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# Integrating the task-based approach to CLIL teaching

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## Abstract

Given the ambitious linguistic and cognitive objectives of CLIL classes, teachers are forced to face the difficulties inherent in this twofold mode of teaching. Content teachers and language teachers are not trained in the same way and do not share the same goals. How can we improve the situation of CLIL classes in France? How can we help students to integrate the knowledge obtained in a CLIL class into their general world knowledge? How are we going to help them use a foreign language to communicate meaningful content with reasonable confidence? This article will show how the task-oriented approach advocated by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages can help create a better synergy between the two aspects of CLIL.

Key words: CLIL, CEFR, task, teaching

## Introduction

For the past ten years, the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) has had an increasing impact on foreign language teaching and learning in France including an emphasis on gaining intercultural perspectives. France was indeed the first European country to mention the existence of the CEFR and its action-oriented approach in its official school curriculum.

Our purpose here is to analyse the impact of the CEFR on CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning).

CLIL is often seen as the instrumental use of a second language to teach another subject, as the language itself ceases to be the direct object of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, this is only partly true: both the content subject such as mathematics, biology or history and the language used as a medium are involved more or less equally in defining the learning goals. According to the European commission of languages, the main objectives of CLIL are three-fold:

- to allow students to broaden their knowledge of a subject
- to improve students' abilities in a foreign language
- to give students an intercultural perspective of the subject, thus stimulating their interest in and shaping new attitudes toward other cultures

In addition it is hoped that CLIL's multi-faceted approach will motivate students through more diversified teaching methods.
(The European commission of languages (http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/language-teaching/doc236_en.htm)

This type of integrated learning thus enables learners to use the language both as an object (during micro tasks for instance) and as an instrument (to communicate) while at the same time enlarging students' experience of the world. As Lecercle puts it:

> "Le langage n'est pas un outil à la disposition du locuteur, c'est une expérience, c'est une activité: ce n'est pas un objet distinct du locuteur et qu'il manipule. On entre dans le langage, on se coule dans le langage, pour utiliser la vieille métaphore heideggérienne, on habite la langue. La conséquence est que parfois je parle la langue (ce qui me donne l'impression de l'utiliser comme un outil), parfois c'est la langue qui parle par ma bouche, et guide ou impose mon dire. […] La conséquence ce cette conséquence est que la communication ne peut être la seule fonction du langage. […] Ce n'est peut-être même pas la plus importante: le langage est aussi le lieu de l'expression d'affect, un terrain de jeu et d'apprentissage du monde, etc. (Lecercle, 2004 : 69-70)."

The CEFR offers a vision of language-learning that enhances the social dimension of the individual through an action-based approach whereby human communication is not to be restricted to a performance in a given situation: "The action-based approach therefore also takes into account the cognitive, emotional and volitional resources and the full range of abilities specific to and applied by the individual as a social agent." (CEFR, 2001: 9)
In France, CLIL is often assimilated with *DNL* which means teaching content subjects through a foreign language (usually at secondary school level in *classes européennes*, or LANSAD, LANguages for Specialists of other Subjects, at university. In this chapter we will focus on CLIL at high school level (*lycées*) and discuss the topic from our French specific context.
What sort of problems do CLIL teachers encounter? What are the most frequent questions and paradoxes in CLIL teaching? Can learning through CLIL be improved through a CEFR task-oriented approach? Can we really give the students the opportunity during their CLIL classes to experience the language such that they are aware of the benefits gained from this mode of learning?
In order to answer these questions, we will first consider the specific problems and paradoxes raised by CLIL teaching in France and potentially in other countries.
In part 2 we will bring out the characteristics of the CEFR which can apply to CLIL teaching and help solve the problems listed in part 1.
Then, we will suggest activities in a CLIL context to improve students' learning and offer one example
Finally, we will discuss the question of assessment in a task-based CLIL context.

**1- CLIL teaching: problems and paradoxes**

## 1.1. CLIL teaching in France

### 1.1.1. An “imperious necessity”

In 1992 a seminal note was sent out from the National Education Ministry to the attention of the superintendents (recteurs) of all the country's school districts (académies) concerning the importance of preparing students to become European citizens. The Minister spoke of "the imperious necessity" (1992) for students to gain fluency in foreign languages and knowledge of foreign cultures. Beyond language teaching, a European program of study (sections européennes) was to be initiated in middle school and high school. Motivated students would get extra hours of foreign language classes beginning in eighth grade which would allow them to follow a course in a content subject, beginning in high school, that would be taught in that language. The superintendents were asked to work together with the middle-school and high-school principals of their districts interested in this project to set up European sections in their schools. After participating in the European Section, the students would be able to take an exam at the end of their secondary studies. If they passed this exam, their high school diploma (baccalauréat) would then specifically indicate which content subjects they had successfully completed in the European Section. The implication of such a note would be that the student's foreign language competence was quite high.

### 1.1.2 The CLIL exam

By 2003 the terms that govern students' achievement in CLIL are established. An optional oral exam will be offered to students who have received a passing grade in their CLIL class during their high school studies and who attain a minimum grade of twelve out of twenty (an above average score equivalent to approximately B2) on the language section of the exam leading to their obtaining a high school diploma.

