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Assessment Issues in CLIL: What You've Been Wondering but Were Afraid to Ask

Resumen

La evaluación es una de las áreas más controvertidas en AICLE debido a diversos factores tales como la ausencia de directrices, el tratamiento de los aspectos lingüísticos, y la dificultad de encontrar instrumentos de evaluación que midan eficazmente las áreas disciplinares desde una perspectiva integradora. El presente trabajo pretende contribuir a la literatura de AICLE ofreciendo respuestas concretas y líneas de actuación a partir del análisis de los aspectos siguientes: en primer lugar, la importancia de incluir instrumentos de evaluación de carácter formativo, que se ajusten al contexto CLIL en general, y a las diferentes realidades educativas en particular. En segundo lugar, es preciso definir claramente los diferentes roles del profesorado de la educación bilingüe- profesores de áreas no lingüísticas (ANL) y lingüísticas (AL)- así como poner de manifiesto la necesidad del trabajo colaborativo y la planificación conjunta entre ambos. Por último, es urgente resaltar el papel de la lengua vehicular como instrumento integrador que facilite la expresión del contenido y las competencias asociadas a cada área disciplinar.

Abstract

Assessment is one the most controversial areas in CLIL mainly due to the lack of guidelines, the treatment of language aspects, and the difficulty of finding assessment tools, which could efficiently measure content, language and skills. This study aims to contribute to the CLIL literature by offering concrete answers and priority action lines on the following main aspects: First, in relation to the need to implement Formative Assessment tools suited to the CLIL context in general, and the different CLIL educational realities in which this approach is set in particular. Second, the teachers' roles- content teachers and language teachers- in bilingual education- need to be clearly defined for effective collaboration and joint planning among them. Finally, it is also necessary to highlight the role of the language in CLIL as an integrating instrument enabling content knowledge expression, and the competences associated with the different areas and disciplines.

Palabras clave
AICLE, evaluación formativa, lengua, roles del profesorado

Keywords
CLIL, formative assessment, language, teachers' roles.

Introduction

The idea for this talk came from the research I conducted on assessment practices in the Bilingual Sections of the CAM Bilingual Project, a state-funded bilingual program implemented in Madrid in the academic year 2004-2005. This gave me the opportunity to interview both CLIL teachers and students, analyze the main assessment tools, and thus to learn first-hand about the difficulties they face in relation with language-related issues, namely whether to assess them or not, and the criteria to do so, and the need to find the best assessment tools for CLIL subjects.

Assessment is probably one of the most controversial issues in CLIL due to the variety of contexts in which this methodological approach is set, the difficulties in assessing the language, and the lack of official guidelines and research on the topic. This study aims to uncover the most common issues about CLIL assessment by means of a practical approach. To start with, we will reflect on CLIL teachers' assessment practice with the help of an initial questionnaire. Then we will focus on the need to conduct Formative Assessment, the best alternative assessment tools, teachers' roles in CLIL assessment, and how to make linguistic aspects visible in CLIL. Finally, to encourage critical thinking, and trigger questions on this subject matter, a final reflection on the main aspects pointed out before will close the discussion with the help of a typical tool in Formative Assessment: Exit Slips.

Formative Assessment

Formative Assessment or Assessment *for* Learning (AfL) was designed as a pedagogical tool to regulate and promote learning rather than a grading system to score students. As opposed to Assessment *of* Learning or Summative Assessment, which is judgmental by nature, AfL aims to establish clear learning objectives, and to provide effective feedback through questioning tools, which inform both teachers and students, and help them fill learning gaps (Black & William, 1998). Formative Assessment has the following main features: First, it focuses on what the student is able to do rather than catching her/him up in those skills s/he was unable to accomplish. This emphasis on skills and abilities detaches Formative Assessment from traditional instruction in that in the first, the focus is no longer on retrieving theoretical concepts but on practical activities which can help students show the depth of their knowledge. Second, Formative Assessment is conceived as an indispensable part of instruction i.e. integrated in classroom routines (Leung &Mohan, 2004), and not just after the teaching sequences. Consequently, the feedback is effective for both students and teachers because it is provided during the learning and teaching process, when there is still time to act on it (Chappuis, 2012, p. 36), and therefore, attention is given to both the process of learning and its final product. Third, unlike traditional Summative Assessment, which is largely based on standardized exams, Formative Assessment combines different types of feedback such as performance-based assessment and classroom observation from individuals and groups of learners.

