(Net)Working CLIL in Portugal

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Abstract | Recent growth in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) across educational levels in Portugal has positioned it in European Commission reports (Eurydice 2012; 2017) and attracted much needed attention to the educational practice which warrants further in-depth exploration in order to better understand it and ensure quality provision in the country. This article explores the concept of CLIL at work in Portugal and highlights its brief trajectory to date as well as the challenges and opportunities it presents teacher educators and researchers. It provides an overview of the recently established *Working CLIL* research strand of TEALS (Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies) which is actively engaged in connecting CLIL communities in Portugal and beyond.

Key words | Working CLIL, CLIL in Portugal, teacher education, communities of practice

1. Introduction

Now more than twenty years on from the coining of the acronym and launch of the educational approach on the European stage, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), "a generic umbrella term which would encompass any activity in which a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non-language subject in which both language and the subject have a joint curricular role in the domain of mainstream education, pre-schooling and adult lifelong education" (Marsh 58) has become widespread across the continent, and its reach, under its many guises, is felt around the world (Ellison, "CLIL in the Primary School Context" 253). And while there are countries where it has been regular practice for some time and made its way into educational policy (e.g., Spain and Italy), that have already accounted for its success and shortcomings through research in their own context, others have yet to take stock of what is for them a recently evolving phenomenon. Such is the case of CLIL in Portugal.

Conceptualising activity[1] involving the integrated learning of content and an additional language (here English) in Portugal reveals discrepancy in the use of terminology. At least four acronyms have come and gone over the years (Ellison, "CLIL as a Catalyst" 37), with the consensus now on 'CLIL' (the acronym in English) and 'Ensino Bilingue' (bilingual education). Institutions within close proximity of each other operating similar models use either term, and some choose to use both (e.g., The Bilingual Schools Programme, a joint venture between the Portuguese Ministry of Education and the British Council, uses both on a continuum from Early Bilingual Education to CLIL in later schooling). These terms are somewhat all-encompassing 'umbrellas' which may be used to cover each other. For example, the most recent Eurydice survey on 'Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe', defines CLIL as "a general term to designate different types of bilingual or immersion education" (Eurydice, "Key Data 2017" 141).

Scholars, however, make distinctions which draw on socio-political circumstances and ideology as well as more practical issues related to amount, age of learners, and teacher profile, (Cenoz et al.; Coyle, "Towards a connected research agenda"; Johnstone; Lasagabaster and

Sierra). For the purposes of this article, we use the term CLIL in accordance with Dalton-Puffer et al. as one that is "neutral and generally accessible" (3) and the language referred to is English given that this the main foreign language used in CLIL in Portugal. Terms like 'hard/strong' and 'soft/weak' CLIL (Ball et al. 26-27) are also used to describe models which are content- or language-led with the former given by content/subject teachers and the latter by teachers of English in the foreign language classroom, which may go some way to explaining the claim made by these teachers that they also 'do CLIL' in their lessons. This often transpires as project work from the English language coursebook linked to other areas of the curriculum and labelled as 'CLIL'. This may involve the presentation of content previously introduced in the mother tongue by subject teachers which, it may be argued, does not constitute CLIL (Coyle, "Motivating learners and teachers") since it is not genuine 'first-experience' content learning. The 'hard/soft' dichotomy is also used to distinguish between programmes which have high or low percentages of CLIL within their school curricula.

Whereas reasons for implementing CLIL at school level across national contexts converge largely on the need to improve proficiency in a foreign language (mainly English) through increased exposure, and to facilitate international communication for improved mobility for study and work, it is perhaps reasonable to say that those involved in early CLIL projects in Portugal took a 'proactive' stance which manifested itself in small-scale experimentation within grassroots projects realising the multiple benefits of the approach to holistic learning, cognitive development, intercultural understanding and teacher collaboration (see section 2 below).

Given the positive outcomes of these early projects, recent expansion of the Bilingual Schools Programme, and the burgeoning of English Medium Instruction in institutions of higher education in the country, it would seem that approaches involving the integration of content and an additional language are here to stay. And while Portugal may learn from those who have gone before it, it still has much to gain from an understanding of its own CLIL phenomenon, because even though principles apply across the board, CLIL remains a highly flexible approach

determined by contextual idiosyncrasies which make a study of it anywhere interesting and necessary, especially where it involves compulsory schooling and higher education.