The students take the CLIL exam in the content subject and in the language in which they followed a CLIL course. The subject could be Biology, Physics, Mathematics, History-Geography, Physical-Education or any other subject in which the high school offered a CLIL class. The precise form of the exam and the tasks that the students will have to carry out will depend on the content subject. In general, the students are given a text (which might be accompanied by other documents, such as graphs or pictures) in the foreign language that they have never seen before and have thirty minutes to study it. They must then give an explication of the documents in the manner defined by the national commission that is specific to each content subject and that oversees its curriculum.

The students' final grade in CLIL will be composed of both the grade in class and the grade on the final exam calculated on the basis of 80% for the final exam and 20% for the course average. As originally indicated by the Ministry in 1992, this grade will be transcribed onto the student's high school diploma.

Students are very proud to have "classe européenne" inscribed on their diploma. They always mention this on their resumes when looking for a job. For potential employers it represents a proven ability to speak a foreign language and attests to the candidate's willingness to work harder than average in pursuit of greater achievement.

### 1.1.3. The CLIL teacher certificate

Content subject teachers who want to become involved in CLIL must necessarily be certified to do so. The certification process, as defined in the latest certification decree (2010) includes two main stages. After signing up for the exam, candidates then have to write an approximately 5-page "report". In the report will be a resume of the candidate's work experience, degrees and any specific studies, training or travel experiences that are pertinent

to the CLIL situation including how they became proficient in the language they want to teach in. Candidates will also explain their motivations for wanting to teach CLIL, which should prove their interest in the culture of the speakers of the language. Furthermore, a draft of a lesson plan will help to show the candidate's grasp of CLIL methodology. While the decree clearly states that the report is to be written in French, it is highly recommended that the candidates include a one-page summary of the report in the foreign language as proof of their linguistic competence.

#### 1.1.4. The final stage

The final stage is decisive. Candidates appear in front of a commission made up of a language teacher, an inspector of the candidate's content subject and a CLIL teacher. The exam will last up to a maximum of thirty minutes, and will be partially or totally in the foreign language. The candidates will give a ten-minute presentation of themselves and their interest in CLIL after which the commission will question them for up to twenty minutes. These questions will cover the candidate's knowledge of the national CLIL curriculum, its methodologies, cultural aspects, and aims. Candidate's will be asked how they plan to implement DNL in their school, how they imagine working as a team with the language teacher and what sources they can use to create courses. They are expected to be familiar with various programs to increase the students' contact with foreign populations: Comenius and Erasmus programs, eTwinning, UNESCO, etc. They must prove their awareness of differences in pedagogical strategies in France and the country of the language they will be teaching in, and the differences between teaching their content subject in a regular class and in a CLIL class. They will need to show their perfect knowledge of the exam they will be preparing students for and have ideas for how to best create classwork to help the students prepare for the exam.

Thus content teachers who want to give a CLIL course must, first of all, speak the foreign language well, at a B2 to C1 level. They must be strongly knowledgeable about the rationale underpinning CLIL courses and the methodologies they are to use. They must be fully cognizant of the cultural motivations of CLIL and be able to pass on their enthusiasm for the culture of the speakers of the language they are teaching in, as well as an understanding of the point of view of those speakers concerning the subject content they are teaching. They must show the ability to create CLIL lessons so as to prepare their students for the final exam in the European Section.

#### 1.1.5. Teaching Substance

While the official curriculum texts are quite clear as to the goals of CLIL and the qualifications of the content teacher, they remain hazy as to exactly what content is to be covered in the CLIL class, and to what extent the CLIL teacher is expected to specifically work on the students' language abilities.

One of the objectives of the CLIL course is to develop and enhance students' knowledge of the content subject from an intercultural point of view (Académie de Nancy-Metz 2004). The content of the CLIL class will then follow the curriculum of the subject matter, based on the same topics, but will not be the core teaching of that subject. CLIL lessons will then offer other ways of looking at those topics through the use of current articles written in the language of the class proposing a new slant on the issue. By not defining a specific curriculum for CLIL the National Education bestows on CLIL teachers a vast field in which to exploit their creativity

While improvement in the foreign language is a core objective of the CLIL class, the official curriculum does not specify the extent to which the CLIL teacher is to work on the accuracy of the students language use. Clearly, the content teacher is not a language teacher and cannot

substitute as a language teacher. And yet, the content teacher must help the students to express themselves clearly and correctly in the foreign language. One of the conundrums of the CLIL teacher is thus to decide how far they are to go in working on the students' foreign language ability, and what specifically it is their role to teach.

The official texts offer almost no indication as to the role of the language teacher in CLIL. They address the content teacher who is expected to cooperate with the language teacher. In this respect, the language teacher remains a shadow in the CLIL scheme. Language teachers are not recognized for their work in the CLIL program. They can accept or refuse to cooperate with the content teacher. In the best case scenario they will commit to the project enthusiastically, generously giving of their time to collaborate with the CLIL teacher.

From this brief overview of CLIL teaching in France, we are bound to conclude that there are obvious obstacles to really empowering both students and teachers with the ability to learn or teach simultaneously content and language. Some CLIL teachers pointed at the difficulties they were facing during their CLIL classes

### 1.2. A Questionnaire

A questionnaire including the following questions was sent out to a number of French CLIL teachers:

1. What difficulties do you encounter in your CLIL lessons?
2. What difficulties do your students encounter in their CLIL lessons?
3. How do you manage the gap between the students' level of knowledge in the subject and their level of language proficiency?
4. Do you incorporate the action-oriented approach even though the institutional setting is not very favourable?
5. Can you give us one example of a class activity?