Attempts to change current assessment practice have been clearly noticeable in recent years with the criticism of the exam-driven culture, no unnecessary testing (NUT) (Krashen, 2008), and publications such as *La Constante Macabre* (2005), all of them stressing that assessment practices might be outdated as they fail to reflect students' skills and abilities (Assessment Reform Group, 2002, 2012). In the context of bilingual education, Formative Assessment is particularly relevant for the success of the program. On the one hand, because of its task-based nature and the wider variety of classroom interaction that it promotes (Ball, Kelly and Clegg, 2015, p. 213), and on the other hand, because of the scaffolding it offers students allowing them to engage in cognitive processes, and activate knowledge and skills in a different language from

their own. Despite the different attempts to change the assessment culture, in some countries, Formative Assessment is still far from established. In fact, although in the Spanish educational context, educational competences were already present in the previous educational law (LOE, 2006), and assessment has been described as continuous during the last decades, it was not until the arrival of the current educational law (LOMCE, 2013) that its formative character was highlighted. As a matter of fact, traditional summative assessment is still deeply rooted in the Spanish assessment culture, and alternative assessment tools are just being timidly used to complement traditional standardized exams. Since educational changes usually take time, it is hoped that innovative assessment practices are fully implemented in the near future.

Best Assessment Tools

Apart from students' and teachers' reflection on the teaching and learning process, AfL requires assessment tools suited to the CLIL context, which measure language, content and skills "for a real purpose in a real context" (Coyle et al. 2010), that is tools which mirror real-life activities through contextualized, authentic and alternative means of measuring students' progress. Furthermore, CLIL assessment tools need to balance the cognitive and language demand, and be aware of students' difficulties in relation to language limited proficiency (Lo &Lin, 2014). The following tools are considered effective in the context of bilingual education:

- Portfolios: Unlike the traditional compilation of students' work which is typical in Spanish secondary education through notebooks, portfolios offer a selection of materials and best pieces of work along with some reflection on the part of the student on aspects such as the main difficulties they find in their learning process, and how they overcame them. Portfolios can be presented in paper-based format or electronically, being the latter preferred as it can accommodate audio and video files, a quality which makes them more attractive for digital natives;

- Students' Journals: Journals can take many different forms. As with portfolios, they can help students build skills, promote reflection, and assess their own progress.

- Performance-based assessment such as oral presentations, interviews, narratives and descriptions, blog entries, model making, (collaborative) projects, web quests, and concept maps, to name just a few, can also benefit the learning process in showing students' skills as opposed to memorization skills in traditional standardized exams.

- Self and peer-assessment: In conducting reflection about their own learning progress, which is paramount for independent learning ("learning how to learn"), these tools are essential on the one hand, for the student to evaluate themselves, and also to be able to assess their peers' work, and thus work out, and identify success criteria. However, for effective use on the part of the students, and for those instruments to result in significant learning, the teacher needs to train students in their use beforehand.

- Checklists: Traditionally used by teachers in informal class observation, they can be helpful to notice and assess students' progress, in the form of can-do descriptors, which can be easily linked with assessable learning outcomes (LOMCE, 2013)

- Rubrics: regardless we use holistic or analytic rubrics, they stand out as useful descriptors to make the assessment process as transparent as possible, and show students the criteria used by teachers in assessing work so that they can work on them in their daily practice. Analytic rubrics are especially helpful in bilingual education contexts as

they can separate content and language issues, and attention can be drawn on the (functional) aspects of language which are key to the expression of content knowledge in the typical genres of academic subjects.

WALT ("We Are Learning To") and WILF ("What I'm Looking For") posters are other types of pedagogical tools teachers can use in the classroom to help students become engaged in their own learning process, create a positive learning environment, foster peer-assessment and self-assessment, and reflect on what has been learned during the lesson/unit (Heather, 2012, p. 160). In the first one, the teacher shows the main objectives of the lesson or session, and the second is aimed at sharing success criteria with students so that they understand their performance and those from their peers' in a pedagogical way.

