

Three Frameworks for Developing CLIL Materials

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Any language learning process traditionally needs the mediation of semiotic resources such as print materials (Donato, 2000: 45) or nonprint materials (Reinders and White, 2010; Richards, 2001: 251; McGrath, 2002: 125-136). These materials need to be looked at within a given context and a syllabus derived from a specific approach (McDonough and Shaw, 2003: 4-14). But how should we see materials in ELT? According to Tomlinson (2008: 3-4, 2010: 83), successful materials development, regardless of whether based in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task Based Learning (TBL) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), should be envisaged as learning materials and the principles to follow need to show the central role that learners should play. In this article I will look at ways teachers can organise their own CLIL learning materials in EFL contexts.

Materials and CLIL

CLIL has been widely adopted in Europe, but also in other parts of the world. Because the integration of content and language needs to be more context-responsive in terms of school curricula, and students' linguistic and cognitive levels and needs, there is a clear lack of marketed coursebooks, a concern which is often viewed as a drawback in CLIL (Alonso et al., 2008:46; Cammarata, 2009:562; Coonan, 2007:628; Lucietto, 2009: 12-13; Mehisto et al.2008:22; Moore and Lorenzo, 2007:28-35; Stoller, 2004:267; Sudhoff, 2010: 34; Vázquez, 2007:103).

In the case of EFL, teachers who need more than one-off activities from coursebooks wrongfully claiming to have a CLIL component may want to produce their own materials in order to make them truly context-responsive. McGrath (2002:159) observes that one advantage of teachers adapting or devising their own materials within a content-based approach is that coherence may be easily achieved as it derives from the common theme or subject-matter content. Furthermore, flexibility may be sought through the negotiation of contents and the freedom to start with any given unit of work. However, due to the nature of this flexible approach, principles such as sequencing and evolving complexity may be put at risk as the sequence of themes could be arbitrary. In relation to this, I believe that teachers can reduce this tension if they think of developing materials as building blocks which when put together fulfil the overall aims of a given course. In other words, each block, with its specific set of subject-related contents will follow the principles of flexibility and sequencing. Teachers may start with any given block since any of them, whatever the sequence, will contribute to the main aims established.

Regardless of content, a unit of materials needs to follow an order. In the following sections I will present three similar ways of organising materials, that is, sources and activities. These examples are based on my experience with teenage learners in Argentinian state education.

Framework 1: Mohan's knowledge structures

Following Mohan (1986: 35), I will illustrate one possible sequence. Any materials, or subsequent adaptation, should start by relating their structuring topics to the learners' lives thus encouraging elicitation to benefit from what learners know already.

For example, if my aim is to introduce tourism management, I may ask students to describe some tourist destinations in Argentina, maybe places they have been to or that they know about. From their descriptions I can brainstorm some general ideas about tourism. Through an example of a tour I may introduce new language by making them notice connectors, discourse organisation and specific vocabulary. Next, learners may be asked to sequence and organise a tour for foreign tourists. Once they have covered this activity, they may contrast their sequencing with principled aspects which rule tours such as transportation, budgets, hotel and overall management among others. Finally, learners in groups may respond to a scenario in which tourists complain about some arrangements. Their decision-making will be contrasted again with a similar evaluation taken from another context, perhaps reported in a newspaper article. It is interesting to see how learning is built up stage by stage from the particular to the more general allowing learners to apply reasoning thinking to arrive at more general conclusions that will be subsequently used to assess other concrete situations.

Framework 2: A revised version of Bloom's taxonomy

Teachers may need to sequence their activities according to the following order of cognitive processes: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001). The categories go from low-cognitive to high-cognitive thinking skills; however, I do not think that teachers should design an activity for each of these categories as everything depends on the aim of the lesson, or the final output task. Also, they can cover these in two consecutive lessons.

Let's imagine that my aim is 'to talk about TV programme charts'. First, I may ask my students about their favourite TV programmes. They can discuss in pairs what they like about Argentinian TV and American sitcoms for example. To introduce new vocabulary I may give them a text in which different types of programmes are mentioned. I may ask students to recap the text by telling me what types there are without looking at the text (REMEMBER). Then I can give them an authentic TV programme chart and based on the brief descriptions of each programme, I can ask them to classify those programmes into types (UNDERSTAND). Imagine that now, I make them notice and infer connectors, and specific terminology which is used to describe each programme featured. I may ask them to get in pairs through an information gap activity. Pairs complete a TV programme chart in which connectors, times, and people are missing (APPLY). Based on that students watch shots from different programmes and organise them as a regular TV viewer would see those programmes (ANALYSE). I may ask them to judge whether those programmes may be suitable in the Argentinian context and if so how they can be timetabled to fit our

culture (EVALUATE). Last, I can ask them to plan in groups a TV programme chart for a day and present it the following class together with a handout for their peers (CREATE).

Framework 3: The CLIL Matrix

Coyle et al. (2010: 43-45) take Mohan and Bloom above into account, but they further develop concerns about cognitive challenge accompanied by language support. Their CLIL matrix proposes 'quadrants'. They move from building students' confidence, by resorting to the content and language they know through group or more interactive tasks to 'quadrants' in which learners deal with more individual tasks on the one hand, and further demands in terms of language and content on the other.

In addition, the authors note that this matrix needs also to cater for a careful balance in terms of language and content learning. In a view similar to the taxonomy in Framework 1, teachers need to organise materials in the following order: familiar language, familiar content, new content and last new language.

To organise language activities better, Coyle et al. (2010: 36-38) develop a Language Triptych. Materials should expose learners to language of learning, that is, the learning of key words and phrases to access content, language for learning focusing on the language students will need to carry out classroom tasks such as debating, and language through learning to make room for unpredictable language learning that may arise as the lesson unfolds. If the lesson starts with a text, teachers need to look at its complexity, that is, its linguistic and cognitive challenge, to make sure that materials move from familiar language and content to new content and language. They can manage such a sequence by exploring bullet-point texts, tables and diagrams and more visuals. Teachers can also adapt texts through synonyms, cognates, and simplification of language and content load per sentence.

For example, let's imagine now that I am planning a lesson about population and migration. I can start by resorting to familiar language such as simple present asking students 'What do people do to escape civil war?' I can also ask them about their ancestors, whether they know why and how their great-grandparents arrived in Argentina. From these conversations I can elicit familiar knowledge such as 'immigration'. Through more oral examples, or documentary snapshots taken from YouTube I can introduce them to 'internal/external immigration/emigration' for political, economic, socio-cultural, and educational reasons also explaining the push and pull factors behind these migration types. I may introduce if-clauses by recapping the factors mentioned, 'What would you do if you wanted to get away from Buenos Aires and live somewhere quieter?' and completing sentences so that they use conditional forms to link migration types to push and pull factors. Students can then, in small groups, discuss these issues based on case studies from around the world and organise a presentation in which they retell and evaluate the case study they talked about.

Conclusion

Because the integration of content and language has travelled outside Europe, it is an illusion to think that big publishers will produce CLIL materials which suit each context. Some attempts in materials development show that more often than not students who lack language proficiency are underestimated from a cognitive perspective (Tomlinson, 2008: 8). Teachers, therefore, can recover their agency by having a stronger say in materials development. I admit that even when they can follow principles published elsewhere and some of the frameworks reviewed in this article, it is a challenging adventure as it is time consuming and it requires that teachers pay attention to content and language together. However, if teachers work as a team, efforts are divided and gains are multiplied. I believe we need to pay more attention to what teachers do by researching how they adapt marketed textbooks and what principles they follow when engaged in producing their own CLIL materials to suit their unique realities.

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