DEVELOPING SELF-REGULATED LEARNING IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Many foreign language learners around the world are in classrooms where they must develop not just proficiency in the target language, but also must learn new content information through the medium of a new language in which their proficiency is still developing. Thus, they must find ways to deal with the challenge of learning both language and content simultaneously. Learners who are able to regulate their own learning through a variety of metacognitive and cognitive perspectives and procedures are more likely to meet this challenge successfully. This paper first examines the construct of self-regulation as applied to second and foreign language learners and related constructs. Then the components of content-based language instruction (CBI) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) models are described. Next, Understanding by Design (UbD), an instructional model that is becoming increasingly popular with language educators in the United States is suggested as a vehicle for explicitly developing self-regulated learning in CBI and CLIL classrooms.

1 Self-regulation in language learning

The concept of self-regulation for academic learning originated in the field of educational psychology (see Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998; Zimmerman, 1998; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001) to describe learners who learn for their own purposes in spite of often adverse circumstances. Zimmerman (1998), for example, cites young Asian immigrants to the United States who, despite daunting economic, cultural, and linguistic challenges, have succeeded academically. Second language acquisition theorists have discussed self-regulation as a broader construct than language learning strategies (Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Dörnyei, 2005; Oxford, 2011; Oxford & Schramm, 2007). Generally, self-regulation is described as learners' efforts to direct their own learning by setting goals, planning how to achieve them, monitoring the learning task, using learning strategies to solve problems, and evaluating their own performance. Thus, self-regulation involves a number of processes and understandings, including autonomy (Benson, 2011; Cotterall, 2008), learning strategies (Chamot, 2013; Cohen, 2011; Griffiths, 2013; Oxford, 2011), metacognition (Anderson, 2008; Chamot, 2009; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), and self-management (Rubin, 2001, 2005).

2 Content through language/language through content

Content-based Instruction (CBI) is an increasingly widespread model in the United States that advocates introducing English learners to content subjects by teaching the academic language, discourse, and content information of disciplines such as history, literature, mathematics, and science (Chamot, 2009; Kaufman & Crandall, 2005). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has many similarities to CBI in that a second language is taught through content subjects. The main differences between the two models are the instructional goals and the learners. In CBI, the goal is to prepare English learners for successful participation in the English-medium curriculum; the learners are from immigrant families speaking a variety of first languages.

In CLIL, on the other hand, the goal is to prepare students for a globalized world by developing their skill in using the target language in an academic setting (Bentley, 2010; Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2011); the learners are speakers of the same first language and shared cultural values. Thus, although CBI and CLIL share many objectives, the students served have differing needs. Immigrant students in the United States need to become proficient in the academic language required for success in school and beyond. In countries where English is taught as a foreign language or as a lingua franca, CLIL provides students with learning experiences that help them use English in a globalized international context. CBI aims to help students be successful in an English-speaking environment and CLIL aims to equip students with the linguistic skills needed to participate in the global economy (Bentley, 2010; Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010).

3 Understanding by Design

Understanding by Design (UbD) is an instructional model that aims to improve teaching by focusing on important concepts rather than collections of facts, planning assessment prior to learning tasks, and developing students' ability to engage in higher level thinking (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). UbD has been widely adopted in U.S. primary and secondary schools as an effective route to meeting national and state standards for student achievement. More recently, second language educators have also begun to advocate using UbD to design instruction that incorporates the standards developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2006), pointing out that the UbD framework is an effective vehicle for planning standards-based lessons and units in the foreign language classroom (Eddy, 2012; NCLRC, 2014; NFLC, 2014).

Figure 1 provides a template for the three stages of instructional planning using the UbD model. In Stage 1, teachers establish the desired results of the lesson or unit, including Curriculum Standards (national and/or local learning standards), Big Ideas (major concepts), Essential Questions (questions that lead students towards the major concepts), and Objectives (what students will learn). The examples of Big Ideas and Essential Questions in Stage 1 for both content and language demonstrate that both must be addressed in CBI and CLIL programs, as both integrate content and language instruction.

UbD emphasizes that Big Ideas must not be trivial facts, but rather designed to develop an Enduring Understanding of the concept (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). For example, a point of grammar can never be a Big Idea because grammar is a means to understanding an important concept, not an end in itself. Similarly, Essential Questions cannot be answered with a simple "yes," "no," or statement of a fact (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013). An Essential Question should elicit more than one answer so that students develop their metacognition as they engage in higher level thinking (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013). The UbD design is modified in Figure 1 by the addition of objectives for self-regulation strategies that can assist students in mastering both the content and language objectives.

In Stage 2 of Figure 1, the teacher plans how students will demonstrate what they have learned and provides the rubrics that will be used to evaluate student learning. Again, since assessment evidence should reflect what students have been taught, in CBI and CLIL contexts, this evidence should include both content and language assessment. Suggestions for assessment of the self-regulation strategies instructed are also provided in Figure 1.

