

CLIL Methodology in the 21st Century¹

CINGANOTTO Letizia (1), BENEDETTI Fausto (2), CUCCURULLO Daniela (3)

INDIRE, Italy (1)

INDIRE, Italy (2)

IIS Giordani Striano, Napoli, Italy (3)

Abstract

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology is expanding more and more all over Europe as the recent Eurydice Reports show. It was also mentioned in the latest recommendation on language learning issued by the European Commission in May 2018, as an effective approach allowing the improvement of students' language, disciplinary and trans-disciplinary learning outcomes. In Italy CLIL has been mandatory since 2010: the state of the art of CLIL in Italy has been highlighted by the European Commission as a case-study, providing CLIL opportunities for all. Moving from this background, the paper will describe an online teacher training initiative planned and promoted by the authors through an Italian online university, IUL

The training pathway takes advantage of the tools of Web 2.0 and is aimed at getting the participants familiar with the use of technologies for CLIL. The theoretical framework and the main activities of the course will be detailed, mentioning examples of the participants' products.

Among the different tasks, the CLIL web quest will be highlighted, referring to some of the participants' digital products, comparing the state of the art of CLIL in different European countries or in other parts of the world.

Another task of the course is video-annotation, allowing the participants to self-assess their own lesson or to act as a critical friend on a colleague's lesson. Teachers' reflection and meta-cognition are fostered through this technique, according to Do Coyle's LOCIT (Lesson Observation and Critical Incident Technique) model, which represents the framework of this task.

The transversal and final task of the course is the individual Action-Research plan, which each participant has designed and implemented across the length of the course, according to his/her own research question and in consideration of his/her own specific target and teaching context. Some examples of Action-Research projects will be described.

The participants' reactions and feedback will be also mentioned: comments show how powerful a similar online teacher training pathway may be for a teacher's professional and personal growth.

The overall framework behind the course syllabus is the use of the Thinking Routines by Project Zero (Harvard Graduate School of Education) identifying the different steps of the tasks.

Keywords: *CLIL, teacher training, digital media, reflective teacher;*

1. Introduction

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) refers to the learning and teaching of subject content in a foreign language [8]. It is a dynamic and interactive methodology, focused on the learner as the main protagonist of his/her learning pathway and it has been recommended at international level, as the latest Eurydice Report (Key Data on Teaching Languages at school in Europe, 2017) and the recent proposal for a Council Recommendation on a global approach to languages (May 2018) show. In Italy CLIL became mandatory in 2010 and nowadays it is implemented in all upper secondary schools [5]. The European Commission has highlighted the implementation of CLIL in Italy as an example of case study for Europe, describing it in the latest "Eurydice Brief" report and in the above-mentioned proposal for a Council Recommendation.

CLIL teacher training is a very demanding issue in Italy, as subject teachers are supposed to develop language competences, aiming at C1 level of the Common European Framework of reference for languages and methodological competences on CLIL. Online pathways can help teachers reach those objectives, therefore online courses, MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), webinars and other initiatives promoted through multimedia platforms are usually attended by high numbers of

¹ The authors wish to state the following authorship: Letizia Cinganotto wrote Abstract and paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 6; Fausto Benedetti wrote paragraphs 2,7; Daniela Cuccurullo wrote paragraph 5.



participants.

2. Background

IUL, Italian University Line, is an online university co-funded by INDIRE, the National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research in Italy and the University of Florence. It delivers quite a high number of undergraduate and postgraduate online courses attended by a variety of students, a great number of whom are teachers.

“CLIL methodology in 21st century school” is one of these online courses delivered by IUL on its platform and is addressed to subject teachers or language teachers from any school level.

The syllabus has been planned and implemented jointly by the authors, following a constructive approach, aimed at directly involving the participants in the learning pathway through e-tivities or online tasks, forum discussions, “Teach Meet” webinars etc. The main goal of the course is to guide the participants in the exploration of the potential of learning technologies for CLIL.

3. Brainstorming on a CLIL learning environment

The activities proposed were aimed at exploring the potential of CLIL methodology through the use of the Thinking Routines as a part of Project Zero project², a framework, named “Visible Thinking”, proposed by Harvard Graduate School of Education, which is made up of very simple operational steps aimed at guiding the development of thinking skills [9].

