

***On the traces of subject-specific  
language use: a look at CLIL group  
work situations***

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## On integration

- Fusing goals of content and language learning is the central idea of CLIL (Coyle, Hood & Marsh 2010)
- There are research calls to focus on integration
  - Gajo (2007: 564): in CLIL research “a firm basis of reflection on the very concept of integration is missing”
  - Dalton-Puffer, Nikula & Smit (2010c: 288-289): the fusion of language and content deserves more research attention and transdisciplinary research constructs
- Important to study integration at the concrete level of classroom discourse because “Claims for or against bilingual education of any form ring hollow when there is not a clear sense of what happens inside the classroom” (Leung 2005:239)

## Subject-specific language in CLIL

- Has been addressed by systemic functional approaches in particular (e.g. Llinares & Whittaker 2010, Morton 2010, Järvinen 2010)
- Earlier observations:
  - Llinares and Whittaker (2010): the appropriate language of history in speaking and writing problematic for both CLIL and L1 students (see also Järvinen 2010 for writing in CLIL)
  - Lim Falk (2008): CLIL students used less relevant subject-based language in science classrooms than control students taught in Swedish
  - Nikula (2010): transitions to subject-specific language use less salient in CLIL instruction than in L1 instruction (case study on a teacher's instruction in English and Finnish)

## The present study

- Focus: pupils' subject-specific language use in group work situations during history lessons
- Data
  - 7<sup>th</sup> grade history lessons in Finnish upper secondary school (13-year-olds)
  - 3 groups of 2 to 4 students, 3 lessons by each
- The task
  - to discuss causes and consequences of the Industrial Revolution and The American Civil War
  - pupils were not explicitly instructed about the type of language involved in constructing and presenting knowledge in subject-relevant ways

## **Analysing subject-specificity through focus on:**

- Explicit references to how things are said or done in history
- Use of subject-specific terms and expressions
- Instances of interaction where pupils jointly construct and negotiate their understanding of subject-specific use of language and/or ways of constructing knowledge in history

## Explicit references to history rare

- The word 'history' used only 10 times by pupils in the data
- Even if rare, occurrences reveal pupils' orientation to different subjects requiring specific types of talk/behaviour

Minna see that worked (.) can you stop talking about this and  
concentrate on history

## Subject-specific terms/concepts

- There seems to be awareness of the need to move from everyday language to more abstract and academic expressions
- Meanings of terms and words are often jointly negotiated

Matti: they had more trains they had more factories they had more fields they had more production they had more people

Ville: population

Matti: or population (.) they even had (x)

Ville: (xx) southern confederation had no (area)

## Summary of the main observations

- Subject-specific language is rarely explicitly discussed
- Yet there seems to be some level of awareness that history requires a particular type of language use, reflected in
  - meaning negotiations over special vocabulary
  - engagement in discourse patterns typical of history: providing explanations, seeking causal connections, attempting syntheses
- Group work context seems to encourage shared meaning negotiations



## ***Subject-specific discourse***

- Features typical of the genre of history: narratives, causal explanations, recording, explaining and arguing (e.g. Schleppegrell, Achugar & Oteíza 2004, Coffin 2006, Morton 2010, Llinares & Morton 2010)
- The array of lexical means specifically geared to expressing cause-effect relationships in the data:

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| – (and) then  | 46 |
| – and         | 45 |
| – so          | 30 |
| – because     | 26 |
| – that's why  | 6  |
| – therefore   | 2  |
| – consequence | 2  |
| – connection  | 1  |
| – result      | 1  |

## Implications

- Gajo (2007:564): integration is “a complex interactional and discursive process relevant to both the language(s) and the subject”
  - > CLIL pedagogy would benefit from a more explicit attention to language and language functions involved in presenting knowledge in subject-relevant ways
  - > The importance of providing space for pupils’ shared meaning negotiations should not be overlooked

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