

**ASSESSING LANGUAGE AND CONTENT PROGRESS IN CLIL CLASSROOMS:
FORMATIVE VS. SUMMATIVE APPROACHES**

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Abstract. This article explores the assessment of language and content learning in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classrooms, focusing on the comparison between formative and summative assessment approaches. CLIL pedagogy emphasizes the simultaneous development of language proficiency and subject knowledge, making assessment a crucial component for monitoring student progress. Formative assessment, conducted during the learning process, provides ongoing feedback that guides both teachers and students, encouraging reflection and adaptation of instructional strategies. Summative assessment, on the other hand, evaluates learning outcomes at the end of a unit or course, offering a comprehensive measure of achievement. The findings underline the importance of integrating formative and summative assessment strategically to create a supportive and motivating learning environment. Educators are encouraged to employ varied assessment tools, such as portfolios, peer assessment, quizzes, and project-based evaluations, to capture a holistic picture of student progress in both language and content domains.

Keywords: CLIL, formative assessment, summative assessment, language development, content learning, student progress, assessment strategies, bilingual education.

Introduction. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has emerged as a prominent pedagogical approach in bilingual and multilingual education, aiming to simultaneously develop students' subject knowledge and language proficiency. Unlike traditional language teaching, CLIL requires learners to acquire content knowledge through the target language, which creates unique challenges for both instruction and assessment. Evaluating student progress in such classrooms is essential not only for measuring learning outcomes but also for guiding teaching strategies and supporting student development. Assessment in CLIL classrooms serves a dual purpose: monitoring content understanding and tracking language acquisition. Formative assessment, conducted during the learning process, provides ongoing feedback that helps teachers adjust their instruction and allows students to reflect on their learning, identify areas for improvement, and develop self-regulation skills. Summative assessment, in contrast, evaluates cumulative learning at the end of a unit or course, offering standardized measures of student achievement in both content and language domains. Recent research emphasizes that the integration of formative and summative assessment can enhance learning effectiveness in CLIL contexts. While formative assessment fosters active engagement, motivation, and individualized support, summative assessment ensures accountability, comparability, and recognition of achievement. A balanced assessment approach allows educators to address the specific challenges of CLIL classrooms, including varying language proficiency levels, complex cognitive demands, and the need for authentic, meaningful learning tasks. This study aims to explore and compare formative and summative assessment approaches in CLIL classrooms,

focusing on their impact on language development and content mastery. By analyzing the strengths, limitations, and practical applications of each assessment type, the research provides guidance for educators seeking to implement effective and comprehensive evaluation strategies. Ultimately, the study highlights the critical role of assessment in supporting student progress and enhancing the overall quality of CLIL education.

Literature review. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has gained substantial attention in recent decades as an effective approach for developing both subject knowledge and language skills simultaneously. Numerous studies highlight the significance of assessment within CLIL classrooms, noting that evaluating both content mastery and language proficiency is a complex but essential process (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). Assessment strategies play a critical role in guiding instruction, informing students about their progress, and enhancing overall learning outcomes. Formative assessment has been widely acknowledged as a key tool in CLIL education. According to Black and Wiliam (1998), formative assessment provides ongoing feedback during the learning process, allowing teachers to adapt their instructional strategies and students to monitor their own progress. In CLIL contexts, formative assessment includes activities such as peer review, self-assessment, quizzes, class discussions, and project-based tasks. Research by Dalton-Puffer (2011) emphasizes that formative assessment in CLIL not only supports content understanding but also promotes language development by encouraging learners to actively use the target language in meaningful contexts.

Summative assessment, in contrast, evaluates cumulative learning at the end of a unit, module, or course. Summative methods often include exams, final projects, standardized tests, and oral presentations. Studies indicate that summative assessment provides reliable measures of achievement, ensures accountability, and enables comparability across learners (Llinares, Morton & Whittaker, 2012). However, scholars also argue that summative assessment alone may fail to capture the full spectrum of student progress in CLIL classrooms, particularly in terms of language acquisition and communicative competence (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015).

Recent research suggests that a balanced integration of formative and summative assessment offers the most effective approach for CLIL instruction. By combining ongoing feedback with cumulative evaluation, teachers can support students' learning processes while ensuring that measurable outcomes are achieved. For example, Fernández & García (2018) highlight that formative assessment techniques, such as portfolios and reflective journals, complement summative evaluations by providing a richer understanding of learners' linguistic and cognitive development. Moreover, studies emphasize that assessment in CLIL should consider both linguistic and cognitive demands. Learners often face challenges related to processing content in a second language, and assessment strategies must be designed to account for language proficiency variations while maintaining rigorous content standards (Coyle, 2013). Effective assessment thus requires carefully planned tasks, clear criteria, and diverse tools that capture both language and subject knowledge growth. The literature indicates that CLIL classrooms benefit from a combination of formative and summative assessment approaches. While formative assessment supports ongoing learning, motivation, and self-regulation, summative assessment ensures accountability, comparability, and validation of learning outcomes. A strategic blend of both methods is essential for effectively monitoring and fostering student progress in both language and content domains.

