

Using CLIL Principles Teaching Global Management to Low Proficient Learners

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Abstract

CLIL is a concept that has been around for quite some time but is gaining traction especially in Japan for various reasons. Given the main principles of CLIL, most advocates of this teaching methodology recommend targeting mid to upper proficient learners. With adjustments, this methodology can be used for lower levels as well. This paper outlines how CLIL was used in a lower proficient English Global Management class.

Flipping the classroom is one of the newer concepts that is being recycled and presented as something new. The essence is, learners are expected to read or watch material prior to the class, then actually engage the material plus show some proof of understanding to the teacher in class. This has been the methodology for most liberal arts courses for centuries and is now being applied to other courses as well. The age of a sage on a stage, with transmission of knowledge, asking display questions, answering clarification questions being the primary purposes of the teacher in the class has spelt the end of the traditional lecture.

Another trend that has started first in Europe and has made its way to Japan recently is the idea of offering more university classes in foreign languages with the aim of improving the proficiency of students in those languages. In Japan, under the Global 30 initiative by the Japanese government 30 of the top schools in Japan have been given funds to hire professors to teach their specialty in English. Also under this plan, some schools have made efforts to have Japanese professors who have never lectured before in English, to start doing so. One such school that has gained a lot of attention for such a program is the University of Tokyo, which is regarded as Japan's leading academic institution.

Other schools, not part of the initiative, also offer classes ranging from engineering and science to courses in international business in English.

However, there is a huge flaw with this thinking, in addition to the limited funding provided for this initiative. That is the proficiency of most learners who are taking such courses.

Most learners of such courses have very low English proficiency, yet the instructors are told to conduct their courses in English as if the learners have a much higher level of proficiency than they do. Is this an absurd policy and program? Not if many of the principles of CLIL are adhered to. This is the focus of this paper; an Introductory Global Management course whose medium of instruction is English.

This paper will argue that even incredibly low proficient learners can benefit on a basic level so long as the instructor is fairly proficient in many of the standard teaching techniques of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The paper will proceed as follows; the four main principles of content language and integrated learning (CLIL) will be explained since this is the pedagogical underpinnings for the course, what role the instructor plays in the classroom using CLIL, a basic description of the learners, an explanation of how the case study method is used in the course and a detailed description of one case study and how the learners solved it. This paper will demonstrate how the author, who primarily deals with low proficient learners, facilitates improvement in students. Students are able to demonstrate understanding and actually present written solutions to the case studies presented to them even though the language to produce the results was the L1. Using the L1 to achieve the results of L2, the emphasis on product rather than process, is quite a contentious issue and this will be addressed at the end of the paper. The lessons are based on the case study method which allows some of the basic principles of CLIL to be followed. Let us see what the literature has to say as to what those principals are.

Principals of CLIL are to be found in Stephen B. Stryker and Betty Lou Leaver's Content-Based Instruction In Foreign Language Education where they say:

The fundamental organization of the curriculum is derived from the subject matter, rather than from forms, functions situations, or skills.

Communicative competence is acquired during the process learning about specific topics such as math, science, art, social studies, culture, business, history, political systems, international affairs, or economics.

(6).

This is an overall view of curriculum development while others are much more specific as to the CLIL practices based on four Cs in curriculum development. Coyle (2006:13-14) describes the four Cs curriculum as follows:

The first principle places successful content or subject learning at the very heart of the learning process. However, more traditional transmission models for content delivery which conceptualize the subject as a body of knowledge to be transferred from teacher to learner may no longer be appropriate. The symbiotic relationship between language and subject understanding demands a focus on how subjects are taught whilst working with and through another language rather than in another language. The shift has brought with it a need to redefine methodologies to take account of language use by both teachers and learners which encourages real engagement and interactivity. It has also brought with it teacher reflection on how best to teach and therefore embraces issues fundamental to the education process itself. CLIL therefore has implications for teacher education at both pre and in-service levels.

The idea of transmission of knowledge as the primary role of the teacher and the learners are mainly the receivers and bank the information for later use is not one of the principles of CLIL. The teacher is not a glorified tape recorder or YouTube video, merely transmitting information, but someone who helps the learners engage with the material to make sure learning outcomes come to fruition. This is fundamental to CLIL. Let us move onto the second C which is communication. Communication, in Doyle's model:

The second principle defines language as a conduit for both communication and learning. From this perspective, language is learned through using it in authentic and unrehearsed yet 'scaffolded' situations to complement the more structured approaches common in the foreign language lessons. It also builds on the language learned and practiced in those lessons by providing alternative opportunities to develop a wide range of language skills, strategies and competences needed to function in everyday plurilingual situations. [...] CLIL serves to reinforce the notion that language is a tool which to have meaning and sense needs to be activated in contexts which are motivating for meaningful to out learners [...].

Language is not as an end of it itself to be mastered but, viewed merely as a tool for communication in motivating and meaningful contexts. The third C focuses on the cognitive challenges:

The third principle is that CLIL should cognitively challenge learners whatever their ability. It provides a setting rich for developing thinking skills in conjunction with both basic interpersonal communication

skills(BICS) and cognitive-academic language proficiency(CALP). Research suggests that these challenges encourage thinking to take place in different languages and at a deeper level of inter-cultural understanding involving both *savoir faire* and *savoir etre*.

