

Integrating Content And Language In Specialized Language Teaching And Learning With The Help Of Ict

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Abstract

In recent times both globalization and mobility in Europe have had a significant impact on content-teaching methodologies, and many governments have adopted some form of second-language-medium instruction. However, reading in a second language per se does not make an example of language teaching, as the focus is primarily on content, not language. The instrumental use of a vehicular language – generally a second or foreign language to learners – does not imply analyzing and practicing the communicative structures of the vehicular language itself. Conversely, all good language teaching needs to be based on content that engages the learner, but this is meant to provide useful contexts of use which will enhance the learning experience.

Integration of content and language can only be achieved through the combination of professional expertise and linguistic competence provided by subject teachers and language teachers. Yet, although team teaching would seem to be the ideal solution, this is very difficult to achieve in practice for a number of reasons. Drawing on the successful experience of Canadian immersion programmes, where teachers are trained to teach French, and the subject through French, we believe that a second-language medium of instruction should ideally use teachers trained in both language and content pedagogy. ICT plays a fundamental role in achieving this dual goal as the case study presented in this paper proves. By analyzing a scenario of content and language integrated learning based on the use of e-learning technologies, the paper points out the relevance of involving students in ICT-based activities which give them a combination of professional expertise and linguistic competence.

Introduction

In the past two decades, European socio-economic integration and globalization brought about renewed and increased interest in foreign language teaching and, recently, in using a foreign or second language as a means of instruction. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is receiving special attention in Europe as one of the ways to achieve the objective of learning two languages in addition to the mother tongue, and is listed as one of the innovative methods to improve the quality of language teaching (Action Plan for language learning and linguistic diversity, European Commission, 2003).

Education in a language different from the learner's mother tongue dates back to ancient times, ever since the ancient Romans "educated their children in Greek to ensure that they would have access to not only the language, but also the social and professional opportunities it would provide for them in their future lives, including living in Greek-speaking educational communities". [1] This learning experience has since spread throughout the centuries to all corners of the globe losing its élite backgrounds to open up to a wider range of learners. As a matter of fact, globalization and economic and social convergence have had a significant impact in determining who learns what language, at what stage and in which way. Nevertheless, while the driving forces behind language learning needs

may differ, the objectives still remains the same: achieving the best possible results in the shortest time.

1. CLIL in the language teaching profession

Among the European priorities for the new millennium (Think-Tank Symposium in Strasbourg, 1998), teacher education and the incorporation of CLIL into teacher education were recurring themes. And universities and teacher training institutions were requested to develop pre- and in-service programmes for CLIL trainee-teachers that could balance scientifically grounded research and expertise with practical concerns. [2] Totally neglected was, however, the role of subject professionals, which on the contrary Wolff [3] demanded to be fully integrated in CLIL programmes. In the discussion on whether the future CLIL teacher should be a subject teacher trained in a foreign language or a language teacher trained in one or two subjects, he supported the latter view. But who really should be a "CLIL teacher"?

1. A subject teacher?
2. A FL teacher?
3. A team of both?
4. A teacher with dual education?

In (1), the focus is primarily on content. A subject teacher would most probably make appropriate decisions about module content and objectives, but (s)he would probably fail to plan and design appropriate tasks and activities to develop content-related language competence. The teaching practice of "content" teachers in CLIL could benefit from professional dialogue with FL colleagues in order to increase awareness of effective CLIL methodology. In addition to this "content-biased" learning, a major problem may arise in that most subject teachers still struggle with FL competence and would not be able to teach in a FL.

In (2), the focus is primarily on language. A FL teacher would most likely select content that engages the learner, but fail to provide depth unless supported by a subject professional. In addition, FL teachers often take over in CLIL, creating covert conflict or open resentment in subject colleagues.

In (3), the focus is equally shared between content and language, but separately, one at a time. Both FL and subjects teachers need to get used to working together in spite of their very different teaching strategies (generally, workshop-based for FL teachers, lecture-based for subject teachers). They should both learn "the CLIL approach" [4], plan how to subdivide the module into smaller units, each with appropriate learning tasks and activities; and decide what and how to assess. This coordination and collaboration work may become inoperable in many contexts not only because of ineffective interpersonal relationships but also because of costs.

In (4), the focus is equally shared between content and language, seamlessly. Teachers trained in both language and content pedagogy will most likely be able to achieve greater balance in CLIL programmes.

"Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language." [1] Both are developed simultaneously and gradually. CLIL is not a new form of language education, but it is not a new form of subject education either: it is an innovative fusion of both.

As reported in Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe, CLIL is an educational approach in which various language supportive methodologies are used which lead to a dual-focused form of instruction where attention is given both to the language and to the content: "... achieving this

twofold aim calls for the development of a special approach to teaching in that the non-language subject is not taught in a foreign language but with and through a foreign language." [5]

The main difference between CLIL and other established approaches such as CBLL (Content-Based Language Learning) is the "planned pedagogic integration of contextualized content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching and learning practice. [1]

Besides being a powerful tool that can have a strong impact on language learning, CLIL can be seen as an educational approach to support linguistic diversity – as it helps achieving the plurilingualism pursued by the European Commission since 1995 – and interdisciplinarity – as it overcomes the restraints of traditional school curricula, and represents a shift towards curricular integration.

