

8 France



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8.1 Introduction: National Language, Regional Languages and Foreign Languages

Unlike several of its neighbours, France has only one official national language, historically used as a tool for the unification of the nation, and spread to all levels of society through the implementation of compulsory education in the late 19th century. French is, then, the official language of education throughout the country and its overseas territories. However, in 1951, a law made it possible for regional languages to be taught in their respective regions: these include Breton and Occitan, and the regional languages shared with populations across national borders, or related to neighbouring languages, such as Basque, Catalan, Corsican, Alsatian and Flemish. These measures apply also to the languages of overseas territories. This law and subsequent legislation created the background to some examples of CLIL in France, as we will see below.

Foreign language provision in secondary education covers major European languages (and some less commonly taught European languages, such as Danish, Norwegian or Swedish), but also in some cases, Oriental languages such as Chinese. The baccalaureate curriculum includes at least one foreign language, a second foreign language is often an optional subject, and language specialists will also take a third. The experimental introduction of foreign language provision in Primary education, about 15 years ago, has gradually developed despite the difficulty of supplying enough qualified personnel, and foreign language provision now covers at least the last two years of primary schools nationwide. The phasing in of this provision continues, and the ultimate objective is of language teaching from the final year of *école maternelle* (nursery school) through to the baccalaureate.

As in the rest of Europe, the popular perception that English is an indispensable part of a school curriculum tends to govern demand. Spanish is rapidly overtaking German as the second most popular language, perceived as easy to learn and an opening to South America as well as Spain. Learning German, the language of France's traditional privileged partner in Europe, is consequently promoted as a foreign language. Italian, the other most frequently learned language, continues to benefit from a positive perception.

To complete the background to language learning and CLIL in France, mention should be made of the international educational offer, both in *Lycées français* abroad (catering for expats but also for families interested in the French curriculum and baccalaureate), and

in *Sections internationales of lycées* in France itself (where the children of foreign residents, together with French students, can follow a French curriculum partially weighted towards the culture of the partner country), before going on to a description of the most widespread CLIL provision in France, the *Sections européennes et de langues orientales*.

In what follows, we intend to show how in the French national education system, CLIL, though originally restricted to an elite, as has often been the case, is a tool that is gradually taking root in the national education system for different reasons. Three cases of CLIL provision allow us to review the present situation and possible future developments. The discussion will be restricted to the public sector.

8.2 A First Case of CLIL: the International Sector

In *Sections internationales*, after a minimum of 3 hours per week of language/CLIL learning at primary level, students go on to specific CLIL provision in both lower and upper secondary levels. In history and geography (considered as a single subject in France), two of the four weekly hours are taught in the partner country's language, and the curriculum is negotiated with the partner country. In addition to language classes, at least four hours a week are devoted to literature in the partner's language. This curriculum is certified by an 'international option' in the *Brevet* (end of *collège* – lower secondary) diploma, with two specific exams in history-geography and the foreign language. In the same way, in the *lycée* (upper secondary), we find the same curricular modifications, and for the baccalaureate, although the exam differs according to the students' specialisation, there is again the 'international option' specified in the diploma. There are at present 65 *Sections internationales* in French *lycées*, linked with Britain, the United States, Germany, Spain, Italy, Japan, Holland, Poland, Portugal, Scandinavia and Arab-speaking countries.

The *Lycées français* abroad, brought together in an association, the *Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Étranger* (AEFE), are linked with the French foreign ministry and ministry of education. Although providing a French education abroad, the curriculum is broadened in regard to the country of implantation, particularly in history-geography, and CLIL is part of the curricular provision. The amount of CLIL varies from one establishment to another, as local situations and demand vary enormously, as does the multilingual competency of the students. (Certification of language acquisition will vary according to the final examinations taken.) There are 6 *Sections internationales* (see above) implanted in *lycées français* in the US, Japan and Sweden.

These two examples are, of course, atypical in that the schools concerned represent only a small proportion of public education provision. However, they are examples of the most traditional framework for CLIL, answering a need arising from direct contact with speakers of another language, often more specifically a need for double language competency,

and often – although not always – addressing an elite. The implementation of CLIL within existing structures, and with minimal modifications to national curricula (aiming at enhancement rather than reduction) is the basic model for CLIL in France.

8.3 CLIL in Regional Language Provision

As we have seen, provision for teaching of/in regional languages stems from 1951, and this was confirmed first by circulars in 1982 and 1983, and re-stated in 1989, for example, by the Framework law on Education. Recruitment of qualified regional language speakers for specific initial training of primary teachers was made possible in 2002.

Regional language courses are voluntary and range in primary schools from early language learning to CLIL, while in secondary education, provision ranges from a regional language option on a par with foreign language learning, to CLIL. The implementation of regional language learning is undertaken by regional educational authorities (the French education system is divided into *académies*, with a *Rectorat* as educational authority), in association with local government bodies, in response to demand from parents and regional associations in favour of sustaining regional language and culture.

