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Creating materials with ICT for CLIL lessons: A didactic proposal

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Abstract

When planning a CLIL lesson, the teachers have to plan the input that they want to teach their students, that is to say, the amount of knowledge that the students are going to learn and how this information will be presented and introduced in the CLIL class. However, one of the most concerns of CLIL teachers when looking for materials is that they can't find appropriate materials for their lessons. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of commercially produced CLIL course books and the content knowledge is usually inferior to that of the L1 subject. For these reasons, teachers often have to spend their time preparing their own materials. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to introduce CLIL teachers the creation of materials in an easily way. For doing this, we are going to develop a lesson planning from the second course of Natural Science entitled "Our bones". Just for the students to learn the vocabulary related to this topic, we have developed different interactive activities, which can also be printed, created with free online programmes, and resources.

1. Introduction

CLIL has been described as "the most recent developmental stage of the communicative language teaching" (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). The term CLIL, which is an acronym for Content and Language Integrating Learning, is an approach to teaching the content of curricular subjects through the media of a non-native language. The concept CLIL was created by a group of bilingual education specialists of differing backgrounds in the 1990s as an umbrella term

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covering all the educational activities where "a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non-language subject in which both language and the subject have a joint curricular role" (Marsh, 2002, p.58).

Since the early 1990s, CLIL –both as a term used by researchers and policy makers and as a practical pedagogical approach– has soared in popularity. The definition from Marsh (2002) cited above is very similar to that of Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010), according to whom "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" (see also Georgiou, 2012). Both definitions can be divided into at least two parts: firstly non-language content is taught or learnt through a foreign language and secondly the curriculum contains both language and non-language subject matter.

According to Bentley (2007), in a CLIL course, learners gain knowledge and understanding of the curricular subject while simultaneously learning and using the target language. Therefore, when planning a CLIL lesson, it is very important to plan the input, that is to say, the information that is being presented in the CLIL class. In general, a teacher should follow these steps:

- Choose the topic, and establish the main subject and language contents related to it.
- Look for materials that are going to be used in the CLIL class (textbooks, audio, video...)
- Organize and adapt these materials
- Decide what kind of activities is appropriate
- Elaborate the activities

However, one of the most concerns of CLIL teachers is that they can't find appropriate materials for their lessons. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of commercially produced CLIL course books and the content knowledge is usually inferior to that of the L1 subject. For these reasons, teachers often have to prepare their own materials. In doing so, teachers have a basic choice between three options, according to Moore and Lorenzo (2007, p.28) but each of these options offers advantages and disadvantages:

1. *Produce their own original materials for scratch*: if teachers produce their own materials, they can be reasonably sure that the focus will be exactly where they want it to be, yet the process can be extremely time-consuming and many teachers simply do not have the time to produce everything by themselves, as the amount of time devoted to lesson preparations could be disproportionate. Searching for and adapting existing materials as well as preparing new materials when needed takes up a considerable amount of time and results in a greater workload for CLIL teachers compared to L1 mediated teaching (Floimayr, 2010, p.21; Gierlinger, 2007, pp. 80–81; Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols, 2008, p.22). Teachers might also lack the "professional competences" required in materials adaptation, supplementation and design (Coonan, 2007, p.628).

2. *Employ "undiluted" authentic materials*: The term "authentic material" can be used in a variety of meanings, as a definition is far from consensual. Here, we are going to use it in these two senses: a) non-pedagogical materials from the general media; and b) specifically didactic content materials produced for native speakers of the target language. But one of the most common standardized and used definitions is the following one: "authentic materials are reading texts that were written by native speakers and published in contexts designed specifically for native-speaker consumption, with no thought given to non-native accessibility. The topics, language, syntax, structure, etc., are all pitched at a target audience of native speakers and offered through media intended primarily for native speakers". Other researchers widen the definition to include videos, television programs, and any other sources of language – or anything that might stimulate language use.

3. *Adapt authentic materials in line with the teaching goals*: It is a well established fact that being a CLIL teacher is usually more time consuming than being any other type of teacher, much due to the fact that a great deal of time has to be spent on adjusting and creating appropriate teaching materials. It can be difficult to find authentic materials which do not require some form of treatment prior to use because of the complexity of language used in the instructions, in texts or in the activities themselves.

2. CLIL subjects

First of all, it is important to remember the core principles of CLIL at Primary Education and at Secondary Compulsory Education:

- The subject comes first.