

Disadvantages of the clil methodology education essay



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Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is “ an innovative approach to learning, a dynamic and motivating force with holistic features” (Paresi et al. 2001: 77). This method of learning the content of subject through a foreign language has been acclaimed worldwide as a pedagogical tool of providing learners with a special learn-promoting atmosphere. Although studies conducted in CLIL classrooms have demonstrated numerous positive effects on language competences and attitude, there are still certain skills which cannot be developed as successfully as in traditional classrooms. First of all, this concerns productive skills which are fostered less effectively in CLIL classes. Therefore, additional strategies are much needed in order to boost both oral and written skills. One of such suitable techniques is cooperative learning (CL), which gives learners an opportunity to work with their peers and, what is even more important, motivates them. Incorporating CL into CLIL may help facilitate overall language proficiency and reach a high

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level of learning motivation. This paper will analyse how students may be motivated in CLIL classes by implementing CL. The purpose of the study is to show how CLIL enriched by CL can create a motivating learning environment.

The first section of the paper is an introduction, which is followed by an overview of the research conducted on CLIL in Europe. Section 3 deals with the drawbacks of the CLIL approach and Section 4 is devoted to CL, which is divided into three subsections. First subsection gives an overview of CL research done in Europe. The next subsection defines CL as a term and the following subsection investigates the particularities of CL organization of the learning. Section 5 discusses how a blend of CLIL and CL can contribute to creating motivating class atmosphere. The final section will draw a conclusion about CL as one of the most useful techniques to increase students' motivation to learn language.

2. CLIL research in Europe

As already stated in the introduction, this section deals with research studies carried out in European countries and points out main discussions concerning CLIL as a teaching method, namely its influence on linguistic and cognitive competences of learners.

Before elaborating on CLIL research, it should be noted that there is “ still a well-documented paucity of research in this area” (Pérez- Cañado 2011: 315). CLIL is a special method of “ teaching and learning through a foreign language” (March 2002: 54), which has been widely acknowledged across Europe. This approach of integrating content and language in the classroom has gained an increasing popularity in European countries in the 1990s when

greater levels of foreign language proficiency and new forms of bilingual education were needed due to socio-economic integration and globalization. Being introduced and developed by Council of Europe in 1996, CLIL approach was subsequently underpinned by a series of classroom based studies which provided evidence for its advantages. Overall, research work carried out on CLIL affirms that “ it is safe and promising way of teaching both for foreign language and a content subject” (Gregorczyk 2012: 10). Findings have showed that CLIL has positive impact not only on content learning (cf. Serra 2007; Deller & Price 2007; Seikkula-Leino 2007; Vollmer 2008; Jäppinen 2006), but also on L1 and L2 competences (cf. Masih 1999; Lorenzo, Casal & Moore 2009; Coyle, Hood & March 2010). Besides, there are some researchers who emphasize the ability of CLIL to improve content and language competences and who strongly believe in the importance of the CLIL methodology (cf. Mehisto & March 2008).

3. Disadvantages of the CLIL methodology

Despite the presented potential of CLIL project, several disadvantages of the content-based language teaching were observed and investigated by different scholars and teaching experts. These studies have demonstrated that especially productive skills are less boosted in CLIL classrooms and are achieved at considerably lower levels of performance than receptive skills. This means that both speaking and writing skills are reported to be negatively affected in content-based contexts. Particularly oral production of learners is likely to fail to be successfully developed and improved in CLIL classes (Pérez- Cañado 2011: 317). Although some researchers argue that good interactive skills can be acquired in content-based classrooms (Moore

2011: 533), Casal (2006: 1) points out that learners have few opportunities to communicate with each other which may have a negative impact not only on oral but also on written production. Moreover, it is essential to focus much more attention on writing in content-based classes in order to become more positive outcomes (Dalton-Puffer 2007: 36).

Apart from the questions of negatively affected linguistic competences raised by various researchers, other scholars were concentrated on issues associated with language development (cf. Dalton-Puffer 2007; Merisuo-Storm 2007). However, only few studies are concerned with learners' attitudes or perceptions (cf. Hunt 2011). Since this paper is focused on CL as an effective teaching tool for motivating learners in CLIL classes, the research done on CL will be briefly discussed in the first subsection of the next section devoted to CL.

4. Cooperative learning.

4. 1. Overview of European studies on CL

Though the term cooperative learning was coined in the USA in the 1940s, most research has been undertaken only during the last thirty years and has done much to advance theorists and teachers' knowledge of cooperation education. By looking at CL research outside the USA, there are only few European countries in which thorough and fundamental studies on CL have been conducted, namely in Italy by Lopriore (1999) and Spain by Lobato Fraile (1998), Rodríguez Tuñas and Morales Urgel (1998), Casal (2005), as well as in the Netherlands by Van Oudenhoven, Van Berkum and Swen-Koopmans (1987). More research on CL is certainly needed in Europe, which

could lay particular stress on the benefits of the incorporation of CL into CLIL classes, because this might enhance CLIL greatly.

