CLIL in the Business English Classroom:

From Language Learning to the Development of Professional Communication and

Metacognitive Skills

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Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), business English (BE), language didactics, teaching metacognitive and professional skills, motivation

Abstract

Marsh (2012) asserts that the use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in language teaching at the higher education level has the potential to encourage learners to acquire language in an immersion-style setting, since the integration of language and content provides a substantive basis for language teaching and learning (p. 135). The content provides a motivational and cognitive foundation for language learning because it is of interest and value to the learner. In light of this, language learning by means of CLIL is not only active, but also passive, and in this setting, the focus is primarily on *acquisition* as opposed to *intention*. Students learn by doing and using language as a tool of communication and understanding. Hence, CLIL is also a means to assist in the development of analytic, reflective and hypothesizing skills. The real challenge is to keep students communicating and exchanging in the target language, while providing new information and methods to capture and keep their interest.

This paper presents a pedagogical intervention whereby 170 Business English (BE) students in their first year of a two-year Business Administration and Management course at a French vocational institution were given a professional oral presentation task-based on peer collaborative work. This task was designed to heighten their level of enthusiasm for language learning, while stimulating risk-taking and ultimately boosting confidence-building. In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and more precisely, a course with a BE focus, this study aims to analyze if and how a CLIL-based approach can be implemented to teach a variety of professional skills, while assisting students in the development of their

metacognitive ability. In addition, the students' input on their impressions of the task-based presentation intervention was sought to analyze whether or not CLIL methodology can serve as a setting to encourage the development of metacognitive skills.

Introduction

Traditionally, CLIL has been recognized as a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for learning and teaching of both content and language (Marsh, Mehisto, Wolff, & Frigols-Martin, 2010, p. 11). For example, in France CLIL has been used with French students to help them learn about geography and history in English. Similarly, in Italy, Italian students have been taught mathematics through the use of German.

In this paper, the focus is on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and more precisely Business English (BE). The test group involved 170 first-year students – French and foreign – who majored in Business Administration and Management. The students were from various regions of France, but also a variety of foreign countries (near as in the case of Luxembourg or Germany and further away like China or the Ukraine). They were enrolled in a two-year French vocational program where they were offered a full program of subjects taught in French. Some of these courses included accounting, finance, law, economy, management and communication. They also followed mandatory BE courses to acquire and improve professional (verbal and nonverbal) oral and written communication skills in English. In terms of BE, the students had to not only acquire basic communication skills such as telephoning, negotiating and making small talk, but also learn to structure and give professional presentations, as well as organize and manage meetings or prepare professional documents (marketing or human resources related) and emails, memos, meeting agendas, etc. Furthermore, the students were also required to prepare for international tests (multiple choice style questions) or certification for further studies in business schools, for example. In the European context, like all students in similar programs, they were obliged to continue learning and improving their third language skills (German, Italian or Spanish). In addition, some of the foreign students took French as a foreign language courses to improve their fluency in French, especially since the core subjects in this program are taught in French. The learners in this program earn a vocational diploma after two years of intensive business and management studies. Some students find employment immediately after graduation, while others pursue additional qualification programs in the fields of accounting, finance, human

resources or business management. Every year, a growing number of pioneering students decide to leave France to study and work abroad in hope of improving their language, cultural and interpersonal skills.

For many French students, simply pronouncing a few words in a foreign language is a great fear to overcome. Many students who have low self-confidence in terms of language capacity are reluctant to speak openly in a foreign language setting and those who communicate the most willingly are often the foreign students or those who possess a higher level of linguistic competence. In this teaching setting, it is important to find a pedagogical balance in terms of speaking and writing as well as to design activities and tasks that assist in building confidence and encouraging risk-taking for all of the students regardless of their level of confidence or language proficiency.

Founded on CLIL principles, the BE course and research project presented in this paper were designed to analyze if and how a CLIL-based didactic approach could assist BE students in the development of professional communication skills as well as metacognitive ability through the implementation of active analytical reflection and reasoning. After the initial overview of the theoretical background of CLIL, a summary of the methods and procedure of the research is provided, as well as further considerations and recommendations. The instructional focus is placed on a peer collaborative task which gave the 170 BE students the opportunity for creativity and innovation within a structured learning framework. The traditional approach to language teaching (whereby the teacher teaches and the students learn) was reversed in the task since the students assumed the role of teacher as they shared their newly acquired knowledge. By means of a scenario and role-play involving the presentation of a specific company or association (previously chosen by the teacher), they presented content (business history, details, key milestones, etc.) and developed specific business English language in a learning environment where they took an active role in analyzing the language learning process. Finally, the paper presents some practical observations and recommendations.

