Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is not a new concept, but it is one that is becoming increasingly popular across Europe and in many other parts of the world. Generally speaking, CLIL has a dual focus: it aims to introduce children to content areas such as science, music or art, using a foreign language (in this case English) to teach all or part of the subject curriculum. Basically, English shifts from being used exclusively for language-based purposes to becoming a vehicle to learn non-language content.

Over the past few years, the growing interest in CLIL has been partly due to the positive feedback from teachers who have implemented the approach in class and also thanks to research which has reflected the beneficial outcomes of teaching content areas through a foreign language. Nevertheless, as David Graddol points out in the Guardian Weekly online CLIL debate, ‘When [CLIL] works, it works extraordinarily well, but it is actually quite difficult to do well.’

Projects and CLIL
Doing project work is an excellent way for teachers and children to bring together content and language. Projects generally result in a finished product that can be displayed in class, included in portfolios or shown to parents, and they often include collaborative tasks. Projects tend to consolidate information from different parts of the curriculum in a natural way and provide variety for both children and teachers. They also integrate the four skills while, at the same time, promoting learner autonomy and cooperation.

As a result, projects and CLIL have a number of things in common. They both:

★ integrate language and skills;
★ involve the use of functional language, which is dictated by the topic being investigated or studied;
★ shift away from the ‘language-driven’ approach by presenting and working with English in a natural, realistic context;
★ give children the opportunity to use English beyond the realms of the language class;
★ provide a variety of stimuli for distinct learning styles, learners and levels.

Projects and children
A number of factors are involved when it comes to choosing the type of project to be carried out in young learner classes. Teachers need to consider class size, resources, the
Projects and possibilities

Owing to the flexible and easy-to-adapt nature of projects, they lend themselves to a variety of settings, subject areas and situations.

Some ideas for types of projects might include the following:

 Research projects
 These could involve writing reports on different types of animals and plants or on historical figures. They could also involve completing webquests.

 Investigation projects
 Children could be asked to go out into the neighbourhood or look around their homes or school to collect data on a given topic. For example, they might be asked how many technological devices they can find, or could be required to sketch the layout of their school or their neighbourhood on a map.

 Surveys
 Students can be given (or helped to devise) questionnaires which they use to find out information that can later be displayed on a graph or chart. For example, they could be asked to find out the number of students in the class who waste water or who recycle things at home.

 Hands-on projects
 These could involve such things as making musical instruments from recycled material or producing a landscape collage.

 Experiments or science fair projects
 Children can be asked to make posters, flyers or brochures. For example, they could produce a ‘Healthy heart poster’ with tips on how to stay healthy or brochures with information on local festivals or monuments.

 School talent shows, class plays and concerts
 Children can work together with guidance from their teacher to organise a show, play or concert for their classmates, the rest of the school or for their parents. For example, they can work on an ‘end of the year show’ where they sing songs in English or perform traditional stories.

 Class newspapers or newsletters
 With this type of project, different children or groups of children can be made responsible for different sections of a newspaper or asked to perform different tasks in order to produce a newsletter.

 There are a number of resource books, photocopiable publications and websites with excellent ideas and suggestions for carrying out projects in class, some of which are included in the references at the end of this article.

 CLIL focuses on learning content in a foreign language, rather than on learning the language itself, and projects lend themselves extremely well to implementing this approach.

 Of course, teachers need to tailor the integration of language and content and the use of projects to their own educational needs and circumstances. Ideally, language teachers and non-language teachers, can (and should) work together to decide on subject areas, themes and topics which can be dealt with in English and set goals and objectives according to their particular situation.

 Good luck and happy CLIL teaching!