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# Outlooks in Italy: CLIL as Language Education Policy

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## **Abstract**

The recent implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the fifth and final year of secondary schools in Italy carries with it a number of important implications for teachers, students, and policymakers. This paper seeks to demonstrate that at the local, national, and supranational levels, CLIL raises questions about education quality, access, and equity. Italy's CLIL mandate is conceptualized here as a national language education policy situated within the larger European plurilingualism discourse as defined by the goal of "mother tongue plus two." This discussion also seeks to demonstrate that CLIL, as it is conducted in Italian secondary schools, requires more than scarce national funding and local-level expertise in order to be implemented successfully.

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The recent implementation of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the fifth and final year of secondary schools in Italy carries with it a number of important implications for teachers, students, and policymakers. This paper seeks to demonstrate that at the local, national, and supranational levels, CLIL raises questions about education quality, access, and equity. Italy's CLIL mandate is conceptualized here as a national language education policy situated within the larger European plurilingualism discourse as defined by the goal of "mother tongue plus two." This discussion also seeks to demonstrate that CLIL, as it is conducted in Italian secondary schools, requires more than scarce national funding and local-level expertise in order to be implemented successfully.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a form of bilingual education that has become increasingly popular in Europe and in Asia since its conception in the mid-1990s (Cenoz, Genesee, & Gorter, 2014). It is most commonly known as a "dual focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010, p. 1, emphasis in original). In other words, with CLIL, school subjects like mathematics, biology, and social studies are taught in a foreign language. Shortly after CLIL appeared by name (Marsh, Maljers, & Hartiala, 2001), it was picked up by the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Commission (EC) and promoted as an innovative and efficient solution to the need to develop plurilingual competence among all European citizens (EC, 1995). The EC, a subset of the European Union (EU), emphasizes on its webpage the value of bilingual education in general and of CLIL in particular in promoting language learning and language awareness in the European Union (EC, 2015). CLIL is popularly understood as a means of building intercultural communication skills among emergent bilinguals (García, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008) by allowing them more contact with the target language than traditional foreign language courses would offer, while simultaneously teaching curricular content (EC, 2015).

Coyle et al. (2010) also point out that CLIL necessarily comes into contact with and moves alongside of the wider sociopolitical and sociolinguistic context beyond the classroom, and therefore warn that "for the teachers and learners involved in CLIL, who turn policies into reality, the challenges are high" (p. 155). These issues notwithstanding, Italy's *Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca* (MIUR)<sup>1</sup> issued a mandate in 2010 that CLIL be used in two of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Instruction, University, and Research (Italy's equivalent of a Ministry of Education)

three types of upper secondary schools in the public school system (explained in greater detail below), thereby becoming the only European country in which CLIL has been legally mandated thus far. Guidelines for teacher certification and for curriculum hours have been published, but it has yet to be seen how teachers and students will adapt to CLIL across Italy's increasing linguistic diversity.

In Europe, CLIL courses are typically taught either in a foreign European language (e.g., English in Germany or French in Spain) or an ethnic minority language (e.g., Basque in Spain or Flemish in Belgium). However, as Cenoz et al. (2014) have argued, the definition of CLIL is quite nebulous, "mak[ing] it difficult for [it] to evolve in Europe in a pedagogically coherent fashion and for research to play a critical role in its evolution" (p. 247). There is no consensus on the European level as to how CLIL teachers should be educated, how students' knowledge of subjects and languages taught via CLIL can be evaluated, or which language education programs can be considered *CLIL* as opposed to *immersion* (Cenoz et al., 2014). Different operational definitions of CLIL abound: in Italy's case, the operational definition of CLIL is "teaching a non-linguistic subject in a foreign language" (MIUR, 2010c, p. 1), a concept which is later described in greater depth.

This paper explores how national and supranational policies interact and are realized at the local and classroom level by situating CLIL, as used in Italian secondary schools, within the European Union's larger plurilingualism project. I do this by tracing the paths of European and Italian language education policy from the 1960s to present day (see Figure 1), and detailing the ways that CLIL has been conceptualized and implemented as a contemporary bilingual education mandate in Italy. I will then summarize Italian language education policy initiatives since 2010, present scholarly research detailing the uptake of CLIL in Italian secondary schools, and explore CLIL's implications for Italian teachers and students.

### Conceptual Framework

This paper conceptualizes CLIL as a means of achieving the European Union's and Council of Europe's goal of plurilingualism for European citizens, often referred to as "mother tongue plus two" in European language education policy literature (e.g., EC, 2003). While the EU and CoaE policies conceptualize CLIL as a tool for language education on a supranational level, Italy's national-level conceptualization of CLIL as a method for teaching language and content is also nestled within it, accompanied by diverse classroom-level realizations. Thus, there are roughly three levels at which CLIL is being interpreted: the supranational level, the national level, and the local level. It has been observed, however, that national-level education policy is often slow to catch up with both grassroots initiatives and top-down EU policy changes (Dalton-Puffer, 2008), and the first Europe-wide comprehensive study of CLIL (Eurydice, 2005) demonstrated that it was "still far from being a consolidated and fully articulated educational model ... and that a great deal more need[ed] to be done" (Dalton-Puffer, 2008, p. 1). There is no consensus at the supranational level regarding CLIL teacher education, student evaluation, or curricular planning (Cenoz et al., 2014). CLIL is broadly conceived of as a model of bilingual education at this level, but as this general idea

trickles down into different national and regional school systems, curricula, and sociolinguistic environments, it will inevitably need to be adapted to local contexts. The exigencies of teachers using CLIL in diverse environments may indeed be important in informing the design of teaching materials or other changes at the upper levels of language education policy planning.

