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Ian Tudor

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# **Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in higher education in Europe: an overview of practice and lines for investigation**

*Ian TUDOR*

Responsable Académique, Langue anglaise, Université Libre de Bruxelles  
itudor@ulb.ac.be

## **I - Introduction**

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a pedagogical strategy which has attracted considerable interest in recent decades in primary and secondary education and, more recently, in higher education. Broadly speaking, CLIL is a pedagogical strategy which involves the integration of the study of a second language (L2) with the study of a given content domain – history, physics, marketing, or any other subject. This paper will focus on the use of CLIL in higher education (HE), and specifically within the framework of HE language policy. The paper first outlines the trends which have given rise to increased interest in language learning in HE. It then discusses the pedagogical rationale for the adoption of CLIL within this context and presents a schematic overview of the language policies developed in five HE institutions (HEIs) in Europe, all of which include a CLIL component. A few provisional conclusions will be drawn from the case studies regarding the use and practical realisation of CLIL. From this point on, a constructive but nevertheless critical perspective on the practical realisation of CLIL in HE will be adopted. Specifically, a number of questions will be raised as to the pedagogical grounding of CLIL, and also with respect to the motivation for its use. The goal of the paper is to make a contribution to reflection and practical action in the field of HE language policy, where CLIL is assuming an increasingly significant role.

## **II - A changing environment**

Until fairly recently, language study in HE was essentially the reserve of language specialists, either in terms of philological / literary studies, or with respect to more practical language tasks such as translation and interpretation. In recent years, however, the situation has changed, and an increasing number of HEIs have set in place policies designed to extend language learning to students of other than linguistic disciplines, as well as to other institutional actors such as teaching and administrative staff. These developments are linked to changes in the broader academic and professional environment. Recent decades have seen a dramatic increase in international mobility and exchanges, so that the “global

village” has become a tangible reality in many aspects of everyday life. This trend is particularly marked within the European continent, as witnessed by the growth of the European Union (EU) to include 27 countries with 23 official languages (without speaking of the many other regional or migrant languages) and a population of 490 million. This makes Europe an intensely multilingual and multicultural area. If HEIs wish to prepare their students, graduates and staff to operate within this context, attention clearly needs to be given to their linguistic preparedness.

Furthermore, languages play a significant role in the realisation of many of the goals of the Bologna Process<sup>7</sup> (Ritz, 2006). To begin with, it is evident that the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which gathers together more than 40 different European countries, will become an effective reality only if students, researchers, academics, and university management are able to communicate effectively with their counterparts in other countries. The role of languages in the promotion of mobility, both academic and professional, is equally clear. Furthermore, the European economy is increasingly integrated, most EU countries trading more with their EU neighbours than with other commercial partners. For this reason, the effectiveness of individual companies and the well-being of the economy as a whole depend significantly on the ability of individuals to communicate effectively with partners, staff, clients, or suppliers from other European countries. Indeed, a number of studies (*e.g.* CILT, 2006; Connell, 2002; Hall, 2000; Mackiewicz, 2004; Moore and Hagen, 2006; Orban, 2007) have shown the role which language skills play in the economy, including the negative role played by the absence of such skills. Languages thus play a significant role in the promotion of the EHEA, of mobility, and also in terms of enhancing graduates’ employability.

In response to these changes, a growing number of HEIs have set up language policies designed to extend language learning possibilities to students and other institutional actors (*cf.* various documents on the site of the ENLU project<sup>8</sup> (Tudor, 2007)). HE language policies differ from one another in a number of ways and can potentially include a variety of pedagogical strategies, as will emerge from the case studies profiled in section 4, below. One of the more widely used strategies, however, is the teaching of content courses via an L2, or CLIL.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html).

<sup>8</sup> <http://web.fu-berlin.de/enlu>.

### **III - Rationale for CLIL in higher education**

Research into CLIL at primary and secondary levels has suggested that it has benefits which go beyond the learning of the L2 and include increased motivation for language learning, improved intercultural competence, and various cognitive gains (Dalton-Puffer, forthcoming; Eurydice, 2006; Marsh, 2002, for overviews). Insufficient research has as yet been conducted into CLIL at tertiary level to state whether these gains hold at this level, too. A number of legitimate hypotheses may, however, be expressed as to the potential benefits of CLIL in HE.

