

THE CV-CLIP AS A META-LEARNING STUDENT - TAILORED ACTIVITY WITHIN CLIL AT FMG

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Abstract: The present study focuses on the video clip as a new modal approach in foreign language learning, striving to move away from traditional methods of foreign language teaching and enabling students to apply their acquired language skills in a more meaningful and realistic way. The arguments for pedagogy are discussed from a three-fold perspective: (a) the didactic practice of student-created authentic materials for improving self-confidence and autonomy in language in the CLIL classroom, (b) the propagation and facilitation of students' meta-cognitive and meta-learning skills (c) facilitating access to the labor market or potential target scientific environment. The research presented in this paper is based on a questionnaire as an instrument for measuring the importance the students from the Faculty of Mining and Geology (FMG) place on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the CV-clip as a language learning tool. The results also provided insights into student understanding of CLIL, especially regarding multimodality and the necessity for independence in language studies for all of their future endeavors, be they academic or vocational. The implications of this research are such that they can be used by foreign language teachers both in CLIL classrooms and in traditional ESP classes bearing in mind that student motivation and meta-cognition are the main driving forces in any FLT context related to higher education and potential career development.

Keywords: CV-clip, CLIL, meta-learning, career development, oral communication

INTRODUCTION

This article elaborates several theoretical bases for using a CV-clip as an authentic video material in foreign language classes. Beginning with the assumption that language acquisition and language use are the two sides of the same coin, whereby every student inevitably plays a proactive role in their language development and fulfillment, the authors of the study describe the advantages of authentic, student-made video footage as a functional attempt to acquire, use, accommodate, improve, and modify the linguistic knowledge, behavior and experience of each and every student. CV-clips permit students to construct an image of themselves in a concrete, realistic context since language itself is always embedded in the context of specific situations in which particular linguistic forms are represented more than universal. Therefore, the CV-clip as a meta-cognitive linguistic tool attempts to confirm the benefits of autonomous learning in which students slowly become aware of the importance of reflecting on their own knowledge construction, improvement and achievement, along with the way the learning occurs.

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What is also important to take into account when discussing the CV-clip utilisation in the ELT environment is that a task conceptualised in this way needs to be constantly fine-tuned and revised so as to meet students' real expectations and needs. In layman's terms- the students need to know what the point of it all is. That is to say, constant positive reinforcement and feedback are required in the form of teacher-student consultations as well as an assessment of student attitudes toward the task once it has been completed, where they are free to voice their opinions on the aforementioned issues. One such assessment, conducted in the form of a questionnaire, shall be discussed later in the paper.

THE CV-CLIP IN THE CONTEXT OF AUTHENTICITY IN THE CLIL CLASSROOM

The argument for the pedagogy of meta-learning by means of CV-clip is intended for the development of a new pattern of language instruction and learning in higher education, or, in other terms, it is intended to create a change in the classroom environment by means of a new didactic tool or activity.

There are many reasons that justify the motifs for a change in school settings, and almost all of them are grouped around the need to reflect on dynamic learning, how technology supports the learning and knowledge, what makes it effective, and why our students ought to devote more of their time thinking about their future career opportunities.

Authentic materials relate to many areas that touch to: language production similar to that of native speakers², personal engagement³, real life tasks and situations⁴, culture and target language group behavior⁵. The multitude of the abovementioned aspects, however diffusive they may appear, can be outlined in a single activity: the CV clip. The first argument in favor of it corresponds to what Hutchinson & Waters called "fitness to the learning purpose"⁶. The purposefulness is reflected not only in taking into account the learning processes as educational goals related to some specific institution, but to gain cognitive maturity and positive self-esteem.

The second argument touches on authenticity where the CV-clip is perceived as a genuine activity, task or material which reflects or represents a student's "stretch of real language produced for a real audience and designed to convey a real message"⁷. The CV-clip serves to illustrate the current potential of the student; it mirrors their good or poor learning, revealing simultaneously the attitudes, hopes and levels of aspiration in life. In this way, both teachers and learners can acquire the necessary knowledge of learning problems with the aim to mutually solve them.

