

# Content Language Integrated Learning in Polish Higher Military Education

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**Abstract:** The article discusses the issue of the Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method and its application in military education programs. Firstly, it focuses on CLIL's concept and models, discusses opportunities and challenges arising out of the method in educational institutes with regard to a Spanish-led research; secondly, it formulates challenges for CLIL implementation and enumerates barriers related to it. The final part concerns recommendations on the CLIL application for one of the Polish military universities. In the recommendations authors emphasize that CLIL is an advantageous tool for professionally-oriented education by which, apart from the linguistic skills, self-directed learning and intercultural communication skills can be highly improved.

**Keywords:** CLIL method, military education, linguistic skills, language education.

## Introduction

The European Commission's recommendation that every citizen of the European Union should know at least two Community languages apart from their mother tongue (European Council, 2002),<sup>1</sup> the increased mobility of EU citizens that is possible as a result of the agreement on open borders (The Schengen Agreement, 1985), and the free movement of goods and services are considered the main causes of the enormous popularity of foreign language learning. Along with these political and social changes new ideas for didactic methods have emerged, resulting in a number of methodological approaches

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<sup>1</sup> European Council (2002). Barcelona European Council. Presidency Conclusions. Press Release 100/1/02.

which combine and integrate a particular subject and a language. In pedagogical or linguistic literature notions such as *language across the curriculum* and *language supported subject learning* appeared. A recent concept that has appeared in scholarly discussions about subject and language teaching in Europe is that of Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This concept was created in 1994 by David Marsh and Anne Maljers and stands for the name of the approach which relies on using a foreign language for the acquisition of a particular topic (non-language subjects). It constitutes a promising and effective tool in the promotion of multilingualism in Europe and beyond it and relates to any language, age as well as educational level: from pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher to vocational and professional learning. The European context is noticeable in four crucial works that provide a good overview of CLIL: the two publications by Marsh (*Profiling European CLIL Classrooms*, 2001; *CLIL/EMILE: The European Dimension*, 2001), which were commissioned by the European Commission, the European Commission Eurydice Report from 2006, and the recently published Council of Europe Country Report.<sup>2</sup> The objective of the present analysis is to reflect on two aspects of these publications: the prevalence of CLIL in European education systems and the organizational structure of CLIL teaching in Europe.<sup>3</sup> In Poland, the term CLIL has become increasingly popular and is known as *subject-language teaching* (translated into Polish as *nauczanie przedmiotowo-językowe*) (“Eurydice Report” of 2006;<sup>4</sup> “Profile Report Bilingual Education (English) in Poland” of 2008<sup>5</sup>) and *bilingual education* (*edukacja dwujęzyczna* in Polish).<sup>6</sup> Teaching a curriculum subject in a foreign language also gains popularity in Polish military universities. Since the use of specialist language and colloquial terminology is crucial to effective communication, this methodological approach of teaching is increasingly perceived as a tailor-made solution. The case study of CLIL implementation described in the present paper concerns the National Defense University, the highest level educational institution of the Polish Armed Forces. There, the CLIL methodological approach seems to be a key factor for the development of the offer of both international and national courses. Teaching both international and Polish military students who would like to participate in specialist courses conducted in a foreign language, can be facilitated with the CLIL methodological approach. In order to popularize CLIL in a military environment, the authors of the present article discuss various models of teaching based on this approach and stress its

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<sup>2</sup> Anne Maljers, ed., *Windows on CLIL. Content and Language Integrated Learning in the European Spotlight* (Alkmaar: European Platform for Dutch Education, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Goethe Institute Website, [www.goethe.de/ges/spa/dos/ifs/ceu/en2751287.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ges/spa/dos/ifs/ceu/en2751287.htm) (6 April 2014).

<sup>4</sup> *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at School in Europe*, Strasbourg: European Commission, Eurydice, 2006, available at [www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org) (6 April 2014).