Thus far, only limited research has explored the ways CLIL has been taken up by teachers in Italy since MIUR's 2010 mandate (MIUR, 2010a; 2010b) to teach CLIL in the fifth year of secondary school. However, pilot studies have already made clear that a certain degree of flexibility and innovation will be required in order for teachers to both adapt to CLIL and to adapt CLIL to particular school contexts (see Di Martino & Di Sabato, 2012; Grandinetti, Langellotti, & Ting, 2013; Progetto Lingue Lombardia, 2007). Implementing such a policy is complex, since it involves many stakeholders at many levels. Ricento and Hornberger's (1996) language policy and practice (LPP) onion is a useful heuristic for thinking about the policy layers of CLIL in Italy because each layer "permeates and is permeated by the others" (p. 408), with local decisions being informed by supranational language education initiatives, and with individual teachers drawing on resources from local and national levels. According to this heuristic, policy guidelines are modified as they move to and from the core, where the teacher's interpretation of the policy is put into practice. Thus, the way a given policy is implemented and negotiated on-the-ground likely differs from the way how it is conceptualized at the supranational level. Menken and García (2010) elaborate on the LPP onion concept by depicting the teacher as the "stirrers of the onion" (p. 259): they state that "the educator is sometimes motivated to stir the onion in ways that are in direct response to realities on the ground...[a]t other times, he or she stirs because of personal beliefs, experience, and knowledge" (p. 256). It is difficult for national level policymakers to be attuned to all of the possible obstacles that teachers will encounter in their classroom environments at the local level, and so in many ways, teachers are ultimately the agents who implement policies in practice.

In this paper, CLIL is considered a *language education policy* according to Shohamy's (2006) description of such policies as being "imposed by political entities in a top-down manner, usually with very limited resistance" (p. 76). While these policies are necessarily negotiated by teachers as they trickle down, back-and-forth engagement between individual teachers in Italy and supranational governing bodies has so far been limited. A body of literature has yet to be produced regarding the ways CLIL has been taken up by practitioners in Italy during its first years of official implementation (2013-2015) in accordance with the nationally-mandated guidelines. Thus far, research about CLIL in Italy is largely based on grassroots pilot projects in which schools and teachers have had great autonomy and flexibility in how they go about using CLIL methodologies (Progetto Lingue Lombardia, 2007; Coonan, 2008); the realities of compulsory CLIL have yet to be explored.

This paper draws on the contents of EU, EC, and CoE webpages, policy documents, recommendations, and press releases, as well as Eurydice<sup>2</sup> statistical reports, in order to illustrate the trends and decisions that have influenced language education discourse at the supranational level. Historical accounts of Italian education and language policies, as well as MIUR documents, EC country reports, and articles in Italian newspapers have informed my interpretation of the events

<sup>2</sup> Eurydice is the European education information network established by the European Commission.

and policies that have led up to CLIL becoming a national language education policy in Italy. Finally, reports on local-level realizations of CLIL projects and other activities (from scholarly sources and local Italian news sources) throughout various regions of Italy have been the primary resources for understanding the current state of CLIL at the local level. Prior to delving into the ways in which EU and CoE policies laid the groundwork for CLIL over the past half-century, and before exploring how CLIL has so far been taken up on the ground, however, it is necessary to situate CLIL in the context of Italian education and society. The following section briefly describes the linguistic make-up of Italy, and provides an overview of the three government mandates that brought CLIL to the forefront of language education in Italy in 2010 and 2011.

### CLIL and Education in Italy

As of 2011, two distinct bilingual education programs in Italy wore the CLIL label. One involved the teaching of a regional minority language alongside Italian and the other involved the teaching of a foreign European language alongside Italian (Eurydice, 2012). To my knowledge, no data is available for the current academic year, but one would imagine that those teachers and students who live in a region such as Aosta Valley or South Tyrol, where Italian and a regional minority language are co-official (in these cases, French and German, respectively), will have different experiences from those teachers and students who speak a variety of Italian and who use a foreign European language exclusively for school purposes. This does not take into account any of the large immigrant enclaves where non-European foreign languages such as Arabic, Wolof, Spanish, or Chinese are spoken, but students in those communities will likely encounter many challenges, as well.

In March 2010, MIUR officially introduced CLIL to the Italian school system as part of a larger reform of upper secondary education (MIUR, 2010a). This regulation stated that all linguistic lyceums<sup>3</sup> would be required to teach a non-linguistic discipline in a foreign language (*una disciplina non linguistica in lingua straniera*) from the third year onward, and that from the fourth year onward, another non-linguistic discipline would be required in a different foreign language as well (articolo 6.2). It also announced that all students in all of the lyceums would be required to study a non-linguistic discipline in a foreign language during their fifth and final year of secondary school (articolo 10.5). Included in this mandate are the timetables that outline the increase and re-allotment of hours under the reform, each with a *nota bene* specifically labeling the teaching of non-linguistic disciplines in a foreign language as CLIL. While this announcement did not effect any immediate changes in the schools, it began to increase general awareness of CLIL and bilingual education, and led to MIUR offering opportunities for professional development and teacher training (MIUR, 2010b).

