

BOOK REVIEWS

Phil Ball, Keith Kelly & John Clegg. (2015) *Putting CLIL into Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-442105-8, 320 pp., € 27.95, USD 37.75.

Reviewed by Erwin M. Gierlinger (University College of Education of Upper-Austria)

Within the last 20 years, content and language integrated learning (CLIL), as a balanced approach for the teaching of curriculum subjects through the medium of a foreign language, has become an almost accepted feature in mainstream education systems in Europe and has recently developed high interest in Latin America, Japan, and Southeast Asia. CLIL's popularity can be attributed to its grassroots characteristics as being a phenomenon demanded by parents and employers, supported and methodologically developed by subject and language teachers. This has led to an exuberant variety of CLIL realisations on the classroom level based on highly individualistic didactical and methodological concepts. Broader conceptual discussions on a more principled methodology and their repercussions for the classroom have been few and far between. Therefore, a book that claims to offer a new methodological framework for the CLIL classroom and to provide support for both novice and experienced CLIL teachers will be timely and met with eager anticipation.

This book is part of Oxford University Press's *Handbooks for Language Teachers* series, which is recommended by its publishers for practising language teachers, language teacher educators, and English Language Teaching (ELT) and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Master's degree and diploma students. It is divided into ten larger chapters split into various sections. Each chapter starts with an overview and ends with a summary and further reading. The book also provides an appendix with further tasks and suggested answers, and a glossary. Although at 320 pages it appears quite a bulky read, each chapter is livened up with numerous materials extracts, tables, and figures. For example, Chapter 6 includes 26 materials extracts, three figures, and one table. The book also provides a link to the publisher's website which offers further resources such as a personal note from the authors; discussion questions related to each chapter; further web links related to the issues discussed in the book.

In Chapter 1, "What is CLIL?" the authors set the scene by introducing two main versions of CLIL. The "hard" version emphasises content learning and sees language learning as a bonus in which language teaching has only little or no

involvement in the CLIL program. The “soft” version, according to the authors, is typically shorter, places emphasis on language development, and involves collaboration between subject and language staff. Relating CLIL to other content-based contexts such as English-medium education, immersion education, and bilingual education they identify 11 criteria for success in CLIL. While such a list offers potential food for thought for CLIL teachers, Ball et al.’s discussion sometimes borders on the obvious. For example, “without confidence and adequate fluency in the L2, CLIL teachers cannot teach their subject effectively enough, and this can contribute to a fall in standards” (p. 15).

Chapter 2 elaborates more on the defining parameters of CLIL and suggests further principles that characterise CLIL, such as conceptual sequencing and fronting; task priorities and language as vehicle; enhancing peer communication; and supporting input, output, and thinking skills. While these features would be considered quality markers to any good teaching, it is not really made clear why they should be intrinsically CLIL related other than stating, “CLIL simply brings this issue into greater focus” (p. 45). To consider CLIL per se as a panacea for all educational ills is probably a little unrealistic.

Chapter 3 appears crucial, as it focuses more deeply on the relationship between content and language in CLIL and re-conceptualises this dual-focused approach by introducing the notion of a three-dimensional CLIL. The authors maintain that content needs to be seen through a conceptual, linguistic, and procedural dimension with these dimensions representing planning tools and priority objectives for any didactic and pedagogical activities or tasks in CLIL. This original conceptualisation is illustrated through a “mixing desk” metaphor where teachers have three volume controls which they can adjust to the particular demands of any task. Although, introducing a procedural dimension for language learning is not new from a performative point of view it may be very helpful as a cognitive heuristic for CLIL teachers and hence positively affect their methodological decisions. However, presenting this through a “mixing desk” metaphor, which is set by the teacher according to her methodological repertoire, as the example of a running dictation appears to suggest, raises concerns over neglecting the contextual necessities and boundedness of subject-related tasks and speech acts and may actually lead to extraneous cognitive load. Whilst I do not think that this was intended by the authors, I do believe that the choice of this metaphor runs certain risks of over-simplification.

Chapter 4 revisits the subject-language relationship and introduces a framework of seven principles for language practice in CLIL. Supported by 15 tables and nine figures, this chapter illustrates the multi-layered complexity of language in the CLIL classroom. Owing to this complexity the authors consider subject language awareness and a certain familiarity with language-friendly pedagogy as

essential for CLIL teachers. Chapters 5 and 6 extend on this by looking at activity types to guide input and support output. These chapters present a wide variety of materials extracts, tasks, and activities for guiding learners through these demands. Chapter 6 under the sub-heading “language support in practice” provides a rich number of well-known EFL activities adapted to various CLIL situations. Both chapters emphasise the need for clear language aims and an identification of key structures. By carefully presenting the necessity and power of language sensitive activities these chapters will prove particularly valuable to beginning CLIL teachers, although ordering the 50 materials extracts into subjects, topics, and age ranges may have been helpful for the busy teachers.

In Chapter 7 the authors propose and illustrate seven principles for the successful designing of materials for CLIL. These principles are thoroughly discussed and exemplified through a number of materials extracts to guide teachers into this complex field. Ball et al. claim that, although time consuming, the particular CLIL contexts may need and therefore justify this extra effort.

Chapter 8 approaches a particularly problematic area in CLIL: assessment. Here the authors claim that the three-dimensional content framework will help teachers to identify and balance the assessment demands made upon learners. Faced with the thorny issue of whether to assess content or language, or both in CLIL the authors contend that content will always be the priority and language the vehicle, and it will be assessed only as “this tool of expression” or “conduit of academic discourse” (p. 237). Guided by this, the authors elaborate on formative versus summative assessment, backward design, competences, and rubrics and band scales.

Chapter 9 deals with managing CLIL in schools and emphasizes strongly the planning of CLIL as a whole school matter by carefully considering all the stakeholders. Furthermore, it provides an extensive rubric for monitoring development in CLIL programs. This chapter is therefore an important and timely reminder that introducing CLIL necessitates a serious planning perspective with respect to participant and institutional factors.

In the final chapter Ball et al. focus on training teachers for CLIL addressing an array of big questions such as, what do CLIL teachers need to know? Which learning theories are they likely to agree with or be persuaded to consider? What useful models already exist? What are the differing needs of language and subject teachers, and can these be reconciled within a working model? These are then touched upon by merging the three *savoirs*’ concept of the European Framework of Reference for Language Teachers with the authors’ understanding of CLIL aspects into their own CLIL teacher training model. The final outcome of these training interventions, according to Ball et al., gives rise to a hybrid teacher who

can successfully exploit all dimensions of their tripartite model. A further list of six proposals and recommendations for training initiatives rounds off this chapter.

Altogether, this book presents a vast array of ideas, activities, and tasks relating to CLIL, and it undoubtedly shows the authors' high experience in this field and the field of foreign language teaching. Concurrently, this strength can turn into a weakness if the reader is confronted with an abundance of information that meanders through multiple target groups and is accompanied by a certain amount of redundancy. Had this volume focused more deeply on the primary needs of subject-teachers-turned-CLIL-teachers without digressing into foreign language teachers' realms and at the same time acknowledging subject teachers' already profound pedagogical content knowledge, the excess baggage could have been avoided.

Finally, this volume is certainly an important contribution to the advancement of methodology in CLIL. That said, one wishes a clearer target group focus as a structuring device and some tighter editing had been exercised.

Reviewer's address

Erwin M. Gierlinger
Kaplanhofstr. 40
4020 Linz
Austria

erwin.gierlinger@ph-ooe.at