<sup>5</sup> David Marsh, Marek Zajac, and Hanna Gozdawa-Gołębiowska, *Profile Report Bilingual Education (English) in Poland – Overview of Practice in Selected Schools* (Warsaw: British Council Poland, University of Jyväskylä, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> M. Roda, “Edukacja bilingwalna w Polsce na tle innych krajów Unii Europejskiej,” in H. Komorowska, ed., *Nauczanie języków obcych. Polska a Europa* (Warsaw: Academica SWPS, 2007), 51-58.

advantages by making a reference to Spanish research concerning CLIL effectiveness and the emerging challenges of its application. The final part of the article offers recommendations for implementing this approach at the National Defense University in Warsaw.

## Considerations on the Concept of “Content Language Integrated Learning”

An analysis of the relevant literature indicates that there are discrepancies in the use of the concept. According to Marsh, CLIL commonly refers to when “any dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first foreign language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content.”<sup>7</sup> This means that CLIL assimilates notions such as bilingual language programs, content-based instruction, foreign languages across the curriculum, foreign languages as academic languages, dual language programs, immersion programs, or multilingual programs. Marsh proceeds to stress that CLIL invites a reconceptualization of how we consider language use and learning. It enables the improvement of an integrated educational approach that actively involves the learner in using and developing the language of learning, the language for learning and language through learning. It has been referred to as education through construction, rather than instruction.<sup>8</sup> Mehisto, Frigols and Marsh also define CLIL as an umbrella term covering a dozen or more educational approaches.<sup>9</sup> Sharing Marsh’s view, they claim that CLIL is a “cognitively demanding approach.”<sup>10</sup> Another author, Meyer, states that it is “an approach that is mutually beneficial for both content and language subjects;”<sup>11</sup> Dalton-Puffer views it as an “educational approach.”<sup>12</sup> Ruiz de Zarobe, Sierra, and Gallardo del Puerto also main-

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<sup>7</sup> David Marsh, *Content and Language Integrated Learning: The European Dimension—Actions, Trends and Foresight Potential* (DG Education & Culture, European Commission, 2002), 15.

<sup>8</sup> David Marsh, *Project D3 – CLIL Matrix – Central Workshop Report 6/2005* (Graz, 3-5 November 2005). European Centre for Modern Languages, 2005, 6, [http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/CLILmatrix/pdf/wsrepD3E2005\\_6.pdf](http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/CLILmatrix/pdf/wsrepD3E2005_6.pdf) (1 April 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Peeter Mehisto, Maria-Jesus Frigols, and David Marsh, *Uncovering CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning and Multilingual Education* (Oxford: MacMillan, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Peeter Mehisto and David Marsh, “Approaching the economic, cognitive and health benefits of bilingualism: Fuel for CLIL,” in Yolanda Ruiz de Zarobe, Juan Manuel Sierra, and Francisco Gallardo del Puerto, eds., *Content and Foreign Language Integrated Learning* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Meyer, “Towards quality CLIL: successful planning and teaching strategies,” *Puls* 10 (2010): 11-29.

<sup>12</sup> Christiane Dalton-Puffer, foreword to *Content and Foreign Language Integrated Learning: Contributions to Multilingualism in European Contexts*, ed. Yolanda Ruiz de Zarobe et al. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), ix-x.

tain that, within the European landscape, “it is firmly becoming a preferred educational approach.”<sup>13</sup>

According to Marsh, Zajac, and Gozdawa-Gołębiowska, teaching with the CLIL methodological approach can be conducted in accordance with four models, conveniently labeled A, B, C, and D.<sup>14</sup>

Model A: lessons are conducted primarily in a foreign language and the mother tongue is used to translate the important terminology.

Type A (monofocal): the attention of the course participants is focused mainly on the subject, whereas linguistic issues are rarely raised and usually concern the pronunciation and spelling of particular terms;

Type B (bifocal): the emphasis is placed on both the subject taught and the linguistic issues, although it may vary in individual cases and content is usually a priority. This model is used in order to achieve the objectives of the subject along with the development and use of a foreign language at a very high level.

Model B: the lessons are conducted in a foreign language and Polish. This method of teaching is called “code switching”. Code switching takes place both during the lesson and throughout the entire teaching program. A lesson devotes significant attention to linguistic issues (up to 50%).

Type A: the two languages can be used in many ways and the transition from one to the other can be sudden and appears necessary.

