

Theoretical and psychological foundations of Content and Language Integrated Learning: Towards the development of the interlanguage.

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This paper draws on a recent report by The National Centre for Teacher Training and Development on *dual-focus* education. After the European Union established a significant trend promoting plurilingual education, various countries have eagerly undertaken the task of implementing Content and Language Learning in their educational systems. After a number of years and various programmes launched, in her recent publication Christiane Dalton-Puffer (2007) argues that there is no coherent theory behind Content and Language Integrated Learning. While indirectly most CLIL methodology refers to Krashen's *i+1*, directly, it seems to be hampered by a lack of theoretical foundations. All resulting in gross misconceptions on the part of practising teachers.

In many cases CLIL boils down to teaching lexical items (content vocabulary for specific purposes) and abandoning these areas of language that seem recalcitrant to master, i.e. the system with its intricacies. The most striking example of not seeing the wood for the trees is unwillingness to use such basic psychological processes as transfer (both positive and negative) from the native language.

When we wish our learners to share their attention between the content and the linguistic form (*dual-focus*), it is important to remember that due to the *primacy-of-lexis hypothesis* they shall focus rather on the content of the lesson, i.e. vocabulary items to be learned. It is essential for the process to balance the two components. The assumption being that students are simply to pick up language when focused on the lesson content, it does not mean the teachers cannot use certain tricks-of-trade to guide them and cater for the linguistic facet of the lesson as well. We need a tool that would draw the learner's attention towards the linguistic aspect, hence, my modest attempt to combine the CLIL framework with *the interface model* (Gozdawa-Gotębiowski 2003) of:

- initial exposure
- imprinting
- explication
- explanation
- interface formation
- interlanguage expansion

and Schmidt's (1990) five factors influencing noticing of certain phenomena, namely:

- expectations
- frequency
- perceptual salience
- skill level
- readiness to notice
- task demands.

I find it important to prove how *the interface model* is rooted in Schmidt's theory of influencing language awareness, mostly because a number of existing, or already non-existing, methodological approaches have shown that only a psychologically true mechanism can be of long-term use in the process of creating successful learners.

In a nutshell, one may say *the interface model* (with all its implications for raising language awareness) may be a theoretical answer to obvious inconsistencies within the CLIL domain. Like skilled masters of puppets teachers can drive the learner's attention to linguistic input in order to make

it sink in. CLIL lesson seems to be just an incentive for possible development of the interlanguage. David Marsh's claim that

[t]he language classroom is essential for the learner to understand the 'nuts and bolts' of language - the architectural plans. But there is rarely enough time in the classroom for the language teacher to go beyond this essential part of the learning process. Learners need time to build things with the nuts and bolts - to build the house which they see in theory on paper

lends significant support to a theory and a research project I intend to develop. Since pure language classes do not provide a sufficient number of opportunities for learners to develop their interlanguage, and since CLIL lessons, unfortunately, in many cases are not sufficient to cater for the *nuts and bolts* of the target language, it would be best to combine the two. The *interface model* could be used as a tool mediating between the foreign language lesson and the content lesson. Initial steps of *the interface model* would take place in the content lesson (*initial exposure, imprinting*), then the target language structure would be elaborated on during the foreign language lesson (*explication, explanation, interface formation*) and the last step (*interlanguage expansion*) would again take place in the content lesson.

Such procedure is an attempt to bridge the gap between the learners' psychological drive towards meaning (as well as a psychological need of referring to something the mind already knows) and the teachers' drive towards teaching the system. With a certain target language structure properly anchored in their interlanguages, learners will be able to fully participate in content lessons. Nevertheless, I would like to warn against viewing it as a remedy for the lack of teacher training, a problem that will soon need to be dealt with.

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