



Pluriliteracies and LOCIT for CLIL

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Abstract

The paper is meant to describe the potential of the LOCIT (Lesson Observation and Critical incident Technique) model in Continuous Professional Development with particular reference to CLIL and Pluriliteracies, in line with the latest Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019). The main principles of the Pluriliteracies approach promoted by the European Centre of Modern Languages in Graz (ECML) will be described as a new interpretation of CLIL. A study involving a sample of Italian teachers using LOCIT and video-annotation during a CLIL methodological course will be presented and commented as an example of an effective tool for self-reflection, meta-cognition and professional growth.

Keywords: CLIL, CPD, Pluriliteracies, LOCIT.

1. CLIL and Pluriliteracies

CLIL (Content and Language Integrating Learning) [1], [2], [3] is an active and interactive methodology integrating subject content and foreign languages which puts the learner at the centre of the educational agenda. It is highlighted by the European Commission and by the Council of Europe, as an innovative methodology and a quality agent for school curricula.

In particular, the latest Recommendation for a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (May 2019), pointed out the remarkable situation in Italy, where CLIL has been mandatory since 2010, according to a democratic and inclusive approach, providing CLIL to all upper secondary school students in the fifth year, notwithstanding their language competences.

A recent illuminating interpretation of CLIL is offered by the Graz Group at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), where the author is involved as a member of the consultancy team.

The project, coordinated by Oliver Meyer, Do Coyle and Kevin Schuck, is titled “Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning” [4] and is aimed at fostering the wide range of literacies (subject literacies, language literacies, digital and transversal literacies) our students need in order to meet the challenges of 21st century.

The model aims at building up a “learning ecology” in class, involving all the different stakeholders in an active way: students are the protagonists of the learning pathways, with all their expectations, emotions and anxiety, which we should take into account where the teacher plays the role of a coach or mentor, scaffolding the learning process in order to guide learners towards progressive autonomy starting from a novice level to a mastery level of learning.

The project also focuses on transferable skills that can be fostered through a pluriliteracies approach, aiming at being aware of the specific features of every subject literacy in terms of textual genres and language choices, in order to be able to observe the world through a mathematician’s eyes, a physician’s or a philosopher’s eyes. This is the way we can help our students reach deeper learning and appreciate both the content and the “languaging” [5] of every single subject.

The ECML consultancy team provides training to the member states all over Europe who apply for specific pluriliteracies sessions.

The author took part in a very interesting training session in Montenegro, led by Do Coyle and Kevin Schuck, where the participants were guided to understand the principles of the Pluriliteracies model through practical and engaging activities, like the one in Fig.1, where they have to focus on Do Coyle’s 4 Cs (Cognition, Communication, Content and Culture) and match them with certain teaching activities described on some strips of paper distributed to the participants.



Fig. 1 – Trainees in Podgorica engaged in practical activities

2. LOCIT model

LOCIT model by Do Coyle (Lesson Observation and Critical Incident Technique) [6] consists in video-recording CLIL lessons, in order to analyze them in depth with the help of a colleague as a critical friend, or in some cases, with the contribution of the students themselves, comparing the different perspectives. The main aims of the analysis and reflection while watching the recording are “critical incidents” and “learning moments”.

Critical incidents may occur during the teaching pathway and the teacher may not be fully aware of them when deeply engaged in the teaching process. Therefore, a careful observation of the videos may help identify the critical incidents better, reflecting on the possible reasons for them.

Considering the same perspective, learning moments may be singled out, identifying those steps of the learning pathway when deep learning and understanding occurred, according to evidence in the video-recording.

The LOCIT model recommends repeating the same lesson in the same teaching context, considering the critical incidents and the learning moments previously identified, in order to improve the outcomes and learn from the previous experience. LOCIT model can be considered as an important added value for teachers' continuous professional development, especially within the latest conceptual framework on CLIL defined by Coyle and Meyer within the afore-mentioned Pluriliteracies model.

This is the starting point of CIT (Critical Incident Theory), which is based on the potential of video-documentation, reflection and discussion about a teacher's own lesson clips, but also some other teachers'.

A critical incident is any unplanned event that may occur during class and if teachers are provided with the opportunity to reflect formally on these critical incidents, it is easier for them to uncover new understandings of the teaching and learning process and to change and adjust the actions that follow.

