving a large number of stakeholders. These stakeholders are often not identified. As a case in point, CLIL conferences tend to focus on classroom practice and teacher training. Baetens Beardsmore (2002: 22) speaks of the need to increase coordination of the efforts of all those involved in the improvement of language education, specifically mentioning, among others, teachers and parents as essential partners that are often absent from debates about bilingual education. In the UK, The Nuffield Languages Inquiry (2000) report calls for the high-level involvement of many stakeholders in language education. Mehisto et al. (2009) list a large number of stakeholders including universities, training institutions, local and national governments, parents, teachers, inspectors, researchers and the developers of teaching materials that need to work in a coordinated fashion for the benefit of CLIL programming. Stakeholder identification and involvement is often underutilised in CLIL programme development and delivery.

In summary, the origin of the problems to effective CLIL implementation are akin to a complex and integrated root system. For example, neither education nor language learning literature sufficiently stresses the integration of both content and language. CLIL teachers are often not trained or certified to teach in CLIL. Many CLIL teachers in post elementary programmes hold a subject-focused mindset and may resist integrating content, language and several subjects. Schools and school systems do not sufficiently support teachers in assuming their dual role as teachers of language and content. There is often no central agency to coordinate learning materials development, public relations management, CLIL stakeholder cooperation and learning, and/or the organisation of research. Moreover, education systems can have difficulty in articulating learning outcomes in general and they may not necessarily understand planning needs associated with CLIL. Also, high-stakes examinations may be discouraging teachers from focusing on content and language learning. Finally, the role that a wide range of CLIL stakeholders can play is not fully appreciated, nor do stakeholders always assume their fair share of responsibility for programme implementation.
4.1.4 Strategies for improvement

A multifaceted approach is required. A greater focus on the integration of content and language in educational literature and education systems can support needed professional development and change in classroom practice. Increased application of a dual focus on content and language in all classes will require a recognition and acceptance of the disjuncture created by CLIL, and in particular, of the need to maintain a multiple focus on content and language learning. Subject-focused mindsets need to be stretched to include the integration of both content and language learning. This partly depends on an increased understanding of how teaching to the exam or ‘covering’ the curriculum can undermine learning and exam results. Trainers of educators, school managers and teachers will need to build a solid repertoire of strategies to effectively maintain a dual focus on content and language. Training programmes would likely gain from ‘walking the talk’ ensuring that they apply the same principles that teachers are expected to apply in the classroom. Moreover, school managers need to build a work culture that allows teachers to experiment with newly acquired techniques. Also, the complexity of educational change, and the CLIL change in particular, need to be better understood. Finally, a greater involvement and coordination of efforts by CLIL stakeholders working as professional learning communities holds the potential for supporting schools in making considerable progress in improving the integration of content and language.

An increased effort in research and related professional literature to simultaneously address the interrelationship between content and language could help educators in building the same sort of dual focus. For example, instead of simply focusing on language learning such as Ohta does in her redefinition of the ZPD, the concept can be refined for CLIL to include both content, as well as metacognition which is said to drive learning in general. I propose reconceptualising the ZPD definition as follows to suit the CLIL context:

In CLIL, the ZPD is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual processing and application of content and language knowledge, and the level of potential development achievable through the collaborative processing and application of content and language knowledge with (an) adult(s) or peer(s). The ZPD is the distance between the actual management of one’s own learning and the potential level of self-management of learning when working with (an) adult(s) or peer(s).

On a very practical level, Lyster et al. (2006: 269) encourage educators to reflect on their own practice and preferences. They present a ‘counterbalance hypothesis’, which states that ‘instructional activities and interactional feedback that act as a counterbalance to a classroom’s predominant communicative orientation are likely to prove more effective than instructional activities and interactional feedback that are congruent with its predominant communicative orientation.’ Lyster (2007: 20) referring to (Ranta & Lyster, 2007) continues to stress the need for teachers to push students to develop their language skills. He sees a need for teachers to steadfastly encourage students to replace more easily accessible interlanguage forms with more native-like language.

The above is simply one example of a host of insights and strategies that teachers could benefit from applying in their classrooms. Others are detailed by Cloud et al. (2000), Frosst (2004), McConnell (2005), Lightbrow et al. (2006), Lyster (2007), Mehisto et al. (2008), Swain et al. (2008), and Fortune et. al (2008). Also, teachers need to improve their understanding of various options for cross-curricular integration in general. For example, Fogarty (1991) provides an overview of different forms of integration such as ‘connected, nested, sequenced, shared, webbed, threaded, immersed, and networked’.
Furthermore, much would likely be gained from training in planning, including in the writing of both content and language learning outcomes. Training and dialogue are needed on the impact of high-stakes examinations, as well as on strategies for improving examination results that also foster a dual focus on content and language. Furthermore, there would also likely be considerable value in increasing awareness of the change process in general. Not only would it be valuable to draw on educational change/reform literature as listed above, but to include knowledge gained from business and public sector management. Useful lessons can be drawn from Bryson (1995), Kotter (1996 and 2002), Crane et al. (2003), Fukuyama (2004), Waddell (2005), and Hardy et al. (2005).

