eCLIL Approach

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Abstract
During school year 2015-2016 I coordinated a school network of primary and low secondary level to promote and foster the use of CLIL approach as a tool to improve the quality of learning and teaching foreign language, in particular English in Italian schools. Students involved were students attending the last classes of primary and low secondary school. The theme was common and embraced History and Education to Citizenship. The use of ICT and specific software to build up interactive lessons on a predetermined path involving an interdisciplinary approach has proven to be successful in terms of involvement and improvement in acquisition of language oral and written skills in students, of increasing collaboration among teachers.
Moreover it enlargened and improved the range of vocabulary in young students and in particular they realized the importance of learning a foreign language as a tool to communicate and to do things.They acquired digital skills in connection with language and disciplinary skils .I will give some examples of eClil units and works and how we built them and I will show the level of cooperation and interactivity in this way of teaching and working together with both teachers and students.

Keywords: eCLIL and foreign language teaching

1. Introduction –The context and the participants

The project has been carried out during the school year 2015-2016 in a district made up of schools located in the territory of the town Carini near Palermo, Sicily, led by the school I C Laura Lanza Baronessa di Carini. In particular the schools involved were I C Sferracavallo , D.D."A.Siragusa"in Pallavicino, SMS "De Stefano" in Erice, I C "R.Guttuso" in Villagrazia and I C "F.Riso" in Isola delle Femmine. The participants were more than 240 pupils , aged 9-10, attending the final class of Primary school and more than 300 pupils , aged 12-13, attending the final class of Low Secondary school, around 60 teachers of different levels and subjects, in particular English, Science, History, Italian and Geography, Citizenship and Ict as a support. The theme was " Historical, Geographical and Scientific events during the last two centuries in Europe, in particular, after the two World Wars and the birth of the European Union". The teachers had to attend a basic course on how to plan simple and effective CLIL lessons based on a virtual platform (EDMODO in the specific) to use also in their classes as a vehicle to collect and share the work to be done. The project lasted 6 months. As the level of teachers involved were not equally adequate to the one which was required - A2/ B1- it was stated that the subject teachers had to work in pairs with Foreign language teachers in order to cope with the linguistic gap and to fill the specific discipline gap. The project was also socialized among all the school components as a new challenge to improve the quality of foreign language teaching and to promote a multidisciplinary approach. The basic assumption was that CLIL is a methodology, a means to teach and to learn foreign languages and using such approach so late in the school curriculum , the way it is in the Italian school system, in the last years of high school, doesn't guarantee an effective success. Otherwise, a closer approach to CLIL as a new method to learn foreign languages starting from Primary school should be strongly advised also in terms of increasing motivation to learn in the students.

2. How to elaborate didactic plans approaching CLIL in a lower grade of school

The Starting point to be discussed and exploited was: level of English of the students; level of content knowledge; materials.
As the level of English was quite weak, it was better to start with a more language-oriented approach, focusing on the vocabulary related to the content areas.
Materials had to be set according to the level of the students focusing on the main contents related to the subjects which had been chosen and to the level of the school.Some suggestions were provided: it is better to involve the students to use "real" English content through Google search, and websites

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like The BBC and the British Council resources. Moreover it is better to choose a simple content area covered also in the L1 and work in parallel with the L1 teacher in both languages L1/L2.

There are also many sources of materials to be used on the internet. A particularly useful one is Wikipedia, a great source of texts which can be legally adapted and used in class.

If language teachers and content teachers are working together then it is vital to work as a team, also observing each others' lessons and talk together. Content teachers have loads of materials, you may find equivalents in English of , while language teachers will probably have new ideas on how to exploit those materials for language. It is much better to work for parallel classes together in co-presence lessons. One of the first aspects to think about is the vocabulary. If there is a technical or specialist vocabulary that our students need to know it must be pre-taught,for example, getting students to match words to definitions or pictures, or making gap-fill activities. So the main activity should concentrate on general comprehension of the text using for instance a mind map or other follow up activities but never let the contents drop off. Other activities can include group discussions, individual presentations, making posters and writing about the topic as homework or as a class activity.

Operational activities:

- Choose a Topic;
- Provide a Framework: a Mind Map, a Time line , a Geographical Map;
- Provide the context (where, when, why, who…) in L1;
- Choose an L2 text (written, oral, audio video….);
- Provide a glossary and a basic vocabulary (expressing dates, using past times, adverbs of location, cardinal points etc...);
- Exploit the text;
- Reading / listening and comprehension activities;
- Test the comprehension (cloze tests, oral tests, matching tests questionnaires etc.);
- Work together with students in tasks helping them to acquire both language and content creating a map, a chart, a diagram, etc.;
- Help building the vocabulary;
- Help expressing the contents correctly in L2 – focus on Questions and answers, reports through short summaries…;
- At the same time guide the students in order to respect and acquire the correct progression of the contents –main topic, cause and effect, timeline , geographical settings, main actors , etc. through diagrams and mind maps;
- Assign a task (oral, or written , a text , a ppt, a video) and evaluate both content and language skills-. Contents and language. A comparative level of competence acquisition in L1 and in L2.