It is, therefore, time to understand CLIL in Portugal, to highlight its trajectory to this point, and to address some of the challenges it will face as it continues to grow, namely in the domain of teacher education. As communities of practice spring up, it is important to give them space to flourish and opportunities to connect. These are some of the objectives of the Working CLIL research strand within the Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies (TEALS) group of the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies (CETAPS) and highlighted in this article.

2. Early Projects

It is fair to say that most CLIL activity across educational levels to date has used English as the additional language. However, in one of the earliest projects 'Secções Europeias de Língua Francesa' (SELF) French was used to teach subjects in over twenty lower and upper secondary schools across Portugal. The project, which began in the academic year 2006-2007, was a joint initiative of the Portuguese Ministry of Education and the French Embassy and was the first to appear in a Eurydice survey (2012) for pilot CLIL projects in Portugal.

Most early forays into CLIL using English were from the grassroots. Each of these was, in some way, pioneering in its attempts to integrate content and language within specific school contexts. Despite the short life-spans of these projects, their influence has had long-term effects. One example is the STEPS – UP Project (Support for Teaching English in Primary Schools – University of Porto) which was developed from a protocol between FLUP and Porto City Council for the recruitment and support of primary English language teachers in schools within the city as part of the Ministry of Education's initiative to introduce English language as an extra-curricular activity. In STEPS – UP English language teachers were encouraged to engage in small-scale CLIL projects in the schools where they were teaching.

These projects had goals which went beyond developing linguistic competence in English. These were: to make learning in English language lessons more relevant and meaningful within the primary context; to improve collaboration within schools (between the generalist primary teachers and primary English language teachers) so that the school community could become aware of the positive contribution that English language lessons could make; and to raise the profile of the English language teachers and combat the sense of isolation they frequently experienced. In these projects, English language teachers initiated collaboration with primary generalist teachers to reinforce content from the primary curriculum in their English language lessons. In this sense, it was a type of 'soft CLIL'.

From questionnaires administered to English language teachers and their written reflections on the CLIL projects conducted in 2008, Ellison proved that there were benefits related to collaboration, teaching and learning, as well as constraints regarding generalist and English language teacher liaison (Ellison, "(De)constructing CLIL"). The STEPS – UP project which involved over 20,000 children in 56 schools during its four-years from 2005-2009 was awarded the European Language Label (2008) and Label of Label awards (2012) with its CLIL activity playing a central role.

Ellison furthered her study of CLIL in the primary context in research undertaken in 2010 - 2011 involving the implementation of CLIL by English language teachers in three state primary schools in the north of Portugal (see Ellison, "CLIL as a Catalyst"). These teachers taught multiple sequences of CLIL lessons over an academic year using the content of the primary curriculum, previously negotiated but not pre-taught, by the primary generalist teacher. Lessons were given in the generalist teacher's class time with her present. The rich data obtained through the study contributes an in-depth understanding of extended CLIL practice obtained by examining the content and types of teachers' reflections. Much was learned about contextual factors, teacher competences, learners, methodology, scaffolding strategies, and personal and professional development which has benefitted teacher education practices and implementation of CLIL projects elsewhere in the country.

'Project English Plus' (Simões et al.) is another example of early experimentation. In this project a 7th year class in a lower secondary school in the metropolitan area of Porto was taught 45 minutes of History through English each week in the academic year 2010-2011 by a History teacher with the support of an English language teacher during CLIL lessons. In addition, Project Area classes given by the English language teacher were used to prepare students for the language of History as well as engage them in activities which were related to historical concepts. English was also used in 20-30% of the evaluation instruments for History. Results obtained through questionnaires and interviews of stakeholders were highly positive with regard to students' "linguistic and communicative competences, attitudes towards Otherness, and increasing knowledge of History; teachers' professional development; the overall community's interest and participation in school activities; and the creation of interdisciplinary synergies within school and implementation of networks and partnerships with society" (31). Despite this, the project had to be discontinued because the History teacher moved away from the school. However, the same school has since revived it using Science as the CLIL content subject (see Piacentini et al. in this volume).

