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Assessment in CLIL

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Abstract: The aim of this talk is to explore assessment in higher education and support for learners during their academic education. It investigates the assessment methods that provide success for universities and learners. Universities which implement CLIL should assess learners who would like to attend a programme in English without taking account of their English language qualifications. This assessment should be done in writing, listening and comprehension, speaking and reading and comprehension. In the literature, formative and summative assessments are considered. Formative assessment is ongoing, 'more complex as its intention is to be directly diagnostics with a view to immediately impacting on learner's next steps' (Coyle et al, 2010). Summative assessment occurs at the end of the term or course. McKay, 2006 divides assessment into three phases: design, operationalization and administration phase. If these three phases can't be embedded in the classroom as they are, they can be introduced as a set of questions; why?, how? and what?

1. Introduction

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) has been defined as 'an umbrella' (Mehisto et al, 2008), of 'dual focus' (Kiely, 2009; Coyle et al, 2010), and as a bilingual process in the literature. It is a new way to develop learners competence and attitudes in learning a language. CLIL has spread and started being used in many schools in Europe. Although it is newly-named approach, it has a long history (Mehisto et al, 2008).

This has become a very popular approach to learning language and content and has been implemented in primary and secondary schools and universities. As it is still fairly a new approach, some universities have implemented CLIL partially and some by full immersion. There have been some issues implementing CLIL in primary and secondary school because of a lack of teacher's level of target language or excessive work but there are also some successful cases too. Kiely, 2009 states 'assessment in CLIL is a complex area for a number of reasons' with one of the reason being that CLIL has a dual focus approach.

Assessment is an-ongoing process done by teachers, official education authorities or learners themselves. Assessment can be a guide and done in many ways. In CLIL classroom assessment, the content and language teacher should be integrated. Content should be assessed by the content teacher who would have the depth of knowledge. 'Teacher must distinguish between the language and content knowledge of the students and decide if one is interfering with the demonstration of the others' (Short, 1993). In the literature there are two essential assessment: formative and summative. Formative assessment is an ongoing assessment, 'more complex as its intention is to be directly diagnostics with a view to immediately impacting on learner's next steps' (Coyle et al, 2010). Summative assessment is done at the end of term or course. If these three phases can't be embedded in the classroom as they are they can be introduced as a set of questions; why?, how?, and what? It is important to know:

Why will I assess?

What am I going to do with the information?

How should I assess the learning acquisition?

Universities which implement CLIL should assess learners who would like to attend a programme in English without taking account of their current English language qualifications. This assessment should be done in writing, listening and comprehension, speaking and reading and comprehension.

2. Big question in CLIL

Assessment is a major process to measure what learners understand, what they know and how the programme/lesson plan works. However; in literature the biggest discussion is

how the teacher can make sure whether the learner has a comprehension problem because of lack of language. Questions need to be answered as follows:

Why do we assess?

Who should assess?

What do we assess?

How do we assess?

2.1 Why do we assess?

We assess learners to make sure what is meant to be taught has been captured and what the learner is expected to do to complete the task. According to the results in assessment, we are able to give feedback and set real learning outcomes. Not only would we give feedback to learners but assessment also helps us make decisions about our effectiveness as teachers. Assessment allows the teacher to identify any gaps in the learner's language and content acquisition and support him/her to achieve his/her goals.

2.2 Who should be involved in assessment?

Teachers, university, sponsor bodies but also the learners themselves. Peer assessment also gives learners a lot of information how they are progressing and change their attitude toward learning. The teacher is the assessor of all because he/she best knows the learner's abilities from training/course. The content teacher should work in cooperation with the language teacher. Harris and McCann (1994:4) states: 'A co-operative approach saves both time and work, pools vital knowledge and resources'.

2.3 What do we assess?

This is the major issue in CLIL and has been discussed in literature. Especially in higher education it is very important as the university provides programmes in the target language, here English. Learners are expected to learn both content and language at a certain level. It is vital for the learner's future career to be able to find a better job, or be able to work abroad using depth of knowledge and language together. Learners should be aware of this expectation and assessment criteria should be set up accordingly. It leads us to 'content should be the priority over language accuracy' (Hofmannova et al., 2008) to assess learner's progress. For example; if the learner answers all questions correctly but has poor English, then content answers should be taken an account and he shouldn't fail. This poor English will affect teaching as well to avoid that and also protect the university's reputation; besides learners progress in English the learner should get language support according to his/her level of English. At this stage language support and language input the learner gets is important.

2.4 How do we assess?

Harris and McCann (1994) states that assessment should be done constructively focusing on achievement not failure. Finding out what learners can do is important. Assessment should have reliability for learners to demonstrate what they have learnt or know and also for the teacher to have success in teaching.

Assessment depends on expectations, target, achievement level and learning abilities. Pre assessment can be done to have an idea about the learners' level of English so it will enable the teacher to make a better lesson plan and set realistic targets for learners. We should focus on what we are assessing not anything else. For example: if we assess whether or not they have understood the subject content in Mathematics we should consider the answers, not spelling mistakes in language.

3. Assessment methods

There are many assessment methods, including observation, tasked based activities, oral, written, listening, debate, ask and answer, classroom diary, display, presentation, portfolio, summary, research projects, journals, quizzes.

Some of these methods are done daily or regularly during learning and teaching. However, at higher education, we can choose presentation and quizzes in both content and language assessment besides university's official testing system.

