

CLIL - A Jump into the 21st Century

METHODOLOGICAL TRENDS

Teachers are faced with a variety of pressures on a daily basis; and all the while... the clock never stops. Tick, tock, tick, tock... every minute counts. What perfect timing to pause for laughter. Language isn't knowledge. It's what we use to move knowledge around. This is not a new idea. Back in the 1990's language luminaries such as MAK Halliday were advocating the deep integration of language with real content. It was in 1994 when David Marsh (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) coined the term 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' as an umbrella term to describe this approach. When people talk about bilingualism in Spanish schools, they are talking about CLIL. Although CLIL is not new, it does seem to stir up debate. There are people who think that CLIL is just changing the language of instruction in the classroom. It categorically is not. Others think that bilingual students are at a disadvantage when compared to monolingual students. There is scientific evidence that this is, quite simply, not true.

In April 2018 I had the opportunity to speak with David Marsh for Bilingual Express and I asked him what, if any, are the benefits of integrating English with other subjects. The problem, he said, was that we have not gone far enough in understanding that language teaching, such as English in Spanish schools, needs to be linked across the curriculum, with, for example, Natural Science, in order for students to learn in the most successful way. "It isn't just about English," said David, "because these students will also be reflecting on and thinking in Spanish. If you integrate English with Natural Science in the curriculum, it is more than one plus one - English plus Natural Science. It is a language learning experience, which is clearly effective when done well, but which is also very much part of modern-day thinking about how we should be teaching students

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