Democratizing didactic transposition: Negotiations between learners and their teacher in a secondary school

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Abstract

Didactic transposition is a concept not usually found in TESOL but common to the teaching of subjects and languages such as French or Spanish. This term refers to the pedagogic transformations that occur between knowledge of reference and school knowledge. This article examines how such a process of transformations was democratized by engaging a group of secondary school learners to suggest topics, sources of input, and activities for the development of language-driven CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) lessons. Through action research, an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher in Argentina developed lessons and materials during one school year following the learners' suggestions and evaluation. Data were gathered through class interviews, surveys, and the teacher-researcher's own research journal. The experience shows that didactic transposition inscribed in sociocultural theory may become a democratic act when (1) teachers and learners not only negotiate topics and materials but, more importantly, discuss their motivations, needs, and interests and (2) teachers create spaces to incorporate learner voices systematically and coherently in a manner that improves language learning.

Key Words: didactic transposition; CLIL; action research; negotiation; learner voices.

Resumen

El concepto de transposición didáctica es usualmente encontrado en el campo de enseñanza del inglés pero es común en lenguas como el francés o el español. Este término se refiere a las transformaciones pedagógicas que ocurren entre el conocimiento de referencia y el conocimiento escolar. El presente artículo examina cómo tal proceso fue democratizado mediante el involucramiento de un grupo de estudiantes de la escuela secundaria para sugerir temas, recursos, y actividades con el fin de desarrollar clases en torno a CLIL/AICLE centrado en la lengua. A través de la investigación-acción, un docente argentino desarrolló clases y materiales durante un año lectivo siguiendo las sugerencias y evaluaciones de sus estudiantes. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de entrevistas de clase, encuestas, y el diario de ruta del propio docente. La experiencia demostró que la transposición didáctica inscripta en la teoría sociocultural puede convertirse en democrática cuando (1) los docentes y estudiantes negocian temas y materiales, y discuten sus motivaciones, necesidades, e intereses, y (2) los docentes crean espacios que incorporan sistemáticamente la voz de los estudiantes de manera coherente para la mejora del aprendizaje de lenguas.

Palabras Claves: transposición didáctica; AICLE; investigación-acción; negociación; voces de estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

In TESOL, teachers are expected to transform the English language into teachable units (Widdowson, 2002). Such a transformation emerges from the distance between language as collective knowledge of reference and language as an object of study. This distance can be examined through the concept of didactic transposition. Originally, this was defined as the transformations between knowledge, the knowledge to be taught, and the knowledge taught in the classroom (Bronckart & Plazaola Giger, 1998; Duy-Thien, 2008) from a restricted conception of knowledge. The English language as an object of study is constituted not only by the formal outcomes of fields such as grammar, phonetics, pragmatics, or discourse analysis, to name a few, but also by how it is created and recreated in social interaction (Alvarez Angulo, 1998; Polidoro & Stigar, 2010).

In this article, I advance the idea that English language teaching and learning processes could be enhanced if didactic transposition is explored as a democratic undertaking that includes both teacher and learner voices. The experience below is based on the introduction of language-driven CLIL (content and language integrated learning) in the EFL (English as a foreign language) lesson of a group of learners at a secondary school in southern Argentina.

Didactic transposition theory

In language teaching, there emerges a negotiated didactic system or didactic triangle (Bronckart & Plazaola Giger, 1998; Chevallard, 1985, 1988; Dolz, Gagnon, & Mosquera, 2009) through which teachers, learners, and, in this article, EFL relate to each other. Such a system operates in a given socio-political context that involves politicians, academics, school administrators, curriculum planners, and parents, among other actors (Polidoro & Stigar, 2010). These constitute the noosphere, which constructs and reconstructs knowledge and determines how this knowledge, whether scientific or common, is didactically transposed and taught at schools (Cardelli, 2004; Gómez Mendoza, 2005) or found among teachers (Perafán Echeverri, 2013). In this noosphere, didactic transposition develops. This concept was initially envisaged as a monolithic unidirectional experience, but it was later redefined from a sociocultural dynamic perspective. I shall now expand on these two views.

A transmission view

In an article that recounts the history of didactic transposition, Gómez Mendoza (2005) asserts that Michel Verret (1975) introduced the term to understand the transmission from those who know to those who do not in formal education. This process entailed the transformation of an object of knowledge into an object of study; in this article, English language. Verret's concept was later taken by Yves Chevallard (1985) and elaborated in relation to mathematics teaching. In Chevallard's view (1985), knowledge is equated to scientific knowledge, a rather elitist perception (Cardelli, 2004), and didactic transposition comes to describe the transformations which this knowledge undergoes to become knowledge to be taught and from knowledge to be taught to knowledge taught—that is, what actually teachers do in the classroom. In addition, Chevallard (1985, 1988) claims that the ultimate stage of transposition is the knowledge learnt. It is here that learners play a vital part and challenge the supposed linearity that originally characterized didactic transposition theory.

