

More about CLIL

based on S. Halliwell: Teaching English in the Primary classroom, Longman 1994

Thanks to CLIL children feel that the new language is something belonging to real life, something that is not set apart from the rest of their learning. They can see the language “in action”, how it really works and is used. In English lessons where just language is being taught the students and the teachers imitate real life situations, they pretend to be somebody else for example; they use words and structures for their own sake. This does not happen in CLIL. It is a pity that not all teachers are courageous enough to try CLIL. They either doubt their own ability to do it or they think the pupils will not be able to comprehend and the whole lesson will be too difficult for them. Anyway we may find ways that are not so difficult for either the teachers or the pupils, just if we find what the subjects have in common and we use it.

If you compare the lessons of other subjects taught at school you might find the same processes (see Halliwell):

Diagrammatic representation of information

Repeated pattern

Understanding through seeing

Responding by doing (TPR)

Diagrammatic representation

A diagram or the chart enables us to understand some things more clearly; it discovers relationships and brings surveys. These things are more difficult to be discovered in a straightforward text. In the diagram you can see the most important things at first sight while in the text you have to search for it. Diagrams and charts are used in maths, biology and other subjects as well as in English lessons. Therefore we can teach the pupils to make and read ideas diagrammatically. This can be a good starting point for integrating the subject into English and vice versa.

Repeated pattern

The pattern helps us to store information in our brains. Thanks to the patterns we can remember some things more easily. Thanks to the patterns we can create similar paradigms. Knowing the pattern enables pupils to make plurals for example from the nouns they have not used so far (pencil – pencils, therefore book – books) or regular past tense from verbs (work – worked, therefore call – called). The pattern helps us to handle the physical world better. E.g. thanks to patterns we learn more and more possibilities in PC work. We discover similarities in biology, chemistry etc.

Understanding through seeing

When we understand the message that we can see, we understand the language and when we understand the language we can get the message again. The message comes first, the language afterwards. The message is first carried by what we see, hear or feel. We need visible things first to understand. This technique is used in all subjects, and it is an element of good teaching. As soon as our abstract thinking is developed the message through language can come.

Responding through doing

In all subjects and in real life too TPR appears in mother tongue. Someone asks you to bring water and it would be odd to say ‘I will bring some water for you’. We simply do it. Doing it means we have understood the message. TPR technique is thus also common in all subjects

and it is a good starting point in the early stages of learning the language when the learners cannot articulate properly.

It is always possible to use little bits of English in other subjects and vice versa to use bits of other subjects in English. We can include an English poem occasionally in the lessons of Czech language. In the lessons of music English songs can be sung and in maths simple adding or subtraction can be done in English.

We can (see Halliwell):

Use work from English classes as a basis for work in other subjects

Take techniques from other subjects and use them in English

Use topics from other subjects and exploit them in our English lessons

Teach other subjects wholly in English.

Use work from English classes as a basis for work in other subjects

In the language lesson we can prepare surveys that will be used later in maths, for example. Pupils may discover by questioning or interviewing how far from school their classmates live (questions like : Where do you live? Where are you from? How far do you live? Are drilled this way), their likes and dislikes (Do you like ...? Do you dislike ...? What do you like?), what kind of pets they have at home (Have you got a ... at home?), how they travel to school (How do you come to school? – by bus, by train, by tram, by bike ...) etc. Then they may prepare diagrams, pie charts or block graphs that can be used later in other subjects.

Take techniques from other subjects and use them in English

Language work is done together with other subjects and mental processes are being trained also when pupils are asked to work with categorizing (sorting), sets or even intersecting sets in their English lessons. Drawing the sets can follow the questioning mentioned above. These activities are an important part of the children's intellectual development. The results are then used in other subjects and the language and thought have been linked in a very real way.

Use topics from other subjects and exploit them in our English lessons

Some simple experiments from physics, biology or chemistry can be performed as a tool for language work. Thanks to them pupils can acquire the language through seeing, listening and doing, which is one of the most natural ways of indirect learning. Language is used for a real learning experience.

Teach other subjects wholly in English

Not many teachers are courageous enough to teach the whole subject in English though teaching pupils through the medium of English is the best experience of real use of English that we can provide. Teachers may be afraid that the whole thing is too complicated, the preparation is too demanding and both pupils and teachers will find the lesson difficult. It does not necessarily have to be like that. Let's have a look at what can help the teachers: The lesson before can be done in Czech. The teacher introduces the topic and outlines general approach. After the lesson in English the discussion may follow in Czech again in the next lesson. Thus only the middle lesson is performed in English.

To conclude the topic the following should be mentioned: Teachers do not have to discover special new methods and techniques if they want to teach the subject in English. They can easily use the techniques well known from their English and other subjects' lessons.