

# THE ROLE OF VIDEOS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTENT IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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This paper stems from the increasing role CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology is playing in the Italian schools, having been recently introduced in the upper secondary school curricula. After a brief theoretical framework, the role of videos in a CLIL environment will be dealt with, both for learners and for teachers. In particular some examples of possible use of videos in a CLIL class will be mentioned, also considering the new role of the learner as an active user of the web and as a content generator.

As for the teachers' perspective, video clips can play an important role in a teacher-training pathway, both for Initial Teacher Education and for Continuous Professional Development.

The LOCIT model (Coyle), inspired by the CIT model (Tripp), will be explored as a possible way to reflect and share ideas and opinions about a CLIL lesson among the community of teachers, practitioners, trainers, educators.

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## 1 Introduction

The acronym CBLT (Content-based language teaching) refers to an approach to instruction in which students are taught subject content in a language they are still learning (Lightbown, Spada, 2014). CBLT is often adopted in second language contexts where immigrants are learning both a new language and academic content.

In Europe the most common acronym adopted at secondary level is CLIL, which stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning and was introduced by David Marsh in 1994.

This approach is becoming more and more popular in a lot of European countries, with different projects and programmes, reflecting policies and priorities of each country.

In Italy CLIL was introduced by a Reform Law (Ministerial Decree 88/89 dated 2010) stating this methodology as mandatory in all upper secondary school curricula. In this way Italy aligns with the other European countries, focusing on the international dimension of the educational system.

The European Commission has stated the benefits of CLIL in several occasions and official documents. A recently published report (Improving the effectiveness of language learning: CLIL and computer assisted language learning, 2014) focuses on the importance of conveying subject contents in a foreign language, as this approach can effectively increase the opportunities for language learning and practice without increasing the curriculum time and specialist language teacher time allocated to language learning.

The benefits of CLIL can refer to (Dalton-Puffer, 2007):

- Developing intercultural communication skills;
- Preparing for internationalism;
- Providing opportunities to study content through different perspectives;
- Accessing subject-specific target language terminology;
- Improving overall target language competence;
- Developing oral communication skills;
- Diversifying methods and forms of classroom practice;
- Increasing learner motivation.

A very important framework which represents the background for the implementation of CLIL is Do Coyle's "4Cs" model (Coyle, 2007), that integrates the following dimensions:

- Content which refers not only to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but it is about the learners creating their own knowledge and understanding and developing skills;
- Cognition, which is related to content and to its interpretation, analysis

- and cognitive processes;
- Communication, which refers to the need of reconstructing the content and its related cognitive processes;
- Culture, which refers to intercultural awareness and to the relationship between cultural background and languages.

The main steps in the design and implementation of a CLIL syllabus are clearly described by Meyer (2010) in the “CLIL pyramid”. According to this framework, scaffolding is crucial in a CLIL lesson, as the CLIL teacher must find the best strategies and tools to support and facilitate the acquisition of content together with the development of language competences. The choice of multimedia and multimodal tools may facilitate the CLIL implementation. In this context, videos may represent a powerful and effective way of scaffolding that can be used for any steps of the CLIL lesson, as further explained in the following paragraphs.

## 2 The role of videos in a CLIL environment

Videos can play a crucial role in a CLIL lesson, as they can be exploited in the different phases of the lesson (brainstorming, introduction, practice, testing, etc.) with the aim to engage students and motivate them in a learner-centered perspective (Keddie, 2014).

Both humanistic and scientific subjects may get an added value from the use of videos, as there is a wide range of video-sharing websites on the Internet, including video lessons, documentaries, educational materials.

Videos can be employed to teach other subjects through a foreign language also to low-level learners. It is important to analyze the learners’ needs, level of competence and background knowledge, in order to help them to develop listening and understanding strategies. For this reason, a critical selection and an adequate use of the visual materials should guide any lesson planning. For example, subtitling videos has turned out to be weak and distracting in a CLIL lesson, as students’ attention will be mainly focused on the written texts and not on content.

