

Place Matters: Connecting Local Landscape, Culture, and Language Learning through CLIL

Renata Janktová

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, České Budějovice, Czechia

e-mail: rjanktova@pf.jcu.cz

As children increasingly engage with digital environments rather than their immediate surroundings, educators face the challenge of strengthening the learners' connections to local communities, landscapes, and cultural heritage. At the same time, foreign language education, while expected to develop not only linguistic competence but also intercultural awareness, has traditionally prioritised target cultures, with considerably less attention paid to learners own cultural backgrounds and localities. English, in particular, is widely perceived as a means of engaging with the wider world and as a gateway to understanding other cultures. Consequently, the cultural content of English Language Teaching (ELT) materials, as well as many informal channels of English language acquisition, tends to privilege Anglophone societies and offers limited opportunities for intercultural learning. This paper explores the potential of combining English Language Teaching (ELT), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and local and regional realia as an interdisciplinary approach to learning and a means of enriching intercultural understanding. It argues that learning about familiar places through the medium of English enables students to view their communities from a fresh perspective and with critical distance, thereby strengthening their sense of place and fostering a deeper appreciation of local environments and cultural heritage. This perspective may be particularly beneficial in rural areas, where viewing familiar surroundings through the lens of a foreign language can add a sense of novelty and discovery to places that young people often regard as too ordinary or familiar to be interesting.

