

Book Review

Assessment and Learning in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Classrooms: Approaches and Conceptualisations.

DeBoer, M. & Leontjev, D. (Eds.)

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It is not surprising that as we come upon the thirtieth anniversary of the birth of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), this young pedagogical approach is still a complicated phenomenon, with a wide variety of issues in every aspect of education remaining to be addressed. CLIL assessment is one of them. Although over a decade has passed since Coyle et al. (2010) necessitated an explicit understanding of the assessment process in CLIL, “the variety and depth of issues that remain on the CLIL agenda suggest more research on CLIL assessment is indeed needed before future research can offer clear and workable solutions for both teachers and students” (De Angelis, 2021, p. 32). To this end, the book entitled *Assessment and Learning in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Classrooms: Approaches and Conceptualisations* is a timely response, both in scope and usefulness. It is a successful compilation of papers, which link various theoretical perspectives with different research paradigms and feature the discussion of classroom assessment aimed at improving the quality standard of education. The value of this volume is undeniable,

and both researchers and educators can benefit from it, with a dialectical relationship established between research and classroom practices.

The book has been edited by Mark deBoer and Dmitri Leontjev, who have extensive expertise in language education. This command is manifest in the first chapter jointly constructed by them, *Conceptualising Assessment and Learning in the CLIL Context. An Introduction*, which establishes a theoretical foundation for the entire volume through a detailed review of CLIL-related conceptions. More importantly, it elaborates the organisation of the following chapters based on Leung and Morton's (2016) integration matrix of CLIL contexts, with Chapters 2-5 emphasising subject-literacies, Chapter 6 as well as Chapter 9 characterised by using the target language as a tool for participation in content tasks, Chapters 7-8 focusing on explicit language knowledge, and Chapters 9-10 featuring the contingency of and dialogical interaction in learning.

Chapter 2, *Achieving in Content Through Language: Towards a CEFR Descriptor Scale for Academic Language Proficiency* by Stuart D. Shaw, presents and justifies an academic proficiency scale designed based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and exemplifies how it can be used formatively in classrooms by discussing the assessment issues in a CLIL history class. Although the author admits future work is needed to refine this assessment scale, its preliminary design and application have offered the implications about prioritising professional development of CLIL skills and increasing language awareness in assessment.

Chapter 3, *Academic Culture as Content: Self-Assessment in the CLIL Classroom in the International Liberal Arts University* by Alexander Nanni and Chris Carl Hale, investigates how self-assessment in CLIL can contribute to effective assessment practices and the realisation of learning goals. The positive assessment outcomes further highlight that self-assessment is consistent with assessment *for* learning (AfL), whose nature is to integrate assessment into the learning process rather than the summative end.

Chapter 4, *CEFR, CLIL, LOA, and TBLT – Synergising Goals, Methods and Assessment to Optimise Active Student* by Claudia Kunschak, presents the development of an

assessment framework on the basis of CEFR, task-based learning and learning-oriented assessment (LOA) theories. The author further highlights LOA, whose goal is to promote learning, and advocates taking it as an indispensable and flexible part of CLIL assessment.

Chapter 5, *Assessment for Learning in Bilingual Education/CLIL: A Learning-Oriented Approach to Assessing English Language Skills and Curriculum Content in Portuguese Primary Schools* by Ana Xavier, presents a supportive assessment framework developed based on LOA. The author not only rationalises this framework by elaborating a range of supporting theories but also specifies how it can be used in primary-level CLIL classrooms to facilitate learning.

Following this, Chapter 6, *Assessment of Young Learners' English Proficiency in Bilingual Content Instruction (CLIL) in Finland: Practices, Challenges, and Points for Development* by Taina Wewer, reports a study conducted in the context of Finnish primary education about the classroom assessment of English language proficiency. Based on the assessment methods and challenges confronting CLIL teachers, the researcher submits a set of assessment recommendations. This chapter is positioned in this section of the volume, as it differs from the previous chapters in that it prioritises content learning of CLIL.

Chapter 7, *Gearing Teaching and Assessment Towards CLIL: Theorizing Assessment for Learning in the Junior High School Soft CLIL Classrooms in Japan* by Hidetoshi Saito, presents a range of unreported, planned and unplanned AfL practices in cases of soft CLIL classes. The author establishes an AfL-oriented framework of CLIL assessment, centring around that the responsibility for assessment should be shared amongst classroom stakeholders, such as students and teachers.