Six months later, in September 2010, a decree from MIUR specified the parameters of the teacher preparation courses for learning CLIL methodology (MIUR, 2010b). However, the pre-requisites for these courses turned out to be quite restrictive. One restriction was that the courses would be open only to teachers

<sup>3</sup> Linguistic lyceums (in Italian: *licei linguistici*) are college preparatory secondary schools that specialize in the study of modern foreign languages and literature.

whose competences in a foreign language were certified to have at least “effective operational proficiency” according to the Common European Frame of Reference<sup>4</sup> (MIUR, 2010b, articolo 14.1). Another restriction was that only those teachers who passed the course would be given a certificate attesting to their ability to teach a non-linguistic discipline in a foreign language (articolo 14.1.c). This meant that the format of the courses would not be workshops run by the schools, but rather courses which participants would need to attend on their own time, and in which they would be tested. One of the professional development courses offered for in-service teachers in Rome was slightly less restrictive about language qualifications, requiring B2 competence in a foreign language instead of C1, but was slightly more restrictive in the sense that it was open only to tenured teachers who would be teaching a fourth year class in the coming school year (MIUR, 2013).

One year later, in September 2011, the official decree was released mandating that CLIL be taught in the fifth year of all lyceums as well as in the fifth (final) year of all technical institutes beginning in the 2013-2014 academic year. In addition, MIUR also specified general linguistic and communicative objectives for students in lyceums, including the expectation that students acquire at least B2 level in a foreign language and that they “fully master the Italian language”, specifically emphasizing advanced reading, writing, and oral skills (MIUR, 2011, Addendum A).<sup>5</sup>

Meeting these standards, however, is not straightforward: *mastery* is left undefined and the languages and content areas used for CLIL in any given school depend on the widely variable material, cultural, and linguistic resources of schools and their faculty. While the teachers of CLIL courses will ideally have a good command of the foreign language in which they teach and of the subject matter that they teach, not many of them will have been trained to teach algebra in English or philosophy in French. However, this seemingly rash decision by MIUR can be better understood and contextualized in light of supranational language education discourses and policies that preceded them. The following section contextualizes Italian CLIL within the European Union’s decades-long plurilingualism project, and acclimates the reader to contemporary linguistic and language-education themes in Europe which also come to bear on language education in Italy, specifically.

## Language Education Policies in Europe

### Historical Overview: 1962–1999

The European Union (EU), officially established in 1992 with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, specified how the CoE, the EU, and the individual member states would attend to the business of making education decisions, writing language policies, and supporting language education initiatives. The establishment of the EU and its many departments and programs has added several additional (and ever more macro) policy layers to each European country’s national political, social, and economic systems. This manifests in the countless ways European and national policies and initiatives are interpreted and implemented. In regard to

<sup>4</sup> The CoE’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) has six levels of proficiency: A1 (beginner), A2 (elementary), B1 (intermediate), B2 (upper intermediate), C1 (advanced), C2 (proficient)

<sup>5</sup> All translations of Italian texts are mine unless otherwise noted.

education policy, the Maastricht Treaty specifies that member states are ultimately responsible for the format and content of their own school systems, even though the European community and its policymaking bodies may provide incentives, encouragement, and support in order to implement particular recommendations (EU, 1992, articolo 189; see also CoE, 1997).

By the mid-1990s, the European Commission (EC) had already made various suggestions to the member states regarding the achievement of “mother tongue plus two”, which has since become a key phrase in European bilingual education discourse. The EC’s *White Paper on Education and Training* (1995) states the expectation that “everyone, irrespective of training and education routes chosen, [should] be able to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two [European] Community languages in addition to their mother tongue” (EC, 1995, p. 47). A number of debates have since been held on this topic, and a number of CoE recommendations have been released in response. Crucially, one notes that while policies created on the European level cannot regulate the member states’ practices, they can work toward “converging practice, continuous dialogue, and exchange: diversity instead of uniformity” (CoE, 1997, p. 130). While this could indeed contribute to a robust set of language education policies and practices, it could also complicate practical efforts to establish guidelines, assessments, or training programs beyond the national level.

Figure 1 below briefly describes some of the European language education projects and policies that have laid the groundwork for CLIL, with the CoE’s four targeted language education projects highlighted in gray.

Figure 1  
*European Language and Language Education Projects and Policies, 1954–1999*

Year	Name of Project/Policy	Overview of Goals and Outcomes
1954	The European Cultural Convention of 1954	Beginning of the European Community’s efforts to promote language learning; aimed at increasing unity and developing understanding among peoples and countries of Europe.
1962–1972	“The Major Project” by CoE	Aimed at intensifying modern language teaching in Europe as a means of breaking down barriers and increasing cooperation among member states; language learning no longer considered a luxury, but “an instrument of information and culture...available to all” (CoE, 1969).  Recommended the introduction of a widely spoken European language to all students from age ten; increased multimodal engagement with this language; increased focus on oral/aural skills; overall increased focus on teacher preparation and teaching methods.

