Pedagogies for CLIL: a Lesson from the Practice

Maria Elisabetta Porcedda[1]

Liceo "Eleonora d'Arborea" Cagliari, Italy[1]

Abstract

This paper is aimed at clarifying whether CLIL should adopt a specific pedagogy, as often implied in the literature, like the primary Social-Constructivism, or whether both the same literature and practitioners would pave the way for the adoption of CLIL as an open environment for various pedagogies. Indeed, this question seems crucial, because, if different pedagogies are known by teachers, CLIL would become flexible to the needs of different stakeholders in practice. Moreover, CLIL teacher training should include this broad pedagogical competence, converging with that concerning different linguistic approaches, in order to make teachers aware of their options in relation to the needs of their classroom.

An earlier study on the training gaps of CLIL teachers indicated a great need for pedagogical foundations and then specifically for pedagogy and didactics for CLIL. Based on these findings, there was the preparatory training of three groups of teachers from three Italian Licei Linguistici, engaged in critical participatory action research, left free in their pedagogical and linguistic choices for their implementations, alone or through teams, after a blended short training. During their implementations, they varied the pedagogy along with the linguistic approaches to CLIL depending on the attitudes of their students, their own or those of the team involved, confirming the rare voice of practitioners in the literature and calling for this broader possibility, in contrast to the majority of CLIL research which tends to recommend one specific pedagogy or another.

Keywords: *CLIL, pedagogies, teacher training.*

1. Introduction

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was created with the aim of achieving bilingualism or, better, plurilingualism, together with the content of one or more subjects in formal European education. Nevertheless, it can be said that it points to an open and meaningful educational environment [6] which, through its first original objective, has proven to be beneficial for the holistic development of students, leading them to High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and thus to cross-cutting competences such as learning to learn, cooperation with pairs, personalisation and management of content in different languages, etc.

These findings are often associated with the pedagogy that is widely recognised as underpinning CLIL, namely social constructivism, where students are guided by teachers as scaffolders on their personal but social learning paths through task-based activities. Therefore, CLIL has often been attributed a specific pedagogy, related to its dual focus on content acquisition and foreign or minority languages, whilst teachers see it as open to different pedagogies [1]. These, familiar with the tenets of CLIL, have strongly called for further pedagogical preparation, demonstrating the need for clarification in this area. This is indeed important, both for the proper training of teachers and for their aware implementation of various pedagogies or a precise one in the CLIL environment.

The distinctive feature of bifocused CLIL is certainly the use of strategies which support effective learning in terms of content and languages, based on pedagogies and linguistic approaches together, especially pedagogies which include the linguistic dimension itself as crucial, such as Social-Constructivism [5]. Nevertheless, until recently, research has been largely focused on linguistics, while a deep awareness of the pedagogical dimensions, which founds didactics, gives teaching the key to a variety of approaches and strategies to engage different students in different CLIL implementations.

2. Pedagogies in the clil literature

In the CLIL literature, which today focuses more on strategies and methods, there is little coverage of pedagogy, which is distinguished here from didactic frameworks such as the 4 C's [3], methodologies, such as the inquire-based, strategies, such as role-playing, and linguistic approaches such as the communicative approach.

Apart from the Competency-based, which forms the basis of CLIL for various aspects (notably assessment) [2], if "the subject discipline of a CLIL teacher seems to influence the pedagogical approaches they report using" [7], Genre pedagogy, born from Social-Constructivism and based on cognitive educational approaches such as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), hailed for the CLIL Pluriliteracies Model [4] thanks to its focus on the different specific literacies in each subject, which aims at in-depth and holistic academic learning of students based on the specific language. At the same time, Social-Constructivism has generated a pragmatic version of itself, the Phenomenon-based Learning [2], focused on more transversal inquire learning, so on theory and doing together, across the subjects of the students' curriculum. On the other hand, the concept of culture, specifically related to CLIL teaching, and linked to the awareness that the learning process necessarily involves social, emotional and meta-cognitive needs [2], led to the Transformative pedagogy, that employs collaborative, critical inquiry, and aims at greater inclusivity in schools, starting from a cultural awareness and respect for different cultures. Strategies such as codeswitching and translanguaging, adopted by CLIL, derive from this pedagogy.

3. Background

Apart from the Phenomenon-based Learning, whose results within CLIL were not available in CLIL yet, the others were used in a short teacher training, course, together with the more widely used linguistic approaches (Direct, Structuralist, Communicative, with its Situational and Notional-Functional methods, and Affective Humanistic), in 3 Licei Linguistici in Italy.