I should make a distinction between external and internal didactic transposition (Mendoza Gómez, 2005). These two planes may also reveal how power is distributed in the noosphere. As regards external didactic transposition, it is academics, school experts, pedagogues, curriculum planners, and textbook writers who are usually in charge of transposing knowledge to school knowledge (Alvarez Angulo, 1998; Cardelli, 2004). In the case of TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages), they decide what aspects of the language will be taught, and how, and what kind of language competences and cognitive processes will be prioritized. For some authors (Bronckart & Plazaola Giger, 1998; Duy-Thien, 2008, Gómez Mendoza, 2005), these agents employ four transforming operations: desyncretisation, depersonalization, programmability, and publicity.

The first operation is desyncretisation; that is, the disappearance of the original and complex logics of knowledge generation. Thus, knowledge is presented as a successful line of breakthroughs. This operation may be criticised as research-built knowledge is dehistoricised and, therefore, only results and conclusions may remain. The second operation is depersonalization. In this sense, the original researchers or knowledge generators, their context, and motivations are silenced and invisibilised to enforce generalisations. For example, how many TESOL practitioners who see themselves as followers of task-based learning (TBL) know who conceptualized TBL? Thirdly, the operation of programmability

takes place. Curriculum planners organize knowledge in sequences of complexity and progression in order to match learners' cognitive development among other reasons at play. A good example could be how contents such as grammar, lexis, and functions are sequenced and integrated in a given course book. Teachers may find that present tenses are usually featured before past tenses.

Oh and Oh (2011), in contradiction with Chevallard's spirit, suggest that, through these three operations, scientific ideas are simplified and reconstructed to facilitate learners' access to those ideas. However, oversimplification of language use may be found in course books and teacher practices and may lead to erroneous or incomplete learning. For instance, Spanish-speaking learners of English may have difficulties with possessive structures when their teachers oversimplify rules (Muguiro, 2013).

Lastly, the operation of publicity refers to the need to socialize and impose, to some extent, how knowledge will be taught by the teacher. This may occur through the release of official documents, syllabi, curricula, teacher's manuals, journals, and professional conferences. Through these four operations, we are in the presence of an overarching process of rediscursification through which scientific discourse is transformed into instructional discourse (Lorenzo, 2008; Moore & Lorenzo, 2007).

In general, Chevallard's didactic transposition could be represented as Figure 1 shows. Teachers are left with the task of implementing knowledge didactisation at an internal level of didactic transposition. In effect, teachers may not participate in educational planning vertically conceived and impart school knowledge already synthesized through teaching resources and curricula (Banegas, 2011; Wedell, 2009). It is also relevant to notice that Chevallard's conception of the noosphere excludes learners from the equation and, therefore, only adults with varying degrees of participation appear in his top-down conception of education.
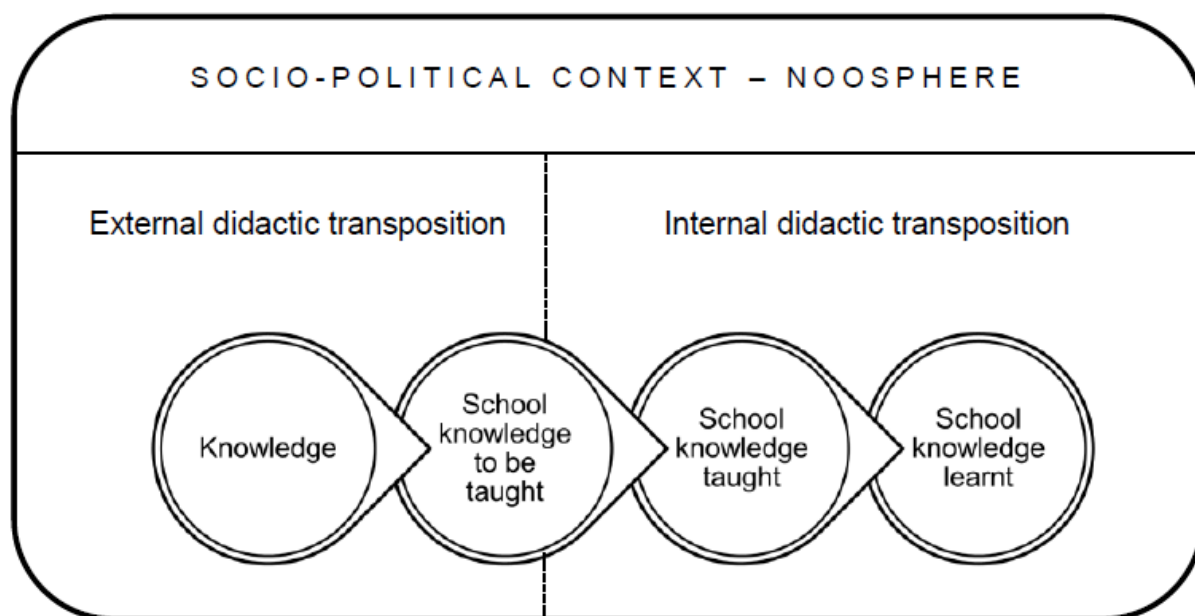
Figure 1. Chevallard's (1985) didactic transposition process.

