Pimp your questions: ten tips for CLIL

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From the editor

Little did I know that when I started CLIL magazine I would someday write this editorial. For the fourth time in two years I can proudly write about all of the articles published in this magazine, something which I am very proud of! Contributors, advertisers, and readers, thank you!

The overall theme in this issue is ‘thinking skills’, so you will find many pieces related to CLIL related articles on Gardner, Bloom, learning strategies and much more. Both regular contributors as well as new authors have contributed to this issue, allowing for a wide variety of opinions, ideas, and experiences. Take a report, for example, on comparing a Spanish text with an unknown language (to the students). Not to mention reading strategies, code-switching, effective questioning and the use of metacognition. I am very proud of the articles published in this magazine and want to thank all of the authors for their efforts.

You might have noticed the new logo on the cover. This is not just a fancy change, it is also the next step in the professional development of the magazine. With its publication becoming more regular, as opposed to its current sporadic nature. I’ve created a separate enterprise for the publication of the magazine, CLIL Media. This will allow for other CLIL related activities as well, like online courses. You can read more on this in the article below.

I hope you will enjoy this edition as much as I do, and remember: all feedback is welcome! You can reach me by going to the website and submitting a contact form or by signing up for the newsletter and sending me a mail through that system.

Have fun!

Patrick de Boer
Editor-in-Chief

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CLIL Courses Online

By the time this magazine is published, the online [free] webinar on the four C’s of CLIL and the application of this to your lesson will already have been broadcasted. However, if you are still interested to find out more, go to www.clilcoursesonline.com and have a look at this new website, of which I am very proud!

CLIL Magazine was something completely new when it started out and nothing like it has been published since, making it the only CLIL related magazine in the world. After two years of working with many CLIL experts worldwide, I thought about ways to connect CLIL teachers around the globe in a different way. The Internet seemed like a logical place to start, and soon I came up with the idea to start online courses.

Please visit www.clilcoursesonline.com and see for yourself if this is a fit for you!

Colophon

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Plan and sequence your questions, in

Here, then, are my top ten tips for effective

thinking equals more language production.

Put simply, getting learners to think more

integrating content and language learning?

CLIL, and what part does it play in terms of

cognition in this model. So why is cognition

be given equal status. This then contrib-

shared between teacher and learners,

then discussion becomes more equally

from lower to higher order thinking is

probing, or verbs such as "describe" and "explain".

Ensure too that questions are clearly

phrased and plan for the possible an-

swers that might be given (and how you

as the teacher could respond). And of course,

always expect the unexpected!

Top ten tips for effective questioning

Here, then, are my top ten tips for effective questioning in CLIL.

1. Plan the questions you are going to ask in advance.

Plan and sequence your questions, in terms of their difficulty and the kind of thinking required from your students. For example, if we use Bloom’s taxono-

my as a guide (see the illustration) ask an analyzing question after you ask re-

membering or understanding questions. On the other hand, you might like to ask an evaluating question to motivate your students to think about a topic when you introduce it: for example, “What do you think about genetic engineering?” to activate interest in Biology.

During a lesson, questions can be planned to move from LOTS (lower order thinking skills) to questions requiring HOTS (higher order thinking skills). Using questions so that a clear progression from lower to higher order thinking is supported will help learners to get deep-

er into a topic. This means that probing or follow-up questions are also prepared. Use “how, who, what, when, why, where” questions for this probing, or verbs such as “describe” and “explain”.

2. Ensure that open, or so-called ‘fat’ questions predominate in the CLIL classroom.

‘Skinny’ questions are closed questions that usually only require one to five word answers ("What’s the unit of force?"). Asking closed questions does not en-
courage learners to talk themselves. If you ask more open questions, (such as “Some people think we are not alone in the universe. What’s your opinion?”) then discussion becomes more equally shared between teacher and learners, and multiple ideas and viewpoints can be given equal status. This then contrib-
utes to another C from the ‘Four Cs’ of CLIL — culture — thus fostering a class-

room culture in which differences are respected.

3. Avoid asking ‘Guess what’s in my head’ questions.

‘Guess what’s in my head’ questions are questions phrased in a way that the student thinks that the teacher has a specific answer they are looking for: students may even think this is what you’re after even if it isn’t. This then lim-
its the students’ willingness to explore their own ideas and to produce more language in the process. Try to make it clear that it is their ideas that you want.

4. Give plenty of ‘wait time’ between ask-
ing questions and collecting responses.

‘Wait time’ is the time given between asking and collecting answers. Posing the question before learners respond, allows learners to focus on one question at a time also gives you as the teacher the chance to offer the specific language support needed: for example, speaking frames that help learners to sequence an explanation in the case of an understanding question or a frame with examples of how to make compar-
isons in the case of a compare and contrast question.

5. Ask one question at a time

Another pitfall to be aware of in a CLIL setting is asking several questions at once, and therefore not giving learners the opportunity to focus on a partic-
ular question and on developing the language they need for answering that question. For example, and to return to Bloom’s model above, the language needed to answer an understanding question is different from the language needed to tackle analytical thinking such as a compare and contrast prob-
lem. So allowing learners to focus on one question at a time also gives you as the teacher the chance to offer the specific language support needed: for example, speaking frames that help learners to sequence an explanation in the case of an understanding question or a frame with examples of how to make compar-
isons in the case of a compare and contrast question.

6. Use a ‘no hands-up’ approach.

Ask students to keep hands down and select the student to give an answer

to a question: that doesn’t give learners much time to think!2 No one can really think in such a short amount of time — you either know the answer or you don’t. So increasing wait time (to at least three seconds) can feel uncomfortable at first, but you and your learners will quickly get used to it. More importantly, the quality and length of answers will rapidly increase the more wait time is used. To save you feeling too uncomfort-
able with the silence in the classroom, you can use wait time to repeat and rephrase the question, which helps to ensure that everyone understands the question.

You can also give your learners the op-
portunity to rehearse the language for their answers. For example, ask them to write down their responses on a mini whiteboard or talk through their ideas with a partner or in a small group, before they respond. If learners have been given time to think and also time to discuss their ideas with a partner or in a small group the teacher can assume that ev-

erone in the class is ready to provide an answer. Posing the question before identifying someone for a response also creates a classroom culture in which ev-

erone knows they need to be prepared to answer every question, and thus en-
gaged at all times in the lesson.

1 For a description of the 4 Cs model see: http://clilingmesoftly.wordpress.com/clil-models-3-the-4-cs-model-docoye/

2 Read about Mary Budd Rowe’s research on wait time: http://www.sagepub.com/eis2study/articles/Budd%20Rowe.pdf

3 For an overview of Krashen’s work see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Input_hypothesis
or use mini whiteboards so that every learner has to offer a response. Aim to establish a climate in the classroom in which not knowing an answer is not acceptable: having this as a classroom ‘rule’ will encourage everyone to be involved in the lesson. So if someone cannot come up with a response offer them additional thinking time and then come back to them for a response later, or as a last resort offer suggestions and allow the student to select their answer (and then with prompts encourage them to justify that selection).