3.1 Presentations

Setting up the right criteria is important for the learner's progress. Every learner should be able to present his/her ideas in an effective way. When we assess presentations we should look for whether they are:

clear simple and understandable

able to express what the learner tries to say

open to any questions

able to integrate with language and content

engaging with the concept

fluent and accurate in language

depth of knowledge

Presentations improve the learner's communication skills, ability to speak independently, confidence, expressing ideas and assessing themselves. Fortanet-Gómez (2013) points out the five aspects in the language dimension:

improve overall target language competence.

develop oral communication skills

deepen awareness of both mother tongue and target language

develop plurilingual interests and attitudes

introduce a target language

Fortanet-Gómez; 2013 states that it is too general to implement the five aspects above as objectives in higher education as learners are required to write complex academic assignments and reports amongst other things. I agree with that. However; it is not impossible when you set up the language programme according to departments or fields such as engineering, science or social science. This ability can be given to learners as a support language when they are studying the content. In a full immersion CLIL implementation, learners will be aware of the university's language policy and expectations. Under these terms, learners will get support from the teacher, language department, and university. Full immersion is important to attract foreign students, to have a good quality education and to raise the university's profile among the other universities nationally and internationally.

The teacher should ask and focus on 'what I am assessing'. It is important for the learner and teacher to focus on key points of assessment criteria. In presentations, not only is the learner able to use the variety structure of language but also the depth of knowledge and

being in control of the topic. Presentations give the learner confidence in the field and use of language. The learner improve their thinking skills and creativity in presentations. When the learner involves and engages to an active learning cognition takes place faster. Therefore, presentations will give the learner chance to show his/her understanding and competence in language

3.2 Quizzes

These are small tests and can be given at the end of each unit or at the end of lesson. Learners usually don't like quizzes. However, they provide the teacher a great information in a short time and help the teacher to keep track learner's progress. Asking key points in learning will provide the teacher information how the learners captured key points and how they demonstrate that.

Not only do they give the ability in improving learners writing skills but also improves thinking skills to be able to give the correct answer in short time. Quizzes can be a great tool and create competition in class to demonstrate what the learner already knows and close the gaps in misconceptions. The teacher might let learners do peer assessment when the teacher go through the answers in the class. Key points of quizzes:

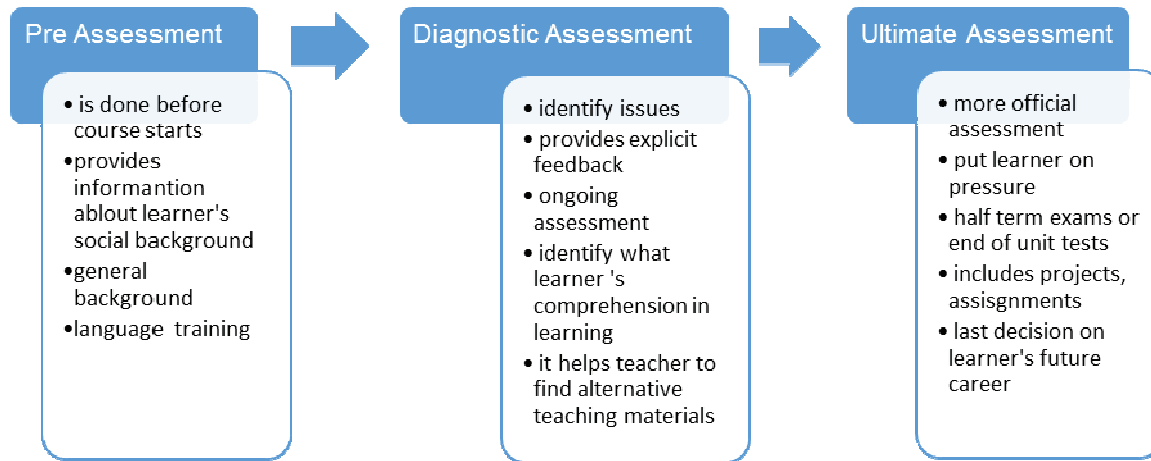
interpretation of ask and answer method

doesn't take much time

evidence for learning

gives feedback to learner and teacher in short time

4. Assessment Stages



To apply this in CLIL, all learners should have had pre assessment before they start their academic training. Pre assessment involves language proficiency and is essential to have some idea about learner's social and general background, and language training during their education so far. This assessment gives the teacher what expectations would be in language and set the lesson plan according to level of proficiency in language. Llinares et al (2012) point out "it may not be appropriate to use language testing materials not based on the actual curriculum content studied." In that matter, pre assessment will demonstrate that learners should get language support once or twice a week in academic writing such as reports, essays and graphs to improve their writing skills. Teacher should encourage learners to involve in tasks or lessons by group or pair work. In that way, learners will improve their communication skills. Massler 2012 states how important language input is to reach the target. The volume of language input is essential to be successful in CLIL.

Diagnostic assessment identifies the issues and provides explicit feedback. It's an ongoing process as a part of learning and teaching. It helps teacher to find alternative teaching sources according to the results.

The ultimate assessment is decision making. It's the last assessment the learner have. They can be done at the end of each term and also includes projects and assignments.

5. Conclusion

I have discussed assessment in CLIL from a higher education perspective and tried to outline the methods and stages of the assessment. What kind of assessment the teacher use is depends on the university, education authority but overall we should assess content as content teacher and language as language teacher. If the language is barrier in learning the content there should be 'language support unit' for the learner. Content and language should think separately in assessment.

In higher education, I believe that assessment can be done effectively through presentations, and quizzes at the end of each unit. Overall it gives the teacher an idea of learner's progress, issues, if there is any, and feedback. Keeping track of learner is important to be able to give him/her feedback about his/her progress at earlier stage and set the right assessment criteria to success. Assessment is not an easy job but it is the last stage of learning and how learner's progress is also affects his future career.

To be able to assess learner's progress, first, there should be the right assessment criteria, learners should know what they are assessed for, and flexible time especially in CLIL. For future studies, it would be a good idea to look into the factors affecting assessment.

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