A sociocultural view

Chevallard's theory was strongly resisted for two main reasons: (1) its transmission, top-down, and applied-science perspective and (2) its elitist incomplete picture of knowledge that possibly disregarded the broader social order in which formal education is inscribed. Authors concluded that Chevallard conceived knowledge as the sole domain of universities and other academic circles, thus ignoring knowledge generated in ordinary social life (Caillot, 1996; Gómez Mendoza, 2005; Petitjean, 1998). Given these controversies, Bronckart and Plazoala Giger (1998) note that, since Chevallard, knowledge has been replaced by knowledge of reference or social practices of reference, since the reference is not solely based on academia and on the notion that all the members of the noosphere are active producers of knowledge of reference, always in tension, from which selections will be made. School content, particularly in (foreign) language teaching, also incorporates knowledge of the language derived from social use (Alvarez Angulo, 1998; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012), and therefore this is also included in social practices of reference. In addition, knowledge to be taught and the rest of the transformations are currently termed as content to be taught, content taught, and content learnt respectively.

In a literature review about didactic transposition in language teaching and tools of mediation in the classroom, Bronckart and Plazaola Giger (1998) focus on the role of textbooks. These authors assert that lessons and textbooks may offer an object of study that is not the result of knowledge transposition. In foreign language learning, the authors suggest that textbooks tend to value spoken language through dialogues over written narrative or argumentative texts. In addition, foreign language textbook writers may not seem to discuss the theoretical framework that guides their decisions and appear to be satisfied with introducing tables of contents which allow the visualization of linguistic structures and speech acts. Because of these features, Duy-Thien (2008) recommends that teachers should not base their lessons only on textbooks, as the pictures they offer may be distorted or out-dated with respect to the original knowledge of reference.

These changes in the conceptualization of didactic transposition indicate that the monolithic transmission model has been replaced by a sociocultural perspective which considers the multiplicity of dynamic interconnections that occur in the totalizing learning process among peers, experts, mediating tools, and context (Díaz-Corralero, 2002; Lantolf, 2000). Anchored in a sociocultural view, the new noosphere is a reflection of the ecology of our social practices of reference. However, Bronckart and Plazaola Giger (1998) indicate that learners should have more influence, since the outcomes of the content learnt may shape the way in which contents are taught by their teachers. This does not occur linearly but through permanent negotiation. What these authors do not discuss is the extent to which learners have a say in the selection of social practices of reference and the pedagogical transformations these undergo to arrive at the content to be taught. This article explores the democratization of didactic transposition through negotiations between teacher and learner voices (Yonesawa & Jones, 2009) and their motivations (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lasagabaster, 2011; Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010; Thoonen, Sleegers, & Peetsma, 2011; Ushioda, 2013) in a language-driven CLIL classroom in Argentina.

CLIL and didactic transposition

CLIL is generally perceived as an innovative approach through which curricular content and a foreign language are learnt at the same time holistically (Coyle, 2007; Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Dalton-Puffer 2007; Kiely, 2011; but see Bruton,

2013). Several CLIL models have been developed and implemented (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010) usually underpinned by Sociocultural Theory and Cummin's contributions (Anderson, 2011; Banegas, 2012; Llinares, Morton, & Whitaker, 2012). These may be placed along a continuum from content-end focus to language-end focus depending on educational settings, aims, and human as well as material resources (Coyle *et al.*, 2010). However, current CLIL literature stresses the content element in European contexts (Dale & Tanner, 2012; Georgiu, 2012; Llinares *et al.*, 2012; Pérez Cañado, 2012). In addition, CLIL is conceptualized more as an educational approach rather than a language-learning approach (Dalton-Puffer & Nikula, 2014). Yet, there are EFL-teacher led implementations outside Europe which report on the incorporation of curricular content into the language lesson to provide new opportunities for meaningful use of the foreign language (e.g. Fernández, 2008; McDougald, 2009; Uemura, 2013).

Despite the fast growth of CLIL implementation, Pérez-Cañado (2012) notes that descriptive accounts or reports that focus on CLIL's success outnumber research-based publications. In addition, the literature offers strategies for lesson planning and materials development (see Bentley, 2010; Dafouz & Guerrini, 2009); however, there is need for a CLIL research agenda that takes CLIL from praxis to systematic scrutiny and theorization of its many aspects (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; but see Ruiz de Zarobe, 2013). The literature has started to offer studies that examine CLIL through action research (e.g. Mearns, 2012).

Inscribed in the relationship between language-driven CLIL and didactic transposition theory from a classroom perspective, a group of four EFL teachers sought to explore in what ways the latter was constructed and negotiated in a regular EFL lesson in Argentina during one school year. In this article, I explore my experience as one of the participating teachers and researcher with my Year 3 class.