As provision is on a regional level, overall national statistics are unavailable. The statistics available on a regional level show increasing figures for regional language learning over the last few years, particularly concerning CLIL at primary level.

Information released by the *Rectorat de l'Académie de Corse* in March 2005, concerning the 4th term of 2004, gives the following figures on the provision of Corsican: 90% of children attending primary school learn Corsican. Of these, 2859 – about 6% of the total primary and secondary school population in Corsica – attend 'parity' bilingual classes, in which a full 50% of the curriculum is delivered in the regional language.

Statistics from the *Rectorat de l'Académie de Rennes*, the education authority for Brittany, for the school year 2004–05, give an idea of the situation in secondary education: 4541 learners follow different courses in Breton or Gallo, including 838 (5.56% of secondary students) following a CLIL programme.

Although the numbers of regional language learners involved in CLIL teaching (already a small percentage at regional level) are low in proportion to the numbers of students nationwide, the uptake of CLIL is on the increase in this sector.

8.4 The Example of Regional Languages and German in Eastern France

A particular case of regional language provision is worth closer scrutiny: Alsace and the eastern Moselle area of Lorraine, both bordering Germany. In these areas, regional language provision is supported as described above, and there are numerous instances

where primary provision reaches full 'parity'. CLIL delivery is ensured by various qualified teachers: volunteer teachers with language competency validated by a recruitment commission; teachers who have taken the specific training course at the region's IUFM (teacher training institute); teachers from Germany on exchange schemes; and people other than teachers, on contract with the local authorities. Statistics for the school year 2004–05 given by the *Inspection Académique du Bas-Rhin*, and concerning primary education in the *département* of Bas-Rhin, show a total of 5883 pupils (aged 3 to 11) in 246 'parity' classes, that is, 5.7% of the total population at the age levels considered in the area.

At the level of secondary education in the Alsace and Lorraine regions, Franco-German cooperation agreements, first implemented in 1987, have given rise to various bilateral systems enhancing the learning of '*la langue du voisin*' (the neighbour's language) through bicultural curricula in different parts of France. In these regions, the particular need for German speakers in the framework of the local economy, in which cross-border exchanges play an extremely important role, explains the high proportion of specific study options (with corresponding certification) in the area. These include a high concentration of *sections européennes* (described in more detail below), and two other specific CLIL curricula, the *Bac Plus* and the *Abibac*.

The *Bac* (Baccalaureate) *Plus* is a specific option for upper secondary students specialising in science and technology, and engineering, leading to complementary certification at baccalaureate level. The curriculum includes enhanced language learning, the delivery of one technological subject and one general subject in CLIL, and a minimum of 2 weeks' work experience in Germany. In addition to the baccalaureate, certification by a Franco-German board in the framework of an agreement between the Académie de Nancy-Metz and the neighbouring Saarland education ministry attests language competency and enables the student to go on to bilingual higher education, for example in the Franco-German university. This option, then, is specific to Lorraine, and is taught in two *lycées* in towns near the German border.

The *Abibac*, in contrast, is a bi-national project involving a small number of *lycées* throughout France and Germany. In the French ministry of education's statistics for 2001, 7 of the 18 *lycées* taking part in the system in that year were in the Alsace-Lorraine area. The term *Abibac* represents the double certification of the German Abitur and the French Baccalaureate, and two special papers, in history-geography and German language are marked by both French and German teachers. The curriculum includes, for French students, six hours of German per week, including literature studies, and five hours of history-geography taught in French and German, together with regular cultural and linguistic exchanges.

In the above cases, it is interesting to note how regional language learning and national foreign language learning policies, thanks to intergovernmental agreements, lead not only to exchanges, but also to common certification, thanks to the introduction of CLIL as a tool for subject and language learning. Once again, however, the number of schools participating in this system is small.

8.5 CLIL in the Mainstream: Sections européennes

Sections européennes were introduced in French national education in 1992, with two main objectives: enhancing the learning of European languages and fostering European citizenship through exchanges with the country of the language studied. (The system also includes *sections de langue orientale*, and Franco-German sections.) The *section européenne* option begins in the 3rd year of lower secondary education (occasionally in the 1st year) with an enhanced language-learning curriculum of 2 additional hours per week, to enable students to acquire the communicative competencies needed for CLIL. In upper secondary, part of the curriculum of one subject will be taught through CLIL (with an extra hour on the usual subject timetable). However, the extra language learning is not compulsory, depending on means available in the school. While the subject most commonly chosen is history-geography, any subject may be taught, apart from French and Philosophy (in the latter case, because it is only taught in the final year leading up to the baccalaureate). The CLIL subject may also vary from year to year. Special certification is given at the baccalaureate: the student must reach a level of 12/20 in the language concerned, together with a special assessment in the CLIL subject – an oral examination counts for 80% of the mark, the other 20% concerning continuous assessment – to obtain the *mention 'section européenne'*.

