

STT: STUDENT TALKING TIME. HOW CAN TEACHERS DEVELOP LEARNERS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL CLIL PROGRAMME?

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ABSTRACT. CLIL has two general aims: firstly, to ensure that pupils acquire knowledge of curricular subject matter and secondly, to develop their competence in a language other than the normal language of instruction. However, there is also an important secondary aim, a linguistic aim which states that pupils should be enabled to develop language skills which 'emphasise effective communication'. It is this aim which may be ignored by busy subject teachers. In this paper ideas will be presented to maximise student talking time (STT) within subject lessons. In addition, consideration of the effect of first language interference in spoken English will be discussed using examples from Spanish teachers and learners. Finally, a model for raising learners' awareness of language transfer, or L1 interference will be suggested.

KEY WORDS: Student Talking Time (STT), Communication Skills, Visual Tools, Interference, Learner Awareness.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF TALK

A recent survey by the European Commission for Education and Culture includes the statement that content and language integrated learning (CLIL) should “enable pupils to develop language skills which emphasise effective communication [...] for real purposes” (Eurydice Survey 2006). Combined with theoretical support: “Interaction in the learning process is fundamental to learning” (Coyle 1999) and Vygotsky’s findings that social interaction is the key to success in learning (see Casal this volume), it is clear that teachers working in CLIL programmes need to address the development of student talk in the target language.

The aim of this paper is therefore twofold: to raise teachers’ awareness of the importance of talking to learn, and to suggest practical, task based ideas and practical visual ideas as a stimulus for using language to talk about content. In addition to

knowledge of how to develop talk, and knowledge of the pedagogy for managing student talking time (STT) in CLIL, how to evaluate talk and how to alert learners to the effect of first language interference will be discussed.

In research on pupils learning languages, it was noted that children’s early language development takes place very largely through talk. Very often by the time they leave primary school, however, much of pupils’ learning depends on their ability to cope with written language. This finding is echoed by Bruton in his research conducted in Seville language classrooms (2004). He noted that typical state secondary instruction revolves around “written grammar and vocabulary exercises, along with communal reading tasks completed individually and with the class as a whole”. In first language talk, most children establish the ‘major linguistic systems’ before the age of five and from this point forward

what is learned and the order in which it is learned becomes progressively more dependent on experience –on having opportunities to hear the relevant functions, meanings and structures used appropriately and to use them oneself (Wells 1986).

CLIL can present this ‘opportunity’ for learners to use language in contexts which are both appropriate and communicative.

In order to find out how teacher talking time and student talking time in CLIL Secondary school classrooms are used, I observed many subject teachers over a one year period in The Netherlands. The subjects included Science, Mathematics, History, Economics and Physical Education. Teachers tended to speak in the target language most of the time. Exceptions were when a pupil had a problem which was unconnected with the content of the lesson. Students, however, used L1 and L2 interchangeably, sometimes ‘on task’ and sometimes ‘off task’. The general pattern of classroom talk was as follows:

Teacher Talk	Student Talk
Instructing	Responding (L2)
Questioning	Questioning (L2 + L1)
Giving opinions	Giving opinions (L2 + L1)
Explaining	Reporting Back (L2)
Eliciting	Asking for clarification (L1 + L2)
Checking	Collaborative talk (L1 + L2)
Correcting	Repeating Language (L2)
Prompting	Reading aloud (L2)
Scaffolding	Socialising (L1 + L2)
Reading aloud	Comments to peers (L1 + L2)
Summarising	
Giving feedback - praising/reprimanding	
Telling anecdotes	

Two issues appeared to need addressing if one of the aims of CLIL is to be met i.e. developing language skills for communication. The questions were: How can teachers enable students to develop talk without impinging on the delivery of the curriculum, and how can teachers use content materials so that students experience a language rich environment while collaborating with peers?

1.1. HOW CAN LEARNERS DEVELOP TALK?


In order to move learners forward linguistically, from everyday conversational talk towards academic talk, they need opportunities in school not only to be exposed to specialised content vocabulary and structures, but also to practise them. Fisher (2005) described classroom talk as either *lower order* or *higher order* and identified features of the two types: lower order talk was used for recall, for checking understanding and for revising learning while higher order talk was used to develop cognitive skills, to express opinions and to stimulate discussion. Both levels of talk need to be heard and practised but his research led to the conclusion that many teachers tend to use lower order talk more frequently, especially when students are questioned on knowledge and comprehension. To develop students' cognitive skills, they need to hear language which challenges them to analyse and evaluate content too.

