



Implementing Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning: Insights from the ECML Training Event in Iceland

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Abstract

This presentation shares insights from an ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages) Training and Consultancy event hosted in Reykjavik, which focused on implementing the “Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning” (PTDL) framework in the Icelandic educational system. The event engaged educators in practical strategies to integrate content and language learning while fostering pluriliteracies development. Participants explored how CLIL and pluriliteracies approaches can scaffold students’ deep engagement with disciplinary concepts, enhance communication, and promote critical thinking. Through interactive workshops and collaborative reflection, teachers identified concrete ways to design learning tasks that support deeper learning and intercultural competence. Key outcomes include a strengthened understanding of the pluriliteracies approach potential to enrich (language) learning environments, alongside challenges such as adapting materials and aligning with national curricula. Attendees gained practical ideas for applying pluriliteracies approaches in their own teaching contexts and contributed to ongoing discussions around fostering more equitable and inclusive language learning in the XXI century. This paper situates these findings within the broader context of innovation in language learning and highlights opportunities for integrating pluriliteracies-informed teaching practices in the classrooms.

Keywords: CLIL, Pluriliteracies, Deeper learning, Professional development, ECML, Iceland

1. Introduction

The growing multilingualism of European classrooms calls for pedagogical frameworks that connect content learning with language development. This paper reports on an ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages) Training and Consultancy event organized in Reykjavik (June 2025), which explored how the “Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning” (PTDL) framework can be adapted to the Icelandic educational context. The initiative aimed to support educators in designing learning experiences that promote disciplinary literacy, deeper understanding, and intercultural awareness.

2. Theoretical Background

The “Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning” (PTDL) framework [1] builds upon the pedagogical foundations of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), extending its scope from a focus on dual-focused instruction (content and language) to a more holistic and epistemologically grounded model of learning. While traditional CLIL approaches emphasize language as both a medium and a learning goal, the PTDL framework reconceptualizes this relationship, positioning language as the primary tool through which disciplinary thinking and knowledge construction take place. In this view, *learning a subject* and *learning to communicate within that subject’s discourse* are inseparable processes. The pluriliteracies approach foregrounds the notion of literacy as a plural, dynamic, and multimodal practice, moving beyond the idea of literacy as mere reading and writing competence. It views literacies as discipline-specific ways of constructing meaning, shaped by the epistemic norms, symbolic systems, and communicative conventions of each subject area. In this sense, becoming literate in science, history, or art involves learning to think, reason, and express ideas through the distinctive modes, genres, and semiotic resources that each discipline values. Crucially, the PTDL framework integrates cognitive, linguistic, and intercultural dimensions of learning. It supports teachers



in scaffolding students' progression from everyday understandings toward more abstract, disciplinary ways of knowing. By explicitly linking language development to cognitive challenge, it aims to promote deeper learning, that is, learning that engages conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and the ability to transfer knowledge across contexts. The pluriliteracies approach thus reframes language not as an add-on to content learning, but as a central means of participation in knowledge communities and of developing learners' identities as disciplinary thinkers and communicators [2].

3. The Icelandic Educational Context

The diversification of Icelandic society is increasingly reflected in student populations at all educational levels. According to Statistics Iceland [3], first-generation immigrants represent around 15.5% of the population, with an additional 1.6% of second-generation immigrants and 7.1% of other residents with foreign backgrounds. This demographic development translates into multilingual classrooms, where some students are exposed to two or three languages in the home environment [4].

The successful development of children's multilingual repertoires requires strong communication between parents and teachers [5], a linguistically rich environment both at home and in school, and appropriate pedagogical and policy measures [6], [7], [8]. These principles resonate with the Council of Europe's Companion Volume to the CEFR (2020), which highlights plurilingual and intercultural competence as central to preparing learners for participation in democratic societies.

In Iceland, the language of instruction is Icelandic, with English taught as the first foreign language and Danish (or, in some cases, Swedish or Norwegian) as the second. Other foreign languages, including Italian, German, French and Spanish, are offered as additional options in upper secondary or higher education, but national curricula do not provide specific methodological guidelines for their teaching [9].

