

# The current landscape of CLIL in primary education in France

An exploratory study and recommendations  
for further research into Content and  
Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

2025

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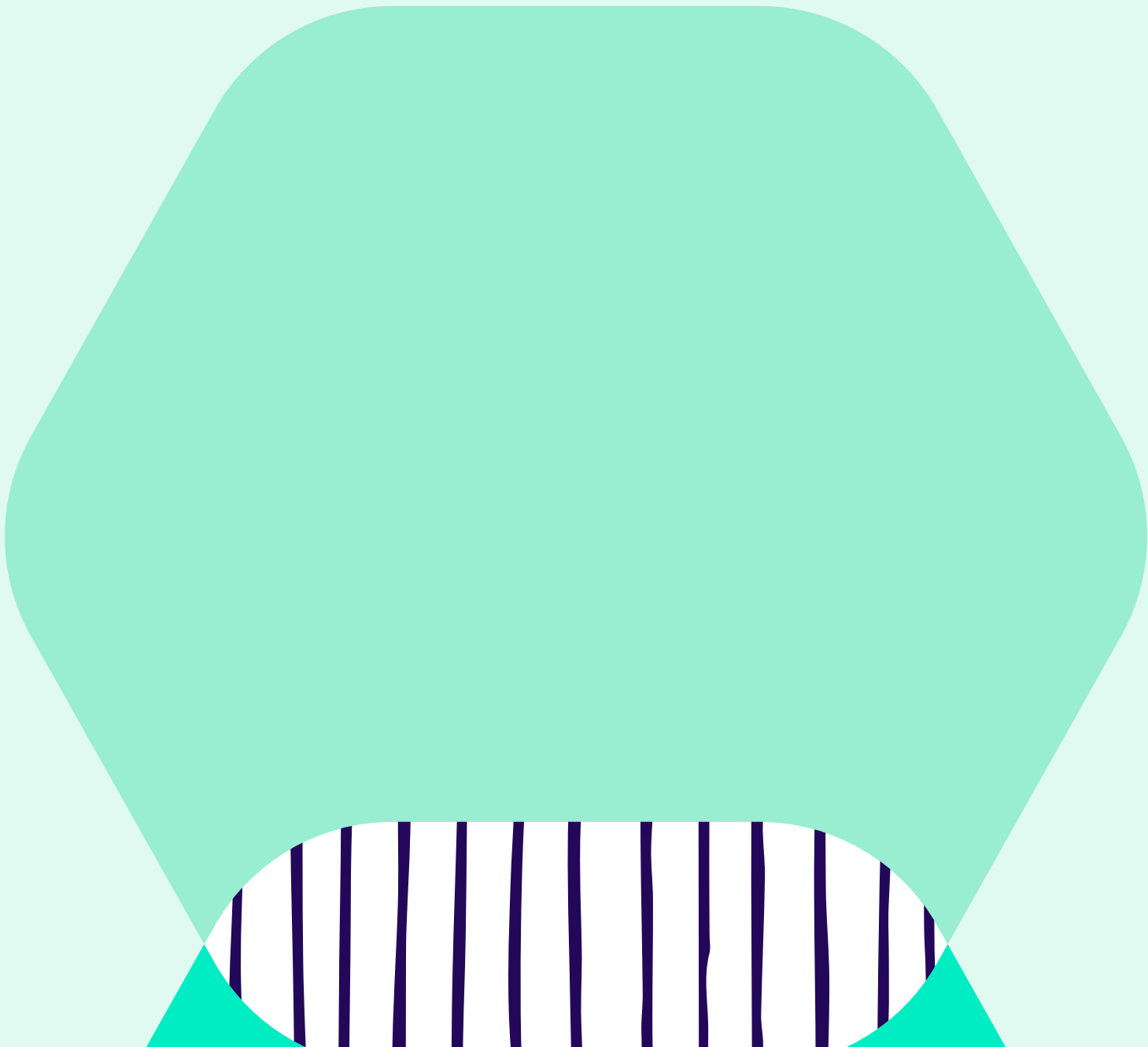
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# Acknowledgments

This report has benefited from the contributions of many different people.

Authors' specific contributions are designated according to [CRediT \(Contributor Roles Taxonomy\)](#)<sup>1</sup> and are shown in Table 1. Order of authorship is designated using to

ticks and then organised alphabetically within the ticks.

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Table 1

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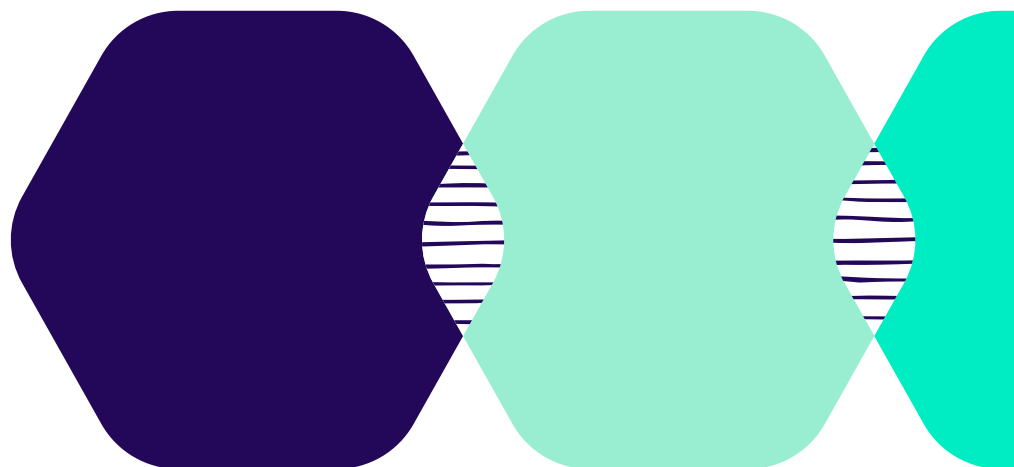
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<sup>1</sup> More information about the CRediT taxonomy is available here: <https://credit.niso.org/>

# Foreword

The Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach involves teaching content through a second or foreign language and thus integrating language learning with subject learning. Its primary goal is to develop both content knowledge and language proficiency simultaneously, fostering meaningful communication, deeper engagement, cognitive skills, and intercultural understanding.

France's education system has long been at the forefront of experimentation in language-teaching approaches, and the teaching of subjects through foreign languages has been a part of its efforts to drive up language levels since before the opening of the first official international sections (*sections internationales*) in the early 1980s. Today, CLIL is a central pillar of French language policy, and a great deal of thought and investment is going into democratising CLIL provision across the country.

Present in France since 1944, the British Council has followed the theorisation and implementation of CLIL projects closely throughout the years as part of its commitment to fostering mutual trust and understanding by supporting the teaching, learning and assessment of English. To this end, we produce research such as this report, support capacity-building initiatives and bring together education

practitioners and leaders to share their ideas and perspectives on topics linked to language learning and school education.

This publication aims to explore what CLIL looks like in France today, examining the current scale of provision, the political framework at national and local levels, and the current research landscape. It includes a series of recommendations for future research and for how the British Council can best support CLIL initiatives in France. Our hope is that it will form a useful point of access for those interested in the topic of CLIL in France and will help shape both our own approach towards CLIL and those of other education actors in the years to come.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the researchers behind the report and to the illustrious advisory committee who have followed the project every step of the way. I would also like to thank all our partners in France, whose advice and support have been invaluable. I hope you find the report illuminating and that it supports you in your research, your decision making or your teaching.

*George Wilson, Head of English and School Education, British Council France*



Photo of George Wilson.

# Executive summary

This report presents the findings of an exploratory research project into the scale and current situation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in primary education (ages 3-10) in France (including overseas territories). CLIL emerged as a term in the 1990s in the context of European policymakers seeking to raise foreign-language proficiency and advance the Council of Europe's goal of a plurilingual Europe. The implementation of CLIL at primary-school level in various European countries, including France, can be understood within this wider context of the advancement of a plurilingual Europe. France was among the earliest proponents in Europe of bilingual education, with international sections in French primary and secondary schools having been in official existence since 1981; with several, in reality, predating this period (St Germain-en-Laye, Sèvres, Fontainebleau etc.).

For the purposes of this exploratory research, Mehisto's (2015) tripartite framework of forces, mechanisms and counterweights has been used to describe and understand the current situation of CLIL in French primary schools. Forces are beliefs, values or attitudes that have the power to bring about actions. Mechanisms are tangible and are present as

parts of a system (such as an education system). Counterweights provide a way to analyse the tension that can exist between forces, and between forces and mechanisms. Counterweights could be either ideational or tangible and can be thought of as both positive or negative depending on one's perspective.

The four main aims for this exploratory research are:

1. To analyse the scale of CLIL in public primary education in France.
2. To identify how CLIL in primary education in France (ages 3-10) (including overseas territories) is conceptualised at national and regional levels in terms of policy and strategy.
3. To identify the principal forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL in primary education in France, the mechanisms for its implementation and the counterweights (positive and negative) to this implementation.
4. To provide an overview of research into CLIL teaching and learning in primary education in France.



To address these aims, an analysis was made of publicly available data from the *Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche* (Ministry of Education (MoE)), a desk review was undertaken of relevant policy documentation found on official French government websites and of the websites of a sample of France's eighteen *régions académiques* and thirty *académies*<sup>2</sup>, and a review of relevant literature was conducted.

An overview of the structure of the French education system can be found on the following page provided by Eurydice: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/france/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure>.

Key findings from this exploratory research are that:

- Publicly available data about foreign-language teaching in primary education does not provide a complete picture of the scale of current CLIL implementation in primary schools.
- CLIL is conceptualised in national policy and strategy documents as being a means of improving foreign-language proficiency. Given that CLIL already has a place within policy, there is therefore room for future iterations of such documents to reflect recent developments in CLIL theory and practice.
- The perception of policymakers that CLIL is primarily a way to improve foreign-language proficiency can be seen as a significant driving force behind CLIL implementation in France.
- National policy documents concerning primary CLIL identify a range of stakeholders: inspectors (*inspecteurs*), academic advisors (*conseillers*

*pédagogiques*), teacher trainers, school leaders, teachers, parents, local authorities (*académies*), and French and foreign partners (such as French universities, foreign institutional partners like the British Council, foreign universities and schools). These policy documents do not tend to make recommendations about the roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders, and explicit reference is not made to the involvement of stakeholders at the regional or *académie* level.

- There is little information about CLIL programmes on the websites of most *régions académiques* and *académies*. Therefore, it can be difficult for stakeholders and researchers to obtain insights into the mechanisms for CLIL implementation at regional and school levels.
- Conceptions of plurilingualism within academic literature in the French context offer a counterweight to official language policy. It would be a logical next step for policy documents to explore the plurilingual complexity of a classroom in these documents and to document how children can serve as learning resources for each other when they are able to use and build on their own linguistic repertoires.
- Overall, there is little current published research into CLIL in the French primary education system, especially about what CLIL looks like in practice.

Based on the research findings, further research into the following areas would be helpful:

- A more detailed understanding of the extent of CLIL implementation across different *académies* and *départements*.
- The ways in which CLIL is conceptualised by inspectors, academic advisors, school leaders and teachers.

<sup>2</sup> *Académie* refers to the specific geographical area within an educational system (e.g. the *académie* of Lyon). The expression *région académique* refers to a higher administrative level grouping several *académies* (e.g. the *région académique* Auvergne-Rhône Alpes includes the *académies* of Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand and Grenoble). Some *académies* might also be *régions académiques* e.g. Mayotte. Other *régions académiques* might be composed of one *académie* but have a different name: e.g. the Bretagne *région académique* consists only of the *académie* of Rennes. France has 18 *régions académiques* and 30 *académies*.

- 
- The way in which the conceptualisation of CLIL at the policy level as primarily a way to improve foreign-language proficiency impacts implementation at the school level.
  - The mechanisms for CLIL implementation at regional and school levels.
  - The progress that has been made in relation to the four ministerial recommendations put forward in the *Guide pour l'enseignement en langue vivante étrangère de l'école au lycée. Oser les langues vivantes étrangères*<sup>3</sup> (Ministry of Education, 2020).
  - The involvement in CLIL programmes of the key stakeholders identified in national policy documents.
  - The impact of CLIL programmes on learners and teachers, including what the benefits and drawbacks are for learners and teachers of CLIL in French primary schools.
  - What CLIL in primary education in France looks like in practice.
  - The main professional needs at present for those involved in the implementation of CLIL in primary education in France.
  - The currently available professional development opportunities for primary CLIL teachers, and their efficacy.
- Several recommendations are put forward for the British Council on how it can best support CLIL in the French education system at national level, regional decision-making level, school level and classroom level:
- Continue to strengthen the relationship between the British Council and France's Ministry of Education, as well as other relevant national education institutions / organisations.
  - Strengthen the relationship between the British Council and France's eighteen *régions académiques* and thirty *académies*.
  - Support practitioners at the school and classroom levels by offering advice, supporting initial and ongoing teacher-training initiatives around CLIL pedagogy, and sharing professional development opportunities from its [TeachingEnglish](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk) online community<sup>4</sup>.
  - Continue to facilitate the exchange of best practice and ideas between experts, policymakers and practitioners both within France and internationally.
  - Conduct future research into CLIL in France in collaboration with stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, and help to disseminate existing research.

This exploratory research into the scale and current situation of CLIL teaching in French primary education can be considered a useful point of access for stakeholders wishing to learn more about primary CLIL in France. The recommendations for further research can function as a relevant basis for stakeholders – including the British Council, policymakers and academics – to formulate future research projects.

<sup>3</sup> *Guide for Teaching Foreign Languages from Primary School to High School: Dare to Embrace Foreign Languages*

<sup>4</sup> The British Council's *TeachingEnglish* is an online community that brings teachers together by offering free online courses, webinars, publications and resources. More than 100,000 teachers in France use the platform and over 6.6 million worldwide: [www.teachingenglish.org.uk](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk)

# 1. Introduction

## Context

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)<sup>5</sup> emerged as a term in the 1990s at a time when European policymakers were keen to champion innovative approaches to foreign-language teaching that they hoped could raise foreign-language proficiency and advance the Council of Europe’s goal of a plurilingual Europe<sup>6</sup>. The subsequent expansion of CLIL in different contexts across Europe as an approach to bilingual education and to learning curricular subject content through a second or a foreign language, at both primary and secondary levels, has been driven – at least at a policy level – by a perception of CLIL as a means for fostering plurilingualism. As Coyle, Hood and Marsh explained in their landmark 2010 book, CLIL became ‘increasingly prioritised within the European Union as a major educational initiative, culminating in the 2005 European Council recommendations that CLIL should be adopted throughout the entire European Union’ (2010, p.8). The implementation of CLIL at primary-school level in various European countries, including

France, can be understood within this wider context of the advancement of a plurilingual Europe and associated developments in early foreign-language learning, developments that have occurred across Europe since at least the early 2000s and which were examined in detail by a British Council report in 2011, *Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE)*. The *ELLiE* report found that most European countries expect children to have begun learning a foreign language by the age of nine years at the latest (most schools sampled in the research project started at seven years of age). The report concluded that the ‘European project for the establishment of a multilingual citizenry, underpinned by an early start to FL [foreign language] learning in schools, has advanced considerably’ (Enever, 2011, p.7). Although CLIL was not specifically examined in the report, the expansion of CLIL within European primary-education contexts can, nevertheless, be viewed within this wider European plurilingual project that *ELLiE* highlighted.

<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this report, we have conserved the term CLIL throughout so as to be able to compare and contrast with French conceptualisations of similar approaches to teaching through a foreign or additional language.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Council of Europe, the term ‘plurilingualism’ aims ‘to capture the holistic nature of individual language users’/learners’ linguistic and cultural repertoires’. See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/plurilingualism-and-pluriculturalism>



In the present report, we discuss the results of an exploratory research project which has sought to investigate the scale and current situation of CLIL teaching in primary education in France (ages 3-10 and including French Overseas *départements* and *régions*).

## Aim 1

France was among the earliest proponents in Europe of bilingual education. According to the description of CLIL provision in France published by the European Commission in 2004, international sections (*sections internationales*) in French primary and secondary schools, in which at least half the intake initially consisted of French pupils and at least one-quarter of

foreign pupils, have been officially recognised since 1981 (Eurydice, 2004). Today, according to the official website Eduscol<sup>7</sup>, ‘admission to the international section is decided by the IA-DASEN<sup>8</sup>, upon the recommendation of the school leader, who will have previously assessed the students’ ability to follow the instruction provided in the section [...]. In primary school, the examination consists of an oral test<sup>9</sup>. International sections involve learning particular subjects through a foreign language, with the main target languages being English, German, Spanish and Italian (Eurydice, 2004).