## CLIL AS LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY

1971-1981	“Modern Languages: improving and intensifying language learning as factors making for European understanding, co-operation, and mobility” (CoE, Project No. 4)	<p>Focused on the technical aspects of language education (e.g. planning tools, teaching frameworks, materials development) and on piloting them in a variety of educational settings (Girard &amp; Trim, 1988; Trim, 2007).</p> <p>Teachers in pilot projects felt positive about the innovative methods and instruments that they had piloted; however, broad implementation of these methods would have required a significant overhaul of teacher training and of language education curricula.</p>
1981	Recommendation 928: on the educational and cultural problems of minority languages and dialects in Europe	<p>Asked that member states find a way to “gradually adopt children’s mother tongues for their education” (CoE, 1981a, section 4b), including the use of dialects in pre-school and the use of the standardized mother-tongue in primary school, with the progressive introduction of the national language alongside the children’s first language.</p>
1982	Recommendation No. R (82) 18	<p>Called attention to a series of issues pertaining to modern language education (for domestic and migrant students); recommended that schools make a range of languages available to their students and that international exchanges among students and teachers be made possible. (CoE, 1982; 1982b)</p>
1982–1987	“Learning and Teaching Languages for Communication” (CoE, Project No. 12)	<p>Focused on teacher training, with additional aim of strengthening co-operation among the European nations, contributing to the literature on and practice of teacher training, and generating materials for educational systems (Girard &amp; Trim, 1988). This project involved organizing 37 successful teacher training workshops and led to a wide range of recommendations for language education.</p>
1989–1997	“Language Learning for European Citizenship” (CoE, Final Project)	<p>Goals included cultivating the idea of European citizenship, developing an appreciation of Europe’s linguistic richness, and cultivating large-scale plurilingualism; specific focus on bridging the gap between language education policy and actual classroom practice. (Trim, 1987)</p>
1992	Symposium on Transparency & Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, Evaluation, and Certification	<p>The Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is developed. The CEFR was published and disseminated to the member states in 2001 (CoE, 1992b; Trim, 2007).</p>

1992	European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages	Guaranteed particular protections and rights for particular historical minority languages (new minority languages and dialects of the majority language not included); each country was to decide for itself which minority language groups would be given rights (e.g., to education) in their native languages (CoE, 1992a).
1994	Introduction of CLIL	(Marsh, Maljers, & Hartiala, 2001)
1995	“On improving and diversifying language learning and teaching within the education systems of the European Union”	Mentioned for the first time “the teaching of classes in a foreign language for disciplines other than languages” as part of its promotion of innovative teaching methods (CLIL was not mentioned here by name). (CoE, 1995)
1999	Bologna Process	Established a European Higher Education Area aimed at increasing mobility and the exchange of people, resources, and ideas across national borders, creating a more cohesive intellectual community of students, researchers, and academics across Europe; led to increased need for language education.

### Themes in Language Education Policy Today: 2003–2013

Three recent EC reports released between 2003 and 2013 will help orient the reader to contemporary discourse surrounding language education policy in Europe, and how this discourse has the potential to influence national-level policy decisions. The first report, the EC’s (2003) *Action Plan (2004–2006)*, emphasizes the importance of efficiency and quality in language education and introduces CLIL by name as a major factor in the EU’s language education goals. This report claims CLIL “nurtures self-confidence among...those who have not responded well to formal language instruction in general education” (EC, 2003, p. 19) and that it provides language education without requiring extra instructional time. As a means of introducing CLIL to schools, the EC suggests that member states procure the assistance of “trained teachers who are native speakers of the vehicular language” (p. 19) and that they ensure that “all teachers of a foreign language should have spent an extended period in a country where that language is spoken and have regular opportunities to update their training” (p. 25).

The second report, *Europe 2020* (EC, 2010), was issued in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008. It emphasized strategies for economic growth and stability and focused heavily on youth preparation for the job market. Throughout the report, particular countries are mentioned as being either especially equipped or especially behind in the goals that the report deems important. In one instance, it points out that “targeted action to improve the current [employment] situation is a priority” especially in Italy (EC, 2012, para. 4). Considering Italy’s unemployment rates for individuals aged 20–34 years hovered somewhere between 30% (EC, 2013b, p. 6) and 50% (EC, 2013a) at that time, these policy recommendations may have been perceived as particularly salient.

The third report, *Rethinking Education Strategy* (EC, 2012), reflects a similar focus on increasing the efficiency and quality of language education in order to build

a career-prepared and plurilingual European population. The *Strategy*, however, explicitly links language learning to economic achievement, employability, and mobility, emphasizing the importance of foreign language ability for today's globalizing world. This document pushes member states to upgrade their foreign language teaching methodologies and specifically states that the target should be 'mother tongue plus two' (EC, 2012, para. 2.1). Considering the ideas put forth by these three documents, it is unsurprising that the Italian government launched a program in 2013 "to modernise the entire education system" (Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze, 2013, p. 10), part of which included introducing CLIL as a mandatory feature of upper secondary education. Indeed, all three of these reports set high goals for teachers and students, even stating the expectation that teaching in *at least* one foreign language should be the norm for future educators (EC, 2004). As is discussed in the next section, the echoes of Italy's complex linguistic and cultural history continue to have an effect on language education policy decisions today, and implementing CLIL can have significant effects on curricula, students, and teachers.