Although policy documents acknowledge the importance of inclusive, integrated language education, CLIL is not formally embedded in the Icelandic curriculum [10]. This makes the Icelandic context unique: while teachers and learners face increasing multilingual realities, there is a lack of structured training and resources to implement innovative approaches such as CLIL and pluriliteracies. At the same time, this gap represents an opportunity. By experimenting with integrated pedagogies, Icelandic educators may develop context-sensitive models that strengthen subject-specific literacies, foster deeper learning, and support students' linguistic and academic growth across the curriculum.

4. The ECML Training and Consultancy Event in Reykjavík

On 4–5 June 2025, the University of Iceland hosted an ECML Training and Consultancy workshop entitled “Beyond CLIL – Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning”. The two-day event was part of the ECML's programme of tailored professional development activities offered to member states and was designed to support educators in integrating pluriliteracies-based approaches into their practice. The workshop brought together a diverse group of participants, including in-service teachers, student teachers, and teacher educators, all of whom shared a commitment to fostering deeper learning through integrated language and content teaching.

Led by ECML experts Letizia Cinganotto (University for Foreigners of Perugia) and Kevin Schuck (independent educational consultant, the Netherlands), the programme combined theoretical input with practical, hands-on activities. The opening sessions introduced participants to the foundations of CLIL and to the pluriliteracies framework, highlighting the concepts of disciplinary literacy, scaffolding, and multimodal meaning-making. Subsequent workshop activities invited participants to work collaboratively on designing tasks and learning sequences that engaged students in both disciplinary knowledge-building and language development.

The design of the programme ensured a balance between input, practice, and reflection. For example, interactive activities such as Mentimeter polls, scaffolded group tasks, and collaborative lesson planning enabled participants to explore how the framework could be applied in their own teaching contexts. Feedback and plenary discussions provided space for participants to critically reflect on challenges and opportunities, with particular attention to issues of learner agency, intercultural competence, and transferability of knowledge across languages and disciplines.

Throughout the workshop, participants reported valuing the practical orientation of the activities and the opportunity to exchange experiences with colleagues across institutions. Many highlighted the relevance of the pluriliteracies framework for addressing the needs of multilingual classrooms in Iceland and for enriching teacher professional culture more broadly. The event was widely regarded



as both inspiring and applicable, equipping educators with concrete tools to rethink their practice and laying the groundwork for further collaboration and innovation in language and content education.

4.1 Participants

The workshop gathered 14 participants out of 24 registered, representing a range of educational backgrounds. The group included professionals from different educational levels and institutions across Iceland and was highly diverse in terms of roles and professional profiles, including:

- School teachers working in upper secondary, compulsory, and adult education, teaching subjects such as Icelandic as a second language, English, German, French, Spanish and Danish.
- University lecturers and researchers specializing in language pedagogy, plurilingualism, and teacher education.
- Student teachers and teacher educators, engaging with issues of multilingualism and pluriliteracies in training programmes.
- Educational specialists and consultants working in school services and teacher support.

This variety of profiles provided a fertile ground for reflection and collaboration. Teachers contributed concrete classroom experiences, while researchers and teacher educators brought theoretical insights and methodological frameworks. The mix of perspectives enabled participants to explore the Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning (PTDL) approach not only as a pedagogical model, but also as a tool for fostering dialogue across educational sectors.