7. Don’t answer your own questions!
Only the learners answer the questions (and not the teacher). If learners know that a teacher typically always gives them the right answer eventually, then what is their incentive to think for themselves? Offer hints or prompts (and plan these) to guide students in their thinking.

8. Create a climate in which learners feel safe and become willing to take risks.
So encourage learners to give answers that still need more work (by emphasizing that it is not wrong, since that is not the point here). A safe atmosphere is also vital for language learning: Krashen has argued that when learners’ anxiety levels are high, or their ‘affective filter’ is raised, language learning simply does not happen.3

9. Acknowledge ‘off beam’ answers by always finding something positive... ...and not merely dismissing them. When students come up with something that is not quite there yet, a teacher can build confidence with prompts that help learners to self-correct and find a better answer. A teacher can aid this process by providing ‘thinking out loud’ examples of a reflection process that demonstrates increased awareness, clarification and critical thinking.

Putting into practice these tips for effective questioning in CLIL enables an approach to learning that foregrounds problem solving, critical thinking over the reproduction of knowledge, and learners’ ability to think for themselves rather than merely performing for the teacher’s benefit. As the Keith Trigwell quote at the top of this article suggests, we need to think of learning, and learning in a CLIL classroom, as the promotion of effective questioning. After all, what is the point of a question in a school classroom if the answer can be found with a quick Internet search?

So my tenth and final tip:
give learners opportunities to formulate their own questions!

With thanks to Rosie Tanner for feedback on an earlier version of this article.

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**Book Review: CLIL Activities by Liz Dale and Rosie Tanner**

The goal of CLIL Magazine is to provide its readers with tools for lesson development. Reviews on books about CLIL are therefore an addition to the magazine which perfectly adhere to this aim. Although CLIL Activities was last published by Cambridge University Press in 2012, it is still well worth being reviewed as the content can be used for many years to come.

The first time I heard of CLIL Activities was during a conversation I had with Rosie Tanner, one of the authors, as she talked about the book with a lot of enthusiasm and energy. I bought the book as soon as it was published, as I was sure it would live up to my expectations. Needless to say I was not disappointed.

The book is divided into three different parts: Background to CLIL, Subject pages and Practical activities. The lion’s share of the book consists of over 180 pages of activities that can be applied to any lesson. The different parts of the book are conveniently separated and allow for fast and accurate searches.

**Part 1: Background to CLIL**

Although the vast majority of the readers probably buy this book for the activities, information about CLIL itself is not something that should be disregarded. Written in easy-to-read, short paragraphs, the authors explain some basic concepts of CLIL and provide answers to common questions about CLIL. With practical tips and even a “how CLIL are you” test to check your own CLIL level, the authors try very hard to help out teachers that encounter challenges in their working with CLIL. Key terms such as scaffolding, assessment, BICS and CALP, and many others are explained and accompanied by practical lesson ideas.

**Part 2: Subject pages**

As CLIL is not subject specific, each subject teacher needs to understand how to work with CLIL in their own field of study, which can be challenging. Rosie Tanner is particularly proud of the subject pages, which discuss the most common speaking and writing goals as well as the learners CEFR level for language use for that specific subject. Four pages for all fields of study are provided, to make sure every teacher will be able to find something useful.

**Part 3: Practical Activities**

The main part of the book has over eighty activities categorized into different skill orientations like activating, writing, reading and assessment. Some of these can be found in other publications as well but the details provided for each activity make the activities in this book to be an easy-to-use recipe for every lesson. Each activity is accompanied by a short introduction which describes the CEFR level of the activity as well as the time it takes to do the activity in class. Variations are also provided, allowing for a more creative approach to applying the activities in class. Not only do the categories explain the core focus of the activity, they can also be quickly found and applied effectively.

**Conclusion**

CLIL Activities is a book written for every CLIL teacher and wants to provide them with practical ideas and background on CLIL. The authors succeeded in writing a book that not only reaches their own goals, but also functions as both a reference and a source of inspiration. Where other books on CLIL focus either on background information or certain ideas, CLIL Activities allows for professional development for every subject teacher through a practical approach and inspirational subject pages. A must read for every CLIL teacher!

Would you like to win a copy of “CLIL Activities” by Liz Dale and Rosie Tanner?

Go to www.clilmagazine.com and click on “win a book.”
Students’ perceptions of code-switching in Hungary and the Netherlands

By Janet Streeter

At CLIL 2013 at Ustron, in the snowy mountains of Poland, there were three workshops devoted to the phenomenon of code-switching and L1/L2 translanguaging. I was delighted that I was not alone in choosing this topic. I felt it was high time that such an important and inevitable aspect of CLIL was given closer attention, particularly with regard to practice in mainstream schools throughout Europe and in related academic literature.

Definitions

First of all it would be helpful to consider a couple of definitions. Linares, Morton and Whittaker (2012, p. 331) refer to code-switching as:

“The use of more than one language, or language varieties, in conversation. It usually refers to the ability to switch languages or dialects depending on the context or conversational partner.”

Marsh (2010) develop the definition in term of instruction through the vehicular language.

“Young people today have a global perspective on what is right and wrong, and this perspective determines their practice in multilingual contexts.” (Marsh, 2010, p.16)

Many academics now seem to prefer the term translanguaging and Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010) develop the definition in direct relation to CLIL, when they refer to “partial instruction through the vehicular language”

“Translanguaging refers to a systematic shift from one language to another for specific reasons.” (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010, p.16)

L1 and/or L2

As a Dutch TTO teacher, you could ask – “What’s all the fuss about? The students are meant to speak English (i.e. the target language or L2) all the time.” I agree, but we all know that it is not always as easy as that and many academics in the field of Bilingual Education and Modern Languages teaching are vehemently opposed to the exclusion of the mother tongue (L1) from the classroom (Cummins, 2007). At the risk of undermining the whole TTO language policy (!) it is probably wise in this article if I adhere to the “one size does not fit all” approach to CLIL methodology [Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010, p.14]. Indeed, European teachers’ attitudes to switching languages in the CLIL classroom seem usually to be based on factors such as local perceptions of best practice, their own language ability and that of their students, local language teaching traditions, school policy and anecdotal evidence. On our travels throughout the Netherlands, my colleagues and I have worked in many schools where target language use is embedded in TTO departments and the students are achieving very high levels of proficiency and academic work. We have also visited other schools where teachers find it more difficult to keep the students in English, particularly in pair and group work. As language use and support is part and parcel of our CLIL training courses, I decided to examine code-switching a little more closely and my starting point was the students themselves.

The study

I embarked upon a very small-scale preliminary study of data collected from teenagers in two bilingual Secondary schools – one in Hungary and one in the Netherlands. When observing lessons in these schools I had begun to question whether some of the code-switching that I was witnessing in class was actually enhancing students’ learning.

Apart from beginning with the same letter of the alphabet, Hungary and Holland have quite a lot in common when it comes to CLIL. They are both countries where competence and fluency in English has high social and economic status. Consequently, parents are key stakeholders. English is a way of students not only broadening their minds, but also securing a better future for themselves with more opportunities in an increasingly globalised world. The languages of these two countries are not widely spoken elsewhere. CLIL is embedded in both mainstream education systems.