2 Little, D. & D. Singleton (1991). Authentic texts, pedagogical grammar and language awareness in foreign language learning. In C. James & P. Garrett (eds.), *Language awareness in the classroom*. London: Longman, 123-132

3 Van Lier, L. (1996) *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy and authenticity*. London: Longman

4 Lewkowicz, J.(2000) Authenticity in language testing: Some outstanding question. *Language testing* 17.1, 43-64;

Van Lier, L, op. cit.; Guariento, W. & J. Morley (2001). Text and task authenticity in the EFL classroom. *ELT Journal* 55.4, 347-353

5 Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 279-294

6 Hutchinson, T. & A. Waters (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learning-centered approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

7 Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic material and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 40. pp 97-118. doi: 10.1017/S0261444807004144

Another very important aspect of the CV-clip is its holistic nature, in that it can serve a myriad of purposes and be good opportunities to train students' dynamic nature of learning and hopefully self-representation. We can enumerate some of them: identification of the main words/concepts/phrases, underlying key ideas, summarizing, understanding, reasoning, the art of representation, elaboration, organization, affective reaction, etc. Although this separation of different operations may seem artificial, they all refer to one communicative event which is expected to be contextually bound and formally balanced and organized.

Finally but equally important is developing students' self-confidence which is a significant contribution to the existing academic content and skills agenda. It should be noted that embedding the workplace concept and applied learning skills within language courses adds a professional dimension to academia. A good application of the CV-clip activity when it is woven through the entire fabric of language course, threads the learning outcomes with professional experience and competences in the way that if the primary purpose of the learning is to get the knowledge, then the secondary is to get a job and show the knowledge.

META-COGNITION AND META-LEARNING

Having mentioned CLIL, its primary aim is to improve both the learner's knowledge about the subject and their language skills⁸, a seemingly simple duality. More precisely however, the aforementioned duality was further expounded into the four Cs of CLIL by Coyle⁹:

- Communication: improving overall target language competence;
- Content: learning the knowledge and skills of the subject (in this case the knowledge and skills pertaining to the areas of mining and geology);
- Culture: building intercultural knowledge and understanding;
- Cognition: developing thinking skills.

While the benefits of working on the first three Cs are apparent, the authors feel that for the purposes of this paper special focus ought to be placed upon the significance of cognition in the learning process. The propagation of meta-cognition in the CLIL classroom is crucial for students' meaningful knowledge acquisition as well as their becoming effective, lifelong learners¹⁰. The students who are the subject of this paper are sophomores at the FMG and are unlikely to have ever seriously reflected upon their learning strategies or the methods by which they could further their future career prospects. A claim has been assessed via a questionnaire, the results of which shall be presented later in this paper.

It is of crucial importance to develop the meta-cognitive and meta-learning skills of students since it is these skills which allow them to properly process and internalise newly acquired skills and knowledge. Upon reflecting on these, students begin to construct a firm foundation for their knowledge and skills to spiral out further, thus allowing them to expand and build upon them¹¹. Additionally, understanding and being aware of one's own learning abilities, weaknesses, habits, strategies etc. is the first step in being able to enhance and, where needed, rectify them. Since meaningful realisation regarding one's learning skills takes time (not

8 Marsh, D. (2002). *Content and Language Integrated Learning: The European Dimension - Actions, Trends and Foresight Potential*. University of Jyväskylä

9 Coyle, D. 2007, "CLIL: towards a connected research agenda for CLIL pedagogies", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 10:5,543-562

10 Metcalfe, J. (2008). *Evolution of metacognition*. In J. Dunlosky & R. Bjork (Eds.), *Handbook of meta-cognition and learning*. Lawrence Erlbaum

11 Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. A. (2009). The learning way: Meta-cognitive aspects of experiential learning. *Simulation Gaming*, 40, 297-327. doi:10.1177/1046878108325713

to mention initiating a proper course of action and seeing it through to the end), it is of vital importance that students be exposed to meta-learning strategies and given the opportunity to reflect upon and think about their experiences in the classroom in a meaningful, thorough way.