While few people had the time to write out explicit answers, and the responses for the most part remained rather general, teachers waxed their most specific on two points: their difficulties and suggested exercises.
In the first case, the main difficulty was getting the students to speak (other than those who were bilingual), making sure the weaker students had speaking time in contrast to the bilinguals who tended to take up the speaking "space". Other difficulties include working out how much and how the non-language teachers should be working on phonetic and grammatical errors while aware that their own English was not exemplary (as compared to the language teacher's).

The language exercises, for the most part, tended to be vocabulary or fixed-phrase oriented. This leaves us with the difficulty of how to bring task-based exercises into the CLIL class, which may be as short as one hour a week, where teachers are under pressure to teach to the exam, giving the students the vocabulary and forms that are needed and specific to the form of the exam It must be remembered, too that the CLIL teachers do not have training in language teaching, and know little about the notion of action tasks.

From a cognitive point of view, teachers found that one of the greatest difficulties was getting the students to apply the knowledge learned in their CLIL class to activities and exams in their native language content courses. This means that for some reason, the students were compartmentalizing their knowledge according to the language in which they acquired it.

How can we improve the situation of CLIL classes in France? How can we help students to integrate the knowledge obtained in a CLIL class into their general world knowledge? First of all we need to explain the causes of the problems raised by the teachers.

### 1.3. CLIL teaching and the level descriptors

The CEFR offers a description of what a language user can do at various levels of competence. When studying level descriptors in the CEFR, a discrepancy between the first three and the last three levels stands out. From A1 to B1, communication remains rather familiar and does not involve complex subject matter, whereas from B2, language becomes specialised. Academic texts can be read and understood and specialised fields of interest can be dealt with. For oral comprehension a learner at B2 "can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines or argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar (...). He can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. He can understand contemporary literary prose." But it is only at C1 that he is supposed to be able to "understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to his field." And it is at C1 level that he can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects (...), or "write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report (...) (CEFR 2001: 27).
Students are expected to reach a B2 level at the end of high school. However, CLIL classes begin earlier when students are only at A2 or B1.

### 1.4. Problems and Paradoxes

Thus the language difficulties in CLIL classes in France lay precisely in the discrepancy between the level at which students enter CLIL and the level they need to accomplish CLIL work. This is the first paradox of the French CLIL scheme: students enter high school at a B1 level whereby the purpose of CLIL classes is to foster the mastery of the language to help students reach B2. However the prerequisite for CLIL work is a B2-C1 level, which means that the students are, in fact, unable to carry out the work for content learning. The discrepancy between the level needed to do the work and the students' actual level leads the content teachers to constantly finding that the students' level is beneath the needed level to carry out the work they are expected to do, for the teachers are expected to focus specifically on content leaving the language work to the language teacher. In this context, content predominates over communication.

This introduces the second paradox of the French CLIL scheme. While CLIL is supposed to bridge the gap between language as an object of teaching and as a means, thus combining both language and content learning in a single class, the scheme distinctly separates content teachers' role in CLIL teaching from that of language teachers. Language teachers are given a supporting role to help bring the students' language competence up, while content teachers are to create lessons to teach content, in the assumption that the students can carry out the content exercises. Thus, the importance of content predominates over communication itself. The language class then remains exercise-based, and the CLIL class is content-based, while neither, in fact, is task based.

### 1.5. What solutions?

From the above transpire the challenges that CLIL teaching must surmount: How can an action-oriented approach be implemented where the subject matter prevails over communication itself with such a discrepancy between the students' actual language level and

the required level? How can language-learning and content learning be best integrated? What are the best ways for the content teacher and the language teacher to share their work in CLIL? Indeed, the very purpose of integrating a task-based approach to CLIL classes could be to foster the mastery of the language to help the students reach B2 so that the notable discrepancy between the knowledge of the subject matter and the mastery of the language to deal with it would disappear.
But how are we to deal with this paradox and help teachers with their CLIL classes?
The CEFR which contributed to making us aware of the problem could very well help us solve it.

## 2. What are the main characteristics of the CEFR applicable to CLIL classes?

### 2.1 Language as action

#### 2.1.1. The conception of language

The CEFR rests on a conception of language as action: "Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences** (CEFR: 9)." This approach is in keeping with Vygotsky's theory of the social origin of thought as well as with Wittgenstein's opposition to the Augustinian lexical vision of language. According to Wittgenstein (1953) language is action, whereas for Saint Augustin, the function of words is to give names to objects and sentences and language is just the way these denominations are connected. For Bange the Augustinian conception of language can lead to learning a language totally apart from communication. (Bange, 2005: 17)
The conception of language as action under various conditions and constraints implies a different role for the student. CLIL classes also imply a different learner position.

#### 2.1.2. The learner's use of language

The learner is seen as a social actor in a socio-communicative perspective which is significantly different from the communicative approach. In the communicative approach language activities are based on information gaps, or take the form of different types of role-plays and thus can be considered as artificial by the learner. In the action-oriented approach, real-life-like activities are to bridge the gap between the learning situation and the normal use of language.
The CEFR "describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively." (CEFR: 1)

"The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. While acts of speech occur within language activities, these activities form part of a wider social context, which alone is able to give them their full meaning. We speak of 'tasks' in so far as the actions are performed by one or more individuals strategically using their own specific competences to achieve a given result. The action-based approach therefore also takes into account the cognitive, emotional and volitional resources and the full range of abilities specific to and applied by the individual as a social agent." (CEFR: 9)
How can such an approach really take place within the closed context of the language class?
The answer is given by Ellis who writes that tasks are especially useful to design a communicative course in a context where there is little opportunity for authentic

communication. He distinguishes task-supported language teaching in which tasks have just been incorporated into traditional ways of teaching, from task-based language teaching in which tasks are central to the whole design of a course. (Ellis, 2003: 27) What does a task-based approach mean and how can it apply to CLIL classes?

