

Introducing Content and Language Integrated Learning in Study Abroad Programs

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Abstract

This paper argues that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) should be introduced into Study Abroad (SA) programs in a cohesive way, creating a new educational methodology (CLIL & SA) which is more effective than using the two separately. The traditional interpretation of CLIL as a 4C-based methodology (cognition, culture, content, and communication) is explained and then criticized as being not sufficient, with a further ‘C’ being added (context), resulting in a new interpretation of CLIL which is better described as being 4C+1 (but not 5C, as the extra ‘C’ encapsulates the others). Then, this paper refutes research that contends that CLIL can substitute SA, and builds the case for CLIL coexisting with SA and formal instruction (FI). Following this, the model of these three methodologies working side by side in a mutually exclusive way is challenged, with a model of a CLIL=SA symbiosis, with FI working separately put forward. This research adds to the body of research on CLIL as it looks at CLIL from the point of view of the study abroad program manager, giving new perspectives on how study abroad program contents could be planned.

Keywords: *CLIL, Content and Language Integrated Learning, SA, Study abroad programs*

1. Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a method whereby non-native speakers/users of a language are put in a situation where they use their language skills where non-language targeted content is taught. It provides an environment where, according to the European Commission (2003), students can “use their new language skills now, rather than learn them now for use later”, with an advantage of CLIL being that it exposes the learner to the language “without requiring extra time in the curriculum” (European Commission, 2003). On the other hand, Marsh et al. (2010) describe CLIL as “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language.” Marsh et al.’s inclusion of language as a teaching goal may, at first reading, seem to differ from the sentence at the beginning of the paragraph which states that “non-language targeted content is taught”, but they both relate to the same thing. While the content of the material taught is non-language related, the language medium through which the students are taught is not their mother tongue (from here on in this paper this language is written as L2, meaning their second language, although it may actually be L3, L4, etc.), resulting in the students becoming more familiar with the L2 while concurrently

developing knowledge of the non-language content. Coyle (2005) puts it another way by saying that “CLIL demands that content is made accessible through language”, and that the way to do this is by (the syllabus and learning environment) providing the learners with the content to learn, while the language can come from elsewhere.

The above may lead the novice designer of a CLIL program to consider just two parts (content and language knowledge) indispensable for success. However, as CLIL is complex and context-sensitive (Gierlinger, 2014), there are actually four parts which must be considered, and these are called the 4Cs of CLIL. The 4Cs of CLIL are cognition, culture, content, and communication, as shown in Figure 1, and, therefore, a successful CLIL methodology will need to consider the relative value of each of these.

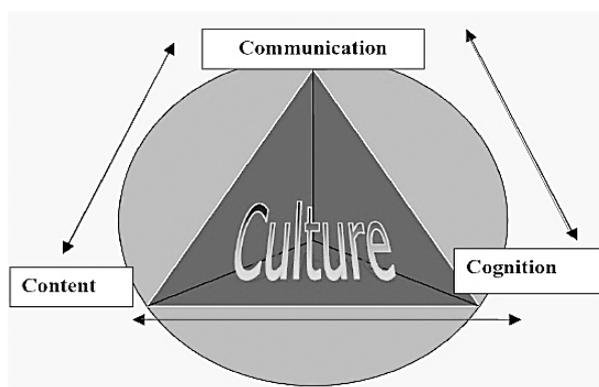


Figure 1: The 4Cs Conceptual Framework for CLIL (Coyle 2005).

Gierlinger (2014) uses the term “context-sensitive”, meaning the entire CLIL framework is encapsulated within context, suggesting a ‘fifth C’. Furthermore, as indicated in Figure 1, ‘communication’, ‘content’ and ‘cognition’ each exist in a cultural environment. This allows us to redraw Coyle’s earlier 4C Conceptual Framework for CLIL as a 4C+1 framework, with culture affecting each of communication, content and cognition, while all exist in a specific context. While Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010)’s diagram (Figure 2) seemed to illustrate this concept of a 4C+1 framework, they didn’t explicitly recognize it as a move beyond the 4C Conceptual Framework. This paper contends that describing the conceptual framework as 4C+1 (but not 5C, as context encapsulates the original 4C framework) is more appropriate.

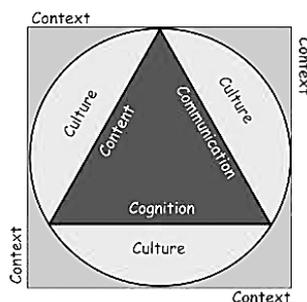


Figure 2: The 4C+1 Conceptual Framework for CLIL (Coyle, Hood, and Marsh, 2010)

2. CLIL as Complementary to SA (Study Abroad) and FI (Formal Instruction)

CLIL can be seen as a competitor or alternative to Study Abroad (SA) programs, as CLIL also allows students to enjoy “genuine communication” (Eurydice Report, 2006), especially for those students who have “positivist assumptions that learning proceeds directly from experience” (Vande Berg, Paige, and Lou, 2012). This differs from formal instruction (FI) which, as Juan-Garau (2014) points out, is often combined (but not joined) with SA, with FI usually sandwiching (preceding and following) the SA program.