Moreover, it would likely be helpful for those participating in training to analyse their own preparedness to learn. Dweck’s (2006) ‘growth mindsets’ versus ‘fixed mindsets model, or Csikszentmihályi’s (1990) flow model that analyses levels of anxiety, worry, apathy and boredom versus arousal, flow, control and relaxation may be of help in setting the stage for recognising, facing and addressing the disjuncture resulting from CLIL. Analysis and articulation of one’s own attitudes and understandings, is a departure point for learning.

Further, it is important that training cover a host of complex topics in an integrated fashion. In addition to those listed above, teachers need support in fostering critical thinking about language, content and learning skills, and assessment for learning. Yet, Carpenter (2000 referred to by Marzano, 2005: 157) believes that teacher professional development has such a negligible effect on classroom practice as to be considered an unjustifiable investment. To avoid such a situation, as much attention needs to be applied to the content being taught to teachers, as to the training/learning process itself.

In training educators, Kearns et al. (2007: 23, referring to Boud and Walker, 1990; Boud, 1993) state that training needs to help ensure that teaching/learning is ‘reflective and experience is processed’. Thus, trainers are well advised to ensure that their training is delivered in a manner that also reflects the ideals of CLIL classroom practice including fostering assessment for learning. In addition to creating opportunities for a reflective experience, this also implies the co-construction of knowledge rather than knowledge transmission. According to Pickering et al. (2007: 2-3), this could include ‘professional portfolios, reflective learner diaries and artefact creation and critique’. Another option worthy of consideration is the self- and guided-analysis of teacher-chosen sections from their own filmed lessons.

Hardcastle (2007:157) states that ‘to be able to reflect critically on their own practices in order to change them, teachers need to operate reflexively on their own multilayered understandings … and they need support in this’. For this support to take place, it is also likely that other CLIL stakeholders, such as school managers, inspectors, and their trainers need a thorough understanding of CLIL practice, and need to participate in training programmes.

Some further insight into developing CLIL-related training may be gained from the Estonian CLIL experience, where educators considered centrally organised training as key to programme success. To help ensure that CLIL professional development programmes in Estonia met the needs of its stakeholders, the Immersion Centre, which manages the national CLIL programme, created a training policy through an extensive consultative process. Some 30 representatives of stakeholder groups spent two days at a workshop in 2004 developing the policy. The draft policy was distributed to a wider range of stakeholders and subsequent input was incorporated. Eventually, the Immersion Centre’s steering committee, consisting of major stakeholder representatives, approved the policy.
The policy refers to the Centre’s vision, mission and mandate, and to values previously agreed upon with stakeholders. It lists each stakeholder group that is to benefit from the policy, including each group’s internal stakeholders. It makes reference to legislation that impacts on the policy. In order to measure the success of the policy, performance indicators are included. The first indicator was an improvement in student personal development and achievement.

According to the Immersion Centre’s 2005 annual report, when delivering training the Centre aims to:

- articulate a common understanding (among stakeholders – author’s note) of a learning environment that supports children;
- define the competencies required by stakeholders (training participants), as well as training needs and activities;
- improve the Centre’s and its partners’ capacity to develop, implement and expand immersion programming;
- support planning with stakeholders through the articulation of future directions and action plans;
- increase the capacity of partners in the delivery of training and advice;
- define the principles and policies of cooperation; and,
- create a network capable of supporting programme establishment, development and expansion.

The policy seeks to involve stakeholders, ensure greater coherence among stakeholder understandings and plans, and improve student achievement. Training is designed for authentic experiences such as developing planning instruments and building stakeholder networks. It seeks to involve those being trained in planning training and assessing its effectiveness. It is intended to empower participants, sharing considerable responsibility with them for the development of successful programming. The policy is an exercise in what Fullan (2001) refers to as ‘coherence making’ helping to ensure that policies, plans, budgets, training programmes, classroom practice and so forth operate as a coherent whole.

Despite being labour intensive and requiring considerable coordination, developing the policy helped facilitate the delivery of training and ensure the training programmes supported stakeholders in addressing real concerns.