#### **1. Motivation**

There is a fairly general agreement in language teaching circles that motivation plays a crucial role in language learning (Dörnyei, 2001). With the expansion of language learning in HE, it has to be acknowledged that not all students of non-linguistic disciplines will necessarily feel a strong personal motivation for language study. However, the linking of content study with the learning of an L2 may potentially strengthen students' motivation to learn this language. This may derive from the transfer of students' motivation for their chosen field of study to the language of instruction, or simply from students' desire to succeed in their chosen subject area. The motivational value of CLIL is thus a potentially powerful argument for its use as one component of a broader HE language policy.

#### **2. An authentically communicative activity**

Another potential benefit of CLIL relates to the nature of the communicative interaction to which it gives rise. One of the main challenges which language teachers face is to create learning activities which give rise to a genuine need and desire to communicate via the L2. CLIL offers the possibility of creating precisely such a situation. Studying via an L2 engages students in a variety of communicative tasks which have a clear pragmatic goal, namely to assimilate the knowledge and competences linked to their chosen field of study. Depending on the mode of teaching and learning adopted, this involves a range of communicative activities – listening comprehension and note taking, reading lecture notes or background references, question asking and spoken interaction, as well as various modes of writing. In order to succeed in an academic course taught in an L2, students are obliged to use this language as a practical communicative tool in order to assimilate academic content, prepare their course assignments, prepare for and take their examinations, and so on. In this respect, CLIL satisfies many of the parameters for successful communicative language teaching, namely an integrated, goal oriented and pragmatically relevant interaction with the target language (cf. Johnson and Johnson, 1998, 69-74). Furthermore, given that CLIL involves students assimilating complex and

potentially unfamiliar academic material, it is plausible that CLIL can support in-depth learning.

### **3. Parallel development of academic/professional competences and domain-relevant communicative skills**

The increasingly multilingual nature of the European workplace means that graduates are likely to have to make use of their academic training in more than one language. The fact of pursuing at least part of their academic and professional training in an L2, as is the case in CLIL, helps students to develop their academic / professional competences in parallel with language competences intimately linked to their chosen field of specialisation. In this way, CLIL can help students to acquire both professional knowledge and skills and, at the same time, the ability to communicate the relevant concepts in an L2 as well as their first language.

### **4. Preparation for lifelong learning**

Along with promotion of the EHEA, mobility, and employability, lifelong learning is one of the main goals of the Bologna Process. This reflects the fact that we live in a rapidly evolving professional environment. However relevant students' academic training may be at a given point in time, it is highly likely that they will have to initiate further learning cycles subsequent to graduation. This is particularly marked with respect to languages and thus to lifelong language learning (Mackiewicz, 2002). Whichever language or languages students may learn during their HE programme, there is every likelihood that they will, at some future stage of their career, find it necessary to deepen their knowledge of a language they have already studied or to learn a new language.

Helping students acquire language learning skills which they may transfer from the learning of one language to that of another is thus a significant goal of language teaching in HE. In this respect, CLIL may offer a number of advantages. It is an integrated learning activity which calls upon students to engage in a range of different learning tasks – independent consultation of L2 textual materials, use of dictionaries or other language reference materials, negotiation and disambiguation of meaning, drafting and revising L2 written work, or preparing for oral presentations and examinations in the L2, for example. In this way, CLIL may potentially help students to develop learning skills which they will be able to transfer to subsequent language learning. This is a plausible hypothesis but one which, to the author's knowledge, has not as yet been researched. This, as other aspects of CLIL in HE, is an area which merits further investigation.

## 5. Overview

In summary, then, there are plausible pedagogical arguments for the use of CLIL in HE. Certain points, especially the question of in-depth learning and the development of transferable learning skills, merit further research. It is fairly uncontroversial, however, that CLIL is a valid and potentially productive language learning strategy which merits consideration within the broader framework of HE language policy development.

## IV. Case studies: sample of higher education language policies

So far, this paper has focused on the rationale for the expansion of language learning in HE in Europe and on the pedagogical rationale for CLIL as one component of a HE language policy. This section will focus on a sample of five HE language policies. These and other policies were studied within the framework of the ENLU project and in follow-up research. Each of the language policies profiled below includes CLIL together with a range of other strategies as part of a broader language policy package. The five language policies selected are presented schematically in order to highlight their main component parts.