*The first aim of the current research then is to provide an updated understanding of the scale of CLIL in primary education in France by drawing on the data currently available from the Ministry of Education.*

<sup>7</sup> <https://eduscol.education.fr/699/sections-internationales-modalites-d-ouverture-et-admission-des-eleves>

<sup>8</sup> The IA-DASEN (*Inspecteur d'Académie – Directeur Académique des Services de l'Éducation nationale*) is the representative of the French Ministry of Education at the administrative level of the *département*. They are responsible for implementing national education policies at the local level under the authority of the rector of the *académie*.

<sup>9</sup> All translations of French texts have been done by the authors or the production team.



## Aim 2

The Eurydice (2004) country report formed part of a wider statistical description of CLIL in Europe at that time (Eurydice, 2006). In this wider report, CLIL is used as a term to ‘describe all types of provision in which a second language (a foreign, regional or minority language and/or another official state language) is used to teach certain subjects in the curriculum other than language lessons themselves’ (p.8). However, the fact that CLIL can include different types of provision also means that different conceptualisations of what exactly CLIL involves might be advanced (by both policymakers and practitioners). It also means that different terms for CLIL may be used, as we see in the French context – we explain the most commonly used alternative terms for CLIL in the French context in Section 4 below.

In this report we understand CLIL as a ‘dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of content and language’ (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010, p.1).

Yet, as Coyle and Meyer (2021) explain, although this definition is useful for a broad understanding of CLIL, the last two decades have seen CLIL develop in a wide variety of contexts with differing interpretations of the core pedagogical characteristics of CLIL. Alongside these developments, there has been a debate about the defining characteristics of CLIL, such as the differences between CLIL and other approaches to plurilingual education (for examples of this discussion and debate, see: Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter, 2013; Dalton-Puffer, Llinares, Lorenzo, & Nikula, 2014; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010). For Coyle and Meyer (2021), then,

“

*the challenges lie not in arriving at one definition of CLIL – labels are meaningless if the quality of the learning process is not fit for purpose – but in the shared understanding of fundamental principles of plurilingual learning which inspire educators to define, design, enact and evaluate with their learners the conditions for learning that are of the highest possible quality and relevant to the communities they serve. (p.5)*

This usage of the term ‘approach’ rather than ‘method’ in the broad definition of CLIL that we have adopted above therefore reflects the need to underpin practice with fundamental *principles*, as Coyle and Meyer argue, in contrast to what could be the more pedagogically prescriptive idea of a method. It is worth noting that this use of ‘approach’ is also in line with developments in language teaching since Kumaravadivelu’s (1994) influential conception of a post-method pedagogy.

There is, however, a key feature of CLIL that we want to highlight at this stage, which is how language is conceived as the *vehicle* for understanding and expressing the learning of subject content. Language learning, in other words, is not an objective in itself. As Ball, Kelly, & Clegg (2015) explain, this important aspect of how we understand CLIL entails supporting learners to ‘see how important language is in the process of learning. This is the special nature of CLIL, from which it derives its paradigmatic strength’ (p.54). This point about what is a key paradigmatic feature of CLIL – language as the *vehicle* for learning – will be returned to at different stages in this report.

*The second aim for this research, then, is to find out how CLIL is conceptualised in the French primary-school context at national, regional and school levels in terms of policy and strategy, including what principles are identified as key to its successful implementation.*

This will involve undertaking a review of relevant national and regional policy documentation related to primary education in France.

### Aim 3

In addition to seeing primary CLIL in France through the lens of the European plurilingual project and, moreover, as a phenomenon driven by top-down education policies, how else might the forces driving its implementation be understood? What are the mechanisms for this implementation, both in terms of national and regional policies as well as school-level mechanisms through which CLIL is happening? And what are the counterweights at work in the French context: that is, those forces (the impact of which could be either positive or negative depending on our perspective) that are critical of or even antagonistic to the prevalent drivers of primary CLIL in France?

*The third aim for this research is to identify the principal forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL in primary education in France, the mechanisms for its*

*implementation and the counterweights (positive and negative) to this implementation.*

This tripartite framework of forces, mechanisms and counterweights (see Figure 1) is taken from Mehisto's (2015) work on analysing bilingual education systems. Mehisto defines a force as belonging to the 'ideational realm' (p.xvii): that is, forces are beliefs, values or attitudes that have the power to bring about actions, including the establishment of mechanisms that 'receive their energy' from a particular force or combination of forces (p.xviii). In connection with this, the way CLIL is conceptualised – for example, at a policy level – can also be viewed as a particular force. In contrast to forces, mechanisms are tangible and are present as parts of a system (such as an educational system). Counterweights provide a way to analyse the tension that can exist between forces, and between forces and mechanisms. Counterweights could be either ideational or tangible and Mehisto also emphasises that counterweights can be thought of as both positive and negative (p. xviii). We will use this tripartite framework to describe and understand the implementation of CLIL in French primary schools.

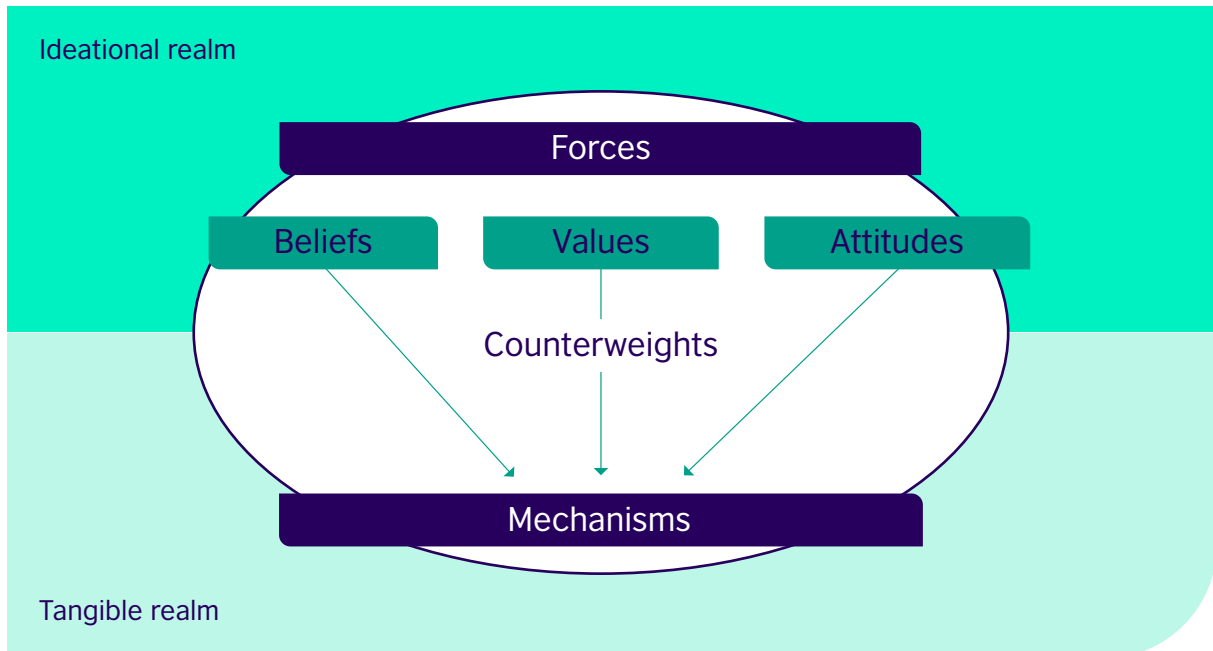


Figure 1: Tripartite framework of forces, mechanisms and counterweights inspired by Mehisto's (2015) work on analysing bilingual education systems.

## Aim 4

*The fourth aim for this report is to conduct a review of academic research into French primary CLIL teaching and learning to find out how CLIL has been conceptualised in the French academic context, what principles underpinning primary CLIL have been identified by scholars, and what evidence there has been of successes as well as of the challenges to its implementation according to classroom-based research.*

In summary, the four aims of this exploratory research project into the scale and current situation of CLIL teaching in primary education in France have been as follows:

- To provide an updated understanding of the scale of CLIL in primary education in France.
- To identify how CLIL in primary education in France (ages 3-10) (including overseas territories) is conceptualised at national, regional and school levels in terms of policy and strategy.
- To identify the principal forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL in primary education in France, the mechanisms for its implementation and the counterweights (positive and negative) to this implementation.
- To provide an overview of research into CLIL teaching and learning in primary education in France.

We hope that this report will help illuminate and contribute to building a more detailed understanding of the extent and current situation of CLIL teaching

currently happening in France. The report also puts forward recommendations for further research into the extent and current situation of CLIL teaching happening in France, as well as recommendations for the British Council on how it can best support the French education system at national and regional decision-making levels, and at school level.

This report is organised in the following way:

- Section 2 provides an explanation of the methodology used for this exploratory research.
- Section 3 includes discussion and analysis of current data from the Ministry of Education about the scale of CLIL in primary education in France.
- Section 4 contains a review of current CLIL policy and strategy in France, starting with national policy and strategy, then a sampling of regional policies and strategies at the level of the *région académique* and the *académie* (using documentation available on their websites) to see if and how these diverge from national policy and strategy.
- Section 5 is a literature review of CLIL in primary education in France, including existing empirical research into CLIL implementation.
- Section 6 puts forward recommendations for further research. In addition, this section makes recommendations for the British Council, based on the research findings, on how it can best support the implementation of CLIL in the French education system at national level, regional decision-making level, school level and classroom level.



## 2. Research questions and methodology

To achieve the research aims outlined above, the following four research questions were formulated:

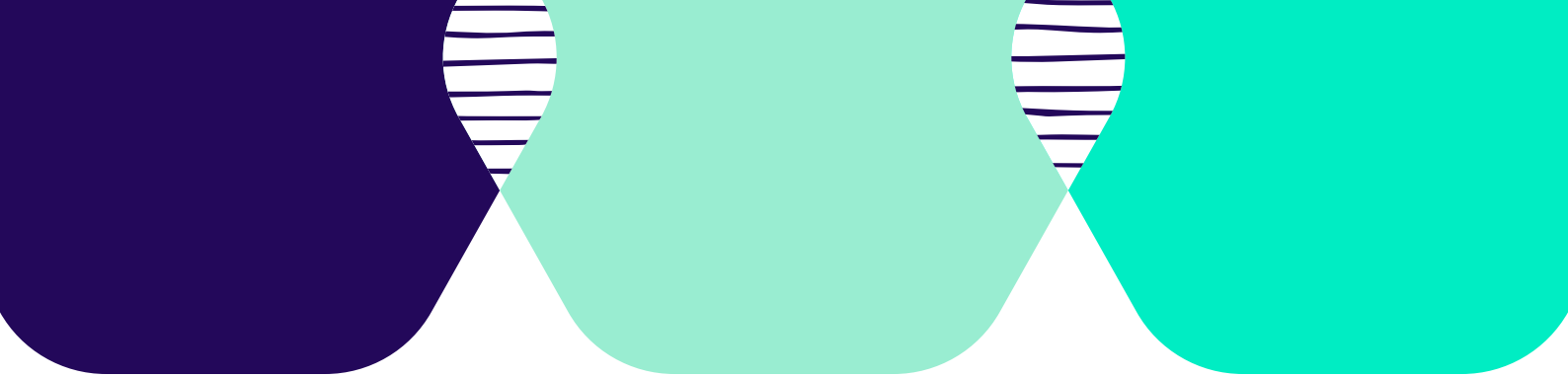
1. What data is there about the scale of current CLIL implementation in primary education in France<sup>10</sup>?
2. How is CLIL in primary education in France conceptualised at national, regional and school levels in terms of policy and strategy?
3. What are the principal forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL in primary education in France; what are the mechanisms for its implementation and what are the counterweights (positive and negative) to this implementation?
4. What literature is there about CLIL in primary education in France, including existing empirical research into its implementation?

The methodology for this research focused on undertaking desk reviews in the following way:

- To address research question 1, an analysis was made of publicly available data from the Ministry of Education.
- To address research questions 2 and 3, a desk review was undertaken of relevant policy documentation found on official French government websites.
- To address research questions 2 and 3 further, a desk review was undertaken to review a sample of websites of France's eighteen *régions académiques* and thirty *académies* – see Appendix 1 for the list of the *région académique* and *académie* websites consulted.
- To address research question 4, a desk review was undertaken of relevant literature.

<sup>10</sup> Our study focuses primarily on public education but sometimes the data available do not distinguish between public and partially private schools (*écoles sous contrat*) so these may at times be included in the data we share.





# 3. Overview of CLIL in France drawing on Ministry of Education (MoE) data

The 2004 Eurydice report identified two main types of what it termed as ‘CLIL provision’ in primary schools.

First, the report referred to international sections in primary schools. International sections have been officially in existence since 1981 in French primary (*primaire*) and secondary schools (*collèges* and *lycées*). Curricular subjects are taught in either French or in a foreign language – up to three hours per week – with the main target languages being English, German, Spanish and Italian. Today, the government website Eduscol indicates that ‘international sections are established within the framework of bilateral partnerships between France and foreign countries or organisations representing their educational systems’<sup>11</sup>. With regard to these sections, the Code of Education (Article D421-132) states that ‘the education provided in international sections aims to facilitate the integration and reception of foreign students into the French education system and to train French students in the advanced practice of a foreign language, particularly through the use of this language in certain subjects’<sup>12</sup>. International sections exist in primary and secondary education. At the time of the publication of the report in 2004, 18 primary schools in France had international sections.

Second, the report referred to CLIL provision in a regional language alongside French. These primary schools had to ensure that the regional language and

French had the same weekly share of the timetable or that the regional language represented 50% or less of teaching time. The target regional languages identified in the report were Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Creole, Gallo, Occitan, the Alsace regional languages, and the languages of the Moselle and Tahitian regions. Statistical data in the report showed that, at the time of publication, 573 schools combined instruction through regional languages and French. However, the broad descriptions of provision in the Eurydice report were based on an assumption that the use of two languages in a school equated to a form of CLIL provision; but, without examining the pedagogical practices in schools and classrooms in detail, there was no way of knowing if ‘CLIL’ was the appropriate term to describe these practices. This observation about the 2004 Eurydice report still holds true for any attempt at understanding the present-day situation of CLIL in French primary schools.

In order to address our first research question about the current scale of CLIL provision in primary schools in France, we consulted the following two government websites with publicly available data:

- [www.legifrance.gouv.fr](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr)
- <https://data.education.gouv.fr/explore/dataset/ive-renforce/map/>.

These websites were consulted in September 2024.

<sup>11</sup> <https://eduscol.education.fr/687/les-sections-internationales>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article\\_lc/LEGIARTI000018380462/](https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000018380462/)

### 3.1 Data available from *Légifrance*

Official ‘international sections’, so designated, are established within the framework of bilateral partnerships between France and foreign countries or organisations representing their educational systems. Current publicly available data from [www.legifrance.gouv.fr](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr) shows a total of 144 such ‘international sections’ in primary schools in France, out of 556 international sections in total including lower and higher secondary schools (*collèges* and *lycées*). Among these, 53 international sections are dedicated to the English language: 37 are named ‘British international sections’, 16 ‘American international sections’<sup>13</sup>. This data shows that there has been a significant expansion in CLIL programmes since the 2004 Eurydice report.

However, this data does not provide a complete picture of CLIL provision in French primary schools because many current CLIL-proximate programmes have not been given the official ‘international section’ label. The definition of a CLIL programme is context-sensitive, as indicated by the following quotation from a personal communication between one of the authors of this report and an official from a *DSDEN*<sup>14</sup>: ‘At the national level, international sections are easily recognised because their status and operations are precisely defined at the national level. For CLIL schools, however, the approaches vary completely from one *département*<sup>15</sup> to another: in some *départements*, it is enough for a teacher to implement a CLIL approach for the entire school to be called a CLIL school, while, in others, only schools offering immersive-type teaching are referred to as CLIL.’ Therefore, in order to better understand the complexity of CLIL in French primary schools, much more detailed data is needed.

### 3.2 Data available from *Éducation nationale*

In order to get a better understanding of the current scale of CLIL provision, we also analysed data available from the Ministry of Education’s Google Map of schools offering *Langue Vivante renforcée (LVE renforcée)* – see: <https://data.education.gouv.fr/explore/dataset/lve-renforce/map/>.

The term *LVE renforcée* refers to any language teaching going beyond the minimum prescribed amount of 1.5 hours per week. This may mean that subjects are being taught through a foreign language (CLIL) or it may, for example, be that the school has received a derogation to teach more hours of a foreign language as part of an experimentation supported by a *Cellule Académique Recherche, Développement, Innovation et Expérimentation (CARDIE)*<sup>16</sup>. However, a precise definition of this term and what it does and does not cover is not provided alongside the Ministry’s data. Therefore, this data raises a question as to what is included and taken into consideration, particularly if *académies* are self-reporting their figures. For example, is a school labelled *LVE renforcée* when the whole school is involved in a language-teaching programme and provides a certain number of hours of language teaching and learning, or is it enough that one teacher dedicates some extra time to a language to have the whole school labelled *LVE renforcée*? Does *LVE renforcée* need to include some element of CLIL or can it just be supplementary classes of English? Given the time constraints on the curriculum, *LVE renforcée* would logically include some elements of CLIL provision but this is not explicitly stated.

