“A ver, entzun ondo, eh? Listen to me, ok?”, engagement and comprehension in a CLIL early education setting: multilingual and multimodal teacher’s discourse strategies

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Current studies on CLIL highlight the contribution of applied linguistics in the field, embracing the multimodal perspective (Evnitskaya & Jakonen, 2017). Besides, recently the importance of CLIL multilingual learning settings has also been examined (Nikula, Dafouz, Moore, & Smit, 2016). Furthermore, it is well acknowledged its potential in all educational levels (Marsh, 2002); however, CLIL and pre-school education is a still a vast unexplored context.

This research focuses on the teacher’s performance during one activity in a CLIL program with 3-year-olds, in a multilingual social context where, according to the frequency of use, Basque is the L1, Spanish the L2 and English the L3. The aim of the study is to provide a broad picture of the multimodal nature of the teacher’s oral discourse, to shed some light on the natural codeswitching that occurs in class. We study how different semiotic resources and languages are co-deployed to make content comprehensible and to promote learners’ engagement.

A Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA) approach has been adopted to recognize the social functions of the different semiotic resources (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O’Halloran, 2016). Thus, following pioneering works on the interaction of multimodal resources in educational settings (Unsworth, 2008), we conduct the micro analysis of a short fragment of a CLIL pre-school session. We examine one activity (6:41 minutes) which aims at introducing greetings in English.

The multimodal annotation tool ELAN (Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics) has been selected for the study. ELAN provides the opportunity to transcribe and annotate multi-semiotic choices made at each point, in the study: verbatim transcriptions annotation of the three languages, discourse functions, extralinguistic (hand gestures, facial expressions, head movement and proxemics) and paralinguistic features and their functions.
We have annotated and analyzed the co-expression of 175 linguistic utterances, 105 extralinguistic features and 39 paralinguistic resources to construct meaning. Findings reveal that the presence of L1 and L3 is quite similar, whereas L2 is significantly lower. L1 and L2 utterances are co-expressed with facial expressions, head movement, interactive gestures, proxemics and paralinguistic features, such as whispering, to promote learners’ engagement. The teacher models English greetings, uses pragmatic and interactive gestures, and at some point even the translation into the L1, to make new content comprehensible. L3 and interactive gestures are also employed to foster the whole group participation. The study reveals how the teacher’s multimodal and multilingual discourse serves instructional and interpersonal functions accordingly to the language chosen.

References:


