1. Introduction CLIL

New Rules for the Language & Content Game.
From CBLT/CALL to CLIL/TILL.

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"I advance on the question slowly, just as Larry does. I am an intelligent officer. Nothing exists without a context."
(Le Carré Our Game, p. 113)

The Language Game

Tower of Babel

In Genesis the people begin to build a tower on the plains of Shinar in order to ‘make a name for ourselves, so that we may not be scattered about the whole earth’ (11:4). For their pride, they are punished with exactly the fate that they feared: ‘It was named Babel therefore, because there Yahweh confused the language of the whole earth. It was from there that Yahweh scattered them over the whole face of the earth’ (11:9). As Umberto Eco observes: ever since, Babel has been the symbol of humanity’s arrogance. God inflicted linguistic diversity on humanity as a curse. Fascinating how this story can be read as a mythical explanation why the various peoples of this world cannot understand one another. Is linguistic diversity a punishment? Anyway, it annoys lots of cultures, the attempt to design or recover a language, which is identical for all people ‘is part of all cultures’ (Eco: 1995). Today we are part of that history. Of course we are only a footnote in that history, a note in the margin of the search for the ideal language, or more fit to this occasion: the quest for the ideal methodology for language teaching.

Diversity versus Unification

In the construction of Europe the linguistic and cultural problem is high on the agenda. First we had coal and steel, and now the citizens have to warm to the idea of a European community through education, culture and language.

Whatever we say about this unification, we should be deeply aware that there aren’t many successful examples of unification without a common language. Can the different languages be described as the curse of God inflicted on European civilisation?

In the rhetoric of European politicians, the diversity of languages is described as a richness. Even if we are in favour of integration, we have to preserve the linguistic and cultural diversity as it represents a storehouse of wealth, which can contribute to the lives of all European citizens. So, the curse is reversed into a blessing. A mixed blessing because it implies: “European
language education policy recommends knowledge of three community languages.” Becoming a true European implies knowing languages – so our problem has been reversed as a strength – even a characteristic of our identity.

How can we live together in this continent ‘the origin of which is multilingual’? Umberto Eco writes: ‘European culture of the future will not benefit so much from a total polyglottism (someone who would speak all languages would resemble Borges’ poor ‘Funes el Memorioso’, who cannot forget anything and has a headful of uncountable, torturing images), as from a community of people who are able to understand/share the spirit, taste and atmosphere of another language’.

Of course, we all agree on the necessity of a good foreign language education for the younger generation; we also agree that all European citizens should have an active working knowledge of languages other than their mother tongue. Again, nice thoughts – but at all the conferences we attend, after a short ritual the conversation slowly turns into English. The other languages still remain operative but only in a particular functional context.

Language for specific purposes

In fact all language learning is inspired by a specific need. In this multicultural, global world these needs are changing and will influence our language teaching. In deciding what sort of language to select and how we are going to teach the language, we should ask why someone is learning a language. At the heart of – for example – ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is the belief that it is more effective to plan an English course on the basis of the needs of a learner than to teach everyone with the same methodology/content. In fact this is true for all language learning.

In 1995, we were invited to two European Sigma conferences: one in Stockholm about “Language Studies in Europe” and one in Osnabruck about “Teacher Training”. In the Stockholm conference we were confronted with a question: ‘What is the future of less commonly taught/spoken languages?’ The answer to this question is full of paradox: to defend their own language, speakers of minority or speakers of less spoken/taught languages should defend their language and culture against the majority languages or the lingua franca and at the same time they should become more or less bilingual in a major language. We should refrain from romanticising this process, but instead try to describe it from a pragmatic perspective. Some languages can have specific pragmatic functions for some people. English, for example, is becoming more and more important as a lingua franca – for international communication and for many specific purposes (academic, business, fun etc.). Taking this evolution into account we can more or less predict that for many speakers it will be essential to become more or less bilingual in English – and for a lot of pragmatic reasons English is at this moment a good choice.