Collating such a huge amount of data is a herculean task and there is inevitably some confusion in the figures. We have found one example where the Ministry’s data does not seem to match other available data. According to the MoE map, nine schools in Montpellier are shown as offering *LVE renforcée*. These are *all* schools with ‘international sections’ teaching Chinese, Spanish, German, and English. The Ministry data would therefore seem to imply that *LVE renforcée* refers only to international sections in Montpellier, as it makes no mention of the 12 schools running an English CLIL programme (2 in the city of Montpellier, 10 in the rest of the *Hérault département*). This may be one consequence of the lack of a national definition of CLIL programmes, as reported by the *DSDEN* official mentioned earlier (see 3.1).

Hence, it is difficult to rely on this data when trying to understand the full scale of current CLIL implementation in primary education in France.

<sup>13</sup> Even though the official website of the Ministry of Education seems to only refer to British or American sections, there can, however, exist locally ‘Anglo-American’ sections, notably in the *académie* of Montpellier.

<sup>14</sup> *DSDEN* stands for *Direction des services départementaux de l’Éducation nationale*, equivalent to a Local Education Authority. The quotation is taken from an email communication dated 2nd December 2024.

<sup>15</sup> A *département* is an administrative division that plays a key role in the organisation of primary education.

<sup>16</sup> A *CARDIE* is the unit within each *académie* that supports pedagogical innovation and experimentation in schools.

Nonetheless, some interesting trends emerge from the map. Out of a total of 43,217 primary and pre-primary schools, 2,410 offer *LVE renforcée* (6% of the total) while 40,807 do not. The map also shows that:

- There is a significant number of schools offering *LVE renforcée* in German along the border with Germany (1,317 out of 1,387) reflecting the historical relationship between the two countries. There are 1,217 schools offering it in the Strasbourg *académie* but only one school offering *LVE renforcée* in English.
- A similar pattern, but on a much smaller scale, exists for Spanish and Italian. 39 schools offer Spanish and 15 schools offer Italian. In the case of both languages, these schools are overwhelmingly located in border areas.
- 867/953 of the schools offering English *LVE renforcée* are in metropolitan France, fairly evenly distributed across the country with no extra density in the *départements* bordering the English Channel.
- 40 schools in the Caribbean offer English as an *LVE renforcée*, of which 21 are in French Guiana. 31 schools in La Réunion offer this provision, as do 10 in Nouvelle-Calédonie and 5 in French Polynesia.
- Académies which offer English as an *LVE renforcée* more widely (i.e. in 50 schools or more) are Versailles (90), Grenoble (84), Orléans-Tours (73), Toulouse (70), Reims (54), Poitiers (52) and Normandie (50).

- Equal time allocation (*parité horaire*) is rare. Among the 2,410 schools labelled as offering *LVE renforcée*, 264 nursery schools (*écoles maternelles*) and 238 primary schools (*écoles élémentaires*) have equal-time allocation. Only 5% of the nursery schools and 11% of the primary schools have equal-time allocation in English. The huge majority of equal-time allocation is dedicated to German, overwhelmingly in the Strasbourg *académie*.

The data above show the variability of foreign-language provision across regions. This could reflect the way that the national strategy is implemented in different ways at the regional level (and is possibly driven by individual policymakers at the local level).

### 3.3 Conclusion

In the years since the 2004 Eurydice report, CLIL provision in French primary schools has increased and the ways in which schools implement CLIL programmes has also become more complex. However, the key finding in relation to our first research question – What data is there about the scale of current CLIL implementation in primary education in France? – is that the publicly available data we have consulted contains limited detail about the scale of CLIL implementation in primary schools. Therefore, we have been unable to fully answer this first research question and further research into the scale of current CLIL implementation in primary education in France would be helpful.





## 4. Review of policy and strategy

In France, practitioners and policymakers frequently use two other terms as alternatives for ‘CLIL’: *Discipline non linguistique (DNL)*, meaning a ‘non-language subject’<sup>17</sup>, and/or the French translation of CLIL as *Enseignement d’une matière intégrée en langue étrangère (EMILE)*. However, as Gabillon (2020) explains, DNL is a term that more accurately describes an educational programme that then may or may not use CLIL as an educational *approach*. In addition, Taillefer (2009) offers a critical view on the translation of the term CLIL as EMILE. According to Taillefer, the change of focus from ‘learning’ to ‘teaching’ (*enseignement*) has a pedagogical impact. As he points out, the discourse around CLIL in the anglophone context encompasses learning and teaching, so that ‘the words instruction, teaching and learning indicate the variety of practices associated with this [CLIL] approach. However, the translation of the concept in the French environment seems to restrict the field to teaching’ (2009).

The use of these two terms in the French context therefore presents a challenge for the present research. On the one hand, we cannot assume a shared understanding of what CLIL is among practitioners and policymakers, who are likely to use these other terms in different ways and possibly also give them different meanings, with usages that may or may not reflect an understanding of CLIL as an educational approach with identifiable pedagogical practices. On the other hand, teachers may use elements of what could be considered as CLIL pedagogy in lessons without necessarily labelling this as CLIL. What is crucial to find out, then, is how practitioners and policymakers conceptualise CLIL. We begin this undertaking in this part of the report by presenting our findings from a review of relevant educational documentation and websites to see what these documents and websites show us about how CLIL in primary education in France is conceptualised at national and *académie*<sup>18</sup> levels in terms of policy

<sup>17</sup> It is useful to note that, although the expression ‘DNL’ is traditionally used in a secondary-education context, the additional qualification that is sometimes required to teach through CLIL in primary schools is called ‘*La certification en enseignement en langue étrangère dans une discipline non linguistique (DNL)*’ (Certification in teaching a non-language subject in a foreign language). This might create some confusion regarding what CLIL is precisely. Besides, it is also worth noting that there has been terminological debate regarding the use of ‘DNL’. Gajo (2007), for example, points out that this ought to be replaced by the word ‘discipline dites non linguistique’ (meaning a ‘so-called non-language subject’) or ‘DdNL’. He considers there exists no such thing as a non-language subject, since all subjects are taught in a modern language, be it national, regional or foreign.

<sup>18</sup> *Académie* refers to the specific geographical area within the French educational system (e.g. the *académie* of Lyon). The expression *région académique* refers to a higher administrative level grouping several *académies* (e.g. the *région académique* Auvergne-Rhône Alpes includes the *académies* of Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand and Grenoble). Some *académies* might also be *régions académiques*: e.g. Mayotte. Other *régions académiques* might be composed of one *académie* but have a different name: e.g. the Bretagne *région académique* consists only of the *académie* de Rennes.

and strategy. We also examine these documents and websites to find out what they reveal about the principal forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL in primary education in France, as well as the mechanisms for implementation.

The first stage to the review process reported on here involved an analysis of four key national policy and strategy documents, which are discussed in detail in Section 4.1. In the second stage, we then examined a sample of *région académique* and *académie* websites, discussed in Section 4.2, to see what information about primary CLIL teaching is available at the *académie* and *région académique* level and to what extent, if any, the information on these websites diverges from national policy and strategy. The review of these documents and websites also reveals the expectations that are placed on teachers, including the skills and experiences that are looked for in job descriptions

for CLIL teaching roles within primary schools, and what professional development opportunities exist.

The discussion of both the national policy documents and *région académique* or *académie* websites is organised in the following way: we first look at what the documents and websites tell us about how CLIL is conceptualised; we then look at what the documents and websites tell us about the forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL; and then, finally, we identify the mechanisms for CLIL implementation that are shown. These mechanisms are further divided into three (see Figure 2) categories which have been derived from the analysis of the national policy documents: mechanisms for setting up a CLIL programme including budgetary considerations; mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the success of a CLIL programme; mechanisms for recruiting teachers and for teachers' continuing professional development.

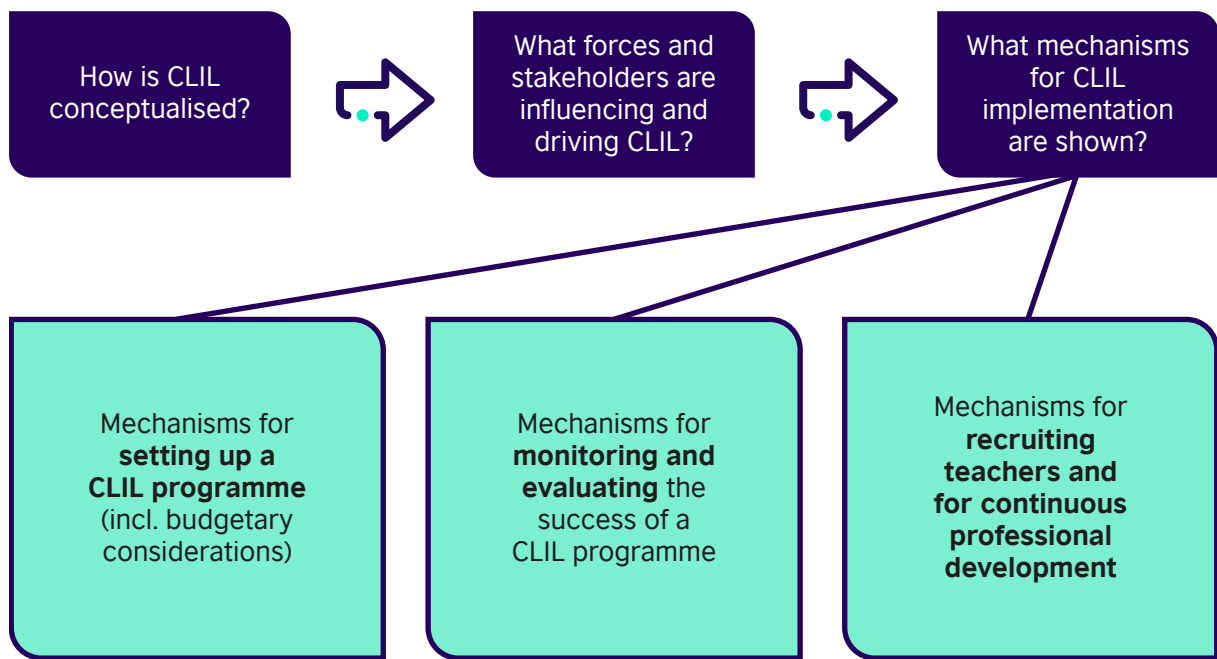


Figure 2: Process for reviewing national policy documents and *région académique* and *académie* websites.





#### 4.1 National policy and strategy documents

The following discussion focuses on four key official documents related to modern language (ML)<sup>19</sup> teaching (LVE, *Langue vivante étrangère*) and CLIL implementation in primary schools in France:

- Ministry of Education (2020). *Guide pour l'enseignement en langue vivante étrangère de l'école au lycée. Oser les langues vivantes étrangères*. (Hereafter referred to as the Guide.) <https://eduscol.education.fr/366/guide-pour-l-enseignement-en-langue-vivante-etrangere-de-l-ecole-au-lycee>
- Ministry of Education (2022). Governmental Circular no 12-12-2022, MENE2234752C. (Hereafter referred to as the Circular.) <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/22/Hebdo47/MENE2234752C.htm>
- Ministry of Education (2012). Governmental memorandum ('Note de service') no. 2012-194 du 13-12-2012. [https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/12/Hebdo47/MENE1241506N.htm?cid\\_bo=66494](https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/12/Hebdo47/MENE1241506N.htm?cid_bo=66494)
- Official governmental webpage dedicated to international classes in primary schools. <https://www.education.gouv.fr/les-sections-internationales-l-ecole-primaire-12443> (Consulted in June 2024).

The first two documents are the most recent ones and will be the main references for this review. The other two documents are used to complement the discussion.

The Guide is intended to help teachers with the teaching of modern languages in primary and secondary schools. It follows both a report published in 2018<sup>20</sup> and the Action Plan for a better command of modern foreign languages (Ministry of Education, 2019<sup>21</sup>) which insisted on the need to increase the time allotted to language teaching and learning, with CLIL identified as an option for achieving this. Taylor and Manes-Bonnisseau's (2018) report is also an indication of how policymakers see CLIL as a means of improving modern language learning outcomes.

The second document, published in 2022, has some prescriptive force as it is a government circular. It specifically addresses the issue of modern language teaching and in particular the new language-assessment programme that will start in 2025<sup>22</sup>. In anticipation of the 2025 international PISA assessment of 15-year-old students' ability in English, the circular instructs all stakeholders involved in language teaching to ensure that 15-year-old French students meet the expected standards by 2025. Students at the end of their lower-secondary education are currently expected to have reached an overall A2 level in English, and a B1 level in at least one, and ideally two, of the broad areas of language competency (i.e. speaking, writing, etc.). Primary school students are expected to reach an A1 level in several broad language competency areas by the age of 10 (students enrolled in CM2, year 6), and in all five major communicative language activities at the end of Year 7. So, while this attainment level does not directly concern CLIL, the document sets a pre-defined target level of language proficiency for CLIL implementation in a French primary school.

<sup>19</sup> ML stands for the French acronym LVE, for *langue vivante étrangère*. Note that this expression, LVE, does not include regional languages.

<sup>20</sup> Manes-Bonnisseau, C. & Taylor, A. (2018). *Pour une meilleure maîtrise des langues étrangères, oser dire le nouveau monde*. Report submitted to the Minister of Education, J.-M. Blanquer, in September 2018. <https://www.education.gouv.fr/propositions-pour-une-meilleure-maitrise-des-langues-vivantes-etrangeres-7052>

<sup>21</sup> *Plan d'actions pour une meilleure maîtrise des langues vivantes étrangères* <https://eduscol.education.fr/document/2294/download> (2019)

<sup>22</sup> For more information about this assessment programme see: <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/foreign-language-learning/pisa-2025-foreign-language-assessment.html>

**Conceptualisation of CLIL**

A definition of CLIL is not provided in either of these documents. However, it is worth observing that the Guide’s first mention of CLIL comes in a section with the heading: *‘Pilotage et gestion de parcours d’enseignement en langue’*. That is: ‘Piloting and managing teaching *in* languages’, rather than the notion of learning *through* languages with language understood as the vehicle for learning – this notion of language as a vehicle was identified as a key paradigmatic feature of CLIL in this report’s introduction. Of course, prepositions can carry subtle differences in meaning in different languages. So, on the one hand, we would want to suggest that it is important to consider to what extent the use of *‘in* languages’ is indicative of an underlying conceptual question about how CLIL is understood at a policy level. On the other hand, the examples of classroom activities suggested for teachers in the Guide encompass ‘projects’, and such activities would encourage learning *through* language (that is, with

no binary between language and subject disciplines). What is needed, then, is further research into what CLIL looks like in French primary classrooms and how teachers conceptualise CLIL based on the guidance given to them.

Central to the conceptualisation of CLIL that is put forward in these two documents is a concern with how CLIL implementation at primary level must involve gradually building learners’ mastery of certain linguistic and subject-specific content. This progression should combine language and subject learning in an integrated approach. While there is a reference to institutional documents about language-learning progressions and outcomes from Years 2 to 6<sup>23</sup>, there is no detailed guidance for teachers about a CLIL progression. However, the Guide does include a cline, recreated in Figure 3 below, which shows how integrating subject content and language learning can be done in a variety of ways, from an emphasis on modern language (ML) teaching (on the left) through to an emphasis on subject teaching (on the right).