A very important step forward in the use of videos at school has been recently made by the latest educational trends, that are focused on user generated content, rather than on user downloaded content, also in light of Web 2.0 philosophy, which is focused on producing, uploading, remixing and sharing content. In fact the term “Web 2.0” is used to describe technologies that allow website users to play a role in authoring additions to the sites they are reading.

Assigning students the role of co-producers has great potential to enable them to innovate, share and form communities of interest and networks (Boyd,

2007). However, controversial positions about this issue have been recently pointed out by some authors (Brake, 2014), who have outlined differences in motivation, access, skills, and usage that appear to underlie and perpetuate differences in online content creation practices between social groups. In particular it has been stressed how the quality of content may be strongly influenced by the producer's point of view, likes and dislikes. Anyway, the positive impact of multimedia technology on learning outcomes has been recently highlighted by one of the latest OECD reports (OECD, *New Millennium Learners - Initial findings on the effects of digital technologies on school-age learners*, 2007).

Our culture can be defined a "Remix culture" (Valeriani, 2011), as youth culture today more visibly orients itself around creating media by extracting component pieces from other people's media creations, then connecting them together to create something new.

Producing and sharing their own videos, students become the real protagonists of their learning pathway, feeling more engaged and challenged, especially if a co-creation process among peers is involved. As FabLab and Makers have become the latest frontier in education, video production may be conceived in line with this scenario.

It is easy to import a video clip directly from a video recording device to a video-editing application when filming on mobile devices. Students can record their video on their mobile phone and then import it as a digital content that can be split in clips, remixed, subtitled and shared through the social networks. Thanks to the use of QR code, students will always be able to access the video themselves whenever they want. In the video sharing culture we currently live, it is crucial for a CLIL teacher to understand and exploit the potential of a video creation or co-creation, presentation and sharing in a CLIL lesson.

Video-sharing culture has made it possible for 21st century learners to share their everyday expertise with the world, downloading and uploading instructional and demonstration videos.

Using video in a language or in a CLIL class can also mean enhancing the teaching through technology: TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning) (Walker & White, 2014), has been identified as particularly powerful and engaging in a language lesson, as students can be effectively and actively involved in their learning project. In these latest years the field of foreign language pedagogy has been racing to keep pace with the numerous opportunities afforded by the Internet and interactive media forms.

## 2.1 Genres of online videos

The internet is an archive of 20th century footage and moving images, most of them imported from TV: excerpts from documentaries (nature, history,

science, art), interviews, news reports, weather reports, historic videos, etc.

You Tube clips from films may be exploited in class in a lot of ways. For example, suggesting particular clips from a film like “Frankenstein” (1994), together with the reading of the book from M. Shelley, chosen among the graded readers suitable to the students’ level of competence, may suggest the teacher a lot of hints and connections for a CLIL lesson in history (the society in 1818, ethics, medical experiments, social issues etc.) or in science (experimentations, fear, chemistry etc.), or in geography (geolocalization: North Pole, Geneva, Scotland, England).

## 2.2 Video annotation in CLIL

Video annotation is becoming a common technique to enrich the power of a video, layering text, links, and hotspots over a video. In this way the video experience will be enhanced by adding information, interactivity and engagement (Bonaiuti, 2012).

Video annotation allows teachers and learners to interact with video via note taking, discussions and comments. Simple interactions between learners and teachers through comments is not the only pedagogical benefit of an annotation. Students can take private notes, add objects and timing references to them during a video lecture. Sharing enhanced notes will help other learners and improve relevant information about search results, in a cooperative and peer learning perspective. The production of notes can also be considered for assessment by the teachers. Through a specific software and interface students can annotate a video quickly and also view existing annotations.

In a CLIL lesson video annotation can be exploited in several ways, especially using specific functions such as label, category, scale, timeline. Teachers can ask learners to perform particular tasks relating to the content of video: instructions given in a foreign language will have to be carried out and in this way students will check their understanding and will develop relevant skills in terms of language, content, transversal and digital competences.