METHOD

This article is based on a collaborative action research project through which four teachers and their secondary school learners engaged in examining their own practices and introducing content into the EFL lesson. The CAR-CLIL project consisted of three cycles that lasted from March 2011 to December 2011 at a secondary school in Argentina. It involved four teachers, one of them as a

teacher-researcher and author of this article, and around 90 learners (for a detailed account of this research project, see Banegas, 2013). However, for this article, I adopt a personal reflective stance in my identity as a teacher-researcher (Allwright, 2003, 2010; Borg, 2013; Burns 2010; Klehr, 2012). I am interested in understanding how didactic transposition for language-driven CLIL was enacted at a macro-level of analysis in collaboration with my own learners, a group of 15–16 year olds in their last year of secondary education in Argentina.

Data were collected through my research journal (see also Banegas, 2012), class semi-structured interviews with my learners, and surveys they completed at the end of each of the three action research cycles. Interviews and surveys were carried out in Spanish. Interviews were audiotaped and orthographically transcribed. I used inductive coding from which I extracted the main themes for thematic analysis of the qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007). In relation to the learner survey, I combined closed and open-ended items. Answers were analysed by counting the number of responses given the limited number of participating learners (30). Through these data, I discuss the negotiations substantiating the democratization of didactic transposition.

I should clarify that the school administrators supported this initiative and allowed us to carry out our research and modify the curriculum to suit our learners' needs. In this regard, democratization also occurred at an institutional level.

RESULTS

Selection of topics and materials

On average, each set comprised three lessons for each of the three cycles. At the school where the research was carried out, English as a foreign language is a subject taught for two hours each week. The content for each language-driven set of CLIL lessons was selected through the following process. Learners suggested curriculum-related topics that I listed on the blackboard. During this brainstorming moment, I highlighted that we would not work on just any topic, but a topic I was also comfortable with and that we could agree on. However, I was open to dealing with topics about which I did not already know. Then, learners voted on a piece of paper, and the most voted topic was the one I used for the lessons (Table 1).

Learners appeared to be interested in history; Cycle 1, for example, featured three topics related to this school subject, and Cycle 3 also included a topic closely related to the region where the research took place. I personally felt comfortable with the most voted-for topics; however, each of them demanded extra preparation, as I knew little about them.

Table 1. Learners' voted topics.

Cycle	Content
Cycle 1	The history of rock music, the Mayas, British invasions in Argentina.
Cycle 2	Drug decriminalisation, Nuclear accidents, Eating habits.
Cycle 3	The Solar System, Eating habits, The Welsh in Patagonia.

Together with these learner-generated topics, learners were also asked to suggest activities and sources of input every time they completed the evaluation survey at the end of each cycle. In general terms, the most chosen sources (learners could choose more than one) of input for each cycle were related to authentic materials that encouraged listening (Table 2). When I probed further into these choices, learners explained that they did not like the artificial and childish nature of the audios in the course book and therefore they preferred challenging, yet authentic, input.

Table 2. Learners' most voted input sources.

Sources	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Total
Songs	11	18	11	41
Films(trailers)	10	15	15	40
Documentaries	2	15	14	31
Adapted texts	1	7	2	10
Interviews	-	3	6	9
Graphs	-	2	-	2
Others?	-	-	-	-

As for activities, Table 3 shows learner preferences from cycle to cycle. Learners' interest in oral skills development was confirmed as the most chosen activities responded to listening and speaking skills. Even their own suggestions indicated their need for such skills. Such interest emanated from both more vocal as well as quieter students. Their preferences also signalled their coherence: the sources of

input and activities chosen matched. For example, they selected 'documentaries' and 'listen (and watch) and complete'.

Table 3. Learners' most voted activities.

C= Cycle	C 1	C 2	C 3	Total
Listen and complete	14	7	13	34
Listen and choose	8	10	15	33
Listen and correct	2	3	4	9
Grammar: multiple choice	-	-	3	3
Take down notes during a presentation	-	-	-	-
Summarise and comment orally	2	1	2	5
Write texts	-	1	1	2
Grammar: gap filling	-	-	1	1
Debate/Discussion	5	12	5	22
Read and answer	5	5	-	10
Read and complete	-	1	2	3
Read and choose	-	-	1	1
Read and correct	-	-	1	1
Suggest others?				
Listen and order	2			2
Read and compare		1		1
Make a presentation with PPT		5	2	7

Personal perceptions

Learners' preferences (Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3) and my personal professional development prompted me to keep written track of my reflections. My research journal revealed two main themes in relation to didactic transposition democratization: (1) negotiation and (2) flexible classroom practices.

With regard to the first theme, I reflected in my journal on my concerns about the rejection, compromise, or acceptance of my learners' preferences. For instance, Excerpt 1 illustrates the consequences of requesting their participation in lesson development. I personally felt that I did not have to accept all their choices because I did not view my students as customers and their preferences were not unanimous even when every student participated in different ways. Yet I wished to incorporate their needs and helped them act accordingly. For

example, if they sought to improve their speaking skills, their active participation in class was expected.

