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Testing and diagnostics of students’ difficulties in CLIL teaching

Alena Šteflíčková

Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Education, Prague, Czech Republic, alena.steflickova@seznam.cz

The poster deals with CLIL and assessment and evaluation in CLIL. It summarises main positive and negative aspects of CLIL with regards to a Czech teacher and it concentrates on ways of diagnosing if a student has problems with language (English) or content subject (mathematics) while writing different types of tests.

There are two main principles used – analyzing on the basis of the combining solutions in different tasks in set of tasks (alternative test) and analyzing of the procedure of a student. The poster introduces examples of several works of research and different alternative tests and it shows some possible ways how the test CLIL students. It also shows examples of diagnosing student’s difficulties, mainly in language.

Keywords: CLIL, testing, assessment, alternative tests.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current globalised world requires modern methods of teaching and learning. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is one of these methods; it integrates learning of content subject and a language other than the language of instruction. Both of these subjects are taught at the same time and via each other. The method is in the spotlight of researchers and scholars who see it as one tool for better language education, also in mathematics education research.

CLIL has some positive aspects and also some problematic ones. One of these is assessment and evaluation. A key question is what should CLIL teachers assess and evaluate – content only (according to Hofmannová, Novotná, & Pipalová, 2004, this is the most common way in CLIL teaching), language only, both content and language separately or both content and language at the same time. Assessing and evaluating of both content and language at the same time can be difficult because sometimes it is not easy to distinguish if the difficulties of a student originated in language or content. Then there is one important question emerging: “How to integrate both parts?” (Novotná, 2011). A connected question is: If a student did not answer a question or answered the question incorrectly, what does it mean? Does it mean he/she did not understand the question or did not know the answer or was not able to produce it? A plain fact is that it is usually not possible to separate these items.

The poster aims at integrating math and English and the main objective of the poster is to introduce several types of alternative tests or tasks which were created and used in ongoing research regarding diagnosing where the difficulty of a student was.

METHODS

Assessment and evaluation is a part of CLIL which is not very often discussed. The ways of written assessment in CLIL are tests aimed at content or vocabulary, alternative tests, performance tests (students perform what they are asked for), portfolios and “can do” tables (there is a list of skills students should learn and the teacher ticks the ones the student has already learnt).

The examples of tests and tasks in my study are based on two basic principles. The first principle is inspired by Novotná (2011) who introduces an alternative test, which is a set of gradated tasks – some tasks are graduated in English and some are graduated in mathematics (gradated in difficulty). By comparing results in different tasks it is possible to make an educated guess where the student’s difficulties are. The second principle is analyzing the procedure of a student’s solution in order to understand his/her train of through.
CONCLUSION

Dealing with assessment and evaluation, if we choose to assess and evaluate content subject only, the tasks and tests would need to be in native language, because as my units of research showed the assignment in second or foreign language (L2) is one factor which influences the understanding. If we assess and evaluate in L2 then there is a question how to diagnose if the student’s difficulty is in language or content subject. One possibility is to use an alternative test or to study the procedure of a student solution. To understand the procedure and train of thought of a student is important for a teacher, so he/she is able to analyze knowledge of a student or a whole class and can use the information for other teaching. Further research could deal with other tests, comparing one test in different languages, as well as studying student’s difficulties in oral testing or different school mathematical domains.

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