## 2.2 The Task-based approach

### 2.2.1. What is a task?

A task is defined in the CEFR "as any purposeful action considered by an individual as necessary in order to achieve a given result in the context of a problem to be solved, an obligation to fulfil or an objective to be achieved. This definition would cover a wide range of actions such as moving a wardrobe, writing a book, obtaining certain conditions in the negotiation of a contract, playing a game of cards, ordering a meal in a restaurant, translating a foreign language text or preparing a class newspaper through group work." (CEFR: 10)

Many other definitions can be found but the most useful one for our purpose seems to be that of Ellis: A task is a workplan
A task involves a primary focus on meaning
A task involves real-world processes of language use
A task can involve any of the four language skills
A task engages cognitive processes
A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome. (Ellis 2003: 9)

He also defines unfocused tasks "which are not designed with a specific form in mind" as opposed to focused tasks which "aim to induce learners to process, receptively or productively, some particular linguistic feature, for example, a grammatical structure." (Ellis 2003: 16)

### 2.2.2. Final task, macro-task, micro-task

To design a task-based language course, important considerations include how the task is going to be performed by the students, and how the goal will be achieved. For that purpose it is useful to distinguish between a "final task" and a "macro-task", as well as between an "intermediary task" and a "micro-task".

A final task is the culmination of a set of lessons. It breaks out of the classroom to reach the world beyond the classroom walls. If the communication level of the task is to be achieved, the students must be guided by intermediary tasks or exercises. For instance, if the final task is a debate that is to take place in front of an audience, where the parents might also be invited, an intermediary task will consist of training the students to express their points of view through pair work activities, for instance. They may work on vocabulary specific to the subject, along with correct pronunciation, in specially designed exercises or micro tasks.

A micro task is generally focused on one aspect of the language to be used in the task.

A macro-task is a task composed of several tasks, including micro tasks. For instance, in a decision taking type of task, students read different texts, or listen to different opinions, and consider various conditions, to make up their mind accordingly. In a class, a macro task may be divided among groups of students working in collaboration. Not all students will necessarily perform the same tasks.

Other definitions borrowed from French researchers deserve quoting:

A macro task is "*une unité d'activité d'apprentissage signifiante*" (Guichon 2006 : 56) whereas the micro-task is «"*une unité de pratique cognitive centrée sur un aspect linguistique, pragmatique ou socioculturel spécifique"* (Ibid. : 79) Guichon adds : « alors que la macro-

tâche met le participant en situation réaliste d'utiliser la L2 (ou du moins elle le rapproche des activités de la vie extrascolaire), la micro-tâche découpe la situation en unités d'apprentissage et focalise l'attention de l'apprenant sur des traits particuliers de la L2. » (Ibid. : 80) And according to Françoise Demaizière and Jean-Paul Narcy-Combes, a macro-task is "*un ensemble d'actions réalistes conduisant à une production langagière non limitée à l'univers scolaire."* (Demaizière & Narcy, 2005 : 45-64)

How can a task-based approach apply to CLIL classes? Can such an approach be easily implemented?
To respond to these questions, it seems important to discuss the different ways to classify tasks.

### 2.2.3. Types of tasks

In actual fact, there are various ways to classify tasks. One of them is pedagogical (Gardner and Miller, 1996) and in keeping with incorporating tasks into more traditional modes of teaching. Another one mentioned by Ellis (2003: 213) is Prabhu's cognitive classification. Prabhu (1987) distinguishes three main types of tasks "based on the type of cognitive ability involved:

- Information gap activity involves 'a transfer of given information from one person to another – generally calling for the encoding or decoding of information from or into language.' (Prabhu 1987: 46) Prabhu gives two examples. One involves a standard information-gap activity while the other involves what Widdowson (1978) has called information transfer, or example, using information in a text to complete a chart or a table.
- Reasoning-gap activity involves 'deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns.' (Prabhu: 1987: 46) Prabhu points out this activity also involve sharing information but requires going beyond the information provided. An example is a task that requires students to work out a teacher's timetable from a set of class timetables.
- Opinion-gap activity involves "identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation."' (ibid. 47) Examples are story completion and taking part in a discussion. Such tasks are open in the sense that they afford many possible solutions (Ellis, 2003: 213).

This type of classification rests on the conception that reasoning fosters learning. Moreover, Ellis mentions another type of classification which could become useful to design a course: Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun's psycholinguistic classification.
This system of classification is based on interactional categories:

- "Interactant relationship: this concerns who holds the information to be exchanged and who requests it and supplies it in order to achieve the goal. (...)
- Interaction requirement: this concerns whether the task requires participants to request and supply information or whether this is optional. (...)
- Goal orientation: this concerns whether the task requires the participants to agree on a single outcome or allows them to disagree. (...)
- Outcome options: this refers to the scope of the task outcomes available to the participants in meeting the task goals. In the case of 'closed' tasks a single outcome is required whereas 'open' tasks permit several possible outcomes. (...)" (Ellis, 2003: 215)

Finally, Ellis proposes a general framework to inform a task-based course involving four features:

- "input, i.e. the nature of the input provided in the task;
- conditions, i.e. way in which the information is presented to the learners and the way in which it is to be used;
- processes, i.e. the nature of the cognitive operations and the discourse the task requires;
- outcomes, i.e. the nature of the product that results from performing the task" (Ellis, 2003: 217).

