

## **1. SUBJECT PROJECT**

This paper will try to cover many aspects of a European Project called *Subject Project*.

It has been experimented in a Scuola Media Sperimentale in Milan by two teachers.

It is an EC financed Project. It is not properly a CLIL but a topic-based approach. It is composed of Units that develop on some contents. The main objective of the approach remains the improvement of the language. The types of contents are very motivating and fascinating for the students. The contents which have been exploited are: Colours, Shapes and Art, The Great Inventions and Music. Aspects of both the artistic and scientific area have therefore been covered. The kind of activities are very interesting and stimulating.

It is a disciplinary course which is not related to just one subject. While in other CLIL classes the subject taught in English was just one, here many subjects were involved (Science, History, Arts and Music). These subjects are integrated to the activities in order to construct interdisciplinary courses. These subjects are also usually about extracurricular events and they are, for this reason, very student-stimulative.

Each *Subject Project* is divided into five units (four are content-based and one is for revision). Every unit has got a very delimited structure: there is an introductory part and brainstorming on contents, then there is a part dedicated to the acquisition of lexis where the students have to be personally involved, and a final part where the students have to produce something. This Project has very strong support for the teacher, giving many indications on how to lead the activities.

It was conceived by a group of Basque people within which there is an English mother tongue component, who moved to Spain. It was firstly conceived at the University of San Sebastian.

## **2. THE PROJECT IN ITS REALIZATION**

The aims of the teachers at the outset were: to facilitate L2 learning, to give the students a greater exposition in L2, to widen their motivation.

They decided to work on third forms because

these are very difficult classes with a great lack of motivation. They hoped at the beginning to stimulate their motivation and their L2 competence. Luckily, the school schedule is constructed in a way in which the students have English every day (40 minutes). It is in terms of time a very brief exposure but continuative and constant.

The students have developed, according to the teachers, strategies such as note taking, jotting down new words and going to look up in the dictionaries when they needed to. The activities were indeed full of new vocabulary and was necessary for them to learn how to face it. Moreover, as the textbook didn't follow the usual pattern of the traditional unit new elements came out spontaneously with no support.

This kind of educational path was applied to grammar, as well.

Autoevaluation was also been very effective. Students are not very used to this therefore they have to learn to do it. They don't know how to assess themselves, but it is something they should learn to do.

## **3. INTERVIEW WITH THE TEACHER**

**Have you noticed any progression in their lexis during the unit on The Inventors?**

Yes. Even if you should always bear in mind the characteristics of the group you are working with. In this case there is an extremely motivated nucleus who surely had a positive burst in its lexical acquisition. On the other hand those who have difficulties followed the lessons with much interest and motivation and this already represents two important objectives for them, because they had a very low starting level. To sum up, at two different levels we have reached the lexical level our objectives.

It was actually the first time students asked me to make a speech on these contents (in English) during the last exam. As an example we had a test on "Enrico Fermi" and they were very willing to talk about it during the exam, as it has many links to other subjects. Before the English exam didn't have any link with other subjects. I myself didn't like to ask them questions during the oral exam because I found it sterile.

# **A TOPIC-BASED APPROACH IN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

### **Do they use lexis during the oral production?**

Yes. According to the level. I think that now they perceive the usefulness of the foreign language.

### **There is therefore a correspondence between your objectives and the results you got from the students?**

Yes. They also use fixed structure much more than before during normal conversation in class.

### **How do you introduce lexis?**

Well, it depends on the activity. Many activities ask for a specific attention to lexis. All the material has very precise indications for the teachers. Usually new lexis is explained before the start of the lesson on a specific content. We have worked a lot on adjectives and nouns and on word formation. Word formation has been very clearly acquired by them. Suffixes. I think they have also acquired a method which goes beyond the subject.

Sometimes I explain lexis in English and sometimes in Italian. It depends, when I think they are able to understand it by themselves I make gestures or I help them in their search for the origin of the word. Other times I ask them to go and look them up in the dictionary. I have taught them that dictionaries can be helpful but they must learn how to use them.

### **Are the parents happy with the Project?**

Very much indeed. We introduced the Project explicitly at the beginning of the year. At one point we even decided to give up the textbook and to go on with the Project and the parents were very happy about this decision. They trust us.

### **How do you judge the material?**

It is very good. Some parts should be corrected. There are some aspects which are too close to their culture. An example is the sensations that were provoked by colours. I really couldn't click with their ideas.

I would also suggest that they prepare the teachers more on the contents, for example I was totally unaware of many of the inventions. This has caused me to work too much on Programming.

I also think they should go a little bit deeper into the contents. Sometimes I feel there is too much material and it is a little bit confused. In a way this continuous change of activity is close to the students' brain and attention time. There are no tests so we have prepared our own.

The evaluation is based on their last production. They have to present a project.

There is also an autoevaluation. They have to say whether they liked the unit, what they have learnt, if they have improved.

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