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# Investigating the impact of CLIL for teaching in Italian schools

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# Main aim

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Through an exploration of the meaning of CLIL,  
argue that CLIL is relevant for all teaching in all  
schools

conclusion

need to provide language education for all  
teachers



# Contextual information

- Europe 1990's: CLIL > foreign languages – mainstream education systems > model 'bilingual education' in Europe = two languages of instruction
- To foster better learning of FLs
- To safeguard different languages of Europe
- Important role of foreign language teachers in introducing CLIL in Italian schools
- Grassroots movement ends with reform 2009 and introduction of 'lingua straniera veicolare'
- Uso del CLIL acronym appears later in: Indicazioni nazionali; DD 6 16/04/2012 (20 CFU); DM107/2015



# CLIL – what does it mean?

## Content & language integrated learning

1. Focus is on learning

2. Type of learning to promote: dual (content and language together) > mirrors a natural process > verbal language used to discover, learn, think, understand, create/express meanings =

speak and write to learn

3. Through activities like the above, language competence is gradually developed and enriched =

learn to speak and to write



# CLIL for foreign language contexts

Why the need to coin CLIL for foreign language contexts?

> to highlight a potential problem

i.e., the **hoped-for** learning of language and content together may not come about as result of the intrinsic difficulties of the foreign language situation itself (e.g., in understanding texts, using the language to learn, acquiring a better language competence ...)

Hence: methodological intervention to **purposely** promote dual learning:

'Language enhanced'

'Language sensitive'



# CLIL and language learning

CLIL is part of a country's language education policy – introduced to promote better FL competence

What is the potential plus value for FL competence?

Some concepts:

- Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills versus **Cognitive Academic Language proficiency** (Cummins - L2)
- External plurilingualism versus **Internal plurilingualism** (Vollmer - L1):

**Internal plurilingualism**: refers to promotion of an 'academic literacy':

- conceptual literacy & discourse competence



# However ...

the acquisition of **academic literacy** cannot come about  
without help (Vollmer)

**thus**

need for purposeful support and purposeful promotion if  
the **hoped for** plus value of CLIL for FL competence  
development can come about



# CofE: new developments: language in other subjects

Recognition of the importance of taking into account the language dimension in the teaching and learning of **all school subjects** in order to ensure access to education for all (cfr. issue Italian, INVALSI 2023)

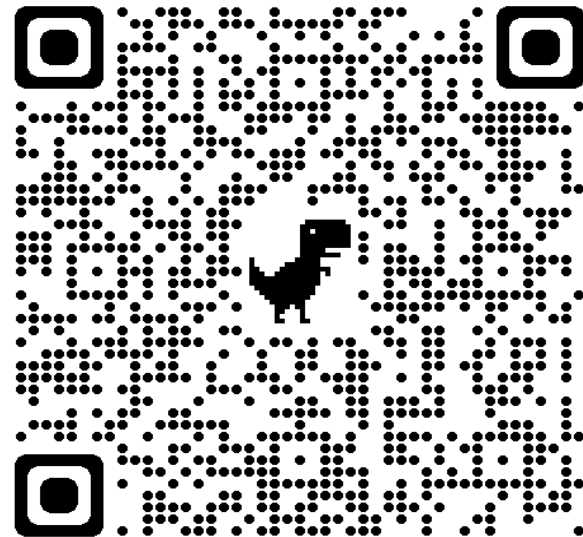
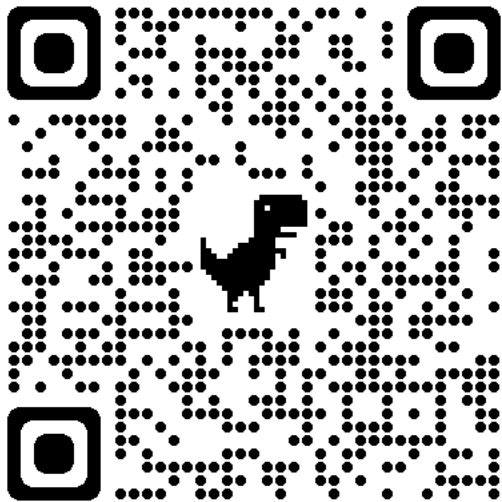
Distinction:

- languages taught as subjects in their own right (literacy, reading, writing, literature, thinking about language, etc.) = **language as a subject**
- languages used for the teaching of other subjects (maths, biology, history, geography etc.) = **language in other subjects**



# Work of CofE

Currently underway within the thematic area called 'Language in education, languages of education' > the project 'Language(s) for schooling' - is going in this direction





# To be noted

Contact with teachers in CLIL training (e.g., courses DD n° 6 16/04/2012) indicates they are not necessarily aware of:

- language dimension of own subject (beyond lexical aspects)
- the language difficulties of own subject for SS
- role of the use of language for learning
- what language skills are and how to develop them
- link between teaching methodology and integrated language & subject learning

= a gap concerning language in subject teaching and its relevance to the language education of students seems to exist in non-language subject teachers' training



# Extend the idea of a CLIL teacher ?

cfr. Levels of SS competence in Italian (normal medium of instruction (and L1 or L2 for SS)) – see INVALSI results 2023

CLIL- foreign language > CLIL - national language?

As

- nothing in the CLIL acronym states that it be used solely with reference to FL situations.

As

- the integrated learning of language and content should trigger the minute a non-language subject is taught (whatever the language – see Vollmer)

As

- this will be all the more effective if purposefully directed and supported through the setting of dual goals and the choice of suitable methodologies



# It follows that ...

- CLIL as an approach is an important concern for all teachers teaching in the national language
- any teacher who takes on board the whole issue of developing language competence through/for his subject and is aware of how this is an important part of the language education of his students should be considered a CLIL teacher regardless of the language involved



# Take note of De Mauro's comments in *Le Dieci Tesi* (1975)

...

He was critical of the way Italian was taught:

“La pedagogia linguistica tradizionale pretende di operare settorialmente, nell'ora detta «di Italiano». Essa ignora la portata generale dei processi di maturazione linguistica [...] e quindi la necessità di coinvolgere nei fini dello sviluppo delle capacità linguistiche non una, ma tutte le materie, non uno, ma tutti gli insegnanti [...]”



# See De Mauro again

He proposed that it was necessary to

[...] integrare nella loro complessiva formazione competenze sul linguaggio e le lingue (di ordine teorico, sociologico, psicologico e storico) e competenze sui processi educativi e le tecniche didattiche [...].



# Language education for all teachers

If the premise is that all non-language subject teachers receive the same training as CLIL teachers, the gaps mentioned previously need to be filled through a programme of language education

## Possible contents

**Promoting competence and knowledge about the language**  
(e.g., - language competence (ability to communicate and mediate effectively) - knowledge about language, e.g., varieties of language used when teaching (text types, genres, cognitive language functions...) and which to focus on as learning goals

**Promoting awareness about language in education**  
(language for education, language in education, ...)



# To close

It could be that non-language subject teachers teaching in CLIL-foreign language apply their new knowledge and awareness to teaching their subject through Italian. It is a beginning.

... but not sufficient

Need to capture all teachers including those who do not teach through the foreign language