Re-situating CLIL knowledge through teacher co-design: scaffolding language-for-thinking for new arrivals transitioning to mainstream subject literacies

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The context: a gap in readiness for mainstream learning

New Arrivals Program (NAP)

- 20-40 weeks of intensive English before mainstream school
- Foregrounds academic language acquisition across subjects
- Tendency to simplify content for communicative purpose

READINESS GAP

for cognitive and disciplinary demands

Mainstream learning

- Subject specific thinking skills embedded in every disciplinary area
- Larger classes, limited language support

The challenge: learning that goes beyond language to prepare for mainstream curricula readiness

Ball et al., 2015; Coyle et al., 2010; VCAA, 2025; Victorian Department of Education, 2024

It's not just language: thinking like a historian

YEAR 9 HISTORY TASK **Why did Britain establish a colony at Sydney Cove?**

Good academic English: a neat list

- Poverty in Britain
- Overcrowded prisons
- Loss of the American colonies

Accurate and well written… but not yet historical thinking

A historian asks…

- How were these causes connected?
- Which mattered most?
- Where does this information come from? Whose perspective is it?
- Whose voice is missing?

Connect causes

"This led to…" "As a result…"

Weigh evidence

"The most important reason was… because…"

Question sources

"According to this source…" "However, this source was created by… so it may…"

Coyle & Meyer, 2021; Morton, 2020; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA], 2025

The theory: Content and Language Integrated Learning

CLIL: a flexible pedagogical approach

- Integrates language and subject content
- 4Cs: Content, Communication, Cognition, Culture

PTDL: Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning

- Puts cognition and subject literacies at the centre
- Subject-specific ways of thinking and communicating

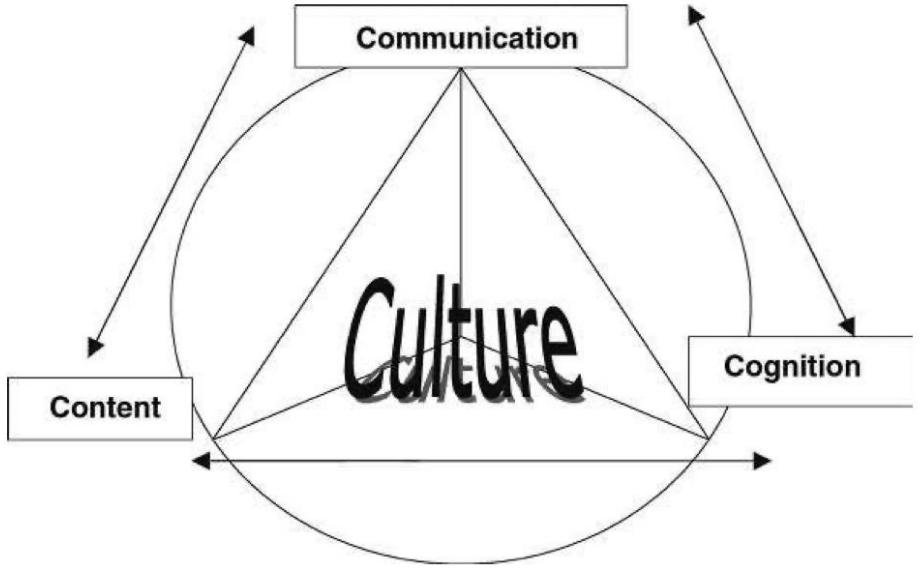


Figure 1.1 The 4Cs Framework (Coyle, 2006 in Coyle, 2007a: 551).

Coyle, 2007; Coyle et al., 2010; Coyle & Meyer, 2021

…but it didn't fit NAP neatly

	Where CLIL is usually used	NAP classrooms
The language	A foreign language, rarely used outside the classroom	English: the language of wider society and schooling
The teachers	Often subject specialists with an established curriculum	EAL specialists, often not subject experts
Learners & time	Relatively stable cohorts over years	Very diverse learners, 20-40 weeks before transition



In Australia

CLIL is used more widely in bilingual education and languages classrooms

Effective CLIL in NAP needs systematic adaptation, not transplantation.

Coyle et al., 2010; Cross, 2014; Turner, 2015

From research to the classroom: making CLIL our own

How can secondary NAP teachers make CLIL their own to support students new to learning in Australian classrooms to develop subject-specific thinking?