However, according to SALA (2014), not only CLIL and SA, but also formal instruction (FI) each offer learners “different complementary opportunities for practice and making progress in their target language”, meaning that each have a role to play as parts which combine to make up a more full education for the student. As a result, students who have all three (CLIL, SA, and FI) in their education will develop skills which “enhance their academic profiles and their future career opportunities” (SALA, 2014). Therefore, while CLIL can “provide a feasible solution to the apparent failure of foreign language learning” (Lasagabaster and Sierra 2010), a better result can be obtained if we do not *throw the baby out with the bathwater* and are sure to keep the successful and, in particular, exclusive elements of SA and FI.

The above paragraph, however, does not argue for keeping CLIL, SA and FI separate from each other. On the contrary, this paper contends that CLIL can and should be used within the SA program to increase effectiveness and student satisfaction (a discussion of FI, however, is outside the scope of this paper).

3. The Necessity of CLIL in Study Abroad Programs

CLIL is, from a discourse perspective, nearer to SA than FI, as communicative “interaction takes place with a focus on meaning rather than on form” (Pérez Vidal, 2013). However, as reasoned above, CLIL does not replace SA (or vice-versa), rather it complements it. This is especially true in the case of the bare-bones short-term (4 weeks or so) language-acquisition-focused study abroad trip with is offered by many universities in Japan (Lynch, 2014) and globally (Jones et. al., 2012). Examination of the contents of study abroad programs in two Japanese universities shows similarities as follows (Lynch, 2014):

1. The term is one month (or four weeks).
2. Students are enrolled in a language course for the entire four weeks, at one university.
3. Usually English is learned, and classes are from Monday to Friday, from an average of four to five hours per day (totally 20-25 hours per week).
4. Students are given formal instruction pre- and post-SA.
5. Students’ English language ability is gauged pre- and post-SA.
6. Apart from language study abroad, the remainder of the time is free, or includes trips which are usually only for the purpose of recreation.

The above list reveals that CLIL is either absent or exists but is not a significant part of the program.

3. Including CLIL in SA Programs

In order to remedy the dearth of CLIL in SA programs, it has been suggested that students are put into situations where they visit companies, schools, etc., and that such visits are not for language-learning purposes, but rather for teaching other content. Such content includes business and employment information in the case of company visits, and sports, education and social life information exchanges in the case of school visits. As this content is the main focus, yet it is made accessible through language, it meets the demands of CLIL as pointed out by Coyle (2005).

Such a program would include CLIL together with the SA program, resulting in changing the three entities identified earlier (CLIL, SA, and FI), into two (SA & CLIL, and FI). This combining of SA and CLIL would result in a fuller, more worthwhile study abroad program while having other advantages such as avoiding the need to provide CLIL before or after students return from SA. Figure 3 gives a simple illustration of how this concept, where learning opportunities are repackaged from three elements to two elements by combining SA and CLIL.

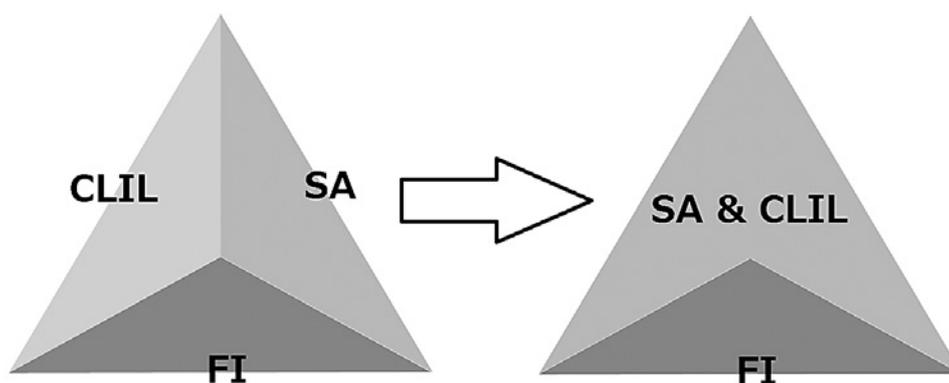


Figure 3: Rethinking Packaging of Learning Opportunities

4. Conclusion

It has been shown that CLIL can be a successful in providing genuine and realistic education opportunities for language learners in an indirect way (Pérez Vidal, 2013) (Coyle, 2005), by focusing on non-language contents in a 4C+1 environment. As CLIL does not exist in a vacuum, nor is a perfect instruction methodology by itself, it forms a part of SA and FI in giving students a “whole” education, resulting in greater educational and employment opportunities.

This paper has argued that there are advantages to considering using CLIL within an SA environment (or vice-versa) and, therefore, the three elements of CLIL, SA, and FI should be viewed and carried out as two: CLIL & SA, and FI. By doing this, study abroad programs should improve and have a greater chance of success. This result should be of interest to SA program managers.

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