### 1. Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium: Solvay Business School (SBS) <[www.solvay.edu/EN/Programmes/ingest/Programme\\_langues.php](http://www.solvay.edu/EN/Programmes/ingest/Programme_langues.php)>

- Languages (English and Dutch) obligatory in the 3 years of the BA (1<sup>st</sup> cycle) programme.
- 30 / 180 ECTS of the BA programme devoted to languages – 15 each for Dutch and English.
- Content of BA language courses linked to students' academic field, *i.e.* language for specific purposes (LSP) orientation.
- Achievement target fixed with reference to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) – level C1 by end of BA3.
- Limited formal language teaching in MA (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle) programme, but a significant percentage of courses taught in English or Dutch / CLIL.
- All students spend one semester in MA on a mobility programme.
- Ongoing efforts to integrate language and content courses more fully in BA programme.

### 2. Kodolanyi Janos University College (KUC), Hungary

- New language policy launched in 2003-04. Main features in the new policy: move to LSP teaching, introduction of content teaching in L2, fostering of independent language learning.

- Subject areas: Economics; Media Studies; Tourism; Catering; International Relations.
- Language courses obligatory in BA1 and BA2: BA1 courses focus on general language competences; BA2 courses have an LSP orientation.
- Content courses in L2 start in BA2 / CLIL, with the formal language courses serving to support students' interaction with L2 content teaching / CLIL.
- From BA3, no formal language courses, but content teaching in L2 / CLIL extended.
- Achievement target fixed with reference to the CEFR – level B2 by end of BA programme.
- Target languages: English, French, German.
- Independent language learning skills fostered by learner training in formal language courses and creation of independent language learning centre.
- Language policy awarded European Language Label in 2005.

### **3. University of Food Technology (UFT), Plovdiv, Bulgaria**

- Bilingual degree programme (5 years) in French and Bulgarian in three main specialist areas: Wine Technology; Milk and Dairy Products Technology; Technology of Bread, Bread Products and Confectionery Products.
- 360 hours of French language courses in years 1-3 with an LSP orientation.
- From year 3, students specialise in one of the three areas listed above. From this point on, around 80% of content courses are taught in French / CLIL.
- Strong professional orientation: French plays significant role in the students' specialist domain.
- Admission to the programme is dependent upon success in a French language admission test.
- The UFT follows curricula common to French universities in the same field of study, has partnerships with French universities, and students may follow a summer internship in France.
- All content lecturers have followed French language courses at the Francophone Centre (set up in collaboration with the Alliance Française); they can also specialise in their content field in French universities.
- English taught in years 1-4: Move from general language in year 1 to English for Specific Purposes in years 2 and 3, and English for Business in year 4.

### **4. Université de Fribourg (UFr), Switzerland<sup>9</sup>**

- Fribourg is a bilingual university in that full academic programmes exist in both French and German, and students may opt for a monolingual programme in either language. From the 1980s, the university built on this potential to offer officially bilingual degree programmes.

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<sup>9</sup> <<http://www.unifr.ch/main/bilinguisme/texte.php>>.

- Fribourg offers three types of bilingual degree: (in French) *Diplôme avec attestation bilingue*; *Diplôme bilingue*; *Diplôme “bilingue plus”*.
- The difference between these degrees depends on the percentage of course requirements fulfilled in the L2 (including taking exams), and the presence of additional courses in LSP and L2 culture.
- The concept of *Rampe linguistique* or *Sprachrampe* is designed to allow students to follow a bilingual programme without being bilingual at the start of their studies.
- Learning advice structures designed to help students choose the most relevant bilingual programme and to manage their learning.

### **5. Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Denmark<sup>10</sup>**

- Fully bilingual university – Danish and English are parallel working languages in all aspects of university life.
- Commitment to bilingualism in the national language plus English in terms of employability of graduates.
- Commitment to internationalisation via use of English as a quality criterion in all aspects of teaching and research.
- Teaching of courses in both languages across the whole academic programme.
- Support structures for both students and staff in English (for Danish speakers) and in Danish (for non-Danish speakers).
- Quality control measures set in place regarding the English language skills of teaching and administrative staff.
- Measures to support the use and quality of Danish (especially in the written language) of Danish students and staff.
- Possibilities for the study of languages other than English and Danish.