Co-design with secondary EAL teachers

Working with them, not handing them a model

Starting from teachers' current practice

What we already do well, and where the gaps are

CLIL and PTDL as tools to think with

Not recipes to follow

Coyle & Meyer, 2021; Johnson et al., 2024; Sannino et al., 2016

The co-design PL: 6 sessions over 15 weeks

Structure: 6 × 1-hour sessions over 15 weeks across terms 3-4, 2026



Sessions 1–3
Mid-late Term 3

Session 4
Term 4, Wk 2

Session 5
Term 4, Wk 3

Classroom trialling
Term 4, Wks 4-9

Session 6
End of Term 4

A concept-mediated formative intervention

Concept-mediated *(Esteve, 2018; Rieker et al., 2023)*	**Externalise existing understandings**	**Engage with CLIL as scientific concepts**	**Verbalise emerging interpretations**	**Use the 4Cs with growing independence**
Expansive learning actions as a heuristic *(Engeström, 1987;2010)*	**Questioning**	**Analysing**	**Modelling a new solution**	**Examining & testing the model**

A concept-mediated formative intervention: the challenge

Re-contextualising CLIL for NAP with teachers



Concept-mediated

Teachers build solid conceptual understanding of CLIL

The challenge: both at once



Teacher co-design

Teachers question, adapt and rework the concepts

Engeström, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2010; Johnson et al., 2024; Sannino et al., 2016

Research design: data and analysis

5 secondary EAL teachers in one NAP setting for professional learning

2 case teachers for in-depth analysis

Professional learning data

all 5 teachers

- Audio recordings of six PL discussions
- Reflective journals
- Intervention artefacts

Case study data

each of the 2 case teachers

1. Baseline interview
2. Classroom observation 1 → stimulated-recall interview
3. Classroom observation 2 → stimulated-recall interview
4. Final reflective interview

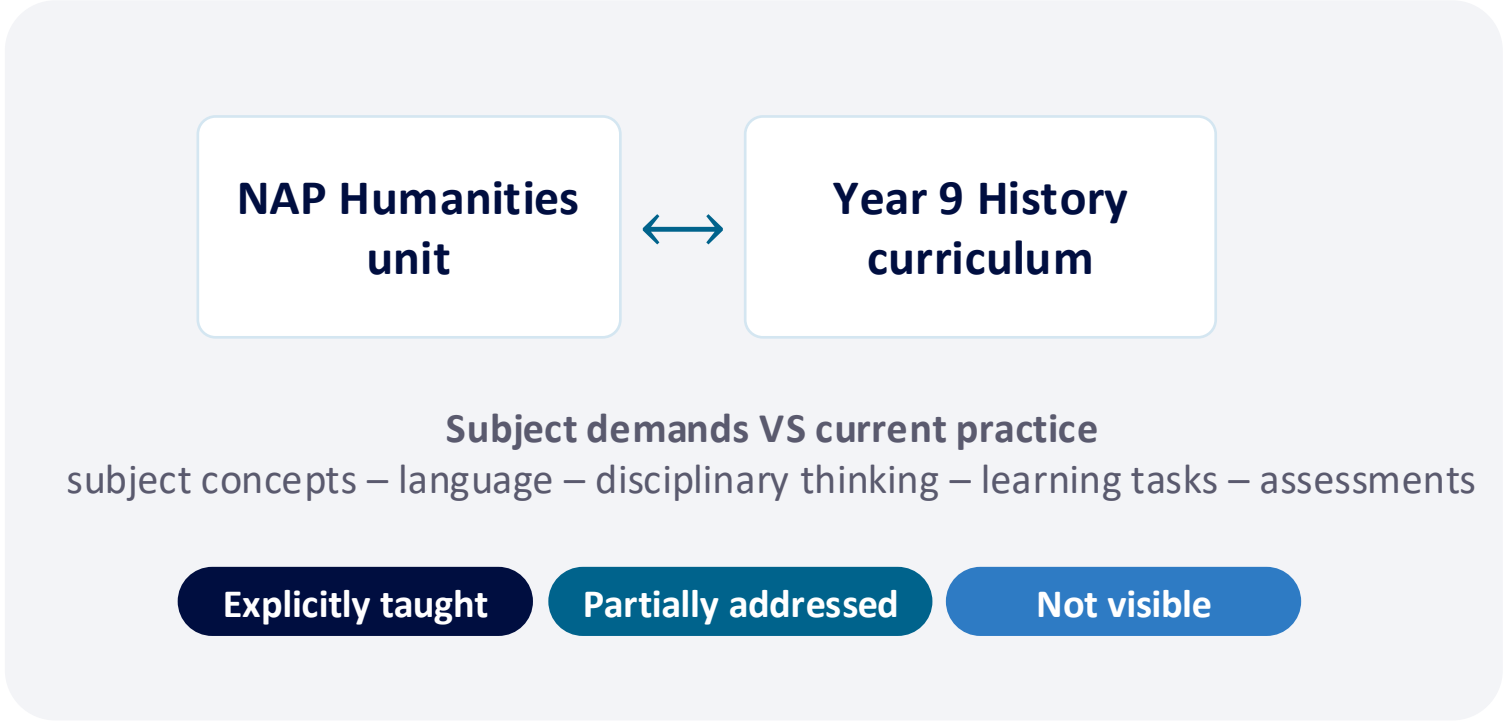
Analysis: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