I conducted interviews with 12 students in total, but for more accurate comparison I looked at the perceptions of 8 students of the same age (14 years old) and in top set classes. The four Hungarian students were in their 7th year of learning all their subjects in two languages. In this private institution, with Hungarian and English native speakers teaching in tandem, ad hoc, unmarked code-switching is allowed in every year group. Translanguaging occurs automatically when the two teachers swap over during the lesson. The only rule is that the students must speak English with the English teacher. However, in English classes they are expected to use English all the time. The 4 Dutch students were in their 3rd year of learning all their subjects in English. Speaking Dutch in CLIL classes is officially not allowed as part of national TTO policy. Both sets of interviewees were high calibre students with very good levels of English, although their spoken fluency varied.

All students were interviewed face to face and responded to the following key questions: 1. When do you speak Dutch/Hungarian (L1) in class? 2. When do you speak English (L2)? 3. What are the rules about use of English in your lessons? Student perceptions of their own L1/L2 use

It is interesting to explore what the students had in common:

Firstly, they all said that they generally used the L1 to a greater or lesser extent in group work. This corresponds to several research findings in the literature (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, p.203; Gil, Garau and Noguera, 2012, p.141). They also said that they would switch to the L2 if a teacher approached, particularly if they were to receive a grade for using the language. Both sets of students spoke of using the L1 in order to
seek explanations from their peers and one student said that she strategically placed herself in the classroom to do this. In both countries, the boys were perceived by the girls as using the L1 when bored or misbehaving in class.

Some students referred to the L1 as being “more natural”, “easier” and less “weird” when used in peer conversations. This correlates with the view of Chavez (2003, p.194-195) cited in Gil et al (2012) that the L2 needs to be used naturally, in genuine situations. The study group was clearly not a group of English as a Second language, immigrant students in danger of being marginalised by society (Cummins 2007, p.15), where allowing or encouraging use of the L1 is a way of valuing their input and ethnicity. However, this finding does raise questions about teenage peer pressure and the need to maintain a safe, but at the same time motivating learning environment with genuine opportunities for purposeful L2 use. Certainly there was no sign of anxiety (Levine, 2003) because both sets of students spoke of the ease with which they now use the L2 after their respective periods of CLIL study. This was perhaps so much the case that they seemed unaware of the purpose of increasing their use of the L2 at this stage. They were clearly able to communicate at will and seemed to have reached a linguistic plateau, at least in terms of their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 2008). This does, however, raise the question as to whether they could be challenged further to develop their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008), thereby giving them a purpose to use the L2 more effectively. This lack of language awareness certainly meant that in some cases, their perceived L1/L2 choices had less to do with the linguistic and cognitive reasons for code-switching favoured by researchers (Kouti, 2012), and more to do with the social environment of the classroom.

Notwithstanding, the girls in both countries expressed the need to know vocabulary in both the L1 and the L2 and talked about their classroom practice. In all cases, they spoke English regularly. However, the Hungarians wanted to speak more L2 in the bilingual classroom (Gil, Garau, Noguera, 2012, p.141). When asked about L1/L2 “rules” the Dutch students implied that they used the L1 as much as they could get away with i.e. L1/L2 use depended on the teacher and his/her classroom management.

Questions raised

In summary, the students’ answers to the three questions were mostly related to the social environment of the classroom and the way it is managed. This is to be expected — after all, these fourteen year olds are not experts in socio-linguistics – and one of the questions focused on “rules”. Yet the findings raise several interesting questions about L1/L2 alternation:

- What research findings and “essential best practice” (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010, p.1) with regard to code-switching and translanguaging are applicable and useful to CLIL in European mainstream classrooms?
- By allowing ad hoc code-switching among our CLIL students, either intentionally or due to lack of teacher awareness, do we run the risk of some of them using the L1 for the wrong reasons, not being sufficiently challenged linguistically, and not achieving their full potential?
- What are the exact implications of this for classroom practice? Should we, as CLIL teachers, be more strategic with respect to code-switching and translanguaging? If so, how?

The aim of my workshop at Ustron was to present the above findings to CLIL academics and practitioners and also launch a discussion about L1/L2 use in the CLIL classroom. This certainly happened. The reactions of workshop attendees, an analysis of relevant scholarly works and my conclusions with regard to the three questions above are presented in a more formal, academic paper (for more information please contact: info@cumbriacil.com). In the meantime, I hope this article will provide a springboard for discussion about L1/L2 use and the practical implications for classroom practice and school policy. I would like to thank all those who attended my workshop and helped me to further my thinking on code-switching. I would also encourage you to attend CLIL 2014 in Venice 28-30 August, where it will certainly be hotter than Poland last year (and that could be just the debates!)

Please excuse this lack of political correctness for the purpose of alliteration.

References


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Teaching in English: Lost on a Mission

By Marjorie Castermans and Jennifer Valcke, Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)

Teaching through a foreign language has been described as a new paradigm shift in (language) education – centered on fostering student competence in a second or foreign language, while developing knowledge of a particular subject matter. This approach is widely used in a large number of contexts and educational settings all over Europe and the world. Implementing programmes through a foreign language requires much more than simply promoting a foreign language education policy or counting on the goodwill of the teaching staff. How should institutions deal with this change in educational context? What should teachers expect? What type of support should be put in place to support students and teachers? Let’s take a look at what is going on in Europe, and particularly, the pedagogical and linguistic support programme set up at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in Belgium.

1) English-Medium Instruction in Europe

For decades now, English has been used as the language of international professional life in virtually all fields; however, only recently has it become the most widespread instructional language in higher education (Wilkinson 2004). The rapid implementation of English-medium instruction programmes across Europe, particularly in universities, is an essential need to attract international students, foster teacher and student mobility and adapt Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to the new demands of the labour market. It is clear that if European citizens are to reap the benefits of an integrated Europe and be more competitive in the global arena, the EU’s goal of multilingualism is a necessity. According to the study carried out by the Institute of International Education in 2012, countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Nordic countries offer foreign-language instruction and enhance your institution’s profile.

2) Content and Language Integrated Learning vs. English-Medium Instruction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) differs from English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in that it aims at developing competence in the content, as well as in the language. The principles underlying CLIL extend that language is used to learn and communicate and thus plays an essential role in content learning. This basic assumption impacts the teaching methodology adopted in the classroom since the objective is not solely to teach in another language, but also to draw attention to the language itself (Couje, Hood & Marsh 2010). In order to implement this new perspective on content and language learning, methodological changes must be operated. These new practices consist mainly in a communicative approach to teaching and learning, offering students every opportunity to practise and improve their language skills. This approach should therefore favour student-centered and task-based approaches in order to allow learners to be actively engaged in learning.