Once again, the opening of a *section européenne* is a decision taken at regional level, by the *Recteur* of the *académie* concerned (schools must apply for permission), and consequently the statistics at a national level are not published every year. Moreover, these statistics are not always expressed in the same way, making comparisons difficult. However, figures for the school year 2001–2002, the 10th anniversary of the *section européenne* system, give a total of 2642 *sections européennes* – with an estimated 8000 students – throughout France (including 134 in vocational schools, recently included in the system in 2000), an increase of 50.17% over the two previous years. Over 95% of candidates obtained their baccalaureate with the special certification. Statistics for the school year 2003–2004 show a total 143 732 students in *sections européennes*, i.e., 2.6% of secondary school students.

What is interesting about *sections européennes* is that while the proportion of CLIL is very modest, (the *section européenne* is an option rather than a separate curricular structure), *sections européennes* are widespread and situated in mainstream secondary education, and, apart from the extra language hours, involve no changes in the subject curricula leading to the baccalaureate.

8.6 Teaching through CLIL

Implicit in the above descriptions is that CLIL is in the vast majority of cases delivered by the subject teacher rather than the language teacher. We will go into more details on qualifications below, but we can say here that there is a basic posit that a foreign language specialist cannot teach a subject, but a subject teacher can teach through a foreign language. Insofar as France is concerned, the subject curriculum is identical whether taught through CLIL or not, and it is true that the need is for someone specialised in subject-specific didactics and pedagogy. Some will consider that leaving language to a non-specialist is not acceptable. However, if one considers that the language is a tool for communication in the CLIL classroom, and that the CLIL teacher does not replace the specialist work of the language teacher (which continues to take place in the language class), this choice will seem logical.

All the same, not having dual qualification, the CLIL teacher often feels the need for support in the foreign language. This is especially true of *sections européennes*. As a great deal of leeway in implementation was allowed when they were set up, different configurations exist, according to the number of hours a school will devote to CLIL out of its annual total. In some cases, we will see co-teaching by subject and language teacher, but this is not very frequent. More often, the language teacher will be a resource and support for the CLIL teacher, for example, by helping in the language aspects of lesson preparation, or pre-teaching terminology during the language class. (They also work together on exchange schemes.)

As the CLIL teacher's main preoccupation tends to be language competency, there is often a lack of knowledge of CLIL methodology, especially when only part of the curriculum is taught in the foreign language. In this case, much thought needs to be given to the choice of activities in the 'traditional' hours and during CLIL teaching. For example, heavy content areas should be reserved for tuition in the mother tongue, and CLIL, in line with the idea that it serves to foster communication abilities, should be used more for consolidation of knowledge through thought-provoking activities. Very few CLIL teachers have had training in the didactics and pedagogy of language and communication, and know little of the language teaching methods which they could adopt in the CLIL classroom, like information gaps and problem-solving. Additional training tends to concentrate on general language proficiency, subject-specific language or the language of classroom management, as these are the needs expressed by the teachers.

Another preoccupation is teaching resources. Adapting textbooks from another country is not an easy solution, as their approach does not often correspond with the situation in hand. Pooling resources is common, internet sites are created, but sharing pools across the country is more difficult. However, in the last few years, the CIEP (*Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques*) has set up a series of on-line resources including

an electronic newsletter for bilingual teachers, the *Billet du bilingue*. Finally, concerning teaching of/in German, mention should be made of the work on Franco-German history textbooks for *lycées*, soon to be published.

8.7 Teacher Qualification

CLIL implementation still depends very often on the presence in the school of a teacher with adequate language competence in addition to their teaching qualification, and teacher qualification varies according to whether CLIL is used in primary or secondary education.

The primary teacher is qualified to teach the whole curriculum. In addition, since the introduction of early language learning in primary education, both initial and in-service training schemes exist to give primary teachers a qualification in language teaching. This qualification, called '*habilitation*' and defined by a national decree, certifies language proficiency at B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference and knowledge of the didactics and pedagogy of foreign languages, and is given by local education authorities. As this certification covers the teaching of a foreign language, however, it does not include CLIL methodology. This may be considered as a first model of qualification to teach CLIL: though there is no real CLIL in foreign language teaching at primary level as yet, it serves as a model for the validation of competency in regional language teaching (see the example of Eastern France above).