2. CLIL methodology in higher education

CLIL research since the 1990s has mainly focused on secondary mainstream education in which, typically, CLIL classes are given in short modules (15-20 hours) organized and taught by FL teachers, quite often during their own FL lessons, with no help from or collaboration with a subject teacher. Recent research has extended to the tertiary level (including lifelong learning), especially after internationalization projects have spread throughout European universities and beyond. An increasing number of university programmes, or individual courses, are being offered in a foreign language. Most of these, though, focus primarily on content as they are given by subject lecturers (see case 1 in section 1).

2.1 A case study

The example below is provided as a case of application of the CLIL approach to a higher education context where the lecturer has been trained in both language and content pedagogy (case 4 in section 1).

The course (30-40 hours), which is an introductory level journalism course integrated with a B1 EFL course, has been offered for four years now to a varying number of Communication Studies students (between 100 and 150 each year) whose L1 vary from Italian (the local language) to any other European language - as classes include Erasmus exchange students, too. The classroom culture, however, is that of the local L1 community.

L2 (English) was used as a medium of instruction. Students entered with similar (limited) levels of L2 proficiency, and their exposure to the L2 was largely confined to the classroom and online activities.

The course has been designed to develop professional journalism skills and improve the pragmatic knowledge of the foreign language (LGP/LSP) thus enhancing the learner's capacity to use communicative elements in actions, or to take actions using communication, to express, commit, interrogate, and engage in interactions, including being active participants in the world and on the Web - all of which are fundamental qualities of a journalist.

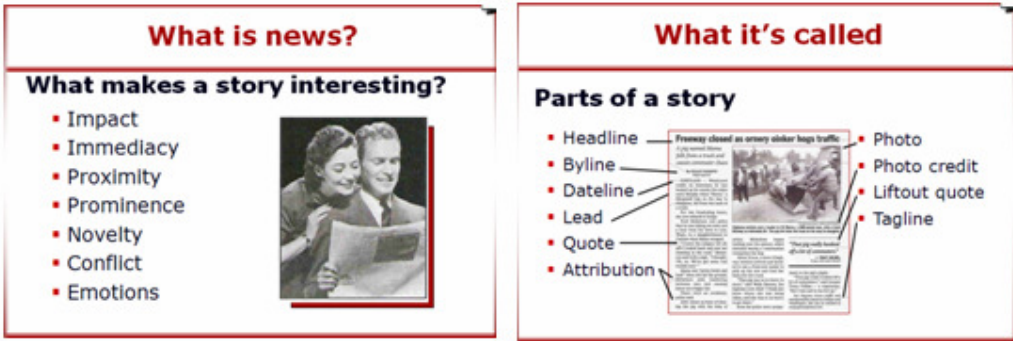


Fig. 1: Sample slides from LIN109 newswriting course

During the course, students were exposed to complex information and were involved in demanding activities which could lead to intrinsic motivation. When using L2 to understand and learn a non-language subject, a wide range of cognitive processes are activated. "CLIL classroom practice involves the learners being active participants in developing their potential for acquiring knowledge and skills through a process of inquiry (research) and by using complex cognitive processes and means for problem solving (innovation)." [1]

Exercise 2-1.1
(See related pages)

Exercises in Editorial Judgment > Would you run the story?

Would you run the story?

Complete the exercise below and then compare your results to those displayed by the Suggested Answer button.

Deciding whether to publish a story depends on a variety of factors, including your target community and the frequency of your publication. Consider the following story topics, pretend you are an editor at each of the publications in the right columns, and decide whether you would be likely to run the story. For each story, check the checkbox under each publication if you would run the story.

	Metropolitan Daily	Community Weekly	Twice-Weekly Campus Paper
Ex. Two firefighters die battling blaze in neighboring state	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A. City council allocates money for sewer repair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Broken water main damages university restaurant and bookstore	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. U.S. president schedules visit to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Email](#) [Print](#)

Exercise 2-1.2
(See related pages)

Exercises in Editorial Judgment > Identifying qualities of news

Identifying Qualities of News

Complete the exercise below to gauge your interpretation of news qualities.

"Will readers care about this story?" That's what editors ask themselves all the time. Their answer depends on the degree to which the stories offer the seven news elements described in your textbook. Rank each element in the following stories from 1 to 10 (with 10 being most important) based upon the degree to which each news element figures in each story. Assume your paper's home territory is whatever geographic location is mentioned. (To review the elements and their meanings, visit Page 17 of your textbook.)