3) Challenges for Students

With CLIL and its dual focus on language and content, students can put the language they are learning into practice instantaneously – a powerful motivational factor – and in institutions can avoid overloading an already-crowded curriculum; provided, of course, students have already attained a certain threshold in the foreign language. This is why the language centre of the ULB offers language courses to all students at the Bachelor’s level across disciplines. The major goal of the content-linked language courses offered over the Bachelor cycle is to equip students with the necessary academic literacy skills across the curriculum and the genre knowledge necessary for them to succeed academically, as well as enable them to follow Master’s courses. An already-crowded curriculum – and rate of speech – whether too fast or too slow – had a negative impact on how well they understood the content. They explained that they were unable to concentrate both on understanding mispronounced words and on understanding new content, while taking notes. They reported that being exposed to poor pronunciation meant they could not model their foreign language adequately. Students also favoured interactive activities over more classical teacher-fronted lectures as they noticed they learned language and content more effectively. Although some students were initially reluctant to follow their courses in a language they did not master, they rose to the challenge and felt more motivated.

4) Challenges for Teachers

If students are confronted with numerous challenges, so are teachers and pronunciators – enunciation, stress, intonation – and rate of speech – whether too fast or too slow – had a negative impact on how well they understood the content. They explained that they were unable to concentrate both on understanding mispronounced words and on understanding new content, while taking notes. They reported that being exposed to poor pronunciation meant they could not model their foreign language adequately. Students also favoured interactive activities over more classical teacher-fronted lectures as they noticed they learned language and content more effectively. Although some students were initially reluctant to follow their courses in a language they did not master, they rose to the challenge and felt more motivated.

5) CLIL: A Paradigm Shift in Education?

There are a number of risks reported in implementing CLIL at university, which could possibly lead to an impoverishment of the quality of learning unless certain guidelines are followed. This is in part due to the fact that language specialists in HE have generally not been included in decision-making, planning and implementation of CLIL programmes. CLIL is an educational approach whose success fundamentally depends on careful methodological planning, should this not be taken into account the quality of teaching and learning may suffer. In line with this, HEIs have the responsibility to train their content teachers in methodology alongside language. Furthermore, there is a clear role for collaboration between content and language teachers in order to maximise the overall quality of English-medium instruction. It is clear that the risks associated with an insufficiently planned application of CLIL programmes at university level and ensuing poor practice will undeniably lead to a decrease in the quality of both teaching and learning. In developing specific institutional language policies, HEIs must invest in training their teaching staff both pedagogically and linguistically, as well as ensure their students receive adequate and tailored language support. In turn, this will foster innovation and best practice in the field of foreign-language instruction and enhance your institution’s profile.

For more information about the pedagogical and linguistic support programme of the Université libre de Bruxelles, please go to the website: http://clil.ulb.ac.be.

References


CLIL Magazine
Handy Hand outs!

By Brian Dixon

“Is mathematics developing its CLIL component as effectively as other subjects?”. This is a question that I have asked myself on occasions in my role as coordinator of the mathematics bilingual network here in the Netherlands. If I read this magazine, then I have to be much encouraged that the answer is ‘Yes!’ It has been great to find thought provoking maths related articles in every edition. Keep up the good work!

In the bilingual maths classes at Cals College we had a very classically orientated strategy, where ‘teaching’ and ‘teacher output’ were pretty dominant. We have been trying to move towards ‘pupil output’, but in a form that “de leerlingen aan het denken zet” (makes the students think), as my former head teacher in the ABC formula, the handout we use is “...”.

Using these two principles, we have made significant strides to restructure our lessons.

1) A “question orientated approach” was the first step: Do I need to answer the question posed by a pupil, or should I ask a question that leads the pupil to the answer? Do I need to explain the next block of theory, or is there a better way for the pupils to tackle the work?

2) Use of [semi filled] hand outs:

Initially we gave handouts on a variety of topics. The objective being to ease understanding, focus attention on the essence of the material and give an overview. As time has gone on we have learned to leave gaps in these summaries, for the pupils to fill in. We find this a more effective way of providing a summary of the content, yet asking the pupils to apply their [language] skills. In the CLIL textbooks, I gather that they call this “scaffolding”. Some examples:

a) English: I used to give a fully filled in version of “how to draw the perfect graph” to my first year students. Now the pupils get the same text, but with gaps in it. They fill in the gaps [first on their own, then check it together] as a summary for the chapter.

b) Integration of different chapters: We use ‘Cut & Paste’ activities so that the pupils create an overview of the principle relationships that they learn in year 2 [and again in year 3]. Knowledge of all the relationships is then tested as part of major tests.

c) An overview: For instance, dealing with all the ways of solving quadratic equations. Here we leave out the parts that the pupils most often forget, and then we fill them in together.

d) New procedures: When dealing with the ABC formula, the handout we use is clear enough that the pupils can work out together how to calculate the discriminant. They express their thought process [output]. I give hints and structure.

This system also has two other benefits. Firstly, the format of the hand out makes it quite clear how we want their calculations always to be written. Secondly, we ask the pupils to provide a sketch after each calculation, that they can visualise what they are doing. Since we have checked that this procedure is properly understood and written, then we turn over the page and let them work on the full ABC formula.

Most of the pupils keep these hand outs in a plastic file. If a pupil is stuck, then I can ask them to find the relevant hand out. This can be enough to help them on their way.

And do you know, the pupils often use the summaries to explain to each other! At such moments I feel that I am really providing good CLIL education. Boy, do I enjoy that!

The ABC formula (the quadratic formula)

when factorising does not work!!!!

a) Always a trinomial in the form: \[ ax^2 + bx + c = 0 \]

b) Two calculations:

1) The discriminant: Tells us if the function intersects/touches/misses the horizontal axis. Intersect: \( D > 0 \), Touch: \( D = 0 \), Misses: \( D < 0 \)

2) What values of \( x \) intersect/touch? (see overleaf)

3) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>[ \frac{1}{2}x^2 + 2x + \frac{1}{2} = 0 ]</th>
<th>[ \frac{1}{2}x^2 + 2x + 3 = 0 ]</th>
<th>[ \frac{1}{2}x^2 + 2x + 2 = 0 ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( a = \ldots, ; b = \ldots, ; c = \ldots )</td>
<td>( a = \ldots, ; b = \ldots, ; c = \ldots )</td>
<td>( a = \ldots, ; b = \ldots, ; c = \ldots )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( D = b^2 - 4ac )</td>
<td>( x^2 + 2x = 10 )</td>
<td>( -3x^2 + 12x = -36 )</td>
<td>( -8x^2 = 16x - 8 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketch: [intersect/touch/miss]</td>
<td>[ 3x^2 + 4 = 7x ]</td>
<td>[ 11 - 9x + 2x^2 = 0 ]</td>
<td>[ -12x - 3x^2 - 36 = 0 ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The steps for drawing a perfect graph

1) Pencil, ruler, rubber.
2) Lots of space in your book.
3) Horizontal and vertical axes about 10 cm long.
4) Beha!!!!!! – (Bovenstrij in de tabel is de Horizontale As):
   so the top row of the table goes on the horizontal axis.
5) Name the axes.
6) Number the axes using regular steps, but
   a. Horizontal axis: start with the lowest number in the table (ie the top left number).
   b. Vertical axis: start from zero using increasing numbers.
   c. Always: Write on the lines.
Now you have your “coordinate system”, then:
7) Plot the points shown in the table [remember Beha!!!!!!]
8) Connect the points with a smooth line.
   Now you have your “graph”.

