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CLIL: SUBJECT – MATTER AND LANGUAGE LEARNING INTEGRATION

The article highlights CLIL as integral part of contemporary school education in most EU countries. Certain peculiarities have been singled out and discussed, its structure, aims and reasons for applications are also emphasized.

Key words: content learning, language integrated learning, integrative approach, academic language competence, higher education.

The term CLIL (Content and Language Integrated learning) designates any teaching / learning of a non-language subject through the medium of a second or foreign language (L2). In other words, we may state, it is a way of learning languages by means of learning another subject. It encourages students to actually use the foreign language as a genuine means of communication. Additionally, it can reinforce students to become self – confident learners and maintain the learning process beyond the language classroom.

The concept of languages used across the curriculum underlining the role of language in subject-matter learning must become an essential part of a framework of reference for languages of school education in Europe. In consequence, special attention will be drawn to the experiences with bilingual education and CLIL where a second (or third) system of communication is being developed by the learner through the use of a language other than his/her 'mother' tongue for subject-matter instruction, thinking and learning respectively. The importance of CLIL lies in the fact that it is based on an integrative, supportive approach stressing the cognitively guiding role language plays in all mental activities such as discourse comprehension and production, as well as when negotiating about concepts, context and meaning. The CLIL approach is extending the range of goals for language learning beyond the development of what Cummins (1978, 1979) called Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), as may often be the case in the domain of FL – towards the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, a tool for successful lifelong education. This academic language competence plays an important role extending the basis which has been laid through mother tongue acquisition and education (or second language acquisition and education for immigrant children) and enabling learners to participate in different discourse communities and their conventions, professional or social in nature. Indeed, it appears that integrating language development and content mediation is what good quality education generally is all about – the interest in CLIL is to grow.

Multilingualism is a must for all new policies. However, the present situation is not homogeneous in all European countries. Whereas in some countries the percentage of people who can hold a conversation in a language other than their mother tongue is almost 100% (Luxemburg or Holland), in others they hardly reach 30% (U.K. or Hungary) (Commission of the European Communities, 2005: 3-4). English is the language most widely spoken in Europe (47% of the European citizens can speak it), that is one of the reasons why it is adopted as a 'lingua franca' in many situations, including education. Even though the European Union is making a great effort to prevent the overuse of this language, which could mean "unforeseen consequences

for the vitality of languages” (Commission of the European Communities, 2005: 6), the reality shows that today it is the most feasible language to use in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in most European countries. Additional to the reasons already provided, English is the language of most international journals in almost all disciplines, as well as international conferences attended by university teachers. Even though the European Commission in their meeting in Barcelona in March 2002 called for at least two European languages to be taught apart from the official languages of each country (European Council, 2002), the reality is still far from the ideal situation, where CLIL in Higher Education could be applied in several European languages.

Some Northern European countries have already carried out experiences in CLIL for a number of years (Lehikoinen, 2004; Prokisch, 2004). However, the rest of the European countries are still at the beginning stages regarding the integration of the foreign language and content subjects in teaching and learning (Argondizzo, 2006; Dafouz & Sancho 2006). Learning about other universities’ experiences could be a good point of departure to start new CLIL programmes in many institutions.

The best way to learn a language is by doing, not just studying it or performing exercises and drills.

Describes an evolving approach to teaching and learning where subjects are taught and studied through the medium of a non native language. The experience of learning subjects through the medium of a non native language is more challenging and intensive as there is more exposure to the language and learners acquire knowledge and skills in different areas of the curriculum. In CLIL learning a curriculum subject in a second, third or sometimes fourth language involves drawing on effective pedagogical practice from a range of different educational contexts. Curriculum subjects apart from languages are taught through the target language. These include Art, Citizenship, Classics, Design, Technology, Economics, Environmental Studies, Geography, History, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Literacy, Maths, Music, Physical Education (PE), Philosophy, Politics, Religious Education (RE), Science, Social Science.

There are many different types of CLIL programmes ranging from full immersion through partial immersion, about 50% of the curriculum, to language showers and regular 20–30 minute subject lessons in the target language. In Secondary schools subjects are usually taught in the target language by non native speaker subject or language teachers. In Primary contexts, CLIL programmes are commonly delivered by non native subject specialists or by English language teachers. In some countries native speaker classroom assistants support the learners too. There are also contexts where native speakers teach English to non native learners (often from minority language groups) to enable them to integrate into mainstream classes. Examples of these programmes are EAL (English as Additional language) in Britain and CBI (Content Based Instruction) in the US.

There are quite a lot of reasons to exploit CLIL teaching a foreign language at school. Here you can the major ones.