Each teacher's activity system (tools, rules, community, division of labour, object), and the expansive learning cycle (Engeström, 1987) to trace how teachers adopt and rework CLIL and PTDL tools over time

Session 1 · Understanding our current practice and needs

WHAT WE DID

- Pairs set a NAP Humanities unit beside the Year 9 History curriculum
- Rated each demand: explicitly taught, partially explicit, or not visible
- Dug deeper together: why do these gaps exist?



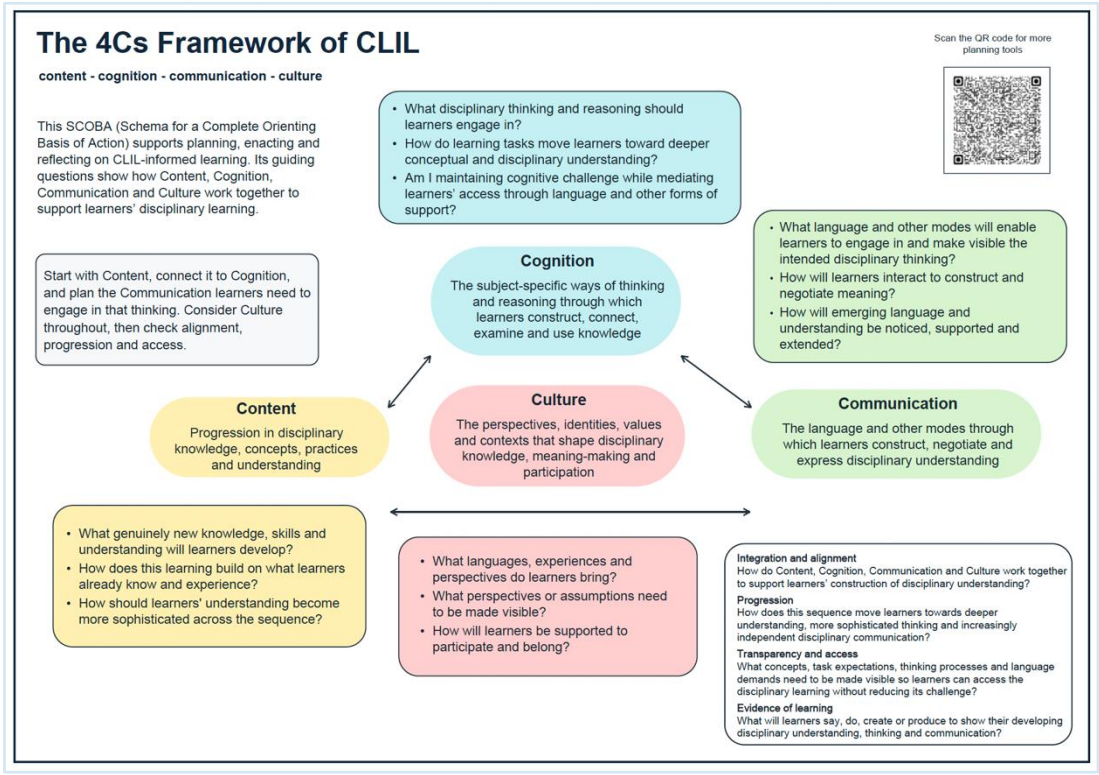
WHAT EMERGED
→ SESSION 2

How can we support newly arrived EAL students to develop age-appropriate disciplinary thinking and practices while building on their existing knowledge, languages and schooling experiences within the limited time available?

