TOWARDS THE USE OF PAINTINGS AS A DIDACTIC RESOURCE IN THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF ENGLISH IN CLIL AND EFL CONTEXTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Different models of communicative competence have been developed during the last three decades and the components that should integrate a communicative competence construct have been specified to make the process of teaching a second language more effective (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor 2006). As a result of this process, the understanding of how languages are learnt and taught has advanced significantly since the 1980s.

The integration of language and content is regarded as an effective way to promote communicative competence given that there is a cyclical relationship between language and content (Nordmeyer 2010). Dalton-Puffer (2008) points to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as an educational approach that produces better outcomes than traditional EFL teaching in terms of communicative competence. Research carried out by Ruiz de Zarobe and Lasagabaster (2010) or Naves and Victori (2010), among others, came to similar conclusions. Research on CLIL-type provision has increased over the last decade. Besides, the advantages of CLIL have been reported in different studies (Mehisto *et al.* 2008, Lasagabaster and Huguet 2007, Navés 2009, Coyle *et al.* 2010, Ruiz de Zarobe & Lasagabaster 2010, among others). However, few studies are found in monolingual communities (Fernández Fontecha 2009). In fact, we have not found a single study carried out in Aragón. Thus, we believe that ours will fill a gap in this field in this Autonomous Community.

Research has also shown that learning improves when linguistic associations through images are created. Moreover, didactic resources such as pictures, wordless books or photographs have proved to be effective in the development of linguistic skills (Rosenblatt 1989, Golden & Gerber 1990, Fueyo 1991, Meek 1998, Lewis 2001, Hashim 2008, Gallo 2002).

With the aim to contribute to this line of research, this study was conducted to determine whether these findings could also apply to paintings as visual stimuli, given that paintings are perhaps the most under-used resource in language teaching and a great resource for discussion and development of receptive and productive skills (Grundy, Bociek and Parker 2011, Lightfoot 2007). We should bear in mind that art is all around us in many forms and has been acknowledged by many European and international organizations as being a very valuable and essential resource in education. In addition, it has been incorporated in the national curriculum (Unesco 2002; *Boletin Oficial del Estado* n. 105-2nd May, 2000; Council of Europe 2006).

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of our study is threefold: first, explore how the participants experience the skill of writing in English; second, explore how the participants experience the skill of writing in English with the stimuli of paintings; third, analyse the results of their written production stimulated by paintings.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To guide us in this research, we formulated a number of questions. The first two, related to our first objective, intended to find the participants' experience and difficulties when writing in English. Three other research questions, linked to our second objective, investigated how participants experienced writing in English with paintings as stimuli, determine whether using paintings as visual stimuli can facilitate the development of receptive and productive skills and examine whether the need to focus on content can be awakened by paintings. Our last research question, linked with

our third objective, aimed to analyze the syntactic complexity, fluency and accuracy of the written production stimulated by paintings.

4. SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted in a bilingual secondary school that has the *MEC/British Council Agreement*. Sixty two students of 4th year of compulsory secondary education participated in the research. Half of them were CLIL students and the other half were EFL students.

5. INSTRUMENTS

The instruments used to collect data were a standardized test, a written composition stimulated by paintings (see writing exercise below), as well as the following two questionnaires.

NOMBRE: _____

El siguiente cuestionario pretende medir algunos aspectos relacionados con el aprendizaje del inglés. En este *test* no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas, simplemente debes responder de forma sincera en una escala que va de 1 a 5.

1.- ☹ ☹ totalmente en desacuerdo	2.- ☹ algo en desacuerdo	3.- 😐 ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	4.- ☺ algo de acuerdo	5.- ☺ ☺ totalmente de acuerdo

Cuando hayas elegido tu respuesta, marca con un círculo el número que más se ajuste a tu situación personal. Si te equivocas, pon una cruz en dicha respuesta errónea y marca con un círculo la nueva opción. GRACIAS.

1.- Me gusta escribir redacciones en inglés.

1	2	3	4	5

2.- En general me resulta fácil escribir en inglés.

1	2	3	4	5

3.- Tengo muchos errores de gramática en mis redacciones de inglés.

1	2	3	4	5

4.- Cuando tengo que escribir una redacción en inglés, no sé qué decir.

1	2	3	4	5

5.- No me motivan los temas de las redacciones de inglés.

1	2	3	4	5

6.- Creo que no tengo la habilidad de escribir bien en inglés.

1	2	3	4	5

7.- Cuando escribo redacciones en inglés me falta vocabulario.

1	2	3	4	5

8.- Cuando escribo redacciones en inglés no sé cómo organizar mis ideas.

1	2	3	4	5

9.- Realmente no sé qué es lo que tengo que saber para escribir bien una redacción.