To enable students to develop lower and higher order talk for CLIL contexts, teachers need to consider adopting a task based learning (TBL) approach. Tasks, in a language teaching context, are both language and skill-focused because they enable students to revisit content and practise talking. Willis (2005) defines the characteristics of tasks as:

- A principal focus on exchanging and understanding meanings
- Some kind of goal set for the task so learners know what they are expected to achieve
- Some language focused study

In a CLIL context, however, a third characteristic of tasks needs to be considered: the use of content language. For lower order talk, which uses concrete, information processing skills, a grid containing key subject vocabulary and some questions can be adapted for any curricular subject. Vocabulary must have been previously taught. The following is an example from a 4 by 6 grid for Mathematics:

FIGURE 1. A 4 by 6 grid for Mathematics

1 What is an equilateral triangle?	2 What is it? 	3 Name 3 quadrilaterals.	4 A hexagon
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Students work in small groups of three or four. They throw two dice, decide whether to add, subtract or multiply the two numbers shown. They then respond to the question / command in the appropriate box or they ask a question which has the content word as the answer e.g. for number 4 above: What 2-D shape has 6 sides?

An example of a task which develops creative thinking across the curriculum while also revisiting content language and concepts, involves the use of two dice and a worksheet with statements from 2-12 such as:

I'd rather be.....because...

2. A heart or a brain (Science)
3. A pound or a euro (Economics)
4. A river or a sea (Geography)
5. An ancient Egyptian or an ancient Roman (History)

Students throw the two dice, add them then respond to that number. This type of task gives students the opportunity to be imaginative and to scaffold one another's talk during their responses, should they need help to explain why they would like to be the object or person.

For developing higher order, hypothetical and analytical talk, tasks can be created from a grid similar to the one explained above:

FIGURE 2. A 4 by 6 grid for Science

1	2	3	4
Why is the spine made up of small bones?	Why are birds' eggs speckled?	A spider isn't an insect. Why?	Where can you see water evaporate?

Tasks such as these help learners develop the ability to make complex meanings explicit by using content language orally in a collaborative context. Groups of learners work together to define and explain both language and content. This in turn, helps them acquire new content vocabulary and concepts in a learner friendly context where there is group support and accountability. After having completed the tasks, learners appreciate feedback so teachers should respond to any language difficulties encountered or to any breakdown in understanding. Tasks therefore provide an ideal opportunity for consolidation of learning.

1.2. MANAGING AND EVALUATING TALKING TIME IN CLIL CONTEXTS

A Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach requires consideration of several aspects, both procedural and linguistic. For successful collaboration in TBL, teachers need to make

the learners aware of the purpose and outcome of the tasks. When learners understand why they are participating in talk and what they have to achieve, they are more likely to remain focused. Teachers should also establish rules and timing for tasks. Clear guidelines such as, 'one person speaks at a time', encourage learners to listen as well as to talk. A time limit is necessary because it is preferable to allow short 7- 10 minute periods for collaborative talk, rather than a longer period which may result in more use of first language.

In addition to these considerations, assigning roles to group members can help students learn to take responsibility for managing and evaluating what happens during the task and can also promote positive group dynamics. Roles might include student A taking responsibility for resources, B noting any difficulties, C ensuring the group speaks in the target language and D reporting back to the teacher once the task has been completed. Building in time for feedback in a plenary at the end of TBL is important too. Questions to be addressed include: how did we do and how can we improve? Finally, teachers need to be aware of cognitive as well as linguistic progression in the tasks they use: from closed talk to exploratory, extended discussion.

As a result of the need for assessment in most areas of a European curriculum, teachers should reflect on how they can evaluate talking time. In recognition of the CEF (Common European Framework) of 'can do' statements, TBL might include the following:

Can:	<u>Date</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Date</u>
Respond to questions				
Ask questions				
Introduce new ideas				
Clarify own points				
Express support for others				
Build on another student's ideas				
Respond to peers by challenging ideas				
Respond to peer talk by offering opposing ideas				
Use evidence to support ideas				
Identify points of similarity and difference				
Identify and report back main ideas of discussion				
Personalise the issue through relevant information				

Teachers need only record the data three or four times over an academic year but they should ensure all pupils are working towards extended talk. By using statements such as these, talk has a value, and teachers and learners have evidence of progress made over a term or a year. Without 'can do' statements, very often talk in a CLIL context can become the skill which is forgotten or ignored. Effective teaching in bilingual contexts has in fact, been defined as

the degree to which a teacher is able to successfully communicate his or her intentions, maintain students' engagement in instructional tasks, and monitor students' performance in completing assigned tasks' (Tikunoff in Richards 2001).

2. MATERIALS FOR DEVELOPING A LANGUAGE RICH CLIL ENVIRONMENT

In the European CLIL contexts I have been involved in, the reality of a school day is that learners use first language in the playground, in the lunch queue, in the corridor and as they enter the classroom. What is noticeable is that it is unusual for learners to encounter the second or target language until the teacher starts to speak in the classroom. One way of helping learners to think in English before the lesson starts, is to have the target language obviously on display at pupil eye level. For example, teachers can write a 'word for the day or question for the day' on the board. If there are posters or pupils' work on display, teachers can pin up questions or statements for learners to read, think about and perhaps respond to at a later stage. Poster questions can be graded from lower order, concrete language, to higher order, creative and analytical language too. A poster of a volcano might have the following:

What features of a volcano can you see?