5. Outcomes and Insights

The discussions and reflections emerging from the workshop revealed several key areas of learning and insight. Participants reported a deepened understanding of how to design learning tasks that promote deeper learning, moving beyond surface-level comprehension toward more sustained engagement with disciplinary concepts. Through hands-on activities, they explored ways to integrate subject-specific literacies, recognising that each discipline requires its own modes of communication, reasoning, and meaning-making. A further central theme concerned the scaffolding of both content and language, highlighting the need to make learning processes visible and to provide learners with structured support as they develop confidence and autonomy in disciplinary discourse. At the same time, participants identified a number of challenges to implementing pluriliteracies approaches within the Icelandic context. A recurring issue was the adaptation of international models to national curricula, which often lack explicit references to integrated pedagogies such as CLIL or pluriliteracies. Teachers also underlined the need for sustained professional development opportunities and accessible resources to ensure that innovations introduced through workshops can be effectively consolidated in classroom practice. Despite these challenges, several key success factors were noted. Teacher engagement and collaboration emerged as crucial drivers of innovation, with participants valuing the opportunity to share ideas and experiences across institutions and educational levels. The practical orientation of the workshop was also highly appreciated, as it provided participants with immediately applicable strategies for integrating pluriliteracies principles into their own teaching contexts. Overall, participants emphasized that the pluriliteracies approach offers a promising and contextually relevant pathway for enriching language education in Iceland's increasingly multilingual classrooms. It provides a bridge between theory and practice, fostering both inclusion and pedagogical innovation. By focusing on how learners construct meaning through disciplinary language and multimodal engagement, the approach aligns well with the broader goals of Icelandic education to promote equity, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding.

6. Discussion: Implications for Innovation in Language Learning

The Reykjavík event provides an example of how pluriliteracies-based pedagogies can meaningfully extend and enrich the CLIL approach, particularly in contexts marked by growing linguistic and cultural diversity. In Iceland, where classrooms are increasingly multilingual, the Pluriliteracies Teaching for



Deeper Learning (PTDL) framework offers a powerful response to evolving educational needs. By placing disciplinary literacy and intercultural competence at the core of teaching and learning, the approach moves beyond traditional language-focused instruction toward a model that cultivates critical, reflective, and socially situated learning. In this sense, pluriliteracies-based teaching not only enhances learners' ability to communicate within and across disciplines but also supports the development of global competences necessary for active participation in pluralistic societies. It aligns with broader European and international efforts to promote equity, inclusion, and deeper learning, echoing policy priorities articulated in Council of Europe initiatives and the ECML's strategic vision for the integration of language and content learning. The Icelandic experience demonstrates that international frameworks such as PTDL can act as catalysts for locally grounded innovation. When contextualized appropriately, they enable educators to reinterpret global principles through the lens of national and institutional realities. However, the experience also underscores the need for systemic conditions that sustain innovation over time — including ongoing professional development, institutional commitment, and policy alignment. Without these elements, even promising pedagogical innovations risk remaining isolated rather than transformative. More broadly, the Reykjavík workshop contributes to the pan-European dialogue on the future of language education. It illustrates the relevance of language education as a foundation for democratic participation in the 21st century.

7. Conclusion and Future Directions

The ECML workshop held in Reykjavík demonstrated the significant potential of pluriliteracies-informed approaches to transform both language and content learning. By combining theoretical insights with hands-on practice, the event enabled participants to deepen their understanding of how the Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning (PTDL) framework can be implemented across diverse educational settings. Teachers reported gaining not only a clearer conceptual grasp of pluriliteracies principles but also a repertoire of practical strategies for designing learning experiences that integrate disciplinary knowledge, language development, and intercultural awareness. The workshop thus served as a laboratory for innovation, fostering reflection on how pedagogical design can promote deeper learning and more inclusive classroom practices. Participants' engagement and the collaborative nature of the activities highlighted the value of professional learning communities in sustaining pedagogical change. The event also underscored that moving toward pluriliteracies-based education requires systemic support through continuous professional development, resource creation, and policy alignment to ensure long-term impact. Looking ahead, several key directions emerge from the Reykjavík experience. First, there is a clear need to continue investing in teacher professional development that bridges theory and classroom practice, allowing educators to refine their understanding of integrated content and language teaching. Second, the development of pluriliteracies-oriented teaching materials tailored to the Icelandic curriculum will be essential to support consistent and context-sensitive implementation. Finally, strengthening collaboration among schools, universities, and policymakers will be vital to embed pluriliteracies principles within national educational strategies and foster sustainable innovation. Overall, the Reykjavík workshop represents an important milestone in the journey toward more equitable, inclusive, and reflective learning environments. It aligns with 21st-century educational goals that emphasize critical thinking, multilingual competence, and intercultural understanding, skills that are increasingly essential in today's interconnected world. The outcomes of this event thus contribute not only to the Icelandic educational landscape but also to broader European efforts to redefine language education through the lens of deeper learning and pluriliteracies.

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