CLIL AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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Resumen
El propósito de este artículo es el de analizar la eficacia del Aprendizaje Cooperativo como metodología de aprendizaje en el aula de lengua extranjera, dentro del enfoque metodológico AICLE. La primera parte de este artículo está basada en investigación y documentación sobre literatura relacionada con el enfoque metodológico AICLE y el Aprendizaje Cooperativo. La segunda parte de esta reseña refleja los resultados obtenidos en un proyecto de investigación llevado a cabo en un aula de educación primaria, donde se han cohesionado dichas disciplinas.

Palabras clave: Multilingüe, cooperar, 4Cs curriculum, Zona de Desarrollo Próximo, andamiaje, refuerzo positivo.

Abstract
The purpose of this study has been to analyze the effectiveness of Cooperative learning methodology in foreign language classrooms that undertake CLIL approach. The preliminary information presented in this article has been gathered through literature review and research done in relation to CLIL methodological approach and Cooperative learning. The second part of this paper deals with the implementation of the research project and the subsequent study of this teaching practice carried out in a primary school.

Key words: Multilingual, cooperate, 4Cs curriculum, Zone of Proximal Development, scaffolding, positive feedback.

INTRODUCTION
The main goal of this study was essentially to improve my teaching practice through the use of modern methodology. I am always looking for new as well as proven methods of instruction in order to introduce subjects and contents to students in the most appealing and effective way, in the foreign language classroom. In addition to that, another factor that I always want to fulfill in my teaching practice is to develop social abilities. I strongly support the idea of the inclusive school where all the children “fit in” regardless of their social class, or personal background. Since I have the feeling that nowadays in our society, despite the fact that physical barriers are coming down, I can’t help feeling that each day children are more and more isolated from the rest of the world.

All things considered, cooperative learning seemed to match perfectly with my educational expectations. It is a methodology that helps children to grow in a “real context” atmosphere. They have to live in a society where they need to work with different people from different backgrounds and do this while growing as part of a whole but a personal commitment and individual accountability to make it work. Secondly, I have to develop this within the English class where contents are taught in a foreign language, with children that have different levels of proficiency in the foreign language. Thus, the implementation of cooperative activities in a CLIL classroom implies some challenging hypothesis that I wanted to answer: Is cooperative learning as effective and beneficial as it is supposed to be? Would it work in a CLIL context?
I.1. DEFINITION: WHAT IS CLIL?

“Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language. That is, there is a focus not only on content, and not only on language” (Coyle, Hood and Marsh 2010:1).

The term CLIL, appeared in Europe in the nineties, as the last and successful methodological approach to language teaching, with the main goal of developing proficiency in both the non-language subject and the language itself. In France the combination of content and language learning is known termed EMILE, in Germany, it is called CLILig, whereas in Spain, it is named AICLE. CLIL is a blend of language and content education. It derives some theories and practice from different teaching methods such as content-based language teaching or English as an additional language (EAL). However, the main characteristic of CLIL methodological approach is that it is content-led, which shifts from previous teaching approaches (Coyle et al. 2010). Achieving this two-fold aims call for the development of a special approach to teaching in that the non-language subject is not taught in a foreign language but with and through a foreign language (Euridyce 2006:8).

Furthermore, it calls for a more integrated approach to both teaching and learning, this requires special thought and change in the educational system: how is it organized in the curriculum, the methods, the target language, as well as the official time devoted to it. All these elements should be taken into consideration as they widely vary, according to our educational context and necessities. In any case, “It is hoped that the solid foundations of CLIL will contribute to the improvement of the processes of teaching-learning languages that our multilingual aspirations require” (Muñoz 2007:25).

I.2. HISTORY-BACKGROUND

Instruction in an additional language is nothing new. Indeed, education through a foreign language is an old practice that dates back to ancient Roman, when Romans conquered the Greek lands. Being conscious of the richness of this culture, Romans decided to educate their children in Greek, for them to be able to learn and acquire the language as well as the culture of the Greeks (Coyle et al. 2010). Afterwards, the first experience of integrating language and content were developed during the seventies and the eighties, in Canada through immersion programs as well as in North America through content-based teaching programs.

