



S.M.I.L.E. Teacher Training Platform

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Abstract⁶

“Slow down, Move your body, Improve your diet, Learn for life and Enjoy school time” (S.M.I.L.E.) is an Erasmus+ project designed with the aim of helping reduce the percentage of early school leavers in secondary schools in Europe and at the same time of stimulating the acquisition of adequate knowledge, skills and competences in order to cope with the requirements of a knowledge-based society.

One of the Intellectual Outputs is the platform “S.M.I.L.E. for teachers’ training” which provides teachers with a view on different approaches to teaching and the role of observation and feedback. To correspond to every student’s needs, a guided-divergent approach has been suggested.

The course is in English.

Training objectives

The training platform will help teachers

- develop their awareness of a range of approaches to teaching*
- create CLIL and student-centred materials relevant to their own context*
- consider issues in evaluating teaching and the effectiveness of training*
- share professional practice with other educators.*

Training Content

The platform concisely presents the following teaching approaches:

- The Educational Value of Sport*
- CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning*
- PBL – Project-Based Learning*
- Flipped Classroom*
- Action Research*
- Social media in education*

combined with hints on the use of the eTwinning platform, the importance of a Healthy Diet and Physical Activity to improve academic achievement and Counselling.

Teachers will also find CLIL Modules on different topics. They embed the above mentioned approaches and may help teachers implement them in their classroom as concrete examples, ideas and tools presented in the modules can inspire and support them in their daily activities.

Teachers will find a range of resources from classroom videos, lesson plans, interviews, presentations, digital tools and classroom materials to peer-review and self-assessment activities.

Moreover, participants will look at practical ways of integrating technology into a teaching environment. They will explore a variety of ICT tools to facilitate and support teaching through the above mentioned new approaches.

A wide range of free available technologies is introduced and worked on during the teaching modules. The Modules illustrated are flexible and can be adapted to any type of school, age range, subject and teachers’ commitment.

Keywords: CLIL, ICT, Online teacher training

1. Introduction

The necessity to enhance the quality of the education system and European students’ skills and competences has been acknowledged at EU level.

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Today's knowledge society is extremely complex and highly demanding and requires the education system to prepare students to face challenges and be flexible and productive once they enter the labour market.

Obviously it cannot be expected that the application of one single uniform approach may improve the system significantly but merging strategies may lead to relevant results.

1.1 Divergent vs convergent teaching

Approaches to teaching fall into two categories [1]:

- convergent teaching
- divergent teaching.

The former approach is highly structured and teacher-centred; the students are passive, knowledge is transmitted to them and learning is measured by tests. Low-order thinking skills are generally strengthened.

The divergent approach is flexible and student-centred. Students participate in the learning process actively and assessment includes self- and/or peer- evaluation together with teacher evaluation. High-order thinking skills are usually developed. Divergent teaching may be expected to be positive because it emphasizes students' autonomous, active, self-reliant learning. But there are students who need direction and structure to reach significant academic achievement.

To meet every student's needs, a guided-divergent approach which provides scaffolding together with ongoing assessment and action research followed by modifications may be a second option. A guided-divergent approach is more structured and less flexible than the open divergent one but less narrow and limiting than the convergent one.

1.2 S.M.I.L.E. Teacher Training Platform

The S.M.I.L.E. platform for teachers' training (<https://versal.com/c/vxxx0f/smile>) provides teachers with a view on different approaches to teaching and the role of observation and feedback [2]. The methodologies and tools illustrated in the training course belong to the divergent category and basically a guided-divergent approach is suggested being inclusive and meeting students' needs in a variety of contexts.

The educational path promotes substantial changes in the teaching practice. These changes may be a possible answer to fulfil the 2030 educational goals [3].

The course is in English being mainly based on CLIL methodology and takes into account that English is actually the most widely taught L2.

2. Divergent approaches to teaching

2.1 Content and Language Integrated Learning CLIL

CLIL methodology is the core of the educational path since it enhances high order thinking skills and promotes students' independence and responsibility as well as team work skills.