Figure 1: WALT and WILF Posters

(Retrieved from Twinkle.uk.com., 2016)

As was pointed out before, Formative Assessment tools are excellent in promoting learning and reflection among both students and teachers. However, most of the times current educational realities show that standardized exams are still the norm in some countries (TALIS, 2014), and therefore, the most sensible option is to combine alternative assessment tools with summative ones, and even to use summative ones in a formative way. The following are concrete measures CLIL practitioners can adopt in the challenge of adapting current assessment practices to the CLIL context:

- Make the most of class notebooks to trigger reflection on the students' best pieces of work, the areas they find more difficult, and how they overcome difficulties. This reflection can help them move from the traditional compilation of activities covered through a semester or academic year onto portfolio work (Escobar Urmeneta, 2006)

- Consider if you really need a test to measure students' progress in your subject; some areas such as Arts and Crafts and Physical Education are more likely to bring about the development of effective assessment through competences;

- Design assessment tools to combine both written and oral tasks, and make sure standardized exams do not have a dominant role in the final grade;

- Find the competences or skills your students might need to perform in order to achieve the main goals of the subject. In this sense, LOMCE's assessable learning standards might be useful indicators;

- Promote reflection about exam results: how students perceive their work and those form their peers' with the use of self and peer-assessment, and include those reflections in a portfolio or journal;

- Train students in self and peer-assessment techniques in class while you correct daily class activities or homework by using can-do descriptors;

- Use the rubrics to show assessment criteria, and to work as in a "Language Clinic" (Coyle et al. 2010), i.e. to analyze students' typical mistakes in the language aspects which are critical in the expression of content and skills;

- If language is to be assessed, make sure appropriate scaffolding is provided not just in class activities and homework but also in assessment tasks (Llinares, Morton & Whittaker, 2012; Bentley, 2010);

- Adapt the assessment tasks to several language levels so that all the students can demonstrate content knowledge regardless their (limited) language proficiency (Bentley, 2010)

- Consider the extent to which you should allow students to express knowledge of the subject by using their L1, as is common practice in other CLIL contexts (Wewer, 2014; Hönig, 2010)

Teachers' Roles

Bilingual education requires considerable involvement on the part of all the faculty members. In Spain, CLIL teachers in secondary education need to be officially enabled to teach their subjects through a vehicular language[1] along with the expertise in an area or subject (s). However, unlike other countries, regulations do not specify that CLIL teachers need specific training on CLIL related methodologies (Eurydice, 2017), a prerequisite which would greatly facilitate the defining of roles and responsibilities. In this sense, and given this lack of training, and the fact that content teachers are not usually prepared to deal with language issues, CLIL teachers usually feel overwhelmed about their own language level, and having to teach their subjects in another language, and unsecure about their roles[2]. To overcome these difficulties, CLIL and language teachers should share the responsibility of their teaching practice to develop common perspectives about curriculum design, and the skills which are relevant to the subject in question (Coyle, Holmes & King, 2009). In this line of collaboration, Pavón (2016, as cited in Otto, 2017) suggests inter-disciplinary work to favor on the one hand, linguistic transference and the development of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) which is paramount in second language acquisition, and on the other hand, the communicative linguistic competence basic in each area according to the educational law in force (LOMCE, 2013). Thus, CLIL teachers have to be conscious of their role as both content and language teachers, that is to highlight the language students will need to deal with content and skills, and language teachers have to be ready to assist students in those language aspects which are key for both BICS and CALP, and plan accordingly. This vision of the content teacher as a language teacher helps to integrate

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[1] In the CAM Bilingual Project, CLIL teachers have to provide evidence of a C1- level language skills to access bilingual education.