The European Union has strongly promoted the acquisition of linguistic diversity amongst European citizens. This has been a crucial element when planning the European unification. In this sense, during the nineties, these linguistic needs lead to the launch of new experimental methods in foreign language teaching. The main goal was addressed to help European Union citizens to become proficient in three European languages, that is, were expected to develop a good command of three languages: the mother tongue and two other European languages. In 2001, the European Year of Languages, having considered a wide variety of different approaches in second language learning acquisition, CLIL is regarded as the most suitable approach to attain these language goals, as an improvement with regard to traditional methods of language teaching. As a result, CLIL is widely supported in the European Union, as it addresses successfully achieving the development of language learning goals through Multilingualism. Subsequently in May 2005, the symposium: “The Changing European Classroom: The Potential Education”, led to some final conclusions, in which schools, children and teachers, were expected to be actively involved as well as trained through CLIL approach (Eurydice 2006). In any case, nowadays, “The debate on CLIL throughout the European Union is very much
alive. Fresh initiatives to promote this still novel methodological approach will be undertaken in the years ahead, probably within the next generation of education and training programs (2007-2013)” (Eurydice 2006:9).

I.3. TAPPING INTO CLIL CONTEXTS

The implementation of CLIL as a successful educational approach into the curriculum, offers a wide range of advantages to the teaching and learning process. One of the most important benefits is the achievement of bilingual learners, that is, the students’ development of linguistic and communicative competence in L2. This implies the ability to think in different languages. Apart from that, when integrating language and content in the classroom, we are gaining hours allocated for language teaching in our school, a fact that has always been emphasized by teachers. According to Coyle et al. (2010) CLIL involves proactive responses to educational challenges. To begin with, nowadays, due to different phenomena such as globalization and immigration, we come across international classrooms, where different nationalities are mixed up. Thus, the need of developing communicative competence amongst the students is manifested. Besides, CLIL approach is flexible, and can be adapted and developed throughout different methodologies to fulfill the necessities of the schools and the students. In addition to that, CLIL is not only centered on “what” to teach, that is, syllabus, programs, goals, and so on. Content and language integrated learning, is also focused on the “how” of teaching contents. In other words, it promotes the social–constructivism as the ideal pedagogical approach to student-lead learning: “The centrality of student experience and the importance of encouraging active student learning rather than a passive reception of knowledge” (Cummins 2005:108).

Coyle et al. (2010) claim that social-constructivism gives a higher rank to social interaction where learning is not only offered by the teacher. Positive feedback may also come from diverse resources such as student’s peers, for instance. That is, students can learn from the teacher as well as from their peers, while exchanging information and being collaborative in their learning processes. From now on, the role of the teacher is that of prompter, guide and counselor while providing the student with scaffolding learning. This way they will provide learners with opportunities to develop their ZDP (Zone of Proximal Development). The term of ZDP, was introduced by Vygostky in 1978 to “ describe the kind of learning which is always challenging yet potentially within reach of individual learners on the condition that the appropriate support, scaffolding and guidance are provided” (Coyle et al. 2010: 29). Another benefit is that CLIL enhances cognitive engagement of students. The key point here is to bear in mind the development of creative thinking within learning. In other words, students need to learn how to think and subsequently, utilize this knowledge to solve daily problems and challenges. All this process of developing thinking and problem solving skills can be underpinned by Bloom’s taxonomy, where the thinking processes are classified in six different categories. Additionally, the CLIL approach proposes an adapted version of Cummins’ 1984 matrix model. This new CLIL matrix pursues to balance the linguistic and cognitive demands in learners learning process, since the language level and the cognitive level of students is likely to need several adjustments during their learning processes. Finally, all these elements are gathered in the 4Cs curriculum proposed by Coyle (2010). Thus, the author claims that there are four guiding principles upon which a CLIL unit can be raised. These are; content, communication, cognition and culture.

I.4. CLIL AND COOPERATIVE LEARNIG

Although CLIL has been shown to be effective within second language acquisition, it must also be stated that the integration of content and language has been criticized and pointed out to contain disadvantages and
limitations, as well. To begin with, this new approach has been found faulty because it is thought to be mainly teacher-led. In this sense, some authors such as Dalton Puffer (2007) quoted by Casal (2008) suggests that in the CLIL context children are not provided with enough chances to practice and have conversations in the foreign language: “Simple arithmetic tell us that with 25 students in a class, if each has a say in a 50 minute lesson, their speaking time must be less than two minutes since the leader of the discussion also has to speak. If follows, by simple power of logic, that CLIL students are listeners most of the times” (Puffer 2007:11). At this point, taking into consideration all these adverse arguments towards the implementation of this methodological approach, cooperative learning could enhance the results in CLIL classrooms. Research has shown that cooperative learning may help to overcome these shortcomings in the CLIL contexts. In this sense, there have been many studies that have proven the positive results thanks to the use of cooperative techniques that have been applied during foreign language learning. Apart from these experiments, there are different theories related to teaching and learning processes that pinpoint the benefits and advantages in the fusion of content and language learning with cooperative learning. Vygostky’s socio-cultural theory, states that the dominant role of the teacher is reduced to some extent to the benefit of the learners. Hence, the students have more chances to speak and have a conversation while they are working in the group. That is, the time and the frequency of opportunities to communicate in the foreign language are increased in the cooperative group amongst teammates. Another theory that supports this union is that of Constructivism. This states that in the cooperative teams, children need to make use of language to communicate and discuss. That is, learners need to utilize language to understand and be understood, Casal (2008). All in all, one can say that teaching and learning in L2 seems to be more achievable and advantageous with the union of CLIL and Cooperative Learning. This statement, leads us to the second section of this paper that relates to Cooperative Learning methodology.

