CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL)
AN INTRODUCTION TO DIDACTICS AND METHODOLOGY
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1. Background Information

At present, more than 450-million people with different historical, social and cultural backgrounds live and work in the European Union. The success of this Union is built upon the equal interchange of ideas and traditions among the members of this diverse population. Historical awareness, intercultural understanding and multilinguistic communicative competence become increasingly important to forge cohesion between Member States as well as enhance the feeling of being European citizens instead of just being citizens of individual countries. [1]

In order to enjoy full participation in an enlarged European Union, knowledge of different languages is part of the basic skills children in the Member States are required to master by the end of their compulsory schooling. Bilingual Education, or to be more precise, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) [2], makes a major contribution to the Union´s learning goals.

Everyone – politicians, businesspeople, university professors, parents and students alike - talks about CLIL, but what does it actually offer? Content and Language Integrated Learning pretty much does what the title indicates: Its dual-focused education gives top priority to the topic of study while the foreign language merely functions as a vehicle of learning and therefore, is only learned in passing.
The dual challenge - conducting instruction mostly in a foreign language while making the content of the target topic king - means that ideally, students are more actively involved in the process of learning by having to concentrate even harder. In addition to a more profound examination of the subject matter, the CLIL method promotes a more natural use of language as the emphasis is on authentic communication in which fluency is more important than accuracy. Moreover, bilingual education also promotes critical thinking through the constant comparison of cultural values.

Of course, CLIL is not a new teaching concept; people have been learning in this way for centuries. Migrants, for example, have learned new languages and learned to know new ways of life. On a day-to-day basis, they have to put themselves in the position where they have to converse, handle situations and complete tasks in a language other than their native tongues. It is a natural way to learn a language [3] – but also, to learn about ideologies and cultures. Language influences our culturally determined way of thinking and at the same time also reflects particular cultural mindsets. Take, for example the German word, "Völkerwanderung", when referring to the movement of Germanic tribes at the end of the Western Roman Empire. The word literally translates to "peoples' migration", but in English it is in some cases used to mean "barbaric invasion"; the two terms have completely different connotations. To change perspective and to reflect on this discrepancy is of course, a powerful source of cultural understanding. Understanding in turn is an important prerequisite for successful crosscultural communication. The question we have to ask is how can we replicate and improve this type of learning experience in our schools?

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[1] The European Commission´s "Action Plan on Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: 2004-2006".
[2] The term CLIL was coined by David Marsh of the University of Jyväskylä in Finland.
[3] One has to add, however, that migrants, not always, but often, who come to a country and immediately take up a job, speak it adequately but never close to perfect.

2. CLIL Didactics and Methodology

2.1 Hallet's Bilingual Triangle

Wolfgang Hallet[4] developed the model of the Bilingual Triangle for curricular as well as individual lesson planning. This a didactical tool, which goes hand in hand with the historical concept of multiperspectivity, points to the following three factors:

a) Phenomena and facts of one's own culture and society (L1). This means that students should get to know their own culture and be enabled to communicate about it. This is as much the case on the level of everyday communication[5] as well as on an academic level[6].

b) Phenomena and facts of the culture and society of the target language (L2). This means that the students should become acquainted with the target culture. Getting to know different cultural aspects is especially important with regard to other perspectives offered on historical, present as well as future matters and therefore with regard to learning how the target countries construct their worlds.

c) Culturally dependent, intercultural, global phenomena and facts (intercommunity). This means that students have to concern themselves with culturally independent, cross-cultural and universal aspects in a globalized world. Comparing similarities as well as differences and coming up with some kind of synthesis are key factors.
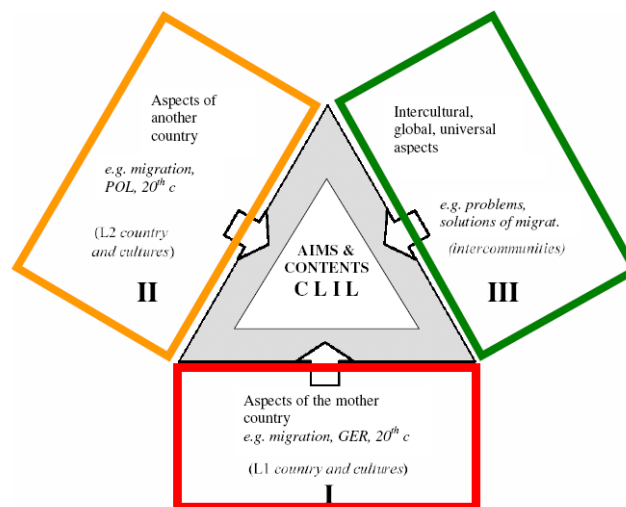
It is understood, when applying Hallet's model to the topic of migration, first, the individual participating countries' migration movements should be investigated separately and second, their migration patterns compared against each other. This naturally involves focusing on cross-cultural phenomena.