Here is an example:

| | |
|---|---|
| Goal | Create a radio show |
| Input | Medium: podcasts, radio programs, interviews on *You tube*, news, weather forecasts, songs, etc. |
| conditions | Structures given; information to be found by students; |
| Processes | Group work; sharing information; collaborative work |
| Outcomes | Several possible outcomes depending on the choices made by each group |

## 2.3. The plurilingual, pluricultural approach

### 2.3.1. A new perspective on language learning

The CEFR also enhances the plurinlingual approach in a global context:

> "The plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor." (CEFR: 4)
> [...]
> "From this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even more languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence." (CEFR: 5)

In this respect, CLIL classes could give the opportunity to connect the official language of the school to another language and develop language awareness as well as code-switching strategies. CLIL classes can also enable teachers and students to compare cultural differences in the study of subject matters and how facts are presented and interpreted.

This implies a radical change of perspective which may offer solutions to many of the problems teachers face when dealing with CLIL. Research has undermined the imperative of teaching only one foreign language with no reference or very little reference to the students' first languages which characterised both structural and communicative methods. This may be due to the fact that the focus is no longer so much on how to teach as on how people actually learn.

In recent works, the Canadian researcher Jim Cummins (2011) advocates this focus on learning. Various projects involving migrant students in particular have shown the importance of considering students as individuals rather than only as learners and to allow them to use their own languages, for instance by letting them hand in papers in a language other than the target language of the course. In this way they are able to use their cognitive abilities to make connections between the two languages and can improve their learning more quickly and more efficiently.
Another advantage is that they engage all the more strongly in the target language as they are free to use their own. Such a plurilingual approach to language learning could also offer a practical answer to one of the issues addressed earlier in this chapter: "How do you manage the gap between the students' level of knowledge in the subject and their level of language proficiency?" The third advantage of adopting a plurilingual approach in CLIL teaching is that neither students nor teachers are compelled to use the foreign language at trivial levels with impoverished texts and dull subjects. Instead, they can use intellectually challenging texts and encourage involvement in both content and language learning.

This new vision of language learning, no longer as second language learning, but rather as bilingual or plurililngual learning may well free teachers from old representations and constraints which do not address the needs of world citizens who must evolve in a dynamic, multilingual, multicultural universe.

2.3.2. Ideal CLIL training
CLIL teaching is not only a matter of learning how to teach both content and language, but also how to integrate them. In this respect, CLIL teaching can be considered, as Candelier does, as part and parcel of the Plural Approaches to Language Learning and Teaching, and more specifically as one type of Integrated Didactics. As such, CLIL teaching and learning has been at the core of various ECML projects among which *A European Framework for CLIL teacher education (CLIL-CD)*. This ECML publication offers "a comprehensive curriculum framework for CLIL teacher education, outlines competences needed and proposes development modules. It is a non-prescriptive, flexible, generic tool which can be used in a variety of contexts, for various languages and for a variety of subjects-areas, in initial and in-service teacher education programmes". (See annotated references below)

## 2.4. Learning strategies

The CEFR is also concerned with cognitive strategies and proposes a three-stage mode of learning control: "Strategies are seen as a hinge between the learner's resources (competences) and what he/she can do with them (communicative activities). The principles of a) planning action, b) balancing resources and compensating for deficiencies during execution and c) monitoring results and undertaking repair as necessary." (CEFR, 2001: 25) This three-stage mode of learning control has been worked out in particular by Bruner (1987) and Levelt (1989). Following the same stream of ideas, Bange emphasizes that "L'action verbale relève bien d'un modèle général de l'action » (2005: 40).

This aspect seems particularly relevant for CLIL learning where students can be engaged in a more autonomous type of learning.

Below is a more concrete explication of how a task-based form of teaching can take shape in a CLIL context.

## 3. Task-based approach in a CLIL context

### 3.1. From describing to operating a task

**Table 1: Describing a task**

| Type of activity (Prabhu's classification) | Cognitive and communicative actions | Intermediary tasks | Final task |
|---|---|---|---|
| Information gap activity | Select<br>Choose<br>Exchange relevant information on a topic | Complete charts<br>Collect and select information (from websites, podcasts, documents, pictures, etc.)<br>Organize information | Prepare an exhibition<br>Create a leaflet<br>Carry out an experiment<br>... |
| Reasoning-gap activity | Infer<br>Deduce<br>Share new information from given information on a topic | Match information<br>Connect places, people, facts, ...<br>Complete charts and draw conclusions<br>Evaluate<br>Make a decision | Present a version of historical facts<br>Present an experiment<br>Check the protocole of an experiment<br>Take part in a TV game (Questions for a champion)<br>.... |
| Opinion-gap activity | Narrate<br>Express feelings<br>Take part in a discussion on a topic | Produce information<br>Express agreement/disagreement<br>Rephrase<br>Concede<br>Select arguments/examples<br>Justify<br>... | Organise a debate<br>Write an article for a magazine<br>Create a radio broadcast on a topic<br>... |

