

## CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the possibility of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) application in Pakistan. English is the language of power and opportunities in Pakistan; however, access to education in English language is still a privilege of few in Pakistan. This paper highlights the place of English in Pakistan and presents a comparison of private English medium institutions and state-run vernacular language (Urdu) institutions. It is seen that successful English language learning opportunities are linked with socio-economic status. It is suggested that CLIL can provide greater opportunities of communication, and hence learning, in a foreign language for learners from less privileged class. This paper briefly describes key features of CLIL, and proposes application of CLIL in public sector institutions, especially institutions of higher education. It is suggested that introduction and implementation of CLIL in the public sector universities of Pakistan may contribute to better language learning outcomes.*

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### INTRODUCTION

English is the symbol of status in Pakistan; and the ability to speak and write correct English opens so many career opportunities and can be seen as a stepping stone in life. "English is considered the vehicle for achieving modernization, scientific and technological development and economic advancement for self and the country; in short, for improving one's life chances" (Shamim, 2008). The importance of English medium education can be gauged from the fact that in last two decades private 'non-elite' English medium schools have mushroomed all over Pakistan, even in the small town; and increasingly English medium education has become synonymous with quality education (Shamim 2008:237). Pakistan does not have one universal system of education catering for the needs of all irrespective of the economic class or background. Parallel system of education – English medium and vernacular medium – in Pakistan is the continuation of British

colonial education system (Rahman 1996; Ramanathan 2005; Shamim 2008). A White Paper on Education in Pakistan (cited in Aly, 2007:54) recommends English as medium of instruction in all colleges and universities; and proposes teaching of mathematics and science subjects in English at secondary and middle schools level. It is argued that majority of children in Pakistan study in private non-elite English medium or Vernacular (Urdu, Sindhi) medium schools, where both students and teachers are not very proficient in English; change in the medium of instruction without raising the standards of education in these schools might "lead to lower levels of literacy in English but also, more generally, in other subject areas taught through the medium of English" (Shamim, 2008:243).

Perhaps it is not just the parallel system of education or method/ approach which determines the success or failure in learning English as second/foreign language. A research study (Schofield & Mamuna, 2003) shows that in non-linguistics variables, associated with the success in learning English as second/foreign language, SES (socio-economic status) is perhaps the most important in Pakistan. Study shows that students attending expensive elite English medium schools have far better proficiency in English as compared to their counterpart from non-elite English medium schools or vernacular-medium schools. As only rich can afford such expensive education for their children, SES appears as the most significant variable in learning English as second/foreign language in Pakistan. The study (Schofield & Mamuna, 2003) also shows that length of instruction, i.e. number of years, in English language also determine the successful learning of English as second/foreign language; it is argued that children who are instructed in English from early stage (Montessori) to advance stage (College/University) appear to do well in learning English as second/foreign language than those students who start at late stage (secondary/ higher) in school. Most of the vernacular-medium schools start teaching of English as a subject at later stage (class 6). It is argued that these finding may not necessarily apply in other contexts, but in the current socio-economic situation of Pakistan SES of a student can be directly linked with his/her success in learning English as second/foreign language (Schofield & Mamuna, 2003).

Pakistan's educational system is stratified according to socio-economic class and can be explained roughly in terms of type of educational institution. The madrassas cater for very poor children mostly from rural and urban working class localities. The Urdu-medium schools cater for lower-middle-class and some middle-class children, while the elite English-medium schools cater for the upper-middle class and above (Rahman, 2004: 315). It can be observed that in the absence of a uniform education system, English language learning opportunities are not equal for all learners in Pakistan. Students from poor economic background study in government-run vernacular medium institutions, where they hardly get enough input in English, therefore, their chances of learning English as second/foreign language are very slim. CLIL provides greater input and increased opportunities of interaction and output in a foreign language. Introduction of CLIL in public sector institutions can help provide increased opportunities of learning English as second/foreign to learners from less privileged background.

### **ENGLISH IN SCHOOLS OF PAKISTAN**

Rahman (2001:243) explains that there are three major types of English medium schools in Pakistan. They are: (1) state-influenced elitist public schools; (2) private elitist schools; (3) non-elitist schools. Federal government public schools, armed forces public schools and cadet colleges and public schools run by federal government institution (e.g. PIA, Customs, Armed Forces) come under the category of state-influenced elitist public schools. The private Pakistani schools such as Beaconhouse and City School, to name a few, are categorized as the private elitist English medium schools. Rahman (2001) explains that these private elitist English medium schools charge quite exorbitant tuition fees, ranging from Rs 1500 to Rs 7000 per month; this expensive education is unthinkable for the poor but even a large part of Pakistani middleclass cannot afford this kind of education for their children.