Benchmarking CLIL (BECLIL) was an early example of a European multilateral CLIL project involving two Portuguese secondary schools in the teaching of Civic Studies and Information Technology through English (see Costa and Lopes). The project enabled the identification of quality indicators and sharing of best practices of CLIL from countries with varied amounts and types of experience, namely in Finland, Romania, Spain and Holland. In the Portuguese schools involved in the project there were improvements in the students' attitude towards and motivation to use English in a "meaningful" (86) way as well as collaboration between language and non-language subject teachers.

CLIL was still a relatively unknown phenomenon during these years, barely present and little discussed at conferences about foreign language teaching in the country. Those within the educational community knew little about it and it was often dismissed as a trend. But this would change in subsequent years through ministerial initiatives at school level, more grassroots projects

and internationalisation strategies of higher education institutions bringing about more English--taught disciplines within degree programmes.

3. Growth and Momentum

3.1. *National and Grassroots School Projects*

A significant turning point in CLIL/bilingual education in Portugal was the piloting of the Early Bilingual Education Project, a collaboration between the Portuguese Ministry of Education and the British Council from 2011-2015 in primary schools in six school clusters across the country. This had been preceded by a feasibility study conducted in 2009-2010 and influenced by the success of bilingual schools projects involving the British Council and ministries of education in Spain and Italy. In this project, primary generalist teachers taught Social Studies (Estudo do Meio) and 'Expressions' for 5-10 hours per week (20-40% of the weekly timetable for primary education) over the four levels of primary education. Teachers received training in bilingual teaching practices and English language. Based on the success of the pilot project, the results of which (see Almeida et al) were disseminated at an international seminar held in Lisbon in 2015, the project, now the 'Programa Escolas Bilingues/Bilingual Schools Programme em Inglês' (PEBI) has gradually extended to other school levels from pre-primary to lower secondary with a corresponding increase in the number of hours per week where English is used to teach other subjects and as a subject itself (5 hours for pre-school; 7-8 hours for primary school; and 11-12 hours for lower secondary school). Broad aims of the PEBI relate to developing proficiency in English and competences in subject area study as well supporting education that is inclusive and intercultural.[2]

Since 2016-2017, schools in mainland Portugal interested in becoming involved in the PEBI must submit an application to the Ministry of Education. They are admitted if they meet all pre-requisites which include: designating it a priority project in the school; teacher education opportunities via Erasmus+ programmes; certified English language levels of teachers (minimum B1 level for pre-school and primary teachers, and B2 level for middle and lower secondary teachers); gradual implementation starting at pre-primary level; and planned collaboration between

content and English language teachers. It is suggested that teachers involved are permanent members of staff and that subjects chosen by schools are ones which ensure continuity over educational cycles. The Ministry of Education and British Council provide training for teachers in bilingual education as well as external monitoring of projects. In addition, extra support may be provided through the Teach Abroad Programme promoted by the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) which offers American university graduates homestays with Portuguese families. These graduates volunteer English language support to teachers and students in the PEBI. There has been a steady growth in the number of clusters involved in the project each year. A goal is to reach 5% of school clusters by 2020. There are currently twenty-five clusters involved, the majority of which are in the north of the country. Owing to the PEBI, Portugal appeared in the Eurydice survey 'Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe: 2017 Edition' as a country offering CLIL in English within its state schools.

What is now needed is further evidence of how school clusters across the country are working within this project. Some schools are 'visible' and there are clear signs of success. One example is Speak English, Reach Success[3] at the Santo António (Barreiro) school cluster which demonstrates how a school can formulate objectives to suit the specific needs of both its students and teachers, as well as use initial training via Erasmus+ to develop a self-sustaining programme of workshops provided by CLIL teams across all levels from pre-school to secondary.