Excerpt 1. Cycle 1.

> (…) to what extent do we need to compromise? How to teach them responsibility, agency, that is, active participation (you can have your say, but you need to do sthg once we accept to give you a more active role, more interesting lesson involve that you participate more).

In relation to seeking coherence between intended changes and outcomes in practice, Excerpt 2 and Excerpt 3 illustrate my need to develop the lesson materials following the survey results. However, I perceived that the process integrated the learners' voice with mine, as I still included my motivation in developing their reading skills in combination with their motivation for speaking skills development. Along these lines, I realized once again that I did not wish to treat my learners as customers I had to satisfy at all costs. The materials reflected their interests and mine in tandem.

Excerpt 2. Cycle 2.

> It fits perfectly for in their evaluation they said they wanted songs and documentaries. I went back to the results from Year 1 Evaluation Survey and I searched for more short vids about marihuana effects and all that. As I was beginning to select my sources and think of activities I decided to keep Year 1 feedback at all times as a reminder of what they had said. I thought of adding more reading input but it wasn't ranked. But because they suggested activities such as 'summarise and comment orally' I did include reading extracts from one of the articles. The vid was better than the articles and I could still develop the listening activities they had chosen in the survey. I think that experience, feedback and observations from the first cycle have allowed me to be more selective.

Excerpt 3. Cycle 3.

> I'm checking the survey results and I need to bear in mind that (a) They want speaking in small groups, (b) They want trailers and documentaries, (c) They want 'listen and complete/choose', but also, they want sthg else, sthg more of information I suppose.

As for flexible classroom practices, my enactment of didactic transposition was dynamic and co-constructed even within the classroom, as Excerpt 4 and Excerpt 5 show. Although I tended to follow my learners' suggestions, some specific decisions were in my hands since I collected and selected the videos. In this respect, I noted that democratization still entailed clearly defined roles within the classroom and as part of institutional expectations. After all, I was an experienced teacher rather than a peer. My awareness of the classroom atmosphere helped me modify my own planning and create spaces for their choices and my own interests.

Excerpt 4. Cycle 1.

> While I thought they'd be interested in Elvis Presley, it turned out they became interested in Diana Ross and the Supremes. Stoooop in the name of love before you break my heart. The song theme and my simple questions generated a lot of debate. I'm changing my own planning at the very last minute.

Excerpt 5. Cycle 3.

> Two words: 'phenomena' and 'nucleus' started out a learning opportunity that I had never envisaged: Latin plurals ☺I ended up covering half the board with sing/plural forms and let them infer some rules and examples ☺I forgot to draw their attention on the adverbials in exercise 5, so what? I loved it!

Learner voices

At the end of each cycle, I conducted a class interview in order to obtain further insights from my learners. In general, learners' contributions can be grouped under two main themes: (1) cognitive engagement, and (2) involvement in lesson development.

In relation to cognitive engagement, learners tended to compare my teacher-made materials, guided by their interests, with the regular international course book in use. Complexity (Excerpt 6) seemed to stem from the fact that the activities promoted higher-order thinking skills.

However, this complexity, which encouraged cognitive engagement, was also found in the authentic sources of input selected (Excerpt 7) and the topics covered (Excerpt 8). Needless to say, these features responded to their own

interests as expressed through the learner survey (Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3). Their awareness of the cognitive processes involved may also indicate the coherence and alignment between their preferences, my materials, and classroom practices. Furthermore, they evaluated the course book as an unreliable and demotivating source of knowledge, for it did not reflect how the language was used outside the classroom.

Excerpt 6. Cycle 1.

Darío:	What differences did you find?
Learner 1:	Yours were much more complex.
Darío:	For example?
Learner 1:	For example the first one (learners had to listen to me explain and complete a table), we don't have anything like that in the course book.
Learner 3:	This one, exercise 10, that we did yesterday (each group made a short presentation and the rest had to take down notes using a table).
Darío:	Complex in a good sense or that you felt you couldn't do it?
Learner 1:	No, complex OK.
Learner 4:	Here (pointing to one exercise on my worksheet) it's ok because the answers aren't obvious (meaning exactly as they appear in the text/audio), you need to think about them and formulate them yourself.

Excerpt 7. Cycle 2.

Learner 4:	The video about the doctor was difficult.
Learner 6:	Still, those activities of listening and doing something were cool because they help you to listen because it's different that the teacher speaks than someone who speaks English every day and you're listening trying to understand him.
Darío:	And how is it different?
Learner 6:	That's a real video with real people.

Excerpt 8. Cycle 3.

Learner 3:	The activities.
Learner 4:	They're different from the book.
Darío:	Are they really different?
Learner 5:	The thing is the topic, the topics are cool. They're interesting and so you feel like you want to learn more even if everything is more difficult. Difficult but better, you see.

Their acknowledgement of cognitive complexity may be associated with their involvement in the course, since they participated not only in the lessons (Excerpt 9) but also in the shaping of them through my granting spaces for collaboration as materials developers (Excerpt 10).