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[4] Hallet, W. *The Bilingual Triangle. Überlegungen zu einer Didaktik des bilingualen Sachfachunterrichts*. In: *Praxis des neusprachlichen Unterrichts, vol. 45/2, p. 117ff.*
[5] Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS).
[6] Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

Not illustrated in this model but verbally highlighted by Hallet are learning strategies as well as linguistic aspects, which should also be taken into consideration by the CLIL teaching methodology.

2.2 Linguistic Aspects of Interaction in the CLIL Classroom[7]

The same parameters that govern any other classroom situation govern the basic linguistic teaching/learning interaction in a CLIL classroom. The first parameter is that content is based on the national subject-based curriculum. The other two parameters, the learner and the teacher, are individuals with their own tastes, preferences who are subject to cultural as well as external influences.
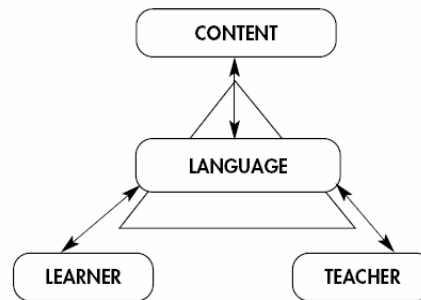
The word "language" expresses the highly complex interactive communication link between the different components. "Language" means both verbal and supportive non-verbal interaction such as gestures.

The differences between the normal classroom and the CLIL classroom is that the language used does not only serve as a filter of communication but that it can even block the process of interaction altogether. Consequently, students have to be guided and assisted in overcoming the language barrier, in turn making them see the foreign language as a chance not only to improve their linguistic skills, but even more importantly, to enhance and deepen their knowledge of the subject matter. This goal can be achieved by putting the following golden rules into practice:

3. Golden Rules for CLIL Teaching[8]

- Your command of the English language should be very good but you do not need to be an English teacher to apply the CLIL methodology.

- Content has priority; language is the means of instruction. Fluency is therefore more important than accuracy. Teaching grammar is a no-go in the CLIL classroom.

- The term "bilingual education" can be taken at face value: The main language of communication, in our case here of English of course, however, depends on the subject as well as on the students' group. The native language also has its place, e.g. when it comes to technical terms. Students have to know them in both languages. Do not make it a habit though, to return to ordinary instruction in the native language if things do not immediately work.

- Keep initial lessons simple and clearly organized. Avoid overload such as too much material, too much homework, too little time, etc. Give your students time to adjust to the linguistic demands.

- Hand out vocabulary lists and annotated materials to help your students. Do not only give them single words arranged in an alphabetical order but entire phrases that they can apply right away. Add phonetic transcriptions to difficult words.

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[7] Tie-CLIL Professional Development Course. Edited by Gisella Langé. Milan: Grafica Luigi Monti, 2002, p. 194f.
[8] This is a co-production of my colleague Harald Weißhaar and me.

- Ask your students not to panic at the first signs of adversity; encourage them to mention difficulties as they appear.

- Be prepared: most students tend to read word for word and overuse dictionaries. Convince them that it is not necessary to understand every single word or sentence. So teach extensive reading[9] instead and emphasize reading for the gist[10]. Work with the technique of skimming and scanning [11].

- Always be aware of the fact that receptive language skills like reading will develop more quickly than productive language skills such as speaking and writing.

- Tell your students that their grades will not suffer from language mistakes! It is the content that you evaluate and not their English competence.

- Be prepared: there will be problems, so do not get frustrated too quickly/fast!
  Motto: *"PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!"*

4. Bibliography

Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004 – 2006.* http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2003:0449:FIN:EN:PDF (June 2009).

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Tie-CLIL Professional Development Course. Edited by Gisella Langé. Milan: Grafica Luigi Monti, 2002.

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[9] **Extensive reading**: one reads as much as possible of interesting materials that are normally within the reader's grammatical and vocabulary competence.
[10] **Reading for the gist**: reading strategy to get the overall meaning of a text.
[11] **Skimming**: a process of speed reading that involves visually searching the sentences of a page for clues to meaning; **Scanning**: technique for quickly finding specific information in a text.