## 2.3 CLILquest

Webquest in a CLIL class are particularly effective, as they may help students surf the net looking for information according to specific tasks and instructions, given by the teacher in a foreign language. Surfing the net for a particular purpose makes the student more responsible and aware of the process of knowledge and competence acquisition.

The term CLILQuest (Fontecha, 2010), that bears a resemblance to the Webquest refers to a learner-centred activity based on inquiry-oriented or pro-

blem-based learning tasks that tap into the resources available on the Internet. It involves the use of web-based tasks within a foreign language model, in a CLIL environment, as shown in the picture below:

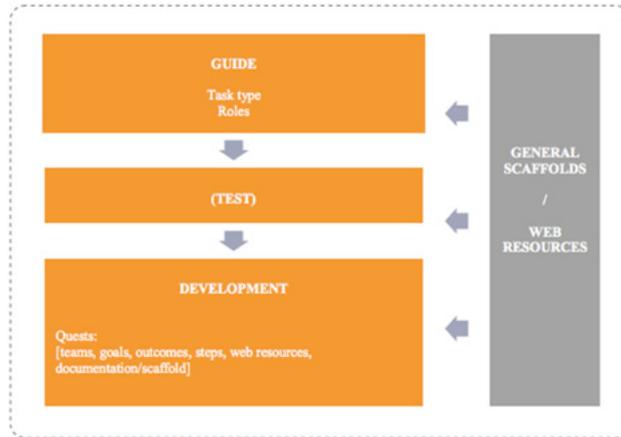


Fig. 1 - Structure of the CLILquest

Any kind of online video can play a crucial role, as they will effectively fulfill the task assigned, convey the content through a wide range of multimodal information (audio, video, script).

Creating or co-creating, editing, remixing and sharing new videos using clips taken from the selected ones, can be a good example of project-based learning, cooperative and peer learning.

## 2.4 CLIL teacher training pathways

The CLIL teacher must develop a very challenging professional profile, which includes language competences, methodological competences, mastery of the subject-content, interpersonal competences and digital competences.

The outcome of the 2004 study, titled “the European Profile for Language Teacher Education”, contributed to the definition of a frame of reference for language teachers education, that underlines the importance of digital competences, including pedagogical technological content knowledge (PTCK - the knowledge of new technologies applied to teaching the specific subject) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006); learning to learn, reflexive and research skills are also highlighted. European values and attitudes are stressed as key requirements: the attention to European citizenship rights and duties, as well as attitudes mirroring and promoting collaboration, cooperation, networking and lifelong

learning (Kelly & Grenfell, 2004).

As for CLIL teachers, a specific framework was developed by the European Centre for Modern Languages and the Council of Europe. It is named “The European Framework for CLIL Teacher Education” and provides a set of principles and ideas for designing curricula for professional teacher development in the area of CLIL. It is a macro-framework that identifies the target professional competences and offer professional development modules to help teachers attain them.

CLIL teacher training in Italy has involved the Ministry of Education, universities, INDIRE (National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research) and other stakeholders as local authorities, school networks, language training institutions, depicting a multi-facet scenario that is based on synergy and collaboration. Teachers must get a C1 level of competence in a foreign language and must attend a 20 Credits post-degree course at University in order to get the label as a “CLIL teacher”.

Training is perceived as a real need by the teachers who are continuously looking for new ways to get updated about the latest opportunities to face the CLIL challenges.

CLIL teacher training pathways may be supported by multimedia and multimodal tools, which can be exploited in different ways. Videos in particular, may play a key role in this field, as explained in the following paragraph.

## 2.5 The role of videos in CLIL training pathways: CIT and LOCIT models

Research indicates that video analysis has positive effects on teachers’ learning (...) teachers find video-based learning motivationally and cognitively stimulating (Seidel *at al.*, 2013).

There has been an increase in the uses of videos in teacher education in the last few years, as ‘artefact of practice’. Lemke (2007) underlines that working with videos allows teachers to experience teaching from a different perspective, as they get ‘inside’ a learning event, thus having a rich tool for self-reflection.

