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Introduction

This paper presents language choice and language use in CLIL content lessons, with two foci: first, the functions of language alternation as observed in the lessons and as described by the classroom participants, and second, teacher views on how their instructional approaches offer scaffolding through language alternation. These two parts of this presentation represent sections from larger studies within the CLISS research project.

In the Swedish context, there are no national guidelines and no organised pre-service training or in-service training for CLIL teachers. There are also no national or local requirements for language use in the CLIL study programmes. Teachers in the Swedish CLIL upper secondary study programmes must thus create their own policies for language use that may be either implicit or explicit (see Lim Falk in this symposium). The use of Swedish (L1) and English (L2) in content lessons in the three schools has been studied over three years as part of the CLISS research project. Methods have included participant observations of content lessons, audio-recordings of lessons, collection of artefacts, and semi-structured interviews with the four main stakeholder groups (students, teachers, school heads, and parents) with a focus on their goals and experiences. The aims of this part of the CLISS research project include the following: the identification of existing practices of language use, the identification of strategies for language choice as both observed and reported, and an understanding of how the students and teachers experience language use in the classroom.

Sub-study 1: Functions of language alternation: practices and perspectives

The first sub-study in this paper presents research on language use according to function. First, the presentation offers a brief overview of how language is used as seen through the lens of translanguaging. Different models of language alternation are then presented, followed by the participants’ experiences of language use. Thus, the results here are based on both observed practices from the classroom and informant perspectives from the interviews.

For this part of the CLISS project, 35 lessons in School B were observed, with the focus on the first year of the programme, during the academic year 2011-2012 and autumn term 2012. Most of the observations were conducted in Grade 1, although a few were also conducted in Grades 2 and 3, making it possible to observe all CLIL teachers at School B. In addition, all seven of the CLIL teachers were interviewed, along with two schools heads and 12 students (individually, in pairs or small groups). Language use in the classroom was analyzed for function and the interviews were analyzed thematically for content. More specifically, a translanguaging lens was used to understand if the language alternation in content lessons offers affordances to facilitate learning or if it is seen as a constraint to content learning.
Translanguaging moves beyond the traditional view of additive bilingualism \((L_1 + L_2)\) and instead offers a focus on the dynamic process of language interaction (Baker 2011:72) and the use of all linguistic resources as an affordance in the classroom (Yoxsimer Paulsrud 2014). Language diversity is considered a resource, one that the increasingly globalised world will demand as speakers will need to use a variety of languages in a variety of situations (García 2009: 17). Although both code-switching and translanguaging describe practices of language alternation and use, they are not the same. García elaborates:

Notice that translanguaging is not simply going from one language code to another. /…/ Instead, translanguaging posits that bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively. (2011:1)

As seen in the observed lessons and as reported by the participants, translanguaging in the classroom can be either teacher- or student-directed (c.f. Lewis et al. 2012a; Lewis 2008:82). In teacher-directed translanguaging, the teacher decides the language of input, and the students, in turn, may be expected, either with implicit or explicit instructions, to produce one or the other language as a follow-up to the original input. In student-directed translanguaging, the students are the decision-makers for language use. The movement between languages is a flexible process as the languages may be used fluidly as students in the CLIL classroom engage in content learning using all their linguistic resources to access input (e.g. listening to a lecture or reading a text) and to produce output (e.g. discussing the material in Swedish and writing an assignment in English).

In this sub-study, the functions of language alternation have been identified as both pedagogic and non-pedagogic, as translanguaging meets the needs of the speakers in a bilingual context. In pedagogic translanguaging, the practices allow for both English and Swedish to be used to accomplish the CLIL content lessons through affordances and scaffolding. Affordances can be seen as the overall planned fluid strategy of offering access to both languages and scaffolding as a specific single instance given right at the point of need (see more in Sub-study 2 below). Non-pedagogic translanguaging (aligned with universal translanguaging as described by Lewis et al. 2012b) maintains an important function of social cohesion in a bilingual space. Both teachers and students are generally very positive about the use of Swedish and English in the CLIL content lesson, although most informants feel that strategic use is more beneficial than random alternation. As one teacher says, “You don’t want to speak Swenglish all the time!”

Sub-study 2: Teacher views on their instructional approach: A specific focus on scaffolding

Building on classic sociocultural theory (e.g. Vygotskij, Bruner, Lantolf) and theory on scaffolding (e.g. Gibson, van Lier), this sub-study adheres specifically to Gibbons’ definition of the notion of designed and interactional scaffolding (e.g. Gibbons 2009:154-158). In Gibbons’ words, designed scaffolding refers to “planned support”, whereas interactional scaffolding “arises in the spontaneous, ongoing talk between teacher and students or between students” (Gibbons 2009:154).
Acknowledging the comprehensive and longitudinal character of the CLISS-project and with inspiration from *linguistic ethnography* (Rampton et al 2004), this part of the paper presents four examples of scaffolding based on instances of classroom practices of four teachers at three schools: two Mathematics teachers, one Natural Sciences teacher and one Social Studies teacher.

Methodologically, the teacher participants’ views on their instructional approaches have been collected in audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews with the teachers. In some cases, interviews have taken place in connection with the CLIL teachers’ lessons in the subject, lessons which have been observed by the researcher. This applies to the two examples of scaffolding in the Mathematics classroom. In terms of the views on scaffolding practices as expressed by the Natural Sciences and the Social Studies teachers, the interview data have been interpreted by the researcher solely on the basis of what the teachers have said that they do. However, as the researcher spent extended time at the three CLIL schools over a two-year period, these two examples can be interpreted in the light of a larger study (Sandberg, forthcoming PhD study), in which similar practices have been observed in lessons—in the same subject or other subjects—and mentioned in interviews by other teachers and in interviews with students.

The results of the present small-scale study show that teachers’ instructional approaches include a variety of scaffolding practices and strategies in the CLIL content classroom, as observed and identified in the classroom, and as addressed and reflected on in teacher interviews. The analysis of the data reveal both designed and interactional scaffolding practices, where the material indicates that the type of scaffolding practice or strategy may depend on teachers’ estimation of complexity of content area, teachers’ perception of overall behavior and state of student group, linguistic/multimodal affordances and teacher experience.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this paper illustrates how that language choice and language use in the CLIL classroom is a complex and dynamic matter. A particular focus is on stakeholders’ translinguaging and scaffolding practices, with several instances from both interviews and observations identified and analysed. Although the examples presented here are few, they exemplify how the teachers and students interact in the classroom using their linguistic resources from both Swedish and English. The two languages together afford possibilities for access to content material in the content lesson.
References