**Table 2: Operating a task**

| **Final task** | **Type of input** | **Processes** | **Intermediary tasks** | **Micro-tasks** | **Assessment** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prepare an exhibition | Pictures, texts, radio | Group work | Write legends (captions) | Vocabulary (according | ndividual spoken |
| Create a leaflet | Brochures, leaflets, websites | Pair work<br>Collaborative work<br>Written and oral reception and production | Select relevant information on a website in order to answer a questionnaire<br>Rephrase sentences<br>Summarise a paragraph | Vocabulary (according to topic)<br>Figures, dates.<br>Grammar: passive voice; superlatives; imperative forms.<br>spelling accuracy | Individual written production<br>+ collective contribution to the final result (ethical and aesthetical aspects) |
| Lead an experiment | Textbooks, notes | Individual work<br>Written and oral reception and production | Look for translations in an online dictionary<br>Translate and mediate a piece of information: spoken production | Vocabulary precision (according to scientific topic)<br>Grammar: Imperative forms; determinants | Spoken interaction (in pairs)<br>+<br>Outcome of the experiment |
| | | | | | |
| Present a version of historical or scientific facts | L1 and L2 Textbooks, documents, pictures, interviews, etc. | Individual work<br>Written and oral reception and production | Find resemblances and differences in a paragraph<br>Listen to two witnesses of the same event | Vocabulary (according to topic)<br>Grammar: comparative forms, whereas, contrary to... In the same way as... | Individual work. Write an essay (150 words) to compare two points of view on the same topic |
| Verify the protocole of an experiment | Assessment work from L2 partners<br>+ Correct protocole | Individual work<br>Reading comprehension | Reordering and matching activities<br>Game: spot the differences | Vocabulary:<br>Marking + appreciative formulas<br>Grammar: imperative forms; appreciation | Individual<br>Written production |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Create and play in a TV game (Questions for a champion) | Information given by students (at the end of a session for instance) | Group work<br>Collaborative and competitive work (teams)<br>Written and spoken production<br>Spoken interaction | Questions and answers<br>Game: find the question<br>Match questions and answers<br>Game: (ni oui ni non…) | Vocabulary: according to the topic<br>Grammar: interrogative, declarative and negative forms | Teams<br>Spoken production and interaction |
| | | | | | |
| Organise a debate | Texts, textbooks, magazines, radio & TV broadcasts, interview, etc... | Class work<br>Collaborative and competitive work (teams)<br>Written and spoken production<br>Spoken interaction, oral presentation | Defend an argument and a counter-argument<br>Game: find out who is favourable to what | Vocabulary: specific to discussion and points of view<br>Grammar: expression of contrast, modal auxiliaries, link words, conjunctions.<br>Phonology: pronunciation of transparent words, specific training of fluency | Teams<br>+ control group<br>+ moderator<br>Spoken production and interaction |
| Write an article for a magazine | Articles from magazines | Individual work<br>Written reception and production | Summarize a point of view<br>Make the distinction between arguments and examples<br>Draw a list of useful expressions | Vocabulary: according to topic<br>Grammar: Compound words<br>Complex sentences<br>Conjunctions | Individual<br>Written expression on a controversial topic |
| Create a radio broadcast on a topic | Radio podcasts, radio broadcasts (news, weather forecast, jokes, interviews, etc.) | Group work<br>Collaborative work | Match radio broadcasts and radio programmes<br>Choose a podcast and try to imitate the voice.<br>Record your voice | Vocabulary: according to topic + specific expressions<br>Grammar: future and past tenses, etc. | Class<br>(Individual assessment done in micro-tasks) |

### 3.2. An example of a task-based activity: a debate

From Table 1, we can assume that organizing a debate in a CLIL class will be an “opinion-gap activity” in which students will take turns presenting a specific point of view on a topic. In formal debate conditions each speaker holds the floor for a specific amount of time without interruption. This implies both full control of one's feelings, and the ability to remain silent and take notes, postponing a reaction until it is one's turn to speak. Students will have to produce information, express agreement/disagreement, rephrase, concede, select arguments and examples, and justify their statements. As a final task, the debate can take place in front of people outside the classroom or as a radio broadcast. Or, the debate can take place in the classroom, and the students will then write up a magazine article presenting both sides of the question.

Table 2 offers a general grid to be filled according to the specific subject matter and language involved

| Final task | Type of input | Processes | Intermediary tasks | Micro-tasks | Assessment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organise a debate | Texts, textbooks, magazines, radio & TV broadcasts, interview, etc... | Class work<br>Collaborative and competitive work (teams)<br>Written and spoken production | Defend an argument and a counter-argument<br>Game: find out who is favourable to what | Vocabulary: specific to discussion and points of view<br>Grammar: expression of contrast, modal auxiliaries, link words, conjunctions.<br>Phonology: pronunciation of transparent words, specific training of fluency | Teams<br>+ control group<br>+ moderator<br>Spoken production and interaction |

3.2.1. Processes

In English-speaking countries a debate is a type of communication that in no way resembles a discussion, Carrying out a debate responds to all the objectives of CLIL learning, including cultural aspects given its specific status and its strictly regimented form. Participating in a debate implies a number of cognitive and linguistic activities. The preparation for a debate as well as taking part in the debate itself imply both important cognitive processes and language activities. Language is used to study a particular subject which is chosen for its importance in today's world; analytical processes are called into play to decide whether given facts uphold or repudiate a given statement. Students must carefully listen to their opponents, comprehend and analyse their statements to be able to respond and counter their opponent's position. They must use argumentative forms of language which go beyond simple statement. Through debate students learn research, organisation and communication skills.