Excerpt 9. Cycle 1.

Learner 5:	What we did the last lesson was more dynamic, with more contributions from us.

Excerpt 10. Cycle 2.

Darío:	How were the lessons?
Learner 1:	These activities like they were better because you included what we had told you to include.

Learners perceived that involvement was not only linked to their own experience throughout the action research cycles. They also noted that my own involvement increased the dynamic nature of the lessons (Excerpt 11). This may also be linked to how our motivations were aligned by recognizing and expressing our interests and the extent to which they were interrelated. Their motivation increased mine, which in turn helped keep their levels of motivation high.

Excerpt 11. Cycle 3.

Darío:	Why?
Learner 1:	I don't know, like you put a lot of effort and at the same time you were looking for activities, you were studying, and gave us all that. That, for me, is like very dynamic.

At the end of Cycle 3, I asked the class to identify the most positive and negative aspects of each cycle. Table 4 shows the three most commonly identified aspects for each cycle and the number of learners who indicated them in brackets.

Table 4. Learners' final evaluation.

ASPECTS		The History of Rock Music (Cycle 1)	Drug Decriminalization (Cycle 2)	The Solar System (Cycle 3)
POSITIVE ASPECTS		Audio-visual input (11)	Topic relevance and treatment (15)	Audio-visual input (11)
		Listening activities (10)	Debate activity (5)	Topic (7)
		Topic (8)	Audio-visual input (4)	Listening activities (6)
NEGATIVE ASPECTS		Learners' presentations (2)	Video showing drug addicts (1)	Video activity (2)
		Little content (1)	—	—
		No grammar (1)	—	—

Positive aspects were connected to their preferred topics, sources of input, and activities. It is worth indicating that learners emphasised the meaningfulness and pedagogic transformation of 'Drug Decriminalization'. As for input, the incorporation of audio-visual sources mainly from YouTube was innovative, authentic, and appropriate for their cognitive development, as indicated above (Excerpt 6 and Excerpt 7). Lastly, listening activities were felt to be the most positive activities, followed by the debate in Cycle 2 as an example of a speaking and listening activity. These results seem to confirm that when learners are given the opportunity to shape the lesson, and we teachers respond to their needs, they may acknowledge this coherence in practice and become more reflective learners.

Learner reflection could be recovered from their perceptions of their own learning. In each cycle, the survey included a questions asking them to rate the extent to which they felt they had improved different aspects of language competence, and the overall lessons, using 'a lot', 'enough', 'little', and 'nothing'. In order to arrive at Figure 2 below, I first added the number of learners who rated each category using 'a lot' and 'enough'. Because each time the survey was completed by a different number of learners in each cycle, I used direct proportionality to establish percentages of rates under each type of impact. Therefore, the y-axis refers to the percentage of impact according to the average number of learners in each class in each action research cycle.
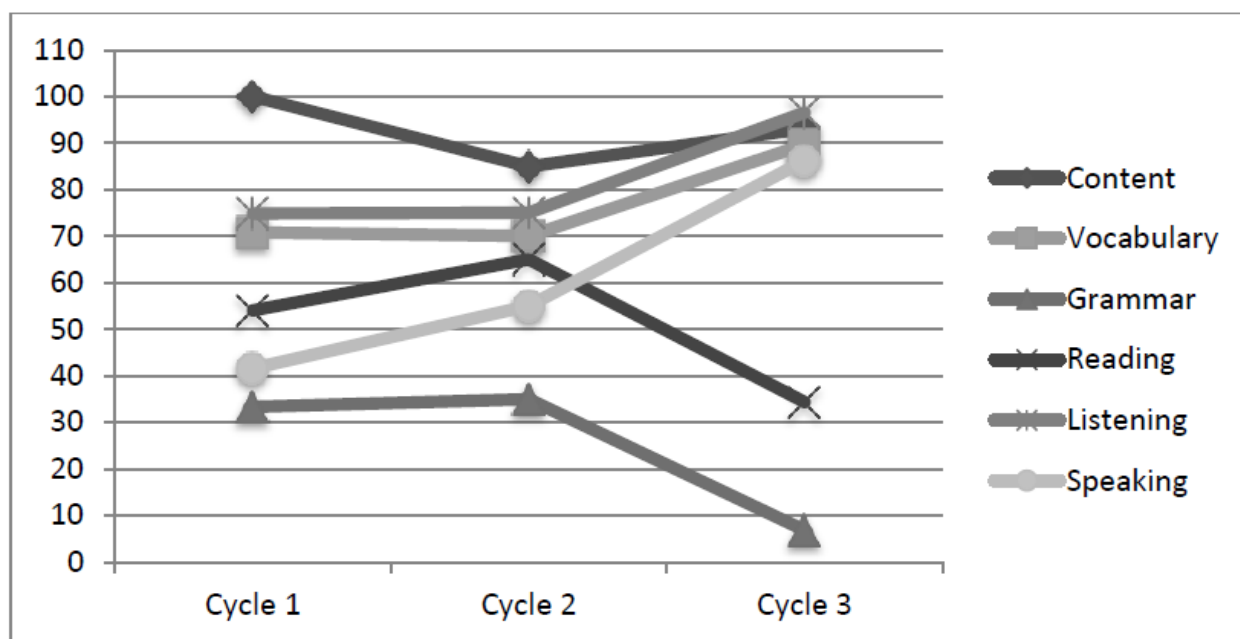
Figure 2. Learners' perceptions of content and language learning.