An example of Thinking Routine used in the course is the so-called “SEE-THINK-WONDER” (STW) Routine, aimed at observing a picture, a video or any other visual input very carefully and eliciting creative thoughts and wonders starting from observation. In our case a picture about a school setting was the opportunity to reflect on a possible CLIL learning environment and collect the teachers’ ideas as a brainstorming activity.



Fig.1 – See-Think-Wonder

Here is an example of output from a teacher collected in the forum:

“See

In the image I can see a primary school class, where the students are sitting around a large table, carefully concentrated to understand what the teacher is saying. The walls are almost completely covered with maps, various images, schemes, probably not realized by those students, because of their complexity. The teacher listens to one of them who is talking, while the others listen silently. On the table there are pencils ready to be used.

Think

While the teacher is talking, the children show passive expressions and do not appear very active. It seems that some of them are not interested in what is happening in that place, probably the children are well managed by the teacher and remain calm and concentrated. The materials hanging on the walls do not seem suitable for the age of the group, but created for older students and are organized in a messy way.

² One of the authors, Letizia Cinganotto, is actually involved in a research project with some colleagues at INDIRE, in cooperation with Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Wonder

It would probably be appropriate to propose activities in which children must take action to produce something, to stimulate their creativity; in fact, they are not doing anything practical. I would really like to know what children think; from what appears through their expressions, I believe that the teacher's communicative style is perhaps too formal. In addition, the tables seem too large and the classroom small, not allowing a good interaction between teacher and students. Finally, children should work in brighter and more welcoming environments".

From the forum discussion the common idea is that a CLIL learning environment should be flexible, interactive and dynamic, allowing the learner to be active, to experiment things and discuss with peers. No top-down lecture is identified with a CLIL lesson.

4. CLIL webquest

An example of e-tivity proposed during the course is the webquest, a mini-project in which a high percentage of the input and material is supplied by the Internet.

According to Dodge [2], a webquest is "*an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet*".

Benz [1] describes a webquest as "*a constructivist approach to learning (...). Students not only collate and organize information they've found on the web, they orient their activities towards a specific goal they've been given, often associated with one or more roles modelled on adult professions.*"

The learners are guided through online research for resources, according to the specific role they have been assigned.

Teachers were asked to work in pairs or groups or even on their own and produce a webquest on the implementation of CLIL in a particular country of Europe and beyond. A "Teach Meet" webinar was organized to let the participants share the results of their research with their colleagues. Very interesting information was collected and shared on CLIL in Greece, in Spain, in Austria and Germany, highlighting similarities and differences with Italy. Interesting reflections came from the teachers as far as possible lessons to learn and bring to Italy from other countries.

5. Action-Research for CLIL

The core idea crossing the whole training pathway was an action research³ project carried out at two complementary levels: one from the trainees' professional point of view and the other for their pedagogical use in the classroom. An action research project within an action research model.

To empower teachers for change, we focused our approach on the idea that teacher education needs to be undertaken from the perspective of teacher development, not only teacher training, which implies a process of continual, intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth and requires observation, analysis, self-reflection, *peer-to-peer exchange* and sharing of know-how regarding project development.

The training model was thus based on the following steps:

1. **Research** (Analysis by trainees of the theoretical framework and self-analysis of their knowledge and competence level for personal planning, organisation and resource discovery)
2. **Research** (Selection of a teaching AR plan)
3. **Research in action** by teachers while teaching in the classroom
4. **Research on action** [10] by teachers after completing the lesson.

The learning pathway had been designed to increase trainees' professional improvement and empowerment through engagement in constant enquiry into their own teaching practice in

³ The origins of action research can be traced back to the 1940s through the work of Kurt Lewin, a social and experimental psychologist concerned with social problems and introduced in Britain in the 1960s by Lawrence Stenhouse who applied it to the educational field and regarded it as research oriented toward the improvement of direct practice.



collaboration with others. It involved a process of examining practices and evaluating the results, leading to an improvement in teaching practice that benefitted both teachers and students.