CLIL and Task-based Learning

According to Marsh et al. (2010), the objective of CLIL is to promote both content and language mastery to pre-defined levels (p. 11). Students tend to learn a language and then use

it as a tool to accomplish concrete tasks with specific communication skills (Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008, p.11). In the context of higher education and CLIL, these specific skills can also include professional communication competency. When compared to more basic grammar-based teaching methods and rote learning, content-driven activities within professionally oriented courses can prove to be more interesting, motivating and linguistically challenging since such activities often involve cooperative learning and collaborative tasks. By working together in small groups, students are not only obliged to communicate and understand each other, but they are also required to deal with the potential for disagreements. In this way, they must then learn to develop negotiation strategies with the objective of finding concrete solutions to their problems. When initially confronted with the challenge of certain professional activities, such as team work for a business presentation, students can often become apprehensive about the many challenges such a project can present. These challenges can involve social, communicative or professional skills, for example. However, as the students progress through the various activities, their level of confidence is boosted when they come to realize that they are capable of sharing ideas, managing disputes and working towards a common goal.

Furthermore, the various stages of the task can be organized so that the focus is placed on creative autonomy through the use of activities such as improvisation and role-play. This will encourage intrinsic motivation (Brown, 1994, p.44) since the learners are encouraged to take risks, push their limits and conquer their fears (such as stage fright or shyness), which are often related to making mistakes in public. In the case of this study, role-play and improvisation activities were a crucial part of the business presentation (the larger task). For this reason, the students were encouraged to prepare early and practice to avoid the anxiety and problems associated with stage fright. In very simple terms, they were encouraged and taught to 'share what they know,' which is a motivational teaching strategy that places value on personal investment and preparation. With practice, students can better learn their roles and ultimately build confidence. For some, public speaking can be a real source of stress and incertitude, but with preparation and rehearsal the stress can generally be brought under control and managed. Upon completion of the final task, their feelings of success and accomplishment are not only a source of motivation but also inherent pride.

Lessons, activities and tasks that are based on sound motivational theories can enhance language learning for students and language teaching for instructors. In his very useful guide to the use of various motivational strategies in the language classroom, Dörnyei (2001) maintains that the teacher embodies the 'group conscience' and serves as the model when he/she ventures to create a cohesive learner group with appropriate group (and professional) norms. These norms are omnipresent and constantly reflected inside and outside of classroom time, from the teacher's classroom management (basic rules and attitudes to adopt in class), lesson planning and activities, to exchanges outside of the classroom (for example, informal moments before or after class or questions about the activities). As the model setting the norms, the language teacher may choose to communicate exclusively in English, not only inside but also outside of classroom time. This motivational strategy requires students to communicate in a language that is not necessarily their native language. The students are thus presented with a real challenge (explaining questions, for example) and encouraged to take risks (confirming they have understood the explanation). These are risks that they might not otherwise take during classroom time. The same may apply in email communication. Whether in a group or one to one with the teacher, students can often feel a sense of accomplishment and pride when they successfully inquire about or solve a problem in a language other than their native language.

By definition, content-based learning focuses the learner on useful and practical objectives since the subject matter is perceived to be relevant to long term goals (Brown, 1994, p. 220). If one were to combine CLIL methodology with task-based teaching, the target language can then become a dynamic instrument for both teaching and learning. Learners are more willing to adhere to a task and related activities when they can perceive the long-term practical usefulness of an assignment. As Brown (1994, p.83) explains, task-based learning simply puts the task at the centre of one's methodological focus. It views the learning process as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to the curricular goals they serve. As an additional consideration, if an assigned task involves a substantial amount of risk-taking, some of the more timid students may prefer to work with a partner. The objectives remain the same in both situations; however, for the sake of equity, students must be evaluated on an individual basis, even if they are presenting their work in groups of two or more.