This opportunity is provided by the CV clip because, not only do students employ their knowledge in a real and practical way, they also gain a unique insight into their self-representation skills, language skills, communicative skills both verbal and non-verbal.

Consequently, students are offered the chance to experience and activate their knowledge in a real and practical way which gives them a unique insight into their abilities via self-reflection in a literal sense since they can see and hear themselves in the video clip, probably for the first time, mock-applying for an internship, scholarship, job etc. They are then able to objectively observe themselves without any interference from the language teacher, self-assess and proceed to realise on their own what their mistakes were, thereby exemplifying the core principle of meta-learning wherein learners increasingly become aware of the knowledge they have acquired, begin to take control of the habits and means of achieving it as well as understanding the phenomenon of learning and being able to modify their learning approach to deal with various learning situations¹².

THE LABOR MARKET AND THE CV-CLIP

It is a mistake to assume that provision of theoretical knowledge with practical experience along with a good GPA is an assurance of employability¹³. To have good marks and work experience does not ensure that a student develops various prerequisites such as cognitive, social, practical, and cultural for success in getting a job. Likewise, a repertoire of attributes and achievements in educational settings may have a general academic value which turns out to be insufficient for labor-market situations and suitability for a wide variety of specific posts.

Since this can be seen as a curricular issue and lack of curricular provision, the activity of creating a personal CV, cover letter and CV-clip is an attempt to supply the aforementioned necessity. Understood as a process or a set of activities, this curricular alignment is meant to focus on the students' performance, individual psychological conditions that underpin their performance at the given time, enriched with some specific, vocationally useful elements¹⁴.

The list of skills or qualities is offered more to make students sensible to skills and qualities in the sense that their attention needs to be given not only to the content to be learned, but also to the processes through which that learning takes place, along with employability-related learning. In such circumstances, study units are not overloaded with expectations, rather realistically address the idea of coherence of progression which should be attained in the first phase of its application.

Personal qualities:

- Self-awareness: awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, aims and values.
- Self-confidence: confidence in dealing with the challenges that employment and life throw up.
- Adaptability: ability to respond positively to changing circumstances and new challenges.
- Willingness to learn: commitment to ongoing learning to meet the needs of employment and life.

12 Biggs, J. (2003) *Teaching for quality learning at university (2nd edition)*. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press; Maudsley, D.B. (1979). *A Theory of Meta-Learning and Principles of Facilitation: An Organismic Perspective*. University of Toronto

13 Biggs, J. op. cit

14 Baty, P (2002) Go ahead for corporate degrees. *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 29 November, p. 1

- Reflectiveness: the disposition to reflect evaluatively on the performance of oneself and others.
- Malleable self-theory: belief that attributes are not fixed and can be developed.

General qualities:

- Language skills: possession of more than a single language
- Listening: focused attention in which key points are recognised.
- Oral presentation: clear and confident presentation of information to a group.
- Explaining: orally and in writing along with justifying a point of view.
- Creativity: ability to be original or inventive and to apply literal thinking.
- Global awareness: in terms of both cultures and economics.

Process skills:

- Commercial awareness: operating with an understanding of business issues and priorities.
- Political sensitivity: appreciates how organisations actually work and act accordingly.
- Ethical sensitivity: appreciates ethical aspects of employments and acts accordingly.
- Applying subject understanding: use of disciplinary understanding from the high education programme.
- Prioritising: ability to rank task, qualities, skills according to importance and situation.
- Planning: setting of achievable goals and structuring action¹⁵.