What is inside the volcano?

Is there a volcano near Seville? Why? Why not?

Where are there volcanoes?

How does the picture make you feel?

With appropriate questions on display, learners are more likely to think and talk in the target language. In some CLIL contexts, background music with target language lyrics can also be used to stimulate talk.

The need for a language rich, yet also cognitive challenging environment was recognised by Cummins. He described the progression of learners' development from BICS (basic interpersonal and communication skills), which have low cognitive demand and are context embedded, to CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency), which has high cognitive demand and is context reduced (2001). If the learners have the opportunity to use the target language outside the classroom, such as is the case with immigrant children or those in bilingual communities, BICS can be achieved in the first two years of language learning. If the language being learnt is a foreign language, the process will take longer. CALP, however, takes considerably longer: from five to seven or eight years. Teachers therefore need to support learners in activities and tasks which bring them towards CALP. The further away from a concrete i.e. 'embedded' context a speaker is, the greater the demands on their linguistic resources. It is important that learners move beyond everyday conversational skills towards mastery of language that is more complex and coherent for educational purposes. Support for language and academic development is needed to enable learners to express ideas in a CLIL

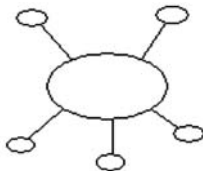
environment. It can be argued that the Cummins model therefore supports the use of tasks which help learners talk about cognitively challenging content material. Academic talk, "is likely to require at least as much cognitive processing as writing an essay on the same topic" (Cummins 2001: 68).

In addition to the use of posters to encourage learners to talk about content material, the use of other visuals such as diagrams, graphs and charts from school subject course books can help develop academic discourse. The advantage is that the materials are familiar to the learners as they have seen them in their course books. An example is taken from a biology text: a diagram of the human body with labelled parts of the digestive system provides an opportunity for learners to use the passive voice to explain the process shown in the diagram from start to finish. Learners have the key content vocabulary on the book page so they can then put into practise appropriate academic language, which is "virtually never used in casual conversational interactions" (Cummins 2001: 68). Using course book diagrams is a practical and time-saving way of extending material so that learners can revisit the content language orally and in a supportive context.

2.1. HOW CAN VISUAL TOOLS BE ADAPTED FOR STUDENT TALKING TIME?

Visual tools have a variety of names: concept maps, cognitive maps, spidergrams, word webs and graphic organisers. Their main aim is to make learning more effective by instructing students in how to use graphic organisers to understand content. They are frequently used for note-taking, for studying or revising content and language. They provide a clear method for representing relationships and linking thoughts, then later remembering key words and concepts. However, visual graphic organisers can also help learners to develop speaking skills because they provide a frame or an *aide memoir* to help structure and scaffold thinking and talking. At the simplest level, a mind map can act as an activator of prior knowledge at the start of a lesson or as a summary of content information to be explained to the class, group or to a peer. The visuals act as frames for learners to think, to add and to build on their knowledge collaboratively. Five examples (adapted from Marzano, Pickering and Pollock 2001) of graphic organisers and their use in different subjects are:

1. *Description Pattern*

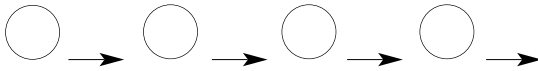


Useful language: and / also / as well as / in addition

Geography: used in small groups. Learners are allocated different capital cities and brainstorm their knowledge about them. The group makes decisions, selects and rejects

information then organises and plots five facts about the capital city. The graphic and the connectives associated with it are then used as a frame to report back the information orally to the rest of the class.

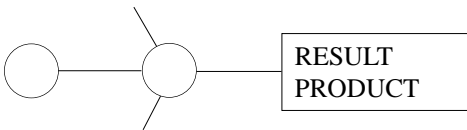
2. *Time Sequence Pattern*



Useful language: first / then / next / after that / finally

History: used for recording facts that led up to an historical event. Learners then talk about them using time connectives. It encourages learners to see time in a horizontal plane rather than as a list of events written vertically. It can be just as effectively used to describe the stages in the setting up of a scientific experiment.

3. *Cause / Effect Pattern*

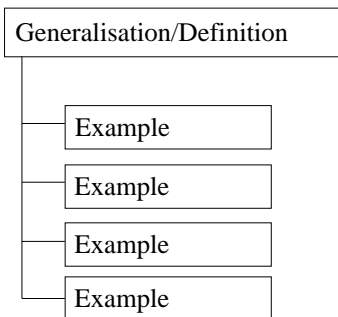


Useful language: because, as a result, because of

This organiser helps learners explain an outcome or effect by using a pattern of circles that relates cause and effect. Learners can use the information recorded in it by linking the content with the language of cause and effect.