## **V - CLIL and the language policy**

A first lesson which can be derived from the five language policies outlined above is that a language policy can assume a variety of different forms and, by implication, that no one language policy model is equally relevant to all contexts (cf. Tudor & Mackiewicz, 2006). Another is that a language policy is likely to involve a package of different language learning and contact strategies. In the institutions surveyed, these include formal language teaching with a general or LSP orientation (SBS, KUC, UFT), language guidance and support facilities (UFR and CBS), mobility programmes (SBS), internships in the L2 and partnerships with institutions in other countries (UFT). This suggests that CLIL

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<sup>10</sup> <http://uk.cbs.dk/content/view/full/55274>.



should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as one component of a broader language strategy. This section, however, will focus on the insights which may be derived from the five policies profiled with respect to the adoption of CLIL.

### **1. L2 level of the students**

The decision to adopt CLIL clearly needs to take account of the initial level of language competence of the students concerned. When students do not have the required level on entry, then measures clearly have to be taken to help them to achieve the necessary language skills before CLIL can be a realistic option. The SBS, KUC and UFT all cater for a more or less significant degree of formal language teaching prior to the introduction of CLIL. Similarly, the *Rampe linguistique* of the UFr offers linguistic support to students who are not bilingual at the start of their study programme. (Furthermore, the possibility offered by the UFr for students to opt for different types of bilingual programme allows for differing levels of bilingual study.) Levels of competence in the non-national language (English) are generally high in Denmark, and this makes the adoption of bilingual teaching at the CBS a practical possibility from the outset. Even so, the CBS caters for linguistic support in the non-national language (English). In this respect it is worth noting that the UFT organises an entry test in French to ensure that students have an adequate initial level in this language, even prior to its formal language teaching programme.

### **2. Different modes of content and language integration**

By definition, CLIL involves the integration of content and language learning. In three of the institutions surveyed (SBS, KUC, UFT), however, measures are taken to integrate content and language study prior to or in parallel with CLIL. This entails the adoption of an LSP orientation to formal language teaching, even if this is staged differently from one institution to another. Indeed, the BA2 courses at the KUC have the explicit goal of supporting the CLIL courses. In these three institutions, therefore, there is a trend to link content and language learning, by means of both CLIL and the LSP orientation given to formal language teaching.

### **3. Language competence of teaching staff**

CLIL involves students working on academic material through a language which is not their first language (L1). It may also involve lecturing staff teaching through an L2. The pedagogical support for lecturing staff teaching in an L2 is thus another factor that merits consideration in the adoption of CLIL. Some of the case studies show the way in which this dimension of CLIL may be supported. The CBS, for example, caters for quality control of the language competences of teaching staff in English and (where necessary) also offers language support to staff teaching in this language. The UFT caters for language support in French in a number of ways, including language courses offered by

the Francophone Centre and the possibility for teaching staff to specialise in French universities.

#### **4. Overview**

It was suggested in section 3 that CLIL has a valid pedagogical rationale, and that it may also support the preparation of students for professional life by promoting the parallel development of professional skills and L2 communicative abilities. The five language policies profiled above indicate the place which CLIL can hold within the broader framework of an institutional language policy. They also allow a number of useful observations to be made as to the strategies which can be adopted with a view to preparing for and supporting CLIL. It might, therefore, seem possible to stop here. Given the increasingly widespread adoption of CLIL in HE, however, a number of questions arise with respect to the practical realisation of CLIL in both pedagogical and strategic terms. The rest of this paper will therefore seek to explore at least the more fundamental of these questions.

## **VI - A few basic questions on CLIL**

As indicated in section 1 of this paper, CLIL has been more extensively researched at primary and secondary levels. The significant expansion in CLIL in HE in recent years has not been supported by a comparable level of research. If CLIL is to achieve its goals, it is therefore necessary for careful consideration to be given to various aspects of its realisation.

