Integrating Language and Content at the Instructional Level

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Outline

1. Language model at UNIBZ
2. (Re)defining my understanding of CLIL
3. The importance of input in language learning and the need for input-processing with adult learners
4. Classroom experiment to demonstrate value of input processing for CLIL
The UNIBZ: A Trilingual University

• Trilingual Model: English, German, Italian (Ladin)
• In School of E/M: half of courses taught in English, one-fourth in German, and one-fourth in Italian
• Students must demonstrate B2 proficiency in two languages for entry, and C1, B2+, and B2 in all three languages to graduate
Specialized English Courses in School of Economics and Management

• Language Center in charge of university language requirements (general English)
• School of Economics and Management requires additional “Specialized” Language Courses
• Must pass 2 of 3 specialized language exams (German, Italian, English)
• Methods and syllabus depend on instructor, but typically focus on the language and language skills of the field (ESP and/or EAP): “English for Economists”
• Is this a CLIL university?
• Am I a CLIL teacher?
What is CLIL (for adult learners)?

• An “umbrella term”? Do CBI, EMI and ES(A)P fall under the umbrella?
• CBI = using content to teach L2 (e.g. Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989)
• EMI = using L2 to teach content ➔ Natural Approach (Krashen, 1982)
• ESP/ESAP = special needs, content often important (e.g. Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Jordan, 2005)
• CLIL = Formal Language Learning + Content Learning (e.g. Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Coonan, 2012)
• Four C’s: COGNITION, content, communication, culture, context, (e.g. Marsh and Maljers, 1994; Coonan, 2012)
• Emphasizes content over language (“strong” CLIL)
• Emphasizes language over content (“weak” CLIL)

➔ CBI is the umbrella term and CLIL is a special form of CBI
Is UNIBZ a CLIL University?

• Depends on who you ask!
• Subject courses = EMI / language courses = ES(A)P / no collaboration
• Scaffolding + Recasting + Feedback ➔ Acquisition (e.g. Lyster and Ranta, 1997)

• **Intermediate Adult learners:** fossilization and plateau phenomenon (see: Ellis, 1997 and 2002; Lightbown and Spada, 2006; Coonan, 2008 and 2012), exacerbated here by lingua franca context and little interaction and no corrective feedback outside language classes (Cf. Prior, 2009)

• Need to differentiate in tertiary education:
  – Theoretical Level: integrating language and content learning
  – Institutional Level: commitment to both language and content learning ➔ *compete for funding*
  – Curricular Level: offering content in L2 and also LSP/LAP courses=>compete for curricular resources ➔ *compete for credit/instructional hours*
  – Instructional Level: integration of content and language in syllabi and lesson plans ➔ *compete for cognitive resources*
Teaching on the CLIL Fault Line

• My course: ESAP + communicative, task-based approach
• Learning language through a “simulation” of content learning, to teach language, language skills and learning skills needed to access more advanced language and content ➔ “weak” CLIL (Ennis, forthcoming)
Reflection: The Role of Input

• Input-Interaction-Output (Block, 2003)
• input ➔ apperceived/noticed ➔ comprehended (connect form and meaning) ➔ intake ➔ integration ➔ output ➔ acquired (Gass, 1988, 1997)
• *comprehensible input* (Krashen, 1982), *input flooding* (Trahey & White, 1993), *input enhancement* (Sharwood-Smith, 1981), *interaction* (Long, 1983), and *output* with *corrective feedback* (Swain, 1985)
• *input processing* (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; VanPatten, 1996; VanPatten, 2002; Lee & Van Patten, 2003)
Input Processing

• Why do errors fossilize?
• Learners have **limited cognitive resources**, and cannot process form and meaning simultaneously
• Perception and cognition must be selective!
• Adult learners know the purpose of language (communication!) and tend to focus on meaning
• ...have developed complex language processing strategies to negotiate for meaning
• ...apperceive/notice features that bear meaning and are necessary for comprehension ➔ connect form to meaning
• **do not apperceive/notice** features that are less meaningful or redundant and not necessary for comprehension
• ➔ need to undermine processing strategies to force students to make a connection between meaning and form
Classroom Experiment

• Are the input processing activities I use more effective than formal grammar instruction and meaning focused instruction at helping students learn language and content concurrently?

• Hypothesis: due to limited cognitive resources, form-focused instruction might lead to greater intake of target grammar features, and meaning-focused instruction might lead to greater intake of content, but input processing will lead to the greatest net gain.
Participants

- 82 students present on first day of B2-level English for Tourism Studies course
- First language: 36 German, 35 Italian, 7 Other, 4 German/Italian
- Proficiency: 12 = B1, 53 = B2, 7 = C1/C2, 10 = unknown
- 81 first-year students
- 79 18-21 years old
Experiment Design

• **Target input:** different functions of *present perfect* and *past simple*
• All students read same two texts about past and recent history of tourism containing several examples of past simple and present perfect in context
• All given the same pre-test and the same post-test to test improvements in knowledge about content (5 questions) and understanding of the different functions of the two tenses (5 questions)
• Test variable was the type of instruction
  – The “control” group (21 total) just read texts
  – The “meaning” group (21 total) read texts + series of T/F reading comprehension activities
  – The “form” group (19 total) read texts + series of deductive grammar activities
  – The “CLIL” group (21 total) read texts + series of input processing activities (inductive grammar + connect form and meaning)
• All activities involved same sentences sampled from the texts, containing grammar in context, and the same sentences were used for pre and posttest (solutions provided)
• Same input, but processed in different ways
## Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Δ % Meaning</th>
<th>Δ % Grammar</th>
<th>Δ % Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>-13.9%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=82)</td>
<td>(T= 11.70, 99.9%)</td>
<td>(T= 4.41, 99.9%)</td>
<td>(T= 2.02, 99.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>-12.4%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=21)</td>
<td>(T= 6.48, 99.9%)</td>
<td>(T= 1.78, 95%)</td>
<td>(T= 2.03, 95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>-21.9%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=21)</td>
<td>(T= 5.80, 99.9%)</td>
<td>(T= 3.75, 99.9%)</td>
<td>(T= 0.95, 80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form</strong></td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>-11.6%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=19)</td>
<td>(T= 5.28, 99.9%)</td>
<td>(T= 1.87, 95%)</td>
<td>(T= 2.35, 99.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLIL</strong></td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>-9.5%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=21)</td>
<td>(T= 5.61, 99.9%)</td>
<td>(T= 1.52, 95%)</td>
<td>(T= 2.55, 99.9%)</td>
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Results: only B2, no Bilinguals

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<th>Δ % Grammar</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B2 (n=52)</strong></td>
<td>32.5% (T = 10.01, 99.9%)</td>
<td>-17.4% (T = 4.60, 99.9%)</td>
<td>7.5% (T = 3.13, 99.75%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Control (n=17)</strong></td>
<td>29.41% (T = 5.68, 99.9%)</td>
<td>-12.94% (T = 1.83, 95%)</td>
<td>8.24% (T = 1.95, 95%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning (n=10)</strong></td>
<td>32.0% (T = 4.71, 99.9%)</td>
<td>-26.0% (T = 4.33, 99.9%)</td>
<td>3.0% (T = 0.67, FAIL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form (n=12)</strong></td>
<td>35.0% (T = 5.74, 99.9%)</td>
<td>-18.3% (T = 2.93, 99.9%)</td>
<td>8.3% (T = 2.80, 99.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLIL (n=13)</strong></td>
<td>35.38% (T = 4.01, 99.9%)</td>
<td>-12.31% (T = 1.30, 85%)</td>
<td>11.54% (T = 1.73, 90%)</td>
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Discussion

• All groups showed comparable gains in knowledge (i.e. content learning)
• Drawing attention to language features had no adverse effect on comprehension of content
  – might have enhanced comprehension (don’t know yet)!
  – thinking about language = thinking about content?
• All students demonstrated losses in understanding of grammar
  – Possibly due to limited cognitive resources:
    • language and content compete for cognitive resources
    • new input challenges understanding of how the language works
    • challenging content + authentic academic language
• Focus on meaning ➔ grammar loss canceled out ➔ no net gain
• Focus on form ➔ grammar loss less ➔ net gain
• Dual focus ➔ grammar loss lowest/ meaning gain highest ➔ greatest net gain
• CLIL needs dual focus (meaning and form), and input processing might be useful in both weak and strong CLIL courses
Limitations

• Have not yet analyzed significance of variance difference scores across groups
• Only looking at input to intake
  – Interaction/Output/Feedback not considered
  – but none of the above occur in subject lectures
  – and already occur in language courses
• One outlier remains in the B2 CLIL group
• Classroom experiment ➔ representative of my teaching context, but not a random sample of general population
Thank you for your attention!

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