When the axes are named “x” and “y”:
Then the intersection point of the two axes is called the origin. This is marked with a big “0” in the bottom left of the intersection point. Never a zigzag.

Zig-zag
This can only be used on the vertical axis. Why? The vertical axis must always start at zero. If there are only large numbers in the graph, then the zig-zag shows that the jump from zero to the new scale.

### Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>$2x^2 + 5x + 2 = 0$</th>
<th>$-x^2 - 4x + 12 = 0$</th>
<th>$x^2 + 6 + 3 = 0$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$a = \ldots, b = \ldots, c = \ldots$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$D = b^2 - 4ac$

$x_1 = \frac{-b + \sqrt{D}}{2a}$

$x_2 = \frac{-b - \sqrt{D}}{2a}$

Conclusion

$x = \ldots$, or
$x = \ldots$

Sketch:

Table completed?.................then complete question 11 in exactly the same way. When this is done you will have a good knowledge of the ABC formula. Good work!

### Conclusion

$x = \ldots$, or
$x = \ldots$

When the axes are named “x” and “y”:
Then the $i............$ point of the two $a........$ is called the $o........$. This is marked with a big “0” in the bottom left of the intersection point. Never use a zigzag when you have x & y.

Zig-zag
This can only be used on the $v........$ axis. Why? The vertical axis must always start at zero. If there are only large numbers in the graph, then the zig-zag shows that the jump from zero to the new scale.

Brian Dixon is a bilingual maths teacher and chairman of the lower school bilingual team at Cals College, Nieuwegein. He is also subject leader for mathematics for the (Europees Platform) bilingual network and is responsible for their bilingual mathematics seminars.
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Metacognition in CLIL

By dr. Mandi Berry

You are about to read this article about metacognition in CLIL. How are you going to read it? Will you skim the subtitles and decide if it’s interesting enough to read? Or are you drawn to the main title for some reason? Are you someone who reads every word in an article to improve your English? Or do you go straight to something in particular? Maybe you looked for a diagram or summary to quickly get the main points?

Three types of metacognition

Each of the above questions is concerned with your metacognition, that is your thinking skills and processes and how you are able to regulate them. Metacognition includes the extent to which you are aware of your own thinking, how much control you have over your thinking and your capacity to evaluate your own thinking. For example, stopping to ask yourself before you read, ‘what am I about to read? Why am I reading this?’ shows your awareness about your thinking. Deciding whether you need to read all of the text or just some parts of it, shows your ability to control your thinking. Working out which strategy will be most useful for you as a reader shows how you evaluate your thinking. There are many different types of metacognitive skills and strategies, but in this article I will deal with three broad categories and relate them to the CLIL classroom: awareness, control, and evaluation.

Effective learners

Effective learners know about and are aware of how they think. They are able to recognise which kinds of thinking strategies are most helpful for finding out and organising what they need to know and remember to use them in particular situations. Interestingly, even though we know that improving metacognition helps improve learning, we don’t seem to give it much explicit attention in schools. At the same time, we know that many learners do not understand or control their thinking processes very well. In CLIL classrooms the importance of cognition is already well recognised as one of the 4Cs, together with content, communication and culture. Metacognition adds another layer that asks us to focus not only on cognition but our ‘cognition about cognition’. This means that learners should be able to recognise how different kinds of learning approaches can be more or less helpful for them to gain the language they need to understand the content well.

Planning, monitoring and evaluating.

Let’s look a bit more at the three broad categories of metacognition.

Planning involves such strategies as analysing the task and the task requirements before starting. For example, asking questions such as: What is the purpose of this task? What sort of language do I need to complete the task? What do I want to achieve from this task? How much time and energy should I spend on it? What do I already know that can help me with this task?

Monitoring involves keeping track of thinking while doing the task. For example, asking questions such as: How do I feel this task is going? What is working well and what is not working so well? Am I making good progress? Are there any changes I need to make to what I am doing? Am I meeting my goals?

Evaluating involves analysing the final product of the task, how efficiently the task was performed and the effectiveness of the strategies used. For example, questions such as, how well did I complete this task? What parts did I do well? Which parts can be improved? What will I do differently next time, and why?

In the CLIL classroom

So what would this look like in a CLIL classroom? Imagine a group presentation in a biology lesson about the ethics of organ donation. Students will investigate and present their ideas about the ethics of organ donation from the point of view of: a medical doctor, a medical lawyer, a research scientist, a member of a biomedical company that harvests pig organs for transplant, a member of the public and a minister of religion.

Planning: Students discuss in groups their ideas about the purpose of the task, the kinds of skills, knowledge and language they will need to complete it and what they expect to achieve from doing the task. They make a time line that shows the different tasks they each need to do and when they will do them. They make a group list of what they already know about this topic and what they need to know.

Monitoring: Students take time to discuss their progress at different points before the presentation. They ask each other whether they are on track with their time line, what is going well, and what sort of help they need to successfully complete the task. For example, knowing how to prepare for an oral presentation, or finding out the meaning of specialist scientific words.

Evaluating: Students can submit a learning report that documents their progress through the task—Did they achieve their goal? What would they change if they had to do this task again? What did they most enjoy? Find most difficult? Students could make a list of the different kinds of strategies they used and what that strategy was useful for, e.g., making a KWL chart (what you know, what you want to know and what you learned) was useful for getting organised, using a cue card was a good way to remember the main language points for a presentation.

Talking about learning maybe a new and strange experience for your students, so providing regular encouragement and support will be important, as well as showing you value this part of their work by including marks for good learning! Providing scaffolding is also necessary, for example, by showing students examples of graphic organisers and talking about how they are useful for planning, or how to make a time line, or recognising your own learning style and how that can help you know about your strengths and limitations as a learner. Finally, just like learning anything new, becoming more metacognitive requires effort and practice. Helping students to recognise that you can become a more successful learner if you are able to control your own learning more effectively is a great incentive!

So, what strategies did you use to help you in reading this article? Were they effective for you?
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Experiencing CLIL’s Effectiveness Through Teaching Aspects of a Non-Lingua Franca

By Ezana Habte-Gabr

A pedagogical methodology is effective when it succeeds in teaching what is completely unknown to the learner. When both language and content objectives are clear and synchronized, small-scale results are attainable as has been the case with a basic geography course taught in Amharic to native Spanish speakers at a Colombian University. CLIL’s expectations are often broad as they seek to attain a range of outcomes in both language and content areas, lending it at times to be questioned in terms of its effectiveness in obtaining these simultaneous results (Georgio, 2012). When the intention of a course is the delivery of a specific set of content such as the location and names of countries along with a set of language skills such as prepositions and adjectives, CLIL accomplishes these goals. Geography has often been selected as a CLIL course as the learner can readily apply a variety of intelligences such as visual and spatial, requiring simple language structures. (Kouti, 2012:69) Creativity and pedagogical options are enhanced through a geography CLIL course. (Cross, 2012) Daourda (2012) notes that “meaningful and contextualized” activities are fostered through online map activities, which was noticed in this lesson as students were presented with content which was a novelty.

