

at the end of primary school. The Harris (1983) study depended on teachers to self-report to visiting inspectors. The other two studies involved relatively small numbers of participants and in the case of the Jiménez Catalán & de Zarobe (2010) study, there were confounding variables relating to previous hours of instruction received by the experimental group. Despite these limitations, one can view CLIL approaches as an attenuated version of immersion and the evidence that we have to date in Ireland on both immersion and CLIL is quite positive (Harris et al., 2006; Ó Duibhir, 2009).

On the basis of the evidence gathered here, a case could be made that pilot projects be established to further investigate the merits of CLIL instruction in an Irish context. One such successful pilot project on a version of CLIL involving teaching one or two whole subjects through Irish was reported in Harris et al. (2006). Based on a qualitative assessment, this intervention was judged to be very successful. Such an approach would also be in keeping with the recommendations in the Government's 20 year strategy for Irish (Rialtas na hÉireann, 2010) and the study of the Inspectorate (Department of Education and Science, 2007).

## **Content and language integrated learning**

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is an approach to language learning where the target language is used as the medium to teach both content and language. While the main focus of the typical CLIL lesson is on content, the target language is used as the medium through which pupils engage with the content. This process enables the attainment of both content objectives and language objectives in the same lesson. The approach to teaching in an all-Irish school is a form of CLIL that could also be classified as a total immersion approach as it permeates all aspects of the curriculum except for English.

The CLIL approach described here is where one subject, or topics from a subject, are taught through Irish. CLIL is very much in keeping with a communicative approach to language teaching, also as it provides an authentic context for L2 acquisition and use. The challenge of providing

authentic contexts to learners has been one of the difficulties in achieving success with a communicative approach. This notion of context is also key to learners being able to understand the content that they are engaging with in lessons. As the content is embedded in a context, the pupils utilise this contextual information together with their prior knowledge to derive meaning from the lesson. In a CLIL classroom, learners become active participants in their own learning using complex cognitive processes to acquire knowledge. This ability to think in another language can impact positively on content learning also.

A project to explore the potential of CLIL in teaching Irish when suitable materials and professional support were provided is reported in Harris et al. (2006). The project involved working regularly with 50 third- and fourth-class teachers over a two-year period to develop full courses in Science and Art through the medium of Irish. The teachers came from a wide variety of ordinary schools, including those in disadvantaged areas. The vast majority of them had no previous experience in teaching through Irish. Separate groups of teachers in Dublin and Tullamore met in workshop sessions to explain and discuss the approach and to distribute sample lessons. Having tried out the materials in their own classrooms, the teachers returned and discussed progress and completed questionnaires concerning the lessons. The lessons were then revised on the basis of this information. The teachers found the approach both enjoyable and rewarding and the courses, 'Bain Triail As' and 'Lean den Ealaín' (Harris & Mac Giollaibhuí, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c), were subsequently published for general sale.

None of the lesson material consisted of translations or adaptations of existing courses in English. Instead, every aspect of each lesson was planned and developed with the particular needs of pupils and teachers in ordinary schools in mind. Art was chosen because so many of the activities appropriate to the subject at this level involve language use which is located in a practical, concrete context. Science was chosen as the other subject in the knowledge that it would make greater demands on pupils in terms of vocabulary and perhaps use of language. In addition, while it was intended at the time that science would be introduced as a subject for the first time in the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999), that curriculum had not yet been published at the time the project was carried out. Thus, it was expected that pupils would have a high level of interest in this subject since they had not been taught it before. The teachers themselves also would not have taught science before – even through the medium of English. Thus, it was possible for both teachers and pupils to make an entirely fresh start on this subject through the medium of Irish.

The teacher's material for each lesson was in three parts. The first consisted of background material including (i) a statement of the objective of the lesson, (ii) materials required, (iii) a list of the main vocabulary items involved (Irish and English), and (iv) a list of informal phrases or idioms that

might be useful to the teacher during the lesson. The pupils' material in the case of Science also includes a pictorial vocabulary in Irish at the beginning of each lesson. The second part of the teacher's material consisted of an outline of the main steps in the lesson, usually illustrated, including a full script for the teacher. The aim was to anticipate some of the difficulties which would be presented by the limited linguistic ability of pupils, and to suggest possible ways around these difficulties. The availability of the prepared material had the effect of freeing teachers from some of the minute-by-minute decisions about the lesson to be taught, thus allowing them to attend more fully to classroom dynamics. In particular, they could devote more of their creative energy to responding to the individual needs of pupils who were learning through Irish for the first time. Teachers were expected and encouraged to depart from the script which they actually did. Nevertheless, there was general agreement that having the lesson planned in advance in this way was a major factor in the success of the project. The third part of the prepared material consisted of an optional development of the basic theme for more able classes.

A number of principles were agreed with the teachers with regard to teaching the lessons: for example, that in the beginning teachers would accept questions from pupils in English but answer them in simple Irish. In the longer term, teachers might rephrase in Irish the questions which had been posed in English by pupils. Discussions in English between pupils should also be permitted initially, but pupils should gradually be encouraged to use Irish.

While this particular project did not include a pre- and post-test of the pupils' proficiency in Irish, there is evidence from the studies by Harris (1983), Kiziltan & Ersanli (2007), Seikkula-Leino (2007) and Jiménez Catalán & de Zarobe (2010) discussed above that this approach leads to greater proficiency in the target language.

### **3.3 INTENSIVE LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES**

The evidence gathered on intensive language programmes comes to us from the research conducted on intensive French language programmes in Canada. The first intensive language programmes reported on in this body of literature were in Montreal, Quebec in the mid-1970s for intensive French and intensive English (Netten & Germain, 2004a). It was the evaluative research on these initiatives that highlighted the importance of intensity of instruction in the programmes. The authors argue that for the pupils to develop their