A Study of Linguistic Transfer in CLIL Students' Oral Discourse

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Aim of the UAM-CLIL project: general

-Studies at micro level, focusing on process/product. (Dalton-Puffer and Smit 2007)

-To identify the **linguistic needs** of ESO learners of history (and geography): the language of the discipline, the language of interpersonal communication, formal features of CLIL students' interlanguage.

-To provide support for **secondary teachers** (specialists in disciplines or in English) setting up CLIL projects.

UAM-CLIL Project: Data

	FEB 2006		APRIL/ MAY2006		APRIL/ MAY2007		APRIL/ MAY2008		MARCH 2009	
	GEOGRAPHY: NATURAL DISASTERS (1st ESO)		HISTORY: ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS (1st ESO)		HISTORY: FEUDAL EUROPE (2nd ESO)		HISTORY: PHILIP II (3rd ESO)		HISTORY: THE FIRST WORLD WAR (4th ESO)	
CLASS DISCUSSION 30 mins	A 4,967words	B 3,549 words	A 3,946 words	B 1,952 words	A 3,588 words	B 2,808 words	A 2,041 words	B 1,645 words	A (to be transcribed)	B (to be transcribed)
WRITTEN TEXT 20 mins	A (26 texts)	B (17 texts)	A (26 texts)	B (25 texts)	A (24 texts)	B (23 texts)	A (22 texts)	B (17 texts)	A (to be transcribed)	B (to be transcribed)
INTERVIEW 6 students/3 levels	A 1,665 words	B 2,012 words	A 2,214 words	B 2,316 words	A 3.802 words	B 5,139 words	A 4,166 words	B 3,794 words	A (to be transcribed)	B (to be transcribed)

The Present Study - Objectives:

- To analyze CLIL learners' Social Science-related spoken production in 2 state secondary schools:

- **2005/2006 1º ESO students (12/13-year-olds)**
- **2006/2007 2º ESO students (13/14-year-olds)**

- To analyze the evolution of transfer errors over a two-year period.

- To find the causes of transfer errors.

The data

- **2005/06:**
  - 12 ten-minute personal interviews on the topic of natural disasters, recorded in the Spring of 2006.
  - 12 ten-minute personal interviews on the topic of ancient civilizations, recorded in the Summer of 2006.

- **2006/07:**
  - 12 ten-minute personal interviews on the topic of feudal Europe, recorded in the Spring of 2007.

The Theoretical Framework

- **Linguistic transfer and learner error research** (Dulay & Burt 1974, Ringbom 1986, Ellis 1994, Selinker & Lakshmanan 1992, Hakansson, Pienemann & Sayehli 2002, Kellerman 1978, Odlin 1989, 2003).
- **Research in Canadian immersion contexts** (Lyster, 2007).
- **CLIL research** (Dalton-Puffer 2007, Hajer 2000; Llinares, McCabe and Whittaker, 2008).

What is a split?

- **Lexical split**:
  Spa *construcción* → Eng construction + building
  ST: *[Only] the* ***construction*** *of the houses, and technology but-*.
- **Syntactic split**:
  Spa *más fuerte/confortable* → Eng *stronger/more comfortable.*
  ST: *[Ah, make] more strong buildings.*
- **Coalescence is the opposite phenomenon.**
  - **Lexical:** Spa *estar de acuerdo* → Eng *agree.*
    ST: *Yes. But we have to* ***be all, agreed*** *because if, only one people don't buy it. There is no difference.*
  - **Syntactic:** Spanish word order.
    ST: ***Work the peasants*** *very hard***.**

INITIAL RESULTS

- 1. Which is the most frequent phenomenon, coalescence or split transfer?
- More split than coalescence transfer errors were registered.

- 2. Is it more frequent at the syntactic or the lexical level?
- Syntactic split transfer was more frequent than lexical split transfer.

Grammar Split Transfer Features to be analyzed:

- Article use.
- Third person subject dropping.

Table 10: Article error percentages per student.