Type B: much attention is paid to promoting foreign language learning. As in the case of Type A, the solution is applied in order to achieve the proposed learning objectives. Moreover, it allows for ample opportunities to practice a foreign language.

Model C: the use of a foreign language is limited to between 10 % and 50 % of the lesson time. The norm is an interweaving of both language and content (in the students’ mother tongue).

Type A: one language is dominant.

Type B: there is a focus on both the subject and the elements of a foreign language, but attention is paid mainly to the content. Language learning is limited.

Model D: to achieve very specific goals, a foreign language is used only on specific occasions and rather sporadically.

Type A: the lesson is conducted primarily in a foreign language and the series of classes concludes in Polish. The main objective is to consolidate existing knowledge rather than the development of language skills, which results in the so-called *macro-switching* of the languages used.

Type B: lessons are conducted in Polish but are based on foreign language materials.

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<sup>13</sup> Yolanda Ruiz de Zarobe and Rosa María Jimenez Catalan, *Content and Language Integrated Learning: Evidence from research in Europe* (Bristol: Multilingual matters, 2009), 13.

<sup>14</sup> David Marsh, et al., *Raport ewaluacyjny. Edukacja dwujęzyczna w Polsce. Praktyka w wybranych szkołach* (Warsaw: CODN, 2008).

Type C: students prepare projects and present them in a foreign language. This model complements the Polish language teaching and creates opportunities to use and develop the foreign language. Its function is to motivate, its aim to consolidate knowledge and learning by creating an alternative means of learning the material.

This model aims to support the organization of the teaching process and permits the individualization of the curriculum for a particular group.

### **Opportunities and Challenges Arising out of CLIL in Educational Institutes**

Research data on CLIL effectiveness collected during a study trip to Spanish educational institutions revealed that the CLIL methodological approach works very well, especially in the area of vocational education (in the field of services where communication skills, including the extended use of foreign languages, are crucial), and primary education.<sup>15</sup> A recent study confirming the effectiveness of this methodological approach was conducted by a group of Spanish teachers from Granada's Hurtado de Mendoza school (Andalucía, Spain).<sup>16</sup> The research team conducted a survey of language competences that aimed to compare the two groups of students attending the school.<sup>17</sup> Group A was comprised of Spanish-speaking students who had four standard hours of English per week in the curriculum, whereas Group B was comprised of Spanish-speaking students with four hours of English per week in the standard curriculum and an additional eighteen hours of teaching in a variety of subjects (such as marketing, entrepreneurship) with the CLIL methodological approach focused on the use of English. The study began by conducting identical tests for the two groups (listening and reading comprehension in English) in order to compare their language skills at the very beginning of the study (October 2012). The test results confirmed that Group B (which declared its willingness to learn in the classroom using CLIL) had a slight advantage with an average score of 3.23 for the "reading section," and of 1.65 for the "listening section." In comparison, Group A achieved, respectively, the following results: 2.88 and 0.88. The average general language competence of groups A and B thus had the ratio of 1.88 : 2.44.

In May 2013 the test was repeated under the same conditions. Groups of students from both classes were subjected to the test without prior notice. The results were sur-

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<sup>15</sup> Thanks to a grant awarded by the *Foundation for the Development of the Education System in Poland*, in June 2013 the authors of the present article were able to collect data about the implementation of the CLIL methodological approach in secondary and higher education schools (Hurtado de Mendoza Escuela de Granada Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Politécnica de Madrid) as well as in leading Spanish educational institutions (Dirección General de Mejor de la Calidad de la Enseñanza, Madrid; Junta de Andalucía, Granada).

<sup>16</sup> "Hurtado de Mendoza" is a renowned 50-year-old professional school with more than 2,000 students.

<sup>17</sup> Research staff members include Eva Beatriz Ramal Rodríguez, Jaime Jesús Ocaña Martínez, Pilar Ortega Cabezedo and Antonio Reyes Gómez. They gave permission to the authors to cite their research data in the present article.

prising because in Group A there was a decline in the reading skills from 2.88 to 2.40. In the area of listening comprehension there was an increase from 0.88 to 1.43. In contrast, Group B showed progress in both areas, reaching a rate of 3.64 in the reading section (previously 3.23) and 2.08 for the listening section (previously 1.65). In summary, the average score of both groups in May was represented by the ratio 1.91 : 2.86.