There are also specialist initial training courses for future teachers in regional languages – this time, including some CLIL methodology – in the IUFMs (teacher training institutes) in the areas concerned with regional language learning. In-service training is also provided by the local education authorities. However, these specialisation courses do not lead to special status for the teachers who take them: teachers in France are civil servants, and wage scales are the same for all. So the real incentive is the teacher's own interest and enthusiasm in teaching through CLIL.

In secondary education, the situation is different, since teachers are qualified in only one subject. Until recently, the system has been as follows: as in the primary sector, volunteers also obtain a '*habilitation*' from the regional foreign language inspector. This enables them either to take part in their own school's CLIL project, or to ask for a transfer to a position in a school already providing CLIL. A certain number of posts are earmarked in an *académie* each year, and the candidates with the corresponding language '*habilitation*' – and, of course, the corresponding subject, since secondary teaching posts are subject-linked – will have priority over candidates who do not have the '*habilitation*'. The remarks about the lack of special status for CLIL teachers in primary education are valid for secondary education – there is no difference in wage scales. Interest and enthusiasm are again the prime motives, although the earmarked teaching posts may be an incentive if they concern 'good schools' or allow more geographical proximity to the place of work.

Until now, then, most secondary CLIL teachers are recognised as competent in the subject and in the language, but may start CLIL (and even continue for some time) with no actual training in CLIL methodology. Some IUFMs offer optional CLIL courses in initial training, and in-service training is provided in certain cases. However, in recognition of the growing role of CLIL in secondary education, a new certification system is coming into force. In 2004, a '*certification complémentaire*' for *section européenne* CLIL (together with French as a second language, cinema, theatre, dance and art history, often taught in schools, but with no teacher qualification attendant) was set up by ministerial decree. The candidate must demonstrate proficiency in the target language, bi-cultural knowledge, knowledge of CLIL pedagogy and the ability to set up an international exchange. This certification is the first to define and validate specific competencies at national level, and by implication will also define CLIL training schemes.

8.8 Moving beyond the Experimental Stage

The account above shows that, although CLIL is still available to only a small proportion of learners in France, it is now accepted as a valid approach in various situations, and is gradually becoming more widespread. In particular, with the opening of *sections européennes*, it can no longer be considered an approach reserved for an elite. Thirteen years after the creation of *sections européennes* in mainstream education, CLIL is now moving beyond the experimental stage.

A strong point in favour of CLIL in France is that, while provision is decided at a local level, it takes place in the framework of national decrees that provide a solid basis for its implementation. In particular, in secondary education, certification at baccalaureate level always accompanies a CLIL project, involving assessment both of the language and the CLIL subject, and this provides not only recognition of students' work, but also of the project itself. The setting up of *certification complémentaire* is another step in the development of CLIL, both as recognition of teachers' competency and as a clearer definition of the demands of CLIL and training needs.

It is interesting to note that, whether the language taught is a regional or a foreign language, and whatever the system, CLIL provision is always closely linked to a cultural project – international schools set up in bilateral cooperation with other countries, and projects involving regional language and culture, or European citizenship. Because of the cultural aspect, many CLIL projects in secondary education involve the teaching of history-geography through CLIL, as a terrain for the enhancement of cultural understanding, and even when the proportion of CLIL provision is limited, many subjects may be taught in this manner. The intercultural emphasis contributes to the recognition of CLIL as being enriching.

8.9 Future Development of CLIL

In the report accompanying the framework law that has recently been passed by the French parliament (late March 2005), the need to improve the learning of foreign languages as tools for communication is underlined. When this law comes into force, all the systems described above will be maintained, and often enhanced to a significant degree, as shown in the following statements in the report:

- In the field of early language learning, learning of a first foreign language will be generalised all over France, first at the CE2 level (7–8 year olds), then at CE1 level (6–7 year olds).
- Language learning is recognised as a cultural opening, and so among the stated targets for language learning is an increase of 20% of the number of *sections européennes* by 2010, with better national coverage.
- There will be at least two *sections internationales* in each *académie*, covering the whole period of schooling, from the beginning of primary education through to the baccalaureate.
- *Lycées internationaux* will continue to represent France abroad, and, more interestingly, will provide bi-national certification, where possible.
- The *Abibac* will be offered in every *académie*, and what is more will serve as a model for the creation of bi-national baccalaureates.
- Teaching of/in regional languages and culture will continue to be provided in association with local government authorities.

It may be forecast that in a future that is less and less distant, with the confirmation of the progressive implementation of language learning at an earlier age, language competency at secondary level will be higher, and linked with more implementation of CLIL in the curriculum (particularly in view of the fact that CLIL enhances authentic communication through the foreign language). It is to be hoped that CLIL will not only be made available to more and more students, but will sometimes be delivered more intensively than in the present small proportions of the timetable to which it is restricted. It is now certain that, in the next few years, CLIL, losing its experimental character, will both expand and mature.