

Embracing Transculturality by Internationalising the EFL Classroom

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Abstract : Over the last decades, there has been a rise in the use of CLIL (content and language integrated learning) methodology as a way of reinforcing FL (foreign language) acquisition. CLIL techniques have also been transferred to the formal instruction-based FL classroom where through content-based lessons and project work it can very often say that teachers are 'clilling' in the FL classroom. When it comes to motivating students to acquire an FL, we have to take into account that English is not your run-of-the-mill FL: English is an international language (EIL). Consequently, this means that EFL students should be able to use English as an international medium of communication. This leads to the assumption that along with FL competence, speakers of EIL will need to become competent international citizens with knowledge of other societies, both contextually and geographically, and be flexible, open-minded, respectful and sensitive towards other world groups. Rather than 'intercultural' competence we should be referring to 'transcultural' competence. This paper reports the implementation of a content- and task-based approach to EFL teaching which was applied to two groups of 15 year-olds from two schools on the Spanish island of Mallorca during the school year 2015-2016. Students worked on three units of work that aimed at 'internationalising' the classroom by introducing topics that would encourage them to become transculturally aware of the world in which they live. In this paper we discuss the feedback given by the teachers and students on various aspects of the approach in order to answer the following research questions: 1) To what extent were the students motivated by the content and activities of the classes?; 2) Did this motivation have a positive effect on the students' overall results for the subject; 3) Did the participants show any signs of becoming transculturally aware. Preliminary results from qualitative data show that the students enjoyed the move away from the more traditional EFL content and, as a result, they became more competent in speaking and writing. Students also appeared to become more knowledgeable and respectful towards the 'other'. The EFL approach described in this paper takes a more qualitative approach to research by describing what is really going on in the EFL classroom and makes a conscious effort to provide real examples of not only the acquisition of linguistic competence but also the acquisition of other important communication skills that are of utmost importance in today's international arena.

Keywords : CLIL, content- and task-based learning, internationalisation, transcultural competence

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