### **1. L2 teaching = CLIL?**

So far in this paper, no distinction has been made between CLIL and the teaching of content courses in an L2. The distinction, is, however, a significant one. CLIL is a pedagogical strategy which involves the joint pursuance of two sets of goals – the acquisition of knowledge and skills in a given content domain and, in parallel, the acquisition of communicative skills in an L2. This implies clear goal setting and the pedagogical planning and monitoring of both the delivery and the uptake of teaching in the L2. Two of the institutions profiled above (UFT and CBS) explicitly mention quality control and language support measures for lecturers teaching through an L2. Content teaching via an L2, with English being the favoured language, is increasingly widespread in HE in Europe. The question therefore arises as to whether this qualifies as CLIL by dint of a clear goal differentiation and pedagogical support. If this is not the case, and Marsh (2004) suggests that it is not, then one can question whether L2 teaching is likely to yield the language learning gains which CLIL is hypothesised to offer. It also raises fundamental questions as to the overall quality of teaching and learning in HE.

## **2. Language competence of students – between challenge and obstacle**

As emerged from the case studies, in particular SBS, KUC and UFT, the introduction of CLIL (or L2 teaching, at least) followed more or less extensive formal language teaching. Studying complex academic material through an L2 places significant demands on students' linguistic abilities. This clearly represents a challenge. The question arises, however, as to when a challenge becomes an obstacle, such that studying through an L2 may *prevent* students from assimilating the content of their academic programme effectively, and thus have a negative influence on the quality of their learning. This is a factor which clearly merits research. For example, from which level on the CEFR would students be judged able to follow content teaching in an L2 without the risk of an impairment to the quality of their learning?

In addition to language competences, consideration may also need to be given to students' attitudes and motivations. Accepting the linguistic and cognitive challenge of studying through an L2 may be perceived differently depending on students' attitude to language learning, to the L2, or their perception of the role of the L2 in their academic / professional training. Such factors may exert a non-negligible influence on students' interaction with L2 teaching, and thus on the success of the initiative. Here, too, research is needed. It would, however, seem wise to undertake an evaluation of students' perceptions in this area before launching into L2 teaching.

## **3. Language competence of teachers**

As already suggested, questions relating to the linguistic competence of lecturing staff also play a role in the adoption of CLIL. Marsh (2004) states that such measures are "unreported", though the CBS and UFT case studies suggest that efforts are being made in this direction in at least some institutions. One question which arises here is whether a certain minimum level of language competence is required in order to be able to teach effectively in an L2. Another is whether HEIs have or are willing to set in place testing and support procedures designed to evaluate this factor.

Other related questions arise. One is whether teaching in an L2 causes any identifiable losses in a lecturer's teaching abilities. If this were to be the case, focused language support could be organised. Another question is whether the linguistic and communicative demands of L2 teaching vary from one discipline to another. In certain disciplines (mathematics or engineering, for example) a significant amount of information is provided in non-linguistic forms such as formulae or graphics. These may serve to support communication of discipline-specific information and thus support understanding of linguistic elements. In other disciplines, information may be borne in a dominantly verbal manner, which may place greater demands on the communicative abilities of both lecturers and students. Here, too, further research is required in order to better understand the linguistic demands of teaching (and studying) in an L2 (Taillefer,

2004). The results of this research would serve to guide the decision as to whether to opt for L2 teaching or not, and also the linguistic and pedagogical support offered to lecturers.

#### **4. Collaboration between content and language teachers**

In one way or another, all the case studies show a combination of formal language teaching (or linguistic support in the case of the CBS and UFr) and L2 teaching / CLIL. Indeed, at the KUC, the BA2 language course have the explicit goal of supporting the introduction of L2 teaching. Marsh (2004), however, suggests that collaboration between language specialists and content lecturers is by no means the norm. This may result from institutional factors, language centre or department staff having little or no contact with content lecturers, or even from questions of status, language teaching staff in many HEIs having a lower institutional status than mainstream lecturers. Collaboration between language and content specialists can be beneficial in a number of ways, however. One is that formal language teaching may, in part at least, be geared to providing students with preparation for the transition from language learning per se to the use of the L2 for study purposes. Another is that language specialists may be able to operate in parallel with content lecturers to observe students' interaction with L2 teaching and offer ongoing advice and support to both students and lecturers.