2.1 Building up the vocabulary. Some examples built up for the basic course

This example was taken from an English course textbook in order to guide teachers to realize an easy and basic path to follow and to create a learning object.

Fig.1 How to express percentage

Class 3° Media
Science
An example of a Clil unit on Electricity

Text and Images
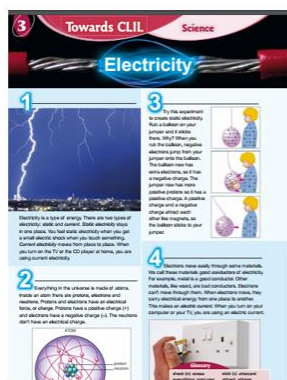Practical examples
Glossary

Fig.2 How to structure a CLIL lesson on science using an English course textbook

3. School network work

Guided by these examples provided in the basic course as a peer to peer activity in I C Laura Lanza school, the teams made up of subject teachers and foreign language teachers (English in this case) gave lessons in pairs introducing themes and work procedures to their students. The aim was also to provide and exploit all the ICT tools and software, which were introduced during the course, such as Edmodo, Mind map, Hotpotatoes , Kahoot,Power Point and Movie Maker in order to produce learning objects together with the students and for the students to get the most appealing and successful and exploitable didactic tools. Moreover as the language of the new media is English the use of these tools made learning easier and more motivating.

All the teachers developed a set of common procedures and didactic plans.

The work was made also in parallel classes, CLIL and No CLIL classes, so that the results of the shift in competence could be more easily acquired. Competences were evaluated through testing: cloze tests, oral tests, building up of maps and learning objects, virtual presentations and videos. The evaluation took into account both content and language ,specific vocabulary and terms, use of correct tenses.

Fig.3 A concept map built using FreeMind application

3.1 An example of a didactic plan
CLASSES: 3B / 3C
TOTAL MONTHS: 36
LEVEL: medium
OPERATING MODE: open and traditional classes
Team : 2 Italian, History and Geography teachers
1 Science teacher
2 English language teachers

1 ICT teacher for media tools

TITLE: "The Nazi racial state: a legalized persecution founded on scientific issues".
Aims:
Acquiring specific historical - geographic - scientific vocabulary in L2
Expressing dates and placing events in the past in L2 by setting events in a timeline
Making brief reports both in written and oral form in L2
Understanding short written and oral texts in L2
Reporting a historical event through various forms (written, oral, audio-visual) in L2
Level ranges:
High Range: Pupils showing good skills and basic knowledge with an orderly working method that shows interest and participation in the activities;
Mid-range: Pupils with sufficient basic training with a working method of consolidation and almost constant commitment;
Low range: Pupils with partial possession of basic requirements.

Expected results:
Interaction both oral and written with proper vocabulary on the Topic in L2 (High Range)
Answering questions both oral and written about the topic in L2 (Media Range)
Acquiring and recognizing the vocabulary in L2 reusing it in cloze tests (Low Range).
Methodology:
Structured and not structured tests (cloze tests true / false, multiple choice, matching exercises, questionnaires, spider diagrams, mind maps) Laboratory Didactics, Group Work, Frontal Lesson, Inductive and Deductive Methods.

Tools and Media: multimedia board, disciplinary textbooks, Internet (Google, YouTube, Wikipedia)
Used Software: Word, Excel, Mind map, Edmodo Platform, Adobe Reader
Testing : online quiz on Edmodo - Oral Interview

Some examples of the learning objects at the following link:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdTdCf5YQTofONzhD5eafZA

4. Evaluation
The results of the path were collected through a survey monkey test in which teachers were asked to compare the level of both content and vocabulary in the classes involved in the project and in the classes not involved in the project. Making a comparison with traditional classes ,the results were that the students had acquired the same content as in mother tongue lessons although expressed in a basic way and wider vocabulary and use of language to express past events . A survey conducted among the students had proved an increase of motivation and interest in continuing the use of CLIL as a new way to approach disciplines such as History or Geography which they previously considered rather boring. A survey among teachers had proved that this experience had improved cooperation and exchange of good practices and teaching methodologies in order to make the teachers' team work more effectively and successful within their classes and the school.

Conclusion
CLIL is not an impossible challenge in the Italian school system provided that the approach changes. Unfortunately, the general low level of English language competence of Italian subject teachers has not allowed so far a proper development of CLIL in Italian schools. Only the spreading and sharing of projects of this kind and an adequate cooperation among the subject teachers and the English language teachers , the extensive use of ICT tools in order to create in cooperation new and more appealing learning objects, can plant the roots of a successful CLIL approach in schools in Italy.

References
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[7]   All materials produced by TOWARDS CLIL project START UP CLIL Network, school year 2015-2016, Leader school I C Laura Lanza Baronessa di Carini, Referent teacher and Coordinator Mrs Emanuela Leto, Headmaster Prof. Giampiero Finocchiaro