

Review of the book *CLIL activities: A resource for subject and language teachers (with CD-ROM)*, by L. Dale & R. Tanner¹

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CLIL's literature is growing fast as a result of the varied implementations seen in the settings in which it is explored. Dale and Tanner's contribution to the fast growing CLIL literature is a gem for researchers, ELT/CLIL coordinators, and above all, teachers who are engaged in CLIL implementation and know about the benefits and challenges CLIL teachers may find along the way. I approached CLIL Activities as a teacher-researcher who believes that CLIL entails the integration of curricular content and language learning with the aim of making a second language an inherent part of the school curriculum.

CLIL Activities may be taken as a handbook focused on practice as more than half of its pages do offer wide-ranging activities. The authors state that the book is targeted at subject and language teachers probably with the intention of showing that both content and language are equally important and interrelated. The book is divided into three parts: (1) Background to CLIL, (2) Subject pages, and (3) Practical activities. The authors move from establishing a theoretical framework to teaching ideas which could be applied to different CLIL models and settings. The book comes with a CD-ROM which mirrors the content organisation of the handbook. The CD-ROM does not offer supplementary materials. It contains the same photocopiable checklists, graphic organisers, boxes, and sample subject-related texts which we find in the printed version. These can be saved and shared digitally.

Part 1 offers a succinct and innovative background to CLIL. Needless to say, it includes the well-known definition by Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010; see also Coyle, 2007; Marsh, 2008), but it moves further as it outlines the differences between CBLT (Content-Based Language Teaching, see Creese, 2005) and immersion. For Dale and Tanner, "CBLT [content-based language teaching] deals with teaching content in language lessons" (p. 4), and immersion focuses on subject matter learning but not on language. Dale and Tanner restrict, and

¹ (2012). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.



resignify, CLIL scope and models (Banegas, 2012) by stating that “CLIL deals with teaching a subject at the same time as teaching language” (p.4).

In addition, Dale and Tanner summarise the benefits that CLIL brings for learners, teachers, and institutions, but they also raise people’s awareness of the challenges (challenges for CLIL learners are unpacked in Part 2, pp. 41-45) and questions sustainable CLIL implementation poses. However, these challenges can be overcome by deploying CLIL through a rationale which integrates sociocultural theory, Bloom’s taxonomy, BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills), and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). Throughout the pages, readers will find checklists, guiding questions to organise activities and materials, and boxes with key ideas about concepts such as scaffolding (p. 31), effective talk (p. 35), and assessment (p. 38). With reference to the rationale, it is worth pointing out that this is perhaps the first major book on CLIL that does not embrace Coyle’s 4Cs framework.

Part 2 provides “examples, encouragement and support to CLIL subject teachers without a language teaching background, and to language teachers with some insights in ... nine subject areas” (p. 41). These areas include the arts, humanities, physical education, and science. Because Dale and Tanner are aware of the challenges that CLIL learners may have at the level of affective factors, discourse, skills, grammar, lexis, and culture in the areas selected, each section presents tips for language teaching. For example, the section devoted to Economics and Business Studies opens with a word cloud possibly generated by wordle.net. Under the heading “The language of economics and business studies”, the authors condense (1) the most typical thinking skills needed, (2) examples of input such as newspaper articles, reports, and online presentations, and (3) the most common language functions (for example: recounting, explaining, persuading) accompanied by illustrative language exponents (for example: “... figures dropped”, “was caused by”, “how can we ...?”) and text types (for example: charts, spread sheets, ads). This heading is followed by a sample text which highlights the discourse features found in business-oriented text. Readers need to go through Part 2 bearing in mind that these are only sample texts, functions, and aims. The section finishes with sample language and content aims in speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary.

Part 3 gives this book its *raison d'être*. It contains 91 activities divided into the following chapters: Activating, Guiding Understanding, Focus on Language,



Speaking, Writing, Assessment, Review, and Feedback. Regardless of the chapter, each activity starts with a box that summarises the aims, language and thinking skills, language focus, time, and CEFR level, as well as the teacher preparation required to carry out the activity successfully. The box is followed by clear bullet-points that take teachers through the activity procedures step-by-step. However, these procedures are not fixed. Each activity offers flexibility and it also comes with graphic organisers, sample hand-outs, variations and tips for cross-curricular collaboration or teaching ideas before, while, and after teaching.