Theoretical Framework

As Mehisto et al. (2008, p.12) illustrate, the CLIL methodology encompasses three main goals: content, language and learning skills. In terms of language learning, the integration of all three goals can offer students a variety of useful skills, such as language proficiency, cognitive and social skills, as well as the potential for high levels of academic achievement (upon the completion of the set goals) not only in the CLIL language but also in the first language area. With regards to lesson planning, Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010, p. 36) insist that teachers must elucidate the interrelationship between content objectives and language objectives. For this reason, they have devised a conceptual representation that makes these connections in the form of a Language Triptych (see Figure 1 below).
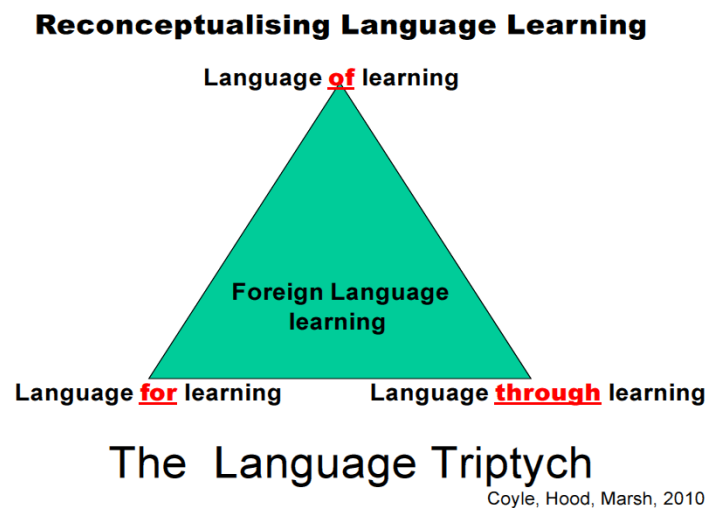
Figure 1: The Language Triptych (Coyle et al., 2010)

The Language Triptych was constructed with the objective of taking into account the need to integrate cognitively demanding content with language learning and using. Furthermore, "it supports learners in language using through the analysis of the CLIL vehicular language from three interrelated perspectives: language *of* learning, language *for* learning and language *through* learning" (Coyle et al., 2010, p.36).

Since learning activities often comprise metacognitive demands and interactional skills at the tertiary level, if we place the task at the centre of our methodological focus and use a CLIL methodology in the classroom, the teaching and learning experiences are then further enhanced to function as a professional development catalyst (Coyle et al., 2010, p.24). For content learning to be effective, students must actively think about and articulate their own

learning. For Coyle et al. (2010, p.29), students must be cognitively engaged and encouraged to become aware of their own learning through the development of metacognitive skills such as "learning to learn." Interactive classrooms are typified by group work, student questioning or critical analysis and problem solving. The critical analysis and questioning phase can involve the articulation of learning strategies since CLIL students are required to cooperate with each other in order to make use of each other's strengths and compensate for weaknesses. They must learn how to operate collaboratively and effectively as a group.

As teachers, our role is then much more supportive in nature. We facilitate learning by observing the students and guiding them, though not without our set of fixed values and convictions (van Lier, 1996). These values and convictions are ubiquitous since they are embedded in our approach to lesson planning and classroom management. As teachers, we constantly communicate our set of fixed values both verbally and non-verbally (gestures, facial expressions and paralanguage) when we approve or disapprove of behaviour, for example. In a similar fashion, Flavell (1979) touches on the idea that teachers have an influence on metacognitive learning styles. He states that "it is at least conceivable that the ideas currently brewing in […the…] area [of metacognition] could someday be parlayed into a method of teaching children (and adults) to make wise and thoughtful life decisions as well as to comprehend and learn better in formal educational settings" (p.910). This method could be based upon an overall vision of how we construct teaching activities in order to facilitate and improve language teaching and learning methods. For Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) language teaching activities should additionally include motivational strategies and confidence building schemes.

In general terms, students who work in a collaborative way have the opportunity to develop life skills such as observational and interpersonal skills. This can represent a source of motivation and a safe haven to build confidence and improve communication skills. Collaborative learning obliges students to deal with the unexpected, while they construct knowledge that is built on classroom (world) interaction and exchange. Teaching students to 'think before they speak' can be a very useful strategy and a way to integrate critical analysis methodology and metacognitive strategies. With regard to professional communication activities such as business presentations, collaborative learning and sharing can provide a rich forum for discussion and discovery. Students actively adhere to learning and become

motivated or intrigued by the shared content. This is particularly true when the students themselves create their own presentation script or mock work scenario.

