Investigating interactional competence in secondary CLIL classrooms

Tom Morton
University of Leeds
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

View of learning

- Situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991)
- Socially-shared cognition (e.g. Schegloff, 1991; te Molder and Potter, 2005)
- CA and SLA (Mondada and Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Hellerman, 2008; Kasper, 2009)

Situated Learning

- Learning is a function of the activity, context and culture in which it occurs (i.e., it is situated);
- Social interaction is a critical component of situated learning;
- As the newcomer moves from the periphery of the community to its center, they become more active and engaged and assume the role of full member of the practice.

Learning as participation and doing

expertise is defined dynamically through continuing participation in the discourse of a community, not primarily through the possession of a set of problem-solving skills and conceptual structures. Achieving expertise is becoming indistinguishable in your actions and uses of representations in the language games at play from other members of a community of practice. (Pea, 1993: 271)

Socially shared cognition

The embeddedness, the inextricable intertwinedness, of cognition and interaction. (Schegloff, 1991: 152)

back

Situated learning, social cognition and SLA

- Second Language Acquisition as Situated Practice (Firth and Wagner, 1997; 2007; Mondada and Pekarek Doehler, 2004)
- Locating cognition in second language interaction and learning: Inside the skull or in public view? (Kasper, 2009: 11)

A situated perspective on ‘doing science’ in bilingual classrooms

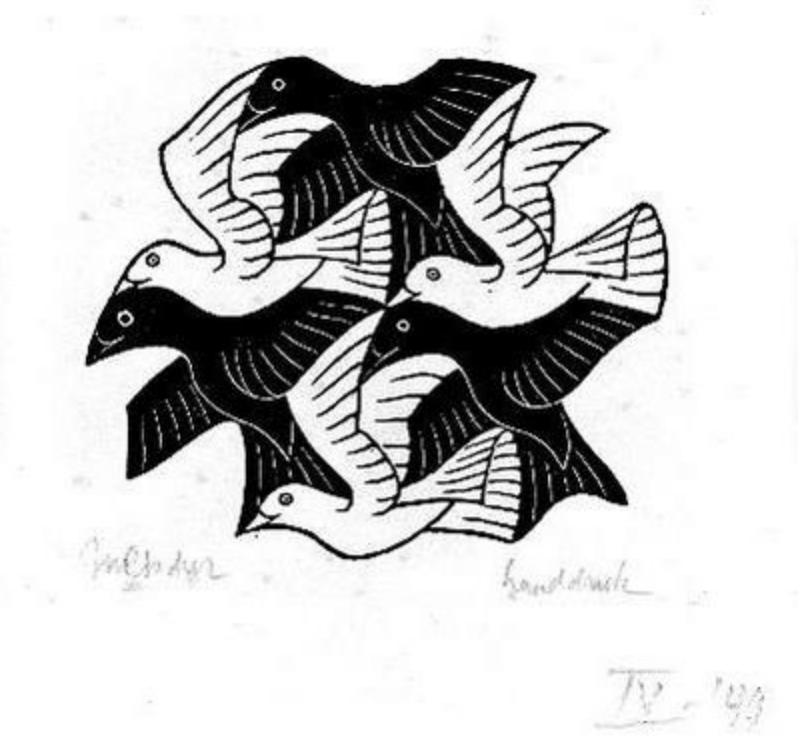
- Misleading to separate work on language and content
- Based on two unhelpful assumptions:
  - definition of language learning as the acquisition of linguistic forms
  - view of communication that reduces it to the mere exchange of communicative contents
- Need to focus on *talk-as-activity*

(Pekarek Doehler and Ziegler, 2007)

Interactional competence

- Goals of the situated practice, roles of participants, topics and themes relevant;
- Trajectories along which the practice may unfold, their meanings and participation structures;
- Flexibility to change or rearrange the resources of the practice, and the consequences of such actions;
- Skill to recognise situations where the patterns apply and use them in new situations.

(Hall, 1999: 137; Young, 2009: 193)



Example of bilingual science teaching in Madrid

- 4th year secondary (16 y.o.)
- Biology (topic of genetic variation)
- Bilingual section of state secondary school (part of BC/Ministry bilingual project)
- One ‘case’ in four-case study of discursive practices and teacher cognition

1	T:	right (.) so I was-
2		I I was telling you that (.)
3		there's three ways (1.5)
4		to say (1.2) characteristics
5		for instance the characteristic
6		eye colour or hair (.) colour
7		hair type (.)
8		curly or straight (.) ok
9		his is straight
10		hers is curly (1.0) ok?
11		yours is (.) straight.
12		(0.8) yours is? let's see
13	S:	curly=
14	T:	=slightly curly and yours
15	S:	( )
16	T:	quite straight. ok so

17	T	ok so we've got
18		ok so characteristics?
19		(2.2)
20		can you see properly?
21		(3.4)
22		is the same as (.) traits,
23		(2.5)
24		or you can also say features.
25		(1.6)
26		this is English ok?
27		so any characteristics ( )
28		traits or features
29		you might (.) find the three words
30		when reading or or
31		when (1.0) studying in English (.)
32		right?

33		so wh- what features
34		were we talking about?
35		(1.2)
36		what feature (.) what trait
37		were you talking about?
38		(1.4)
39	S:	the type of hair
40	T:	good the type of hair
41		whether the hair is curly as hers
42		or straight. ok
43		>so that's another trait.<
44		so we've got
45		(1.5)
46		we've got colour, got hair type,
47		got hair and then we-
48		>yesterday we had colour<
49		so- those are traits
50		that can be seen can be seen (.)
51		right?

52	T:	but (.) can you think of any traits?
53		(1.2)
54		of us (.) humans (0.5)
55		that might differentiate us
56		(1.4)
57		but that we cannot see
58		on the outside?
59		(1.8)
60	S:	DNA
61		(1.0)
62	T:	well DNA is not a trait (.)
63		DNA is a ↑molecule (.)
64		that contains the ↑information
65		(1.4)
66		to get all possible traits. ok?

Examples of interactional competence (teacher foregrounded) in this practice

- Navigating diffuse boundaries between:
  - language and content focus; shifting in and out, intertwined;
  - language ‘learning’ and language ‘use’(traits and features)

- Creation of learning opportunities (widen vocabulary; know what a trait isn’t…; leave open ‘thinking spaces’)
- Shifting between different types of knowledge (everyday ‘surface’; more esoteric ‘hidden’);
- Signalling where we are and what we are doing multimodally: verbally, writing on board, use of intonation and stress, pausing, gestures (pointing, emphasising).

Interactional competence: summary

- Interactional competence involves knowledge of the relation between language forms and the social contexts in which they are used;
- Interactional competence is distributed across participants and varies in different interactional practices;
- Interactional competence is not what a person *knows*, it is what a person *does* together with others.

(Young, 2008: 105-6)

Implications: new thinking on the 4 C's in CLIL

- Content: what is being learned: participation in a practice/acquisition of subject knowledge? (Sfard, 1998);
- Communication: exchange of information about stuff? Or 'doing' (and 'being')?
- Cognition: individual or socially distributed? In the skull or publicly available?
- Culture:"if cultural awareness is developed through interaction (…), then learner interaction in CLIL is fundamental."(Coyle, 2009: 108).