[2] Author's data from unpublished research on CLIL assessment practice in the CAM Bilingual Project.

content and language effectively, to avoid the tendency to overlook errors, which might otherwise fossilize, and it engages students in a holistic curriculum where everybody talks the same language. Below there are some of the actions CLIL teachers can undertake for effective teaching and assessment:

- Analyze your subject (s) so as to consider the language objectives students will need to master for effective expression of content and skills;

- Talk to the language department or specialist to see whether those linguistic aspects are present in the curriculum of English as a Foreign Language, or maybe students studied them in the past;

- Meet up with the language department to know about your students English level, and the most common challenges they encounter as regards expression and comprehension in the foreign language; This will help you to adapt the activities and assessment tasks to suit your learners' needs;

- Ask the language specialists for advice on the most common and useful techniques to deal with language learning strategies (for instance, to ask students to underline the stressed syllable when they come up with new or difficult words);

- If necessary, organize a "language awareness seminar" (Schleppegrell, Achugar. & Oteíza, 2004) to share ideas and good practice with the rest of the teachers in your area.

As for language teachers, the following actions are recommended:

- Include some language learning strategies in your daily teaching practice. This will help your students to deal with the learning of new vocabulary in CLIL subjects;

- Promote vocabulary learning through chunks or common collocations. This will help students to learn CALP more efficiently, and to move gradually from academic language to academic discourse;

- Make students reflect on text structure: analyze different texts with them so that they notice how ideas are linked and progression is made;

- Train your students on skimming and scanning for reading and listening, and encourage them to use these techniques while tackling challenging texts in English;

- Be ready to use academic texts in your subject so that students perceive the curriculum in a holistic way, and in order to review before an exam;

- Train students for oral tasks, provide them with a list of useful sentences, and promote self and peer-assessment with the help of a rubric. Share the rubric with other colleagues in the bilingual team, so that it can be adapted and used in other CLIL subjects.

- Talk frequently to the CLIL teachers, offer help, and try to be involved in their subjects;

- If you are a bilingual coordinator, get to know the language assistant (s) as soon as possible, and put her/him in touch with the CLIL teachers. Language assistants can most helpful if they are informed about the language aspects which are challenging for students, and which impede them express content knowledge. Make sure bilingual coordination meetings are held periodically, try to encourage joint planning, promote

discussion on common criteria for assessing language-related aspects, and make sure that support is being offered for all the faculty staff.

Making Language Visible in CLIL

Language in CLIL is much more than BICS and CALP. In fact, CLIL teachers need to be aware of the language the students will need in order to be able to express content knowledge, and to develop the linguistic competences intrinsic to the topic and academic discipline in question: language *of, for* and *through* language learning and language using (Coyle et al 2010) as showed in the language triptych below:

Figure 2: The Language Triptych
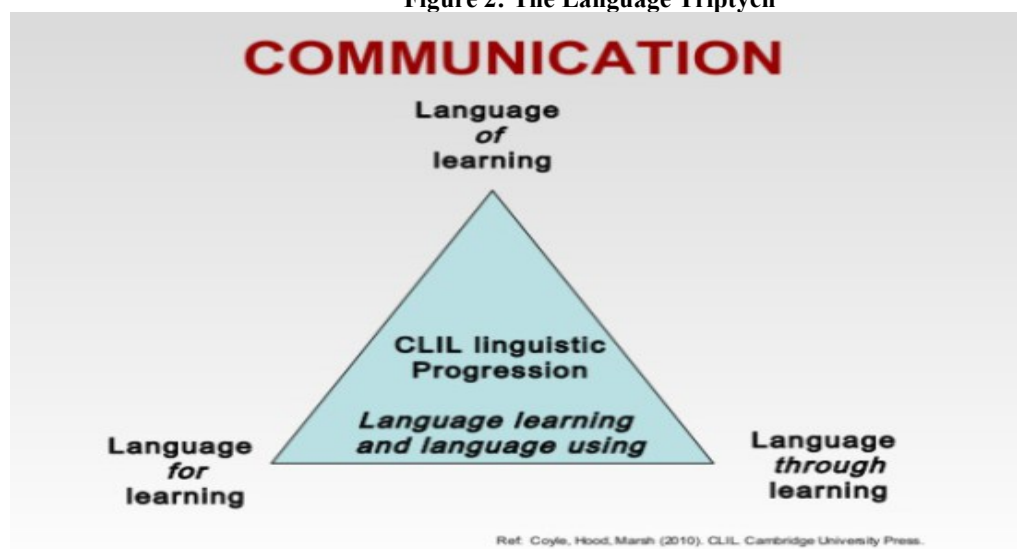
(From Coyle et al. 2010, p. 43-45)