Within Part 3, the Activating and Guiding Understanding chapters build bridges by scaffolding new or previous knowledge and cognitive and thinking skills based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Teachers are encouraged to exploit graphic organisers such as flowcharts, timelines, and spider maps among many others. The activities in both chapters also promote the development of oral as well as written language skills. In addition, the language focus stresses different aspects. For example, in an activity called "red and green circles", the language focus is on present and simple tenses. Conversely, in the "scrambled eggs" activity, the focus is on word order and text organisation, but in "KWL (know, want, learn) grid", it is on note-taking.

With an emphasis on language, speaking, writing, and assessment, the following chapters evidence the shift from a CLIL stress on reading and listening to the development of all macro-skills in an integrated and coherent manner. Readers, however, need to be warned that the Focus on Language chapter features activities aimed at vocabulary development such as "bingo" or "mnemonics". While the activities are worth exploring, I wonder why the authors decided not to either (1) call the chapter 'Focus on Vocabulary', or (2) integrate lexis and grammar so that language is seen holistically. The constant shift from vocabulary to grammar to language functions is also perceived in the Focus on Speaking and Focus on Writing chapters.

Lastly, the Assessment chapter offers fourteen activities that promote constructive review and feedback through cooperative interactional patterns. In other words, assessment and feedback as an integral part of the teaching and learning processes is in the hands of learners and therefore assessment comes from peers. Learners may be provided with questions for group and individual self-assessment, correction cards, or rubrics to assess oral presentations. The



chapter also includes questionnaires through which teachers can find out useful information about their learners' learning styles.

Dale and Tanner aim at sharing resources with both language and subject teachers. However, their definition of CLIL seems to rule out those CLIL models which stress language learning or appear similar to regular topic-based lessons. In so doing, the authors not only frame CLIL within a content-driven perspective (see Llinares, Morton, & Whittaker, 2012) but also assert that they do not mean any subject or language teacher, but that CLIL should be in the hands of CLIL language/subject teachers. This, of course, stems from a context where there are subject-matter teacher education programmes that include a component on CLIL, as in the case of Austria or Germany (Vásquez, 2007). That said, it seems that the book is firstly targeted at content teachers and secondly at language teachers who exercise a supporting role in the CLIL lesson. The real audience in mind—that is, content teachers—is evidenced through the rather basic definitions about language learning found in Part 1. For instance, on page 42, discourse is defined as “any stretch of spoken or written language longer than one sentence”. Concepts about language and language learning are second nature to a teacher of English, for example. However, they may be a novelty to content teachers.

Overall, it seems like language treatment as such has been neglected. Firstly, the activities in Part 3 signal that the language focus could be one discrete part of the language system or a function among others. In some other cases, the language focus appears a bit too broad or linked to the topic or source of input selected. To illustrate this feature, I may mention those activities whose language focus is “vocabulary” or those that may be labelled as “various, depending on topic”. Additionally, readers should note that many of the aims, language functions, and genres run across all subject areas. In this sense, the authors could have developed a checklist or table showing how a function such as “describing” can be found in any subject area (see Llinares *et al.*, 2012). Finally, most of the 91 activities are targeted at B1 learners. This may indicate that either CLIL is not for complete beginners or that teachers will need to introduce further adaptations to cater for so-called underachievers. However, suggestions for adaptations are scanty or do not address the impact of those adaptations in terms of content input and cognitive complexity. These three aspects reveal that the activities help to grade content without a closer look at language.



All in all, *CLIL Activities* by Dale and Tanner is a useful resource book for subject teachers mainly. Teachers should not expect to find ready-made worksheets since the activities are exponential and need to be matched to a specific and real school curricula, aims, and contexts. Although I do not think it would suit the needs of every context, subject and, to a lesser extent, language, teachers can use it to add variety to their lessons and take advantage of the flexibility it features.

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BIODATA

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