

Collaborative Learning Through CLIL

内容言語統合型学習における協働学習



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I have been teaching English to a wide range of students, from pre-school children to adults, at both public institutions and private language schools for more than 15 years. Currently, I mainly teach children as well as junior and senior high school students at a private language school, work as an NPO teacher trainer for foreign language activities in an elementary school (*Shogakko Gaikokugokatsudo*), and have just started to teach English for Tourism at a university in Tokyo. The variety of ages, proficiency levels, and learning goals of students and participants has led me to become more aware of the importance of language learning with a content focus in meaningful contexts, especially in collaborative learning.

Encounter with CLIL

Last summer, I attended a seminar on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at Sophia University. I could say that it was here that my eyes were opened. CLIL has developed and spread throughout Europe, and to other EFL contexts such as Japan. I could see that it effectively integrates most of what I learned in my TESOL graduate studies into a single theoretical framework. What especially interests me are the 4Cs and the 10 Principles of CLIL. The 4Cs are “content (subject matter), communication (language learning and using), cognition (learning and thinking processes), and culture (developing intercultural understanding and global citizenship)” (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010, p. 41). Coyle states that value of the 4Cs framework is “the symbiotic relationship that exists between these elements” within specific contexts (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 41).

The 10 Principles are a list of criteria for good CLIL pedagogy and materials proposed by Meyer (2010) and Mehisto (2010) and revised by Ikeda (Ikeda, Izumi, & Watanabe, 2011). Accordingly, a CLIL approach aims to

- 1) give rich input in content and language,
- 2) use authentic materials,
- 3) give multimodal input (e.g., texts, photos, pictures, maps, diagrams, graphs, statistics, etc.),
- 4) scaffold content and language,
- 5) involve both lower-order thinking skills (LOTS: remembering, understanding, applying) and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS: analyzing, evaluating, creating),
- 6) develop academic skills,
- 7) encourage cooperative learning,
- 8) stimulate content and language output,
- 9) integrate the 4Cs,
- 10) aim for good layout and design (Ikeda et al., 2011, pp. 28-29)

Each element in the 4Cs framework and each item of the principles mentioned above is bound to be familiar to language teachers who have been engaged in TESOL or applied linguistics for some time. However, for me, the key attraction of CLIL is that it “organically” integrates and packages the theoretical elements and principles for “synergy” so as to create and provide high-quality language education for learners (Ikeda et al., 2011). It is this aspect of CLIL that has attracted me the most, while realizing that it is hard to “juggle” all the 10 principles within any particular context so as to provide optimum conditions for learning. In my own experience, some students tend to get demotivated by grammar-focused instruction for tests and superficial communication activities in non-meaningful contexts. However, after introducing a CLIL approach, they become interested in the content itself and the language classroom becomes a place for improving not only their language, but their thinking skills as well.

Learner Autonomy in Collaborative Learning Through a CLIL Approach

I have participated in the collaborative learning group since I became an LD SIG grant awardee in 2012. The group discussions always give me a lot of suggestions or insights into how collaborative learning could have an effect on language learning. Also, some of the members are very interested in and actually conduct their classes with a content focus. Thanks to the collaborative learning in the group, I have become especially interested in learner autonomy in collaborative learning.

According to Little (n.d), with regard to the definition of learner autonomy, “there is a consensus that the practice of learner autonomy requires insight, a positive attitude, a capacity for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others”. With the aim of helping the students in my Tourism classes, I have been exploring ways of improving the students’ learner autonomy in collaborative learning through a CLIL approach. Besides a textbook, the students are conducting a portfolio project which utilizes authentic, tourism-related materials that they have collected as a basis for discussion in class and reflection on their self-learning process.

At this point in time, it appears that the project is stimulating the students to become more interested in the tourist industry through these connections with “reality”. This makes them more curious about peers’ ideas, and I am hoping that the class discussions that ensue will play a part in promoting their language learning. I would like to explore the effects of the CLIL approach on my students further and hope to share results and implications of my research in the near future.

References

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