II. DEFINITION: WHAT IS COOPERATIVE LEARNING?

Cooperative learning has been largely outlined by several authors with numerous approaches. In general terms, we can define it as a methodology where children are working in small groups with individual and team accountability. Children take advantage of interaction: they learn as much as possible while acquiring skills to work in groups. This promotes self-learning as well as high levels of achievement. The concept of cooperative learning involves children working together to accomplish a shared goal, and it is this sense of interdependence that motivates group members to help and support each other’s endeavors. Johnson and Johnson (2003) claim that this methodology of working implies grouping children in heterogeneous teams of four to six members each, where differences are established among children in relation to their gender, level of curricular competence, performance and output, amongst others, Gillies (2007). The main idea is the achievement of a common goal, through the use of both individual and collaborative work. Learners need to work together to achieve their aims, and they do this by performing different roles within their group. The basic premise is that individual success is as important as group success, and the first is not achieved without the second. Hence, children will learn to work in an interdependent community.
II.1. COOPERATIVE CLASSROOM: TYPES OF LEARNING STRUCTURES

Johnson and Johnson (1978) quoted by Pujolàs (2004), establish that there are different categories in learning structures, depending on the children’s expectations and the ultimate aims of the classroom. Thus, we can distinguish between three main categories of learning structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Structure</th>
<th>Individualistic</th>
<th>Competitive</th>
<th>Cooperative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Of the activity</strong></td>
<td>- Individual work, not competitive.</td>
<td>- Individual and competitive work.</td>
<td>- Individual and cooperative work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- There is no group work</td>
<td>- Group work is rejected.</td>
<td>- Group working is essential and collaborative help is promoted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative help is unusual</td>
<td>- Collaborative help has no sense.</td>
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<td><strong>Sub-structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>of the reward</strong></td>
<td>- The student achieves his/her goals regardless of whether the class group accomplishes the goals or not.</td>
<td>- The student achieves his/her goals, only when the rest of the class does not reach them.</td>
<td>- The student achieves his/her goals only when the rest of the group reaches them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Of the authority</strong></td>
<td>- The teaching and learning process and the curriculum management is developed by the teacher, who does not care about class interaction.</td>
<td>- The teaching and learning process and the curriculum management is developed by the teacher, who may promote competition amongst the students or not.</td>
<td>- The teacher shares with the class the teaching and learning process as well as the curriculum management. S/he promotes the class interaction.</td>
</tr>
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Adapted from Pujolàs (2009) (Original text in Spanish)

II.2. IMPLEMENTATION: LITTLE COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

The philosophy of a cooperative group is: “In the inclusive school, everybody fits in”. Rodriguez (2000), “Everyone learns from everyone” Pujolàs (2009:138). In this sense, there are three essential conditions for the members of the group to be part of this “little community of learning”: protagonism, active participation and cooperation. Thus, cooperative work is not about grouping children that will be dealing with an activity, as traditional groups are established in the classroom to perform temporary tasks. Within cooperative classrooms, the teams are authentic communities where each individual child is an essential element who performs an indispensable role in their society. On the other hand, the application of the cooperative learning in the classroom may not be regarded as an easy task by some teachers, overall at the beginning of the process when planning it. Nevertheless, if we want to be successful in any single activity in our teaching
practice, time for classroom management and organization are always required. Hence, planning for cooperative learning is as well.

According to Pujolàs (2004), there are several points to take into account when implementing cooperative leaning in the classroom. Thus, we should start to introduce it little by little with one or two sessions in a week. We should start with some dynamics for the students to get used to work cooperatively and acquire team spirit. Additionally, we should arrange the group properly while making the roles of the members of the team clear from the very first day. The author proposes the following sequence as an example of an advisable pattern to introduce this new methodology in the classroom.