In order to clarify to the 15 teachers involved (8 Foreign Language teachers and 7 History ones), mostly inexperienced of CLIL, how the linguistic approaches relate to the CLIL pedagogies described in the literature, and to provide them with the background for deliberate planning of CLIL strategies in different contexts, a framework was offered to them as an overall picture (Table 1) ::

Table 1.
Overall framework of CLIL linguistic outcomes by linguistic approach, related to pedagogies and strategies

Linguistic Approach (L.A.)	CLIL linguistic outcomes per L.A.	Related pedagogies	Suggested strategies by L.A.
Direct	1) FL competence through authentic environments and materials (ICTs tools too)	Social-Constructivism : a, b, c, d Genre: b, c Competency-based: a, b	a) Peer/group working for tasks for non-formal FL b) Multi-disciplinary topics of different subjects/Diverse academic languages c) Immersive context of topics and subjects d) Conversations, dramatizations, visuals and gestures (input and feedback
Structuralist	1) FL understanding and speaking	Competency-based Genre	a) FL laboratory and input/output/scaffolding techniques

Linguistic Approach (L.A.)	CLIL linguistic outcomes per L.A.	Related pedagogies	Suggested strategies by L.A.
Communicative	1) Communicative competence (situational learning) 2) Multi-culture embedding (socio-pragmatic FL functions) 3) Threshold level of embedded content and language, included in CLIL curricula	Social-Constructivism: a, b, c, d for 1) and 2) Genre: a, b for 1), 2) and 3) Competency-based: b, d for 1), 2) and 3) Transformative: b, c, d for 1) and 2)	a) Role-playing b) Multi-disciplinary team-teaching for didactic units/Microteaching/Transmedia activities c) Codeswitching and translanguaging d) Evaluation rubrics
Affective-Humanistic	1) Communicative Competence, respecting students' learning styles (inclusivity and autonomy) 2) Logic and holistic learning 3) Motivation and engagement 4) Language and culture awareness (FL pragmatic functions) 5) Removing affective filters in FL learning	Social-Constructivism: a, b, c, d, e, f for 1), 2), 3), 4) and 5) Genre: d for 4) and 5) Competency-based: a, b, c and f for 1), 3), 4) and 5) Transformative: b, c, e, f for 1), 2), 3), 4) and 5)	a) Peer/group cooperative working for tasks (cooperative task-based) b) Problem solving c) Multimodal input/output/scaffolding, as well as game-based d) Content-based activities (e.g., Extensive Reading), linked to c) e) Codeswitching and translanguaging f) Evaluation of students' paths and their self-evaluation, linked to a), c) and d) (meta-cognition)

As can be seen, there are no clear-cut answers in the literature about how students can achieve linguistic outcomes in CLIL classes through pedagogies. It depends on teachers' choices and prior training, students' attitudes, learning styles, skills and relationships in the classroom. But the merging of pedagogies and linguistic approaches seems to offer other possibilities in very concrete terms. Indeed, it is certainly different to put into practice, for example, microteaching or a cross-curricular topic, because this choice implies different outcomes in terms of language and content. More importantly, any pedagogy can suggest strategies, bearing in mind that language and content for CLIL aim at students acquiring mainly cognitive other than communicative skills.

4. Teachers' resulting choices

The premise for the present results is that the majority of the teachers had no experience in this field, so that especially the management of the methods could not yet appear in depth and show errors of their learning-by-doing in the initial phase.

Most teachers (7) chose Genre pedagogy as a more precise response to specific History literacy and its attention to academic vocabulary. Almost the same number of teachers (5) used Social-Constructivism, from which Genre is derived, and shared with it many aspects at the basis of CLIL (such as the collaborative, task-based approach, scaffolding, etc.), which may underscore their greater focus on language, as there were more FL teachers than History ones. Transformative pedagogy was

definitely used less than the previous, probably because it does not allow the interference of teacher-centred approaches, whereas those previous can be adopted gradually, especially in the design of tasks. Finally, Competency-based was not applied alone, and the assessment of the competencies involved in the students' final tasks proved to be difficult. As for the linguistic approaches, the Communicative Approach, especially the Notional-Functional method, was highly adopted (only one of the 10 teachers who opted for it preferred the Situational), in line with the prevalence of Genre pedagogy (and partially of Social-Constructivism), which emphasises the importance of communicative functions to reach communicative achievements in different contexts, such as different genres for different subjects. This is also confirmed by the use of role-playing as the most used technique (see Table 1). On the other hand, Transformative seemed to be associated by teachers with the adoption of Affective-Humanistic approach, thanks to the predominant attention to both linguistic and cultural awareness and to a participative learning environment. Undoubtedly, this is a crucial point to be further explored for CLIL.

But what clearly emerged is that teachers tend to use more than one pedagogy, and also linguistic approaches, albeit to a lesser extent. For instance, the Transformative was used exclusively by only one teacher, at other times alternating with Genre in the same classroom for different projects, or together with Competency-based, with which it shares the importance of evaluating the acquisition of transversal skills, and finally with Social Constructivism to deepen the pluricultural dimension of the topics through plurilingualism in the classroom.

Conclusions

From this study, which within its limits underlines the need for further studies in the pedagogical field (e.g., involving more teachers from different courses, other pedagogies, etc.), it is clear that CLIL is a meaningful environment open to the embedding of different linguistic approaches and pedagogies which enrich it with authentic ways of teaching and learning, far from adopting a single pedagogy, though Social-Constructivism clearly appears at the roots of CLIL.

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