### Implementing CLIL in Italy

#### Historical Context

Although Standard Italian, which is a present-day variant of Dante Alighieri's 14<sup>th</sup> century literary Italian, has been the people's *de facto* official language (and internal *lingua franca*) for generations, Italy is in fact a quite linguistically diverse nation. It is home to dozens of historical minority languages (e.g., Occitan, Slovenian, Greek, varieties of German and French) and regional Latinate varieties (e.g., Calabrese, Sicilian, Sardinian, Venetian, Tuscan), and it has recently become home to many new immigrant languages as well (e.g., Romanian, Albanian, Arabic, Chinese). However, with the exception of South Tyrol (on the Austrian border) and Aosta Valley (on the French border), Standard Italian has been the sole official language of schooling since at least 1963, when compulsory schooling was extended from age 11 to age 14, and Latin was removed from the curriculum as a vehicular language (Tosi, 2001). In the face of a prolonged literacy crisis, Italian linguists in the 1960s began to explore the relationships among social class, language background, and school achievement (De Mauro, 1963).

By the mid-1970s, the majority of the population had gained social and economic access to tertiary education taught in Standard Italian (Tosi, 2001), although a 1974 linguistic survey showed over 50% of Italians reported speaking a non-standard variety (*dialetto*) at home (Doxa, 1996, as cited in Ruffino, 2006). The steady increase in literacy rates and school attendance sped up the rate at which the population Italianized over the course of the 1970s and 1980s (Dal Negro & Vietti, 2011, p. 73), and also appears to have played a role in the population's decreasing use of *dialetti*. Ruffino (2006) claims that "there is no doubt that school has [always] been the principal tool for linguistic unification" (p. 40), which is achieved through teaching Standard Italian to students.

In 1975, *Le Dieci Tesi per un'Educazione Linguistica Democratica* [Ten Theses for a Democratic Linguistic Education], written by a subset of the *Societa' Linguistica*

*Italiana* called GISCEL<sup>6</sup>, sought to address the injustices that existed in Italian language education policies and practices. One of their (lengthy) critiques included the observation that “[t]raditional language pedagogy overlooks the reality of the student’s often colloquial and dialectal background, *de facto*” (GISCEL, 1975, n. 7e). These theses were intended to outline and define the foundational theoretical premises of a democratic linguistic education and to reach a wide audience of scholars in both linguistics and education: school teachers, policy makers, and all people who consider themselves part of a democratic education system (GISCEL, 1975). Ultimately, the *Dieci Tesi* appear to have contributed to two curricular reforms (in 1979 and 1985) by pushing for a more democratic language education, but regional languages and dialects have nonetheless continued to be treated as nothing more than supplemental to Standard Italian.

*Dialetti* and other minority or immigrant languages have been given consideration as potential resources for Italian students in particular circumstances (Coluzzi, 2008), but “the common tendency has been to ignore immigrant languages both officially and unofficially...view[ing] them as a source of problems and as a hindrance to the acquisition of the national language” (Guerini, 2011, pp. 121-122). Italy’s *Law on the Protection of Historic Linguistic Minorities* (Law no. 482/1999) did not grant rights to any *dialetti*, although it did grant legal recognition to some historical minority languages, such as varieties of French, German, Albanian, Slovenian, and Greek that are spoken in the border areas of Italy (Italian Parliament, 1999). In summary, it may be a challenge for policy makers to keep linguistic rights in perspective while promoting the acquisition of modern European languages. It may also be challenging to valorize the linguistic resources of students who have competence in languages not typically used for CLIL, including those individuals born in Italy, in another European country, and elsewhere, during the push for ‘mother tongue plus two [European languages]’.

## Social Factors

CLIL can be said to have the overt goal (Schiffman, 1996) of promoting the aim of mother tongue plus two additional European languages, but it can also be said to have the covert goal of promoting English rather than foreign languages in general (Dalton-Puffer, 2008; Di Martino & Di Sabato, 2012; Progetto Lingue Lombardia, 2007). Therefore, in hypothesizing the effects that CLIL may have in Italy, it is also necessary to explore both the overt language education policies about the teaching of standard and recognized languages as well as the covert policies regarding the (lack of) accommodation of non-standard varieties of Italian and other unrecognized minority languages (Guerini, 2011; Maggio & Tempesta, 2006; Ruffino, 2006). That is, Italy’s schools are currently at a crossroads in which they must accommodate Italian minority languages, immigrant minority languages, and foreign European languages, despite the fact that there are different and sometimes competing discourses and practices circulating about each one.