Finally, Coyle refers to the fourth C-culture. Culture is probably the most difficult and the most vague element in Coyle's model.

The fourth principle embraces pluriculturalism. Since language, thinking and culture are inextricably linked, then CLIL provides an ideal opportunity for students to operate in alternative cultures through studies in an alternative language. Studying a subject through the language of a different culture paves the way for understanding and tolerating different perspectives. (Coyle, 2006:13-14)

This is was the basis of how the curriculum was designed for the Global Management course. Having established the principles of which the curriculum for the course was based on, let us now focus on the role of the instructor needs to be, especially with low proficient learners.

The basic conundrum that is faced by the instructor is the fact that most university professors use the lecture format as the primary way to conduct classes while language teachers have a great deal of knowledge how to conduct classes where the main purpose is for their learners to become proficient in the language. One way transmission of knowledge where learners are passively receiving the knowledge, and are not engaged in using the knowledge, is shown not to improve proficiency, let alone communicative ability. The dichotomy between the so called subject expert lecturer and acquisition expert can be quite striking.

Therefore, without the benefit of a team teaching environment, where the best of both worlds can be combined, which has been adopted by many schools, the language teacher has to become a subject expert in some field or the subject expert has to learn enough about language acquisition type classes. As has been noted by Murphey(1997), many language teachers have "jumped at the opportunity" to teach content in a communicative way(122). Murphey also goes onto to add that many of the subject lecturers are "less than enthusiastic" for changing to a non-lecture style format(123). Having covered the role of the instructor, let us look at the learners.

In this particular class the learners are "pre-experienced" in that they have little or no experience of the business world. They are university students and most intend to follow a business career. This lack of experience leads to the instructor to provide a window on the business

world. In this particular class, the business world outside of Japan, which for some, is quite difficult to picture being so young and never having travelled outside of Japan. The learners are quite dependent on the instructor but again, with one of the principles of CLIL as learners trying to develop their own thinking and ideas and express them in English, the instructor takes great care as to not influence too much what are the solutions to the problems presented. However, given the very low proficiency, how does the instructor really know that the learners are able to understand and use the theoretical management knowledge presented by the instructor?

This is where the case study method is really effective. The case study enables learners to look at a particular business problem from various perspectives. Again, keeping with the idea that language is merely a tool for solving problems, what kind of problems can low level proficiency learners solve? What makes the case study method a very good task for even low proficient learners is that it is a problem solving task, and as Frendo (2005) notes “the required skills may include writing, speaking, presenting, listening and so” (58).

One interesting type of problem that managers, regardless of the country, face is trying to hire a person for a particular position at a company. The traditional way of trying to find the appropriate person is to create a job advertisement, send it along to the various media (newspapers, specialist magazines and popular internet recruitment sites) then receive resumes, screen them through some kind of criteria matrix, then interview the candidates and then choose the perceived best person for the job.

This could be done as a display type question where the instructor elicits the 5 steps as to how a person gets hired. What makes this challenging for pre-experienced learners is that they have perhaps been the person looking for a job but never the person making the hiring decision. Therefore, it is not too beyond their realm of current understanding. Having understood the basic five steps, what comes next in the lesson?

Analyzing a typical North American resume with a typical Japanese one is what happens. This is a classic teaching technique of compare and contrast which is one of many ways to solve problems. Problem analyzing, problem solving and giving justification for the solutions are the goals of the course. These goals can be demonstrated to the teacher by the students.

Start by bringing in a Japanese resume and eliciting the various parts of the resume. Then have a typically western one created then do a compare and contrast exercise between the two then list the common points and the differences on the board. Having done that then present a job

advertisement and have three candidates with detailed resumes then have the learners form small groups, discuss which person should get the job and explain their answers. Unfortunately, 9 times out of 10, the discussion normally takes place in the L1 but the outcomes, written sentences explaining the rationale for the decision is written in English. That is how the instructor is able to confirm just how much learning has taken place. The results of this exercise is quite interesting given the resumes and the job involved. These are pre-experienced learners with very little schema to use in their decision making process. So the learners simply look at the age of the candidates and choose the oldest one. Let us end this paper with the inevitable question using L1 to produce L2 product.

Any instructor has to come to terms with the idea of process versus product. Luke Prodromou in Using The Mother Tongue states that there is the potential for using the mother tongue but also there is “the danger of abusing the mother tongue” in classrooms (5). He goes on to critique the direct method as mere “orthodoxy” (5). Therefore, there is justification of using L1 amongst low proficiency learners as the process to create the product in L2.

This paper has outlined one particular class describing the very low proficient learners, the case study method, the justification of using L1 for creating L2 products.

Future research into this class will focus just what kind of L1 language is used to create the outcomes. The purpose of this research will be to identify whether L1 is very task dependent or not. The benefit of such research will be if for future learners that what kinds of phrases are used in L1 then those phrases can be taught to learners with the goal of ending their dependence on the L1.

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