

The Use of CLIL Activities in Teaching English

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Abstract: This article is devoted to content and language integrated learning and the activities which is very useful to use in English classes. CLIL helps students discover and develop multiple skills, to improve their communication skills.

Key words: methodology, language skills, information, method, language, subject, term, knowledge

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is a way for learning content through an additional language or language through some specific content, thus teaching the subject via the language. This term was adopted in 1994. In English language teaching, various forms of CLIL have previously been known as 'bilingual education', 'English across the curriculum' and 'content-based instruction'. CLIL refers to teaching subjects such as Science, History, Geography, Art and Craft, Music, Physical Education and English Literature to students through a foreign language. This can be achieved either by the English teacher using cross-curricular content or by the subject teacher using English as the language of instruction. Both methods result in the simultaneous learning of content and of language.

CLIL is subject teaching through a foreign language. This is entirely subject-led and the subject dictates what language support is needed. The language is one part of the process, rather than an end in itself. It is assessed on subject knowledge. It may be taught by a subject teacher, or a foreign language teacher. In some cases it is taught by both teachers, which is an ideal scenario, though as this is a resource-heavy option it is less common. Marsh suggests that CLIL can offer learners of any age a natural situation for language development and it can boost a learners' motivation.

There is a fundamental difference in the use of language between the language class and the content class. In the language class the four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) are part of the end product and are also a tool for introducing new language and practicing and checking linguistic knowledge. In the content classroom the four skills are a means of learning new information and displaying an understanding of the subject being taught. So the language is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, and the structure and style of the language is often less colloquial and more complex.

CLIL takes place in a number of different teaching situations. It may be more useful to think of it as being on a continuum from total to partial immersion. More usually, some subjects are taught through a foreign language some of the time. What seems to be universal is that the practice of teaching a subject through another language is becoming more and more common, and this inevitably leads to yet another challenge for a number of teachers. Unfortunately the push for CLIL has been faster than the training for the teachers who are required to deliver it.

Many subject and language teachers find themselves having to teach a subject through English without the support or training they need.

There are two different types of teachers involved in CLIL, who have very different needs the expertise of the language teacher may not be shared by the content teacher and vice versa.

Subject teachers -have to teach their subject through English. These teachers know the subject matter but may lack experience and confidence in two particular areas:

- their own command of the language may naturally be limited. They are not used to giving input through another language, or to helping their students with the language. This certainly affects their confidence as well as their ability;
- as subject teachers they may not have the armory of interactive activities that language teachers need. Language learning is by its very nature dependent on interactive communication. When teaching a subject in the mother tongue, the need for repetition, checking of understanding, and active learning is not as crucial as it is in language teaching.

There are a number of claims made for the advantages of CLIL, although it is difficult to substantiate them. One is that it can develop foreign language ability more effectively than conventional foreign language teaching does. What it certainly can do is to prepare students for future study and the workplace where they are likely to need to operate in English.

In language teaching it is important to encourage and devote time to students producing the language rather than just learning about it in terms of its grammar and structure. This means that lessons are often highly interactive with students trying out various tasks in the new language. Language teachers are encouraged to reduce their talking time in order to allow for more student talking time. In subject teaching on the other hand it is important for students to take in and understand the curriculum. There may be a lot of facts and information for them to learn and the input may be highly complex. In order to cover the curriculum a teacher must devote more time to giving input and not necessarily allow so much time for the students to give output or to be interactive; in fact, there needs to be more teacher talking time. Subject teachers teaching through another language may have a language problem, so they need to use strategies which reduce the time spent addressing the class from the front.

In the same way, it is important for language teachers teaching a subject to use interactive activities which help the learners understand and engage their interest. If we teach a subject which students find difficult, boring or unappealing, and if on top of that, the students are being taught in a language they find difficult, then for them to learn anything is going to be a miracle. Our only hope is to make the lessons active and interesting, that is, the activities and processes must be appealing so as to counterbalance any negative aspects of the content and language. This book aims to address this need.

In conventional foreign language teaching, the key features are usually controlled input and practice of language points. In teaching a subject through a foreign language the methodology is different. As the subject dictates the language demands, we have to analyse the language demands of a given lesson and give the learners the language support which they need. Learners will need help in the areas of lexis, cognitive functions and study skills.

There is no reason to abandon the use of the mother tongue where it can be used as a support and learning tool. A good example would be group work in which students could discuss a problem or piece of information in their mother tongue as a route to achieving the given task in English. In reality a lot of codeswitching moving between the two languages—will take place and that is perfectly natural.

Learners need to develop communication skills for expressing ideas about subject content and to help learners work well together. They need to express and interpret functions (facts, data, thoughts, and feelings), both in writing as well as orally. Therefore, CLIL is aimed at STT (student talking time) and reduce TTT (teacher talking time). To develop meaningful communication the following strategies are used:

- brainstorming to start or finish a topic of study
- open questions
- discussions
- peer feedback
- group feedback
- share ideas with a partner before writing and after writing
- report back on research found on the Internet
- prepare poster or PowerPoint presentations
- role play or debates

The following activities are often used in English classes.

Odd one out. The teacher writes lists of related words and add to each list one word which is not related. The students should find the word which is not related to the given list. For example: retina, optic nerve, sacculus, iris

Two minutes to remember. The teacher writes the title of the text on the board. Discuss the title with the students. Write the key words from the text in any order on the board. Draw a box round each key word and leave enough space between the boxes to add the example words given in the text.

For example: Location, climate, human activity etc.

Guess the answer. The teacher writes or chooses a text from a book then writes a set of questions that are answered in the text. These could be the questions provided in the book.

Walk and swap. The teacher writes a definition for each leaving a gap for the key word. The learners should find the key word and complete the sentence.

For example: One way for artists to sell their work is to put on an.....

To sum up, CLIL is widely used in teaching foreign languages. CLIL helps students develop multiple skills and to improve their communication skills.

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