1	2	3	4	5

10.- Para mí escribir redacciones en inglés es..... (puedes subrayar todos los adjetivos que mejor describan tu opinión).

divertido	aburrido	sencillo	complicado	útil	poco útil
motivante	desmotivante	interesante	pesado	entretenido	creativo

Questionnaire 1

NOMBRE: _____

Curso: _____ **Bilingüe:** **Sí** _____ **No** _____

Edad: _____ **Sexo:** **V** _____ **M** _____

¿Cursó estudios de primaria en un centro bilingüe?: **SI**____ **NO** _____

3

Este cuestionario pretende medir algunos aspectos relacionados con la actividad de redacción que hemos hecho con los cuadros de arte. Recuerda que en este *test* no hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas, simplemente debes responder de forma sincera.

Responde a las siguientes preguntas:

11. Esta actividad de redacción que hemos hecho con cuadros de arte has sido para mí ... (*puedes subrayar todos los adjetivos que mejor describan tu opinión)*

divertido	aburrido	*sencillo*	*complicado*	*útil*	*poco útil*
motivante	*desmotivante*	*interesante*	*pesado*	*entretenido*	*creativo*

12. Si tuviéramos más tiempo (o en otro momento del curso) me gustaría hacer actividades relacionadas con éstos u otros cuadros. Responde: SI o NO y argumenta tu respuesta

_____

_____

Valora del 1 al 5 los siguientes aspectos. Pon una cruz en la columna correspondiente. Si te equivocas, tacha dicha respuesta errónea y pon una cruz en la nueva opción.

1.- totalmente en desacuerdo	2.- algo en desacuerdo	3.- ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	4.- algo de acuerdo	5.- totalmente de acuerdo

PREGUNTA	1	2	3	4	5
13. Realmente **no** me ha gustado hacer esta actividad					
14. Si hubiera sabido algo sobre el pintor o el cuadro, habría escrito una redacción mejor					
15. Los cuadros pueden despertar en mi ganas de **escribir** en inglés					
16. Me gustaría hacer actividades para **hablar** en inglés de éstos u otros cuadros					
17. Sería interesante **buscar y leer** algo de información en inglés acerca del contenido de éstos u otros cuadros					
18. Me gustaría **escuchar** interpretaciones de expertos relacionadas con éstos u otros cuadros					
19. No necesito saber nada de un cuadro para poder expresar las emociones que despierta en mí					
20. Intercambiar opiniones con mis compañeros y el profesor me ayudaría a aprender más de arte y a mejorar el inglés					
21. Los cuadros de arte pueden ser un buen recurso para aprender inglés					
22. Es interesante conocer la sociedad, cultura o ideología de la época para entender un cuadro					
23. No me gustaría hacer otras actividades relacionadas con cuadros de arte					

Questionnaire 2

Imagine that you are in an art gallery. Walk around the room and write down the number that corresponds to each painting. You can do this on your own or in small groups.

1

PAINTINGS	NUMBER
Café terrace at night	
Entrance to the Public Garden in Arles	
First Steps	
Noon, rest from work	
Portrait of Doctor Gachet	
Self-Portrait in front of the Easel	
Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear	
Skull of a Skeleton with Burning Cigarette	
The Night Café	
The Sunflowers	
The Potato Eaters	
The Starry night	
Van Gogh's Bedroom at Arles	
Village Street in Auvers	

- Have you seen any of these paintings before? (write down the number/s)

  _____

- Do you like any of the paintings? (write down the number/s):

  _____

- Read the following exercise:

Your school is organizing a writing competition. Choose ONE of the paintings and write about it. You can choose the style and content of your writing.

The best composition will be published in the school magazine.

Note: Here you have some ideas of what you can do:
You can write a story, a description or an article
You can write in the first or in the third person
You can compare the painting to your own life, places where you go, etc.
You can describe the painting, the place or the people
You can imagine or invent what is happening
You can write about the meaning of the painting; the style of painting
In short, you can choose the style and content of your writing

- Write down the **number** of the **painting** you have **selected:** _____

Writing exercise (part 1)

NAME:_____

2

Title of your writing:

_____

Writing exercise (part 2)

6. DATA ANALYSIS

The answers of the two questionnaires in both groups were codified and statistically analysed by means of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). Following the work of Wolfe-Quintero, Inigaki & kim (1998); Ortega (2003) and Navés & Victori (2010) the stimulated written composition of CLIL and EFL was analysed for accuracy, fluency and syntactic complexity.

7. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Results suggest that (1) CLIL learners show better opinion of their own experience of writing in English. (2) EFL learners experience more difficulties when writing in English. (3) The adjective that best describes writing in English for most participants is 'useful', while after the use of paintings as stimuli it is 'creative'. (4) The use of paintings to stimulate written production has a positive impact in both groups. (5) Paintings can awaken the wish to develop productive and receptive skills. (6) Paintings can stimulate both language and content. (7) CLIL learners tend to write more grammatically correct sentences, be more fluent and more accurate than their EFL counterparts.

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