Science and Economics: learners record the causes which lead to climate change or record the causes that lead to inflation.

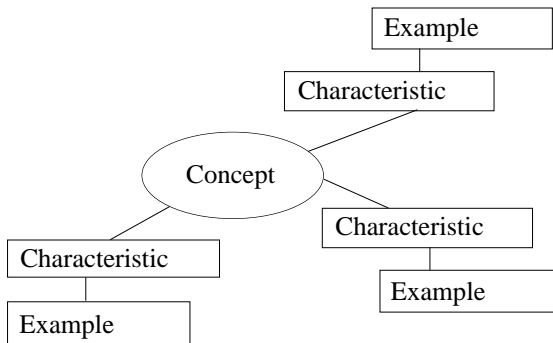
4. *Definition Pattern:*



Useful language: to illustrate, in addition, furthermore

Mathematics: An example is: 'A prime number is only divisible by one and itself'. Learners, in groups or pairs, decide which definitions they can map onto the visual, then using connectives of addition, share their information with other groups.

5. *Concept Pattern*



Useful language: for example / for instance / to illustrate the point

Language: the concept of a fable. Three characteristics include an indefinite time in the past, the use of animals as protagonists and the incorporation of a moral. Learners find their own examples to record, then using the language of exemplification, share their ideas with the class.

All the graphic organisers provide clear frames for collaborative talk among learners. They help focus the talk on content with specific language support required to discuss the content. They are flexible; develop creative thinking and enable learners to feel confident when presenting information to their peers.

3. HOW CAN KNOWLEDGE OF L1 FEATURES HELP IMPROVE TALK?

As a result of work done with Chinese pupils who were having difficulty talking about content and language, I discovered that learners over the age of ten, and who have had two years of English language teaching, are able to understand and, more importantly, want to understand why some of their mistakes are related to features of their first language. By showing and displaying on the wall common mistakes (L1 interference) made by many Spanish speaking learners of English, learners feel reassured that these are not individual difficulties, but are quite universal. For Spanish learners, therefore, I display the following charts on the wall or put copies of them in learners' books as a reference guide. The mistakes highlighted in the table below were all made by Spanish teachers while on CLIL training courses in Norwich.

TABLE 1. *Spanish L1 Typical Mistakes (adapted from Swan and Smith 1991)*

	Spanish	English
Verb forms: (perfect tenses)	How long <i>are you</i> working? It's a long time <i>that I do</i> this	How long <i>have you been</i> working? <i>I've been doing</i> this for a long time
(future)	<i>Do I</i> write this tomorrow?	<i>Will I</i> write this tomorrow?
(be + adj)	<i>I have interesting</i> to know	<i>I am interested</i> to know
(infinitives / gerunds)	<i>To text</i> is good	<i>Texting</i> is good
Conditionals:	If I <i>will finish</i> , I will log off	If I <i>finish</i> , I'll log off
Adjectives (concord)	Teacher <i>resources</i> books	Teachers' <i>resource</i> books
Adverbs: (position)	<i>Often she</i> asked us	She <i>has often</i> asked us
Pronouns: (3rd person omitted)	It isn't mine. <i>Is hers</i> Was raining.	It isn't mine. <i>It's hers...</i> <i>It was</i> raining.
(relative)	My friend <i>which left...</i>	<i>My friend who</i> left...
Prepositions:	When we arrive <i>to</i> school... It consists <i>on</i> a projector We copy them <i>on</i> our notebooks I'm interested <i>on</i> the project	When we arrive <i>at</i> school... It consists <i>of</i> a projector We copy them <i>in</i> our notebooks I'm interested <i>in</i> the project
Vocabulary:	In our lesson <i>plannings</i> We did some writing <i>works</i> Have you any <i>informations</i> ?	In our lesson <i>plans</i> We did some writing <i>exercises</i> Have you any <i>information</i> ?
Word order:	<i>I only can</i> make a suggestion We've <i>got also</i> many questions It makes <i>easier the work</i> I like <i>very much</i> Science	<i>I can only</i> make a suggestion We've <i>also got</i> many questions It makes <i>the work easier</i> I like Science <i>very much</i>
Others:	Can you <i>explain us</i> ?	Can you <i>explain it to us</i> ?

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To summarise, learners in CLIL programmes should be empowered to talk in the target language beyond the conversational level of basic daily transactions. They need teacher support to collaborate with peers in order to explain course book diagrams and graphs, to participate in task based learning, and to use graphic organisers for developing cognitive, academic language. With knowledge of why some of their language mistakes are the result of L1 transfer, learners will be able to interact in the learning process and move forward using academic, communication skills with confidence.

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