The data clearly show an increase in the average progress of competence in Group B in comparison to Group A. The group of students who over a period of eight months studied with the standard curriculum of English remained at a level of language competence that was very similar to the initial one. Group B learned in the classroom with the CLIL program and showed strong progress. To confirm the effectiveness of the methodological approach, further tests will be carried out in February 2014. In the interview with the research team it was stressed that students in classrooms with the CLIL program showed greater motivation and achieved significantly better results with the subjects taught in a foreign language. Presumably, the bilingual program required greater attention and led teachers to repeat contents more frequently than in teaching with the use of the native language.

To support the research results, it is vital to refer to Ida Kurcz, a professor at Gdańsk University, who deals with the issues of bilingualism. In her book, *Psychological Aspects of Bilingualism*, she indicates that bilingualism may influence the functioning of

Table 1. Average for specific receptive skills for Group A.

Description	GROUP A			
	OCTOBER		MAY	
	READING	LISTENING	READING	LISTENING
Average for particular receptive skills	2.88	0.88	2.40	1.43
Average in general	1.88		1.91	

Table 2. Average for specific receptive skills for Group B.

Description	GROUP B			
	OCTOBER		MAY	
	READING	LISTENING	READING	LISTENING
Average for particular receptive skills	3.23	1.65	3.64	2.08
Average in general	2.44		2.86	

cognitive structures, citing a 1962 study by Elisabeth Peal and Wallace Lambert, according to which bilingualism influences creative thinking and flexibility in thinking.<sup>18</sup>

### **Challenges for CLIL Implementation and Barriers to Overcome**

An interview with researchers permitted the collection of information about the challenges posed by CLIL implementation. In their opinion, the scope of these challenges includes:

1. Supporting traditional teaching with the CLIL methodological approach.
2. Introducing foreign language terminology to a greater extent than in traditional teaching.
3. Introducing cultural components to a greater extent than during traditional foreign language teaching methodological approach.
4. The possibility of using CLIL not only in the official language of a given country, but also in regional languages and dialects, languages of national minorities or other official languages of the country.
5. The possibility of implementing the CLIL methodological approach for periods of different lengths, ranging from a few weeks to a few years.
6. The increase of students' motivation and concentration as a result of CLIL implementation.

Said challenges are connected with the necessity of reducing barriers in the following categories: stereotypes concerning CLIL, insufficiently prepared teaching staff and programs, lack of didactic tools. These barriers are discussed and analyzed in the following paragraphs.

#### *Stereotypes Concerning the CLIL Methodological Approach*

- a) The belief that the CLIL applies only to the English language.
- b) The belief that the CLIL applies only to specific subjects.
- c) The traditional approach to foreign language teaching (with an exclusive focus on language).
- d) Difficulties in establishing priorities between linguistic and thematic contents.
- e) The belief that the CLIL is only for gifted students.

CLIL is not limited to learning official languages, but can introduce the languages of minorities, regional languages and other official languages of a country. It is not limited to the taught topics. Moreover, CLIL can be applied to both the humanities and technical sciences. The emphasis on the traditional concept of teaching foreign languages is still strong and it is not expected that this will change or that the CLIL methodological ap-

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<sup>18</sup> Idy Kurcz, ed., *Psychologiczne aspekty dwujęzyczności* (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2007); Elisabeth Peal and Wallace E. Lambert, *The Relation of Bilingualism to Intelligence* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1962).

proach will replace the classical methodological approach fully. However, CLIL merely supports the teaching of a foreign language, introduces professional vocabulary, and its goal is to concentrate on content rather than language and to develop the habit of using a language for a specific purpose. It is emphasized that there should be a balance between content and language (50/50) and that content and didactic methods should play a leading role. This can be an important criterion in determining priorities and assessing students, since language value is *added* to the content. The belief that CLIL applies only to gifted students is completely unsubstantiated. The methodological approach can be used for all types of learners, regardless of their abilities. It has been proven that in vocational education and training, students can achieve very good results by using this methodological approach. The reason for the success of the CLIL method, in a manner similar to the natural approach of language teaching, is “learning by doing” in a social environment, through interaction: language is not the learner’s main objective, it is rather a tool to achieve other goals. In a sense, a foreign language is a *working language* used to acquire knowledge and abilities.