CLIL [4] stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning (a term created by David Marsh and Anne Maljers in 1994) and it means that subject content is taught and learnt through a foreign language. To achieve this goal teachers should motivate their students to engage with the language and challenge their thinking skills by providing resourceful and thoughtful activities.

CLIL [5] principles can be said to stem out from 3 main blocks:

- Bloom's taxonomy + LOTS & HOTS
- Cummin's quadrant + constructivist theory of Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding
- Cole's 4Cs theory

Remembering, understanding and applying are LOTS. That is, they are lower-order thinking skills. Analyzing, evaluating and creating are HOTS, which means, they are higher-order thinking skills. Teachers have to combine HOTS and LOTS activities in order not to tire their students without proceeding from remembering to creating straight away as the two levels are very different demanding different tasks. The best approach is to start from the bottom and climb up the levels step by step. The graphic that would best show this concept is the one of a **spiral**.

Jim Cummins suggested that there are important differences between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). The idea that CALP entails a different sort of competence was really the starting point of the current trend towards integrating language and content.



Lev Vygotsky viewed interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies. He suggested that teachers should use cooperative learning exercises where less competent children develop with help from more skillful peers - within the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky believed that when a student is in the ZPD for a particular task, providing the appropriate assistance would give the student enough of a "boost" to achieve the task.

In 2005 Do Coyle provided a useful topic or project framework centered around **4Cs**: **content** (progression in new knowledge, skills and understanding), **communication** (interaction, progression in language using and learning), **cognition** (engagement in higher-order thinking and understanding, problem solving, and accepting challenges and reflecting on them) and **culture** (also called intercultural understanding or global citizenship: "self" and "other" awareness, identity, citizenship, and progression towards pluricultural understanding). The framework integrated both Bloom's taxonomy, constructivist theories and Cummin's quadrant in a coherent way.

In the planned modules [6] CLIL is combined with flipped classroom and project-based learning which contribute to enhance the student-centered approach.

2.2 Flipped Classroom

In a flipped classroom [7] environment students are introduced to content prior to/ outside of class in order to practice later what they have learned in a guided setting which complies with the scaffolding process fundamental to CLIL. Students can view and review material at their own pace and according to their own needs. Secondly, teachers can structure class time to optimize individualized attention to students [8] [9]. Finally, students have the opportunity to make use of the material they are learning in a reinforced setting.

2.3 Project Based Learning

Project Based Learning [10] is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge.

PBL [11] requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. To answer a Driving Question and create high-quality work, students need to do much more than remember information. They need to use higher-order thinking skills and learn to work as a team. The development of these competences represents one of the bases of CLIL.

3. Action Research

Action research [12] [13] [14] is a collaborative activity to be used among colleagues who are looking for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student motivation and achievement. The action research cycle supports teachers in assessing needs, documenting the steps of inquiry, analyzing data, and making informed decisions that can lead to desired outcomes. Through this process teachers examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research.

Action research is suggested as part of the process and is intertwined with the above-mentioned methodologies to enhance teaching and learning.

4. Conclusion

Throughout the training course a series of thought-provoking, motivating and engaging issues are provided to both teachers and students.

When designing the Modules the importance of making them flexible and adaptable so to meet diverse requirements was thought over. Physical Education was chosen as the driving subject to drag in students by means of a subject whose activities they generally like. At the same time, though, one of the aims was also to engage students in some other less playful issues ranging from the educational value of sport to doping, from healthy eating to resilience.

As explained various methodologies have been taken into consideration and merged in the CLIL Modules so as to develop an approach linked to the students' background knowledge, and which may stimulate their thinking skills and offer a range of highly motivating activities, not usually accounted for in a traditional class.

21st century education is moving ahead in a rather demanding way for both students and teachers. Educators have been asked to find new ways to engage students in their learning process and S.M.I.L.E. Teacher Training Platform has been designed to try to respond to this challenge!



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