#### **5. Pedagogical adaptations**

The type of support which either students or lecturers may require in order to make L2 teaching effective, as a number of the other points raised in this section, merits research. It is likely, however, that at least a certain number of pedagogical adaptations may be called for. It was suggested above that studying through an L2 places additional demands on students, and that a balance needs to be struck between the (potentially productive) challenge of studying through an L2 and the use of the L2 becoming an obstacle to effective learning. This might usefully be investigated on at least two levels.

The first would relate to specific pedagogical support geared to supporting students' interaction with L2 teaching. This could include specific pedagogical measures such as:

- requiring students to read specified content material prior to attending lectures, or providing a summary of the target material;
- setting students focus questions prior to lectures so as to prepare them cognitively for the content of the lecture;
- providing visual support to lectures in the form of slides shown during the lecture, potentially with annotated versions of the slides being made available to students for personal study out of class time;
- providing students with glossaries of key technical terms in their L1 as well as the L2.

Measures of this nature could help support students in their interaction with the L2. True, they may call for an extra pedagogical investment by content teachers acting alone or in collaboration with language specialists or pedagogical advisors. However, given the very limited knowledge we currently have of the practice of CLIL in HE, it would seem profitable to explore the degree to which such measures could contribute to the effectiveness of the undertaking. It might also be useful to re-evaluate the relation which exists between formal language teaching and CLIL. For instance, it would not be inconceivable to arrange for at least some content courses to be taught interactively, possibly by an experienced language teacher familiar with the target domain, as a preparation for a transition to CLIL *per se*. This could allow for a more gradual transition from language to content focus under the guidance of a language teacher trained to assess students' language abilities, to diagnose difficulties, and to foster communicative interaction.

The second relates to the nature of the general pedagogical approach adopted in HE. Marsh (2004) rightly points out that CLIL is "ideally" characterised by interactional methodologies, *i.e.* methodologies which open up scope for discussion, the exchange of ideas, and the negotiation of meaning between lecturers and students, and among students themselves (see also Dalton-Puffer, *op. cit.*). Indeed, such exchanges constitute the basis for many of the pedagogical advantages attributed to CLIL. Approaches to teaching and learning vary considerably across Europe, and in some teaching revolves largely around information transfer based on formal *ex cathedra* lecturing. Questions may be asked as to whether CLIL is fully appropriate for such teaching traditions or, at least, whether pedagogical adaptations may be required in order to ensure the effectiveness of L2 teaching and learning (cf. Räsänen and Klaassen, 2006).

## **6. Overview**

CLIL involves the joint pursuance of content and language learning, and offers a number of potentially significant gains in terms of language learning *per se* and also with respect to the development of students' communicative abilities in their chosen field of specialisation. For this reason, CLIL merits serious consideration within the framework of HE language policy development. This having been said, the practical realisation of CLIL raises a number of significant questions of a pedagogical nature. These questions have a direct influence on the likely pedagogical effectiveness of CLIL in language learning terms, and also on the overall quality of teaching and learning. Given the relative paucity of research on CLIL in HE, together with its increasingly widespread adoption in HEIs across Europe, research in this area may be seen as a priority. Furthermore, the issues raised in this section have implications with respect to the pedagogical training of HE staff called upon to teach through an L2, as well as to the relative roles of content and language teachers in the practical realisation of CLIL.

## **VII - CLIL and language choice**

The language policies profiled in section 4 involve a variety of languages, which reflects strategic choices of the institutions in question. The SBS focuses on English and Dutch, languages which play a key role in terms of employability in Belgium. The UFr offers students the possibility to attain high levels of competence in two of the national languages of Switzerland, with the advantages which this offers in terms of employability. The UFT offers a bilingual programme in the national language (Bulgarian) and in French, a language which plays a significant role in the students' chosen field of specialisation. The KUC prepares students in fields which have an international dimension: KUC students have learning opportunities in three languages, which enhances their possibilities for both mobility and employment. Finally, the language policy of the CBS is articulated in terms of both national employability (Danish and English) and internationalisation (English). In other words, the language policies adopted by these institutions reflect strategic choices which fit in coherently with one or more of the goals of the Bologna Process. Language policy development involves consideration not only of the pedagogical strategies by which the policy will be realised, of which CLIL is one, but also decisions relating to the choice of which language or languages are to be learned.