Finally, in Stage 3 of Figure 1, the teacher develops the actual learning activities for the lesson or unit. Having thought through the goals and objectives and the assessments that will demonstrate the degree to which students have attained them, teachers can devise targeted learning activities that will help students actually reach the desired objectives. In Figure 1, these learning activities are described in the five learning phases of the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) (Chamot, 2009; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

STAGE 1 – DESIRED RESULTS

Established Goals (Content Standards and Language Standards)

Big Idea(s) for Content and Language	Essential Question(s) for Content and Language
Examples for Content:	*Examples for Content:*
• *The myths and fables of different cultures help us understand a people's values and beliefs.* • *Changes in climate have affected where people can live, the work they can do, and the food they can eat.*	• *Why are myths and fables important in different cultures?* • *How have changes in climate affected people's lives in the past?*
Examples for Language:	*Examples for Language:*
• *Myths and fables use imaginative language to explain natural phenomena or teach a lesson.* • *Informational texts use facts and scientific observations to explain causes and effects of natural or man-made phenomena.*	• *How is the language used to tell a myth or fable different from the language of other types of stories?* • *What are three characteristics of informational texts such as geography and history?*

What will students learn? (Objectives)		
Content Knowledge and Use *Example: Students will be able to describe the effects of climate change on humans in three different historical eras.*	**Language Awareness and Use** *Example: Students will be able to write a short essay describing of the effects of climate change on humans in three different historical eras using appropriate organization, vocabulary and style, language usage, and mechanics.*	**Self-regulation Strategies** *Example: Students will be able to plan their short essay, monitor the writing process, solve language and content problems as needed, and evaluate/edit their essay prior to submitting it.*

STAGE 2 – ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

How will students be assessed?	
Performance Assessment(s) *Examples: Demonstrations, Presentations, Oral Interviews, Projects, Role Playing, Essays, Reports, Questionnaires, Learning Logs*	**Other Evidence** *Examples: Work Samples, Self-evaluation Checklists, Standardized Tests, Teacher Tests*

Rubrics/Criteria for Content Assessment *Based on Big Ideas, Essential Questions, and Objectives for Content*
Rubrics/Criteria for Language Assessment *Based on Big Ideas, Essential Questions, and Objectives for Language*
Rubrics/Criteria for Self-regulation Strategies Assessment *Based on Objectives for Self-regulation Strategies*

STAGE 3 – LEARNING PLAN

Materials Needed Examples: Realia, video clips, Internet sources, readings, performance examples, worksheets, etc.

FIVE LESSON PHASES

Preparation (how students get ready to learn): Teacher provides advance organizer of learning objectives, asks Essential Questions about the topic; and elicits students' additional questions (what they want to lean about the topic). Students identify their prior knowledge/experiences related to the content topic and related language, decide on own content and language learning goals (in addition to those required by curriculum or standards), and choose potential learning strategies. Students and teacher decide if any concepts, vocabulary/language structures, and/or learning strategies need to be reviewed or pre-taught.

Presentation (how students access new information, language, and self-regulation strategies): Teacher provides variety of information resources, both print and non-print, as well as choices of tasks and assessments that can help students understand and interpret the Big Idea(s), taking care to relate the Big Idea to students' prior knowledge and interests. Can be set up as learning stations. Teacher and/or students model self-regulation strategies as appropriate.

Practice (how students practice the new information, language, and self-regulation strategies): Students complete tasks and assessments they have chosen. Teacher organizes independent small groups and/or individuals, reminds students of Essential Question(s), and provides both individual and group assistance as needed. Teacher coaches students on self-regulation strategies and suggests ways to apply them to the task.

Self-evaluation (how students assess their own learning): Students reflect on and assess their own learning of content, language, and self-regulation strategies through: stating the Big Idea(s) in their own words, learning logs, small/large group discussion, *I can…* statements with documentation, performance measures, exit slips, etc. Students use their self-evaluation to set their next personal learning goals.

Expansion (how students apply the lesson to their own lives and personal backgrounds): Student are challenged to connect the Big Idea(s) of this lesson to their own lives and identities through a choice of individual or collaborative projects. Parental involvement is recommended.

Fig. 1. Instructional guidelines for integrating UbD, CBI/CLIL, and self-regulation strategies

Adapted from the following sources:

Chamot, A. U. (2009). *The CALLA handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson-Longman.
McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2013). *Essential questions: Opening doors to student understanding.* Alexandria: ASCD.
Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design.* Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design, Second edition.* Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

While the UbD template of instructional objectives, assessments, and activities in a CBI/CLIL lesson may seem fairly straightforward (though the balance between content and language and assessment of each are not always self-evident), the instruction and assessment of self-regulation strategies may not be as clear. Effective learners have often developed self-regulation strategies on their own, while less-effective learners need more explicit instruction. The next section suggests ways in which language and content teachers can incorporate explicit instruction in and assessment of self-regulation strategies in their CBI/CLIL classroom.

4 Developing self-regulation in the CBI/CLIL classroom

Learning both content and language in the CBI/CLIL classroom is challenging. Understanding and remembering new content taught in a second language is difficult because students must process new conceptual knowledge simultaneously with the language needed to comprehend and express it. To successfully meet this challenge, students need tools that enable them to learn strategically and independently. Teachers can help language learners become self-regulated learners who can approach complex tasks with useful strategies to help them manage planning how to carry out the learning task, how to monitor the task while engaged in it, and how to evaluate their performance on the task with a view to improving it next time (Chamot, 2009). How can the language teacher help learners acquire these tools?