Session 2 · Introducing CLIL concepts and tools

WHAT WE DID

- Read different definitions of CLIL to form understanding
- Presented the 4Cs as a planning tool in materialised form
- Spotted the 4Cs in a Science CLIL sequence



The key pedagogical tool:

Schema for a Complete Orienting Basis of Action

(the SCOBA)

Core concepts "essential" for CLIL teaching and learning materialised'

Esteve et al., 2021

WHAT EMERGED → SESSION 3

Teachers could see the 4Cs at work, but needed a sharper tool to plan and teach thinking explicitly.

Session 3 · The “I do, we do” of planning

WHAT WE DID

- Modelled planning a History sequence C by C with the SCOBA
- Used CDFs to make curriculum verbs teachable

OUR DESTINATION

European Arrival: Why did Britain establish a colony at Sydney Cove?

History Years 9–10

Cognitive Discourse Functions *Dalton-Puffer, 2013*

“the way thinking in academic learning is realised in recurring patterns of classroom language”

SEVEN CDF CATEGORIES:

- **connecting thinking and communication;**
- **identify the main cognitive process to demonstrate**

Classify | **Define** | **Describe** | **Evaluate**

Explain | **Explore** | **Report**

WHAT EMERGED
→ SESSION 4

The planning made sense on paper. The next step was seeing how the 4Cs come together in a real lesson.

Session 4 · Integrating the 4Cs in teaching

WHAT WE DID

- Experienced an integrated learning moment
- Provided thinking framework for reading
- Considered how did content, cognition and language intertwine?

Why did Britain look for another place to send convicted people in the 1780s?

THINKING FRAMEWORK TO CLASSIFY: *three kinds of reasons for setting up a colony*

Social	**Penal**	**Imperial**
about people and money	about crime and punishment	about land and power

THE SOURCE

"After independence, America no longer accepted convicted people from Britain."

A STUDENT'S ACCOUNT

CLASSIFY This is a **penal** reason **because** it is about crime and punishment.

EVIDENCE **The text says** "America no longer accepted convicted people."

Key sentence frame for classifying reasons and linking reason to evidence supplied to express that relationship

WHAT EMERGED → SESSION 5

Teachers were at different places in understanding what makes subject-specific thinking subject-specific.

Emerging tensions: re-situating CLIL in NAP

Preliminary · *Questions teachers raised as they worked with the 4Cs*

1

Generic ↔ subject-specific thinking

"If explaining is something we do across subjects, what actually makes the thinking subject-specific?"

2

Language first ↔ language for thinking

"Should we teach the key vocabulary first, before the content?"

3

Thinking in L1 ↔ showing it in English

"What if students can think it in their first language, but not yet in English?"

4

Naming the thinking ↔ just doing it

"For beginners, do we name the thinking, or just teach how to do it?"

Preliminary analysis of PL discussions and reflective journals, Sessions 3–5

Session 5 · Discussion and individual planning

WHAT WE DID

- Discussion first: compared two "explain" tasks, History and Science
- Built the comparison together
- Then offered theoretical insights that build on teachers' ideas

"If explaining is something we do across subjects, what makes the thinking subject-specific?"

HISTORY
Explain why Britain established a colony at Sydney Cove.

SCIENCE
Explain why ice melts when heated.

then, theoretical insights

Disciplinary literacy as tools for knowledge construction and communication
Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012

Language and thought being inseparable
Vygotsky, 1986

Explicit and systematic instruction for language of thinking
Meyer, 2010

WHAT EMERGED → NEXT STEPS

Teachers took these ideas into individual planning, and are now trialling their redesigned units in class.

Opening a space for dialogue

I'm in the middle of this work, and I'd love to hear your perspectives.

What resonates with your own context?

What seems challenging, or open to question?

What would you add, adapt or ask?



Open discussion

Selective references

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Thank you! Let's keep talking

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