Although the majority of state schools involved in CLIL across the country belong to the PEBI, a small number have developed their own initiatives. One such school is Escola Secundária Dr. Joaquim Gomes Ferreira Alves, located in Valadares near Porto in the north of the country. This school is not part of a school cluster. It signed an autonomy contract with the Ministry of Education in 2013 which afforded it up to 25% curricular autonomy. This has facilitated the development of its 'GoCLIL'[4] project which has been running since then and now involves CLIL classes taught by content teachers across a broad range of subjects in all of its lower secondary levels, as well as the first year of upper secondary. The project has been monitored by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto since it began. This monitoring has involved

teacher education, classroom observation and research (see Ellison and Almeida Santos). Key to the project's success are its teacher coordination and stability year on year, realistic aims which include: general and cognitive academic proficiency in English, inclusivity, fostering interdisciplinary and integrated approaches to learning, and the development of 21st century skills. Another influential factor is the modular approach it has adopted. This involves modules or sequences of CLIL lessons given intermittently with lessons in Portuguese which has allayed parental fears of children missing out on content and language in the mother tongue, ensured continual contact with CLIL in a large number of subjects as well as provided time for teachers to adapt teaching methods and prepare lessons and materials. CLIL accounts for 25-40% curricular time. The project has managed to sustain itself through its committed teaching staff who have accumulated a high degree of expertise over the years and now provide their own CLIL teacher education programmes. They are also lead partners in a European project of the same name involving schools in Italy, Greece and Romania.[5]

CUBA CLIL IS IN[6] is a more recent example of a project developed within an Erasmus+ programme involving the school clusters of Cuba and Vidigueira, and the Professional School of Cuba (with its project CLIL ME IN[7]) in the Alentejo region. It is supported by the City Council of Cuba, the National Association for Inclusion and Innovation in Schools (AENIE) and the University of Évora. The goals of the project are a response to national as well as local needs to support the internationalisation of the regional community given the development of facilities which promote future employment (airport in Beja). CLIL is seen an opportunity to motivate students to use the English language for real purposes as well as improve collaboration within and between institutions. CUBA CLIL IS IN was the recipient of the 2018 European Language Label award for Portugal.

3.2. *Higher Education*

As is the case in many institutions of higher education (HEIs) across the world, English taught programmes (ETPs) are also increasing in number in HEIs in Portugal (see Wächter & Maiworm). This is set to continue given ministerial strategies and recommendations for the internationalisation

of Portuguese higher education (see Ministro Adjunto e do Desenvolvimento Regional e o Ministro da Educação e Ciência, "Uma Estratégia para a Internacionalização do Ensino Superior Português." Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 78/2016; Coelho and Arau Ribeiro). The number of ETPs an institution can offer is a clear sign of its ability to internationalise. And whilst intentions include attracting higher fee-paying foreign students, they are also to prepare home students for a world of work which necessitates the use of a global language. Thus, the scope of internationalisation and its benefits are not only academic, but social, cultural and economic.

However, the absence of linguistic policy and mechanisms for ensuring quality in ETPs leaves them vulnerable and open to scrutiny (Marsh and Diaz; Marsh et al.; O'Dowd). Continual linguistic and methodological support for academic teaching staff is essential since teaching complex content through the medium of an additional language requires competences for which many teachers have not been previously trained (Ellison and Pavon). Merely switching to a different language of instruction assumes that teachers and students are highly proficient in it, which is not always the case. What is required is a change in methodological approach to one which supports the integrated learning of both content *and* language, i.e., CLIL. This is the key difference between English Medium Instruction (EMI) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). There have been concerted efforts to develop awareness of and support for implementing CLIL in higher education in Portugal, notably through the ReCLES Guide (Morgado et al., "ReCLES Guide") which piloted CLIL training and implementation in polytechnic institutions across the country, and the Higher Steps project at the University of Porto which offers an English for Academic Purposes course incorporating methodology for CLIL (see Ellison et al.). In addition, these and associated research within HEIs (see for example Gaspar et al.; Morgado et al., "Content, Language and Intercultural Challenges in Engineering Education"; Morgado et al., "CLIL in Portuguese Higher Education"; Silva et al.) reveals a high degree of commitment to a study of CLIL practices in higher education in Portugal.