In these latest years researchers have been working a lot on the role of a reflective teacher in the 21st century schools, pointing out how teachers should collect evidence, documents, video narrative memories, in a sort of portfolio or e-portfolio so that they can reflect on their behavior and actions in order to find weaknesses and strengths and to change their teaching style and strategies accordingly.

There have been a lot of different initiatives in the last decades involving teachers as researchers; the ones adopted for use in this study imply the ‘practitioner’ component, where teachers critically research their own classroom

practice. This means objectifying the processes in each particular context, observing and analyzing them and sharing reflections with others; in brief, teachers are stimulated to develop what is called “theory of practice”, supported by practice-based evidence, so that the value of the processes is reinforced by discussion and critical reflection.

Donald Schön (1983) suggested that the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning was one of the defining characteristics of professional practice. He argued that the model of professional training which he called “Technical Rationality” is a description of how professionals “think in action”. The cultivation of the capacity to reflect in action (while doing something) and on action (after you have done it) has become an important feature of professional training programmes in a lot of subjects, including foreign languages and CLIL.

The use of videos in a training pathway can help teachers reflect on their own teaching strategies and style in order to find out weaknesses and strengths and to improve the following actions.

This is the starting point of CIT (Critical Incident Theory), which is based on the potential of video-documentation, reflection and discussion about one’s own lesson clips, but also some other teachers’ ones.

A critical incident is any unplanned event that occurs during class (Farrell, 2008). It has been suggested that if trainee teachers formally reflect on these critical incidents, it is easier for them to uncover new understandings of the teaching and learning process and to change and adjust the following actions.

According to Tripp (1993) critical incidents are

(...) not ‘things’ which exist independently of an observer and are awaiting discovery like gold nuggets or desert islands, but like all data [...] are created. Incidents happen, but critical incidents are created by the way we look at a situation [...] an interpretation of the significance of an event. To take something as a critical incident is a value judgment we make, and the basis of that judgment is the significance we attach to the meaning of the incident.

A Critical Incident can help to reach a deep reflection that goes beyond the simple description of an event, trying to get the most of it in terms of personal and professional enrichment.

Fowler and Blohm (2004) pointed out strengths and weaknesses of CIT, as shown in the following table:

Table 1  
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CIT MODEL

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage participants at a personal level in examining attitudes and behaviour that will be critical to their effectiveness;</li> <li>• Can be written for a variety of situations;</li> <li>• Require analysis and reflection, decision-making; reduce idea of answers being available from an “expert”;</li> <li>• Short reading time; move quickly into reflection;</li> <li>• Can be used singly or grouped to illustrate concept or processes;</li> <li>• Can lead to role playing and situational exercises to provide practice;</li> <li>• Appeals to concrete experience and reflective observation learning styles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants may complain they receive too little information;</li> <li>• Incidents need to be carefully written, revised, or selected to make desired point;</li> <li>• If aimed at culture-specific learning, need host-country resource people;</li> <li>• Most effective if individual reflection is discussed in small groups of fewer than eight;</li> <li>• Frustrating technique for abstract conceptualization learners.</li> </ul>

A good reflection on a lesson or on specific moments of a lesson can represent a useful exercise within initial training pathways for CLIL. In a life-long perspective, also in-service CLIL teachers may be guided through the observation and reflection on their own lessons or on the some colleagues’ ones, in order to share ideas, comments, feedbacks and improve the teaching style.

Do Coyle (2007) has created the LOCIT model (Lesson Observation and Critical Incidents Technique), which aims at guiding teachers to engage in practitioner research and professional dialogue by analyzing and reflecting on teaching and learning practices through class-based inquiry. The starting point is the identification of “learning moments” (observed while watching a video clip of a lesson), which represent the topic for discussion, reflection, comments and future planning, also supporting professional learning and community building.