Chapter 8, *Does AfL Promote Discussion in CLIL Classrooms? Exploring AfL Techniques and Their Effect on Classroom Communication* by Rachel Basse and Irene Pascual Peña, foregrounds the shift from teacher-centred education to a student-teacher co-construction process of learning with the application of concrete AfL techniques. Despite the positive outcome that CLIL learners are more engaged in learning, the

authors also link the discussion with the other chapters to highlight the potential of AfL as a meaningful tool to promote classroom interaction and help achieve the language and content learning aims.

Chapter 9, *Assessing (for) Understanding in the CLIL Classroom* by Dmitri Leontjev, Teppo Jakonen and Kristiina Skinnari, is themed as CLIL assessment from teachers' perspective, underlining the analysis of the interaction between a teacher and a student. Amongst different findings, the researchers spotlight the purpose of the studied assessment practices, which is to understand learners and foster their understanding, coins a term (i.e. assessment *for* understanding) as an essential part of AfL to raise teachers' awareness of making efficient use of assessment for learning purposes.

Chapter 10, *Teacher-based Assessment of Learner-led Interactions in CLIL: The Power of Cognitive Discourse Functions* by Mark deBoer, analyses the interaction among learners in online forums and dwells on how they mediate each other in the process of knowledge construction. The researcher draws implications from the findings for teachers to improve classroom assessment for learning purposes and highlights the insight that content learning and language learning supplement one another.

Chapter 11, *Conclusion: Dialectics in CLIL Classrooms*, is the summary of this book from the editors, who, based on the discussion and research findings of the previous chapters, underline the combination of Davison's (2008) Classroom-based Assessment Cycle of teaching, learning and assessment with Leung and Morton's (2016) integration matrix for systematic AfL and LOA practices. Moving beyond CLIL, the editors draw insight from CLIL assessment for other educational contexts and raise the expectations that researchers should probe into assessment issues from the perspectives of curriculum planning, participant perceptions and classroom practices in a dialectical research-practice way and that educators should embrace professional collaboration not only in local institutions but also in a wider international context.

As my words have suggested at the beginning of this review, the edited book is a praiseworthy one, which has exemplified different CLIL assessment practices in various

educational contexts and specified how CLIL learners and teachers can engage in more efficient assessment activities for formative, learning purposes. The exceptional merit of this volume first lies in that it offers a sophisticated understanding of CLIL assessment through innovative educational practices and frameworks, providing insights into several issues that educators may find challenging when implementing CLIL, such as which language should be used in assessment, who should administer it and how students' learning progress can be measured (De Angelis, 2021). The book is particularly embedded in the concept of AfL, which also clarifies the confusing relationship between assessment of content and assessment of language in integrated classes (Llosa, 2020) by allowing of more flexibility for learners and teachers to decide on what to assess as per the changing learning needs. The other strength of this book is that it positions education in a multilingual and multicultural arena, presenting not only those European countries (e.g. Portugal, Finland, Spain) which have witnessed the boom of CLIL but also some Asian ones (e.g. Japan, Thailand) that are pursuing the educational trend created by CLIL. Against the backdrop that CLIL is still relatively under-researched outside Europe and that the development of CLIL practices can be "rather diverse due to the various sociocultural and education contexts among and within" Asian countries (Copland & Ni, 2018, p. 141), this book informs the academia of some invaluable experience in Asia's educational context and presents an encouraging phenomenon that the development of CLIL in Asia is grounded on the experience from Europe and deepened through the continuous localisation of educational reforms and policies.

Undeniably, both language researchers and CLIL educators, the target audience, will find this book engaging because of the rich account of innovative educational experience and how the chapters are positioned as per the contexts they belong to. A final comment, almost as a footnote, for not only this book but also the broader CLIL research agenda is that researchers and educators should establish a link between language education theories with general education ones and take into consideration the universal principles of assessment reliability, validity, flexibility, fairness, transparency, manageability, engagement, authenticity and appropriateness. This

opinion, though personal, is rationalised by that these principles penetrate through summative, formative and diagnostic assessment across learning of different sorts, in a range of contexts and for learners of all ages, the adherence of which is a promise of accurate understanding about student learning (Cranley et al., 2021).

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