The course sought to expose school teachers in the town of San Gil and its rural surroundings to approaches of curriculum integration in an EFL context; hence CLIL was chosen as a containing approach. Much of CLIL is undertaken in schools shifting towards bilingualism in Colombia (Rodriguez, 2011). The teachers who were part of this demonstration lesson would be exempt from this sphere given their EFL context, setting the stage for course teaching the rudiments of both, the content area, which in this case is locating countries in Africa, and language skills such as prepositions and adjectives.

Procedure

Students were shown a map of Africa which was labeled in Amharic. Next to the map was a table with a list of countries written in Spanish and Ge’ez script in the first. The second column had phrases stating the loca- tion of one country in relation to another. For example, “Chad is next to Niger” in both languages. The preposition ‘next to’ would be drilled in Amharic using other countries in the continent. Subsequently, other countries would be pointed out and the class would come up with sentences. As the script is non-Latin, students begin to associate the written names with colors and shapes of countries. Once students have mastered ‘next to’ other prepositions are drilled.

Writing in Ge’ez script is syllabic and students eventually begin to grasp the sounds represented by each letter as they are exposed to countries whose names have the same syllables. Libya (LIYYA) and Algeria (ALGERYA) for instance end with the sound ‘ya’ or ‘s’. Once exposed to the different letters on the maps, students could be exposed to the general alphabet system, resulting in the preposition lesson having a spin-off effect on the desire to learn more about the language.

Conclusions

Based on the fact that specific language and content goals can be simultaneously achieved in an unknown language shows that they are attainable in English which is much closer to Spanish. Furthermore, this lesson has shown that emphasis must be placed on synchronizing each content objective with a language one at beginning levels of language acquisition. Finally, teachers should be willing to accept the drift into broader cultural and linguistic issues as being part of this approaches’ success.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Unisangil, Bilingual Educational program for providing me the opportunity to incorporate this lesson in a teacher specialization course.

References


Ezana Habte-Gabr was born and raised in Ethiopia and has taught in Colombia for over a decade. His undergraduate and graduate degrees are in Geography from the University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa. He has taught English and Geography at primary, secondary and university levels.

CLIL Magazine

Amharic is very distant from Spanish except for the occasional word both languages may have derived from Arabic. Furthermore, students know very little about the African continent, setting the stage for course teaching the rudiments of both, the content area, which in this case is locating countries in Africa, and language skills such as prepositions and adjectives.

A more current map was unavailable online on the day of the class, providing a basis for a brief historical discussion of the continent.

This is the Amharic script which is from an ancient language called Ge‘ez which today is an ecclesiastic language, very much like Latin

http://mylanguages.org/amharic_write.php was used to generate Ge’ez script

[A map dating back to the 70s taken from Kelly Wickham’s website http://www.kellywickham.com/mochamomma/2012/12/30/2012-travel-part-ii.html with permission]
By Tanya Schadee & Janie McCloughin

How can students be helped with their L2 reading? Can teaching a particular reading strategy enhance reading levels? There are many models of reading based on component skills assumptions, any of which could be a source of reading problems, such as vocabulary knowledge, grammar knowledge, word recognition or motivation to read. For instance, the ability to skim and scan effectively is seen as an important part of the reading process, [Nuttall, 2005] and so we decided to concentrate on this particular activity, with special reference to teaching using CLIL techniques. Activation is regarded as crucial in CLIL to help learners make explicit in the target language both the ideas and the language they already know, so that they can make sense of new content as well as new language [Dale, L. van der Es, W., Tanner, R., 2010]. Moreover, Vygotsky [1978] tells us that scaffolding helps the learner move into new areas of development.

Good readers are skilled at judging what they need to get out of a text to accomplish their purpose, and can confidently skip or ignore parts of the text, whereas an inefficient reader will feel the need to read everything closely [Grellet, 1981]. Scanning and skimming are skills which are themselves composed of a varying number of techniques which can be explicitly explained to and practised by the learner, such as locating the topic sentence in a paragraph, looking for main ideas and ignoring detail, locating transition signals, [i.e. firstly, lastly] and learners can be expedited to understand that they need to practise these at speed. [Muet, 2000]. Hitherto, it has been believed that readers acquire a set of skills hierarchically formulated, which then allow them to decode a text. We now know that a reader is not a passive receiver of content, decoded in what Nunen [1991] described as a bottom-up view of reading. Using a top-down model, we put the reader more in the centre of the activity.

We noticed that many of our students did not read efficiently but set off in an unstructured manner. For instance, in a questionnaire, 24% did not read the title of the text, and 52% did not notice italicised or boldface words or phrases. We developed a lesson series in which these and other indicators of inefficient reading could be addressed, by offering a variety of assignments in which there was a clear scaffolded build up both in level of activity and length of texts. The lesson series began with games and activities such as asking students to make up titles for short passages from newspapers; guessing the titles of books from the blurbs; playing a vocabulary-based card game; and playing an online murder mystery game. Many of these were timed to keep up the pace and force the skimming and scanning and to provide a sense of competition. Small rewards also helped to inject a sense of fun. Gradually longer texts were introduced with a wide variety of activities and approaches; students were encouraged to predict, discuss, draw pictures, build on their reading with creative writing, create posters or collages; listen to rap and conduct a mini-debate. The input included authentic material such as newspaper articles, extracts from novels, a graphic short story, gangster rap and was chosen on the basis of connection or relevance to teenagers.

We were able to evaluate the impact of this lesson series using before and after Cito reading tests, and employing test and control groups. While we had hoped to show that the test group had improved dramatically, in fact both groups had similarly improved. Noticeably, however, the test group improved in the time it took them to complete the test - by ten minutes. What we take from this result is that such a lesson intervention can have the desired effect of improving reading efficiency.

Ideally this type of lesson series would form one part of an integrated reading programme, covering other aspects of the reading curriculum in the same style. We concentrated on skimming and scanning, but the same type of intervention would also work when focusing on, for example, vocabulary. It was noticed that the use of simple techniques, such as the use of rewards, and a timing element, gave students some much-needed motivation and altered their perception of their own abilities for the better. A carefully handled competitive element can improve the pace and atmosphere, and varied and scaffolded tasks can engender a feeling of ‘doing’ rather than ‘reading’ – a pursuit many students claim to dislike. One desirable outcome of such a reading programme would of course be to enable a student to become an efficient reader. This would only take place if a weak reader could break out of the vicious circle of frustration and enter the virtuous circle of the good reader. An efficient reader does not necessarily read for pleasure, and a weak reader almost certainly does not. Therefore an even more desirable goal would be to:

- create an interest in reading
- provide incentives for reading
- promote reading for enjoyment

To do this an integrated programme should be implemented throughout the school, in which there is a clearly defined progression from year one. Students could be given more autonomy to choose material which interests them, and more training in how to do this. Their own choices would be validated and respected, which would improve their self-confidence, and would increase their motivation to break out of a negative cycle if they are weak readers. An attitude of self-reflection on their reading and their own choices would improve their awareness of how they tackle the reading process, and bring to light what difficulties and problems they face. More varied and enjoyable activities would create a different climate of reading, and would inculcate a positive attitude.