QUESTIONNAIRE

As most students have never undertaken a task such as this before, it is important that teachers remain sensitive to student attitudes and feedback while developing ways to include the CV-clip into the ELT courses. Hence, a questionnaire was deemed the most useful for assessing student attitudes toward the CV-clip as a tool for expanding their cognitive and meta-cognitive abilities, gaining new language and technical skills as well as reinforcing and expanding existing linguistic, academic and vocational knowledge.

The questionnaire was distributed among 2nd year students who had successfully completed their English course at FMG. The language of the questionnaire is Serbian so as to ensure that the received feedback is as accurate and reliable as possible. The students were both male and female, approximately 21-22 years old. Additionally, as far as their English language ability is concerned they may be ranked from basic to independent users.

The questionnaire itself is of a Likert-type and comprises 9 statements evaluating students' opinions on the CV-clip's effectiveness in:

- Improving and reaffirming language skills (vocational and academic).
- Enhancing meta-cognitive abilities.
- Inspiring students to consider future career prospects.

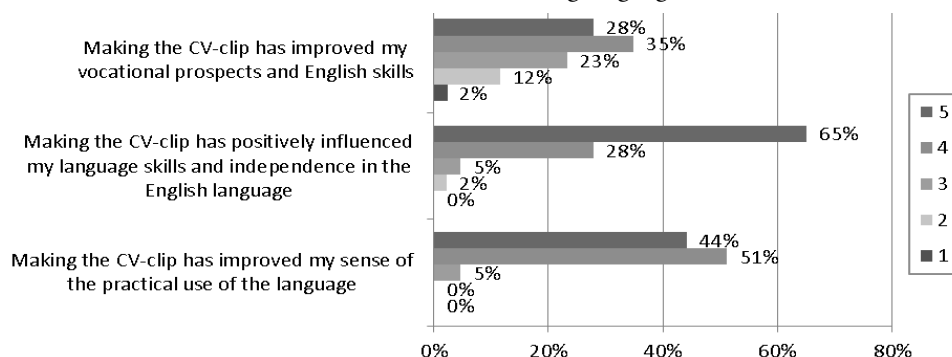
The respondents of the questionnaire were then asked to signify the degree to which they agree with the statements by circling a number from 1 to 5 where 5 corresponds to 'I completely agree' and 1 to 'I completely disagree'. 43 questionnaires were distributed and all were returned.

¹⁵ Bennett, N., Dunne, E. and Carré. C. (2000) *Skills development in higher education and employment*. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Given the overall enthusiasm with which they approached the task and the quality of the clips submitted at the exam, it is not surprising that student response to the CV-clip in respect to all of its multi-modal purposes was generally positive. It is likely that the novelty of the task played a great part in why the CV-clip was met with such approval.

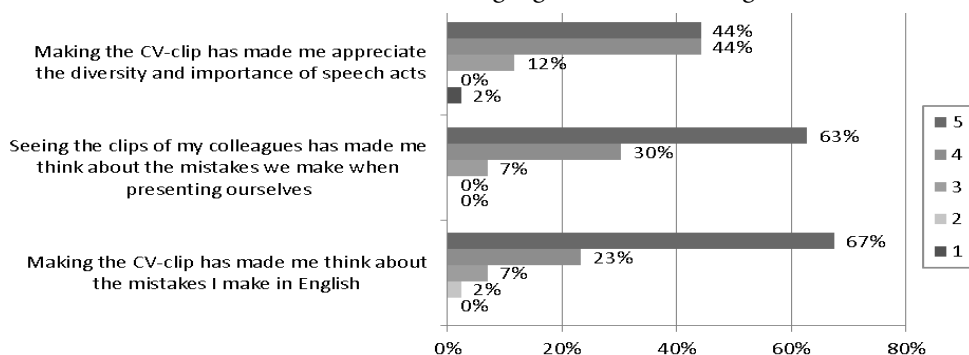
Table 1: *Statements concerning language skills*



Regarding the domain of language independence and offering students a valuable insight into possible, practical uses of the English language, students responded favourably. The CV-clip task had a positive effect on students from all levels of the language spectrum, proving to be both a confidence booster as well as facilitating the role of ELT as something that can be used in a real-life situation for the benefit of the speaker.