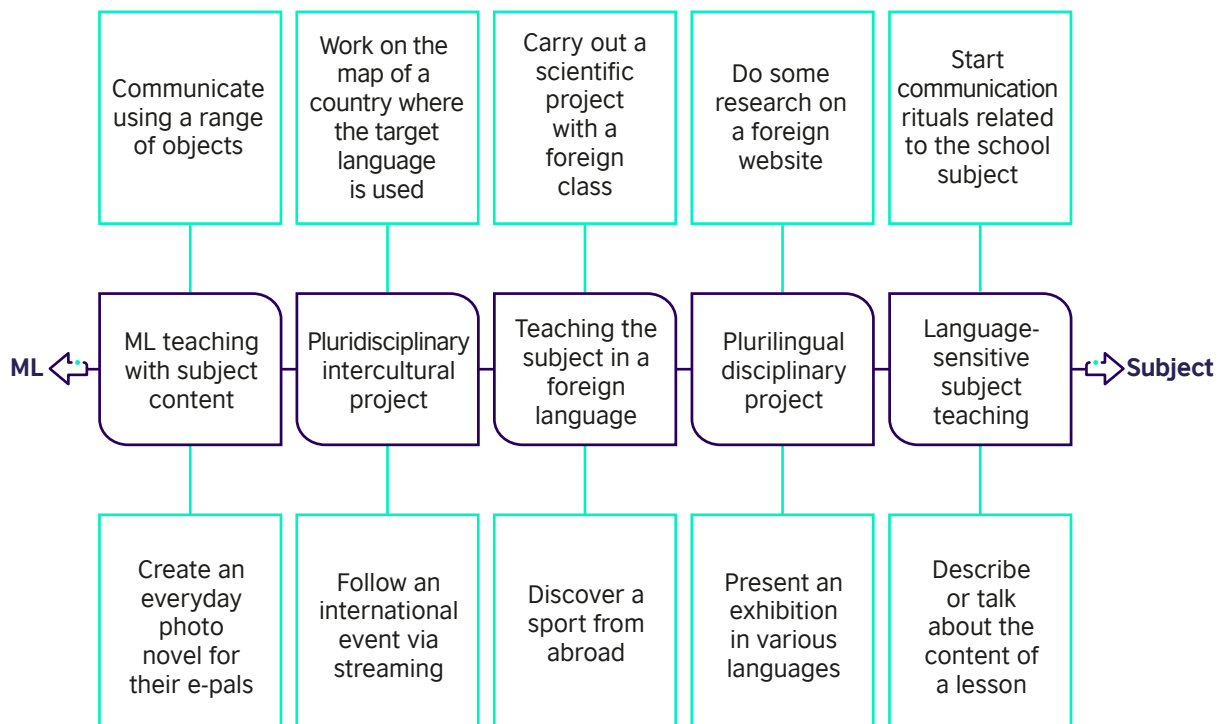


Figure 3: A mapping of lesson approaches (Source: adapted from the Guide (Ministry of Education, 2020, p.30))

<sup>23</sup> See <https://eduscol.education.fr/137/reperes-annuels-de-progression-et-attendus-de-fin-d-annee-du-cp-la-3e>



According to the two documents, a CLIL programme in a school can take a variety of forms, depending on human resources, team dynamics and partnerships. This flexibility could be seen as a recognition of CLIL as an approach that can vary according to diverse and specific contextual factors. However, since the documents do not clearly define CLIL and do not identify specific underlying principles for effective CLIL delivery in primary-school contexts, there is a clear danger that CLIL is interpreted by different schools (and individual teachers) in differing ways, so that any use of a foreign language in a primary classroom is deemed as constituting CLIL without understanding the pedagogical features of CLIL in practice. For example, putting CLIL into practice will involve designing sequences of learning with scaffolding for both the learning of the language and the subject content, supporting learners' understanding of lesson input and their production of language (written and spoken) to show evidence of their learning of the subject.

There is a potential danger of schools and teachers not knowing what CLIL actually looks like in practice – a danger heightened by what has been noted as a tendency to conflate CLIL with classic modern foreign-language teaching and, therefore, to not understand how learning in a CLIL classroom involves a process of deepening subject-content knowledge

alongside progression in language. Practitioners need this understanding of the relationship between progress in subject knowledge and progress in language in order to plan effective sequences of learning in CLIL classes.

The Guide shows the overall organisation of foreign-language teaching in pre-primary and primary education (Table 2). In cycles 2 (years 2 to 4 in primary school) and 3 (years 5 and 6), the curriculum provides for the use of a foreign language as a language of learning. Once again, flexibility is emphasised: CLIL can be implemented in a particular area of activity within a discipline (for example, mental arithmetic in mathematics) or a subject identified by the teachers can be used as the focus for CLIL. Team teaching is also recommended as an effective way to implement CLIL. Overall, as well as flexibility regarding CLIL implementation, both documents emphasise recommendations rather than set requirements, including for target-language teaching time: this is indicated in both documents as 54 hours per year or 90 minutes per week, while teaching time *in* the target language is recommended in both documents as up to 12 hours per week (equal amount of time taught in French and in the other language). Teams are free to choose the subject(s) to be taught in the target language (once again, we see the emphasis here on *in* rather than *through*).

<b>Pre-primary education (3–5-year-olds)</b>	Awakening to languages ( <i>éveil linguistique</i> ).
<b>Primary education (Years 2–5)</b>	Learning of a foreign language as of year 2. Recommendation: 20 minutes of foreign-language teaching per day. Possibility to teach some subjects or lessons in a foreign language.

Table 2: Foreign languages in pre-primary and primary education (Source: adapted from the Guide (Ministry of Education, 2020, p.30))



### Forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL

Both the Guide and the Circular confirm that CLIL in primary schools is viewed by policymakers as a way of improving foreign-language proficiency: this perception by policymakers must therefore be seen as a significant driving force behind CLIL implementation. In France, improving pupils' skills in English and in other compulsory modern foreign languages is an educational priority for the Ministry of Education, as these documents also make clear. Modern language teaching schemes, including the CLIL programmes in primary schools, are seen as one way of achieving these objectives.

The documents note that the development of CLIL teaching in primary education has been slower than in secondary education. However, a number of *académies* have been pilots or centres of experimentation since 2011: Grenoble, Nancy-Metz, Aix-Marseille and Strasbourg. In addition, for some 15 years now, there have also been institutional digital resources managed by France Education international (FEI): *Emilangues* and *Le fil plurilingue*<sup>24</sup>. Even though these resources are mostly dedicated to teaching French as a foreign language, we believe they can be relevant to CLIL teachers as they support plurilingual education in schools. For example, the *Le fil plurilingue* website offers material for teaching French to migrants through various non-language subjects.

Both the Guide and the Circular refer to various stakeholders. The following four ministerial recommendations<sup>25</sup> are put forward in the Guide and show how different stakeholders are intended to be

involved in the implementation of CLIL projects:

1. Set up in each *académie* a cross-category steering committee (*groupe académique de pilotage*) ideally composed of executives responsible for implementing policy for the development of modern languages, such as the *recteur*, the IA-DASEN, the DAREIC, primary and secondary education inspectors, teacher trainers and the director of the local teacher training department (*INSPE*)<sup>26</sup>. This group is open to external stakeholders: parents, local authorities (*collectivités territoriales*)<sup>27</sup> and foreign partners, like the British Council. It has the following functions:

- To define the guidelines for CLIL implementation in primary education.
- To support teams of teachers.
- To identify the intellectual and human resources required.
- To mobilise the appropriate technical and financial resources.
- To plan for the medium-term development and sustainability of the scheme.

According to the 2022 Governmental Circular, committees for modern foreign language teaching in each *académie* (CALVE<sup>28</sup>) have been set up since 2006 and should meet at least twice a year. In accordance with a 2015 Decree, CALVE membership is renewed every five years. These

<sup>24</sup> Currently, the *Emilangues* is not accessible. *Le fil plurilingue* was previously called *Le Fil du bilingue* – <https://lefilplurilingue.org>

<sup>25</sup> Note that all ministerial recommendations apply at a national level.

<sup>26</sup> The *recteur* is the head of an *académie*. The IA-DASEN (*Inspecteur d'Académie – Directeur Académique des Services de l'Éducation nationale*) is responsible for overseeing education at the *département* level. The DAREIC (*Délégué Académique aux Relations Européennes, Internationales et à la Coopération*) coordinates international and European educational programmes within an *académie*.

<sup>27</sup> These include: *régions, département, communes, regroupement de communes (métropole, agglomération et communautés de communes)*.

<sup>28</sup> *Commission académique sur l'enseignement des langues vivantes étrangères*.



committees define and ensure the implementation of the government's language-education policy. They are also responsible for defining and publishing the academic organisation of language teaching in each *académie*, analysing pupil performance, and monitoring and developing bilingual classes.

2. Strengthen cooperation between primary and secondary education to ensure continuity in pupils' learning paths.
3. Ensure coordination between the various levels of the education system (national, *département* and *académie*) to facilitate pooling and territorial equity.
4. Consider links with research in the form of CLIL scientific councils.

According to these four ministerial recommendations, a range of stakeholders in primary CLIL have been identified; notably, these include parents, secondary schools, and academics researching CLIL. Some information is given about what stakeholder involvement can include. For instance, the Guide points out that collaboration with parents is important as part of the process of implementing a CLIL programme in order to address any concerns parents might have and to identify parental needs. It emphasises that building partnerships with academics can help schools to identify teachers' professional development needs and could also lead to research projects.

### Mechanisms for CLIL implementation

The mechanisms for CLIL implementation discussed in the two documents fall into three categories: mechanisms for setting up a CLIL programme; mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the success of a CLIL programme; mechanisms for teacher recruitment and continuing professional development.

#### Setting up a CLIL programme

The two documents identify several concerns and issues related to the mechanisms for CLIL implementation in primary schools. First, the documents recognise that setting up a CLIL programme seems likely to give rise to some concerns that need to be anticipated and managed through appropriate communication. The upstream planning of the implementation of a CLIL programme must be able to rely on the support of various stakeholders, including inspectors, teacher trainers, and parents. The Guide (2020) points out that 'close cooperation [between inspectors and school leaders] at every stage of the project is a necessary condition for its success' (p.7).

This implementation cannot be done without prior political and educational consideration, according to these documents. For the creation of a CLIL scheme/school not to destabilise the existing school network within a *département*, there is a need for partnerships with local elected representatives<sup>29</sup>. According to the Guide (2020): 'to address threshold challenges for the secondary school offering an EMILE programme,

<sup>29</sup> It has to be noted that the organisation of the school system in France has gradually been decentralised. The Ministry of Education, the town council and the mayor all have responsibilities linked to primary education.



priority is given to establishing an EMILE programme in at least two primary schools within the catchment area of that secondary school' (p.37). These partnerships facilitate a better coordination of all the services involved at various administrative levels in such an implementation. As for the pedagogical aspects, two criteria are highlighted in the Guide: ensuring the existence of competent and willing human resources and thinking about the continuity of the programme (i.e. from primary to lower and higher secondary levels):

- 'Identifying competent, motivated and willing human resources in advance to join a CLIL programme, which can extend to equal time allocation, is the central aspect of implementing a CLIL programme. This should be considered as early as the previous year, or even earlier' (p.10).
- 'The continuity work between primary and secondary education must follow a territorial logic, taking into account the achievements of students from CLIL programmes and building on their enhanced linguistic skills, as well as their developed psycho-social competencies' (p.13).

Fulfilment of these criteria should be coupled with consideration of the introduction of a flexible pathway enabling pupils wishing to leave the CLIL class to be reintegrated into a mainstream class.

As these documents attest, the question of human resources is central to CLIL implementation. There is no question of imposing a CLIL scheme on a school. **Three aspects need to be considered to facilitate the success and sustainability of a CLIL project: the support of the teaching team; building coherent and continuous language pathways between the cycles (school years); and establishing a team of qualified and motivated teachers.**

Although we found little information concerning budgetary considerations, we nevertheless consider this important as a mechanism for implementation and therefore relevant to mention in this analysis. According to the Guide, funding, creating and sustaining CLIL programmes does not require an additional budget, although a 'seed' budget is recommended, as are means of rewarding and recognising the work of CLIL teachers.

#### Monitoring and evaluation

Schools are encouraged to evaluate and promote a CLIL programme, and it is recommended that regular monitoring of learning outcomes take place, using appropriate assessment tools. The Circular mentions the need to use standardised tests in anticipation of the PISA international assessment which will start measuring 15-year-old students' ability in English as of 2025. The documents also recommend that schools undertake an institutional certification process, since this contributes to the quality and the sustainability of the CLIL project. School certification is seen as reinforcing the plural approach to languages from nursery school onwards and as developing multilingualism. Various labels are available<sup>30</sup>, including: *Euroscol* (awarded by a commission at the level of the *région académique* – currently 332 primary schools throughout France hold this label<sup>31</sup>); the *eTwinning* label (either as a national and European quality label<sup>32</sup> to recognise the involvement of individuals, students and teachers, or as an *eTwinning* school label<sup>33</sup> which recognises dedication to a CLIL scheme at a school level).

<sup>30</sup> The 2022 Circular also mentions the English+ label, but no trace of it can be found on the internet.

<sup>31</sup> <https://eduscol.education.fr/1098/euroscol-le-label-des-ecoles-et-des-etablisements-scolaires>

<sup>32</sup> <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/recognition/etwinning-national-quality-label>

<sup>33</sup> <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/recognition/etwinning-school-label>

### Teacher recruitment and professional development

Several types of labels are used to recognise schools' involvement in plurilingual education, including *Euroscol* or *eTwinning* certificates; others, like the *Label étoile* that Montpellier *académie* awards to schools, are dedicated to promoting teaching languages through non-language subjects (Guide, 2020, p.49). As well as these labels for schools, qualifications for individual teachers to teach CLIL lessons can be used as part of a process to enhance their skills. The Guide sets out a five-level process for teacher professional development (p.54), beginning with classroom observation at Level 1 and progressing to Level 5, which would require the teacher to take a complementary certification in teaching in non-language subjects.

A concern with the language proficiency of teachers is also raised. The Guide formulates the 'criterion' of 'language security' (*'sécurité linguistique'*) in addition to proficiency. It states that a B2 level as a requirement for teaching in CLIL may not be sufficient as some teachers feel linguistic insecurity that prevents them from fully deploying their abilities. The Guide also highlights the impact of teachers' linguistic proficiency in the target foreign language on learning outcomes. The Guide states that teachers' linguistic confidence needs to be supported with both linguistic and pedagogical training that can be provided in various ways: teacher(s) within the school providing training for their colleagues; interventions by a secondary-school teacher; or the use of an outside consultant.

Continuing professional development is considered an essential element to the sustainability of CLIL in primary schools and encompasses three dimensions:

- Knowledge and awareness of language.
- Language-teaching pedagogy.
- Pedagogy for non-language disciplines.

Although the stated aim is for professional development that enhances the skills needed for CLIL teaching, it is notable that these official documents do not refer to CLIL as a particular dimension of teacher training (indeed, training in CLIL could be considered as encompassing all three of the dimensions that are identified). The two documents also discuss setting up immersion language-training courses with expert organisations and in accordance with the Ministry of Education's pedagogical guidelines. In addition, various continuing professional development options are also listed in the documents, such as: hybrid training courses, linguistic self-training courses, MOOCs, webinars, and Erasmus+ opportunities.

Several possible areas of partnership for developing the skills of teaching teams are identified in the Guide, such as: partnerships with French universities, foreign institutional partners like the British Council<sup>34</sup> or foreign universities; or encouraging and supporting physical and virtual teacher mobility and exchanges (e.g. *eTwinning*, *ECML projects*<sup>35</sup>), with mobility projects seen as part of an overall approach included in the school's CLIL programme and with teachers given opportunities for European and international mobility and exchange projects. The aim of all these mechanisms (and partnerships and projects) is to develop teachers' practice and ultimately improve learning outcomes for CLIL learners.

## 4.2 Review of websites

The *région académique* and *académie* websites consulted for this review were selected using the following three criteria:

- Geographical location: a mix of mainland France (from different areas of metropolitan France) and overseas (among the Caribbean and the Indian ocean territories), as well as rural and urban areas.
- Enrolment rates<sup>36</sup>: a mix of *régions académiques* and *académies* chosen from among highest, average and lowest rates of enrolment.
- Evolution of enrolment rates in primary education between 2012 and 2022<sup>37</sup> (with Mayotte +22% vs Martinique -25%).

<sup>34</sup> The British Council is named on pages 20 and 21 of the Guide.

<sup>35</sup> For more information on the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML), see: [www.ecml.at](http://www.ecml.at)

<sup>36</sup> *L'Education nationale en chiffres (DEPP, 2021)*: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/l-education-nationale-en-chiffres-2021-324545> (Accessed March 2024).

<sup>37</sup> *L'état de l'Ecole en 2023*: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/l-etat-de-l-ecole-2023-379707> (Accessed March 2024).

Table 3 shows the data that was used to construct our sample for the second criterion. It details the percentage of pupils enrolled in primary schools in the 9 *régions académiques* and 15 *académies* that were selected in mainland France and in the French overseas *départements* and regions.

The websites were accessed in March and April 2024. For further detail, including the website addresses, see Appendix 1.