In 2001, there were 1.3 million foreign residents living in Italy (a six-fold increase from 1981). By 2013 this population would increase to over 4.4 million (Istat, 2013). As language education policies from the EU and CoE continue to be layered on top of Italy’s already complex linguistic reality, where “the coterritoriality of alloglot

<sup>6</sup> Gruppo di Intervento e Studio nel Campo dell’Educazione Linguistica [Group for Intervention and Study in the Field of Linguistic Education]

varieties, regional and local dialects, and Italian in its regional differentiations poses serious problems at the educational level" (Zuanelli Sonino, 1989, p. 89), the country continues its long struggle to transition from framing this linguistic complexity as a problem to seeing it as a resource (Ruíz, 1984). It is still the case that students in the Italian school system "learn that Italian is the unmarked choice ... and that either the local Italo-Romance dialect or ... the language spoken in the family domain are unsuitable options" (Guerini 2011, p. 110). The belief that CLIL should accommodate and promote equal educational opportunities for all students (Coyle et al., 2010) needs to be reconciled with Italy's current reality as well as Italy's age-old *questione della lingua* ("language issue").

### Changes to School Requirements

The Italian secondary schools affected by CLIL include lyceums (*licei*: specialized college preparatory schools) and technical institutes (*istituti tecnici*: specialized career-track schools). As the curricula are quite different from one type of school to the next, I will not attempt to rationalize why CLIL does or does not fit in with these schools' curricula (either for ideological or practical reasons). However, Table 1 and Figure 2 below will provide a broad picture of the curricular content and focuses of the *liceo classico* (a lyceum with a classical studies specialization).

Table 1

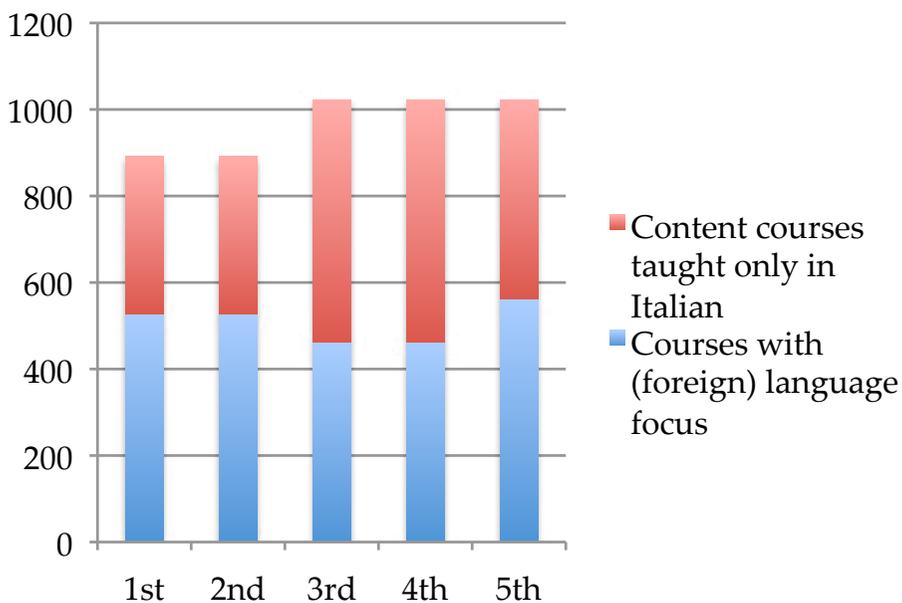
*Hours of Instruction per Year for Subject Areas in Each Year of the Italian Classical Lyceum (Liceo Classico) Curriculum (MIUR, 2010c)*

Subject Areas	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Italian language & culture	132	132	132	132	132
Latin language & culture	165	165	132	132	132
Ancient Greek language & culture	132	132	99	99	99
Modern foreign language & culture	99	99	99	99	99
History & Geography*	99	99	99	99	99
Philosophy*	0	0	99	99	99
Math*	99	99	66	66	66
Physics*	0	0	66	66	66
Natural Sciences*	66	66	66	66	66
Art History*	0	0	66	66	66
Physical Education	66	66	66	66	66
Religion/Free Time	33	33	33	33	33
TOTAL	891	891	1023	1023	1023

\* = subjects that can be taught in a foreign language in the fifth year of all lyceums and technical institutes

Figure 2

*Hours of Instruction per Year for Subject Areas in Each Year of the Italian Classical Lyceum (Liceo Classico) Curriculum (MIUR, 2010c)*



As is evident from Table 1, the number of courses and the number of instructional hours increase after the second year. As the asterisk (\*) indicates, under CLIL, any course can be selected to be taught in the foreign language that students study. There is no specification in the mandate as to the minimum or maximum number of hours of a given course that can be taught in a foreign language. Figure 2 is meant to demonstrate the strong focus on language and culture study in many of the lyceums, with the study of Ancient Greek, Latin, Italian, and a modern foreign language exceeding 50% of the curriculum in the early grades, and the addition of a non-linguistic discipline taught in a foreign language bringing the percentage of language-focused study back over the 50% mark in the final year. It is important to take into consideration Italian as well as other languages because students who do not speak Italian at home are exclusively put into mainstream classes; there is no bilingual aide or special academic track for learners of Italian as an additional language. It is also important to note that in Italian secondary schools, students are placed into a single class for all subjects, during all years of high school. Students remain in the same classroom all day, and the subject teachers travel around the school from group to group. The significance of this for CLIL is that a class with students who have varying mathematical abilities may also vary in terms of their foreign language abilities, compounding the pedagogical challenges that teachers will face.

