Choice, Creativity, and Contingency in CLIL: Making the Learning Visible

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Abstract

Knowledge building, rooted in the epistemological socio-constructivist paradigm, "focuses on the advancement of knowledge, with individual learning as a by-product" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2014, p. 37). The process of learners' goals, discussions, and ideas, creates new artefacts, or 'improvable objects' (IO, Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1996) and "the transformation of that object" (Wells, 2000, p. 67). In a CLIL classroom, through a competence approach to learning (Bernstein, 2000), learners are given agency to advance their knowledge; co-constructing their IO by conceptualizing ideas through decentralisation and diversification in language and culture, i.e., through centrifugal tendencies (Bakhtin, 1981). Choice, creativity, and contingency (Leung & Morton, 2016) are fostered in this invisible pedagogy where the linguistic elements are not preselected for explicit focus nor are there specific stages for learners to progress through. The educator, therefore, needs to create a tension in the syllabus using a centripetal force, i.e., centralisation and diversification, to allow centrifugal tendencies to emerge, making the learning visible. Educators can identify the integration of content and language in this centrifugal-centripetal tension by using heuristics such as cognitive discourse functions (CDFs, Dalton-Puffer, 2013) as CDFs can be co-constructed by the learners or by the teacher and learners to collectively advance learners' knowledge. Data for this presentation comes from a Japanese first-year general English course (CEFR A2 level). The learner-learner interaction from an asynchronous online forum used to facilitate the co-construction of their IO will be used to illustrate how educators can guide the learning process in this pedagogical approach.

Keywords: centrifugal discourse, co-construction, cognitive discourse functions, educator awareness, learner interaction