As a pedagogical strategy, CLIL is language neutral. It would, however, be naïve to ignore the fact that the expansion of CLIL in HE revolves significantly around English. A realistic evaluation of CLIL, or L2 instruction at least, would be incomplete without consideration of the specific role of English (cf. Tudor, 2006).

### **1. English as a lingua franca**

It is an observable fact that English plays a significant role in HE in Europe and, indeed, worldwide. English is the favoured language of academic publication in a growing number of fields. This means that many students need to read English in order to gain access to information in their chosen specialisation, and many academics find it necessary to use English in order to participate in international conferences and to publish their research. In addition, English is the preferred language of international business and international meetings in many areas of activity. Viewed from this perspective, according English a place in a HE language policy has a clear rationale. As CLIL is one potentially valuable strategy, it logically follows that CLIL involving English is likely to appear frequently in HE. Questions arise, however, as to the motivations for the adoption of English as language of instruction, and the influence of such choices on the broader goals of HE language policy, in particular linguistic diversity and employability.

## **2. English-medium instruction as a facility option**

The changes in the academic and professional environment outlined in section 2 have led a growing number of HEIs to set up strategically informed language policies. This is not the case in all institutions, however, and persons involved in language policy development frequently face a variety of challenges (Tudor, 2005). Institutions may experience difficulty in finding space for language learning in students' academic programme, or funding for language learning may be limited. Furthermore, in a significant number of institutions there is still insufficient understanding of the importance of languages. In such situations, the temptation exists to teach existing content courses in an L2, this decision being presented as a "language policy". Given the importance of English, such decisions frequently involve the teaching of content courses in this language. In other words, the adoption of English as language of instruction may be a facility option, rather than a coherently thought through strategic choice.

## **3. Market forces and the role of English in HE**

Another powerful motivation for the adoption of English-medium instruction is the potential of this language to attract the increasingly large market of "international students". Offering courses in English makes it easier for institutions to attract such students, especially if the national language of the institution is less widely spoken. This trend is, however, observable even in countries with a widely spoken language such as France and Germany, especially at postgraduate level and in certain fields of study, business studies and economics in particular. For these reasons there is a trend towards English as the preferred language of academic mobility in Europe. One may legitimately question the implications which this trend has in terms of linguistic diversity and the goal of multilingualism.

## **4. Attrition of languages other than English in HE**

The increasing role of English in European HE is not without consequences for the status of other languages. A questionnaire completed by 25 participants in the project ENLU in 2005-06 included the question "Have members of your institution expressed concerns with respect to the erosion of the home language in Higher Education?" Thirteen participants responded positively to the question. One Danish colleague commented: "Yes, that concern is expressed repeatedly and massively." Another colleague, also from Denmark, responded: "Yes. There is a concern that the students' and graduates' proficiency in – especially written – Danish needs to be enhanced. There is also a general concern because English is taking over in certain domains (international business, research, etc.) and that Danish will deteriorate as a consequence." The sample is far too small to evaluate how widespread such views are, but the question remains open as to the role which the increasing use of English may have on students' command of their L1.

In response to the same question, a Finnish colleague made the following remark: “There is a long tradition in Finland to keep an eye on the development of the mother tongue. The (University) language policy makes a point to stress the importance of fostering the Finnish language and its use. There is a concern for the weakening of the functionality of the Finnish language for various academic – research in particular – purposes. The policy stresses the importance of an awareness of the importance of the mother tongue as an ingredient of academic expertise. The language policy is built upon the principles of plurilingualism (involving also the mother tongue).” This response reveals the same concern as expressed by the two Danish respondents, while also pointing to measures designed to re-balance the situation by offering support to the development of a rounded multilingual competence, including in the L1.

### **5. English, employability and the Europe of the Regions**

It is an observable fact that English plays a significant role as a lingua franca in Europe, and that it has become the preferred language of communication in a variety of both academic and professional fields. Does this, however, mean that English is sufficient for all graduates? Without underestimating the usefulness of English, it needs to be borne in mind that many graduates, in particular persons working in small or medium enterprises (SMEs), will work “locally”, and it is by no means certain that English is the most immediately relevant language in such contexts. Which languages are the most useful for persons working in SMEs in Catalonia, Eastern Germany or Western Poland, Slovenia, or Wallonia? It is very likely that this language will not be English but Catalan or Spanish, Polish or German, or Italian. This question has no necessary link to the question of English-medium instruction. However, there is a real risk that the increasing importance of English, combined with the spread of English-medium instruction, will tend to crowd out other languages from HE, with negative consequences both for the fostering of multilingualism and, more immediately, for graduates’ employability.