Results I (Article Use)

	Article Errors 100%		
Student	**Spring 2006**	**Summer 2006**	**Spring 2007**
1A	27.8	23.7	15.8
2A	19.2	9.5	17.5
3A	14	10.2	9.7
4A	2.2	13.3	14.1
5A	17.2	13	18.6
1B	12.1	8.6	18.5
2B	17	18.4	20
3B	10.3	34.5	16.7
4B	21.1	29	18.2
6B	11.9	28.1	5.3
Mean	**15.28**	**18.83**	**15.44**

Some examples…

- **ARTICLE ERRORS:**

- ST: *The power of all the world was centered in those cities, because they, they were kings and the most important people, **the** noblemen, **the** priests, **the** scribes…*

- ST: *When you brush **the** teeth, eh, switch off the water.*

Figure 12: Potential third person subject dropping errors per student

Results II (Subject Dropping)

Third person Subject Dropping Errors 100%		
Student	**Summer 2006**	**Spring 2007**
1A	0	3.1
4A	17.6	3.4
5A	33.3	7.1
2A	7.1	0
3A	16.6	0
2B	20	22.4
4B	0	0
6B	26.9	30
1B	15	26.7
3B	18.2	35.7
Mean	**15.47**	**12.84**

Results III (Subject Dropping)

- No significant cross-time differences between the group means.
- School-wise, a slight difference was observed.
- T-Tests were applied to compare School A's and School B's group means both in the summer of 2006 and the spring of 2007.

Results IV (Subject Dropping)

School Means	School A	School B
Summer 2006	14.92	16.02
Spring 2007	2.72	22.96

Results V (Subject Dropping)

- There were no significant differences between the two schools in the summer of 2006.

- There were significant differences in the spring of 2007.

Some Examples of Subject Dropping…

- **Example 1:**
  - RES: *OK. Am, .. are earthquakes .. the .. mm result of our faults? Is because we do something that earthquakes happen, or we can't prevent them?*
  - ST: *I th-, em, I think that,* **(It)** *is a movement of the, ground and, I don't, I don't think that can we prevent.*

- **Example 2:**
  - RES: *Right. Um, what are the consequences then of monsoons? Tsunamis. Obviously.*
  - ST: *That* **(They)** *destroy all near thing, and, kill, people.*

- **Example 3:**
  - RES: *OK. Right. Sergio and the last question. You personally, can you personally do anything to, either prevent, or to mitigate the consequences of natural disasters?*
  - ST: *Now no because I, a child, but, in, when I, old and, yes, eh,* **(I)** *go to the place and-.*

Transfer-Specific Conclusions

- **About markedness, saliency and frequency…**
- The less marked, the more salient, but not necessarily the more frequent (*I, you, we* pronouns vs. *they*)
- The less frequent, the more marked, the less salient, the more liable to undergo transfer the structure is (*it* vs. *I, you, we, they* pronouns)
- HOWEVER…
- The more frequent (Articles are more frequent than pronouns) were also found to be more liable to undergo transfer.
- **Frequency seems to hold no correlation with liability to transfer.**
- **Transfer does not necessarily diminish regardless of high exposure to the TL, assuming that the proficiency level increases, as the results in article use suggest.**
- **Transfer seems to evolve along with the interlanguage →*"Transfer is developmentally moderated"* (Hakansson 2002)**

As far as CLIL is concerned…

- Subject dropping might be related to the type of input received in the class.
  - School A's TCH: School A's teacher: *What was **Feudal Europe** like? What was **it** like?*
  - School B's TCH: *Tell me about Feudal Europe.*

- Split-transfer errors seem to be particularly difficult to overcome. As some of them hinder communication, more explicit reference on grammar is needed →FOCUS-ON-FORM (Lyster 2007)

Some Afterthoughts and Further Research

- CLIL input alone is not enough.
- Certain aspects (say, subject dropping), can be mastered with the right kind of TCH eliciting, but other aspects need a more specific focus on form.
- What about EFL learners? Do they make fewer article, SD and negation mistakes? In what way is CLIL insufficient?
- The CLIL model could provide the background framework for the implementation of transfer-aware methodology.