On the other hand, one of the weak spots of the CV-clip in its current iteration has proved to be its capacity to improve students' vocational knowledge of English (language related to mining engineering in this case). Since the CV-clip is still being piloted, the main focus is still on familiarising students with its concept as well as focusing on professional and career-related vocabulary. Nonetheless, this feedback is definitely valuable as it provides information on which segments of the CV-clip multi-modal nature need to be expounded in future courses thereby rounding out its true potential.

Table 2: *Statements concerning cognition and meta-cognition*

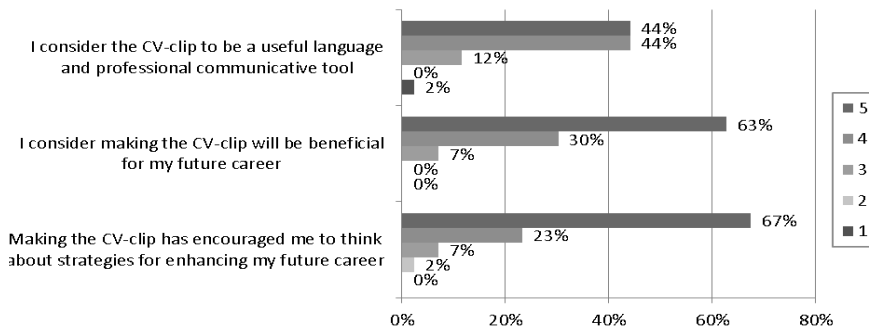


The questionnaire results from the domain of cognition and meta-cognition indicate that the CV-clip provided a unique opportunity for students to gain insights into their own mistakes as well as those of their colleagues. This, in turn, enables them to form a more authentic image

of themselves as real speakers of the language and to take more responsibility for their mistakes after having seen them on the screen of a monitor, loud and clear for everybody to see.

The importance of such authenticity has been recognized by the respondents of this questionnaire. Once again, the majority of students have come to recognise the weight of speech acts and just how crucial even the tiniest mistake could be when faced with producing near-flawless English or looking professional enough for a potential scholarship interview or prospective employer. Whichever might be the case, it would seem that, according to the responses herein, the CV-clip could be viewed as a useful instrument in developing students' meta-cognitive abilities overall.

Table 3: *Statements concerning career development*



Finally, in the segment of the questionnaire concerning career development, students were once again of the opinion that the use of the CV-clip is a positive development. Venturing slightly into the territory of meta-cognition, the overwhelming majority of respondents has been inspired to think of more ways of enhancing their future careers. Similarly, most feel that the CV-clip is already one of those tools that might be advantageous for their future career prospects.

Additionally, and tying in well with the realization of the importance of speech acts, respondents also recognise the usefulness of the CV-clip as a means to this very end, as a tool which is not only useful for language but for professional communication as well.

CONCLUSION

We have discussed the use of the CV-clip in the CLIL classroom from multiple standpoints. It may tentatively be concluded that the CV-clip has been well-received by students despite it seemingly being uncharted territory, both for students and the professor. What the CV-clip has done though, is raise the overall language confidence of students of all profiles, offer students the opportunity to practice their English in a more authentic/simulated environment and make them see the usefulness of ELT in a real situation.

This overall increase in the quality and confidence is further facilitated by providing students the chance to objectively and maturely assess their own knowledge, as well as that of their colleagues and not only learn from that corpus of mistakes, but to develop and adjust their learning strategies as well. Most interestingly however, it would seem, given the feedback received, that the students were also cognizant of the progress made and meta-cognitive strategies and skills employed. What all of this ultimately leads to is young professionals who approach their future career plans in a thoughtful, profound way, one which utilises the CV-clip as its integral part.

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