2016 Training on CLIL Methodology
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FINAL REPORT
by
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Summary

1. Why CLIL? To learn in a more natural and stimulating way (2),(7), (8)
2. Awareness of the language and self-confidence (1)
3. Integration from beginning to end (3)
4. Cooperation at different levels: 1 between teachers, 2 between students and 3 between teacher and students (4) (9)
    1. L2 teacher and subject teacher sharing planning and strategies
    2. The active role of the students' groups and their motivation
    3. Tutoring, students' feedback, teacher's feedback
    4. My experience
5. Using different techniques to activate multiple intelligences (5)
6. More accuracy and time needed in the input phase (6)
7. Using ICT for CLIL (10)

Why CLIL?

As I learnt during my CLIL training courses, CLIL's goal is twofold: progress must be achieved both in English and in the subject taught in English.

CLIL is an acronym created by David Marsh in 1994. He thinks that CLIL is as an umbrella term to define a methodology inspired by over a dozen educational approaches (eg. immersion, bilingual education, multilingual education, language showers enriched language programmes, and others). His definition clearly shows that CLIL is a multifaceted, flexible methodology.

Doing CLIL means to experiment innovative strategies based on modern concepts like *learning by doing, cooperative learning*, *learning by errors and task-based teaching,* in which tasks have all the characteristics of real situations (8). Linking activities to reality and placing the students at the centre of the learning process increases students' motivation and lessons effectiveness. (7). This and other innovative approaches can be combined in CLIL to offer a more natural and stimulating way of teaching (and learning) foreign languages.(2) (8).

Awareness of the language and self-confidence

The first thing that I learned in my CLIL methodology course was that the teacher must pay very strong attention to different aspects of the language. Understanding the nature of lexis and the meta-linguistic processes that produce lexical awareness is very important in order to use the language properly when teaching a non-linguistic subject in English.

Teachers should be aware of homophones (a word that is pronounced the same as another word but has a different meaning), grammatical function (some words can be either a noun, verb, adjective or adverb) and polysemy (words can have different meanings in different contexts)

A CLIL teacher often needs to rephrase a text that was originally written for English (or another L2) native students, in order to make it suitable to a CLIL audience. In this context, it is important to be aware of the text structure, for example the presence of metaphors, which the students may find challenging. The teacher can decide to eliminate the metaphors and reformulate the text with a different organisation of the phrase or to help the students reformulate the text themselves, "unpacking" grammatical metaphors. This can be done for example by asking them questions like: who did what? How did this happen? What did this lead to?

In my opinion, based on my professional experience, meta-linguistic awareness can strengthen the teacher's self-confidence during CLIL lessons, especially when students interact in English and are free to ask questions about how to express themselves properly.

Integration from beginning to end

Since CLIL's goal is twofold and progress must be achieved both in English and in the subject taught in English(3), integration of language and content is key at any stage of the CLIL teaching/learning process, from the initial planning, to the final evaluation (2.2). This is why cooperation between the L2 teacher and the subject teacher is essential to give the best possible results, as long as both teachers have an understanding of the CLIL methodology.

In the planning phase, an even distribution between language content and the subject-matter taught in L2 should be defined. Cooperation is needed to choose strategies and to define the evaluation criteria and scoring methodologies. Such cooperation implies an intense exchange of information between the teachers involved and provides a common ground for the preparation of integrated teaching activities. In doing this, we should always keep CLIL's purposes in mind, namely: to improve the knowledge of the subject, increase the exposure to L2 (and one that is applied to subject content) and to increase motivation by creating authentic context.

Cooperation at different levels

While cooperation between teachers is crucial in CLIL, there is also a strong need for true interaction in L2 between the students, which is why cooperative learning is so useful in CLIL lessons.

The teamwork needed to accomplish the tasks assigned to the students provides an opportunity for them to share ideas and opinions, while interacting in L2 in order to achieve a specific purpose.