Based on Figure 2, content learning was usually perceived by learners as high. Language learning impact may have depended mainly on my success in incorporating their need for further listening and speaking skills development and vocabulary learning through learner participation. While Cycle 1 was perceived to have impacted the most in terms of content, it was Cycle 2 that proved to be more meaningful in their view. In relation to language learning impact, listening, vocabulary, and speaking determined language impact. On the other hand, reading and grammar fell dramatically in Cycle 3. Nevertheless, this was not a major concern, as these elements were not ranked high in terms of preference, and I did not promote them extensively in the lessons, except for instances of grammar noticing. Judging by the results, such instances were not translated into substantial benefits, and indicated that as a teacher I had to re-examine my practices in relation to grammar noticing/language awareness as a strategy.

Integrating voices

The data presented above revealed that learners and myself as their teacher co-constructed our lessons. Learners in particular voted for the area of knowledge and helped me shape how this would be taught by suggesting sources of input

and activities and, later, stressing the need for challenging tasks. How the content was taught—that is, how lessons unfolded—was also a co-led act, since my perception of their attitude during each lesson acted a as a trigger to modify my lesson plans. In this regard, my dynamic approach to lesson planning and curriculum enactment was signalled by informed decisions based on my learners' views and my reflections.

Such a democratic and collaborative undertaking impacted the content learnt, since learners valued listening and speaking skills in terms of their own language improvement. In sum, didactic transposition for language-driven CLIL was guided by the topics selected and by the authentic and cognitively complex nature of sources of input and activities provided these stem from learners' needs (Kong & Hoare, 2011). These needs included tasks that helped them develop their higher-order thinking skills. The data show that learners may have sought engagement through complex learning over superficial learning.

Based on a sociocultural view of didactic transposition, the experience lived between this group of 30 learners and myself helped me map didactic transposition as a democratic event intersected by learner and teacher motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). In this converging zone where motivations were aligned through negotiation and compromise (Thoonen *et al.*, 2011), didactic transposition did not appear as a linear process with a transmission view of learning. Rather, didactic transposition emerged as a set of complex in-flux transformations that fed back into each action research cycle through systematic evaluation (Figure 3). Such a vital component included class interviews, learner surveys, and my own teacher reflections. This illustrates that evaluation was personal and interpersonal. I evaluated my own performance in the same manner that the learners evaluated theirs and mine.

The results of this evaluation process resulted in democratic and flexible classroom practices through which both learners and teacher engaged in two interrelated activities: (1) selection of social practices of reference (topics and sources of input) and (2) pedagogical transformations (activities). In addition, the democratic spirit that flexibilised our curriculum and aligned our motivations created a dialog in which I created my own materials, leaving our course book behind in order to respond to our needs and interests. Through my materials and practices, surveys, and interviews, learners had a voice as researchers advocate

(Bronckart & Plazoala Giger, 1998; Rocha Pessoa & de Urzêda Freitas, 2012; Yonesawa & Jones, 2009).
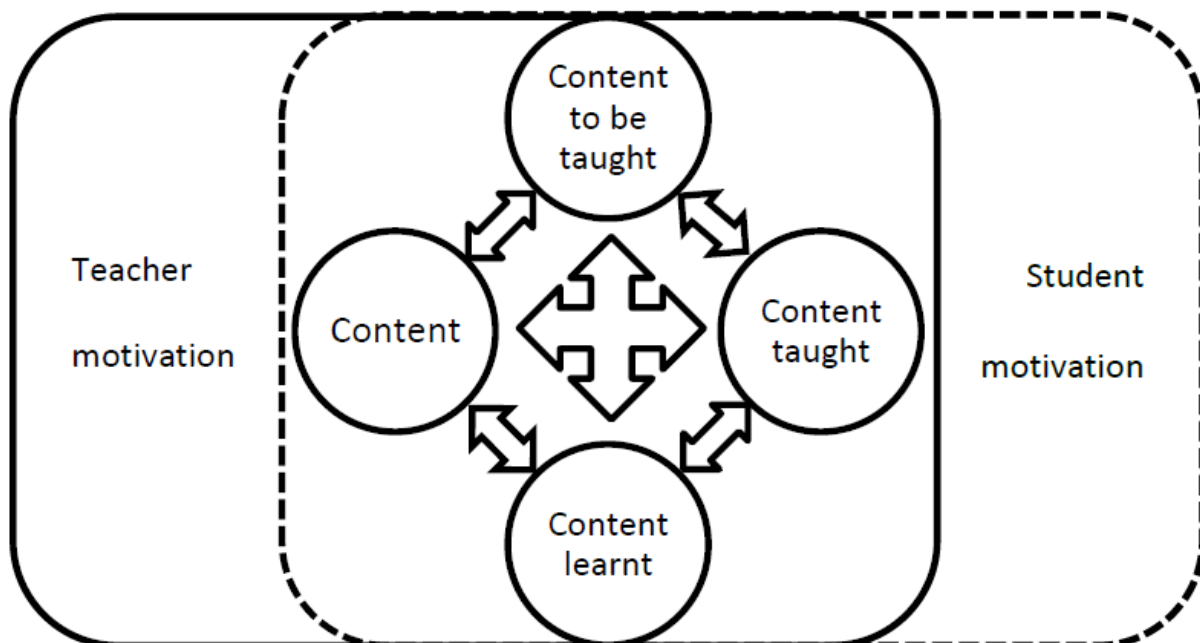
Figure 3. Democratic model of didactic transposition.