<i>Région académique</i> <sup>38</sup>	<i>Académie</i>	Enrolment rate %	Total enrolment rate per <i>région académique</i>
Nouvelle-Aquitaine	Bordeaux	4.7 %	7.9%
	Poitiers	2.3 %	
	Limoges	0.9 %	
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	Clermont-F.	1.8 %	12.1%
	Lyon	5.2 %	
	Grenoble	5.1 %	
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	Dijon	2.1 %	3.8%
	Besançon	1.7 %	
Occitanie	Toulouse	4.2 %	8.2%
	Montpellier	4.0 %	
Hauts-de-France	Lille	6.5 %	9.4%
Bretagne	Rennes	4.8 %	4.8 %
Mayotte	Mayotte	0.8 %	0.8 %
La Réunion	La Réunion	1.8 %	1.8 %
Martinique	Martinique	0.5 %	0.5 %

Table 3: *Académie* and *région académique* enrolment rates (Sources: Ministry of Education-DEPP, 2021)

We were able to access the websites for all the selected *régions académiques* and *académies*. However, we found it difficult to find pages devoted to language teaching and, in particular, CLIL classes, and/or details of school-level mechanisms for CLIL implementation. These institutional websites do not always include links to these themes. The actual webpages seem to stand on their own and were only located after several searches using different combinations of keywords. The absence of an easily accessible page about CLIL programmes/schools on these *académie* sites does not facilitate easy access to information.

### Conceptualisation of CLIL

Generally speaking, most of the websites offer a range of organised teaching resources (Besançon, Martinique, Toulouse, Montpellier, Lille, Lyon), even if some of them only concern secondary education (La Réunion, Mayotte). For instance, the Montpellier *académie* website provides a clear organisation of the CLIL resources available. These are organised into four distinct themes: using videos, language teaching (words and syntax), foreign language culture, CLIL and non-language disciplines. Furthermore, the academic advisors behind the

<sup>38</sup> The French government has changed the administrative organisation of territorial divisions. There now exist *régions académiques*, which can include 1 to 3 *académies*. For more information, see <https://www.education.gouv.fr/les-regions-academiques-academies-et-services-departementaux-de-l-education-nationale-6557>



webpage (*Conseillers pédagogiques départementaux (CPD LVE)*) have split the activities and resources into the five annual *périodes* corresponding to school terms in order to support the teachers' work.

Although we found no definitions of CLIL on any of the websites, what this example from Montpellier shows is an understanding of the support teachers need in helping learners see the importance of language in the process of learning in a CLIL lesson, including support for guiding their understanding of subject content.

### **Forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL**

Information on CLIL varies from one education authority website to another. Some *académies* do not address this subject (Limoges, Mayotte, La Réunion), while others mention a few, often dated, experiments (Rennes, Lille, Dijon, Bordeaux, Clermont-Ferrand) without any later updates on these projects. The information contained on the websites of other *académies* (Poitiers, Dijon) offers a minimal amount of institutional information about CLIL, i.e. basic information about the CLIL programme or project, the existence of additional qualifications for teachers, and the availability of the *Guide pour les langues* (2019)<sup>39</sup>.

Overall, we found no information on these websites, which would seem to be primarily targeted at teachers and head teachers (rather than parents or other stakeholders), regarding any particular forces and/or stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL at these *région académique* or *académie* levels. Furthermore, the fact that the relevant pages<sup>40</sup> that do exist are often created by a *conseiller pédagogique départemental* (CPD LVE) might well indicate that CLIL is primarily seen as a way of improving language-learning outcomes.

### **Mechanisms for CLIL implementation**

Compared with the national policy documents discussed in Section 4.1, we found no details on the *région académique* and *académie* websites of mechanisms for setting up a CLIL programme (with the exception of the *académie de Grenoble* which will be discussed below), and no explanation of mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of CLIL programmes. We did, however, find information about requirements for CLIL teacher recruitment but no details about professional development opportunities. We found no additional categories of mechanisms to consider for this analysis.

<sup>39</sup> Accessible at <https://eduscol.education.fr/document/347/download?attachment>. This document is presented as a guide for primary school teachers on teaching modern languages to pupils aged 6-10.

<sup>40</sup> Often hosted by the *académie* website. See for example: <https://blogacabdx.ac-bordeaux.fr/lve64/accueil> ; <http://blogs16.ac-poitiers.fr/lve/emile> ; <https://lve21.cir.ac-dijon.fr> ; <https://lv.circo25.ac-besancon.fr/2018/10/26/formes-geometriques> ; <https://lve-rhone.enseigne.ac-lyon.fr/spip/#onglet>

### Setting up a CLIL programme

One education authority did stand out from the rest: Grenoble. We have included a specific focus on their webpage because it provides relevant information about how their CLIL projects are organised and offers useful insights into what mechanisms can be involved in setting up a CLIL programme at the school level. It should be noted that the Grenoble *académie* is one of the few pioneering *académies* in the area of bilingual education and CLIL, having launched CLIL projects as early as 2011 (mainly in the Savoie *département*). The education authority's website is a platform for promoting and enhancing the momentum generated by these projects over the last 10 years. The site features an interactive map showing CLIL projects by language. In addition to English, which is already well established, the education authority is developing schemes for German and Italian. Moreover, CLIL schools are now being set up as a strong primary and lower-secondary school network. This is achieved through educational support<sup>41</sup> backed up by project funding. Grenoble also demonstrates the coherence of its CLIL projects by providing its teachers with a wide range of teaching and media resources. These CLIL projects appear to be extremely well organised with the following features:

- Language assistants working from pre-primary level upwards.
- 5-year-old pupils having 45 minutes of language teaching (and not merely the mandatory *éveil à la diversité linguistique* ('awakening to languages') sessions).
- Team teaching being encouraged.
- Teaching being highly structured, with a link between language and subject content.
- A progression to the scheme being planned, with various criteria for schools leading to the attribution of different 'levels'. These criteria include teachers' language proficiency (from B1 to B2+) and the development of international partnerships.
- A progression being planned in terms of organisation; for example, there is a gradual continuity between primary and lower- and upper-secondary schools, with students starting with a minimum of 3-4 hours and this increasing to 10-12 hours of language learning a week (including an increase in the number of non-language subjects taught through a foreign language).



<sup>41</sup> See their *Feuille de route départementale* (Departmental roadmap): <https://savoie-educ.web.ac-grenoble.fr/lve/emile-enseignement-dune-matiere-par-lintegration-dune-langue-etrangere>

### Teacher recruitment

Job opportunities for teaching in CLIL schemes often appear as *postes à profil* (i.e. posts requiring specific abilities). These posts deviate from the normal process by which a teacher is allocated to a school. The analysis of job descriptions for CLIL teacher recruitment from various *académies* enabled us to gather some information on concrete expectations and working conditions, although a diversity of expectations and requirements across the job descriptions was apparent. Some education authorities explicitly state that the post entitles the holder to the *Indemnité de suivi et d'accompagnement des élèves (ISAE)* salary supplement (approximately €1,200 extra per year). Although additional language certification is not required, the level of language ideally expected is high (C1-C2, while B2 is the level suggested in the Guide – see Section 4.1) and the teaching skills that are looked for are also demanding. Interestingly, one job description refers to the Guide as the regulatory framework, which is not its intended purpose, while others refer to the Circular or the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

In addition to the standard knowledge and skills required of teachers, other specific requirements for prospective CLIL teachers mentioned in the job descriptions (focusing on English as the target CLIL language) included:

- Familiarity with the technical language used in English classes and in the various subjects taught in English.
- A 'perfect' command of the English language<sup>42</sup> (phonology, expressions, vocabulary and syntax, etc.).
- A thorough knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries (through having lived in one and/or having a bilingual parent).
- Experience of teaching English, preferably with previous experience of teaching in an immersion class abroad or in another relevant setting.
- Knowing how to link your teaching to an educational project with a cultural and linguistic dimension (multilingualism).
- The ability to set up innovative projects, develop international exchanges and forge links with partners.
- Willingness to engage in a training process concerning the pedagogy specific to bilingual teaching and the intercomprehension of languages: for example, training in how to organise the interaction of the languages present in the classroom (French language of schooling, home language and modern languages studied).



<sup>42</sup> 'Maîtriser parfaitement l'anglais au plan linguistique'. See <https://www.ac-toulouse.fr/media/49214/download>



- Ability to seek out and establish communication with native speakers.
- Experience of teaching at different levels of primary school (from pre-primary to Year 6) and a good knowledge of the French primary syllabus.

### 4.3 Conclusion

This discussion of both the national policy documents and *région académique* and *académie* websites has looked at what these documents and websites tell us about how CLIL is conceptualised in the French primary-school context. We have also looked at what the documents and websites tell us about the forces and stakeholders influencing and driving primary CLIL, as well as the mechanisms for its implementation. We divided these mechanisms into three categories derived from the analysis of the national policy documents. This conclusion is organised according to the two research questions we have sought to address through our review of documents and websites, together with a discussion of the implications of our findings. We return to these implications in the recommendations that we put forward in Section 6 of the report.

### How is CLIL in primary education in France conceptualised at national, regional and school levels in terms of policy and strategy?

This review of two key national policy and strategy documents has confirmed that, at this policy level, CLIL in primary schools is seen primarily as a way of improving foreign-language proficiency. We can also see that these documents emphasise flexibility in the implementation of CLIL in primary schools by making recommendations for its implementation rather than defining a set of requirements (other than the requirement for learners to have an A1 level in English by the end of primary school; on this point, it is worth noting that there is currently no standardised assessment of pupils' foreign-language level at the end of primary school – performance results are therefore largely based on school-based testing). As we commented, this flexibility could have both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, flexibility could be seen as a recognition of CLIL as an approach which can vary in its implementation according to diverse and specific contextual factors. On the other hand, since neither the documents nor the websites provide a definition of CLIL or clear underlying principles for effective CLIL delivery in primary-school contexts, there could be a danger



that CLIL is interpreted by different schools (and teachers) in different ways, so that any use of a foreign language in a classroom is deemed as CLIL. Likewise, the emphasis on making use of available (human) resources is pragmatic but does not encourage schools to plan for ways to develop a CLIL programme in the school based on identified principles for effective CLIL.

The conceptualisation of CLIL in primary schools as, above all, a way of improving foreign-language proficiency raises the need for further investigation into how this conceptualisation affects implementation. For example, it would be useful to find out how this conceptualisation of CLIL affects both teacher recruitment and teacher training at the school level – to what extent, if any, is there a ‘clash’ between the initial training in foreign-language teaching that primary teachers receive and any initial or ongoing training they might receive in CLIL? This is an interesting question for potential further research.

We also noted the emphasis in these documents on how CLIL implementation at primary level must involve gradually building learners’ mastery of certain linguistic and subject-specific content. While examples of how to integrate subject content and language learning in a variety of ways have been shown, there exists no *detailed* guidance for teachers specifically about how to plan this progression. This could suggest the need for teacher training to fill this gap in the official guidance, so that CLIL primary-school teachers have a clear understanding of how to plan progression in learning at the level of a series of lessons and at the level of a wider scheme of learning. In other words, a model of progression would be helpful. One useful and relevant progression model for French primary CLIL teachers could be the pluriliteracies model (Coyle & Meyer, 2021), which is a cross-curricular progression model for acquiring domain-specific literacies (adapted from Veel’s (2000) work on science as a genre with its own distinctive ways of thinking about the world). The four stages of this model of progression within a subject domain and across the curriculum are: doing, describing, explaining and arguing (Coyle & Meyer, 2021). CLIL teacher training on applying this model could involve practical examples for planning activities across sequences of learning (both at the level of a lesson and across a series of lessons) that encompass these pluriliteracy stages in learning at primary level.

### **What are the principal forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL in primary education in France; what are the mechanisms for its implementation and what are the counterweights (positive and negative) to this implementation?**

The perception of policymakers – not only in France, it should be noted – that CLIL is primarily a way of improving foreign-language proficiency can also be seen as a significant driving force behind CLIL implementation. The national policy documents that have been reviewed also show that policymakers intend a range of stakeholders to be involved in the development of CLIL programmes within primary schools, including parents. However, the policy documents make no further recommendations about this, and we found no documented examples on the websites of the involvement of stakeholders at the regional or *académie* level.



Further research could look into the involvement of the key stakeholders identified in the national policy documents and what is actually happening in terms of their involvement in primary CLIL programmes. Furthermore, it would be useful to find out why these stakeholders in particular have been identified by policymakers and how this identification in the French primary-school context compares to those in other countries. Indeed, what does existing research indicate globally about crucial stakeholder involvement for effective implementation of CLIL?

We organised the mechanisms for implementing a CLIL programme, based on the analysis of the national policy documents, into three categories: mechanisms for setting up a CLIL programme; mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the success of a CLIL programme; and mechanisms for teacher recruitment and continuing professional development. Although our review of the *académie* websites has revealed that information on these sites does not diverge from the national policy and strategy, more research is needed to find out about the specific mechanisms for implementing CLIL that schools are using. The example of the Grenoble *académie* provides some insight into what these mechanisms can involve but there is clearly a need for further research into what is happening in other *académies* or *régions académiques*.

The job profiles for CLIL teachers that we looked at emphasised the need for a high level of linguistic and teaching skills. This seems to reflect a desire to enhance the value of CLIL schemes and to pay particular attention to the quality of language

teaching. In light of this expectation, it may seem surprising that *académie* websites do little to promote CLIL classes and schemes. The webpages, which are sometimes difficult to access, provide basic information and resources for teachers. Despite the long history of CLIL implementation in France, only the Grenoble *académie* website among those sampled has a policy of promoting, enhancing and raising the profile of CLIL programmes. Given the fact that the overwhelming majority of French pupils attend the primary school of the catchment area in which they reside, and, given the fact that institutional websites might not primarily be targeting parents and other stakeholders, such promotion as there is would seem to be aimed at head teachers who might be in a position to introduce CLIL in their schools.

In both the official documents reviewed in this exploratory research, and on the websites examined, there is no mention of any research into the implementation of CLIL in French primary schools, other than a reference in the Guide to Grenoble, Nancy-Metz and Strasbourg where CLIL pupils' results in mathematics and French have been found to be at least equivalent to those of pupils outside the CLIL programme. While there has been limited research and analysis of current CLIL implementation (see the literature review in the next section of this report), more research into CLIL implementation would be useful. Indeed, a study of the professional practices of CLIL teachers would be worth carrying out in order to have a better understanding of the real situation of teaching and learning in CLIL classes and a better understanding of teachers' professional development needs.





## 5. Literature review

In this section, we review literature that adds to an understanding of the forces driving CLIL in primary education in France, the mechanisms for its implementation and the counterweights to this implementation. This review has also sought to look at how CLIL has been conceptualised by French researchers. Although the CNESCO (*Centre national d'étude des systèmes scolaires*) conferences held in 2019 recommended developing CLIL programmes as a way of reinforcing language learning, there is a paucity of research specifically about the implementation of these CLIL programmes in French primary education<sup>43</sup> (which was apparent early on in this review process). Consequently, we have decided to look at literature spanning the twenty-year period since the 2004 publication of the Eurydice report on CLIL in France, one among several *Country Reports* that formed part of a detailed statistical description of CLIL in Europe at that time (Eurydice, 2006). Also in the early 2000s, developments in official language-education policy in France, including a new primary curriculum in 2002, gave impetus to the teaching of both foreign

and regional languages at primary level, which has been described as a 'revolutionary change' (Gabillon and Ailincăi, 2015, p.3596) and can also be seen as a driver of subsequent CLIL implementation. Therefore, the two-decade period for this literature review reflects the need to examine developments since the Eurydice report and the change in language-learning policy in France, which had only recently come into effect when the Eurydice report was published.

This literature review is organised around three themes. A first theme is concerned with the ways in which CLIL has been described and conceptualised in France. We begin this theme by explaining further the different terms used in the French education system alongside (or as synonyms for) CLIL. We then look at the description of primary CLIL provision contained in the Eurydice (2004) report. A final element to this theme looks at how CLIL has been conceptualised in the French academic context and how this conceptualisation contributes to discussions about CLIL's underlying principles.

<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that more literature can be found about CLIL in the *sections européennes* or under the category of *discipline non-linguistique* (DNL), the terms used to designate bilingual education programmes in secondary schools, than at the primary-education level. For examples of the literature on CLIL in French secondary-school contexts, see: Causa (2019); Causa & Stratilaki-Klein (2022); Tardieu and Dolitsky (2012); Gravé-Rousseau (2011).

The second theme looks at CLIL in practice: that is, research that has taken place into what CLIL looks like in French primary schools. We consider both descriptive and intervention classroom-based research. We begin this theme by looking at examples of French research into bilingual education where a regional language is used alongside French, since this research has relevance for primary CLIL practitioners. We then look at research specifically about CLIL in order to see what this literature can reveal about the successes and challenges of French primary CLIL in practice. However, it is important to preface any discussion of classroom-based research on CLIL with the recognition that, across the wider literature on CLIL, there are significant differences of opinion about the benefits of CLIL (as well as how to understand what counts as a benefit). Some proponents of primary CLIL have claimed that this approach has been ‘especially effective in primary schools’: according to this view, language acquisition involves learning meaningful content rather than learning a language in isolation, with early bilingualism producing other ‘important spin-offs’ such as increasing the ‘self-confidence and self-esteem of the children’ (Egger and Lechner, 2012, p.11). Other authors writing about primary CLIL have urged caution due to the lack of a strong evidence base; as Ellison points out, ‘there is still little research on CLIL with young learners’ (2019, p.260). Our

review of the literature on primary CLIL in France has confirmed what Ellison is saying: there has been very little research on CLIL in practice in French primary schools and more research is clearly needed.