The importance of English is also growing because of the Internet. As Warschauer states (1999): ‘As little as two years ago, there was widespread
concern that the Internet was fostering linguistic imperialism. Some 82% of Internet servers were in English, leading one Russian critic to proclaim that the Internet was becoming “the ultimate act of intellectual colonialism”’. Well, we remember – more or less at the same time a mail written by a Russian student asking for help – helping him to learn English because (we are quoting from a lost source): “the Net speaks English”.

Warschauer (1999) wonders: ‘Is the Internet an English-only phenomenon or a medium of multilingual expression?’ Well, the story is changing; according to recent estimates “other languages” are catching up and even passing over...

So Warschauer (1999) wonders again: ‘Does this mean the era of English-language privilege on the Net is over to be replaced a Babylon of languages?’ We think his answer to that question is interesting for the recent evolution of all languages:

‘I would contend then that we are facing a situation of diglossia on the Internet. On the one hand, English is the main (but not exclusive) lingua franca used for global communication (with other major languages, such as Spanish, used for international communication in particular regions). Indeed the daily international communication made feasible by the Internet strengthens the need for a world lingua franca, and it appears that English will continue to play that role, at least for the foreseeable future.

On the other hand though the multiplicity of channels made feasible by the Internet also allows for the full range of expression in other languages.’

Indeed, globalisation and new technologies create new opportunities for all languages (also regional minority languages that can escape from the dominance of national languages or who can benefit from new media for their survival and use).

The Methodology Game

For many years the search for the ideal methodology was inspired by a debate between traditional language teaching and the communicative approach. In traditional language teaching “grammar” and “literature” played a central role.

In the communicative approach the importance of “functions” and “notions” were stressed. In fact “notions” referred to content but very often content was more or less neglected because of the importance of process (doing things, stressing skills... cost time so inevitably for some teachers “content” was neglected).

Probably we should be aware that traditional courses underestimate the importance of skills and processes because they are overstressing products and knowledge. On the other hand communicative courses seem to overestimate the importance of processes (learner-centred) and so underestimate the fact that communication is about content. This “progressive” attitude towards content and
knowledge confronted us with a crisis in cultural literacy—the disappearance of a shared knowledge (Soetaert & Bonamie 1999).

Today we realise that there is more at stake than this ongoing discussion between two methodologies. More and more we become aware of strengths and weaknesses of all methodologies. No single methodology is an ideal methodology for all learners. There is no methodology without some weaknesses and strengths.

Recently we are confronted with different trends, not one unifying theory. Dieter Wolff (1994) selected five new approaches that tried to overcome the weaknesses of the past methodologies: task-oriented learning, content-oriented learning, cognitive learning, process-oriented learning and learner autonomy. Wolff suggests that the main paradigm shift in the post-communicative turn can be described as a shift from “instructivism” to “constructivism” (1994). Indeed, constructivism seems a major trend in teaching. In this article we want to focus on the importance of ‘content-oriented learning’ combined with a constructivist perspective.

The term “content-based language learning” covers a growing number of different approaches that view language as a medium for learning content, and content as a resource for learning language.

The Content game

In the curriculum “Language Arts” are very often considered as an independent subject separated from disciplines. This separation suggests that teaching the skills, the grammar, the vocabulary and the genres should precede subject matter. When we rephrase the question from the perspective of content, we are confronted with the fact that language is embedded in learning all subjects—across the curriculum. We live in “a domain of subject-dependent knowledge and subject-dependent reality... We literally create the world in which we live by living it” (Maturana, 1978, pp. 60-1).

Learning subject matter can be described as learning a kind of discourse... – a kind of rationality. We are learning through language and we are learning to use a particular discourse. Therefore we would like to plead that all teachers should be aware of the essential role of language in teaching and learning. Or to put it differently: CBLT/CLIL is an interesting perspective for all teachers of all subjects. Again based on the principle that learning “something” can be described as learning a particular literacy, and this implies becoming socialised into a particular discourse.

