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Shaping Language

Shaping Teaching

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***Foreign Language Learning and Motivation:
does CLIL shape them differently ?***

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Both teachers have a long history in their fields, having taught at the Liceo scientifico for a combined experience of over 25 years and having spent a long and productive period as researchers at international level.

They attended the 2013 methodological course at Roma 3 University where they completed their CLIL training making them among the first “wave” of teachers ready to apply CLIL as requested by 2010 Italian High School Reform.

This talk reports about results and relevant data regarding their three years of CLIL activity, focusing on History (M.L.C.) and Physics (S.D.)

The introduction of CLIL in Italian High Schools has seen the *Licei Linguistici* (the Institution where Foreign Language Teaching is the core course in the curriculum) leading in applying the method and testing the results.

Teaching subjects in a foreign language (CLIL, Emile etc..) is mandatory starting the third year and involves up to three different languages.

For the other High School curricula CLIL has to be formally implemented for the final year and in Technical Schools English is the only allowed language

While the *Licei Linguistici* represents 17 % of the total student population*, the *Licei Scientifici* are 46 % giving this type of school an important role in describing how CLIL influences the Teaching and the Learning overall. For this reason sharing the overall results after 3 years of application in School could be relevant for this audience.

[*] Source : MIUR <http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/web/ministero/cs220216bis>

SOME DETAILS ABOUT THE COURSES

School years: 2013/2014 (Practicum of UNI-ROMA3 methodological course)

2014/2015

2015/2016

Language : English

Involved classes : no. 4 Fifth year - Liceo Scientifico

Students' age : 18 - 19

Average number of students in a class : 24 (total students: about 100)

Students' average language proficiency (from CEFR) : B1

Time percentage of CLIL of the whole course : 45 % (Ministry of Education has set 50% as a limit)

Both History and Physics, with their CLIL component, were leading subjects in the State Exam (*Esame di Stato*) 2015/2016

KEY FINDINGS

According to students' feedback, the CLIL program is successful in improving the areas of:

- Motivation
- Foreign Language Learning
- Cognitive Factors

However, to be successful it is necessary to:

- Build strong collaboration with Foreign Language teachers and all the other Departments
- Spread awareness that the CLIL approach is suitable and will work with all the students
- Some subjects fit the program better than others (i.e. history vs. physics)

Motivation

Motivation can be defined as goal-oriented, purposeful behavior

A goal is relevant for a given individual, may not be relevant for another one

The attitude a person adopts towards a given goal (i.e. his belief about it and value in which he holds it) will be based upon its relevance to him and the social group he belongs to

Cognitive and affective factors in FLL

Attitudes involve both a cognitive component(i.e. what a person believes about a given goal) and an affective component (how s/he feels about that goal, either favourably or unfavourably) (Secord, P.F. and Backman, C.W, 1964)

It is quite clear that making sense of a goal (i.e.cognitive) and valuing the goal(the affective) will play important roles in goal oriented behaviour

The concept of consciousness- i.e. the ability to conceptualise reality-is clearly seen as crucial in determining motivated behaviour. It is because humans can “make sense” of the world that they can plan ahead and direct their activity towards defined goals (Leont'ev, A.N. 1973)

Mother Tongue Acquisition and FLL

In acquiring the mother tongue, motivation plays a central role

Language is seen as “relevant” because it allows the child to :

- interact with others and act upon his/her environment
- develop a sense of personal/ social identity
- make sense of the world and his/her experience (thereby regulating
- his/her own behaviour)

Do the same factors appear in the Foreign Language Learning?

What allows a person to consider a new language “relevant”?

The Child develops attitudes toward other languages/cultures through their mother tongue, or the sub-code of the mother tongue in precise contexts

Successful Foreign Language Learning depends on the concepts and attitudes towards language which are developed through the First Language Acquisition Process

Aptitude and Motivation /1

Aptitude is often considered as predicting success in a Foreign Language.

Aptitude tests measure the cognitive skills acquired through the first language (Van Els et alii, 1984)

Aptitude is related to motivation in the sense that it allows the child to “make sense” of the activity they are undertaking

Intrinsic motivation is usually defined as motivation which is guided by an interest in the task itself in which one is engaged, whereas extrinsic motivation is said to be guided by external stimuli (Van Els et al, 1984)

Aptitude and Motivation /2

Can CLIL foster intrinsic motivation in order to improve Foreign Language and Content Learning ?

Speaking different languages helps and enriches our identity and cognitive abilities transforming us in nomadic subjects (Rosi Braidotti, 1994) and consequently we become open to the complexity of changing.

The language and culture used in the CLIL classroom allows for the language itself to constantly transform as well as to the teaching strategies to be reshaped, re-proposing the path that a foreign language learner follows in his learning.

Part one - According to the students involved in the CLIL teaching of History:

Motivation

The study of History in English is : Interesting, fun and creative.