A final theme looks at reports on teacher-training projects in France and related publications which can be considered relevant to the professional development needs of French primary school teachers delivering CLIL lessons. As part of this theme, we also examine training that has taken place in the context of a wider plurilingual (rather than specifically CLIL) education context. This is relevant since it allows us to consider the issue of CLIL within the broader scope of plurilingualism. As we noted in the introduction, the development of CLIL has taken place in the context of a wider European plurilingual project. Further, as Dalton-Puffer has stated, ‘any second or foreign language can become the object of CLIL, [yet] English is the language which dominates the scene’ (2007, p.1). It is therefore useful to briefly look at debates in France about approaches to plurilingual education, especially since academic work in this area in the French context can be seen as a counterweight to the conception of language education driving primary CLIL implementation at a policy level – therefore, there are also important considerations raised in this debate for CLIL teacher training.





## 5.1 Descriptions and conceptualisation of CLIL in primary education

Debates have taken place in France about the use of the different terms to refer to CLIL as an approach. Tardieu and Dolitsky (2012) discuss how CLIL is often referred to as *Discipline non linguistique* (DNL, non-language subject) or *Langues pour spécialistes d'autres disciplines* (LANSAD, languages for specialists of other subjects) – LANSAD is the term most often used at university level. However, Gabillon (2020) emphasises a distinction in the way these different terms are used (and which we have already drawn attention to at the beginning of Part 2 of the report): CLIL is an educational approach, while DNL or LANSAD are terms describing educational programmes that may or may not use a CLIL approach. Taillefer (2009) has put forward an alternative French translation of CLIL to replace the other term frequently used for CLIL in the French context (EMILE, *Enseignement d'une matière intégrée en langue étrangère*). As we also indicated in Part 2 of the report, Taillefer points out how the change of focus from learning to teaching in the term EMILE ('*enseignement*') may have pedagogical implications. To maintain the focus on learning, Taillefer proposes the term *Apprentissage [learning] intégré d'une matière et d'une langue (AIML)*, which is similar to a term used by the European Council (2004): *Apprentissage intégré d'un contenu et d'une langue (AICL)*. In the French context, the term 'bilingual programme' and 'immersion' are also used, sometimes instead of referring to CLIL and/or at times as terms distinct from CLIL. For discussions about the differences between CLIL and other approaches to multilingual education in the French context, see Nikula (2016) and Gabillon (2020).

When it comes to English as the CLIL target language, Zehra Gabillon can be considered as one of the foremost French researchers. In her state-of-the-art review of CLIL literature (Gabillon, 2020), she places CLIL in France within a wider social and historical context, arguing that CLIL has

been influenced by various historical, political, epistemological and social factors that can be traced back to the 1980s, as well as postmodernist conceptions of linguistic diversity and language-teaching methodology that also emerged at that time.

According to Gabillon, based on her review of the literature, the underlying principles of CLIL can be summarised in the following way:



**[CLIL] aims to (a) respect plurilingual teaching philosophies, (b) consider language, content, communication, context and cognition as an inseparable unified entity, (c) create naturalistic learning environments, (d) provide tasks that promote cognitive engagement and creativity, (e) allow collaborative knowledge building, (f) promote dialogical interaction, and, (g) develop awareness of self and others. (2020, para. 44)**

The first of Gabillon's principles raises the wider concern with plurilingual learning which will be discussed further in Section 5.2 below. Taken together, these seven principles, devised as they are by a French CLIL expert, offer a useful framework for CLIL teacher-training interventions in France, as well as a relevant conceptual underpinning to policies in the French primary-school context. Gabillon's state-of-the-art review is also a useful contribution to the literature, identifying fundamental principles underlying CLIL practice. (For examples of book-length guides for teachers containing practical examples on applying key principles that, although aimed at secondary school teachers, are also relevant and useful for primary school teachers, see: Ball, Kelly and Clegg, J., 2015; Dale & Tanner, 2012; Mehisto & Ting, 2017).

## 5.2 Primary CLIL in practice

Because French research into CLIL practice as such is scarce, we have looked at examples of French research on bilingual education where a regional language is used alongside French. While we will not be dedicating this section to regional-language teaching in France, we will first consider the findings from two research projects that we deem inspiring and relevant for primary CLIL practitioners. We will then turn to research that focuses on CLIL research projects about English-language teaching in France.

Escudé (2011) has reported on a research project, *Euromania*, which aimed at supporting both language and subject-content learning through what is termed 'linguistic intercomprehension'. The project involved the use of a textbook (titled *Euromania*) which focused on subject-content learning and was not used as a tool for language learning. However, Escudé discusses the research findings related to the linguistic and comprehension<sup>44</sup> abilities facilitated by linguistic intercomprehension. This refers to learners' 'ability to exploit [...] previously acquired funds of knowledge' (Doyé, 2005, p.9). In other words, learning an additional language builds on the knowledge of previous language(s) learnt or acquired, so learners need to be supported to make connections with their previous linguistic knowledge. Based on this concept, Escudé analyses the impact of activities that involve activating eight-to-nine-year-old primary school pupils' intercomprehension of Romance languages in their bilingual lessons (examples of activities described by Escudé involved learners noticing similarities and differences at a word level across Romance languages). According to Escudé, the *Euromania* project showed that 'intercomprehension not only speeds up learning; it also structures it. [This approach] succeeds in integrating the building of linguistic skills with the building of notional skills. Languages are manipulated in their disciplinary context' (2011, p.27).

Anciaux (2016) has reported on a research project in Guadeloupe where the allocation of instructional time between French and Creole was 'not compartmentalised in time slots' but based on 'the actual practices of the speakers, with a view to approaching the standard and academic norms of the two languages in question'<sup>45</sup>. Such an approach required a careful reflection by teachers on how to



use code-switching for instructional purposes in non-language subjects (Duverger, 2007; Causa, 2019). Among the findings that are discussed, Anciaux states that this project led teachers to develop reflexive practice and that they started to plan their lessons thinking about how each language could facilitate learning. In addition, Anciaux claims that bilingual education motivated the students, increased their participation and facilitated their understanding of new concepts. Moreover, some students no longer felt self-conscious about using Creole.

<sup>44</sup> Five different questions allow the assessment of the students' abilities to make sense of content-related instructions, texts or words in other Romance languages.

<sup>45</sup> No page number available on the online version of the chapter.



Overall, both Escudé and Anciaux champion the idea that well-thought-out bilingual teaching methods and bilingual programmes create positive outcomes in language learning and content learning. Moreover, they both argue that learners' linguistic repertoires and plurilingual identities can be strengthened and developed through language learning.

Turning now to a context where English is the CLIL target language, Gabillon's research in French Polynesian primary schools, where English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was first piloted in 2006 and has since been gradually extended to all French Polynesian primary schools (Gabillon & Ailincăi, 2015), has also included classroom-based investigations. In the French Polynesian context, CLIL is one of a number of multilingual-learning projects that have been implemented as part of the extension of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) provision (Gabillon & Ailincăi, 2015). Gabillon and Ailincăi (2013) report on an experimental study in a French Polynesian primary school which involved using CLIL to teach short science lessons through English with breakthrough EFL-level learners aged ten to eleven. According to the results of this study, CLIL was used successfully with these beginner-level learners. The study also identified aspects of effective CLIL teaching practice with the target learners. The first was the importance of providing rich extra-linguistic contextualisation through techniques such as the use of realia alongside input in the L2 <sup>46</sup>. The second was the function of dialogical exchanges between the teacher

and learners as scaffolding for the learning, both for learning the L2 and the scientific concepts. Gabillon and Ailincăi also concluded that 'with beginner-level CLIL learners the activities need to evolve gradually from teacher-learner mediated activity to peer-mediated activity patterns' (p.176).

Gabillon and Ailincăi (2016) have looked further into the role of extra-linguistic contextualisation in CLIL lessons with beginner-level EFL learners. In a study involving French Polynesian primary learners aged nine to ten, they analysed how providing learners with easily accessible artefacts in the CLIL primary classroom, such as the objects and materials used for hands-on scientific experiments, offers myriad and rich scaffolding opportunities. In addition, extra-linguistic communication, encompassing both the teacher's use of physical gestures to support their input in the L2, as well as learners' non-verbal responses to show understanding, can help to extend dialogical exchanges between the teacher and the learners, and improve the quality of these classroom interactions. This result is in line with previous research on the need to think of language teaching and learning as multimodal and multisensory processes (in the French context, see: Azaoui, 2021; Colletta, 2004; Tellier, 2008).

Henderson and Payre-Ficout (2018) have presented the preliminary results of an investigation into the pioneering implementation since 2011 of CLIL classes in the *académie de Grenoble*. They analysed the responses (21 teachers from primary schools and 16

<sup>46</sup> L1 refers to a learner's first language (or mother tongue), while L2 refers to any additional language learned after the first.

from secondary schools) to an online questionnaire sent out to the CLIL teachers in the *académie* (mostly in the Savoie *département*). The study provides some insight into the teaching practices of the teachers involved in these classes. For example, in relation to feedback and scaffolding strategies, the findings mirror those of Gabillon and Ailincăi (2016) in terms of the use of visual aids. In accordance with findings that show that teachers adapt their multimodal strategies depending on context (Tellier & Stam, 2012; Azaoui, 2013), Henderson and Payre-Ficout's results show that visual aids are mostly used for teaching in L2 (about 55% of respondents declare using these aids when teaching in L1 versus 90% in L2). Interestingly, only a third of respondents declare allowing the use of L1 as a possible strategy when teaching in L2. Azaoui's study (2024) found that the use of multimodal resources could reflect a monolingual ideology, as it shows a preference for non-verbal resources as a means of limiting the use of L1. It could be argued that this focus on visual aids contradicts the plurilingual principle of code-switching (as promoted for use in plurilingual education) (see Anciaux, 2016; Duverger, 2007; Causa, 2019; Causa & Stratilaki-Klein, 2022) which constitutes one characteristic of bi/plurilingualism. In terms of school results, according to the teachers' statements, students make good progress both in language and subject content.

### 5.3 Teacher education to promote language diversity through CLIL

For this final section of the literature review, we have identified reports on teacher-training projects in France that can be considered as relevant points of reference for future projects that may seek to address the professional development needs of French primary school teachers.

Bernaus, Furlong, Jonckheere and Kervran (2011) and Auger and Kervran (2010) have reported on the *Conbat+* project, which was a Council of Europe-funded project that investigated plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in teaching curricular subjects and included the involvement of a French researcher (Martine Kervran). *Conbat+* was designed to reconcile 'CLIL with plurilingualism and pluriculturalism' (Bernaus et al., 2011, p.18). The objective of the training kit, which included 18 sets of activities covering 12 school subjects for a whole range of target groups (from early primary to upper-secondary school) was to enhance learners' 'plurilingual and pluricultural competence' (Coste et al., 1997) and empower educational stakeholders to 'manage ethnic and cultural heterogeneity' (Bernaus et al., 2011, p.7).



The Conbat+ authors stressed that ‘the awareness of languages, cultures, plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, in the senses defined above, is the major aim of ConBat+’ (ibid., p.17).

In accordance with plurilingual philosophy, Conbat+ adopted ‘a language-sensitive approach to content. This implies that all language skills are considered and exploited in a way that will enable learners to access content as well as to use language in a meaningful way’ (ibid., p.21). The final goal is to foster the development of a plurilingual repertoire where languages are all interconnected, and users can call upon a diversity of languages of which they have some knowledge to make sense of a text (Rossner & Bolitho, 2022). Such a language-sensitive approach facilitates a shift away from the monolingual ideology that is still highly prevalent in French schools and which can mean that, as Hélot argues, ‘any linguistic and cultural knowledge acquired in the home context apart from French becomes invisible and only school knowledge is legitimised’ (2003, p.273). Auger and Kervran (2010) point out that, at the time that the Conbat+ project was implemented, there still existed in France (as elsewhere) a dominant conception of plurilingual speakers’ linguistic repertoires as being composed of separate and distinct languages. Referring to Auger (2010), they also argue that plurilingualism was usually conceived by CLIL teachers as French plus the CLIL target language rather than as complimentary elements of a single language system.

Auger (2021) has highlighted the need for professional development to support what she refers to as Plurilingual Language Education. Auger has listed CLIL among other ‘pluralistic approaches’ she identifies as ‘representative of plurilingual and intercultural education’ (2021, p.467). However, according to Auger, teacher training is needed that addresses all teachers’ beliefs about the status of different languages and the teaching of additional languages in order to foster plurilingual education. This would involve developing language-sensitive approaches across all levels of school and in all curricular subjects, underpinned by the understanding that ‘content has always involved language, and language has always involved content’ (Ball et al., 2016:25).

Since code-switching<sup>47</sup> is a common and natural bilingual strategy in human communication (Gumperz, 1982), some French academics have given code-switching significant thought from a pedagogical perspective (Causa, 2019; Duverger, 2007) and this work could have relevance for teachers in primary CLIL classes. In this respect, one model worth highlighting is that of Duverger (2007). Duverger considered how code-switching could apply to teacher education, and, in particular, to the training of teachers who teach a non-language subject through a modern language. From this perspective, Duverger points out that code-switching can be used at various stages during the lesson preparation and teaching. He breaks down code-switching into three levels: macro, meso and micro (ibid., para. 23). Each level is understood in the following way:

- Language alternation at a macro level is of a ‘structural nature, which concerns the general programming of lessons. The macro level is concerned with the selection of the topics and themes that will be primarily taught in L1 or L2.<sup>48</sup> Note that primarily does not mean solely in L1 or L2. There is always an alternation between the two languages.
- Language alternation at a meso-level ‘takes place throughout the teaching unit’. The meso-alternation is ‘carried out by the teacher during the lesson in a reasoned, considered and voluntary way, in the form of successive sequences, with a view to encouraging the pupils to learn processes’ (ibid., para. 31). The main objective here is to think of how L1 and L2 can complement one another, or how documents in one language can bring some clarification or precisions regarding a notion dealt with in the other language.
- Language alternation at micro-level ‘refers to the short passages from one language to another, non-programmable, and therefore highly situational’ (ibid., para. 29). It encompasses the spontaneous use of languages for reformulations in the heat of the interactions.

As already mentioned, when discussing Anciaux’s (2016) results regarding the use of the Creole language in bilingual education, such a reflection on

<sup>47</sup> Code-switching and the concept of translanguaging share a common dynamic approach in relation to bilingualism. Nevertheless, from a sociolinguistic standpoint, Otheguy et al. (2015) reject the word code-switching as, to them, it is still a ‘theoretical endorsement of the idea that what the bilingual manipulates, however masterfully, are two separate linguistic systems’. However, we have retained the use of the term code-switching in referring to Duverger’s and Causa’s work, as we consider that Duverger’s and Causa’s use of this term does not convey this ideology. It is used by them as part of their pedagogical reflections on how to help teachers develop their critical thinking about how best to use the full linguistic repertoires of both students and teachers when teaching and learning non-language subjects through modern languages.

<sup>48</sup> L1 refers to a learner’s first language (or mother tongue), while L2 refers to any additional language learned after the first.

language alternation ought to help teachers to positively acknowledge the learners' language repertoires and even encourage learners to consider their repertoire as one unified ensemble of communicative resources. From a teacher perspective, the implementation of this pedagogical approach can encourage teachers to better welcome their students' languages. Such an approach can even reassure teachers and/or learners who might feel guilty for alternating between languages.

Hartmann and Hélot (2021) have reported on a research project carried out at the Graduate School for Teaching and Education at the University of Strasbourg with student teachers who are training to work in bilingual schools in the Alsace region. Hartmann and Hélot analysed these student teachers' mental representations and perceptions of, as well as attitudes towards, multilingual picture books and supported the trainees' own explorations of the pedagogical opportunities of 'interlingual and intersemiotic mediation' (p.176), focusing on the use of the trilingual edition of Tomi Ungerer's *The Three Robbers* (1961). According to Hartmann and Hélot, the translingual and multimodal activities that were explored gave rise to a new 'pedagogical approach to literacy with young readers, specifically in a bilingual education context, and explain how picture books can foster integrated, multimodal, and translingual learning, as well as the development of biliteracy and metalinguistic awareness' (p.174). Hartmann and Hélot

concluded that 'student teachers are well able to become creative agents of change in bilingual classrooms, once they have understood that strictly separating languages in their literacy teaching is not the most productive approach for their students to develop their bilingual identity' (2021, p.193).