### *Staff*

A further barrier to the use of CLIL in schools and universities is the human factor, as described in the following points:

- a) Lack of evident interest in CLIL on the part of teachers and lecturers in Polish higher education institutions.
- b) Lack of competence on the part of teachers and lecturers in higher education.

Competent staff understands the essence of an integrated teaching method that combines content and language. An adequate preparation and the ability to use the available tools is a key factor in CLIL. Of course, teachers who want to introduce this methodological approach in their curricula must first learn about it and have access to materials and information about its effectiveness. Therefore, a crucial point appears to be the dissemination of information concerning CLIL and the creation of a network or a kind of “support group” for those brave teachers and lecturers who are willing to take up the challenge. In the aforementioned Spanish vocational school, like many other schools in Andalusia, the CLIL methodological approach was introduced by providing a so-called “assistant” teacher who conducted CLIL classes. The assistant is usually a person who speaks the language of instruction as their mother tongue. The assistant’s task is to be present during each lesson and to offer linguistic support to both teacher and students. Assistants are often volunteers: students or retirees for whom the assistantship is a form of entertainment, additional pastime, and an opportunity to explore a new country.

### *Introducing CLIL into curricula*

- a) The curriculum is often focused on working on the content rather than developing competencies.
- b) The belief that in the CLIL methodological approach the issue of formal rigor and time take control of the entire program.

- c) The belief that the CLIL methodological approach requires additional funding, labor and time.

Curricula that use CLIL have their own characteristics, but do not need to be changed to a radical extent. First of all, programs should be focused specifically on the development of skills and competencies. The CLIL cycle can be varied: there are programs that last only a few weeks, and there are others covering several years of education. Depending on the model, the content presented in a foreign language should be a minimum of 10 % and a maximum of 50 % of the teaching program. It seems that it is possible to start working with CLIL gradually: for example, in the D model, a foreign language is used occasionally, for specific purposes, such as the introduction of terminology and definitions. In this way, by observing the progress of learning, the teacher is able to assess “the amount of foreign language” in the class in the next semester. The belief that the preparation of the CLIL program is more time consuming and costly than a traditional program is misleading. Much information is available on the Internet that can replace expensive course books and make the preparation of lessons less time consuming.

### *Tools*

- a) Troubles with assessing the competence and skills of students.
- b) The problem with different input and output levels of language competence among students.
- c) Lack of teaching materials for foreign language classes.

The competence and knowledge assessment largely depends on the learning path a teacher chooses. With a variety of choices available, it is necessary to build an assessment system with universal criteria allowing for a reliable knowledge check.<sup>19</sup> An additional difficulty for the assessment itself is the speed of foreign language learning in a group with different levels of language competence. This issue is strongly connected with the availability and the choice of the teaching materials. The number of possible CLIL paths and the amount of specific teaching materials available for each path are not sufficient. If foreign language materials are too difficult for a student, they exceed his or her perception capabilities at a linguistic and cognitive level. Therefore, fulfilling a didactic goal and avoiding the aforementioned situation requires a greater effort on the part of the teacher with regard to the choice of adequate teaching materials.

### **Content Language Integrated Learning at the National Defense University in Warsaw: Some Recommendations**

The effectiveness of the CLIL methodological approach, as suggested by the aforementioned Spanish researchers, would encourage its implementation at a military university,

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<sup>19</sup> Anna Czura and Katarzyna Papaja, “Classroom-based and external assessment in CLIL,” *Anglica Wratislaviensia* 49 (2010): 163-170.