To start with, we could make use of some techniques for the students to develop positive attitudes and willingness towards group work in the class. The group’s internal management, that is, the roles and the different functions of the members, the team’s notebook, plans and objectives, internal evaluation, etc. All these elements need to be explained clearly and internalized by the children. Next; the performance of the techniques. The students are going to deal with the content of the didactic unit, working together in their base group. That is, using some of the techniques proposed in the cooperative methodology as a new way to study and work in the class. Finally, we should always keep assessment in mind. During the whole process of developing the tasks, the teacher should assess the individual performance of the students using different resources, such as observation, keeping notes in a diary, recording the students’ performances, portfolios, etc. In addition to this, peer-assessment and self-assessment should be used as well.

III. THE SCIENTIFIC ACTION: THE RESEARCH PROJECT

III.1. DATA COLLECTION

The data collection has been gathered in a Primary school in Year four class, during different sessions, in the science classroom through a CLIL didactic unit. In relation to the type of data collected, this was taken from two main sources. Initially, information was collected through direct observation and informal interviews with children. This was done by talking with the children while working on the tasks, at different stages while developing the activities. This process was addressed to obtain information about their impressions and feelings towards the activities proposed in the sessions. Secondly, further information was collected through different resources and techniques included in a CLIL didactic unit.

The gathering methods used in the research project for the collection of the data, that are included in the didactic unit, were obtained through cooperative learning methodology within CLIL approach. On the one hand, the input collected through cooperative learning was obtained using two of the main representative techniques within this methodology; Jigsaw and TGT (Team-Games-Tournaments). These techniques were performed through different classroom arrangements and grouping as well as the tasks that were taken the form of fact-file, and scrapbooks. Additionally, other methods that were carried out in this CLIL didactic unit are: oral presentations, self, peer, cooperative assessment, as well a teacher assessment tests. In general terms, these cooperative techniques were applied within CLIL context, that is, through a CLIL didactic unit.
III.2. THE FINDINGS

In general terms, it can be stated that the final results of the experiment were quite positive. To begin with, from the analysis done through direct observation and the informal interviews to children, I could proclaim that they loved working in cooperative groups and learn through the foreign language.

In addition to that, the implementation of the cooperative learning techniques were very effective. This can be stated from the analysis of the techniques implemented, thus, we can deduce some positive aspects. To begin with, I could observe the positive development of the students’ English skills developed through the cooperative techniques worked out during the different sessions. What is more, the oral presentation task -which sometimes can be quite hard for some learners- was quite positive and welcome. During the presentations, I was absolutely amazed with how naturally and easily they spoke in front of the class. Although, they were allowed to read the information from the paper gathered, some of the children did not need it, as they told me: “I am not going to read the paper, I am going to say it without reading the paper”. Some of those that were not delighted with the idea of talking in front of the classroom were willing to do it when they were able to do the presentation with their group instead of doing it alone.

In relation to the cooperative group’s internal development, although this was their first experience in working as a cooperative team, I could observe how they were absolutely enthusiastic with the activities for several reasons. First, they were mixed with their peers and they love it, consequently, they were absolutely disposed to work in groups. In the first session, they were arranged in groups of experts - they love this expression “I am in a group of experts”. In the second session, they were arranged in base teams. In both cases learners seemed to be more confident when they were not “alone” performing a task, in the team they had a feeling of being part of a group, their group. I explained to them that they should help each other and that no one was able to “win” or “finish first”, until all the members of the group had finished the tasks properly, and this was individuals and the group responsibility. Second, they found the activities easier and achievable, when they could work together. They told me, “I like it, because I can ask my teammates to help me, when I don’t understand the activity, and where we still do not know how to do it, “we” can ask the teacher”. In other words; they felt more secure and confident when they realize that “they were not the only ones who did not know what to do”. Within the team, they felt reassured and more willing to work together to achieve the goal. These findings go in hand, with one of the main cooperative learning foundations: learning helping each other. Another element from cooperative learning grouping that has been effective is group role distribution.

This occurred naturally. When working in their team base, in the second session, most of the groups organized their roles from the very first moment, e.g. “Pablo you can color the map, I will write the provinces, ok?”. In this sense, One could observe that all the class knew each other. They knew their talents quite well and their “drawbacks” and this was reflected when assigning their duties according to their capabilities. Yet there were some children that needed more “teacher’s guidance” with the role distribution. This happened when two “natural leaders” were in the same group. This was the perfect situation to teach them that is the whole group who has the last say in discussions. On the other hand, the filling in of the assessment tests was a very fruitful resource as well. Children find their teammates’ opinion quite interesting and gave positive feedback about their work. The negative aspects took the form of: “you can do this better by…” or “your work is really good, and can be improved this way…” . What is more, they were really interested in knowing how to improve their work. I definitely noticed that when children obtain positive
feedback from their peers and teacher, in a proper way, they feel more willing and encouraged to improve their performances.

