Teaching your subject in english (Merindades) - Amanda Jane McLoughlin

Reflective Journal – Sara Martínez Izcara

Hey, fellows! I must confess that, although this is the second year that I have taught a bilingual subject, I had no idea until now that what I was doing was almost a "science" in itself, and of all the tools and knowledge that I had totally overlooked.

The first session of the course has started a bit confusing for me for this reason. However, as we have progressed, I have begun to glimpse a lot of new possibilities for developing my bilingual classes. So far, I have only started experimenting in class with some of the concepts involving CLIL, such as using specific tasks to introduce new technical vocabulary through visual student-centred activities.

I must also confess that, before this session, I was one of those who viewed bilingual classes with some scepticism. I'm happy to say that I've begun to see it differently: if the bilingual classes don't seem to be going well, it's because we don't use the necessary tools to make sure that doesn't happen.

All in all, I am anxious to continue advancing in this course and see how far I can go in my classes with this new knowledge. Let's see...

Like every lesson, the second day of the course started with theory of learning which, because of my training, is not very easy for me. It has been time to analyse the components of CLIL from two different models: 4Cs and 3Ds. The first one talks about four components of the learning process, while the second one focuses on the contents of that process.

Fortunately, later, with these models in mind, we have moved on to practice and then I have begun to understand what we were talking about. Personally, I prefer to use the 3Ds model because it feels more natural to me. However, I will need to go a little deeper to get to internalize this way of approaching the contents that I must deal with in class.

It has also been interesting to practice analysing the BICS and CALP language in school texts and to realize how the words that can be CALP for certain levels can become BICS as the student internalizes them. This exercise has made me more aware of the language that I should use with my students to improve their understanding.

Finally, I have also enjoyed the tasks done in class to demonstrate how Scaffolding significantly improves the quality of learning. And, while I was doing them, I was thinking about how to apply or improve these techniques in my classes... And I think, to some extent, I have already done it! ☺

The third day of class had a common thread that was easier for me to understand: the importance of asking good questions to the students. And with it, the need to plan the questions we are going to ask throughout the class.

This is something that (I think) I had never asked myself before: what questions I must ask, in what order of complexity, if I ask enough open questions in class... The latter I sincerely believe not. And perhaps it is because it is always the same students who answer, or because it is very difficult to get them to follow a thread... I think that the question I repeat most these days in class is: "Are you listening to me? ☹

But that is what scaffolding is for, right? I find the activities in class to be great tools for trying to get the right questions asked at the right time and to establish a better dialogue with the students. I have already adapted some of them with the younger students, although there is room for improvement.

Gradually I hope to improve the ability to plan my questions and consider the Bloom's Taxonomy in pursuit of my goals. It will take some practice to get the hang of it, but here we go...

The fourth day of the course has been a time to learn that there is a wide range of activities that teachers can use in CLIL. There are many types of tasks, some more laborious and some simpler, some to work on individually, some in pairs and some in larger groups. So, before we set out to plan a task, we should think about which tasks motivate learners, which ones facilitate interaction, which tasks develop the learning skills I need, and so on.

The mini-project carried out in class has been a task that has required group work, research through different sources of information, and the elaboration of a final product in which what has been learned has been communicated orally and visually, all in a fun way.

I have enjoyed it very much and I think that it can be a future activity in my classes without making major modifications. All I need to do is find the topic, think about the information I am going to provide, how much time I am going to have, which groups I am going to organize, what can be a satisfactory product for the students... and launch myself. ☺

The fifth and last day of the course has arrived and we have dealt with an important topic: CLIL assessment. During the course we have learned how to plan lessons, tasks, questions...but, once the students do their work, how do we evaluate what they have learned? In CLIL, evaluation cannot be done only sporadically.

An important point is to distinguish between the two types of assessment: formative and summative, and to think about which one serves different purposes throughout our course. I think that the first one is more about diagnosing the student's progress, providing him or her with feedback throughout the learning process. In contrast, the second one tries to evaluate the student's achievements at a given time... And the two complement each other.

Another aspect to consider is that in CLIL we must evaluate both content and language, and we must adapt the different assessment techniques to our objectives. In addition, we must think about how to accommodate the assessment tasks to our objectives. Personally, I prefer to consider the concepts mainly as the object of summative assessment, while language and procedures as the preferential objective of formative assessment.

During this class we have also seen several ideas for both formative assessment and accommodating summative assessment tasks, all of which are very attractive.

Honestly, I couldn't say what I have found most interesting in this course... I think it has been awakening my interest day by day and I have achieved to reach the objectives of the course. I hope I can put everything into practice, or at least a large part of what I have learned. Thank you very much for all this.