Most private non-elitist English medium schools are "English medium only in name". The demand for English medium education in Pakistan is so enormous that even in small towns one can witness the mushrooming growth of such schools. The tuition

fees of these schools range from Rs 50 to Rs 1500 per month, which is quite higher than the fees of state-run vernacular schools and lower than private elitist English medium schools. It is elaborated that, contrary to claims, in most of these schools, only mathematics and science subjects are taught in English and all other subjects in Urdu. Teachers in these schools are neither educated from English medium schools and nor professionally trained to teach in English; for instance "teacher write answers of all subjects on the board which students faithfully copy, memorize and reproduce in the examination" (Rahman, 2001:248).

In vernacular-medium schools, both Urdu and Sindhi, English is not a second language but a foreign language; and source of worries for both teachers, because they are not well-versed in it, and for students. A 1982 report on vernacular schools of Lahore, states that "students could not speak or understand English, and at most they could read their lessons and simple sentences" in English. It is argued that students of vernacular-medium schools, coming from poor background, do not get opportunity to interact with or through English except in textbooks and classrooms, therefore it is hardly surprising that they fail to learn English. Successive governments have failed to implement a uniform policy vis-à-vis beginning of English as a subject in vernacular-medium schools; some schools start from class 1 while others from class 6 (Rahman 2001).

State-run vernacular schools, which in most cases use Urdu as medium of instruction except in Sindh province, especially in rural Sindh where Sindhi is also used as medium of instruction, get "step-motherly treatment in the allocation of funds, maintenance of buildings, quality of teachers, provision of resource material and so on" (Rahman, 2001:245). It is argued that far from removing inequality in academic education, State is responsible for creating parallel systems of education; one for the rich elite and other for the masses. He maintains that these elitist schools/ colleges are operated at huge cost and public money is used to maintain these elitist institutions and thereby parallel systems of education (Rahman, 2001:244).

Rahman (1999:22-27; 2001:251) argues that students from elite English medium schools are very fluent in English not only because they are taught through English, but it is also used in



outside classroom interaction with teachers and classmates; and as these students come from affluent back ground and their parent are also educated so English is also used at home. It is argued that use of English outside classroom both at school and home is the major difference, in terms of competence and performance of English, between students of elite English medium schools and private non-elite English medium schools and vernacular-medium school, where English is taught only as subject, and students get very little opportunity to use English at school and almost never at home.

Rahman (2001:254) explicates that apart from English and vernacular medium of education thousands of students study in religious seminaries (Madrassas). Mostly these students come from poor background and having families of religious orientation. The education in these seminaries is free and food is also served at meal times. It is argued that generally English is perceived as a language of western people, and in the strict sense of the term of non-believers by the Ulemas (religious leaders). Pakistan has a history in which policy of teaching English in these seminaries has been resented and resisted. However, some religious sects support and have introduced at least English as a subject in their curriculum; but the quality of teaching and learning is far from satisfactory (Rahman, 2001: 255).

### CLIL DEFINED

“CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (Mehisto, *et al.* 2007:9). The term CLIL (content and language integrated learning) became popular in Europe in the mid 1990s. Marsh and Frigols (2007:34) maintain that “the term CLIL was adopted in Europe during 1994 to help professionals explore the types of good practice and sometimes very significant outcomes being achieved where ‘language-supportive’ methodologies were used to learn both language and authentic content”. The innovation of CLIL is not particular to modern times; the earliest example of CLIL can be traced 5000 years back in the history, when Akkadians, the conquerors of Sumerians, learnt the subject like botany, zoology and theology in local Sumerian language. In Europe, for centuries, the use of Latin to learn disciplines like law, science, medicine and philosophy is

also an example of CLIL. While the influence of Latin was detrimental to the development of local languages, CLIL on the contrary espouses learning through second language and the development of local or first language as well (Mehisto, *et al.* 2007: 9). In recent history, the English immersion programmes for French speaking Canadians can also be cited as a development towards CLIL approach. It is argued that globalization and technological development have emphasized the need of communication on international level across continents. International issues ranging from politics, economics to sports and entertainment are all dependant on effective communication. It is argued that CLIL has emerged according to the demands of modern academic and socio-economical needs. Marsh and Frigols (2007: 34) argue that "CLIL has emerged as an ecological professional development in language teaching because it responds to the new, changing and immediate demands of two fundamental 'environments'; the wider society, and the school". Mehisto (2007:10) maintains that "Globalization has made the world interconnected in ways not seen before. New technologies are facilitating the exchange of information and knowledge." CLIL has emerged as a viable approach to develop and promote communication among continents and cultures.

### ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF CLIL

The CLIL approach aims to use learner's second/ additional language as a medium of instruction for learning other subjects, for example, science, maths, geology and history. The CLIL approach requires content teachers to teach those language parts which are essential for the comprehension of 'content'. On the other hand, language teachers play the dual role, they teach standard language curriculum using material from content subjects; at the same time, language teachers help content teachers in the teaching of content subjects through second language.

Mehisto, *et al.* (2007: 11) argues that "CLIL is a tool for the teaching and learning of content and language. The essence of CLIL is integration". Following are described as the dual functions of CLIL:

1. Language learning is included in content classes (e.g., maths, history, geography, computer programming, science, civics,

etc.) This means repacking information in a manner that facilitates understanding. Charts, diagrams, drawing, hands-on experiments and the drawing out of key concepts and terminology are all common CLIL strategies.

2. Content from subject is used in language-learning classes. The language teacher, working together with teachers of other subjects, incorporates the vocabulary, terminology and texts from those other subjects into his or her classes. Students learn the language and discourse patterns they need to understand and use the content (Mehisto, *et al.* 2007:11).

It is argued that students' desire and motivation to comprehend and use 'content' encourages them to learn the language. Unlike other approaches, in CLIL students do not learn a language for the sake of learning, but they learn to use the language. It is argued that incorporation of content in language classes and vice versa facilitates the learning of both content and language. "In CLIL, content goals are supported by language goals" (Mehisto, *et al.* 2007:11). Apart from content and language goals, CLIL also focuses on students' learning skills. The development of learning skills helps in achieving the content and language goals. Meshisto (2007:12) defines the following as the ultimate goals of CLIL approach:

- Grade-appropriate levels of academic achievements in subjects taught through the CLIL language.
- Grade-appropriate functional proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the CLIL language.
- Age-appropriate levels of first-language competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- An understanding and appreciation of the cultures associated with CLIL language and student's first language;
- The cognitive and social skills and habits required for success in an ever-changing world.

Dalton-Puffer (2007: 1) explains that "the term Content-and-Language-integrated-Learning (CLIL) refers to educational settings where a language other than students' mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction". It is argued that although use of L2 as a medium of instruction is not a new phenomenon; it is surely a new development in most of European countries, where

educational system has remained predominantly monolingual since early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dalton-Puffer, 2007:1).

Dalton-Puffer (2007:2) argues that “many pedagogical concerns with foreign or second language learning over the last few decades have addressed the fact that classrooms are widely considered the places where languages cannot really be learned”. Van Lier (1988:3, cited in Dalton-Puffer, 2007:2) argues that “successful learners learn more on the street than in class, but if we take that statement to its conclusion, ESL classes are unnecessary and EFL classes useless”. CLIL classroom offer genuine opportunity of communication; when students learn content subjects in a language other than mother tongue, they do not dwell upon learning the rules of foreign language, but they actually use the foreign language for genuine communication. Thus, CLIL classroom are turned into streets where genuine communication takes place. “In other words, CLIL classrooms are seen as environments which provide opportunities for learning through acquisition rather than through explicit teaching” (Dalton-Puffer, 2007:3). It is argued that some content teachers fear that the use of second or foreign language in content classrooms may hamper the teaching/ learning of content subjects, but research suggests CLIL provides students opportunity to learn L2 through meaningful interaction embedded in learners’ own context, this clearly gives an edge to CLIL over other approaches in which language is taught in isolation. CLIL develops students’ academic and professional competences in more than one language and they are better prepared to take up future professional challenges of communication through L2 (Tudor, 2008). Dalton-Puffer (2007) argues that CLIL classes are ‘either content-driven or language-driven’, and success of the CLIL programmes hinges on the clarity of the objectives pursued.

## CONCLUSION

Pakistan has enormous challenges ahead of it; improvement in education will have direct bearing on country’s socio-economic development. A vast majority of young learners do not get equal opportunities of quality education, because they come from poor background. It can be seen that students studying in expensive private English medium institutions are more successful in



learning/acquiring skills in English language as compared to students from government-run vernacular medium institutions (Rahman 2001). Socio-economic status is also seen as an important factor in successful language learning (Schofield & Mamuna, 2003). While socio-economic level of a vast majority cannot be raised, to enable them to afford quality education; changes can be made in the current education policy and curriculum to provide the less privileged students increased opportunities of learning the language of power in Pakistan (Shamim 2008). The introduction of CLIL, as a dual-focused education approach, in the public sector institutions of Pakistan will provide increased opportunities of input, interaction, communication and hence learning of English of English as a second/foreign language. CLIL, as an emerging education approach, can be very useful in raising the level of education in Pakistan, in general, and that of English, in particular.

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