### Changes to Teacher Practice

It is not uncommon for European policies to be picked up by individual teachers before they receive official support from national authorities (Progetto

Lingue Lombardia, 2007). Thus, the concept of teachers as language policy arbiters (García & Menken, 2010) is of particular interest in the Italian situation. For instance, Italy's Law No. 59/1997, which shifted particular administrative powers from the State to the region (Italian Parliament, 1997), has allowed grass-roots education projects to thrive in Italy and has permitted particular language education initiatives and practices to take shape, particularly foreign language training for teachers (Coonan, 2008) and CLIL activities (Progetto Lingue Lombardia, 2007). However, these initiatives are sparsely distributed throughout the country, and they are typically concentrated in a small number of schools in each region.

As mentioned previously, studies of how CLIL has been realized in Italy are limited to pilot studies conducted prior to the official implementation of CLIL. These pilot studies vary widely in terms of methodology, context, and participants, but they nonetheless bring to light some of the positive and negative aspects of implementing CLIL in various contexts throughout Italy. Based on these pilot studies, teacher responses to CLIL seem to be mixed, with some feeling enthusiastic and others feeling skeptical. Three such responses are briefly described below.

The first study (Grandinetti et al., 2013) looks at the ways teachers whose language skills are less than proficient and whose students have limited knowledge of a foreign language can nonetheless take advantage of CLIL in their classrooms. Two teachers, one of biology and one of English, at a secondary school in southeastern Italy collaborate in order to teach a non-linguistic discipline in a foreign language, as specified by MIUR (2011) to their students. The researcher remarks with some irony that the implementation of CLIL in Italy "calls upon a nationwide abundance of teachers who are not only content competent, but also fluent in English" (Grandinetti et al., 2013, p. 355), despite her assertion that the reality is quite different: many content-competent teachers in Italy do not have any experience teaching their subject of specialization in a foreign language. This study focused on how language teachers and content teachers can collaborate via team-teaching and collaborative preparation of materials and lessons in order to teach with CLIL methodology. The authors demonstrate that "CLIL, done well, can indeed offer a pragmatic means for obtaining rather positive learning outcomes despite rather 'far from ideal' conditions" (p. 356).

Second, a study of teacher expectations for CLIL in Naples, Italy (Di Martino & Di Sabato, 2012) focuses on teachers as stakeholders in language education policy. The authors point out that despite MIUR's 2010 reform specifying that CLIL would be the concern of content teachers (rather than language teachers), no content teacher has yet attempted to do CLIL independently in any Italian school for an extended instructional period. They note that while MIUR's quantitative data about teacher readiness for CLIL paints a reassuring picture, many teachers were actually ambivalent toward the reform, believing on one hand that Italy needs to begin developing language education opportunities, but on the other hand that they felt a lack of security and trust toward the trainers who would be involved in the implementation of compulsory CLIL. The authors warn that the teachers they surveyed expected to encounter organizational problems, a lack of preparation and commitment, and considerable extra work. They feared this would cause a lack of cooperation among teachers, which would further undermine CLIL, as it

relies heavily on team-teaching and on co-production of teaching materials (Di Martino & Di Sabato, 2012).

Finally, a comprehensive report of CLIL pilot projects throughout the district of Lombardy from 2001-2006 (Progetto Lingue Lombardia, 2007) presents quite different and overwhelmingly positive reactions from teachers about CLIL. Lombardy, the region home to the city of Milan, has received 1.2 million of Italy's 4.4 million foreign residents (Istat, 2013; ORIM, 2013), so it is unsurprising to see that while English was the most taught language through CLIL projects (52%) at upper secondary schools in this study, some also included less-taught languages such as Russian (3%), Arabic (8.5%), and Chinese (12%) in both curricular and extra-curricular projects. The Progetto Lingue Lombardia (2007) report attributes this to "the will of the schools to face the specific needs of diverse groups of [language users] present in the territory" (p. 7), noting that Italian as a second language was also recommended by schools as a potential project in the future. Lombardy upper secondary schools' participation in CLIL activities increased from 138 classes in the 2001-2002 academic year to 410 classes in 2005-2006, with 43% language teachers and 57% content teachers.

Unlike in Grandinetti et al. (2013) and Di Martino and Di Sabato (2012), most teachers who participated in the CLIL activities in Lombardy had received some type of CLIL training (e.g., online courses, regionally sponsored courses, courses abroad, teacher workshops) prior to getting involved. Furthermore, the vast majority of funding for these pilot projects and planning activities came from the individual schools' funds, rather than from external sources (Progetto Lingue Lombardia, 2007). Funds for such projects are limited and are therefore not available at all schools in Italy. Thus, many schools would likely need to seek funding from the EC or the CoE in order to participate in a CLIL pilot project (see EC, 2013a).