specifically the National Defense University in Warsaw. The National Defense University (NDU), the highest level educational institution of the Polish Armed Forces, educates both military and civilian students and conducts scientific research especially for the needs of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. The university conducts studies in both Polish and English and its research interests include the following areas: the national defense system and defense strategy of the Republic of Poland; contemporary military conflicts; Land Forces and Air Force in the defense system of the Republic of Poland; peace support operations; command and management in crisis situations (including contemporary terrorism); territorial and civil defense; CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation); the logistics and economics of defense; and education for security. The aforementioned subjects are supported with online courses in English (which can be used alone or combined with teaching). Since the students who attend the courses master foreign languages at different levels, NDU's academic teachers focus their attention on approaches that help students to acquire new language skills together with the subject taught. As the CLIL methodological approach gains popularity, it is increasingly perceived as a solution that meets the students' needs. It may prove especially helpful for the acquisition of specialized vocabulary that is crucial in the communication between experts from different countries on a specific subject. To introduce this methodological approach, there are some pilot practices that intersperse specialist courses with a "portion" of a foreign language. One instance is the series of workshops on critical thinking for civilian students at the National Security Faculty, where teaching a language takes up 30 % of the course time. On the basis of their observation of participating students, tutors maintain that the key issues are memorized faster and better understood as a result of a deeper exploration of the meaning of concepts.

With reference to the aforementioned Spanish research and taking into consideration the pilot practices at the National Defense University in Warsaw, we would like to put forward a few recommendations concerning the implementation of the CLIL methodological approach. Firstly, the construction of suitable teaching materials can be considered a crucial point in order to reduce barriers and make the implementation of standardized CLIL programs smoother. With appropriate guidelines, academic teachers have the opportunity to practice and modify the course of the lesson according to the educational needs of students. Secondly, a wide range of valid assessment tools should be specifically designed in order to give learners feedback about their performance with regard to the key concepts of the subject taught. Finally, the preparation of the teaching staff is essential to the effective implementation of CLIL.

## Summary

Teaching a subject in a foreign language is not a new idea, and specialized literature offers a number of terms that are synonymous with Content Language Integrated Learning. The CLIL methodological approach, which is applicable to various languages as target languages, can be implemented according to various models and cover from 10 % up to 50 % of the teaching program accordingly. The variety of models available for Content Language Integrated Learning permits the adjustment of the teaching content to the

group of learners, thus enhancing their ability to acquire both the content and a language, and hence supports the development of knowledge and competence. Building a content-language competence is particularly important for effective communication between military staff members from various academies.

CLIL implementation in military universities can be a bridge between studies in their native language and studies conducted entirely in a foreign language. This scenario is more comfortable for staff members who do not have sufficient language proficiency and would like to develop their knowledge of a foreign language, especially for a specific purpose. In case of an insufficient number of teaching materials, professional training and language learning can be supported with online materials, teaching modules, and other resources.<sup>20</sup> The advantage of this solution conducted in an asynchronous mode makes it possible for learners to return to the training content at any time and any place. This is important for staff members who are stationed outside their home unit and cannot attend classes on a regular basis. The rich repertoire of courses can provide a basis for teaching materials, and these can be modified according to teaching needs and objectives.

Since in military areas a specific language must be used in different contexts and circumstances, the CLIL methodological approach is a viable tool for the maximization of teaching effects. Not only do students become familiar with specific issues, but they are also equipped with linguistic knowledge. Consequently, the barriers of intercultural communication are reduced or disappear and students are better prepared for self-study and searching materials for their own interests. Also, CLIL provides opportunities to study content from different perspectives. It also encourages learners to develop multilingual interests and attitudes and prepares them to interact in international environments. In this regard, Mehisto emphasizes that CLIL promotes the development of learning skills: social, cultural, cognitive, linguistic, academic, etc. The acquisition of these learning skills facilitates achievements with regard to both content and language.<sup>21</sup> In light of these advantages, and considering that language elements can be included in almost every curriculum, the implementation of CLIL in specialized curricula for military staff should be broadly discussed by education experts and decision-makers.

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<sup>20</sup> This approach is promoted by the *Comunidad de Madrid*, supported by the Dirección General de Mejora de la Calidad de la Enseñanza, an organization dealing with bilingual education in different forms.

<sup>21</sup> Peeter Mephisto, Maria Jesus Frigols, and David Marsh, *Uncovering CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning and Multilingual Education* (Oxford: Macmillan Education, 2008), 11-12.

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