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ASPETTI LINGUISTICI E INTERAZIONALI NELL'APPRENDIMENTO CLIL
CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning): linguistic and interactional aspects

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the research is CLIL methodology (Content and Language Integrated Learning), one of the latest significant curriculum trends in Europe, in which curricular subjects (either humanistic or scientific) are offered in a foreign language.

The dissertation is divided into two main parts: a theoretical section, including an overview of different perspectives and the theoretical background of this research, and an analytical section, devoted to the description and to the analysis of some examples of CLIL classroom interactions in primary and secondary schools.

PART I – Teaching theory and practice

The term CLIL was introduced in 1994 by David Marsh and Anne Maljers and it refers to the integration of contents and language in the learning process: while using a foreign language, you can learn contents at the same time, improving the level of language competence and the motivation and interest to the subject. Therefore, in a CLIL lesson, you have to pay attention to both the communicative and linguistic level and the content level of what is being taught. The idea is that you can't learn contents without considering the language, as much as you can't speak a language isolated from its context and from the contents that are being conveyed (Crandall, 1994).

From this idea stems the “4 Cs” model suggested by Do Coyle (Coyle et al., 2010): *Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture/Citizenship*: according to this model, the learning process is the result from the integration of these four dimensions. Starting from the origin and definitions of the term CLIL, the research analyses the advantages of this methodology, from a holistic perspective, including linguistic, metalinguistic, cognitive, aspects.

However, also disadvantages are taken into account: CLIL represents a real revolution, that impacts all the actors of the school system (Headmasters, language teachers, subject teachers, language assistants, parents, students, etc.). It takes time to analyse the potentials of this approach and to implement it. One of the key features of CLIL is teacher training aimed at developing a combination of skills and competences: linguistic, subject, didactic, and methodological.

The training process is quite demanding, especially in the case of in-service teachers, who have to cope their teaching timetables at school with the University courses.

A chapter is devoted to the European scenario: considering the latest reports from the European Commission and the latest Eurydice report (Key data on languages in Europe, 2012), the research tries to offer a picture of the implementation of CLIL methodology all over Europe.

In Italy CLIL methodology was introduced by a Reform Law dated 2010: in September 2013 “licei linguistici” started implementing the study of a subject in a foreign language in the third year. Students in their last year of all secondary schools will be offered a subject taught in a foreign language in September 2014, thus making CLIL mandatory in the upper secondary school curriculum. In order to become a qualified CLIL teacher, the Italian Ministry of Education has designed specific in-service training courses, focusing on both language and methodology. As far as language is concerned, the CEFR level of competence required to teach CLIL is C1. As for methodology, a specific Decree establishes that Universities will deliver post-degree courses in CLIL. The learning paths are conceived as blended, with a part of face-to-face lessons and some online activities, offering materials, best practices and toolkits delivered through a special e-learning platform.

A specific chapter is devoted to the monitoring project which is being carried out by the Ministry: an online questionnaire is being delivered to all the teachers that planned and implemented CLIL modules during the school year 2012-13.

PART II – Data analysis

This part deals with the main features of class interaction, stemming on the theoretical framework on which this research is based.

In particular, the main principles of Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis are briefly described, in order to better understand the characteristics of the interaction between teacher and student and among students themselves.

Some considerations are mentioned also with reference to the latest researches in the teaching field with particular attention to the Task-Based Approach methodology.

CLIL activities in class can contribute to a more spontaneous and genuine use of the language in contexts and to carry out specific tasks. In fact, effective CLIL lessons take place in laboratories, in equipped rooms or even outdoors. This helps to improve the students' level of competence.

The works of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) are briefly referred to, in order to explain the origin and the main principles of Conversation Analysis. The mechanisms of turn-taking are also taken into account, especially with reference to classroom interaction.

Classroom interaction has some particular features which derives from the asymmetrical nature of the dialogue: teacher and students do not have the same interactional power. In fact the teacher has the complete control of the interaction, at any level (Orletti, 2000). The features, which are typical of classroom interaction, among which the IRF sequence (Sinclair, Coulthard, 1975), can be found also in a CLIL lesson, where different models are applied as well.

One of the most important and common strategies used during a CLIL lesson is the *scaffolding* process, which is the way teachers try to help students in the achievement of the objective of the lesson, guiding them towards progressive autonomy. Considering the scaffolding process, the interactions from a CLIL class in a primary school are examined and discussed, trying to underline the strategies used by the teachers to help the students perform the tasks assigned.

As far as secondary school is concerned, some videoclips from CLIL lessons are analysed and discussed, considering the linguistic resources used within the interaction, but also non verbal communication, which play a leading role in CLIL classes, as multimodality can facilitate the understanding of contents and the process of learning in general.

The thesis aims at pointing out the added value that CLIL methodology can give to the teaching and learning, even if there are still problems and doubts to sort out. Teachers and students are eager to discover this innovation and benefits are quite evident: this can be considered a good starting point in the perspective of the Italian school system. However it will take some years to ascertain the actual results of the implementation of this reform, and to evaluate its impact on the whole system, especially on students moving towards the European benchmarks in terms of linguistic, transversal, curricular and key competences.

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