4. Future Challenges and Opportunities

4.1. *Teacher Education*

Teacher education across educational levels is vital to the provision of quality CLIL/bilingual education in Portugal and its longevity. This would need to incorporate the knowledge bases of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and 'non-language' subjects. CLIL is a unique fusion of these knowledge bases which makes a study and practice of it potentially complex (Ellison, "CLIL as a Catalyst" 53). Thus, becoming a CLIL teacher is not an easy undertaking; it requires "multiple types of expertise" (Marsh et al. 5). So far teacher education for CLIL in Portugal has mainly been through in-service courses at HEIs (e.g. FLUP), the Portuguese Association of teachers of English (APPI), online courses (e.g., the British Council), Erasmus+ training courses where teachers study and work alongside those from other countries involved in CLIL projects, as well as programmes at schools provided by CLIL teachers for their colleagues (see section 3.1. above).

Those currently engaged in teaching CLIL are part of an ageing population of teachers. For long-term growth of programmes, CLIL needs to be addressed in pre-service teacher education for foreign language and 'non-language' teachers. This is not only for the purposes of ensuring longevity of programmes, but more importantly, a study of CLIL alongside approaches and methods of English language teaching (ELT) and other subject teaching, can provide valuable "content, linguistic, cognitive and cultural awareness-building" (Ellison, "CLIL the Added Value" 65) of the curricula of each as well as an appreciation of their reciprocal relationship which will support better collaboration and responsibility towards whole school approaches to learning.

Notably when the Portuguese National Education Council (CNE 2013) invited expert opinion on the implementation of English in the primary school curriculum, many suggested CLIL as an appropriate approach. However, there is little evidence of foreign language teaching degrees in Portugal which account for CLIL in their programmes not to mention non-language teaching degrees. Degrees in pre- and primary education and subject-specific secondary education do not currently contain an obligatory foreign language, yet it is these teachers who will be the future CLIL teachers in mainstream education. Another expectation is that foreign

language teachers will work with these teachers, yet they are not formally trained in terms of subject specific language, literacy and methodology, an awareness of which is needed for effective collaboration between teachers in CLIL projects. Clearly, for many institutions this would require changes in the structure of degrees in order to cater for both foreign language and CLIL methodology.

The Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto is one institution which has been addressing the challenges and opportunities that pre-service teacher education for CLIL can provide in primary and lower secondary schools in its Masters degrees in teaching English (and other foreign languages) in basic education since 2008. Student teachers have learned about the principles and practice of CLIL during didactics for English language teaching, and have developed plans using the 4Cs framework which focuses on Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture (Coyle et al.) through liaison with generalist/non-language teachers as well as given CLIL lessons during their teaching practice in state primary schools. This framework is also used by student teachers of Masters degrees in teaching foreign languages in lower and secondary education when they are preparing English language lessons in order for them to support the development of 21st century skills in their own learners.

Since 2016, CLIL has been part of the Masters degrees in teaching English in primary and lower and upper secondary school. In the first of these, it is a subject worth six ECTS credits, and in the second it constitutes 50% of the six-credited subject on English for Specific Purposes. Common to both of these is the analysis of Portuguese school curricula according to the 4Cs, and subsequent design of a portfolio of lessons and materials for a specific subject area. Students also conduct their teaching practice in schools which have CLIL/bilingual projects, thus enabling them to observe and better understand CLIL in practice. Given that FLUP has a protocol with Escola Secundária Dr Joaquim Gomes Ferreira Alves for pre-service teacher education practica for History, a subject which is included in the GoCLIL project, student teachers of this subject may also benefit from observation of their mentors teaching History through English.

In addition to the above, the doctoral programme in didactics of languages also incorporates CLIL theory and practice in the curricular unit on specific didactics, thus stimulating engagement and much needed discussion of the phenomenon among researchers at this level.