Hartmann and Hélot's work with student teachers is an example of how French academic research on plurilingualism can be seen as a counterweight to an official policy-level conception of language learning. Hélot has argued that the primary curriculum that came into effect in 2002 and is now being replaced reflected a view of plurilingualism formulated from a monolingual standpoint, since this curriculum is 'envisaged for monolingual and monocultural children' (2003, p.273). As Hélot goes on to explain: 'it is mainly the teaching of major dominant European languages which is being strongly promoted from very early on and for which the content-and-language-integrated-learning model of bilingual education is being implemented in various forms' (2003, p.272). What is then excluded from this official conceptualisation of CLIL is how the plurilingual complexity of a classroom is acknowledged and, further, how children can be learning resources for each other using their individual 'repertoires and agency in several languages' (Moore & Gajo, 2009, p.138). In a CLIL classroom context, the concept of linguistic repertoires refers to the 'linguistic skills and





competences [that learners] can mobilise at a given point in both their first and additional languages' (Rossner & Bolitho, 2022, p.57). As in so many contexts around the world, primary CLIL teachers in France would undoubtedly benefit from support and training in what Garcia describes as a focus on 'the full repertoire of resources that diverse racialised students bring into [...] classrooms' (2024, p.17).

## 5.4 Conclusion

An overarching finding from this review of literature has been the paucity of research literature specifically about CLIL in French primary education. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a general need for further research and, especially an examination of what CLIL looks like in practice in the French primary school classroom.

This review has sought to look at how CLIL has been conceptualised by French researchers. We also sought to identify what the literature could tell us about the forces, the mechanisms and the counterweights to the implementation of primary CLIL in France. To do this, the review was organised around three themes: the ways in which CLIL in France has been described and conceptualised in academic research; existing research that has taken place into what CLIL looks like in French primary schools; reports on teacher-training projects in

France and related publications which can be considered relevant to the professional development needs of French primary school teachers delivering CLIL lessons. We now consider how this review has helped to address our research questions, together with a discussion of the implications of our findings from this review process. We return to these implications in the recommendations that we put forward in Section 6 of the report.

### **How is CLIL in primary education in France conceptualised at national, regional and school levels in terms of policy and strategy?**

The literature reviewed here has confirmed that a significant driving force behind CLIL implementation in French primary schools has been the official conceptualisation of CLIL as a way of teaching a foreign language. Indeed, this official conceptualisation reflects the rationale for the adoption of CLIL by European policymakers in the early 2000s. As Gabillon (2020) in her state-of-the-art review of CLIL literature reminds us: 'CLIL was not originally intended as a content-and-language-teaching approach. Rather, the original aim was the development of an 'innovative foreign-language teaching method' that could (a) respond to changing demands and needs in language learning, (b) promote plurilingualism, and (c) create synergy for the economic development of a plurilingual Europe' (para. 4).



However, conceptualisations of CLIL have evolved in the two decades since. This has included the way that content can be conceptualised from both subject- and language-teaching perspectives. For example, in Ball et al.'s (2015) 'three dimensions of CLIL' model, subject content is conceived as involving learning across linguistic, conceptual and procedural dimensions, rather than being seen as separate from language. As Ball et al. put it, why would we want to see content and language as separate when 'content has always involved language, and language has always involved content' (2015, p.25). From a language-teaching perspective, Meyer and Coyle (2023) have argued that language teaching should be conceived as a discipline so that its content encompasses 'literatures, cultures, and languages, which is key to outlining a new paradigm for the language classroom: language learning as deeper learning for creative and responsible global citizenship' (p.236). This 'new paradigm' involves 'recalibrating' how we think about language, culture and literature in the language classroom and emphasising the development of learners' critical literacies and cultural consciousness. Education policy may need to begin reflecting these developments and the integrated processes of learning that CLIL draws attention to, since 'the non-language subject [e.g. geography, mathematics, music] is not taught in a foreign language but *with* and *through* a foreign language' (Eurydice, 2006, p.7). CLIL demands that teachers look at the whole teaching and learning process, as both the target language and the non-language subject learning need to be thought about jointly.

### **What are the principal forces and stakeholders influencing and driving CLIL in primary education in France, what are the mechanisms for its implementation and what are the counterweights (positive and negative) to this implementation?**

Our review has highlighted how academic work on plurilingual education in France can be seen as a counterweight to an official conception of plurilingualism. Scholars have adopted the term 'plurilingualism' to highlight a holistic rather than a segmented understanding of an individual learner's linguistic repertoire. This shift in terminology has implications for teaching, learning and assessment, as a plurilingual conception also changes how linguistic proficiency is viewed: in place of the notion of a language learner acquiring a stable and well balanced set of competencies, plurilingualism 'insists on disequilibrium and partial competence [...] potential linkages rather than on the separateness of its various components' and 'a vision of competence which includes the situated mobilisation of the linguistic and cultural components of the repertoire, and its potential evolution and reconfiguration over time and circumstances; it includes mediation abilities, related to circulations and passages between languages' (Moore and Gajo, 2009, p.144). The last aspect – 'circulations and passages between languages' – emphasises translinguaging<sup>49</sup> and this review has also indicated how translinguaging could have an important role in a primary CLIL classroom. We referred to the Conbat+ European project carried out in the early 2000s as an example of activities that

<sup>49</sup> Translinguaging has been defined as 'a theoretical lens that offers a different view of bilingualism and multilingualism. The theory posits that rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, as has been traditionally thought, bilinguals, multilinguals, and indeed all users of language select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to negotiate particular communicative contexts. Translinguaging also represents an approach to language pedagogy that affirms and leverages students' diverse and dynamic language practices in teaching and learning' (Vogel and Garcia, 2017, p.1).



could be implemented to promote languages other than English, or alongside English. Encouraging a plurilingual approach to CLIL does not hinder the learning of the target language of the CLIL class; it goes hand in hand with this objective as it helps learners to understand how they can make use of their linguistic repertoires.

Hélot and Young have described a multilingual school as:



***a place where linguistic and cultural diversity is acknowledged and valued, where children can feel safe to use their home language alongside the school language (French in this case) to learn and to communicate, where teachers are not afraid and do not feel threatened to hear languages they do not know, and where multilingualism and multilingual literacies are supported. (2006, p.69).***

This description is also an appeal for placing all languages on an equal footing (including non-European ones) which opposes any form of linguistic imperialism; it is also an appeal for a ‘pedagogy of and for diversity’, as Auger puts it (2022, p.26). As the British Council’s ELLiE report likewise observed: ‘the ever-growing presence of English in Europe may be a limiting factor for children’s access to other FLs [foreign languages]. It seems evident that policymakers, parents and schools will need to explore ways of compensating for this significant lack of input if Europe is to consolidate a basis for a plurilingual citizenry across all school systems’ (2011, p.149). There is a

need for further research that examines how the implementation of CLIL in French primary schools impacts learners’ access to other languages, including their home languages – does CLIL limit or enhance this access?

Finally, the review of literature undertaken in this report has identified conceptual resources that could be drawn on for future professional development initiatives in French primary CLIL. We would therefore suggest that such training could be informed by the following:

- Gabillon’s (2020) seven principles underlying CLIL practice provides a relevant framework for designing primary CLIL teacher-training workshops.
- Gabillon and Ailincăi’s findings from their classroom-based investigations (2013, 2016) can be used as examples for training focusing on ways to scaffold learning in CLIL lessons.
- Hartmann and Hélot’s (2021) work with bilingual student teachers offers an example to build on for designing professional development training on translanguaging for CLIL teachers. In addition, the three levels to Duverger’s (2007) model for analysing code-switching by teachers is also relevant to include in training in this area.
- Coyle and Meyer’s (2021) conception of pluriliteracies is a cross-curricular progression model for acquiring domain-specific literacies, and teacher training on pluriliteracies could focus on how this model helps with both planning sequences of learning and with understanding what progression looks like in the CLIL classroom. In addition, CLIL teacher training on applying this model could involve practical

examples for planning activities across sequences of learning (both at the level of a lesson and across a series of lessons) that encompass the four pluriliteracy stages (doing, describing, explaining and arguing) in learning.

- Auger’s (2021) seven-step Plurilingual Language Education Framework (see Figure 4 below) – with its focus on plurilingualism as a particular understanding of what language is rather than describing a particular educational system, as

well as how plurilingual education involves an emphasis on an individual learner’s multiple linguistic repertoires – provides a relevant tool for professional development that supports CLIL teachers in their application of the principles and practices of plurilingual education. As Auger explains, plurilingual education approaches see ‘languages as a vehicle and a tool for developing knowledge’ (2021, p.466) – this is an understanding of language that also underpins CLIL.

- ⇒ **Step 1** involves the identification of the languages spoken by students in the class in order to recognise everyone’s language repertoire.
- ⇒ **Step 2** refers to the fact that all languages must be used as a resource to teach and learn.
- ⇒ **Step 3** involves using resources such as translation, comparison, and plurilingual texts in class.
- ⇒ **Step 4** consists of implementing mentoring within the classroom to enhance learning.
- ⇒ **Step 5** involves using a plurilingual and pluricultural environment inside and outside class to help all students.
- ⇒ **Step 6** involves leveraging the linguistic and cultural resources of parents, as they should be involved and given the opportunity to share their particular expertise.
- ⇒ **Step 7** aims to raise awareness among educational staff and teachers of all subjects, advising even those who are not language teachers of their responsibility for teaching through language and culture in their classes.

Figure 4: Auger’s seven-step Plurilingual Language Education Framework (Source: adapted from Auger, 2021, p.470).



# 6. Recommendations

What follows are recommendations based on this exploratory research. These recommendations have been divided into two sections. In the first section, nine recommendations are put forward for further research which we hope will be of relevance to stakeholders with an interest in finding out more about the current situation of CLIL teaching in primary education in France. In the second section, a series of recommendations are made specifically for the British Council on how it can best support the implementation of CLIL in the French education system at national, regional, school and classroom levels and thus further its mission to support the learning, teaching and assessment of English and of subjects taught through English in order to foster positive cultural relations between the UK and France.

## 6.1 Recommendations for further research

*Recommendation 1: Further research into the scale of current CLIL implementation in primary education in France.*

The first of the research questions posed for this exploratory investigation (see Section 2) has been only partially answered by the present research. In

Section 3 we explained how the publicly available data on foreign-language provision in French schools does not allow for an accurate calculation of how much of this provision can be considered as CLIL. In Section 3, we also commented on the lack of information about CLIL programmes on the websites of the *régions académiques* and *académies*. More research is therefore needed to find out about the current scale of primary CLIL implementation in France. We would suggest the following research question: *What is the scale of current CLIL implementation in primary education in France?*

*Recommendation 2: Further research into how CLIL is conceptualised by inspectors, academic advisors, school leaders and teachers. Further research into how the conceptualisation of CLIL at the policy level as primarily a way to improve foreign-language proficiency impacts implementation at the school level.*

The second question for the present research focused on finding out how CLIL in primary education in France is conceptualised at national, regional and school levels in terms of policy and strategy. The review of national policy and strategy documentation in Section 3 has shown how CLIL is



conceptualised at the national level, while the review of *région académique* and *académie* websites provided some (but limited) understanding of this conceptualisation at the regional and school levels. More research is therefore needed to see how CLIL is conceptualised by those involved in its implementation at regional and school levels: inspectors, academic advisors, school leaders and teachers. We would suggest the following research question: *How is CLIL conceptualised by inspectors, academic advisors, school leaders and teachers?*

Connected with this, it would be useful to find out how these conceptualisations impact the implementation of CLIL at the school and classroom level (see Recommendation 7 as well below).

Moreover, it would be important to see to what extent these practitioners' conceptualisations reflect the way CLIL is conceptualised in the national policy and strategy documents reviewed by the present research as, primarily, a means of improving foreign-language proficiency.

In addition, it would be useful to see how the conceptualisation of CLIL in primary schools at the national policy level – as primarily a way of improving foreign-language proficiency – impacts

implementation at the regional and school levels. For example, it would be useful to uncover how this conceptualisation of CLIL affects both teacher recruitment and teacher training at the school level. Further research is also needed to see how the underlying beliefs about language and learning that are reflected in the job profiles we reviewed in Section 4 then filter down to the school and classroom levels and are reflected in the beliefs, values and perceptions of CLIL primary teachers. These are interesting additional questions and areas for potential further research related to the way CLIL is conceptualised at regional and school levels by those involved in its implementation.

*Recommendation 3: Further research into the mechanisms for CLIL implementation at regional and school levels.*

In this report's review of national policy and strategy documents, the mechanisms for CLIL implementation we identified were organised into three categories: mechanisms for setting up a CLIL programme; mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the success of a CLIL programme; and mechanisms for teacher recruitment and continuing professional



development. Although our review of the *région académique* and *académie* websites has revealed that information on these sites does not diverge from the national policy and strategy, more research is needed to find out about the specific mechanisms for implementing CLIL that schools are using. The example that we discussed of the *académie de Grenoble* provides some insight into what these mechanisms can involve but there is clearly a need for further research into what is happening in other *académies* or *régions académiques*. We would suggest the following research question: *What are the mechanisms for CLIL implementation at the regional and school levels?* We would also suggest that the three categories of mechanisms identified in this report could serve as a useful framework for this particular area of further research.

*Recommendation 4: Further research into the progress made with following the four ministerial recommendations put forward in the Guide pour l'enseignement en langue vivante étrangère de l'école au lycée. Oser les langues vivantes étrangères (Ministry of Education, 2020).*

In our review of national policy and strategy, we highlighted the four ministerial recommendations regarding CLIL implementation put forward in the Guide: the continuance of the work of committees for modern foreign-language teaching in each *académie* (CALVE); cooperation between primary and secondary education to ensure continuity in pupils' learning paths; coordination between the various levels of the education system (national, *académie* and *département*) to facilitate pooling and territorial equity; and the development of links with research in the form of CLIL scientific councils. It would be useful and highly relevant as part of wider research into CLIL implementation in French primary schools to find out what progress is being made with following these recommendations across different *régions académiques* and *académies*, as well as what impact these recommendations are having on the implementation of CLIL in schools. We would suggest the following question for such research: *What progress has been made with following the four ministerial recommendations put forward in the Guide pour l'enseignement en langue vivante étrangère de l'école au lycée. Oser les langues vivantes étrangères (Ministry of Education, 2020)?*

*Recommendation 5: Further research into the involvement of the key stakeholders identified in the national policy documents.*

The national policy and strategy documents reviewed in this report identify various stakeholders, including inspectors, academic advisors, teacher trainers, school leaders, teachers, parents, local authorities, and French or foreign partners (such as French universities, foreign institutional partners like the British Council, foreign universities and schools). It is important to find out more about both the role and actual involvement of these stakeholders in French primary schools and, alongside this, to see what impact any such involvement is having. We propose the following question: *What involvement of the key stakeholders identified in the national policy documents is happening in primary CLIL programmes?* As part of this research, it would be useful to understand how these stakeholders conceptualise CLIL. Further, it would be useful to examine the extent to which parents support the introduction of CLIL programmes, as this would then help to assess to what extent CLIL is driven by top-down policy or, conversely, by bottom-up forces such as the needs and wishes of parents (as well as those of learners and teachers).



Furthermore, it would be useful to find out why these stakeholders have been identified by policymakers, as well as how this identification in the French primary-school context compares to those of other countries. Indeed, what does existing research indicate about crucial stakeholder involvement for the successful implementation of CLIL? The following questions would be relevant to address: *Why have these stakeholders in the French primary-school context been identified by policymakers? How does this identification in the French primary-school context compare with those of other countries?*

*Recommendation 6: Further research into the impact of CLIL programmes on learners and teachers, including what the benefits and drawbacks are for learners and teachers of CLIL in French primary schools.*

Although there have recently been research projects and training programmes launched at the European and French levels<sup>50</sup>, one significant overall finding from our review of literature in Section 5 is the present paucity of literature about CLIL in France, including a lack of research into the impact of CLIL programmes on both learners and teachers. Further research into the impact of primary CLIL is therefore clearly needed and this should encompass an investigation into both the benefits and drawbacks of CLIL programmes for teachers and learners.