To sum up, from the analysis of the results obtained through different methods of data gathering, I can state that the implementation of the cooperative techniques developed within the CLIL context, was successful and effective for the children and their learning process. What is more, they expressed their willingness to continue to work in groups cooperatively.

III.3. THE ACTION PLAN

In relation to future actions into the planning and implementation of cooperative methods within the CLIL classroom, there are some elements that I would like highlight, as I have realized that they are essential for the activities’ success. On the one hand, I have become aware of the importance of giving clear and concise instructions to children. This may sound obvious, but it is essential. We need to keep it short and simple. Additionally, when possible we should provide them with examples of the tasks. For instance, when working with the scrap book, we provide them with one sample for them to gain a visual of the final result. Besides, we need to make sure of children instruction comprehension, asking them to explain things or give us examples in relation to the task. On the other hand, another key issue to successful teaching in cooperative learning sessions is planning. When everything is planned to the last detail, the session is usually developed quite well in the classroom. Yet I have to admit that cooperative learning and CLIL didactic units’ planning are not exempt of work. It is true that it takes time and effort on the part of the teacher. Finally positive feedback is another key aspects in children’ success.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

I firmly believe that whether we want to achieve high levels of motivation in our students and success in our teaching practice, we need to work hard to provide our students with new proposals in their learning. When planning through CLIL contexts, some changes should be done, thus, the traditional units of works based on grammar and contents should be transformed into a different teaching/learning approach. In the same way, a blueprint through cooperative learning should be developed carefully, that is, there are many elements that should be modified such as pedagogical approach, curricular syllabus, and organizational factors, amongst others. In addition to this, the language teacher and the content teacher should be coordinated, not only for curricular reasons, but also for the positive effects on learners’ instruction. However, one may come across with colleagues reluctant to any change in their syllabus, and what is more, the language teachers might be expected to “adapt” their practice to the content teacher educational programme. In this sense, I have a strong conviction that the implementation of new methodological resources, such as cooperative learning and the CLIL approach, has little to do in schools if educational members are not engaged with the idea of retraining themselves and their teaching methods.

Taking into consideration all these essential aspects, I strongly believe that this new way of planning can be effectively integrated in the foreign language classroom and all the students’ needs would be covered. In other words, this combination of methodological approach is effective and attainable, provides children with beneficial results in their learning processes.

In my view, classrooms are miniature learning communities. I have always established this parallelism: the classroom is the society where children grow and learn in the same way as we, adults, do it in our
community. This has both its drawbacks and its benefits. Consequently, we need to teach our children not only contents and subjects, but also how to express and communicate with each other, since this is crucial in their personal evolution. Thus, according to European Union, CLIL seems to be the best scenario to deal with this linguistic necessity. Subsequently, language teachers should take this new approach into consideration, and the common pathways of learning that it proposes to foreign language teaching and learning. On the other hand, this community of learning, as aforementioned, is not perfect totally. This miniature society has the same drawbacks that “real life” implies, and children need to learn how to cope with obstacles, that without any doubt will arise. “Unfortunately” we are just human beings, that is, we are not perfect: we have talents and drawbacks. Learning is like life: a process where making mistakes is the most common way of learning. Consequently, it is essential to instruct children to be tolerant when making mistakes and controlling their frustration. Thus, we should show them that this is common, as I said before, we are just humans. We have just been aware of our talents and drawbacks, focusing on ameliorating the first, while overcoming the latter.

As Howard Gardner (1993) claimed in his theory about human intelligences: all of us have several capacities developed in different levels of proficiency. The point is to focus on promoting them. In this sense, cooperative methods, seem to offer an ideal framework, since it provides learners with the opportunity of working together while taking into consideration their different necessities and paces of learning. Additionally, students when working together, learn to respect their differences while helping each other to achieve their common goals in learning. Furthermore, as tested in this experience, positive feedback and praise are basic elements of learning. In this sense, I have always believed that the more you expect of your students, the more you get of them.In summary, I must admit that in this experience I have just dealt with is “the tip of the iceberg”. Nevertheless, it has been worthy enough to stimulate me to forge ahead and to investigate in depth within this methodological approach. All in all, the blend of both: CLIL and cooperative learning, appears to be the perfect combination, since deep down they are focused on the same goals: to be able to live together while communicating and learning from each other and to, in turn, make the world a better place to live in.

REFERENCES
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