Example

Clark County officials are asking homeowners to drain stagnant swimming pools and fountains that could become breeding grounds for mosquitoes carrying West Nile Virus.

impact
 immediacy
 proximity
 prominence
 novelty
 conflict
 emotions

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Fig.2: Sample activities from LIN109 course

The ESL component of this course emphasized four areas of study: reading, writing, grammar, and discussion of the content material. During the course learners discovered that they were actually learning a third language, the language of journalism, a specialized variant of L2 that is regulated by its own grammar and style (course material referred to Associated Press guidelines). The writing component covered the structure of a news story, leads, sentence clarity and combining, quotes and attributions. These activities are not much different from those taught in a writing course in an intensive ESL program, The effectiveness of the approach lies in the fact that the activities were not done for their own sake but rather to help students develop judgment, critical and writing skills that they would certainly need in their present (some students were already working in a newsroom) or future job.

Grammar Quiz
(See related pages)

For each item below, select the sentence that is grammatically correct.

- Select either A or B below.
 - A) The English teacher returned the exams to Tamara and me.
 - B) The English teacher returned the exams to Tamara and I.
- Select either A or B below.
 - A) Henry's brother is much taller than he.
 - B) Henry's brother is much taller than him.
- Select either A or B below.
 - A) Us workaholics hope to relax and have fun when we finally take a vacation.
 - B) We workaholics hope to relax and have fun when we finally take a vacation.
- Select either A or B below.
 - A) Mark told me that the two players who won the most sets on Friday were Tucker and he.
 - B) Mark told me that the two players who won the most sets on Friday were Tucker and him.

Click on either A or B buttons.

True or False Quiz
(See related pages)

Read each question carefully and then select the best answer.

- Stories that involve well-known figures are interesting to readers.
 - A) True
 - B) False
- Anecdotal feedback is one research method used to gauge which stories strike a chord with sources, friends and colleagues.
 - A) True
 - B) False
- The average reader spends more than an hour a day with a newspaper.
 - A) True
 - B) False
- Once stories are edited in the newsroom, they are sent on to copy editors and designers.
 - A) True
 - B) False

Click on either A or B buttons.

Multiple Choice Quiz
(See related pages)

Read each question carefully and then select the best answer.

- Which of the following is NOT on your author's list of seven elements that make a story interesting to readers and qualify as "news"?
 - A) impact
 - B) immediacy
 - C) proximity
 - D) preference
- Publishers hire market research consultants to study readers and determine what might sell more newspapers. Which of the following research methods do they NOT use?
 - A) personal interviews
 - B) focus groups
 - C) phone, mail and web surveys
 - D) monitoring devices
- Which of the following is NOT a common trait of newspaper readers?
 - A) Readers are in a hurry.
 - B) Readers prefer longer articles.

Fig. 3: Samples from LIN109 newswriting course tests

The assessment criteria were framed in a way that focussed on assessing the student's understanding of the subject matter and their capacity to engage with the subject matter through analysis, evaluation, and speculation. All these skills were manifest in their ability to demonstrate them through their writing, and through online activities (fig. 2). This approach of seeing content through the language or discourse of the discipline was adopted from Systemic Functional Linguistics theory which underpins the programme and from the pedagogy associated with this theory.

The use of coherently developed content sources allowed students to call on their own prior knowledge to learn additional language and content material. The curriculum and activity sequences were made available on a flexible and adaptable e-learning environment (fig. 4).



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a news article. The article is titled "Tools, talent and temperament" and discusses the challenges of journalism. It includes a sub-section titled "THE BASIC HARDWARE: TOOLS EVERY REPORTER NEEDS" which lists items like a notebook, camera, and computer. The sidebar on the left shows a course structure for "Week 1" and "Class 1" with various exercises and key points.

Fig. 4: Screenshot from LIN109 website



The Learning Management System enabled students to coordinate their action through real-time and asynchronous tools, from anywhere, anytime.

3. Conclusions

The practice of combining language and content for both purposeful linguistic and subject-matter learning originated in Canada around 1965 within the first programs in language immersion education developed to provide the country's English-speaking young population with opportunities to learn French. In Europe, the methodology has been described by the European Commission as "an excellent way of making progress in a foreign language". As a matter of fact, high levels of competence can be reached in classrooms where the target language is a medium of communication rather than an object of analysis.

Research in learning theory reinforces teaching approaches which combine the development of language and content knowledge, and practice in using that knowledge. In CLIL practice, learners are empowered to acquire knowledge while actively engaging their own powers of perception, communication and reasoning.

CLIL is flexible and can be adapted to different contexts; yet, for the approach to be justifiable and sustainable, its theoretical basis must be rigorous and transparent in practice. Good CLIL practice is characterized by a more holistic educational experience for the learner than commonly achievable.

In CLIL classrooms, students are exposed to a considerable amount of language while learning content. CLIL is content-driven, and this is where it both extends the experience of learning a language, and where it becomes different from existing language-teaching approaches.

It is commonly agreed that CLIL courses make an excellent tool for the integration of language and content providing that curriculum planners, course designers and teachers manage to keep language and content exploration in balance, not to lose sight of content and language learning objectives, and not to overwhelm students with excessive amounts of content that may lead to overlooking the language teaching and learning dimension of instruction.

This approach (CLIL) is seen as providing education which goes beyond language learning.

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