It helps the Learning, giving new reasons to learn

Also it offers reasons for fostering either extrinsic than intrinsic motivation

- a) improving students' knowledge and competences in two disciplinary fields at the same time
 - a) helping to pay attention to the lessons and the activities
 - b) deepening the knowledge of some of the historical topics
 - c) preparing the students to acquire skills that they will have to use in their scholastic, academic but also simply life's future

Students' comments and evaluation

During this year we have had the opportunity to study History in English and in my opinion this is a great thing because there is a lot of fun learning much more things about this subject in another language!

It is a good method to increase the control of the foreign language and to learn more topics of History

I think that studying history in English is funny and interesting

CLIL is an original way to improve the language and our knowledge. Is fun and creative.

It's a training for the future, in fact in the last year we will have to study a subject in English.

In the future English language will be used everywhere, so to know and to speak it will be very important to travel

Foreign Language Learning /1

The CLIL approach according to the students' comments and evaluation is important regarding the Foreign Language Learning because:

A) It helps in improving the skills needed to have a good command of the language and a pronunciation close to the native

- Important to train my English language
- *Can help us in pronunciation and it can improve our skills in speaking another language.*
- The CLIL is a good method to increase the control of a Foreign Language.
- *History in English is important because it is a way to improve the language and our knowledge.*
- The CLIL also had the online expansion and this gave us the opportunity to hear someone who read the tracks in order to improve our pronunciation

Foreign Language Learning /2

B) It allows to enlarge the English Vocabulary

- It increases the control of this foreign language and it helps to learn more topics of history. I think that also the other subjects should be studied in English because this method is useful to improve our English pronunciation and to learn many more English words
- *I found that many documents that were on the Italian book lost a lot of their authenticity when translated and the CLIL project could have been an occasion to contextualize them and study them in their original form*

Foreign Language Learning /3

C) Improving the skills in the Foreign Language can foster improvement in the History field and vice-versa

- Important to enhance History notions and English speaking ability
- *Important to improve the knowledge and the ability to speak a foreign language by repeating and enhancing the historical events.*
- English History is very important because it helps to increase our level of language and our awareness about the world's History.
- *The CLIL also had the online expansion and this gave us the opportunity to hear someone who read the tracks in order to improve our pronunciation.*

Cognitive Factors

The CLIL approach is considered very useful in respect of the cognitive point of view: It allows to transfer the skills acquired in a subject's field to another, and also promotes the transition from basic skills to more complex ones

- I think that studying history in English is interesting and useful to deepen some of the historical topics. In fact, you can study more aspects of an event and in particular unknown interesting news.
- *Studying history in English at school is very important because, thanks to it, we can improve our English while doing a subject which I consider really interesting*

It helps Foreign students to follow the lessons and activities when they cannot understand Italian

- History in English, it was a different experience for me. It helps to thinking in English. Also it was very educational and enjoyable. It helped me when I couldn't understand Italian

Part two – The CLIL course in Physics

Motivation /1

The study of Physics in English by mean of a CLIL course can be highly useful, culturally significant, brilliant in its subject contents and it casts new light on already known concepts.

It's an undisputed truth that English is the official language in the Science field so the CLIL course brings students to use the language through which the knowledge is transmitted.

As an example of exciting group-work, it was amazing reading and discussing the original article about the recent discovery of the gravitational waves [B.P. Abbott et al., PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS 116, 061102 (2016)] just a few days later that it had been available on the web.

Motivation /2

Staying close to the Science frontiers, whatever the subject, is a powerful motivational boost.

In particular, the students interested in science and technical subjects for further study understand that they are acquiring important language tools as well as general purpose skills.

As for History part one, students' comments and feedback results follow hereafter.

PHYSICS CLIL - Motivation

What do you think about the CLIL course you attended ? Was it useful in general ?

5 % Not useful

Subject too difficult in general, really demanding in L2

95% Useful

- To improve language skills, specific vocabulary, use of ENG
- Dealing with scientific topics in their “natural” language
- Groupworking & watching videos
- In view of university courses

What interested me most

- Dealing with these subject using English
- Learning new specific terms
- Groupworking
- Classmates' opinions, expressed in English
- Speaking with the teacher
- Subject : in general, all covered topics
- Videos and their explanations
- This new kind of lesson, a new approach

PHYSICS CLIL - Motivation

Involvement in communication

1 - lacking		0 %
2 - adequate	XXXXXX	36 %
3 - good	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	46 %
4 - excellent	XXXXXX	18 %

Attitude

1 - lacking		0 %
2 - adequate	XXXXXX	22 %
3 - good	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	69 %
4 - excellent	XXXX	9 %

PHYSICS CLIL - Foreign Language Learning

Were your language skills and abilities at the right level to follow this course successfully ?

Were the videos appropriate to your comprehension level ?

