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The Advantages of Using “Frankenstein” from a CLIL Perspective in a Secondary Level

*Las ventajas de utilizar “Frankenstein” desde una perspectiva
AICLE en un centro de Secundaria*

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ABSTRACT. In this article, we speculate that sometimes students may not be interested in reading books. Therefore, teachers must provide meaningful experiences for students, while they develop a creative space to enjoy classic pieces of art with enormous potential for our daily lives. For this reason, three different activities are presented below. Firstly, communicative skills are fostered through a task based on Frankenstein. Secondly, values and critical thinking are promoted through a debate. Finally, students' creative skills are developed by designing a new character for the novel. All these activities are not only meant to foster collaborative work but also to let students be immersed in classic literature.

Keywords: Literature; books; social values; feelings; CLIL; Frankenstein.

RESUMEN. En este artículo, consideramos que algunas veces los estudiantes no suelen mostrar demasiado interés en leer libros. Por lo que es esencial que los docentes brinden experiencias valiosas para los estudiantes, invitándolos de forma creativa a disfrutar de obras clásicas que tanto tienen para enseñar. Por esta razón, se presentan diferentes actividades innovadoras. En primer lugar, las habilidades comunicativas son fomentadas a través de una actividad basada en Frankenstein. En segundo lugar, los valores y el pensamiento crítico son promovidos en un debate. Finalmente, las habilidades creativas de los estudiantes son desarrolladas mediante el diseño de un nuevo personaje para la novela. Todas estas actividades no solo fomentan el trabajo colaborativo, pero además le permiten a los estudiantes sumergirse en la literatura clásica.

Palabras clave: literatura; libros; valores sociales; sentimientos; AICLE; Frankenstein.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the benefits of including content and language integrated learning (CLIL) lessons in an English as a second language (ESL) classroom while teaching literature. Coyle (2007, p. 551) puts forward a philosophical stance that has given rise to her practical and overarching 4Cs framework integrated by content, communication, cognition, and culture where these four are taken into account holistically within specific contexts. In addition, according to Coyle et al. (2010, p. 3), CLIL represents an umbrella term for any teaching context in which at least part of the instructions are given in a second language, rather than in L1.

Aligned with a CLIL approach, this article seeks to provide teachers with a theoretical and practical framework that may encourage them to adopt famous pieces of literature such as “Frankenstein,” authored by Mary Shelley. Being one of the most important literary works of all time, this novel involves multi-faceted themes that are enriching in a classroom environment, such as the plethora of ethical and scientific debates, artificial intelligence, love, and discrimination, among others.

This article first includes a theoretical description of CLIL. Then, it describes a set of activities drawing on our own teaching practice.

Conceptual framework

CLIL as a conduit for plurilingual competence

As Banegas (2012, p.116) states, “CLIL is an approach in which various methodologies are used to achieve a dual-focused form of instruction in language and content”. Moreover, CLIL represents “an innovative methodological approach of far broader scope than language teaching” (Eurydice, 2006, p.7).

Furthermore, CLIL aims to develop the plurilingual competence of students through intercomprehension, interculturalism, and plurilingualism (de Carlo, 2009; Sudhoff, 2010). This evidence suggests that CLIL breaks an intercultural barrier where learners can have experiences that could not be possible in a monolingual setting. This is

the reasoning behind planning lessons by considering this approach. As stated by Tardieu and Dolitsky (2012, p.10), “CLIL classes could give the opportunity to connect the official language of the school to another language and develop language awareness as well as code-switching strategies.” That is to say, teachers and students will be comparing cultural differences in the study of subject matters by interpreting and presenting important matters in a second language.

Moreover, a radical change is demonstrated in language learning which clearly offers solutions to most of the problems that teachers face when dealing with CLIL lessons. This new approach frees teachers from old structures and constraints that do not address the needs of world citizens who must learn how to evolve in a dynamic, multilingual and multicultural world. Instead, they can use challenging novels such as “Frankenstein” to involve both content and language learning.

Why framing “Frankenstein” in a CLIL lesson?

