Abstract:

Integrating Content and Language:
An alternative approach to undergraduate language teaching and learning

In European higher education, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is not a new phenomenon: in many countries, English is used to teach a variety of specialized subjects (Aguilar/Rodríguez 2007; Costa/Coleman 2010). In the UK, however, few university language departments use a structured CLIL approach.

Integrating content and language teaching and learning means that students are provided with extensive exposure to the L2, structured around subject-specific content. Thus, in addition to acquiring subject knowledge, students gain language proficiency and, through negotiating meaning, acquire transferable skills such as problem-solving, team work and constructive self- and peer-assessment.

Consequently, CLIL has the potential to be an invaluable pedagogical instrument which equips graduates with the sophisticated academic, linguistic and personal skills that today's employers seek. Indeed, a recent UCML report on UK labour market demand for modern language graduates (Mulkerne / Graham 2011) has highlighted how tertiary education will play a significant role in closing a skills gap caused by a decrease in German uptake post-GCSE.

This paper presents findings from a mixed-method case study which is part of an on-going PhD project describing and analysing the aims, main actors, pedagogical approaches, learning outcomes, and assessment structures which underpin one UK university's CLIL approach in German. These results are set against the results of a LanQua CLIL project analysing a number of CLIL projects implemented in tertiary education across Europe (Greere / Räsänen 2008).

Definitions of CLIL:

Within CLIL, language is used as a medium for learning content, and the content is used in turn as a resource for learning languages.

<div align="right">European Commission (2005: 2)</div>

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an **additional language** is used for the learning and teaching of both content *and* language. That is, in the teaching and learning process, there is a focus not only on content, and not only on language. Each is interwoven, even if the emphasis is greater on one or the other at a given time.

<div align="right">Do Coyle et al. (2010: 1, their emphasis)</div>

German at Aston University:

⊗ Single honours degree or combination with another MFL, Translation Studies, English language or one of the social sciences subjects offered in the school: International Relations, Politics, or Sociology.

⊗ Depending on the subject combination, all language students take at least 40 credits through the medium of the L2: a core language module and a core subject module such as *German History* in Year 1 and *Post-War Germany* in Year 2, plus L2-taught optional modules, specialist Translation Studies modules, English-taught modules in the combination subject or another language studied as part of the university-wide language programme, depending on their programme combination.

⊗ International Business and Modern Languages: 50-60 credits provided in the L2 through a specialist *German for Business* core language module and one or two business-oriented subject modules; business students also join the core history and society modules.

⊗ fully integrated and assessed Year Abroad which allows students to further improve their language skills in a natural immersion situation

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