Teachers stated that the positive aspects of their experience included the development of linguistic and across-the-board CLIL competences as well as a perceived increase in student motivation (Progetto Lingue Lombardia, 2007). The problematic experiences they described included problems with the functional organization of the school timetables and, to a lesser but still significant extent, co-planning interdisciplinary teaching with a colleague, sharing of faculty meetings, and the adoption of common assessment standards for both language and content. Nearly 70% of courses were team-taught with language and content teachers sharing all teaching responsibilities, and another 20.5% were taught with the assistance of a 'native expert'. Interestingly, of the 200 upper secondary classes that participated in CLIL activities, only 68 continued the activities for multiple consecutive years despite more than twice as many having inserted CLIL as an educational objective into their school charters<sup>7</sup>. While reasons for this discontinuation are not offered, it is possible that a support system did not exist for continuing CLIL, that is was too costly or too time-consuming, as was repeatedly mentioned elsewhere in the report (Progetto Lingue Lombardia, 2007).

### Language and Content Standards

While the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) espouses fairly open-minded ideals about plurilingual competence as

<sup>7</sup> School charters are called *piani dell'offerta formativa* (P.O.F.) (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 2006)

the overall goal of language education, taking into consideration what they call partial competencies and moving away from the all-or-nothing approach, it has nonetheless become a gate-keeping device for many teachers who wish to pursue education or professional development. In the proceedings from the Modern Language Project's concluding conference, which brought to a close its 35 years of language education projects, the benefits and drawbacks of the CEFR are discussed in relation to the major social changes of the preceding decade, such as the increasing mobility of people, goods, and information:

The new situation...brings with it great opportunities for Europeans well equipped to seize them, but also increasing disadvantages for those who are not.... Those lacking communication skills risk marginalisation and feel threatened by the competition European mobility produces.... There are also legitimate anxieties concerning the vitality and even the viability of smaller languages and cultures and their continuing contribution to the richness and creative diversity of European cultural life.... Thus it is that, so far from being an area of purely technical interest, language learning engages those fundamental values around which a human community is ordered and which are at the heart of the Council of Europe. (Trim, 1997, p. 14)

This clause makes evident the potential widening of the opportunity gap caused by the modern languages initiative: on one hand, there are those who are "well equipped to seize the opportunity" and on the other hand there are those at an "increasing disadvantage", who "risk marginalization", and have "legitimate anxieties" about the future of their language communities. It is also important to consider that there are questions of language acquisition and content standards. No standards or specific curricular goals currently exist in Italy for subjects that will be taught through CLIL.

### **Directions for Future Research**

From the discussion above, there emerge several unresolved issues impeding the successful implementation of CLIL in Italy's secondary schools. First, CLIL has been implemented in Italy in the midst of an economic crisis in which funds for schools, cultural institutions, professional development, and research have been dramatically reduced. Thus, those teachers who are being offered the opportunity to teach with CLIL on their own are almost exclusively those who already have very high language skills. As team-teaching is not cost-effective in the long-term, it is possible that teachers proficient in an additional language will have more opportunities than their content-teacher colleagues to teach with CLIL. The measures that lead to the successful implementation of CLIL (e.g., developing materials, training teachers, planning lessons, building syllabi, and piloting courses) require an investment that the Italian government is ill-equipped to make at the present time.

Coonan (2008, 2011) notes that until very recently, there were no regulations regarding language competency for CLIL teachers or students on the European level or on the national level. Teachers doing preliminary CLIL projects typically resorted to team-teaching until 2008-2009, but now it is far less common to see

teachers working together inside or outside of the classroom (Coonan, 2012). When team teaching was done, however, this didn't immediately solve the problem of knowing how to address both content teaching and language teaching, since a task such as think-pair-share would not typically be used by a fifth year physics teacher, but would be very common for a teacher of intermediate-level language learners. The pedagogies are different and often complementary, but teachers may lack the support, skills, or time to weave together the linguistic and subject-matter learning into the course. Coonan (2012) proposes that even though it may not be possible for teachers to perform double-duty as teachers to their students and consultants to their colleagues, it is possible with support from the school administration to teach in an overlapping way: third year students who will be studying art history in French would benefit from their French teacher doing some work with them on the topic of art history in French class. If the curriculum for a particular class of students were aligned precisely, teachers might be able to draw on the expertise they have to provide each other indirect assistance in this way. Most importantly, whatever professional development occurs for new CLIL teachers, it must take into account the gradual cycle of learning, implementing, reflecting, and revisiting; one-time workshops will likely be insufficient.

While some of these issues are specific to the Italian context, some aspects of them appear to have been addressed indirectly by the CoE's *Recommendation 5* (2014a), the most recent document at the time of writing that regards European bilingual education policy. Rather than focusing broadly on bilingual education or the accommodation of minority languages, it asks member states to make explicit the linguistic competences and norms that students will need in order to succeed in particular academic subjects (CoE, 2014a, articolo 10). It recommends that all learners (especially "the most vulnerable") be exposed to diverse language-learning situations and that educators keep in mind the "cross-cutting effect" that language has on all learning processes (CoE, 2014a, articolo 10). While this has the potential to be read in numerous ways, it highlights the need for all language users to become aware of ways in which they value (or prohibit, or scorn) particular ways of using language, and it elevates the concept of language awareness (rather than language proficiency) as a skill. Whether this attitude will be incorporated into CLIL in Italian schools remains to be seen, but it would certainly be a promising step toward recognizing Italy's linguistic diversity and toward expanding the goals of language education.

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