But how can this be made visible in daily teaching practice? First, teachers are recommended to formulate the language objectives in their subject, and ensure that these language objectives are met in their lesson plans. For this purpose, and in order to avoid the lack of attention on language-related issues which is common in bilingual education (Met, 1991; Snow, 2001; Short, 2002; Stoller &Grabe, 1997), and in some bilingual contexts where CLIL teachers lack language awareness (Pavón & Ellison, 2013), and which sometimes result in language invisibility (Llinares, Morton &Whitaker, 2012), a close analysis of the language which is typical of each area is necessary on the part of teachers. In this sense, the following template suggested by Polias (2003)- which can be easily adapted for younger leaners and other CLIL subject- displays several categories, namely genre, field, tenor and mode, being all of them aspects which conform academic discourse:

Table 1: A Model for assessing students' written work

Genre
- Are the stages and phases of the text organized logically and according to the genre
- Have all the stages and phases been included?
- Do each of the stages and phases achieve their purpose'

Field
- Does the text include all the field knowledge expected?
- How varied is the students' vocabulary?
- How well has the student expanded the nominal groups?
- Is the level of technicality and/or abstraction in the text appropriate?

Tenor
- Does the student show the appropriate level of expertise?
- Is the appropriate level of uncertainty used?
- Is the appropriate level of objectivity used?

Mode
- How well does the student choose theme (orientation)? In the text?
- How well are conjunctions used?
- Is the text cohesive?
- How accurate are the grammatical elements such as tense, articles and word order?
- Is the spelling accurate?
- Is the punctuation accurate?

(From Polias, 2003, p. 59)

By analyzing subject literacy or the "grammar of the subject", CLIL teachers can deconstruct the language of textbooks and other materials, and focus on language from a functional viewpoint i.e. as a meaning-making resource (Schleppegrell, Achugar & Oteíza, 2004. p. 27). With this functional approach, deliberate attention is thus directed not only to academic vocabulary but also to pronunciation, syntax, and the language functions which conform academic discourse, rather than to form. In CLIL, the focus on form (FoF) can be beneficial during daily teaching practice (Pérez Vidal, 2007) but it might fail to bring content and language together in CLIL assessment due to the fact that the emphasis should be laid on content over language. Besides, apart from specific attention to the language *of, for* and *through* learning or content-related and content compatible vocabulary (Bentley, 2010) and discourse functions, this language awareness on the part of the teachers entails on the one hand, the recognition of the different demands of the language present in the CLIL subject, and on the other hand, closer attention to the linguistic needs or challenges of the learners. The first can be handled for instance by an analysis of the spoken and written language demands, the types of texts that students will need to read and listen to (Gibbons, 2002, p. 122), and the latter, as was pointed out in the previous section, by closer analysis on students' difficulties as regards language, and the collaboration between content and language teachers. To end with, agreement is required as for the type of measurement (if any) which is to be conducted in relation with language aspects that will be taken into account such as the four skills, vocabulary and grammar, language functions, and language learning strategies.

Workshop Development

After having dealt with the most relevant theoretical aspects of CLIL assessment, the main objectives of this practical workshop are presented below:

- To analyze one's assessment practice as a previous step for reflection;

- To reflect on the need to implement Formative Assessment tools;

- To recognize the differences between assessment in CLIL and non-CLIL subjects;

- To be aware of CLIL teachers' roles in bilingual education, and be ready to work in collaboration with language teachers;

- To highlight the relevant role of language in CLIL as the vehicle for content expression:

- To engage in debate, and share best practices for assessment in CLIL.

The session is organized into six phases covering the following topics: a preliminary reflection and analysis of the participants' assessment style, Formative Assessment, main assessment tools and how to combine them with standardized exams, a closer look at language teachers and CLIL teachers' roles, and the need to make language issues visible for fair assessment practices.

Phase 1: Initial Questionnaire. Your Assessment Style.

To introduce the topic of assessment, the teachers fill in the questionnaire below, individually or in pairs/groups. These questions aim to raise awareness and introduce the main objectives in the workshop in relation with the teachers' roles in bilingual education, Formative Assessment, best assessment tools, and making language aspects visible in CLIL.