The first step in carrying out a debate in class is for the content teacher to decide on a statement to be argued for (called "proposition") and against (called "opposition"). The class can be divided into two either randomly, or by allowing students to choose the side they want to argue. Some suggestions for debate statements might be:

Biology: In-vitro fertilization should be available to anyone who wants it.
Scientists should be free to carry out research on human embryos
Genetic engineering is a boon to humanity

Social Studies: Our country has a responsibility to support human rights initiatives in other countries
Freedom of speech should be total and without exception concerning the subject matter

Math: Zero should be considered a number like any other
Math is based on logic

Physics: Any sized celestial body that has sufficient mass for its self-gravity to overcome rigid body forces so that it assumes a nearly round shape and that circles the star we call our sun should be considered a planet of our solar system

3.2.2. Type of input

The first step will be to have students find information about the debate subject from newspapers, books, internet sources ... etc. Teachers can help students to find information on the subject, teach the pertinent vocabulary and the correct pronunciation of the language that is specific to the subject. In agreement with the goal to enlarge the students' cultural horizons, it is recommended that during the research phase, teachers can lead discussions on how different cultures may offer different perspectives on the given subject.

3.2.3. Intermediary tasks and micro tasks

The language teachers should work with students on argumentative forms, conjunctions that show partial agreement or disagreement with what has been said before. Students will also need to learn how to pick up on what was said previously. Moreover, they need to be able to use fixed forms to communicate agreement, disagreement and partial agreement which can still leave room for disagreement.

Following are examples of language forms that will help students to better communicate in a debate situation:

Partial agreement that leaves room for counter arguments (as often introduced by "but" or "however"):

That's true up to a point, but ...

That's an interesting idea, however ...
While that is true, ...
Although, it is true that ___, however ...
That's true in a way, however ...

Polite disagreement to be followed by a counter argument:

I'm sorry, but I can't agree with that point.
I'm sorry, but your statement is, in fact, only an assumption and has not been proven.
I'm afraid I can't agree with you on that.
I'm afraid that I'll have to disagree with you on that point.
I'm sorry but that statement is unacceptable.

Following are examples of conjunctions and connecting phrases that allow for contrast between the opponent's point of view and one's own:

On the contrary, conversely, however, although, even though, while, on the one hand ... on the other hand ...

3.2.4. Format

From a cultural point of view, it is interesting to present the importance of debate in English speaking countries and the official debate format . This will include the roles of propositional and oppositional constructive and rebuttal speeches. The official format is:

First Proposition speaker (constructive - 7 minutes)
First Opposition speaker (constructive - 8 minutes)
Second Proposition Speaker (constructive - 8 minutes)
Second Opposition Speaker (constructive - 8 minutes)
Opposition Rebuttal (4 minutes)
Proposition Rebuttal (5 minutes)

Certain aspects of a formal debate should be noted: Most importantly, no one can interrupt the speaker; each speaker has a given amount of uninterrupted time. Speakers can only attack their opponents' arguments during rebuttals. Also, speakers are very limited to what type of information they can present during their speeches: during constructive presentations, they can only present new information defending their position. Obviously, during a second constructive speech, a debater can choose to present information that specifically contradicts what the opponent has presented. Direct confrontation of arguments can only be presented during rebuttal speeches.

3.2.5. Organisation

After students have completed their research on the topic, the "for" and "against" teams will meet separately to analyse the data they have found, and to build arguments to defend their point of view. In a classroom situation, it is recommended that each speech be delivered by different students which would allow a maximum of students to take part in the debate itself. The format can be adapted to the class, for example speaking times can be reduced and the number of speeches can be increased to give the greatest number of students a chance to speak. It is suggested, too, to have time out between each presentation pair thus permitting those students who do not give individual speeches to participate during the debate session.

Below is a suggestion for a modified format adapted to the classroom:

First Constructive Speeches: 3 minutes for each side to state the team's position and the arguments and solutions that the team proposes as well as questions to ask the opposite team.

First Proposition Constructive

First Opposition speaker

10 minutes time out for the teams to prepare a 3-minute rebuttle answering the opponents' questions and attacking their position with counter-arguments and facts.

First Proposition Rebuttal

First Opposition Rebuttal

10 minutes time out for the teams to prepare a 3-minute conclusion interpreting the arguments in the favor of their position.

Proposition Conclusion

Opposition Conclusion

If time permits, there can be a greater number of constructive and rebuttal speeches which would allow more students to take the floor. Observers of the debate can serve as judges to decide which team has better defended their point of view. Of course, they will have to defend the reasons for their decisions.

3.2.6. Connected real life-like tasks

A debate can be part of a wider project extending to other tasks (macro tasks) and involving other partners, such as parents, students from other schools and so on. Here are some examples:

- Prepare a bilingual exhibition and organize an open conference with simultaneous translation (plurilingual approach) or workshops;
- Organize a poll in the school or on the Internet;
- Create a web page with text, pictures and recordings;
- Create a radio broadcast including news, interviews and various recordings of the debate (a form of collaborative production), and so on….

Thus, the content of the debate is communicated beyond the time-space of the debate itself.

## 4. Assessment

### 4.1. Assessing task-based work

It may seem difficult or even irrelevant to assess a task which has been performed by a group of students, all the more as it is close to real life. How are we going to give individual grades to group work such as an exhibition or the creation of a TV game?