1. Exposure. Students are exposed to a considerable amount of language while learning content, which should be comprehensible and linked to their previous learning.
2. Contextualized Learning. Language input and tasks are useful and relevant to the discourse context. They learn how to negotiate content through language in natural discourse context.
3. Three – Prior knowledge and expertise. Students are asked to use their previous knowledge and expertise to learn additional language.
4. Motivation. Motivation is enhanced by the intrinsic relevance of the tasks and topic to the students’ needs and interests.
5. Variety of teaching / learning approaches. CLIL supports student-centered approaches such as cooperative learning, experiential learning and project-based learning (Coyle, D. & H. Baetens Beardsmore, 2007).

There is no singular formula for CLIL, variations and combinations are possible and created according to the school context. There exist the three main models in use:

1. Theme – based instruction – Focus on language – Teacher of Foreign Language
2. Sheltered instruction – Focus on content – Subject teacher

3. Adjunct instruction – Focus on both content and language – Collaboration between the two teachers (team-teaching) (Fortanet-Gomez, I. & C. Raisanen, 2008).

The main objective of these CLIL modules is the development of thinking skills through the discovery and learning of curricular content using English. This is an effective way to achieve preparation for academic and professional life. Students will be asked to express thinking in L2, read and write for study purposes and engage in academic discourse.

Topics must be selected and arranged taking into consideration the standard curriculum of secondary schools. The types of text and vocabulary presented must be specific to the subjects. Furthermore, general academic vocabulary, which can be used across subjects and is crucial to discourse within the subjects, should be practiced as well. Each Unit develops as follows:

- activating previous content knowledge through brainstorming, elicitation of questions, ideas and hypotheses through visual aids, then providing vocabulary to support new content learning;

- presenting content through different types of text (reading passages, graphs, diagrams, mind maps, flow charts, etc.). Key reading skills are practiced through tasks such as scanning, cloze exercises, outlining, information transfer, passage completion, labelling, reading and note taking;

- working on content through graded tasks that develop a variety of cognitive skills (Information processing, interpreting, deducting and giving reasons, posing questions, evaluating information);

- follow up tasks with the application of creative thinking or evaluation skills, mainly through tasks for supporting speaking and writing on the subject (making presentations, writing an essay, talking or writing from a prompt) (Marsh, D. & D. Wolff, 2007).

The integration of content and language is a challenge in any form of education. In primary and secondary education the challenge often confronts a single teacher who has to combine both content learning goals and language learning goals. For the learners it is a challenge because they have to cope with not only their unfamiliarity with the content-to-be-learned but also with new language exponents. The latter will include both the language related to the content, but also instructional language related both to general didactics and to the specific didactics of the content subject (Dalton-Puffer, Ch. 2007). The instructional language in a secondary school physics class will not be the same as that in a history class, for example. In general, although the physics or the history teacher may seek help from language experts, including fellow teachers, these challenges tend to reside at the level of the individual teacher who aims to stimulate the learners to achieve the double goals. This is the familiar environment in which content and language integrated learning or CLIL is realized.

The concept of language(s) used across the curriculum emphasising the role of language in subject-matter learning should become an integral part of a framework of reference for languages of school education in Europe. In consequence, special attention will be drawn to the experiences with bilingual education and CLIL where a second (or third) system of communication is being developed by the learner through the use of a language other than his/her 'mother' tongue for subject-matter instruction, thinking and learning respectively. The importance of CLIL lies in the fact that it is based on an integrative, supportive approach stressing the cognitively guiding role language plays in all mental activities such as discourse comprehension and production, as well as when negotiating about concepts, context and meaning. The CLIL approach is extending the range of goals for language learning beyond the development of what Cummins (1978, 1979) called Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), as may often be the case in the domain of FL – towards the development of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), a tool for successful lifelong education. This academic language competence plays an important role extending the basis which has been laid through mother tongue acquisition and education (or second language acquisition and education for immigrant children) and enabling learners to participate in different discourse communities and their conventions, professional or social in nature. Indeed, it appears that integrating language development and content mediation is what good quality education generally is all about – the interest in CLIL is to grow.

Nowadays with all the facilities available at school there is no pretext to ignore the opportunities for facilitating integration of subject – matter and language learning. CLIL has been

around for quite a long time to generate a wide range of modes that can suit any educational needs and circumstances. Within the framework of immersion education CLIL stands out as one of the most efficient methodology and therefore deserves closer attention of those who want to boost school education.

Educational authorities of any European country can learn the available experience and apply CLIL as part of mainstream school education taking into consideration certain peculiarities of its educational needs.

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В статье рассматривается понятие «интегрированное изучение содержания и языка», которое уже стало привычным явлением в странах Европейского Союза и используется для характеристики учебного процесса, когда учебные предметы изучаются на иностранном языке.

Ключевые слова: содержание обучения, комплексное изучение языка, интегративный подход, языковая компетенция, высшее образование.

У статті розглядається поняття «Інтегроване вивчення змісту та мови», яке є вже звичним явищем у країнах Європейського Союзу і використовується для характеристики навчального процесу коли навчальні предмети вивчаються іноземною мовою.

Ключові слова: зміст навчання, комплексне вивчення мови, інтегративний підхід, мовна компетенція, вища освіта.

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