

Learning French as a 4th language through a CLIL and competence-based approach in (Spanish) Basque Country

Curriculum scenario for CLIL in the language classroom

Why is this scenario interesting?

- The scenario establishes horizontal transitions teaching French as a fourth language drawing on the languages taught in primary education and continued in secondary.
- The scenario establishes linguistic-conceptual and cognitive/maturational transitions from primary to secondary education.

Short description:

The scenario was implemented in 2010 in the (Spanish) Basque Country in the sense that a CLIL approach was adopted with bespoke materials and training subsequently written and applied (see for some information in French: https://eleanitz.eus/public/eleanitz_project_francais). Since 2018 the materials have been adapted (ongoing) to an approach based on Roegiers' situational-competence model (Roegiers, 2010). For Secondary Education (12-16), since the transition to democracy, French has been the option as a 4th language within the bilingual curriculum (Spanish-Basque) with English a compulsory 3rd language. A limited amount of schools choose German as the 4th language. The post-2018 materials are available on a digital platform ('Alexia') only.

How does the scenario support transitions?

The adaptation and re-writing of the materials is currently in the 4th year of its 4-year phase, and during each subsequent academic year of this re-write, the materials are piloted in a limited number of schools. French is not studied at Primary level and so any transitions are envisaged in the following manner:

- 1) The transition from three curricular languages to four in a multilingual context.
- 2) The cognitive/maturational transition from Primary to Secondary.
- 3) The transition from lower to upper secondary education with its attendant linguistic-conceptual demands.
- 4) The transition to a competence-based framework in language learning.

	Aims of language learning	Aims of content learning	Approaches/methods
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The language of schooling, particularly in the network of 'Ikastolas' is Euskara (Basque). Spanish is studied as a subject but all pupils by the end of Primary are functionally bilingual. - Basque has co-official status with Spanish. - The first foreign language introduced tends to be English. - The second (effectively the 4th curricular language) is French or German. - Basque is a minority language (spoken by roughly a million people) and Spanish enjoys diglossic status. - The major aim of Basque-medium education is to raise plurilingual Basque citizens. To achieve this, a firm literacy basis is established in the L1 whilst offering an increasing multilingual choice in the vertical progression of the curriculum. French thus plays a part in this multilingual offer. - There is also an ongoing project (HTI, Basque acronym for 'Hizkuntza Trataera Integratua') to integrate the approaches adopted by all four languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CLIL is mostly used with English and French. The approach was adopted partly to motivate (and avoid an explicit linguistic syllabus) but also to extend the discourse fields by incorporating the CALP from other curricular areas. - In English, the content reflects a range of disciplinary discourse fields. - In French this is also the case, but due to the lower level of language attainment the content also strays into functional areas – but always based on the demands made by the 'situation'. The narrow linguistic function cannot be separated from the wider conceptual demands of the situation. - Basque is the minority language but enjoys co-official status on the Spanish side of the Basque border. The content of the Basque and Spanish programmes reflects the cultural heritage of the region but also its sociolinguistic realities. A CLIL approach is not widely used, the programmes focusing more on literacy within text genres deriving from communicative situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - French and English both use a CLIL approach, embedded within a situation-competence framework. The materials are designed for the digital platform 'Alexia' and the students use Chrome Books to access and use the materials. - English is 4 hours per week, but French is only 2. This affects the length of the units but both English and French study a unit per trimester. The unit has a theme, usually derived from the wider curriculum, and the students use the contents and procedures as 'resources' for confronting and resolving the situation. The language contents are also considered 'resources' for this final competence action. <p>Group work and cooperation are central to the methodology, as is systematic self-assessment. The self-assessment can be further tested by supplementary digital activities, usually more language-focused. Group work and S/A are assessed as meta-disciplinary competences.</p>

Secondary 1 (ISCED 2)	<p>Introduction to French by highlighting meta-linguistic strategies which draw on the three languages from Primary. Emphasis on Francophone contexts (and their dialects) through competence-based projects using (more or less) authentic situations. Basic communicative competences are developed through a student-centred response to the situations.</p>	<p>In French the content at this stage tends to focus on immediate realities (school, regional characteristics, the relationship between the Basque Country and France/Francophone contexts) underpinned by an insistence on the development of the plurilingual repertoire.</p>	<p>The methodology is active and hands-on requiring the students to ‘perform’ and reducing the need for the teacher to be over-explanatory. However, language support and scaffolding is much in evidence, and the demands must reflect the reality of a two-session week timetable. The self-assessment criteria are provided (see Secondary 2).</p>
Secondary 2 (ISCED 3)	<p>More emphasis on text genre and more formal register. Increase in the sophistication of meta-linguistic reflection.</p>	<p>More or less a continuation and deepening of the above. The content perhaps moves from a personal to more disciplinary-based fields.</p>	<p>There is little difference in the methodology, save a growing emphasis on grammatical reflection, perhaps more embedding of language than explicit scaffolding, and the need for the students to work out more inductively the criteria for self-assessment.</p>
Tertiary	<p>This depends on the individual schools, but the materials are no longer ‘bespoke’ nor the framework necessarily competence or CLIL-based. There are plans to implement this as a vertical continuation of the current project.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Short description how the curriculum scenario establishes links between CLIL and plurilingual education:

French is taught as a fourth language by highlighting meta-linguistic strategies which draw on the three languages from Primary.

With regard to intercultural education, the proximity of France to the Basque Country and the fact that a part of the Basque Country is in the French state means that there are socio-geographical and heritage factors that can be exploited. But as explained previously, we also focus on Francophone countries because it enables a wider socio-political perspective which in turn facilitates the CLIL approach - itself requiring a wider range of content than the narrower confines of a purely linguistic syllabus. The dialects and varieties of French in these countries also provide further opportunities for contrast, comparison and language reflection.

Suggestions for further development:

Learning French as a 4th language through a CLIL and competence-based approach in the (Spanish) Basque Country can help to both exemplify and develop two key new areas of the CEFR (2017), namely 'Mediation' and 'Translanguaging'.

The situation-problem scenarios on which the units are based require *mediation* by default because the audience ('recipients') of the action-solution is varied (peers, other schools, parents, others) which requires the presenters (the 'agents') to mediate carefully their messages, and choose appropriate registers/CALP. This is particularly true of the upper secondary stage.

Translanguaging is similarly inevitable given the A1/2 levels in lower secondary education and the natural tendency to draw on the other three languages. We are now actively writing activities and tasks which explicitly incorporate this approach and we hope to continue its development.

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