It is generally agreed that although some students may have not read the literary work, there appears to be firm evidence that almost everyone has certain knowledge about the story. This article highlights the importance of incorporating ‘Frankenstein’ into a CLIL lesson, recognizing that students will not only gain intercultural knowledge but also enhance their cognitive processes. For instance, by fostering higher-order and lower-order thinking skills, teachers will be helping their students to acquire mental abilities that will be suitable for the world we are living in. This includes comparing the setting in which the work of art takes place and the students’ context, developing citizenship values and making judgments about the social topics covered in the novel. By doing so, learners will develop their awareness as thinkers, practice strategies for effective thinking, and develop habits of intelligent behaviour needed for a lifelong learning. In the following paragraphs, we will provide details and examples of meaningful activities.

Activity 1: Frankenstein in Argentina

As teachers, we need to encourage students to develop their productive skills. In this case, we will be focusing on the speaking part.

Communicating orally involves making different decisions, such as the type of language we use, the formality, the type of grammar, how long we talk, among others. By presenting this activity, students will be fostering the social meaning of what they are trying to express.

Aims: activate previous knowledge about the students' culture, to frame "Frankenstein" in their own culture, to express their feelings towards the novel, to provide students with practice on the speaking and listening skills.

Target learners: Ages 15-17, pre-intermediate level (B1).

Language focus:

- Vocabulary related to "Frankenstein" (Alchemist, adjectives for physical description -tall, short, big-, adjectives for personality -nice, kind, intelligent, benevolent-, (discrimination, social issues, ways to prevent discrimination).
- Reimagining the character in relation to students' context.

Skill in focus: Speaking and listening.

Materials needed: Laptop and television.

Estimated time: 10/15 minutes.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will set the frame of the class by showing this video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDgu25Dsv34&ab_channel=TED-Ed
2. After watching it, students will be asked several questions to activate previous knowledge about the story and about their own culture. This activity will be carried out as a whole class activity, using the technique of slips in a bag and working cross-pairs (one student will ask a question to another student).
3. Students will have 10 minutes to answer:
 - How would you describe Frankenstein?
 - Can you imagine Frankenstein living in Argentina in 2023? Will he be discriminated?
 - Have you ever felt mistreated by people that you don't know?
 - How was your reaction?

- When the creature tried to talk to people, it was rejected. Have you ever been in a similar situation at school?
- What can we do to prevent this type of situation?

Feedback: The teacher will give corrections to students' interventions after they have finished their idea. Corrections of vocabulary or grammar items will be made according to the level and to the context. There will be no need to correct every single word. As students will be participating orally in a whole-class activity, the teacher will give the feedback after they have given their answers.

Anticipated problems: A situation that may arise would be the lack of participation among students. To solve this problem, the teacher will directly ask some more extroverted students first to break the ice.

Alternatives: Students can intervene in pairs. The teacher may give them five minutes to discuss their ideas and to express the things they found in common.

Activity 2: Working with citizenship values

It is essential that citizenship values are part of our lesson plans if we are to implement CLIL. Consequently, by promoting ethical values among our students, we are not only exercising human rights and fulfilling their social responsibilities but we also are leading them to live in a respectful atmosphere. In this second activity, students will be asked to work with values described in Frankenstein.

Aims: develop critical thinking as well as empathy, respect, collaborative work, and fellowship.

Target learners: Ages 15-17, pre-intermediate level (B1).

Language focus:

- Vocabulary: Review about feelings, emotions and values.
- Grammar point: Review of different tenses.
- Linguistic functions: Describe personal experiences that students may relate to the topics dealt in the novel.

Skill in focus: Reading, listening and speaking.

Materials needed: Photocopies with quotes. Board. Chalk/Marker.

Estimated time: 10/15 minutes.

Procedure:

- As a brainstorming activity, the teacher will encourage students to think about social values promoted in Frankenstein by writing the following question on the board:
 - Which of these topics are present in the story? How?

LOVE-HATE-AMBITION-KINDNESS-SELFISHNESS-PREJUDICE-ARROGANCE-HAPPINESS-SADNESS-RESPECT-LOYALTY-FRIENDSHIP

- Then, the teacher will distribute a photocopy with four quotes as shown in Figure 1, related to the story. Students will have to read them and state their opinion considering what they read in Frankenstein.