References


Muet [2000] Study Skills for the Malaysian University English Test


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Janie McCloughin is a class teacher of English and Literature at Carmel College Emmen, with her focus on the development of bilingual excellence. Both are native speakers and particularly interested in the culture behind the language.
Fostering Students’ Autonomy in a CLIL Class

By María Pilar Nuñez Delgado & Pablo Marcelo Oliva Parera

Abstract
Autonomy seems to be inherent to our work in the L2 classroom. It is customary for course designers and instructors to describe objectives and plan activities to foster autonomy in their classes. Therefore, there must be ways to evaluate it. This article attempts to describe an innovative way to measure autonomy through the analysis of students’ metacognitive knowledge when analyzing their own work. During this experience, students’ answers were categorized into three levels that showed different degrees of control. The participants were university students enrolled in a CLIL Spanish class. The contributions of this study include pedagogical implications related to the content studied in class as well as insight on the instructor’s role in the L2 classroom.

Introduction
We, as teachers, often look for ways to motivate and foster autonomy. We often relate to students’ successes by the level of autonomy that they exhibit. Throughout our careers, we have often wondered about ways to maximize our students’ autonomy, especially because as L2 instructors, we are constantly reminded to purport and develop it when writing the syllabus for a new course or to delineate the objectives for our classes. [Council of Europe 2001, Benson 2010]. David Little acknowledges [2009] three important points related to autonomy in the L2 classroom. The first one has to do with involving the students by creating meaningful situations where they can participate and justify their own decisions. The second has to do with students’ reflection on their own performance and decisions they make along the way as to what they are learning in class. The third objective pertains to the proper use of the target language as students learn to express themselves.

In the last decade, we have witnessed how reflection has made its way into the L2 classroom, especially in activities where students have to self-rate their own performance when reading, speaking, etc. [Núñez Delgado et al. 2011, Sinclar 1999]. The term reflection has also often been associated with autonomy as well as motivation in second language acquisition [SLA] [Romero Lopez et al. 2011]. Therefore, if we view autonomy as a capacity that enhances student learning, it begins to seem worthwhile to see what the students have to say about their own work. Keeping this in mind, in this paper, we attempt to describe a study carried out at a university with students whose L1 was English learning Spanish. The final objective was to measure their metacognitive awareness by making them reflect on different tasks. In this CLIL class, there was not a required textbook. We selected content related to the students’ career goals and used the six T’s approach as a guideline for the integration of content and language [Grabbe & Stoller 1997]. In this approach, each T stands for the following concepts: themes, texts, topics, threads, tasks and transitions. The result of this experience, on one hand, allowed the instructor to understand the weaknesses and strengths of the learners. On the other hand, it brought about changes in the curriculum at university level.

History
The concept of autonomy reached momentum in the SLA field when the Modern Languages Project was created in 1971 through the Council of Europe [Benson 2001 citing Holec, 1981]. There have been several attempts to define autonomy, one that caught the attention of researchers in the nineties was Nunan’s [1997] concept of autonomy as a matter of degree and not as an ‘all-or-nothing concept’. This probably influenced Benson’s idea of it as one of control. He also suggested “if we are able to define and describe autonomy in terms of various aspects of control over learning, we should also in principle be able to measure the extent to which learners are autonomous” [Benson 2001: 51]. Despite the number of definitions, there seems to be one that is accepted because of its relevance to L2 learning and that is “capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action” [Little 1991:4]. Years later, Benson placed the student in the center of the scene when he affirmed “L2 autonomous learners are in control of important dimensions of their learning” [Benson [2010:79]]. The question that researchers have been trying to answer is whether autonomy can be measured; since autonomy in the L2 field is seen as a construct of capacity or ability of students to make informed decisions about their own learning [Sinclair, 1999]. Therefore, if autonomy is seen as a capacity to make informed decisions, as it has been suggested, the promotion of this development of metacognition in the L2 classroom is essential and evaluation necessary to promote it [Sinclair, 1999]. In the next section, we will describe the study that consisted of asking the students’ questions every time they completed a task. We will see that students who could provide more anecdotal examples to the answers exhibited more metacognitive conscience.

The study
This action research study was meant to find answers that could help the instructor remedy a problem and improve his teaching performance [Bailey & Nunan 2009]. In this CLIL class, there were 13 American university students taking levels A1 and A2 Spanish class. The concepts studied were integrated with the contents of their Master’s degrees in English. The topics selected for the semester were human rights, aboriginals in Latin America, international policy and education. Every time students finished a major task, they would complete a questionnaire based on Sinclair [1999]. For this particular study, we considered and analyzed the answers of two major tasks: an oral presentation at the beginning of the semester and another one in the end. The students completed the following questions in both instances:

Why did you decide to work on this topic?
Did you like it? Why? Why not?
How did you go about doing this activity?
Why did you do it in this way?
How well did you do?
What, if any problems did you have?
Why did you have them?
What things would you have done differently?

(Adapted from Sinclair, 1999: 97)

The answers provided were all ranked into three categories [Sinclair, 1999]. If the student answered questions using superficial rationales, general statements, or incorrect use of metalanguage, the student’s answers were ranked under level 1 or ‘largely unaware’. One example under this category would be “I chose this topic just because”.

Now if the student answered the questions using a large amount of anecdotal evidence, metaphor, metalanguage, or questions, the statements could be categorized under level 2, which Sinclair calls the transition stage, or ‘becoming aware’. An example of this category would be: “I noticed that my pronunciation in this task was great in the beginning but not so good towards the end. I was feeling tired”. If the answers provided by the learners contained a competent use of what has been described before or the students described the use of alternative strategies, their responses were categorized as level 3, ‘largely aware’. For example: “If I had consulted better sources, I would have had a more complete outcome. Next time I will do that”.

Conclusion
The answers were all ranked into three different levels mentioned, and percentages were used to quantify the number in each level. 16% of students’ answers were categorized as level 1. 44% qualified as level 2, and 40% pertained to level 3. Several factors could explain the values categorized mainly in levels 2 [becoming aware] and 3 [largely aware]. The first is that students’ writing did not occur in a vacuum. They referred to their trips abroad, experiences with the culture and jobs. This explains the abundance of metaphors and anecdotes written. Second, learners, in their presentations, either selected familiar topics because they wanted to delve deeper into them, or they chose something completely new because they wanted more information. This seems to be consistent with the fact that university level students bring to class knowledge of the world that is different from that of younger students [Papai 2000, Cummings 1989].
I remember precisely when I learned the Dutch word *kussen*. Someone kissed me when I was lying on a pillow. Dutch readers will immediately understand that, at that moment, I learned that *kussen* meant two things – a pillow [cushion] and a kiss. And the word stuck because it meant two things, because of the situation I was in (!) and because we talked and laughed about the word. In other words, relating my experience to theories behind learning vocabulary input became intake, the word was learned in a meaningful context and there was some processing taking place.

How many words can you remember out of all those lists of French, German or English words that you learned at school? Do you recall situations, like mine, where you learned a word or a phrase in a particular situation and it stuck forever? And have you ever stopped to think about how your students learn words?