It can also be said that the training policy helped model good classroom practice. During 2005, all training programmes were developed in concert with stakeholders and included stated learning outcomes, and the evaluation of outcome achievement by participants.

The existence of the Immersion Centre, which coordinates stakeholder cooperation, has been central to the success of the Estonian training policy and CLIL programme in general. In jurisdictions where there is no such central body empowered to work for the benefit of CLIL and its stakeholders, optimal programme management may prove much more difficult to achieve.

The Estonian model reflects the main characteristics of professional learning communities. These communities:

- have shared values and vision;
- assume collective responsibility for student learning;
- foster reflective professional inquiry;
- facilitate collaboration, which includes open and frank debate;
- promote group, as well as individual learning (Bolam et al., 2005).
As the major concern of educators and school managers is high-stakes examination results, it is important to know how professional learning communities impact on examination results. Hargreaves (2007: 181) reports that ‘… professional learning communities have a systematic and positive effect on student learning outcomes (Louis and Marks, 1998; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Anderson and Togneri, 2002, Bolam et al., 2005).

Although CLIL classes have been established by one enthusiastic teacher with the support of an administrator, setting up and developing a CLIL programme is a complex undertaking. Optimal management and delivery of education in general ‘transcend the capacity of one school working alone’ (Smith et al., 2001: 516). Considering the added complexity of establishing a bilingual or multilingual programme, effective and sustainable CLIL programmes can also be said to surpass the capacity of any one person or educational institution working alone.

Bentley (2006), Day (2003), Fukuyama (2004), Fullan (2001, 2007), Harris (2003), Hopkins (2002, 2006), Hopkins et al. (2003), Lopez et al. (2003), and Warren (2005) write of the need to involve stakeholders in planning the delivery of education. Professional learning communities literature provides a framework for managing stakeholder relationship and for helping all stakeholders to build their capacity to improve student learning. These communities can help CLIL stakeholders to gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and values needed, and provide a structure for making informed and coordinated decisions, for the delivery of quality programming.

Such a group of people, focused on how to meet the challenges of CLIL programming, can better manage their own and each other’s disjuncture. A professional learning community can help reduce the number of people working at cross-purposes and build synergy among stakeholders for managing the CLIL change. These groups are built slowly with great care. Values, daily routines, policy documents, budgets, teaching practice, and in-service training, among others aspects are brought in line with one another, as the members of the professional learning community actively work to improve and apply their understanding of how to build sustainable CLIL programmes.

In summary, the complex set of challenges faced by those instituting CIL call for an even more complex and integrated set of countermeasures or strategies. Increased attention to the integration of content and language in educational and CLIL literature, and in education systems can support CLIL stakeholder, including student, learning. Training in and dialogue about planning and implementing learning outcomes, good pedagogy and the change process can all contribute to improved educator and student learning in CLIL programmes. Training is likely to be most effective if participants are guided in reflecting critically on their own practice. A central body responsible for CLIL programme coordination can make an important contribution to programme development. Finally, increased stakeholder involvement that includes the development of professional learning communities are central to improving CLIL programming.
5. Conclusion

CLIL programme implementation often causes disjuncture – a tension between one’s current way of doing things and a new approach. Disjuncture can serve as a learning opportunity or invoke defensiveness and rejection. Many teachers find it difficult to apply a multiple focus on content and language, as well as on cross-curricular integration, cognition, and reflection. Education officials and administrators, as well as teacher trainers are facing some of the same difficulties. A climate of high-stakes exams that can contribute to a reduction in autonomous decision-making by teachers; a lack of knowledge about CLIL-specific and other widely accepted teaching strategies and their impact on learning, as well as on examination results; teacher mindsets; and, a need for better and more coordinated planning by teachers and government authorities; all impact on CLIL. Any of these factors can knock a programme off balance.

Solutions or counterweights for balancing programming are part of a complex interrelated package that includes: an increased valorisation of content and language learning in education in general, and in the language learning (including CLIL) literature; teacher training that supports teachers in guided reflection on their own mindsets and their practice coupled with repertoire-building in CLIL-specific strategies, as well as on building awareness of how these strategies impact on examination results; an improved understanding by educators of the role of key aspects of good pedagogy such as fostering critical thinking, setting learning outcomes and assessment for learning, and their impact on learning and examination results; designating or establishing a central body responsible for CLIL programme coordination and support; identifying and detailing the role of all CLIL stakeholders; and, building professional learning communities.

Finally, there is a need for research and training that help CLIL stakeholders to identify and concurrently address multiple interrelated factors contributing to or detracting from successful CLIL programming.

References