<i>'People are shaped by their experiences. The way a person thinks and acts is mainly a result of how life has treated them'</i>	Agree / Disagree / Qualify
Respond	
<i>'It is important to feel emotions powerfully. Whether you are feeling guilt, love, sadness, horror or joy, you should go big'</i>	Agree / Disagree / Qualify
Respond	
<i>'The way someone looks is not really important'</i>	Agree / Disagree / Qualify
Respond:	

'Revenge is completely pointless. Nothing can be gained through it'	Agree / Disagree / Qualify
Respond:	

Figure 1. Quotes

3. Finally, the teacher will read each quote and students will state their opinions and give reasons. This activity will be done orally as a whole-class activity, in which students will be asked to raise their hands and the teacher will choose the speakers. By doing so, students will be discussing moral and social values.

Feedback: Same as in the previous activity, the teacher will give corrections to students' interventions, after they have finished their idea. Corrections of vocabulary or grammar items will be made according to the level and to the context. There will be no need to correct every single word.

Anticipated problems: A situation that may arise would be the lack of participation among students. To solve this problem, the teacher will ask particularly those students that are more extroverted and they would probably break the ice.

Alternatives: Considering that students are familiar with apps, the teacher could design a Google Forms in which she/he includes these quotes and the options for students to answer. Then, with the data collected, they can work with charts in order to know the percentage of the class who agrees, disagrees or has another opinion. The teacher will also be able to read students' comments in a different section.

Activity 3: Design your own creature

By providing learners with opportunities to explore their creative abilities, teachers are not only allowing them to discover possibilities but also to expand their ideas, especially when working in groups,

since it is the result of mixed ideas based on fruitful discussions that lead to the final product. Throughout this activity, students will need to agree on different aspects to present a new character.

Aims: Foster creativity and innovation, develop writing skills, foster social abilities by working in small groups, activate schemata on the novel, and retrieve previous knowledge related to adjectives and feelings.

Target learners: Ages 15-17, pre-intermediate level (B1).

Language focus:

- Vocabulary: revision of adjectives/feelings.
- Grammar: present simple tense.
- Linguistic function: create a character that contains something proposed by each of the members.

Skill in focus: Writing.

Materials needed: Big sheets of paper, markers, pen, paper.

Estimated time: 20/30 minutes.

Procedure:

1. At this stage, students will be divided into groups of four.
2. The teacher will explain the first part of the task by saying that students will have to design a new friend for the creature. Moreover, students will choose his/her name and make a sketch of this new character.
3. The second part of the activity is to describe the character by mentioning his/her physical characteristics and the ones about his/her personality.
4. The last step is to copy this information in big sheets of paper. The decoration can be chosen by students.
5. Once they are ready, students will share their creations with their classmates. The posters will be stuck in the classroom's walls.

Feedback: The teacher will correct the drafts and will give them back to students so they can create the posters and place them on the wall.

Anticipated problems: One problem that may occur is the lack of creativity to produce the sketch, so the teacher may allow the use

of electronic devices for students to look for inspirational models on the internet.

Alternatives: Considering that students are already familiar with plenty of apps, they will be able to design their posters by using virtual tools such as Genially, Canva or PicsArt in order to paste the link in a Padlet document so everyone can see their work.

Conclusion

As previously stated, the aim of this paper was to demonstrate the relevance of including a CLIL approach literature. In effect, we incorporated not only a theoretical framework but also activities that have the potential to be a great tool to provide students with unpredictable and new language in a dynamic and collaborative way.

This article is intended to give teachers more insights as regards the relevance of creating a holistic classroom for students in which content, communication, cognition and culture are provided and developed in a meaningful context. As an example, by making use of a masterpiece such as “Frankenstein”, cultural awareness could be raised and expanded by comparing different times, cultural contexts, and social values. The novel can contribute to the class with a plethora of themes that may be developed through the 4Cs in order to improve students’ proficiency in both their mother tongue and their second language. We truly believe that it is of paramount importance to engage students in a classroom from a CLIL perspective, developing their plurilingual competence through language and content.

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