Although this is a simple statement, it creates complex problems: How do students become socialised in a discourse community? What are the discourse acquisition processes of learners? How do we learn subject matter discourse? We need research, theory and examples of good practice focusing on the use and acquisition of language in subject matter courses. We need to reorganise our teaching in situated, activity-based forms and strategies of
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communication. Anyway, we need to move away from the concept of language as a disembodied subject matter on its own.

Of course we shouldn’t disembody our new suggestions from the past. For example we should bear in mind an important lesson from the communicative approach: we have to avoid decontextualised language teaching. Indeed: ‘Communication is not learned through language, but rather the reverse; language is learned through communicating’ (Devitt 1989: 7). We can also learn something from a more traditional view on teaching: learning is not content-free. But we should reconsider what we mean when we talk about “content”, and not going back – as in back-to-basics – to outdated ideas of content, teaching and learning.

So, we need more research on the learning processes in subject matter courses – both from the perspective of native speakers as from the perspective of non-native speakers. This question can also be rephrased: in fact we are asking how people are socialised in situations of linguistic, cultural, disciplinary, contextual diversity. The discourses we are dealing with emerge within workplaces (or in academic settings) and are best learned in such discourse communities.

Teachers should be aware of how specific contexts generate modes of discourse, how teachers and students construct together the ways of using language that constitute their approach to a subject matter. From the perspective of this conference, we can argue that we need more information about functional bilinguals in the classroom. We should also end the compartmentalisation between foreign language acquisition specialists and other specialists in language learning and teaching (see also Valdes 1992). We need a theory integrating ideas from language acquisition (mother tongue and foreign languages) and content acquisition.

Again we can learn something from the communicative turn: the importance of “language input” (Krashen 1985). Combining “skills” and “content” implies combining two kind of competences: communication skills and “cognitive academic language proficiency” (CALP) (see Cummins 1983, Snow et al., 1989).

Knowing a language is being able to use a language. This functional approach should be combined with the fact that communication functionally implies communicating about “things”, about “content”. Very often in schools this implies communication within a particular subject domain.

But we also want to criticise this idea. First of all because we don’t want to overstress the importance of disciplines. What we are saying should be true for all “things” or “subjects” we can communicate about. The place of each topic we are communicating about is in the context of life; its relevance is in the engagement of the participants.

The Ranking Game
In our research group we became aware — influenced by our cultural studies — that accepted practices of gathering knowledge within the Academy and in education in general are problematised. The borders of these disciplines are blurring. In fact our "accepted practices" are always problematised, there is on-going discussion of what counts and what doesn’t... An ongoing hierarchy of knowledge hierarchies. "The Ranking Game", as Janet Wolff (1999) characterised this post-modern perspective. This ranking game can best be illustrated by the traditional ‘content’ of language teaching: literature — or more specifically, the literary canon.

In traditional teaching very often “literature” was the main content: the ultimate aim of learning a language was reading its literature, embedded in its culture (Landeskunde, cultural studies, civilisation, etc.).

In our work we started problematising the literary canon — the traditional core of language teaching. But we were also confronted with the problem of “defining the canon of academic knowledge”. And more problematic: the new kind of content that appears in a digital environment (Soetaert, Top & van Belle 1995; Soetaert & Van Kranenburg 1998; Soetaert & Mottart 1999).

The Literacy game

For Hirsch (1987) and others culture should be seen as a database of facts which should be memorised because this matrix represents the best of the West (or the best of the Nations). And we need to be literate in our shared cultural heritage in order to participate in our democracy.

Such a traditionalist approach tries to protect young people against the dangers of media addiction by cultivating a taste for high culture mainly found in book literacy (Postman 1985, 1992).