Language skills at right level :

- yes 30 %
- partially 40 %
- no 30 %

Videos :

- appropriate 20 %
- not appropriate 80 %

Difficulties encountered

- ENG – listening – understanding videos
- Intrinsic difficulties of the subjects
- ENG in general – speaking
- ENG in general – reporting in English
- ENG - specific terms and dictionary
- As a follow-up, reporting in detail what I learnt
- Timing and managing of the lesson

PHYSICS CLIL - Foreign Language learning

General use of English

1 - lacking		0 %
2 - adequate	XXXXXXX	18 %
3 - good	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	58 %
4 - excellent	XXXXXXXXXXXX	24 %

Content acquisition

1 - lacking	XXXX	9 %
2 - adequate	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	36 %
3 - good	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	51 %
4 - excellent	XX	4 %

PHYSICS CLIL - Cognitive factors

Consider the attention and concentration you had to spend in order to follow the CLIL lessons in the foreign language: do you think this effort can affect your learning possibilities concerning the subject content during a CLIL lesson ?

Yes, it can affect my learning possibilities **50 %**

It can, but there is an overall learning advantage **25 %**

No, it can't **25 %**

What are the subjects and the topics you think can be best taught in a CLIL lesson ? (say art, history, science, math, physics...)

- Physics **90%**
- Art **50%**
- History **50%**
- Science and Chemistry **25%**
- Math **15%**
- Italian literature **5%**
- Sport activities **5%**
- Philosophy **5%**
- Any subject **5%**

PHYSICS CLIL - Cognitive factors

*Other
comments
or
remarks
about the
CLIL
course*

- ENG practice is so good and useful, as well as learning technical English terms
- It is very important to prepare the unit with an introductory lesson dealing with the specific glossary and scientific terms which apply (with written outline and dedicated look-up tables)
- It is important to speak only English, avoiding Italian in every situation of the lesson
- Peer-to-peer and groupworking are a good practice
- Look for better didactic materials, with more images and animation (“gifs”-like) to explain clearly phenomena and physical effects

THE PROBLEM OF LEARNING MATERIALS

The CLIL approach seems to fit better some subjects vs others:

- The didactic materials play a very important role and we found a crucial difference in the History and Physics.
- For History there are a big amount of sources and materials as well as some updated and helpful textbooks.
- Conversely, for Physics the materials are very lacking and have higher targets of learning.
- The topics are very complex (Relativity, Quantum Physics, Atom Nuclei...), there are few or poorly made textbooks, on the web the available materials are of academic level and the students do not have math tools to be able to deal with.
- Each CLIL lesson of Physics needs an accurate and careful planning and material selection

ESAMI DI STATO : A CHANCE FOR CLIL

- The collaboration of the Foreign Language teachers and of the other teachers is crucial at the Esame di Stato.
- If they are willing to collaborate, as it happened in the Commissions of Exam in which we were in this last Scholastic year, the Exam takes place in a serene and positive atmosphere that allows to attain good results, because, as we have seen, a good attitude towards the Foreign Language Learning and CLIL is very important to motivate the students.
- The CLIL approach fits perfectly with the demand of the Final High School exam. At the final exam students are required to exhibit the ability to establish interdisciplinary connections as a key skill to pass the exam. The interdisciplinary connection is the foundation of the CLIL approach.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

According to the students who have been taught History and Physics through the CLIL approach, it acts favourably upon the Learning in the following 3 areas:

Motivation

- Improves students' knowledge and competences in two disciplinary fields at the same time
- Helps to pay attention to the lessons and the activities
- Deepens the knowledge of some of the subjects' topics
- Prepares the students to acquire skills that they will have to use in their scholastic, academic but also simply life's future

SOME CONCLUSIONS

Foreign Language Learning

- Helps in improving the skills needed to have a good command of the language and a pronunciation close to the native
- Allows to enlarge the English Vocabulary and to learn English in authentic communicative contexts
- Improving the skills in the Foreign Language can foster improvement in another disciplinary field and vice-versa

Cognitive factors

- Allows to transfer the skills acquired in a subject's field to another and promotes the transition from basic skills to more complex ones
- Helps Foreign students to understand lessons and activities when they have problems with Italian

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

- Planning together with the teachers of the Department of Foreign Languages is important and necessary.
- The Foreign Language Department teachers are usually very understanding and helpful when they are asked to collaborate for activities related to CLIL.
- A concern expressed by the Foreign Language teachers is that the Reform of the Italian Secondary School which has cut L2 hours will not be helping the process of implementing the CLIL teaching.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS : OBJECTIONS TO CLIL

There is some skepticism about the CLIL approach expressed by other Colleagues in the following ways:

- Are the CLIL teaching objectives suitable to all students or are they too ambitious?
- The required training for the teachers is not sufficient to carry out the CLIL teaching
- Inevitably the use of English will lower the standards of the subjects' teaching and learning

ADDITIONAL REMARKS : CLARIFICATIONS

Therefore it is necessary to clarify that:

- The CLIL methodology is addressed to all the students and not only to the more successful ones
- A CLIL teacher is not a Language Teacher but a Subject teacher who conveys his/her subject through L2

The Learning of a Subject through L2 does not lower the learning standards, indeed it makes them higher:

- There are two languages involved in the learning requiring higher cognitive skills
- The CLIL teaching aims at fostering not only BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) but also the CALP (Cognitive academic language skills)

THANK YOU !!

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