4.1 Goal-setting and planning

The teacher helps students think about what they expect to be able to learn and be able to do in the target language within a short time period of one to two weeks. Establishing personal goals helps students focus on practical and specific actions that they can undertake in a specified time period to improve their language and content learning. Teachers can explore with students their plans for reaching the goal(s) they have set. It can be helpful for teachers and individual students to decide together on a written plan that can be used as a detailed action plan to reach the desired goal(s). Students can then use the written action plan to remind themselves of the steps and procedures to accomplish their goal(s) and to make any needed adjustments.

4.2 Monitoring

An effective technique for helping students become more aware of how a task is progressing while they are working on it is for the teacher to model the process by thinking aloud. For example, teachers can show a text on the screen and tell students their thoughts about it as they read through it, pausing for questions and comments such as:

> "Is this making sense? What's the main idea here? I'm not sure what this word means – should I just read on, make a good guess, or look it up? Oh, I need to go back to the beginning of this paragraph to re-read so that I'm sure I understand. Hmm, this is difficult to understand – I think I should start taking notes."

Similarly, teachers can model the writing process by thinking aloud as they write on the board. They can hesitate, cross out a word or phrase, rewrite, and use arrows to rearrange what they have written. Self-questions and comments might be:

> "Am I expressing my ideas clearly? Will my reader understand what I'm trying to say? Am I following my plan or outline? If not, do I need to make a new plan? How could I clarify my intended meaning? This is it! Exactly the right word/phrase!"

During the reading or writing process, it can be helpful for students to make notes of their monitoring process by writing or recording their reactions to a text to indicate their understanding of the main idea, questions they have, and personal opinions. For listening and speaking tasks, monitoring usually consists of awareness of the effectiveness of the communication.

4.3 Problem-solving

The greatest benefit of helping students develop the ability to monitor their performance on a task in progress is that they can identify problems as they arise and take immediate steps to solve them. For example, once a student identifies a difficulty in comprehending a written text, he or she can try a number of self-regulation strategies to solve the problem. These might include strategies such as making logical inferences, summarizing the difficult text in his or her own words, or using resources such as a more knowledgeable peer or instructor, a dictionary, or the Internet. Descriptions of a variety of task-based language learning strategies are provided by various researchers in this area (see, for example, Chamot, 2009; Cohen, 2011; Griffiths, 2013; Oxford, 2011; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

4.4 Evaluating

Most students believe that their teachers are solely responsible for evaluating student work. This belief often hinders students from taking active responsibility for their own work. Naturally, teachers *are* responsible for assessing and evaluating student achievement, but when students learn to self-evaluate, they develop the ability to reflect on whether they have met the goals they established during the planning phase of the learning task and, if not, what corrective actions they might take. By evaluating their own work before submitting it to their teacher, students begin to learn some of the critical thinking skills needed for independent and self-regulated learning. Self-evaluation activities can include checklists that provide students with criteria for examining their work, summaries of texts read or listened to, developing and responding to self-questions, and seeking feedback from a peer. When students practice evaluating their own language performance, they develop their ability to analyze the successful and less successful features of their communication, then formulate plans to improve the less successful features – in other words, to begin the next cycle of goal-setting and planning. Self-evaluation of their own work helps students learn how to become self-regulated learners (Chamot, 2009).

4.5 **Self-management**

Finally, students need to understand how to manage their own individual learning approach. This can range from relatively straightforward activities such as time management (I know I tend to procrastinate, so I need to make a personal schedule of internal deadlines) to an understanding of one's own learning time cycle (I learn better in the early morning or my best learning time is in the late afternoon). As language learners increase their accuracy in organizing their own language learning tasks and experiences, they acquire the tools needed for managing their own learning. In fact, self-management can be seen as more-or-less synonymous with the concept of self-regulation (see Rubin, 2001, 2005).

Thus, becoming self-regulated learners is a process undertaken by students, often with a teacher's guidance, that culminates in the ability to learn autonomously. In language learning, students set goals by deciding on *why* they want to learn the language and *what* they plan to do with the language. They plan *how* to accomplish the language tasks that will develop their desired proficiency in the new language. As they work on these language tasks, they constantly monitor how they are progressing, making adjustments as they progress, identifying problems that arise and seeking strategies to solve them. After completing the learning task, they carefully evaluate it to see if they have attained their original goals and if they need to make corrections. During this whole process, learners use their knowledge about themselves and their own learning preferences to regulate their learning processes.

5 Conclusion

This paper has argued that language and content teachers in content-based instruction (CBI) or content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programs can help their students learn how to regulate their own learning and that the Understanding by Design (UbD) instructional model can provide guidelines for implementing this process. Classroom-based research is needed to explore this premise and to identify the conditions and factors that sustain or hinder a CBI/CLIL teacher's success in helping students to learn both content and language more effectively.

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