One of the first things that new CLIL subject teachers realise about teaching P.E. or science or a humanities subject is that their students come across lots of new words: subject terminology such as photosynthesis, allegro or a horse [the large wooden box that students jump over in the gym]. And what do we ask our students to do with those new words? Write a list of them, sometimes write a definition in English or their first language or occasionally write a sentence to contextualise the words. Our students keep these words in a PIF (personal idiom file) or glossary, and then, by halfway through the year, both they and you – the teacher – have forgotten about them.

So how can we keep learning vocabulary alive?

**Some background about thinking and learning vocabulary**

Here is a brief summary of some ideas about how we learn vocabulary.

1. We have a short-term memory, a working memory and a long-term memory. The more we help students to process words and phrases, the more these are likely to end up in our long-term memories where we can grab them again to use later. If our students memorize a list of words and their translations for a test, they can faultlessly regurgitate them on the test and promptly forget most of them because they stay only in short term memory. Similarly, input needs to become intake, which means that it is no use just giving students words to learn [input]: they need help in processing vocabulary, so that they use and store it [intake]. In other words in moves from short term to working memory. Finally, the more opportunities for processing there are, the more connections that students can make in their brains and the more likely they are to remember vocabulary. This is how long term memory is formed.

2. Good vocabulary activities recycle words and phrases, so that students are exposed several times to the words or phrases that you want them to learn. If students are exposed to words at least three times, they are more likely to learn the vocabulary than if they are only exposed to them once [Barcroft, 2012].

3. Effective vocabulary activities are meaningful and interactive [Barcroft, 2012]. This means that we should ask our students to learn and practise vocabulary in context and not as single, unrelated words. One way of looking at this idea is that we can divide vocabulary tasks roughly into ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ ones. Vocabulary tasks which work on higher order thinking skills [or HOTS] – applying, analysing, evaluating or creating – are likely to be more effective than those working on lower order thinking skills [or LOTS] - remembering and understanding. An example can be seen in Figure 1 (van der Es, Dale and Tanner, 2010: 79):

**Figure 1: ‘Poor’ and ‘rich’ vocabulary tasks related to LOTS and HOTS**

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**Thinking through vocabulary in CLIL**

*By Rosie Tanner*

“She had always wanted words, she loved them; grew up on them. Words gave her clarity, brought reason, shape.”


Some pedagogical implications from this experience: firstly, a practical way to promote autonomy is by asking students to critique their own work, self assess their production, and by making them participants in their learning. Secondly, the information the students provided served as data that eventually came in handy for the instructor to design language-related activities through scaffolding [Bruner 1983, Van Lier 2004]. Also, due to the level of the group, the class turned out to be challenging because they had to struggle with vocabulary and fluency. There seems to be some correspondence with studies towards L2 proficiency with appropriate target language use” (2004: 47)

The study reaffirms Little’s principles that “learners need much more than just the minimum competence necessary for communication in order to feel autonomous” (Little 2004: 10). In other words, relating my experience to theories behind learning vocabulary input became intake, the word was learned in a meaningful context and there was some processing taking place.

How many words can you remember out of all those lists of French, German or English words that you learned at school? Do you recall situations, like mine, where you learned a word or a phrase in a particular situation and it stuck forever? And have you ever stopped to think about how your students learn words?

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**Figure 1: ‘Poor’ and ‘rich’ vocabulary tasks related to LOTS and HOTS**

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**Three thinking vocabulary activities**

Below I describe three easy-to-implement vocabulary activities which work on making vocabulary more meaningful, personalize vocabulary, are examples of ‘rich’ activities and work on HOTS. The first two are based on activities from Morgan and Rivolucori [2004] and I watched Henk Dijkgraaf at Pieter Zandt College in Kampen teach the third activity in a havo class.

Vocabulary activity 1: My Room

1. Ask your students to take a piece of paper or page from their notebook. They
draw the ground plan of their bedroom in their notebooks, as if they are looking from above into their room.

2. Write about twenty words that they need to revise up on the blackboard.

**Africa (geography)**
Great Rift Valley, Nile, peninsula, Horn of Africa, Gobi desert, Atlas mountains, source, freshwater lake, discover, share, x kilometres wide, y metres deep, z kilometres long, inactive volcano, summit, Mount Kilimanjaro, river system, drain

A ground plan

3. Students write all of the words on to their bedroom ground plans. They need to have a reason for putting their word on to their plan, to be able to explain to each other later.

**Rich vocabulary learning task using HOTS: applying**
Use these words about metamorphosis to write a story about a butterfly in exactly 50 words.

4. In pairs, they tell each other where they have placed their words and why. This is the most important stage – by talking about the words and associating them with a place in their own rooms, students are personalizing the words, making them meaningful to themselves, and processing the vocabulary more deeply.

**Vocabulary activity 2: My own set**
1. Write the words you want your students to revise up on the board.

**States of matter (chemistry)**
sublime, sublimate, melt, freeze, valency, lead, solidify, condense, condensation, freezing point, boiling point, solid, liquid, gas, plasma, compound, particle, flow, density, expand, cool, solidification, fusion, regressive sublimation, sublimation, vaporization

2. Ask students to work individually and to create categories of words, or sets. They must make at least THREE different categories – according to the words’ meaning, or sounds, or the look of words on the page.

**Example of a category:**
**ICE**
melt, freezing point, freeze, cool, expand

3. When they are ready, ask students to give each category they have made a title.

4. Ask students to work in groups and to tell each other about their categories. They will have now processed the words twice, once while categorizing and the second time while discussing with their group. You could also do this phase with the class as a whole.

**Vocabulary activity 3: Word association**

**Fractions, percentages and decimals (mathematics)**
half, halving, quarter, equal, parts, fractions, width, length, fraction, multiply, equivalent fractions, third, three quarters, divide, multiplications, cancel down, convert, decimal, decimal point, numerator, denominator, terminate, recurring decimal

1. Before your students come in to the classroom, write or type up a table on the [smart]board which includes some words that you would like to revise, like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>half</th>
<th>decimal</th>
<th>fraction</th>
<th>divide</th>
<th>recurring decimal</th>
<th>width</th>
<th>third</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. Ask your students to write down what they associate each of the words with: they can write words or phrases. They might need some help with this at the start, so do a couple of examples with them first.

3. Ask some of them for their ideas and write them on the board. They might come up with ideas like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>moon</th>
<th>a tenth</th>
<th>many numbers</th>
<th>half</th>
<th>decimal</th>
<th>recurring decimal</th>
<th>fraction</th>
<th>divide</th>
<th>terminate</th>
<th>little bit</th>
<th>divorce</th>
<th>death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. Rub out the words in the original table like this and ask your students to recall the original words. When they have done that, write them in the table again. This activity helps students to make their own connections with words and might be a strategy that they could use when revising alone.

The main message of my article about thinking and vocabulary has been to encourage you to get your students to work actively and meaningfully with the words they are learning. And, as an afterthought, you might like to test your own vocabulary with this online test: http://testyourvocab.com

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**References**


