

Authenticity in CLIL

(Study: Authenticity and CLIL : Examining Authenticity from an International CLIL Perspective
Richard Pinner, International CLIL Research Journal, 2013)

Although this study reports on a relatively small sample and is preliminary in nature, there are some interesting findings which can be used to further stress the importance of the 'dual focused aims' (Marsh, 2002: 2) of the CLIL approach. Students are as keen to learn about content areas as they are to improve their language skills. They are also interested in learning study skills, which perhaps indicates a disposition towards developing greater autonomy. The fact that content was the most important aspect in defining authenticity implies that CLIL, through 'authenticity of purpose' delivers a greater sense of engagement to the students and allows opportunities for language focus to arise organically in the classroom situation. This can be defined as authentic communication in the sense that language acquisition arises from language being used as a tool to support other learning. The CLIL classroom, by the very definition of the approach, is authentic in nature, because the CLIL classroom has at its heart learning aims which include authentic interaction and 'authenticity of purpose' (Coyle *et al.*, 2010: 5).

Although the CLIL students in this study marginally favoured linguistic competence over content knowledge, it was clear that content was almost as important in both the students' choice of course and learning aims. What is more, the content was vital in defining the nature of the students' relationship with authenticity. It was the content that held the initial interest for the students and gave them something on which to focus and, in many ways, provided a frame around which language practice could be scaffolded. In this way, authentic content was central to their language learning experience. This is in keeping with the comments I made at the start of this paper that native speaker-based definitions have been out of favour for over a decade. Content and purpose formulated the most important aspects of authenticity for students, and the general satisfaction students expressed and the high value they attributed to content knowledge as part of their learning aims suggests that CLIL has a very valid place in language education in Japan. Future studies might do well to further examine the nature of authenticity within CLIL, and perhaps incorporate teachers' views on the subject and compare those to views put forward by the students.