It would also be important for future research on the impact of CLIL in the French primary-school context to focus on exploring specific aspects of implementation. The following are suggested further research questions connected with a broader concern with impact:

- *What is the impact of CLIL on learning outcomes (both subject-related and language-related)?*
- *What is the impact of CLIL on learners' levels of comprehension in, and their production of, the target CLIL language?*
- *What impact does CLIL have in underprivileged areas (for example, on social mixing)?*
- *What impact does CLIL have on learners' home languages and on their use (and acquisition) of languages other than the CLIL target language?*

*Recommendation 7: Further research into CLIL in primary education in France in practice.*

A key area for further research that we identified in our literature review is the need for investigations into what primary CLIL actually looks like in practice in the French context. There is therefore a need for studies focusing on the professional practices of CLIL primary-school teachers. Such studies would provide

<sup>50</sup> For example, see the European project *Beyond CLIL – Pluriliteracies teaching for deeper learning* and its recent implementation in Montpellier: <https://www.ecml.at/News/tabid/643/ArtMID/2666/ArticleID/2920/preview/true/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>





a better understanding of the real situation of teaching and learning in CLIL classes and a deeper understanding of teachers' professional development needs (on this latter point, see also Recommendation 8). We propose the following broad research question: *What does CLIL in primary education in France look like in the classroom?*

Investigating what primary CLIL looks like in practice should also focus on looking at particular aspects of practice. For example, it would be useful to find out about the different ways in which teachers use language in the CLIL primary classroom, including to what extent this involves making space for translinguaging and multimodality (the use of both linguistic and non-linguistic modalities for communication). This further research should also consider differentiation in the CLIL classroom, such as how CLIL teachers deal with different levels of linguistic proficiency in their classrooms, as well as what SEND provision is available for learners<sup>51</sup>. It would also be useful to review the teaching and learning materials used by teachers and how effective these materials are for meeting the needs of both learners and teachers.

*Recommendation 8: Further research into the current main professional development needs for those involved in the implementation of CLIL in primary education in France.*

A key area for further research would involve an analysis of the current professional development needs for those involved in the implementation of

CLIL in primary education in France. A comprehensive professional development needs analysis would involve collecting data from teachers and learners and this analysis could be undertaken in tandem with research that also addresses the previous recommendation.

We would recommend the question: *What are the current professional development needs for those involved in the implementation of CLIL in primary education in France?*

*Recommendation 9: Further research that reviews the currently available professional development opportunities for primary CLIL teachers.*

Our review of national policy documents and the websites of the *régions académiques* and *académies* identified various professional development opportunities for primary CLIL teachers. These continuing professional development options listed in the documents include hybrid training courses, linguistic self-training courses, MOOCs, webinars, and Erasmus+ opportunities. However, research is needed into the effectiveness of the various options, as well as the extent to which these options are able to address the main professional needs identified in a comprehensive professional development needs analysis (see also previous recommendation).

We would suggest the question: *How effective are the continuing professional development options available to teachers in addressing their professional needs in relation to CLIL?*

<sup>51</sup> SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

## Suggested questions for future research

### Scale, conceptualisation and organisation of CLIL

- What is the scale of current CLIL implementation in primary education in France?
- How is CLIL conceptualised by inspectors, academic advisors, school leaders and teachers?
- Why have certain stakeholders in the French primary-school context been identified by policymakers? How does this identification in the French primary-school context compare with those of other countries?
- What involvement of the key stakeholders identified in the national policy documents is happening in primary CLIL programmes?

### Implementation

- What does CLIL in primary education in France look like in the classroom?
- What are the mechanisms for CLIL implementation at the regional and school levels?
- What progress has been made with following the four ministerial recommendations put forward in the *Guide pour l'enseignement en langue vivante étrangère de l'école au lycée. Oser les langues vivantes étrangères* (Ministry of Education, 2020)?
- What are the current professional development needs for those involved in the implementation of CLIL in primary education in France?
- How effective are the continuing professional development options available to teachers in addressing their professional needs in relation to CLIL?

### Impact of CLIL on learning and equity

- What is the impact of CLIL on learning outcomes (both subject-related and language-related)?
- What is the impact of CLIL on learners' levels of comprehension in, and their production of, the target CLIL language?
- What impact does CLIL have in underprivileged areas (for example, on social mixing)?
- What impact does CLIL have on learners' home languages and on their use (and acquisition) of languages other than the CLIL target language?





## 6.2 Recommendations for the British Council

Based on the research findings from this report, there are several recommendations for how the British Council can best support the development of CLIL in the French education system at the national level, the regional decision-making level, the school level and the classroom level.

*Recommendation 10: Continue to strengthen the relationship between the British Council and France's Ministry of Education and other relevant national education institutions/organisations.*

Support from the British Council at the national level can be reinforced through continuing to develop the relationship between the British Council and France's Ministry of Education. In addition, we would suggest that there might be opportunities to build partnerships between the British Council and other relevant national institutions, ministry operators and organisations. A first step towards further developing these relationships and partnerships would be the sharing of the present report.

*Recommendation 11: Strengthen the relationship between the British Council and France's eighteen régions académiques and thirty académies.*

Support at the regional level can be developed through strengthening the relationship between the British Council and France's eighteen *régions académiques* and thirty *académies*. As with the previous recommendation, a first step would involve the sharing of the present report. This relationship could be further developed through the involvement of the British Council as an external advisor in the committees for modern foreign language teaching in each *académie* (CALVE<sup>52</sup>) as well as in steering committees specifically related to CLIL teaching.

*Recommendation 12: Accompany practitioners at the school and classroom levels by offering advice, supporting initial and ongoing teacher-training initiatives around CLIL pedagogy, and sharing professional development opportunities from the British Council's TeachingEnglish online community.*

The British Council can offer support at the school and classroom level by using its expertise to advise on initial and continuing professional development initiatives around CLIL. It can also work with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education to share webinars, publications and online courses from its TeachingEnglish<sup>53</sup> offer as widely as possible across France.

<sup>52</sup> Commission académique sur l'enseignement des langues vivantes étrangères.

<sup>53</sup> The British Council's TeachingEnglish online community brings together 6.6 million teachers around the world and over 100,000 in France. It offers free access to publications, webinars, online courses and materials. It can be accessed at the following web address: [www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk)



*Recommendation 13: Continue to facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practice between experts, policymakers and practitioners, both within France and internationally.*

The British Council should use its convening power, its international reputation and its expertise in the fields of language learning and CLIL to organise events that allow for the exchange of ideas between national and international stakeholders and contribute to dialogues around these topics. Where possible, it would be beneficial for these to be organised in partnership with ministry operators, such as France Education international, the Centre national d'enseignement à distance (CNED) or Réseau Canopé. These events should draw in part on the British Council's research and position papers to inform discussions.

*Recommendation 14: Conduct future research into CLIL in primary education in France in collaboration with stakeholders, such as French universities and the Ministry of Education, and help to disseminate existing research.*

The British Council should continue to fund and lead ambitious research projects examining the role of CLIL in primary (and secondary) education in France. Where possible, these should be organised in partnership with the Ministry of Education, *académies* and French higher education institutions. The recommendations in Section 6.1 could help to frame future research projects, and we would also suggest that it would be useful for Gabillon's (2020) seven principles underlying CLIL practice (discussed in Section 5) to form a basis for this research. Indeed, we would even suggest that Gabillon's seven principles might be used to actively inform future national policy and strategy.

The British Council should also forge partnerships with research communities, such as the *Association pour la Recherche en Didactique de l'Anglais et en Acquisition (ARDA)*, to help share existing research with the wider teaching community.





## 7. Conclusion

It is hoped that this exploratory research into the scale and current situation of CLIL teaching in French primary education will prove useful to all those interested in CLIL in primary education in France. As the report's recommendations for further research indicate, more data need to be collected from those involved in the implementation of CLIL – inspectors, academic advisors, school leaders and teachers – in order to better understand both what actually goes on in CLIL classrooms and the professional development needs of CLIL primary school teachers.

As this report has also shown, additional data is needed to formulate a more detailed picture of the scale of CLIL in primary education in France. In addition, this report has put forward detailed recommendations for further research across various areas and aspects of CLIL implementation. These recommendations can function as a relevant basis for stakeholders – including policymakers and academics – to formulate future research projects.

This exploratory research has illustrated the usefulness of Mehisto's (2015) tripartite framework (forces, mechanisms and counterweights) for describing and understanding an education system. Through the analysis of national policy and strategy documents, three categories of mechanisms for primary CLIL implementation in France have also been formulated: mechanisms for setting up a CLIL programme; mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the success of a CLIL programme; and mechanisms for teacher recruitment and continuing professional development. These three categories provide a useful extension to Mehisto's framework,

which can be built on as part of the further research in the French context recommended by this report.

A key finding of this research has been how national policy and strategy see CLIL in the main as a foreign-language teaching methodology. However, as has been pointed out in this report, conceptualisations of CLIL have evolved significantly in the last two decades and the conceptualisation of CLIL as a way to support foreign-language learning no longer fully recognises the integrated processes of learning to which CLIL draws attention. Moreover, this report has argued that a significant counterweight to official language policy has been the academic research on plurilingualism in the French context. We have argued that what has sometimes been missing from the official conceptualisation of CLIL is how the plurilingual complexity of a classroom has come to be acknowledged and, further, how children are now seen as learning resources for each other when they are able to use and build their own linguistic repertoires. It would be helpful for evolving education policy to reflect these recent developments in CLIL practice and the concomitant theorisation of this practice in the future.

Finally, we hope that French primary school teachers who read this report will be able to use it as a resource for developing their own CLIL teaching practices. The areas for teacher training identified in the recommendations might also help teachers to identify targets for their own professional development, along with models such as the British Council's **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework for teachers**.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> The British Council's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework for teachers consists of 11 deeply interconnected professional practices that provide a description of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes that teachers can develop and put into practice in their context. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers>

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# Appendix: List of the *région académique* and *académie* websites consulted


Région Académique	Académie	Websites
Nouvelle-Aquitaine	Bordeaux	<a href="https://blogacabdx.ac-bordeaux.fr/lve64/accueil">https://blogacabdx.ac-bordeaux.fr/lve64/accueil</a>
	Poitiers	<a href="https://www.ac-poitiers.fr/langues-vivantes-dans-l-academie-de-poitiers-124565">https://www.ac-poitiers.fr/langues-vivantes-dans-l-academie-de-poitiers-124565</a> <a href="http://blogs16.ac-poitiers.fr/lve/emile/">http://blogs16.ac-poitiers.fr/lve/emile/</a>
	Limoges	<a href="https://www.ac-limoges.fr/langues-vivantes-121457">https://www.ac-limoges.fr/langues-vivantes-121457</a>
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	Clermont-Ferrand	<a href="https://www.ac-clermont.fr/veille-a-la-diversite-linguistique-126786">https://www.ac-clermont.fr/veille-a-la-diversite-linguistique-126786</a>
	Lyon	<a href="https://langues-01.enseigne.ac-lyon.fr/spip/spip.php?page=rubrique&amp;id_rubrique=4">https://langues-01.enseigne.ac-lyon.fr/spip/spip.php?page=rubrique&amp;id_rubrique=4</a> <a href="https://gex-sud.circo.ac-lyon.fr/spip/spip.php?article322">https://gex-sud.circo.ac-lyon.fr/spip/spip.php?article322</a> <a href="https://lve-rhone.enseigne.ac-lyon.fr/spip/#onglet">https://lve-rhone.enseigne.ac-lyon.fr/spip/#onglet</a>
	Grenoble	<a href="https://savoie-educ.web.ac-grenoble.fr/lve/emile-enseignement-dune-matiere-par-lintegration-dune-langue-etrangere">https://savoie-educ.web.ac-grenoble.fr/lve/emile-enseignement-dune-matiere-par-lintegration-dune-langue-etrangere</a> <a href="https://savoie-educ.web.ac-grenoble.fr/lve/enseigner-en-langue">https://savoie-educ.web.ac-grenoble.fr/lve/enseigner-en-langue</a>
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté	Dijon	<a href="https://lve21.cir.ac-dijon.fr/">https://lve21.cir.ac-dijon.fr/</a> <a href="https://lve21.cir.ac-dijon.fr/2023/03/24/programmes/">https://lve21.cir.ac-dijon.fr/2023/03/24/programmes/</a> <a href="https://www.ac-dijon.fr/connaissiez-vous-le-dispositif-emile-123469">https://www.ac-dijon.fr/connaissiez-vous-le-dispositif-emile-123469</a>
	Besançon	<a href="https://lv.circo25.ac-besancon.fr/2018/07/03/emile/">https://lv.circo25.ac-besancon.fr/2018/07/03/emile/</a> <a href="https://lv.circo25.ac-besancon.fr/2018/10/26/formes-geometriques/">https://lv.circo25.ac-besancon.fr/2018/10/26/formes-geometriques/</a> <a href="https://champagnole.circo39.ac-besancon.fr/?p=9103">https://champagnole.circo39.ac-besancon.fr/?p=9103</a>
Occitanie	Toulouse	<a href="https://www.ac-toulouse.fr/parcours-linguistiques-renforces-premier-degre-127772">https://www.ac-toulouse.fr/parcours-linguistiques-renforces-premier-degre-127772</a> <a href="https://edu1d.ac-toulouse.fr/politique-educative-31/lve31/">https://edu1d.ac-toulouse.fr/politique-educative-31/lve31/</a>
	Montpellier	<a href="https://pedagogie.ac-montpellier.fr/discipline/langues-vivantes-etrangeres-ou-regionales-1er-degre">https://pedagogie.ac-montpellier.fr/discipline/langues-vivantes-etrangeres-ou-regionales-1er-degre</a> <a href="https://view.genial.ly/613b93b5124b880d527e7f43">https://view.genial.ly/613b93b5124b880d527e7f43</a> <a href="https://pedagogie.ac-montpellier.fr/search/#/niveaux-educatifs/107/niveaux-educatifs/112/niveaux-educatifs/117/niveaux-educatifs/118/domaines-d-enseignement/7727">https://pedagogie.ac-montpellier.fr/search/#/niveaux-educatifs/107/niveaux-educatifs/112/niveaux-educatifs/117/niveaux-educatifs/118/domaines-d-enseignement/7727</a>

Région Académique	Académie	Websites
Hauts-de-France	Lille	<a href="https://pedagogie-nord.ac-lille.fr/docuweb/mission-langues-59/">https://pedagogie-nord.ac-lille.fr/docuweb/mission-langues-59/</a> <a href="https://ien-fourmies.etab.ac-lille.fr/2017/06/29/dispositif-bilangue-ecole-jean-mace-fourmies/">https://ien-fourmies.etab.ac-lille.fr/2017/06/29/dispositif-bilangue-ecole-jean-mace-fourmies/</a> <a href="https://consignes-eps-lv.etab.ac-lille.fr/html/consignes.html">https://consignes-eps-lv.etab.ac-lille.fr/html/consignes.html</a>
Bretagne	Rennes	<a href="https://ecole-levizac.ac-rennes.fr/spip.php?article132">https://ecole-levizac.ac-rennes.fr/spip.php?article132</a> <a href="https://ecole-jean-mace-brest.ac-rennes.fr/spip.php?article194">https://ecole-jean-mace-brest.ac-rennes.fr/spip.php?article194</a>
Mayotte	Mayotte	<a href="https://www.ac-mayotte.fr/certification-complementaire-122059">https://www.ac-mayotte.fr/certification-complementaire-122059</a> <a href="https://bv.ac-mayotte.fr/organigramme/index.php">https://bv.ac-mayotte.fr/organigramme/index.php</a> <a href="https://histoire-geographie.ac-mayotte.fr/IMG/pdf/dnl_allège.pdf">https://histoire-geographie.ac-mayotte.fr/IMG/pdf/dnl_allège.pdf</a>
La Réunion	La Réunion	<a href="https://pedagogie.ac-reunion.fr/anglais/dnl-en-selo-et-dispositif-emile.html">https://pedagogie.ac-reunion.fr/anglais/dnl-en-selo-et-dispositif-emile.html</a> <a href="https://bloc-note.ac-reunion.fr/9741179n/files/2020/11/Parcours_une_seule_langue_CP_au_CM2.pdf">https://bloc-note.ac-reunion.fr/9741179n/files/2020/11/Parcours_une_seule_langue_CP_au_CM2.pdf</a>
Martinique	Martinique	<a href="https://site.ac-martinique.fr/pole-langues/?page_id=2366">https://site.ac-martinique.fr/pole-langues/?page_id=2366</a> <a href="https://site.ac-martinique.fr/anglais/?p=239">https://site.ac-martinique.fr/anglais/?p=239</a> <a href="https://site.ac-martinique.fr/pole-langues/?page_id=1889">https://site.ac-martinique.fr/pole-langues/?page_id=1889</a> <a href="https://site.ac-martinique.fr/drareic/">https://site.ac-martinique.fr/drareic/</a> <a href="https://site.ac-martinique.fr/pole-langues/?page_id=3722">https://site.ac-martinique.fr/pole-langues/?page_id=3722</a>

All websites were accessed in March and April 2024.

# About the British Council

We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. We work with governments and our partners in the education, English-language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Working together we make a bigger difference, creating benefit for millions of people each year all over the world. Indeed, we work in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

An abstract graphic design featuring a large, dark blue shape on the left and a large, bright green shape on the right. These two shapes overlap in the center, creating a white space filled with horizontal, slightly wavy stripes. The stripes are dark blue, matching the left shape. The overall composition is modern and geometric.

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The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.