Table 2: Getting Started: Initial Questionnaire on your assessment style.

Read the questions and answer TRUE or FALSE

QUESTIONS	TRUE	FALSE
Assessment in CLIL needs to be different from assessment in non-bilingual subjects		
I know about Formative Assessment		
The assessment tools we use suit Bilingual Education		
CLIL teachers need to plan for the language used in their subjects		
All learners need specific language teaching at both early stages and more advanced stages of CLIL programs		
CLIL teachers correct content-vocabulary and some pronunciation but don´t usually correct grammatical errors.		

Phase 2: Formative Assessment and CLIL.

Starting from the first question: "Assessment in CLIL needs to be different from assessment in non-bilingual subjects", and with the purpose to answer the second question: "I know about Formative Assessment", the main features of Formative Assessment or Assessment for Learning (Afl) are now analyzed. During this phase, the participants are encouraged to ask any questions and share their views on these two introductory questions.

Phase 3: Best Assessment Tools and How to Combine them with Standardized Exams.
Next, the best assessment tools for CLIL are introduced, and we comment on how they can be complemented, and combined with typical standardized exams in mainstream education. The main goal of this part is to make teachers aware of the need to implement Formative Assessment tools for effective assessment practice, namely through triggering students' reflection on their own learning, the use of the portfolio and self and peer-assessment, and with the use of rubrics sharing success criteria.

Phase 4: Your Role as a CLIL/Language Teacher.
The next step in the workshop will be to work out the main roles of CLIL and language teachers. For that purpose, the participants are encouraged to work in small groups or pairs, and assign the following duties to the CLIL teacher, the language teacher (or both):

Table 3: CLIL and Language Teachers' Roles

Read the different roles below, and try to assign them to CLIL teachers, language teachers or both:
- *Establish concrete language objectives*
- *Highlight specific academic vocabulary students need to learn*
- *Offer guidelines for successful presentations, essays, etc.*
- *Work in collaboration with other teachers, plan accordingly.*

After this brief discussion, the main roles of CLIL and language teachers are highlighted, and awareness is raised on the need for both of them to work in collaboration with each other, and welcome joint planning in their subjects.

Phase 5: Making Language Visible in CLIL.
Participants are asked about the main aspects of language they take into account when assessing language aspects in CLIL, and related information on the language demands of the curriculum and the students' is presented and discussed with the help of the following prompt questions:

Table 4: Making language visible in CLIL subjects

Discuss the following with a peer:
- ✓ Which are the demands of the curriculum? Which is the specific language of your subject?
- ✓ How can you help your students grasp that language? How can this language be facilitated so that they are able to express content knowledge?
- ✓ Which grammar aspects do your students need to master?
- ✓ Are they familiar with those grammar aspects? How can you help them out?
- ✓ Is there something that the language teacher and/or language assistant can do to help them with those aspects?

To end this phase, discussion turns to the language aspects the participants assess and why, and whether criteria is shared with the rest of the teachers in the department or school.

Phase 6: Exit Slips to the Rescue!
In this workshop, the main topics about CLIL assessment in relation with assessment tools, CLIL and language teachers' responsibilities, and the relevance of language-related aspects have been discussed. The last part of the session is devoted to participants' questions. To guide reflection on what they have learned during the session, exit slips are used:

- ✓ *One thing I learnt*

- ✓ *One thing I found interesting*

- ✓ *One question I still have*

Conclusions

In the last two decades, there have been different approaches to assess CLIL subjects depending on the contexts in question. This study joins them all in welcoming Formative Assessment tools, collaboration between CLIL and language teachers, and a closer look at language-related issues as paramount in content expression. It is hoped that these actions can guide practitioners in the following main areas:

- Know about Formative Assessment, the best Formative Assessment tools, and how they can be combined with standard exams;

- Raise awareness on CLIL and language teachers' roles in bilingual education, and the best ways to work in collaboration with each other;

- Recognize the need to deal with language in the class as a prerequisite for fair assessment practice;

- State criteria about the language aspects which will be taken into account in assessment, their weight on the final grade, and present them to students.

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