Exploring Connections: Content Learning and Language Learning

Based on Do Coyle’s 4cs Framework
The Content of Learning

What is *content* in a CLIL context?

What constitutes *content* within the *4cs Framework*?
Content is a subject or a part of a subject from the school curriculum, such as:

- Geography, History, Economy ...
- Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Chemistry ...
- Music, Art, Art History ...
Or projects based on topical issues drawing together different aspects of the curriculum, for example:

- Global warming
- Ecosystems
- The industrial revolution
- The Olympic Games
The What of Content Learning

Or cross-curricular or interdisciplinary studies involving various disciplines to build knowledge, for example:

- Climate change
- Water in the world
- Global communication
- Learning across continents
CLIL teachers will decide what is more appropriate for them depending on variables such:

- Teacher availability at their schools
- Language support
- Age of learners
- Social environment
- School context
How this content is taught in a CLIL context?

In other words, what is meant by effective pedagogies in CLIL classrooms?
Traditionally, we were taught within a **Teacher Centered Model**:  
- The expert (teacher) deposits information and skills into the memory of the novice (learner)  
- It is a *teacher controlled* and a *teacher led* methodology
The How of Content Learning

Nowadays, we tend to teach within a Student Centered Model:

- Based on Social Constructivism
- It is an interactive and student-led learning
- Learning is supported by more experts (teachers, other learners or resources)
The How of Content Learning

Social Constructivism Approach features

- Teacher’s role involve facilitating cognitive challenge
- Learners must be cognitively engaged
- Teachers should consider how to actively involve learners: group work, student questioning and problem solving: Active Learning Approach
Gradual release of responsibility model

Proportion of responsibility for task completion

- Modelling: All teacher
- Joint responsibility: Guided practice
- Practice or application: All student

Gradual release of Responsibility
“Effective content learning has to take account not only of the defined knowledge and skills within the curriculum or thematic plan, but also how to apply these through creative thinking, problem solving and cognitive challenge.”

(Coyle, Hood and Marsh, (2010) CLIL. CUP p 29)
The Language of Learning

What is *language* in a CLIL context?

What are the *connections* between language and content?
CLIL is not simply "translating" content learning from the first-language into another language.

So we need to investigate what is language learning in CLIL.
In traditional foreign language learning contexts, the learning of the new language was based on grammar progression, reading of texts, audio-lingual methods and more recently on communicative approaches. Communicative approaches are based on theories of language learning requiring a focus on meaning as well as focus on form (grammar).
The communicative approach has lead to theories which suggest that language learning includes language using and therefore, emphasizes the importance of using language in authentic interactive settings in order to develop communicative skills, rather than focusing exclusively on grammar.

Then, an alternative approach could be the one offered by Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010, p 35):

*In CLIL settings, it is necessary for learners to progress systematically in both their content learning and their language learning and using, so using language to learn is as important as learning to use language.*
But, as we know, in CLIL settings there is a difference in levels between the cognitive competence and the linguistic competence. Many CLIL learners have a cognitive level higher than their linguistic level of the vehicular CLIL language. **So, what can we do to allow our learners to access language fully and use it?**
The Language of Learning

(Manel Piñeiro, 2008)
CLIL teachers need to give a special support for language, and, therefore, plan language carefully, analysing what kind of language learners will be using. Teachers have to make explicit the interrelationship between content objectives and language objectives.
The Language Triptych (Coyle, 2002) could help us to integrate cognitively demanding content with language learning and using.
Language Triptych

Language of learning

CLIL linguistic progression

Language learning and language using

Language for learning

Language through learning

The Language Triptych, Coyle, 2002
Language Triptych: The 3As Tool

Communication is in 3 planning stages:

1. **ANALYSE**: the content, cognition, culture for language **OF** learning.

2. **ADD**: language **FOR** learning - all the language students will need to operate in the CLIL classroom. Eg discussion skills, effective group work skills, research skills.

3. **APPLY**: language **THROUGH** learning – new language which grows from the learning to the recycling of language.
Language Triptych: The 3As Tool

Language OF learning

Language needed for learners to access basic concepts and skills relating to the subject theme or topic.

Learners need to acquire language specific to subject (eg language of science, language of mathematics, language of geography):

*Curriculum Discourse*
Language Triptych: The 3As Tool

Language OF learning: reflection points

- What type of language does this subject or theme use?
- Define the content-obligatory language, such as key words, phrases and grammatical demands of the unit (e.g. the language of discussing, hypothesising, analysing).
- What kind of talk do learners need to engage in and how do we build in progression over time?
- What is the most effective way of teaching the language of learning?
- Which of the identified language and skills shall we target for development in this particular unit?

The kind of language needed to operate in a foreign language environment.

Learners need to be supported in developing skills such as those required for pair work, cooperative group work, asking questions, debating, chatting, enquiring, thinking, memorizing and so on.
Language Triptych: The 3As Tool

Language FOR learning: reflection points

- What kind of language do learners need to operate effectively in this CLIL unit?
- What are the possible language demands of typical tasks and classroom activities? (e.g. how to work in groups, organise research)
- Which language skills will need to be developed? (e.g. discussion skills)
- How are we developing metacognitive strategies? (learning how to learn – e.g. reading strategies, comprehension strategies)

Language Triptych: The 3As Tool

Language FOR learning: reflection points

- How can learning be scaffolded (supported) by the teaching and learning of specific language? (e.g. language used to seek additional information, assistance, explanation and access to other sources).

- How do students practise their new language and recycle familiar language?

- Have we prioritized the language for learning in this unit in relation to the content? (i.e. what students need to know at which stage of the content – e.g. focus on developing reasoning, making a case).

- Is the language which is used to assess the learning accessible to the learners?

This kind of language emerges from the active involvement of learners thinking and asking. New meanings would require new language.

It needs to be captured while during the learning process, then recycled and developed later. It can not be predicted in advance.
Language Triptych

Language THROUGH learning: reflection points

- What necessary language functions and notions do the students know already?
- How can these be practised and extended?
- What strategies can our learners use to access new language for themselves?
- When new language emerges, how shall we capture and select language for further development?
- How can we define language progression in this unit?

Cultural awareness
Intercultural understanding
Pluri-culturalism

Embedding language in CLIL: an analytical framework (Do Coyle, 2002)