According to Tripp [7], critical incidents do not exist independently of an observer, but they are created and interpreted by the specific significance the observer will ascribe to them.

A Critical Incident can help to reach a deep reflection that goes beyond the simple description of an event, trying to get the most from it in terms of personal and professional enrichment.

Fowler and Blohm [8], pointed out strengths and weaknesses of CIT, as in the following table:



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage participants at a personal level in examining attitudes and behaviour that will be critical to their effectiveness; Can be written for a variety of situations; Require analysis and reflection, decision-making; reduce idea of answers being available from an "expert"; Short reading time; move quickly into reflection; Can be used singly or grouped to illustrate concept or processes; Can lead to role playing and situational exercises to provide practice; Appeals to concrete experience and reflective observation learning styles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants may complain they receive too little information; Incidents need to be carefully written, revised, or selected to make desired point; If aimed at culture-specific learning, need host-country resource people; Most effective if individual reflection is discussed in small groups of fewer than eight; Frustrating technique for abstract conceptualization learners.

Fig. 2 –Strengths and weaknesses of CIT model

As shown in the table, this technique may also have some weaknesses, as incidents should be carefully selected and commented on and feedback should be effective and constructive, addressing teaching practices avoiding touching on the personal and emotional sphere.

As culture is the filter of every CLIL activity, it is important that the analysis of the videos is culture-bound and so the people involved all share the same culture.

Fig. 3 shows Coyle's LOCIT model in a very effective way.

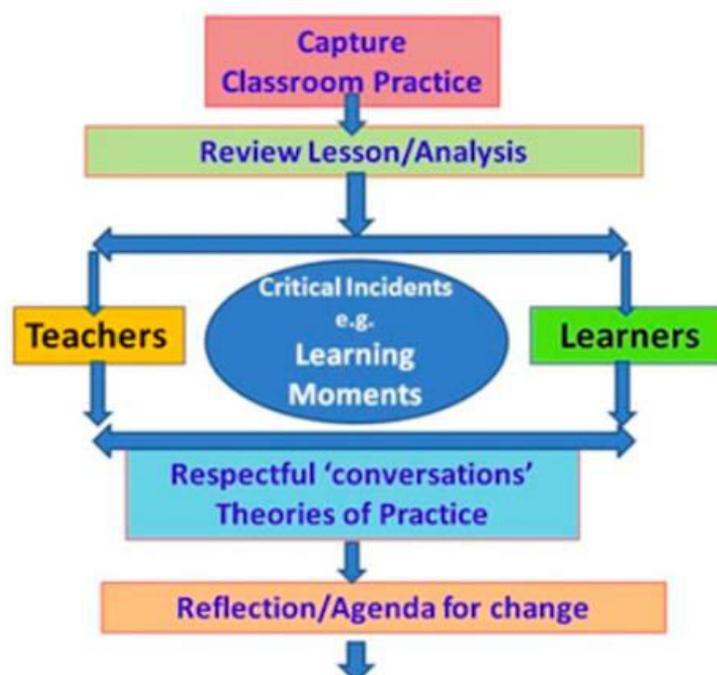


Fig. 3 – LOCIT model

After capturing a lesson on a video-recording, the analysis is made separately by the teacher and possibly a colleague as a critical friend and by the students. It will be interesting to match observations and comments from teachers and students during "respectful conversations", as Coyle defines them. The teacher will have the opportunity to realize if his/her impressions on learning moments and critical incidents are in line with the students'. All these remarks will lead to reflection and to a shared agenda for change and improvement.



3. Video annotation for CPD in CLIL

Video annotation [9] allows teachers and learners to interact with video via note taking, discussions and comments.

Sharing notes will help to share reflection and relevant information about the teaching and learning process, in a cooperative and peer learning perspective. Through a specific software such as *moochnote* or *edpuzzle*, students can annotate a video quickly and also view existing annotations.

In a CLIL lesson video annotation can be exploited in several ways, especially using specific functions such as labels, categories, scales, timelines: students and teachers can annotate their learning moments and critical incidents on the video recording of the lesson exactly at the precise point where they occur.

As Lemke underlines [10], working with videos allows teachers to experience teaching from a different perspective, as they get 'inside' a learning event, thus having a worthy tool for self-reflection.