In the case of the BE course that is the focus of this study, instead of having to present a purely descriptive business presentation about a company, the students were given the task of preparing and presenting a collaborative project based on the role play of a professional scenario. The reason for this modification was to discourage students from the act of simply verbalizing information from *Wikipedia*. In the activities leading up to the final task, the students created language content (the script or dialogue). They presented and shared their knowledge and as observers, they were required to ask for the language help they needed. The students were also encouraged to evaluate their progress and negotiate outcomes. As they built on and shared knowledge, they repackaged information, while thinking creatively and critically. The emphasis was placed both on verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as interactive and intercultural communication. The students were required to understand, respect and follow all of the activities associated with the task. The role-play task (see Appendix A) was based on the choice of one of five professional scenarios, such as a job interview, an annual meeting or a presentation for shareholders. Some of the activities leading up to the task involved choosing a partner and scenario, structuring the role-play presentation, preparing a script, integrating props or audio-visuals, interacting with the audience, and finally providing feedback on the various activities and tasks.

In this way, the core features of CLIL methodology were respected. According to Mehisto et al. (2008, p.29), some of the core features are as follows:

Multiple focus
- Supporting language learning in content classes
- Supporting content learning in language classes
- Integrating several subjects
- Organizing learning through cross-cultural themes and projects
- Supporting reflection on the learning process

Safe and enriching learning environment
- Using routine activities and discourse
- Building student confidence to experiment with language and content

- Guiding access to authentic learning materials and environments
- Increasing student language awareness

Authenticity

- Letting the student ask for the language help they need
- Maximizing the accommodation of student interests
- Making a regular connection between learning and the students' lives
- Using current materials from the media and other sources

Active Learning

- Having students communicate more than the teacher
- Encouraging students to help set content, language and learning skills outcomes
- Obliging students to evaluate their progress in achieving learning outcomes
- Favouring peer co-operative work
- Negotiating the meaning of language and content with students
- Allowing teachers to act as facilitators

Scaffolding

- Building on student's existing knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests and experience
- Repackaging information in user-friendly ways
- Responding to different learning styles
- Fostering creative and critical thinking
- Challenging students to take another step forward and not just coast in comfort

Co-operation

- Planning courses/lessons/themes in co-operation with CLIL and non-CLIL teachers
- Involving the local community, authorities and employers

With time and planning, it is then possible to design activities that integrate most or all of the above features. At the heart of these core features is the thinking (cognition) behind the teaching and learning process. Simply stated, the more powerful the thinking, the greater the learning. In the case of this study, students were given an outline of instructions; however,

they were encouraged to create and improvise their scenarios while providing detailed information.

According to Mehisto et al. (2008, p.30), thinking (cognition) is defined as the mental faculty of knowing, which includes:

- perceiving;
- recognizing;
- judging;
- reasoning;
- conceiving;
- imagining.

Cognition is required in lesson planning, but to heighten the intellectual challenge of a particular task for students, it should also be integrated into the task itself, so as to encourage the learners to develop their individual metacognitive, critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. According to Flavell (1978), metacognition refers to higher-order thinking that involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning. It consists of both metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experiences. He further explains that it plays an important role in oral communication of information, oral persuasion, oral comprehension, language acquisition, memory, problem solving, social cognition and various types of self-control and self-instruction (Flavell, 1979). In due course, the integration of the aforementioned theories in language lesson planning can bring constructive results on many different levels both for the language learner and teacher.

Pedagogical Focus

This pedagogical intervention was conducted in the academic year 2013-2014, at the University of Lorraine and more precisely, in the Business Administration and Management Department of the Institute of Technology in Metz, France. At the outset of their two-year program, students must possess many different professional, interpersonal and business-related skills. For example, they must be at ease with the use of modern modes of communication (from business software to presentation materials, such as tablets). They are required to work efficiently and independently, but at the same time, they must be capable of communicating with culturally diverse teams. They need to develop their ability to analyse various situations and defend their stance on any given subject, as well as acquire strong written, oral and professional skills in English.

Procedure

The task was given during the second half of the students' first year studies. The advantage was that the students already knew each other and they were free to choose their working collaborators. The students formed groups of two and sometimes three at the most. One month before the date of their oral presentation, they were given the name of a recently created international company or association. Some of the companies were oriented towards an innovative product or service, while others were based on newer trends such as crowd funding and business angels. The students were encouraged to meet often outside the classroom, to research their company or association, to write a short scenario which would present all of the information related to their company, to learn and rehearse their roles, and then finally, to act out their scenario in front of their classmates and the teacher.

Previous to this activity, the teacher provided a lesson on the qualities of a successful oral presentation, including the role of body language and voice projection as well as the use of audio-visual aids in business presentations. During the month leading up to the presentation date, the teacher merely guided the students in their research and answered questions only if necessary. Their scenario, which included an interactive role for the audience, had to be based on one of the following five different business scenarios:

- a presentation to new shareholders (the audience),
- a job interview (the audience is the hiring committee),
- a conference-type presentation with the new international managers (the audience),
- an annual meeting for (some new) executive & administrative employees (the audience),
- the annual review for the finance department (some new employees & the shareholders).

The students were asked to improvise (and not read notes), to be creative, professional and original. They were encouraged to use humour, but cautioned that the ambiance had to remain professional. The audience was composed of their classmates who were instructed to complete a detailed business profile chart (see Appendix B) while listening to the various presentations. The check-list also included a section for their personal feedback on the overall

quality of the presentations. In the case of misunderstandings and miscomprehensions, the audience was obliged to actively participate in direct questioning at the end of the presentation, since this check-list was collected and analysed by the teacher. Therefore, the quality of the oral presentation was equally as important as the information being presented. From the beginning, it was made clear that all students had to possess a clear and discernible role and that each one of them would be obliged to speak in an equitable fashion. Students were instructed that the scenario presentation was to last between 10 and 15 minutes in duration. Team work in problem-solving was encouraged. Technical problems (often related to audio and visual issues) were to be dealt with and improvisation was encouraged if there was an unexpected turn of events. As an observer and moderator, the language teacher merely facilitated the passage from one presentation to the next, while evaluating each of the students individually (see Appendix C for evaluation grid).

After all of the scenarios were presented to the class, the students were given about 30 minutes during class time to complete a printed questionnaire (see Appendix D), composed of 22 questions (for the most part based on the Likert scale method, as well as a few open-ended questions). They were asked to document their personal opinions and reflect on the learning process during the activity and the various challenges they faced during the preparation and execution phases of their scenario. The students were only given two hours of class time to work on their scenarios and to approach the teacher with questions, issues or problems. (Therefore, the bulk of the preparation was done outside of class time.) It should be noted that during this two-hour session, the teacher circulated and on an informal basis asked the groups of students to critically analyse their progress by sharing their metacognitive skills and strategies. For example, the students were asked to share the types of "phases" through which they progressed during the various activities. The responses varied from one group to another, but the majority evoked the following: conception, hypothesis, imagination/creation, negotiation, company research and dialogue design. During this session, they were also once again reminded that extra points would be given for creativity, innovation and risk-taking.

As with any CLIL-based activity, the overall intent of this activity was to integrate content with language and learning skills. Nevertheless, this activity was a result of much didactic reflection after observing the purely descriptive business presentations that were given by the students in the first semester. The primary objective was to create a task that would involve a

more authentic and professional dimension (the role-play and scenario) to offer the students an opportunity to conceive and design original language immersion settings. Equally important was the need to develop a framework in which the students would create their scenario while taking risks and boosting their confidence level in public speaking situations. During the various presentations, the students were offered an opportunity to share their knowledge with the others who observed the role-plays and discovered the new content (company, organization or association, etc...). In order to heighten the intellectual challenge and encourage the students to develop their analytic, reflective and hypothesizing skills, the students were obliged to take an active role in and provide views on learning about how they learn.

Research Discussion

This study ultimately serves to determine the extent to which students in a business English course found their learning enhanced by the use of CLIL, the integration of professional communication skills, and finally, the development and analysis of metacognitive skills. At the same time, the study investigates the students' impressions on the pedagogical intervention through the use of a questionnaire. This questionnaire was originally conceived and created by closely examining and decomposing the various stages and activities involved in preparing the final role-play presentation task.