The problem does not only stem from the fact that the required form of assessment is individual whereas the task has been carried out by a group, but also from the fact that teachers have always graded students on linguistic performance (in the case of language teachers) or the acquisition of knowledge (in the case of content teachers). What about the aesthetic, imaginative, emotional, cognitive aspects involved in a real-life like task?

According to Howard Gardner (1996) there are two conceptions of assessment: formalised testing and actual proof. In other words, a rather sophisticated mode versus on-the-job training and assessing. Although this distinction made by Gardner does not directly apply to the classroom situation in which assessment cannot be considered as pure formalised testing, it does question the common idea that assessing by means of a formalised test is more valid that assessing by achieving a task. Gardner demonstrates that formalised testing can only deal with a very limited scope of intelligence or mastery and does not take all an individual’s competences into account. According to him, assessment should be positive and play a social

role both for the individual and the community. (Gardner, 1996 : 114 ) He advocates a type of on-the-job assessment (ibid 115) which could indeed apply to task-oriented CLIL classes.

**4.2. Defining competences and criteria**

Still, it is possible to give students individual grades all the time they are performing a CLIL task.

Linguistic competences may be taken into account while the students perform micro-tasks on grammatical, lexical or phonological aspects of the language. And the degree of knowledge and mastery of the content whether it be mathematics, history or biology, can be assessed through intermediary activities.

Sociolinguistic as well as pragmatic criteria should also be used, such as the way the exhibition is received by the public, or the number of radio listeners or TV watchers in the case of a radio or a TV broadcast, of visitors to a website, or the actual result of the experiment if someone is to follow guidelines dictated by another person.

Finally, the cognitive strategies defined in the CEFR (see above) may also be assessed through the ability to work in a team, question knowledge, discuss a point with others, look for further information, decide on task-sharing and role distribution, and so on.

In any case, positive evaluation – meaning considering what students are able to do rather than what they are unable to do - should be the rule if the philosophy of assessment promoted by the CEFR is to be beneficial.

Still, positive assessment is easier to implement when working at the CEFR required level. In other words, if a task requiring mastery at B2 has been satisfactorily performed by the students of a class, then positive assessment becomes a matter of course. And even if they are not at B2 level yet, the positive vision of learning advocated by the CEFR should prevail over a more traditional conception often strictly linked to language or content assessment.

**Conclusion:**

After considering the problems of CLIL teaching raised by French *DNL* teachers, we have shown that the complex, task-based type of teaching and learning advocated by the CEFR corresponds well with the multifaceted objectives of CLIL, and for this reason, could favour learning in a CLIL class and achieving the objectives of CLIL. With the description of possible tasks to be experimented in a CLIL context it would seem that the task-based approach fits a CLIL class provided that:

- Subject teachers and language teachers work together;
- the teachers adopt a task based approach which motivates students; all the while offering them the content and language input needed to accomplish the task at hand;
- the teachers accept that encouraging students to communicate content in the foreign language, however imperfect their language might be, the better they will improve their abilities both in the foreign language and in the content subject
- they adopt positive assessment both for content and language to build the students' confidence in their abilities.

While the CEFR does not provide a turnkey solution, it certainly enlarges teachers' scope to improve CLIL teaching for the greater benefit and pleasure of both teachers and students.

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**Questions for Reflection**

1- How can we empower non language teachers to teach their subject matter in a foreign language?
2- How can language teachers work with content teachers to enhance students' learning?
3- In what way is a CLIL context emblematic of Vygotsky's notion of a dialectic approach to language and learning, whereby as the child learns more language he can better understand the world around him, which in turn leads him to the need to learn more language?

**Annotated references**

Bange, P. (2005) : (en collaboration avec R.Carol et P. Griggs) *L'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère, Cognition et interaction*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
This book by Pierre Bange summarizes well the results on LL research and very clearly states that both aspects of learning through action and learning through cognition should be addressed by language teachers.
Quote: « Une action n'est pas simplement un comportement. Elle comporte deux faces : l'une cognitive et l'autre opérative (38) ».

ECML 2011 "Content and Language education," *Empowering Language Professionals", 2008-2011 Programme*:
http://www.ecml.at/Programme/Programme20082011/Contentandlanguageeducation/tabid/147/language/en-GB/Default.aspx
Among the four themes developed by TheECML 2008-2011 Programme "Empowering Language Professionals", several projects directly focus on CLIL Teaching:

- Content-based teaching for young learners (EPLC) (The publication offers content-based modules for language classes in French, German and Russian for use in primary schools);
- Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in content-based teaching (ConBaT+) (This publication includes twenty-six content-based didactic units in English, French and Spanish to be used in classrooms).;
- European Framework for CLIL teacher education (CLIL-CD) (The outcome of this project is a macro framework for CLIL teacher education and adaptable CLIL curricular models applicable for different languages and age groups);
- Content and Language Integrated Learning through languages other that English-Getting started (CLIL-LOTE-START) (The publication offers guidelines for the setting up of CLIL-education through languages other than English);
- Good practice in Content and Language Integrated Learning for Languages other than English (CLIL-LOTE-GO) (A training kit for CLIL teachers in languages
- other than English, in complementarity with the CLIL-LOTE-START project, which focuses on CLIL in German as a foreign language)

In fact, all these publications are free and available on the ECML website (http://www.ecml.at) or on demand for paper versions.

Ellis, R. (2003): *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Ellis's masterpiece offers the fundamentals about task-based language learning and teaching as well as deep insight in worldwide research on the topic.

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