4. 2. Definition of cooperative learning

CL promotes better learner's achievement than traditional learning approaches (Slavin 1984: 256). CL is known for its useful and effective instructional value in language learning and in education in general. There exists a large variety of definitions of CL which depend on the theoretical approach behind this term. For Olsen & Kagan (1992: 8) CL is a group learning practice with a special structure, where learning depends on "the socially structured exchange of information" between students who are responsible not only for their own outcomes and progress but also for those of their peers. Similar to Olsen & Kagan (1992) Johnson & Johnson (1981: 446) view CL as a method of arranging "small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning". However, there are several broader definitions of CL, for example, one that is given by Jacobs, Power & Loh (2002: 1) who define CL as "principles and techniques for helping students work together more effectively". Another generalization of the term CL can be found in the studies by Damon & Phelps (1989: 136) where researchers postulate CL as an overarching notion comprising "a range of team-based learning approaches".

Overall, the definition of CL varies according to the aspect of learning which is of primary importance for a particular theorist. In this paper CL is regarded as an effective pedagogical tool for improving productive skills in CLIL classes and for motivating language learners, and thus, particular attention is drawn to both academic achievement and social relationships, which may

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be enhanced in a cooperative environment. The accentuation of these benefits of CL can also be explained by the fact that learners in a cooperative setting follow the aim of the group and try to help each other in learning which serves as a motivating force for their readiness to inform and assist their peers (Gillies & Boyle 2010: 933).

4. 3. Organization of learning in cooperative classrooms

The preceding discussion has demonstrated not only the variety of definitions of the term CL, but also has highlighted the advantages of this effective group learning technique. This subsection will demonstrate the existing methods of organizing of the learning process in cooperative classrooms to show the effectiveness of CL for CLIL approach.

There are several strategies of arranging learning in cooperative classrooms, which is based on different approaches such as Learning Together (cf. Johnson & Johnson 1981; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec 1992), Complex Instruction (cf. Cohen 1994), Group Investigation (cf. Sharan 1994), Student Team Learning (cf. Slavin 1995) and Structural Approach to CL (cf. Kagan 1994). Obviously, certain similarities and differences can be found among them, however, and they are all underpinned by the basic principles of CL, namely, positive interdependence and individual accountability. At this point it should be stated that it is not just the implementation of CL approach into CLIL contexts which is crucial but also the effective and properly designed group methods with their inherent principles from which CLIL may benefit considerably. Furthermore, a huge variety of CL techniques will make content-based classes more exciting for each learner. (cf. Jacobs, Power, & Loh 2002; Sharan 2010). Some of them are presented by Jacobs (2004: 4-5), <https://assignbuster.com/disadvantages-of-the-clil-methodology-education-essay-essay-samples/>

e. g. Circle of Speakers, Write-Pair-Switch, Question-and-Answer Pairs, etc. Importantly, the incorporation of such group activities into CLIL “ provokes students to strive” (Brecke & Jensen 2007: 57).

5. Implementation of CL in CLIL classrooms

As already discussed in the previous section, CL techniques may increase learners’ motivation. However, not only group activities per se motivate students, but it is a ‘ social interaction’ that is so highly important for them, and generally, for children begin to learn at an early age (Gillies & Boyle 2011: 933). Motivation together with exposure and use are defined as crucial prerequisites for effective language acquisition (Willis 1996: 11). Thus, providing learners with more social contacts and peer interaction activities will motivate them to succeed and to learn. This does not mean that in content-based classes students cannot interact and are not motivated. Pistorio (2010: 2) underlines that CLIL has a potential to generate a “ socially constructed learning environment”. Moreover, CLIL, being based on ‘ intrinsic motivation’, gives a lot of opportunities to learn language incidentally (Paresi et al. 2001: 79-80). In addition, some researcher (e. g. Hunt (2011: 365) postulate that CLIL programmes can solve the problem of “ disaffection” in L2 across Europe (Lorenzo, Casal & Moore 2009: 12-13). However, according to Seikkula-Leino (2007: 330), language and content incorporated into the learning environment cannot be equated with success. Therefore, an elaborate combination of essential features of CLIL approach and CL techniques will yield more positive results, and, at the same time, will improve learners’ motivation. “ This integration provides a motivational and cognitive basis for language learning” (Snow, Met & Genesee 1989: 202).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, CLIL being applied in European schools has been developed to enhance bilingual education and has certainly the potential for growth. In order to avoid some pitfalls of the content-based learning, namely negatively affected productive skills, an additional teaching method – CL – has been suggested. In this paper, CL techniques with their crucial principles were demonstrated as successful pedagogical tools which may improve academic achievement and social interaction in a CLIL environment. Underlying the importance of social interaction as one of the inherent conditions for successful language acquisition, this study has proved that CL may be effectively integrated into content-based classrooms in order to achieve both a higher level of motivation and to boost linguistic competence outcomes overall. Furthermore, since various CL activities force peer interaction, they can also foster speaking skills by motivating students to communicate with other.

Further research in this area is needed to identify other positive aspects of CL, which are suitable for CLIL and which may be applied effectively, especially to improve writing skills. It will be also essential to identify other cooperation features which may increase motivation to learn language in content-based classes. Of course, CLIL needs to proceed with development and research not only to highlight its advantages, but also to focus on additional teaching techniques in order to guarantee that students can successfully develop both their receptive and productive skills in a content-based environment. The results of this paper show that CLIL's benefits will far outweigh the disadvantages when implementing CL into CLIL.