This protectionist approach tries to put traditional content back on the agenda: the Literary Canon, the Founding Fathers, and the National Heritage. In fact back-to-basics wants to restore traditional boundaries which were problematised by modern and post-modern thinking: borders between nations, cultures, genres, media... between “high” and “low” culture, between “real” and “virtual”. Their criticism was focused on post-modern problematisation of traditional content and traditional hierarchies.

Indeed, in our post-modern society “content” was further problematised: whose culture should we teach? Even a traditional “content” as literature was problematised: there was a shift towards literature with a small l (focus on popular culture). This was combined with a trend toward a curriculum in textual studies, media studies and cultural studies.

The problem is the status of culture on the curriculum or the development of a ‘culture curriculum’; teachers were asked to shift their concerns ‘from a curriculum oriented to a literary canon toward a curriculum in textual studies’ (Scholes 1985: ix-x), and even broader “cultural studies” or “media studies” (Schmidt 1993). In our information society ‘knowledge’ — content — was further problematised: how is knowledge represented in an electronic network?
Education needs to confront new kinds of literacy so students can deal with the challenges of the cultural and technological revolution that we are currently involved in. The new media are altering many aspects of our society. All these changes were deeply influenced by several significant trends: social, political, economic, cultural and technological developments, all of which are characterised by the prefix -post.

**Post-game**

Lyotard (1984) describes *postmodernism* as the loss of belief in ‘grand narratives’ and the consequent disintegration of communication into ‘language games’. In a *post-industrial society*, the prefix ‘-post’ refers to the fact that manpower has been replaced by information and automatisation, from ‘manufacturing’ to ‘mentofacturing’. What kind of language skills do we need in a new society? A very complex question but anyway, a new elite job class of ‘symbolic-analytic workers’ is emerging.

The world system of nation states is being transformed by the growing globalisation with some important consequences, not only in terms of economy and commerce but also in the realms of culture and education. As a consequence of globalisation, modern national education can no longer be limited to narrow cultural chauvinism. Of course, this will influence language teaching. The new media are likewise transforming cultures and politics. Time and space are compressed; new global networks create new identities (see later): “network” has become the dominant metaphor of our times. Our entire modern culture draws heavily on print/books. How will post-print, digital technologies change this long-standing tradition? Indeed, changes in technology trigger off changes in literacy.

**The computer game**

For two or three hundred years books (printing) have been the dominant medium in our Western culture. Today we are confronted with a few major shifts: from paper page to digital screen, from ‘writing’ to the visual-audio mode, from older organisation of texts to digital design, databases, etc. (all toward a multi-semiotic landscape). More and more traditional content is transformed in digitised content (offline and online).

We are expected to be literate in a traditional sense (reading, writing, listening, speaking) but also “across a various and complex network of different kinds of writing and various media of communication” (Scholes 1998: 130). Language teachers have to regain their prestige not only by referring to the past but by suggesting an agenda for the future. Apart from the basis skills we also need to pay attention to ‘rhetorical techniques of interpretation that can be applied to a variety of cultural texts’ (Bérubé 1998: 25). Special attention should be paid to the question: how do computers change our culture and education? Indeed as Kathleen Welch (1999) argues: ‘When we in the humanities ignore or, worse, jeer at the acoustic/spoken/visual/written basis of their new literacy, their
special knowledge/ability (...) we fail them as their teachers and exemplars of language' (1999: 4).

Therefore we should confront the concepts of “culture/education” and “media”. What is the relation of “tools” and education? In fact the question should be broadened towards a more fundamental question: what is the relation between media and culture? Can they be separated?

Our world, our culture, our literacy is also constructed by the tools we use. Bruner about Vygotsky: ‘...the mind grows neither naturally nor unassisted (...). Intelligence, for him, is readiness to use culturally transmitted knowledge and procedures as prostheses of mind. But much depends upon the availability and the distribution of those prosthetic devices within a culture.’