### **6. Overview**

As already suggested, there is no necessary link between CLIL and the choice of English as language of instruction. CLIL is a pedagogical strategy, whereas decisions relating to language of instruction are strategic, political and operational in nature. It would, however, be unhelpful to overlook the fact that a significant amount of CLIL, or L2 instruction at least, in HE currently involves English. A number of questions need to be raised as to the motivation for the choice of English-medium instruction. Is it a strategically motivated decision? How does English-medium instruction impact on the learning of other languages, on students’ mastery of their L1 and their ability to use this language for academic or professional purposes? And is English the language which is most relevant for students preparing for fields of activity which have more local



outlets? In other words, the question of language of instruction merits being studied within a broader language policy framework, involving consideration of maintenance of the L1, linguistic diversity, and the relevance of different languages in terms of graduate employability.

## VIII - Conclusions

As stated in the introduction, this article has adopted a constructive but nonetheless critical perspective on CLIL in HE. This perspective derives from concern with HE language policy in general, and not CLIL in its own right. In pedagogical terms, the potential advantages of CLIL are numerous – in terms of language learning, the parallel development of academic / professional competences and communicative skills and, last but not perhaps not least, the motivational benefits of linking students' language learning with their chosen field of specialisation. While further research is required to confirm the potential gains of CLIL within the specific context of HE, there is good reason to believe that CLIL can play a positive role in promoting language learning in HE.

This having been said, one may question whether the potential gains offered by CLIL will be realised without focused attention being given to various aspects of its practical delivery. These include the L2 competences of both students and lecturers, pedagogical monitoring and support for both students and lecturers involved in CLIL, and also the question of language choice. These questions have an influence not only on the effectiveness of CLIL in language learning terms, but also on the global quality of teaching and learning.

The following points merit particular attention.

- The willingness to distinguish between CLIL as an informed pedagogical strategy and L2 instruction as a facility option, potentially without the necessary pedagogical reflection and support.
- Research into the gains of CLIL within the specific context of HE – in terms of language learning *per se*, and also with respect to students' communicative abilities in their chosen field of specialisation.
- Research into the language competences which are required of both students and lecturers to engage in CLIL effectively, without the risk of losses in the quality of learning and teaching.
- The pedagogical adaptations or support which may be needed to enhance the effectiveness of CLIL, again in terms of both lecturers and students.
- A critical evaluation of the link between formal language teaching and CLIL, in particular with respect to the way in which formal language teaching may be geared to support the transition to CLIL.

- An evaluation of the possibilities for collaboration between language and content teachers, in particular the monitoring of the quality of learning and teaching through an L2.
- Strategically informed consideration of the choice of languages in HE language policy development. In part, this relates to the decision to adopt CLIL or not, and if so in which language. It also involves consideration of the adoption of CLIL, in particular in English, with respect to the learning of other languages in terms of the promotion of linguistic diversity and of employability.

The landscape of HE in Europe has changed dramatically in recent years, and the increasing use of CLIL, or English-medium instruction at least, is one of the more striking developments. It is likely that, in time, CLIL will attract sufficient attention in both theoretical and practical terms to allow for its effective realisation. It would however be naïve to assume that this will occur without focused advocacy, including the willingness to address critically the issues addressed in this paper.

Underpinning its more specific goals, the main driving force of the Bologna Process is a concern with the quality of HE, in terms of the inherent quality of teaching and learning, but also with respect to the relevance of educational choices to the broader social and economic environment. Indeed, it is perhaps within this framework of reference that CLIL needs to be evaluated: in which way and to what degree can CLIL contribute to the overall quality of HE? Which measures are needed in order to ensure that the potential gains of CLIL may be realised effectively? And finally, in which way can the adoption of CLIL, together with other language learning and contact strategies, contribute to the promotion of intercultural competences and the goal of a genuinely plurilingual Europe?

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