

FOCUS ON CLIL – LITHUANIA 2015

Report from the Conference

LAKMA, the Lithuanian counterpart of AMATE, was established in 1990, the year of the foundation of the Republic. Since that time it has worked hard to promote itself as a fast growing professional body with worldwide contacts in the field of education in English.

The Lithuanian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (**LAKMA**) has organized its 17th international conference “Focus on CLIL- Lithuania 2015”. It was held on 16-17 October in Vilnius at the premises of the University of Education.

The aim of the conference was to bring together local and international experts of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in order to share insights into this area of learning, teaching and research as well as offer examples of good practice in the field.

The participants, teachers from all types of schools from Lithuania, as well as from the Baltic states had an opportunity to explore a variety of CLIL issues that covered all levels of education. The overall positive aim was to promote the CLIL approach in Lithuania and beyond.

Eglė Petronienė, **LAKMA**’s devoted chair, had an opening speech. Welcoming the participants, she pointed out that this year’s conference is attended by a spectacular number of 230 teachers interested in the CLIL approach.

Phil Ball, based in the Basque Country, northern Spain, is the well-known CLIL advocate often presenting in the Czech Republic. He had a plenary entitled **CLIL in Three Dimensions**. CLIL has been around for 20 years and now it is moving to a new stage. The three dimensions are content, language and procedures. He agrees with David Graddol (*English Next*, 2006) that English has become a CORE skill, no longer a mere language. Today, you cannot be monolingual. People are using English today to do something else.

The traditional distinction between hard and soft CLIL is useful but we need to bridge this divide. Subject teachers have to become more “language aware” and language teachers to become more “content aware.” This notion forms the leitmotif of Phil’s new book (together with Keith Kelly and John Clegg) *Putting CLIL into Practice* (OUP, 2015). The new phase of CLIL also means that there is no longer a dual focus but a single one that covers conceptual and linguistic knowledge. Phil says “Languages are acquired WHILE they are being used NOT learned first and used later.” Making mistakes is crucial, it is a part of the learning process. Phil mentioned an interesting fact: In the Basque Country, they do geography in English...

Keith Kelly, based in Bulgaria, has also been presenting in the Czech Republic more than once. Three years ago he opened a new English school for CLIL in Plovdiv. The pupils are 2 to 10 years of age. They do not use textbooks but learn through doing. Keith says: “Children need two things to learn a foreign language – it has to be fun and there should be a lot of exposure to the language.” His talk **CLIL for ELT** described the benefits the CLIL approach has: e.g. bringing real world into

the language classroom (we could watch a short video with 4 to 5 year olds from his school creating secret messages with invisible ink (using lemon juice over a candle), creating contexts for meaningful communication and introducing projects that link with the curriculum). Keith suggests that we should visit lessons of our content subject colleagues and use their ideas in our language lessons while we help these teachers with the language. We have to begin with joining, we cannot work separately.

To write for contacts, partnership with schools and teachers (there are already over 2000 teachers involved), write at factworld@yahoogroups.com

Elmyra Jurkšaitienė teaches at Tauragė Versmės Gymnasium in Lithuania. Her practical CLIL workshop centred around our senses. **CLIL – Not a Luxury but a Necessity** is a hands-on example of teaching a special course called International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Theory of Knowledge. This course is taught entirely in English, which is used as a tool to teach about the world beyond the classroom. We could experience a series of activities/ logically built steps which led us through the rich content and sophisticated linguistic terms. These included not only terms from biology and psychology but also touched upon a human/animal world of sense using e.g. an extract from Virginia Woolf's *Flush, the Spaniel* and visual art to discuss the perception of reality and illusion. The session was an inspiring example of how a language and content can co-exist and enrich each other.

Anna Klobuszewska has a long and fruitful history of working with English in many different fields. In her talk **CLIL: a Challenge or an Opportunity?** she spoke for PEARSON publications. Although CLIL has been here for centuries, it only became a buzz word in the early 2000s. Anna was interested in why CLIL has become such a hot topic in the 21st century. Our pupils/students are the so called "digital natives". They want to collaborate, engage, participate in new technologies. The 4Cs (collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and communication) have now got the 5th C of the 21st century: competence based building: learning and using the knowledge at the same time.

Franz Mittendorfer has been working with English in various functions both in Austria and the UK. His presentation **The Triple E – Eduaction for Empowerment and Employability** was based on the statistics: Today's students will change jobs 7 times and career 3 times. No longer then can we teach language and content as two separate entities. Language education cannot be separated from content education. There is, as we know, not one way of teaching CLIL and Franz suggests: "When in doubt, stand up and do it your way."

I myself, as an AMATE representative, also had a presentation. **CLIL in Czech Schools** shortly mapped the history and the current situation with learning English in the Czech Republic and the role that CLIL might be playing in improving the language level of today's Czech population.

I would like to express my thanks to AMATE for giving me the chance to participate in the Conference.

Michaela Čanková
cankova@volny.cz

Prague 28th October 2015