In general terms, the study was designed to answer the following preliminary research question: In a BE language environment is it possible to create a pedagogical activity founded on a CLIL-based approach to motivate students and teach a variety of professional skills, as well as help students to enhance English language learning, while developing metacognitive and problem-solving skills?

Participants

The participants in this study were 170 first-year students (aged 19 to 24) attending a two-year program at a vocational institution. They were all non-native speakers of English, from differing language, national and religious backgrounds. Most students enrolled in the program were French, but some of the students were of Chinese, Ukrainian, Luxemburgish, Turkish and Moroccan origins. Based on entrance tests at the beginning of the year, their

proficiency level in English varied between intermediate and upper-intermediate level in terms of the European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Results and Observations

The analysis of the students' responses from the questionnaire (see Appendix D) led to the following results. With regards to the first question, 'Did learning about Business English in English allow you to learn more?' the analysis of the answers revealed that CLIL does enhance learning, since 95% of the students claimed that the activity provided them with an opportunity to learn a great deal of business English vocabulary since they were obliged to use and communicate in the target language at every stage of this activity. From the research phase to the scenario writing phase, all of the communication was done in English. Many students mentioned that the companies and associations were relatively unknown (to them) and this fact resulted in a heightened and concentrated amount of research (in English) on the Internet. They also appreciated this fact, since 89% expressed that they learned a substantial amount of information (and vocabulary) about the different companies and associations. When asked about the number of times they rehearsed their scenario, the majority (85%) claimed that they rehearsed between 4-5 times. Almost all of the students (95%) claimed that they worked together during the preparation, research and writing phase. For most students, the biggest challenge was to first find (98%) and then synthesize (95%) all of the business information. When asked if they liked working in groups of two or three for this activity, the vast majority (98%) strongly agreed. It should be noted that a total of 6 students (5%) discretely requested the right to work alone.

In terms of the second question 'Does the use of oral presentations stimulate creativity?' the results showed that the majority of students (92%) experienced an elevated level of originality and ingenuity. According to the questionnaire, 94% of the students agreed strongly that this activity helped them to become more analytical, imaginative and autonomous in language learning. Many commented that active listening in the audience was also very useful for language learning since the audience members energetically and willingly asked questions when they did not understand something. The need to fill in a business profile chart (Appendix B, which was collected and assessed by the teacher) was perhaps the real source of this motivation. Astonishingly, this method motivated even the most timid of students who

had been reluctant to participate in the previous activities but very enthused to perform their role and include the correct information on their information chart.

The third research question was 'Did this activity go beyond language learning?' For this question, the results were quite remarkable. The majority of the students (96%) agreed strongly by stating that the core features of CLIL were respected. Some examples are as follows: 85% of students agreed that the activity integrated several subjects, for example, an international company or an association, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, the use of audio and video, cross-cultural themes and the use of gestures. 87% of the students indicated that studying professional scenarios was authentic, motivating and very practical. For 92% of the students, working through scenarios increased their awareness and solidified their willingness to take risks and confidence in using English when they needed help or need answers. 98% of the students indicated that during the scenario presentation, they communicated much more than the teacher. For the vast majority (95%), peer co-operative work was a very effective way to learn language. In terms of scaffolding, 98% of the students indicated that this study fostered creativity and critical thinking through the use of improvisation. 98% believed that this activity is much more challenging that the traditional monolingual business presentation. When asked about what they learned in this study, 98% of the students indicated business English and business content, 95% indicated improved verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and 75% of students indicated that they had learned how to improve their use of audio and visual aids by watching their classmates (with regard to what should be done and what should not be).

The fourth research question was 'Did this activity help you to develop your metacognitive and problem-solving skills?' The vast majority of students agreed strongly with each individual dimension of cognition: judging (85%), reasoning (75%), conceiving (95%) and imagining (98%). The questionnaire revealed that the vast majority (96%) of the students also agreed with the statement that this pedagogical activity stimulated their creative thinking since all of the scenarios, based on differing companies and associations, were uniquely diversified and sometimes amusing (in the instance that a job interview appears to go badly but eventually passes the mark).