Donald Schön (1983) introduced the concept of "Technical Rationality" which refers to professionals "thinking in action": video-annotation can help reflect in action (while doing something) and on action (after you have done it) which should become an important feature of continuous professional development, especially in the field of language learning and CLIL.

In fact, the use of videos in a training pathway can help teachers reflect on their own teaching strategies and style in order to find out weaknesses and strengths and to improve the following actions [11].

Some universities have already introduced the use of video-recoding lessons for microteaching in CPD in Italy, however, the added value of videos in teacher training could be better highlighted in training programmes.

4. Some LOCIT experiences in Italy

LOCIT model was experimented and interpreted by a group of Italian secondary teachers attending methodological CLIL courses in English in the academic year 2018-19. LOCIT model was adapted to the specific target of teachers, whose level of English was B2, also taking advantage of the use of technologies: specific webtools were used to embed the videos of the lessons (especially *moochnote* and *edpuzzle*) and comment directly on them through video-annotation.

A wide range of reflections on methodological and linguistic aspects were highlighted by the teachers as added value to their professional growth and to their deeper understanding of CLIL methodology and of Pluriliteracies.

Here is a screenshot from a LOCIT model by a teacher of art during a CLIL module on Feudal Society. The teacher embedded the video-recording of her lesson on the webtool for videoannotation and commented on it through specific notes whenever she felt it relevant, not only learning moments and critical incidents identified during the lesson. In the picture below she presents the particular moment as a brainstorming activity.

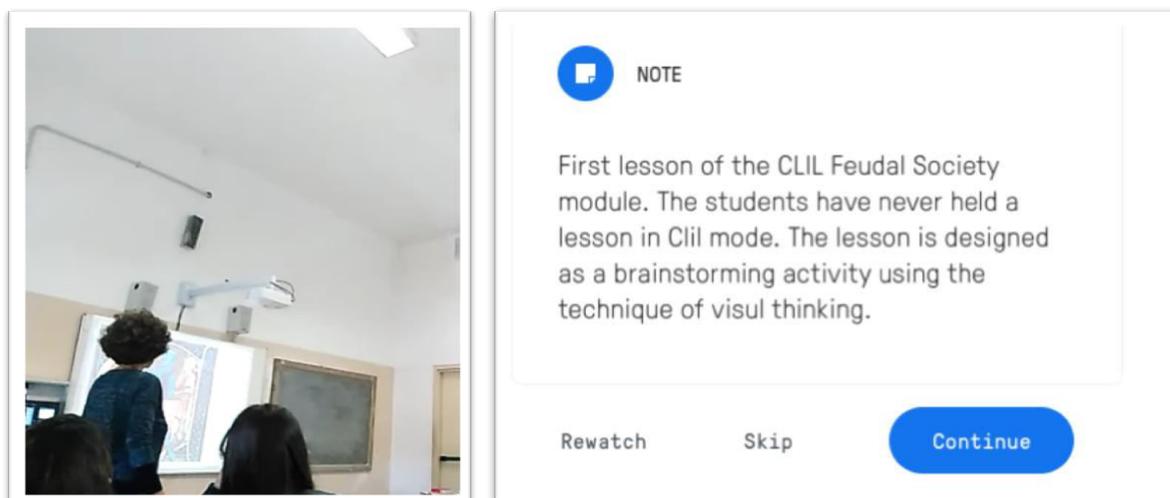


Fig. 4 – An example of LOCIT with video annotation



These were the main findings from the teachers' experimentations with LOCIT through video annotation:

- Teachers should facilitate exposure to input by selecting attractive authentic materials, visual aids, images, videos, objects, multimodal inputs, not only oral or written texts
- Teachers should facilitate output production by adopting different interactive formats and practising creative forms of oral (presentations, round tables, debates) and written or digital (letters, surveys, articles, manuals, ppt presentations, videos) output production (also in pairs or groups)
- Translanguaging may be considered as a useful resource both for teachers and students, when needed, while some teachers in this study considered it as a critical incident.

5. Conclusions

The paper meant to stress the importance of teachers' awareness of Pluriliteracies and of LOCIT model for their continuous professional development (CPD) in the field of language learning and CLIL, in line with the latest Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages. The LOCIT model was described, drawing on CIT theories and the experimentation of this model through video annotation from a sample of Italian teachers which showed how effective this tool may be for both personal and professional growth.

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