By acting in a team, students can develop better social and meta-cognitive abilities, and feel more confident in taking group decisions. Anxiety is reduced and more responsibility can be taken (4). Students' motivations strengthened, because they have a very active role while usually, in a traditional frontal lesson, they are passive. Working in a team or in pairs can

contribute to creating a natural environment in which students can learn to speak the language by accomplishing a task.

Although cooperative learning allows a good level of interaction and produces synergies, it needs specific strategies in order to be effective. There are different types of cooperative learning techniques illustrated by various theories. Following Johnson and Johnson(4) theories I often use a formal type of cooperative learning, assigning specific roles and rules to the students in the group and ensuring tutoring. I use this type of formal cooperative learning especially for problem-solving tasks requiring reflection and discussion in the group.

Sometimes during the input stage, I also use informal cooperative learning, interrupting the power point presentation for 10 minutes and encouraging pear discussions in this time. After that, a class sharing stage will follow, with students' contribution to the lesson. Then the input presentation will continue.

During team work activities the teacher should be able to create a non-judgmental cooperative environment in the classroom, giving up the old role of providing solutions, correcting mistakes and marking students' work. The teacher's role is however very important, as he/she has to achieve certain results by implementing a tutoring methodology.

When adopting tutoring strategies in my teaching practice, I've realised that special attention must be paid to psychological aspects as well. The teacher should avoid correcting language mistakes frequently during the activities. It's better to explain mistakes at the end of the teamwork for the task. Following the approach of learning by errors, and presenting corrections as an opportunity for the whole group to grow, the tutor can maintain a serene atmosphere. Otherwise students could restrain themselves and become inhibited, and interaction would be compromised.
The tutor should encourage the participation of all group members in L2 and facilitate interaction by suggesting questions to stimulate brain storming, critical thinking, metacognition and selection of alternative strategies. Giving positive feedback encourages students to continue the interaction. Asking students feedback at the end of a task can also be useful to adjust teaching strategies.

Using different techniques to activate multiple intelligences

H. Garner's theory of multiple intelligences is based on the notion that intelligence is not monolithic, but rather multifaceted (5).
Each student has a different combination of different types of intelligence and this is why the use of different types of pedagogical stimuli is so important.
So for example, a task could be presented as a filling-the-gap exercise, a crossword, a mutual dictation, a mingling activity involving motion (kinetic type of task). (6)

Using ICT for CLIL

In consideration of all these factors, one can easily understand the importance of using ICT tools in CLIL. One way to increase the exposure to L2, for example, is by using platforms to share videos, texts, images, and various materials selected by the teacher and proposed to the students as assignments to do at home (10.2). In this way, more time is available in the classroom for interaction, group activities and tutored, authentic tasks (10.1). This *flipped classroom* approach is truly motivating and can reinforce students' production skills (speaking and writing), while in a traditional frontal lesson mainly listening skills are required. The

students can still practice their more passive skills (listening and reading) at home, while improving their active ones (speaking and writing) in a flipped classroom environment, by achieving specific tasks in a more active way. Besides platform, CLIL lessons can be implemented using many other digital tools like Wikis, Social Networks, Quest base, various Web applications (10.3)

More accuracy and time needed in the input phase

Not surprisingly, the input phase in a CLIL lesson takes longer than usual: diagrams, tables, charts, lists of words, drawings are used to provide some tools and scaffolding (6) opportunities to students in the L2 learning process. More time is also required because of repetition, a CLIL strategy used to build student's self-confidence and motivation. Repetition consists in presenting the same concept and/or L2 vocabulary in different ways, for example by proposing more than one task on them (9). Repetition is used by the teacher to define a word implicitly, by using it in various sentences and contexts in a natural way. The learning process is therefore more similar to that of L2 native children, who do not need to look up a dictionary and translate a new word. Text adaptation is also time-consuming.

However, the extra time needed in the input stage is an investment that will speed up and deepen the teaching-learning process later on, once students understand the non-judgemental, cooperative, tutoring approach and move with confidence in the CLIL environment created by the teacher.

Silvia Nitti,   Certosa di Pavia, 27/8/2016

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