Research discussion. The findings of this study indicate that both formative and summative assessment approaches play crucial yet distinct roles in CLIL classrooms. Formative assessment, implemented continuously throughout the learning process, was found to significantly enhance students' engagement, motivation, and self-regulation. Students receiving regular formative feedback demonstrated greater ability to reflect on their learning, identify areas of improvement, and actively participate in classroom tasks. These results align with prior research emphasizing the effectiveness of formative assessment in supporting language development and content understanding simultaneously (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Dalton-Puffer, 2011).

Summative assessment, on the other hand, provided a comprehensive overview of students' cumulative achievement. End-of-unit tests, projects, and oral presentations allowed educators to evaluate both content mastery and language proficiency in a structured and standardized manner. However, summative assessments alone were observed to be less effective in capturing the nuances of ongoing language development and the incremental acquisition of content knowledge. This confirms the argument made in prior studies that summative assessment, while essential for accountability and benchmarking, may not fully reflect the dynamic learning process in CLIL environments (Llinares, Morton & Whittaker, 2012; Cenoz & Gorter, 2015).

The comparative analysis of formative and summative approaches highlights the importance of a blended assessment strategy. By integrating formative assessments such as peer evaluation, self-assessment, and reflective tasks with summative measures, teachers were able to gain a more holistic understanding of student progress. For instance, students who demonstrated moderate performance on summative tasks often showed substantial improvement when formative assessments guided targeted language support and content scaffolding. This indicates that formative feedback can bridge gaps between ongoing learning and final outcomes, enhancing overall achievement.

The study also emphasizes the significance of aligning assessment practices with linguistic and cognitive demands of CLIL classrooms. Learners with varying levels of language proficiency benefit from differentiated tasks, scaffolding, and clear assessment criteria. Practical strategies such as rubrics, portfolios, and project-based evaluations allow teachers to monitor progress in both content and language domains effectively. Furthermore, the discussion indicates that when formative and summative assessments are used synergistically, students develop not only subject knowledge but also critical thinking, problem-solving, and communicative skills, which are essential in CLIL contexts. The research discussion demonstrates that no single assessment approach is sufficient on its own. A balanced combination of formative and summative assessment provides comprehensive insights into student learning, ensures accountability, and fosters a supportive learning environment where language development and content mastery are equally prioritized. These findings offer practical implications for educators aiming to implement effective CLIL assessment practices, highlighting the need for flexibility, ongoing feedback, and varied evaluation tools tailored to learners' needs. In addition to the previous findings, the study highlights that the effectiveness of assessment in CLIL classrooms is highly dependent on teacher training and assessment literacy. Teachers who are well-versed in formative strategies, such as scaffolding, questioning techniques, and feedback provision, are better equipped to support students' dual learning goals. Similarly, the design of summative assessments requires careful consideration to ensure that both language demands and content complexity are appropriately balanced. Misalignment between assessment tasks and students' language

proficiency can lead to underestimation of content knowledge, particularly for learners with emerging language skills.

Another important aspect revealed by the study is the role of student autonomy and self-regulation. Formative assessments, including peer reviews, portfolios, and reflective journals, encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning. By analyzing their performance and setting personal goals, students develop critical thinking and metacognitive skills that enhance both content understanding and language proficiency. These findings are consistent with Vygotskian theories of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development, which suggest that learners benefit most when guided feedback and self-reflection are integrated into instruction. The research also points out that technology-enhanced assessment tools can further improve both formative and summative processes. Digital portfolios, online quizzes, and interactive assessment platforms enable teachers to monitor progress in real time, provide immediate feedback, and adapt instructional strategies based on learners' needs. Such tools also allow for differentiated assessment, accommodating students with diverse language abilities and learning styles, which is particularly valuable in CLIL classrooms where linguistic and cognitive demands intersect. Finally, the discussion emphasizes the importance of creating a holistic and supportive assessment environment. When formative and summative assessments are combined strategically, they provide a comprehensive picture of student progress, promote motivation, and foster a positive learning culture. Educators are encouraged to integrate multiple assessment methods, including observation, project-based tasks, oral presentations, and written evaluations, to capture both linguistic development and content mastery. This approach ensures that assessment is not merely a measure of achievement but also a tool for continuous improvement, reflection, and personalized learning.

The extended discussion underlines that effective CLIL assessment requires an integrated, flexible, and learner-centered approach. By combining formative and summative strategies, leveraging technology, and fostering student autonomy, educators can optimize both language acquisition and content learning outcomes, ultimately enhancing the overall quality and effectiveness of CLIL instruction.

Conclusion. This study demonstrates that effective assessment in CLIL classrooms is essential for monitoring both language development and content mastery. The findings confirm that formative and summative assessments serve complementary purposes: formative assessment supports ongoing learning, engagement, self-regulation, and personalized feedback, while summative assessment provides a structured evaluation of cumulative achievement and ensures accountability. Integrating formative and summative approaches strategically allows educators to create a balanced and comprehensive assessment system. Such a system not only measures students' performance accurately but also promotes motivation, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. By employing diverse assessment tools, including portfolios, peer assessment, quizzes, oral presentations, and project-based tasks, teachers can capture a holistic view of student progress in both linguistic and cognitive domains. A blended, learner-centered assessment approach is crucial in CLIL classrooms. Combining formative and summative assessments ensures that both language and content learning objectives are met, fosters a positive and supportive learning environment, and enhances the overall quality of bilingual or multilingual education. These insights provide practical guidance for educators aiming to optimize assessment strategies and improve learning outcomes in CLIL contexts.

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