4.2. *Research*

As yet, little research has been conducted into CLIL in Portugal. Investigation of the phenomenon is essential for better understanding and practice to evolve. The doors are wide open to further research through longitudinal studies incorporating quantitative and qualitative research methods, case studies, as well as teacher-led action research to add to the small amount that currently exists. Both pre- and in-service teacher education should provide modules on educational research so that teachers are equipped with skills and competences to investigate their own practice. Methods must now look beyond stakeholder satisfaction questionnaires to the effects of CLIL on learning in order to prove that it is not a risk to the education of a generation, but a worthy endeavour for all of those involved. Although research in other countries has done this, contextual idiosyncrasies also necessitate localised study in Portugal. There are recent examples of MA dissertations/reports (Almeida, "Tourism Vocational Education"; Franco, "Geometry in English in Primary School"; Xavier, "Assessment"), and PhD theses (Ellison, *Reflective Practices and Teacher Education*) but clearly room for so much more, as well as forums for dissemination and discussion to generate future synergies and pathways towards developing research opportunities within teacher education programmes.

5. The Working CLIL Network

Set up in 2018 by the newly established CLIL strand of the research group Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies (TEALS) at the Centre for Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies (CETAPS), and launched at the Working CLIL Colloquium in March of the same year, the Working CLIL network is, as the name suggests, one which aims to connect communities of CLIL

practice in Portugal so that they may be aware of teaching and research activity, and share resources and ideas about best practice.

Since CLIL is a relatively new phenomenon in Portugal, it is important that practitioners and researchers feel part of a wider community which is working together to better understand it. The creation of the network was also in response to an increasing number of requests from schools and individual teachers for guidance on the implementation of CLIL. Thus, among the objectives of Working CLIL are the following: to forge connections between communities of CLIL practice; develop partnerships between faculty and schools to develop practitioner inquiry and teacher education practices; develop a nationwide network of CLIL researchers; connect schools engaged in CLIL; conduct evidence-based research and longitudinal studies across educational levels; provide support for CLIL (through teacher education programmes; conferences; external coordination of CLIL projects in schools including teacher observation; development of materials for CLIL); host and support other CLIL researchers through research stays at TEALS member institutions.

Members of the Working CLIL research strand are currently mapping CLIL activity in Portugal in order to determine the extent to which CLIL is being implemented in the country and institutional/stakeholder needs with a view to providing recommendations on implementation and support. Further information about members, events, publications about CLIL in Portugal, outputs which include videos from experts in the field and lesson plans can be found on the Working CLIL network site.[8]

6. Conclusion

This article has provided an overview of CLIL/bilingual education practices using English in state education in Portugal. It is a recent and short trajectory, but one which highlights efforts made at ministerial and grassroots levels in the absence of a single template to implement this educational approach. It has also provided words of caution that whilst we may learn from the trials and tribulations of others elsewhere, we must also take measures prior to implementation. This means providing teacher education for CLIL at all educational levels, thus ensuring that success and

quality are guaranteed rather than short-lived. Finally, it provides reassurance for those involved in CLIL that they belong to a wider community of practitioners and researchers with whom they may connect in order to better understand the phenomenon and develop their professional practice. This is the *essence* of Working CLIL.

Notes

[1] Although there is CLIL/bilingual education using the English language in the private sector, projects referred to in this article are those from the mainstream (public) sector which are mentioned in the literature.

[2] Information about the Bilingual Schools Programme may be accessed at www.dge.mec.pt/programa-escolas-bilinguesbilingual-schools- programme and https://www.britishcouncil.pt/atividades/educacao-sociedade/ensino-bilingue

[3] The project 'Speak English, Reach Success' may be accessed at sites.google.com/view/aesa-working-clil-network/home

[4] Information about the GoCLIL project may be accessed at youtu.be/tnlhfOrGqhU

[5] GoCLIL European project may be accessed at goclil.wixsite.com/goclil?lightbox=dataItem-jbyzdtbd2

[6] CUBA CLIL IS IN may be accessed at sites.google.com/view/cubaclilisin/o-projetothe-project

[7] CLIL ME IN may be accessed at epcuba.pt/clil/

[8] Working CLIL network may be accessed at www.cetaps.com/research-areas/teals-teacher-education-and-applied-language-studies/clil/.

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