Kinds of media create kinds of literacy – and kinds of intelligences. Egon (1998) influenced by Vygotsky – tries to show how a development of a particular intellectual took results in kinds of understanding: an oral understanding differs from a written culture. Printing, Television/Film, Digitalisation all create a different kind of literacy. So, digitalisation creates a new culture, new forms of content, new writing & reading spaces, new educational contact-zones. What role does ICT play in language education?

CBLT/CLIL and CALL/TILL

Warschauer (1996) distinguishes three phases in the development of CALL over the last 30 years: behaviouristic CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. Behaviouristic CALL (1960s) entailed repetitive language drills. The computer is serving as a tutor, a vehicle for delivering instructional materials to the student. Communicative CALL (1970s, 1980s) was pleading against the former phase, arguing that we need more authentic communication in language teaching, more intrinsic motivation and more interaction. Instead of using the computer as a kind of tutor, in the communicative approach the computer is used as a stimulus. In the third model – integrative CALL – the computer is introduced as a tool. This implies the learner is empowered to use language in a new kind of environment (examples of “tools” are word processors, spelling and grammar checkers, desktop publishing programs, concordances and – last but not least – the Internet). The computer-as-a-tool agrees with the fact that today a number of educators are seeking ‘ways to teach in a more integrative manner, for example using task- or project-based approaches’ (Warschauer 1996). And we could add to these trends: more content-based approaches.

In fact we are all looking for a model with less compartmentalisations and with more integration of the various aspects of the learning process. Some are pleading that the computer technology (hypermedia) is providing us the opportunities to construct more authentic learning environments in which skills can be easily integrated (even more than the four traditional skills – visual and audio aspects can be added), in which learners have greater control over their
own learning. From the perspective of this conference we certainly agree with Warschauer: ‘a major advantage of hypermedia is that it facilitates a principle focus on the content, without sacrificing a secondary focus on language form or learning strategies’ (1996).

The computer has or will become so widespread in our culture that all teachers and language teachers in particular are obliged to reconsider their major questions. The first question: ‘How does CALL influence our foreign language teaching?’ is gradually replaced by ‘How do we introduce CALL-aspects in our language teaching?’ Nobody can escape the computer as nobody could escape print culture. Inevitably, also in content based teaching, teachers are wondering how they can use the computer: how can software help us in creating bilingual teaching, how to enhance native language instruction using technology, and what content areas can be covered with computers in two languages? And has anybody out there used the Internet for this purpose?

But the purposes – the reasons why we use ICT – are changing fundamentally. Teachers will be more or less obliged to use the Internet. And the Internet will transform our teaching towards a new educational paradigm. Some people are worried about this inevitable evolution – the fact that teachers are more or less obliged to use the Internet. They are deeply concerned with a basic question: ‘How do I fit the Internet into my pedagogical goals for my students?’ But at the same time the media – the prosthetic devices – are transforming culture and education. Probably we will be obliged to rephrase our questions. From: ‘How do I fit the Internet into my teaching?’ to ‘How do I change my teaching to fit the Internet?’

Probably we will be obliged to rephrase our definition of immersion, CBLT and CLIL. Again, the digital environment itself changes the space in which we teach: ‘The best way to learn a language is the interaction with native speakers, the real interaction, using the real language in real communicative situations. Unfortunately, in the school context the opportunities to establish a true interaction are not abundant.’

CALL (computer assisted language learning), TELL (technology enhanced language learning) and TILL (technology integrated language learning) all refer the role of ICT in language learning and teaching. Realising that technology is more than an “add-on” TILL (technology integrated language learning) is a better acronym than CALL (computer assisted language learning) (Soetaert & Bonamie 1999).

The same evolution can be spotted in content based language teaching – the rephrasing of the acronym from “content based language teaching” (CBLT) to “content and language integrated learning” (CLIL). The reconfiguring illustrates the same need: to integrate what has been compartmentalised. And this compartmentalisation was very often due to the use of a certain technology. Today we hope new media can integrate different skills, integrate language and content – and bring language teaching closer to the learner’s aspirations, because after all we do not learn a language for its own sake but for particular reasons:


