



## *APPinep E-Newsletter no. 4—April 2016—Spring*

### **To CLIL or not to CLIL... is that the question?**

Teachers who find the beliefs promoted by CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) advocates appealing but are not ready to embark on a full scale adventure may want to put some “Soft CLIL” ideas into practice.

Soft CLIL, as opposed to hard or strong CLIL, is an approach in which language teachers present different topics of the curriculum as part of the language course. CLIL has been defined as

“A dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for learning and teaching of content and language with the objective of promoting both content and language mastery to pre-defined levels” (Maijers, Marsh, Genesee, Frigols-Martin, Mehisto 2010).

According to Phil Ball, there seems to be some agreement among CLIL practitioners that content-driven (or Hard or Strong) CLIL is focused primarily on the subject content, while language-driven (or Soft or Weak) CLIL is focused primarily on the language.

Teachers who want to try some “Soft CLIL” ideas may want to include more mathematics in a non-threatening way. Take surveys, for example. Surveys, tally marks and varied kinds of graphs can easily be used in different language classes for meaningful purposes such as collecting and organ-

izing data for analysis and practical purposes. Students of different ages may want to find out about favourite rock bands, TV programmes, toys, video-games, films or books. When organizing a private party or school function it is useful to know what drinks and snacks are more popular, or what days or times are more convenient for the guests. Polls conducted in class, for homework or digitally can provide useful information used later to make better informed decisions.

Statistics, the area of mathematics which deals with collecting, organizing, displaying and analyzing numerical data, uses all sorts of graphs which can trigger meaningful discussions. The beauty of using graphs is that they can easily be adapted to the developmental stage and needs of the students: very young learners can be presented with very concrete graphs such as objects or even bodies—a line of children that like apple juice better than orange juice makes it easy to find out what their favourite drink is. Once children are standing in line, heads can be counted and simple addition and subtraction facts can be practised.

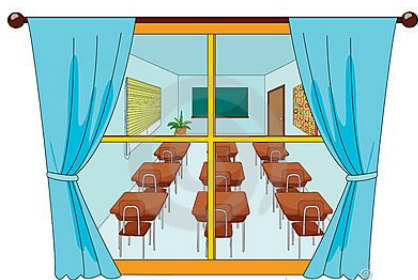
Claudia Rey



## A question about little ones and language

Sometimes it is easy to get more caught up in a lesson as event than in the language being taught in it. The fact that 10, 20 or 30 children have to be together in one place at one time with some semblance of order, with some sort of principle of organisation, not surprisingly often takes precedence.

It is also much clearer for an outsider (a parent looking through the window, a colleague or member of the administration staff coming into the classroom) to see at a glance if things are working in terms of order and control than to ascertain how much language is actually being learnt.



And I think all this is quite reasonable. We are after all by nature social animals before we are academic ones. Without successful event management things do start to go awry. Children get confused about their roles and about what is happening. Noise levels shoot up and so do stress levels. Property and objects can get broken. Squabbles break out and tears are much more likely than in a lesson that is running smoothly.

However, here and in the next edition of the newsletter, I would like to go the other way and to refocus upon language content.



When I was at primary school myself, we were given a song in French and for several years I happily sang 'sona lena tina, sona lena tina' without much thinking about it. I was an adult before I finally ran into the real chorus to Frère Jacques

which is 'Sonnez les matines! Sonnez les matines!' (Sound the morning bells!).

Similarly, some years back, we found this questionnaire grid that one seven-year-old student had completed and left on the floor at the end of class:

Gaucho nein?	Mi nein es Maria.
Gaucho nein?	Mi nein es Pablo.
Gaucho nein?	Mi nein es Marta.
Gaucho nein?	Mi nein es Raul.

Obviously this little chap had been quite happy with his own rendering of What's your name? But both my own example of the song and this one – examples which I cite on a regular basis – point to the need for us language teachers to stop and ask ourselves at regular points of language input and practice: Do they actually know what they are saying?

There are a range of strategies that might help us answer this question. Asking students to say their sentences or to ask each other their questions



slowly may enable us to hear whether individual words are being understood and articulated. Conventional wisdom would have us familiarise students with the spoken form of new language before seeing it in print but, as a counterbalance, at some point allowing students to see the lyrics to songs while they sing them will help avoid more 'sona-lena -tinas' and allow them to start to make the necessary cognitive correlations whereby word sounds are mapped to the graphic form and vice versa.

Similarly, allowing students to read through the lines of a song either individually or in pairs or threes, at a slower speed, as if it were simply a text,

will allow us to clear away any interfering noise or backing music from a course book audio or the muffling effect of a whole class singing at once that might mask mispronunciation. Running through songs, poems or texts line by line, using translation and concept checking might seem a little 'old school' but again it can serve as a lifeline for students who are struggling with meaning - and even after having done so, it is probable that only most of our students will understand only most of the text at best. With this in mind, running through the same text on a different day seems like a very good idea.

Thanks to Appinep for inviting me to contribute here and I wish you all happy teaching.



Chris Roland

## How to cook a book?

Planning a lesson is very similar to preparing a dinner for our friends: we need the right ingredients, the right menu and, most of all, to know our guests' preferences. You want everybody to have fun and enjoy the entire meal so... let's start:

### Ingredients:

Fruits and vegetables – I prefer using puppets but you can also use realia, flashcards, etc.



Pete the Cat, I love my white shoes – By Eric Litwin illustrations by James Dean.

Note: if you don't have the book, you can easily act it out using the following examples:



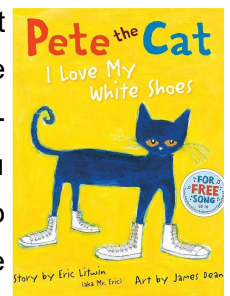
## Recipe

### 1st step: the appetizers

After revising the colours, tell the children that you're going to tell them a story.

Act out the story and don't forget to stop after each question: "what colour...?" (Students quickly understand what they are supposed to do and instantly begin to sing the song, which you can find on YouTube—<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrDmAA-tDPc>)

After exploring the story, revise it and help children to associate food to a specific colour: strawberry = red... It's important that you draw or use flashcards for them to understand the structure of the book.



Continue the story: "what if Pete stepped in a large pile of... bananas (show the puppet)? What colour did it turn his shoes?"

### 2nd step: the main course

Challenge the children to write their own Pete the Cat version. Prepare two lists: a "predictable colourful food" based on the children's suggestions and an extra list of "unexpected" food (children's answers are usually based on their food habits so don't expect them to associate the green colour to peas or broccolis. What about purple food? Easy: eggplant. And white? Onions and garlic of course!)



**Suggestion:** use "ice-cream" or "sweets" for the final pages in order to revise all the colours.

## End of term...

Draw a table on the board with three columns: Food / Colour / Student and begin to fill it in using both lists "what can turn Pete's shoes green? Lettuce, peas, broccolis..."

Once you have decided who does/draws what, you need to give simple instructions about the page: the size of the letters, a clear handwriting, big and creative illustrations, etc. This can be an individual work or you can organize publishing teams based on students' personal abilities and skills:

Type of Learners	Task	Publishing Team
Linguistic	Search for vocabulary (fruit/vegetables/colours)	Proof-readers
Musical	Create a new song version	Song Writers/Musicians
Bodily-kinaesthetic	Acting out the story	Advertisement
Interpersonal		
Visual	Drawing each page	Illustrators
Mathematical	Structuring the book	Editors / Proof-readers
Intrapersonal	Book title / Cover	Cover Designer

### 3rd step: The dessert

It would be great to print and hand out a book to each child to take home and read it to their family: "I wrote a book in English!" but you can use calameo or photo story to publish it online and share it:

Pre-school version: <http://en.calameo.com/read/004339456949bfa81409d>

3rd grade version: <http://en.calameo.com/read/00433945685838d96a506>

Acting out this story for the school or other classes (1st graders or pre-school) is also a possibility and you don't need much to do it.

Well... dinner is served! Enjoy your meal!

Ana Maria Cerdeira—Vagos

Plan more hands-on activities. Get the kids involved both mentally and physically.



Make a memory zig zag book about "My favourite..." Ex.: My favourite colour is... (draw a picture).

Make it fun. Pick a book or read the students' favourite, also sing their favourite songs.

Breath of fresh air. Consider taking lessons outdoors on nice days for a change of scenery.

Celebrate end of year achievements. It's always encouraging to look back and see how much has been accomplished in a year.



Write personal notes to each student. Taking the time will really mean a lot and have a lasting impression on your students.

Want to give your students an End of the Year gift that is inexpensive and fun? Wrap a chocolate bar, to give to your kids, with crepe paper, make a gift card with the following message: "Sweet success!"

Velma Costa—Albufeira



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