The final question 'Were you motivated by this activity?' showed that 98% of the students agreed strongly. 72% claimed that the research was the most challenging aspect. 71% stated that the role-play scenario presentation was very challenging. When asked if 'learning by doing' was the best method for language learning, 95% of the students agreed strongly. An informal poll revealed that many of the students believed also that simulating a professional scenario was part of a positive learning experience that obliged them to reflect, negotiate and improvise in the target language. Some of the scenarios involving the more timid students were so elaborate and amusing that the various groups of students would share anecdotes about the presentations outside of class. This generated a lot of enthusiasm for BE learning. Students generally also expressed the idea that they really appreciated learning a lot of content information (for instance, the structure, history and business objectives) of the various international companies and associations in an entertaining and unexpected manner.

Discussion/Interpretation of Research Study

The above-mentioned findings provide valuable insight into the students' opinions regarding this pedagogical approach to business English teaching. The findings reveal that using CLIL-based activities in the business English classroom to provide a forum for immersion-style language learning can encourage risk-taking as well as confidence building. A CLIL approach to teaching language not only enhances language learning, but it also empowers and motivates the learners since they become more aware of and thus more in control of the development of their own learning strategies. A large majority of the students expressed that this activity improved their language learning since it provided them with an opportunity to learn a great deal of business English, as well as practise and acquire more general English during the various stages of conception and planning to presentation and observation. The activity also helped some students to 'come out of their shell' and overcome their shyness. In terms of content and language learning, the students agreed that they were intellectually challenged since they learned about many different content areas (business and administration, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, intercultural themes and metacognitive skills development). In the same way, the majority supported the idea that the scenario-based format, while simulating authentic and practical role-plays, had stimulated creativity and enthusiasm. This response demonstrates that the CLIL methodology does indeed have the potential to function as a catalyst for professional development. The vast majority of students also supported the idea that the final role-play presentations should have

been recorded and filmed so that the scenarios could have viewed by the other groups of students. This study shows that it is possible to design language learning activities that not only promote language learning in an autonomous, peer collaborative and interactive fashion, but also encourage the development of professional communication skills. Concurrently, the study focuses on the importance of the awareness or analysis of one's own learning and thinking in the professional communication and language learning process.

The questionnaire results clearly showed that the students were very supportive of this CLIL-based activity. In this business English context, the vast majority of students also expressed that the 'learning by doing' method is the best method for language learning. In terms of the main research questions, the student responses also showed that there was a clear positive response for all five of the questions. While the qualitative results gathered through the use of the questionnaire show statistics that suggest the success of this process, it should be noted that the lack of a control group or comparison to another process does undermine the validity of the results.

Conclusion

Using CLIL-based activities in language teaching at the higher education is a viable didactic approach. This study explored the possibility and effectiveness of using the CLIL approach in business English teaching. The research showed that using CLIL methodology and peer collaborative tasks can enhance the development of professional communication skills as well as metacognitive ability through the implementation of an active analytical communication activity. In fact, in the context of language teaching, assisting students in the development of metacognitive and analytical skills may be beneficial for them not only to improve their linguistic skills but also to empower and inspire them to become lifelong language users and learners.

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Appendix A

Assignment: Oral Presentation Task

Working in groups of two – you will present the company, association, organization or project that was chosen for you.

Present your business to your classmates, who will have a role to play during your presentation.

You must choose one of the five following scenarios:

☐ a presentation to new shareholders (the audience)

☐ a job interview (the audience is the hiring committee)

☐ a conference-type presentation with the new international managers (the audience)

☐ an annual meeting for (some new) executive & administrative employees (the audience)

☐ the annual review for the finance department (the audience)

Be sure to signpost and use the appropriate introductory and concluding remarks.

You may use your notes, but bonus points are given for 'risk takers' who improvise.

You can use "props" (telephones, computers, etc…) or audiovisual (power point) aids.

You must inform the audience of all the information on the Business Profile Check-list

The audience will listen attentively and they will note down the information they hear and see on their own check-list forms – these forms will be collected and evaluated.

Audience interaction is mandatory and the use of humor is welcome, but you are in a business setting, so remember to keep it professional.

Your presentation will last 10-15 minutes maximum.

