

DAVID MARSH: INTO THE CORE OF CLIL GOOD PRACTICE
INTERACTIVE CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR, 22.01.2010
at I.T.I “A. Malignani” - Udine



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE LEARN?

This is the sentence Professor David Marsh from University of Jyväskylä in Finland started his interactive conference with: a hearty supporter of the project, he addressed the participants (teachers from primary and secondary schools from Friuli-Venezia Giulia) waiting for their answers.

In one sentence: CLIL induces the learner to be more cognitively active during the learning process; when the students are thinking harder, they are learning better. But why are their performances better both in terms of the content and in terms of the language? What happens to the brain when we are learning through a foreign language? What stimulates the mind?

Professor Marsh claims that researches proved by magnetic resonance show clearly how our brain works when we are learning science, for ex., through English: **neurons that wire together fire together**. CLIL is clearly working for excellence, CLIL is about excellence.

There are many advantages to the CLIL approach:

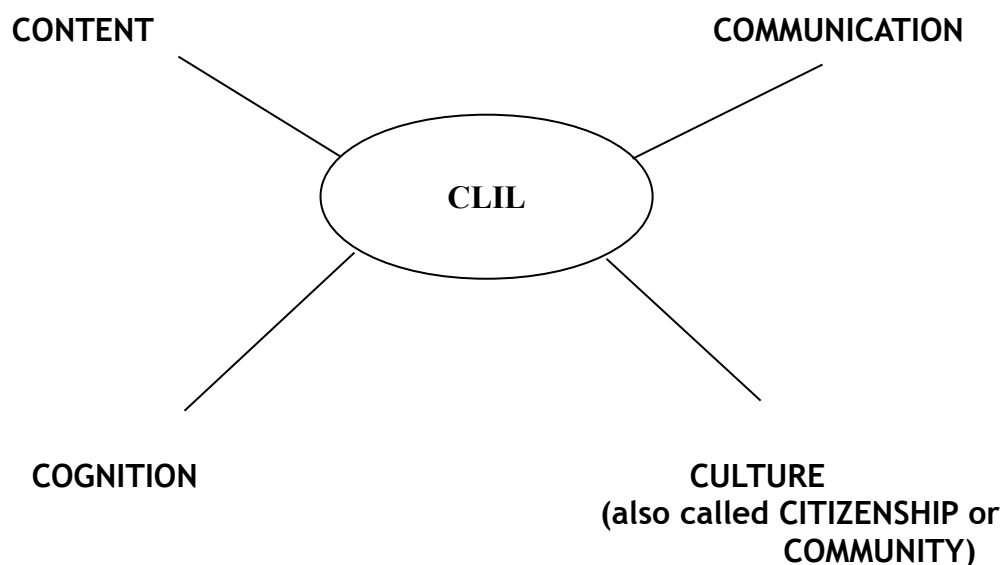
- it develops confident learners and enhances academic cognitive processes and communication skills;
- it encourages intercultural understanding and community values;
- it shows that learners become more sensitive to vocabulary and ideas presented in their first language as well as in the target language, and they gain more extensive and varied vocabulary,
- it increases learners' confidence in the target language;

So CLIL is a wonderful example of convergent education.

But what about teachers? What about their fears and doubts, their hopes and expectations?

Well, Professor Marsh looks and sounds very optimistic about the project, especially thinking about the future reform in the Italian High Secondary school which is planning for a subject taught entirely through the English language in the fifth year. Somebody may believe that is only utopia but the trend is not.

Keeping in mind that “The native speaker is dead”, the subject teacher who wants or would like to use English as a medium for teaching his/her curriculum subject does not have to be proficient in the foreign language; he/she must **be self-confident, feel as a member of a team, work in cooperation, ask for help and suggestions, and be aware of the four Cs of the project:**



According to David Marsh, Principals as well should work for CLIL and support it, otherwise their schools, that is the quality of the teaching, will not be considered “trendy” and will be out of the European awareness.

Teachers need to belong to a “system” and they need new training and a new approach in order to communicate with their students properly and in an effective way and not to feel as ghosts wandering around their schools.

Teachers must ask for:

- in-service training
- experimenting new things
- continuing to learn
- reflection
- inquiry-oriented approach
- peer-learning/sharing experience

because of :

- digital divide
- generation divide
- knowledge divide

To raise enthusiasm in the participants, Professor Marsh invited them to take part in one of the next CLIL meetings around Europe: conferences and seminars planned in pursuit of excellence with the aim of uncovering CLIL quality by CLIL practitioners and evidencing CLIL quality by CLIL researchers.

They will take place in Germany, Spain and Finland all around the year 2010 (visit the website: www.comenius.clil).

Later, he asked all the teachers in the room to write down their needs, interests and wishes for a Regional Action Plan which is being organized in order to have a “list” of CLIL teachers being recognized in their skills, titles and experience , and working in cooperation.

The new TKT CLIL CERTIFICATE will be required in the next future to be “enrolled and listed” in a “Graduatoria Regionale” which is currently being discussed and organized by Ufficio Scolastico Regionale in Trieste.

CONCLUSION

WHY CLIL?

It is scientifically proved that students learn better when they are challenged to understand new topics in a different language from their own because their brains MUST pay more attention to what is explained to them.

Of course, let's leave out of the classroom the traditional teacher-centred lesson: he/she is not the protagonist or the omniscient speaker but:

- a manager
- a planner
- a provider
- a diagnostician

And, what's more, students feel their teachers more “powerful and credible” as they are cooperating one another and being a part of a team.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.ccn-clil.eu

www.marcprensky.com

www.clilconsortium.jyu.fi

www.onestopclil.org

www.scienceacrosstheworld.org

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Next meeting in Udine on 21st May 2010 to show examples of what works in class and to get ready for other challenges.

Prof.ssa Cristiana Rigo

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