

Exploring the Concept of Assessment for Learning in CLIL Primary Schools in Taiwan

Yu-Ting Kao

Department of English, National Kaohsiung Normal University

Abstract

Assessment is probably one of the most controversial issues in the framework of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) due to the variety of contexts in which this methodological approach is set. The instruction of CLIL has a dual focus—language and subject—which inevitably means there are two assessment processes involved. One guiding principle is that CLIL assessment tools need to balance the cognitive and language demand and be aware of students' difficulties resulting from limited language proficiency (Lo & Lin, 2014). While CLIL programs are widespread in primary and secondary education across Europe, the CLIL framework is still at an earlier stage in Taiwan. A careful examination into current CLIL teachers' assessment practice could help build beneficial washback. Therefore, this exploratory study focuses on the assessment purpose of understanding and supporting students' learning, and explores how the concept of Assessment *for* Learning (AfL) is practiced in the CLIL contexts. It first investigates the nature of focus in CLIL lessons (content and/or language) and examines the types of assessment tools and methods teachers used. Research questions regarded the extent to which (1) the assessment tools and approaches that teachers use to evaluate learners' achievement in the content area and language knowledge, and (2) challenges that participating teachers and other stakeholders encounter when designing and implementing assessment tools.

Ten CLIL teachers in elementary schools were observed for more than half-year in 2020. A mixed-method approach was employed to triangulate the data which included class observation, semi-structured interview, and document review for other teaching materials. Results indicated that the observed CLIL teachers in this study strategically used multiple assessment tools, such as questioning techniques, small group work/project, worksheet, oral presentation, to assess students' content knowledge and English language learning. The implemented assessment tools reflected not only the concept of AfL but also the characteristics of each subject matter. Other stakeholders, such as participating students and their parents also hold a positive attitude toward CLIL teaching and the outcomes of the CLIL assessment. Implications of this study to the development of the concept of AfL could be establishing assessment patterns that can be used to assess EFL in the CLIL classroom context of primary education. It could possibly lead to the new synthesis of language and content assessment pattern used in CLIL classroom context.

Keywords: Assessment for learning, CLIL assessment, formative assessment tools, stakeholders' perspectives