This democratic model of didactic transposition was inscribed in a context-responsive noosphere and power was distributed differently to how the noosphere was conceived by Chevallard (1985). As a teacher, I was not a mere implementer of a curriculum concocted behind a desk; I co-developed and co-enacted a participatory curriculum to reach my learners. The learners were not passive recipients either; they were active agents involved in a bottom-up process of pedagogic change. Therefore, we were the developers of our own course. At an institutional level, school authorities allowed me to carry out this experience with freedom and we were never expected to report to the ministerial authorities in our jurisdiction. It was a supported experience from and for the school we shared. In this noosphere, learners and teachers as persons-in-context were placed first, as advocated in Wedell (2009).

Through different levels of participation and involvement—that is, the *how* of didactic transposition—we transformed a given knowledge of reference into school content for the exploration of language-driven CLIL. Yet the democratization of didactic transposition did not mean the collapsing of roles. The learners' role was that of feedback providers and agents who shaped the

lessons in terms of topics, sources, and activities from a macro perspective. On the other hand, I was in charge of the micro-transformation derived from desyncretisation, depersonalisation, and programmability. My role was to collect and select sources, design activities, and sequence them according to increasing cognitive complexity and language improvement. After all, I was their teacher, and the noosphere expected me to continue being responsible for these informed changes and lesson planning and delivery even when participation was more horizontally enacted. The difference was that it was a teacher, rather than a course book writer, who dealt with them. This shift in agency and autonomy may have triggered the production of materials that were authentic, motivating, and cognitively engaging, as suggested in the CLIL literature (for example, Coyle *et al.*, 2010).

The concept of didactic transposition positions language-driven CLIL as a collaborative undertaking through which content is transformed through informed decisions, participation, and democratic delineation of lessons. For language-driven CLIL, both relevance of content and oral skills development were determining factors for sustainable teaching practices and learning. As with other approaches, learner motivation and teacher motivation need to shape language-driven CLIL to ensure that learning and teaching are meaningful and *wanted*. When teachers and learners are involved in the process of integrating content into the language lessons, the teacher wants to teach, and the learners want to learn.

DISCUSSION

The exploration of language-driven CLIL through action research that incorporated learner voices and increased teacher agency resulted in the development of democratic and cyclical transformations reflected in didactic transposition. Such a collaborative undertaking was possible because the learners and myself as their teacher engaged in negotiation, evaluation, and reflection which prompted us to share our motivations and build common ground as the basis for the teaching and learning processes we lived.

We developed a democratic and dynamic view of didactic transposition due the coherence and respect for choices and preferences. My explorations incorporated learners in many aspects of didactic transposition as they selected the topic and based on their suggestions I planned the lessons and developed the

materials to favour authentic audio-visual input and listening and speaking skills. The fact that learners perceived they had learnt content and developed the oral skills mentioned above might be linked to the incorporation of their needs in all the pedagogic transformations I facilitated. In this respect, a limitation on my study is the absence of tests to quantitatively assess whether the students had higher levels of English as a result of the experience. However, their final grades were higher when compared to previous years.

This experience is based on language-driven CLIL and how this could be theorized through the concept of didactic transposition enacted through action research. Nonetheless, the processes that engaged us all could be transpolated to other approaches in foreign language education. Collaboration, democratization of classroom practices, and consideration of learners as "resource providers themselves" (Kuchah & Smith, 2011, p. 137) could be featured in all reflective and informed practices. Nonetheless, this may be more achievable in contexts where teachers are allowed to introduce changes in the school curriculum (Benson, 2010) and request feedback from their learners to improve their courses.

Future research should examine the type of sources and activities learners may choose when given autonomy to collect and select them (through, for example, the use of their computers) and how their decisions impinge on didactic transposition, classroom practices, and teacher identity. A further aspect to examine would be the processes in which learners may engage as materials designers and lesson developers themselves.

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