Video-stimulated reflective dialogue technique has turned out to be particularly effective in CLIL, as Do Coyle’s research has proved.

The following picture shows the steps of the LOCIT model, that is based on the selection and discussion of the video clips selected as considered “learning moments”, together with a clear explanation for that choice:



Fig. 2 – The LOCIT model

Video annotation, already mentioned in paragraph 2.2, can have a crucial role in the afore-mentioned process, developing teachers' reflective practices thanks to the use of comments and notes on lesson videoclips (Calvani *et al.*, 2011).

The Italian teacher-training model both in the Initial Teacher Education and in the Continuous Professional Development does not always exploit the use of video as a medium for activating reflective practices. The added value of videos in the teacher training could be better highlighted in the training programmes, for example including carefully designed modules in training sessions with specific focus on the use of videos.

## 2.6 A comparative study in the USA about the learning of foreign languages

An American study (Pufahl, 2001), aimed at providing a comparative overview of the situation relating to foreign language learning in different countries, in order to get examples, good practices and useful data to strengthen foreign language skills in U.S., was conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington CD and collected information from 22 educators in 19 countries about foreign language instruction in their elementary and secondary schools. The research was aimed at investigating different dimensions both from the teachers and from the learners' perspective.

Among the main findings, learning content-area subjects through the medium of a foreign language turned out to be more and more popular in many

of the responding countries.

Innovative technologies and media were often mentioned as a way to increase access to information in a foreign language, provide interaction with speakers of other languages, and improve foreign language teaching in the classroom. In Denmark, teachers have developed successful strategies for integrating their students' informal foreign language exposure into classroom teaching, especially through the use of films, videos, computer games.

## 2.7 An example of the use of videoclips analysis in a CLIL research project

Analyzing video-recorded teaching and learning CLIL experiences has often been used as an effective strategy and observation tool in a wide range of research projects, ranging from piloting and experimentation approaches to new practitioners.

An example of using video clips in a research is a national project funded by the Dutch Ministry of Education, focusing on the observation, video recording and analysis of CLIL lessons in three Dutch secondary schools, using an observation instrument for effective pedagogy inspired to the framework reported below (de Graaf *et al.*, 2007):

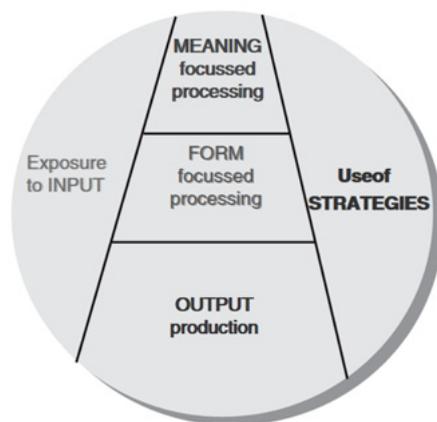


Fig.3 - The SLA 'penta-pie' - Adapted from: Westhoff (2004)

The schools had been implementing CLIL for six years, involving different subjects (History, Geography, Biology, Maths, Arts).

After the observation, video recording and analysis of the CLIL lessons, teachers were interviewed to get a wider range of data to collect, both qualitative and quantitative.

The objective was to find practical evidence for theoretical assumptions

on effective teaching performance directed at language acquisition in CLIL contexts, according to specific teaching performance indicators correlated to assumptions about effective language teaching. The performance indicators were integrated in the observation tool for effective CLIL teaching practice.

## Conclusions

The aim of this contribution was to focus on the use of videos in a CLIL lesson and on the crucial role they can play both from the learners' and from the teachers' perspective.

After a brief theoretical framework about CLIL, some hints and suggestions were sketched out for an effective exploitation of videos in a CLIL class.

The second part of the contribution dealt with teacher training pathways, focusing on the use of videos to help new teachers and in-service teachers to get self-awareness, self-reflection and a better understanding of their teaching strategies and techniques, in order to improve them in a life-long perspective.

The use of videos to foster reflective practices may be better exploited and highlighted in the Italian Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development programmes.

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