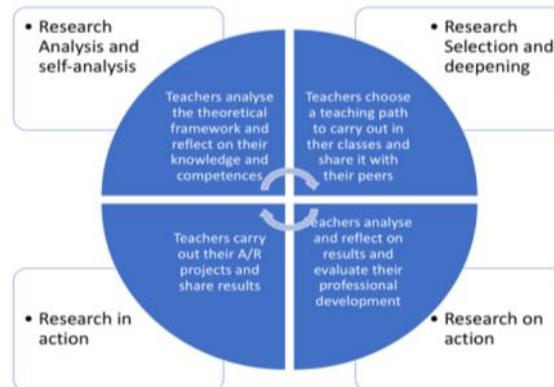


Fig. 2 - The Action Research project within the Action Research model

From our perspective, action research implied moving from isolation to collaboration for participants. Trainees realised the need to investigate and share with peers their theories and practices related to Content and Language Integrated Learning/Teaching and became aware of aspects of their classroom practices that could be improved, as well as the chance to develop professionally by applying the action research approach instead of having innovations imposed from above. By designing and implementing their projects they learnt how to research their practice.

6. CLIL video-annotation

Another task proposed during the course is video-annotation which represents the focus of a great deal of research in recent years [4]. It consists of notes and comments referring to single bits of the video, taken using pen and paper or through a specific webtool, such as “moochnote” or “edpuzzle”. In a CLIL lesson video annotation can be exploited in several ways, especially using specific functions such as label, category, scale, timeline [6].

In a CLIL teacher training pathway Do Coyle [7] suggests the LOCIT model (Lesson Observation and Critical Incident Technique), in which teachers single out specific parts of the videorecording for a lesson and reflect on strengths and weaknesses of that learning moment, looking for the critical incident which may be improved in the following lesson, also thanks to the help of a group of students as critical friends.

The task suggested in the course was aimed at getting familiar with some of the webtools for videoannotation, matching the technical aspects with the reflection and meta-cognition which are crucial aspects in a teacher's professional development [10].

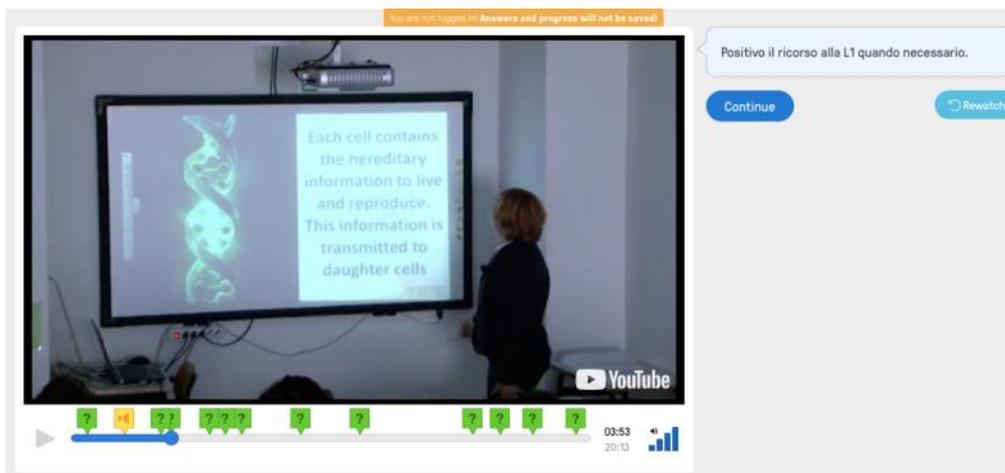


Fig. 3 – Video-annotation



The picture shows an example of video-annotation: the green question marks below the video show the points in the video where a comment has been inserted, such as the one on the right in the bubble, stating that it is deemed positive to use L1 in a CLIL lesson, when necessary.

7. Conclusion

Final thoughts from the participants were collected through another Thinking Routine, named “I used to think, Now I Think”, aimed at eliciting reflections on what a learner has changed after a certain learning experience (in this case the online course) from different points of view: affective, social, cognitive etc. Here is an example of feedback from a teacher:

“My thinking has definitely changed since I took this course. I used to think that CLIL was a methodology more fitting for light and easy content than for complex subjects. As a result, I found it difficult to adopt CLIL and make it applicable to ancient language and literature. Now I think that CLIL is an extremely flexible instrument and you can use it in any case, so long as you learn to plan your classes carefully and interact continuously with your students and colleagues”.

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