Appendix B

Business Profile Check-list

Your full name: _____

Presentation Date:		Group:
Student 1:		
Student 2:		
Company Name:		
Year Established/Country:		
Founder(s):		
Business Type or Industry:		
Primary Company Details		
Company Address:		
Company Type (legal status):		
Subsidiaries (if any):		
Main Website:		
Company Profile		
Company Description:		
Products:		
Services:		
Records, Accomplishments, Milestones		
Year:	Detail:	
Future Goals/Objectives:		
Have you ever heard of this company/association? ☐ Yes ☐No		
Your personal feedback on this **company**:		

Your personal feedback on this **presentation** (Performance, Content, Language, Staging):
From this particular presentation, what have you learned about the learning process?

Appendix C

Oral Presentation Evaluation Grid

	Elements of Analysis:	Value (maximum 5 points per section)
1	**Performance:** Body language, eye contact, voice projection, intonation, clarity, speed Motivation, group management Professionalism Use of signposting, guiding the audience Management of transitions	
2	**Content:** Quality (profile complete or not complete) Interest and motivation generated Use of audio/visuals (pertinence)	
3	**Language:** Grammatical accuracy, pronunciation Coherence, comprehension Auto-correction Language of audio/visuals	
4	**Staging:** Chosen scenario:_____ Duration Audience Interaction Use of audio/visuals (overall effect) Question/Answer Session	
	Total Number of Points:	

Appendix D

Questionnaire

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1   Learning about Business English in English allowed me to learn more language skills and vocabulary.

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

2   The activity provided me with an opportunity to learn a great deal of Business English.

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

3   In terms of vocabulary and new information, I learned

1- a substantial amount	2- many new words	3- no change	4- very few new words	5- nothing new

4   With regards to rehearsal, (my group and) I rehearsed my scenario:

1- four to five times	2- three to four times	3- two to three times	4-one to two times	5-not at all

5   During the preparation, research and writing phase, I worked with my group.

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

6   How would you rate these tasks during the activity?

1=Highly challenging	2= Very challenging	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat challenging	5= Not at all challenging

Finding the business information on the Internet   1   2   3   4   5

Choosing, creating and writing the business scenario   1   2   3   4   5

Integrating the business information into your scenario 1   2   3   4   5

7a   **Do you prefer to work in groups (of two or three people)? If you worked alone go to 7b.**

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

7b   **If you worked alone, please briefly explain why you chose to work alone**.

_____

_____

8   **In terms of creativity, I noticed an elevated level of originality and resourcefulness.**

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

9   **This activity helped me to become more analytical, imaginative and autonomous in language learning.**

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

10   **This activity went beyond language learning.   1   2   3   4   5**

I learned about many different international companies/associations   1   2   3   4   5

I learned many verbal and non-verbal communication skills   1   2   3   4   5

I learned about the use of audio and video for oral presentations   1   2   3   4   5

I learned about different cultural traditions in business   1   2   3   4   5

I learned about the use of gestures and voice control   1   2   3   4   5

11   **I believe that role-playing and observing professional scenarios is:**

	Authentic	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Motivating	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Very practical	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Useful for me to build my self-confidence		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
A good way to increase Business English learning		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

12   **During this activity, the students spoke much more than the teacher did.**

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

13   Working in groups (peer cooperative work) is a very effective way to learn language.

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

14   This activity encourages creativity and critical thinking through the use of improvisation.

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

15   The scenario presentation is much more challenging than the traditional monolingual business   presentation.

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

16   What did you learn from this activity? You can check more than one.

☐ Business English vocabulary and content

☐ Improved verbal and non-verbal communication skills

☐ How to improve the use of audio/visual aids by watching classmates

17   Did this activity help you to develop your metacognitive (learning to learn) and problem-solving skills?

Judging   **1   2   3   4   5**
Reasoning   **1   2   3   4   5**
Conceiving   **1   2   3   4   5**
Imagining   **1   2   3   4   5**

18   This scenario-based activity stimulated my creative thinking skills.

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

19   Were you motivated by this activity?

1=Strongly	2= Somewhat	3=	4=	Somewhat	5= Strongly

agree	Agree	Indifferent	disagree	Disagree

20   The most challenging aspect was the

Research phase   **1   2   3   4   5**

Role-play scenario   **1   2   3   4   5**

21   In your opinion, is "learning by doing" the best method for language learning?

1=Strongly agree	2= Somewhat Agree	3= Indifferent	4= Somewhat disagree	5= Strongly Disagree

22   Your feedback: Include your opinions and suggestions here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

About the author

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