

Developing Listening Skills in CLIL

Vilmantė Liubinienė

Abstract. Listening, like reading, writing, and speaking, is a complex process best developed by consistent practice. Listening is the vital skill providing the basis for the successful communication and successful professional career. Effective listening skills enhance the ability to learn and adapt new information, knowledge, and skills. Listening comprehension is more than extracting meaning from incoming speech. It is a process of matching speech with the background knowledge, i.e. what the listeners already know about the subject.

Listening in a CLIL environment is different from listening in a content class conducted in the mother-tongue and from listening comprehension tasks in the language class. The **aim of** this paper is to analyse how CLIL methodology could be useful in developing listening comprehension in both content and language classes. It is very important to teach students how to listen. In this light, listening emerges first and foremost as a process and second as a product. Consequently learners become responsible for their own learning and gain control over the listening process. Listening skills can be developed by the instruction of general learning strategies. The CLIL approach could be of great help in reaching this goal and is going to be discussed in a greater detail in this paper.

Key words: *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); Language In Content Instruction (LICI); listening skills; cognitive skills; learning strategies.*

Introduction

Listening is a language skill, thus it can be developed through practice. In Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) it is important that students are provided with the suitable materials to listen to. These materials come in a variety of forms, first as a teacher's input, as well as peer input and interaction and as information source (recorded lectures, films, tutorials, etc). In language classes an audio-lingual method was considered to be very important for students to develop a better pronunciation, to train comprehension skills. Vandergrift (2002) points out that in the early 70's, work by Asher, Postovsky, Winitz and, later, Krashen, emphasized the role of listening as a tool for understanding and central to the process of language learning.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how CLIL methodology could be useful in developing listening comprehension in both content and language classes. Research findings are based on the materials produced by the international team of a Socrates Lingua 2 project - "Language in Content Instruction" (LICI) which was carried out during 2006-2009 and has involved 8 partners coming from 7 European countries. The focus of the LICI project and its products was the language of learning and instruction in a CLIL environment. The Language In Content Instruction (LICI) model emphasizes the role of language resources in encoding content-specific meaning. Language and meaning are integrated, and by extending language, meaning resources extend accordingly. The language focus consists of the training of language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), vocabulary and grammar. For linking content with language, general and content-specific thinking skills and strategies are analysed. This paper focuses on the analysis of theoretical issues as well as practical examples illustrating how it might be possible to select and use different strategies in order to develop listening skills in a CLIL environment.

Overview of theoretical developments in the field of listening comprehension

Larry Vandergrift (1999) emphasizes that listening is a complex, active process of interpretation in which listeners match what they hear with what they already know. Two distinct processes characterize listening comprehension. When learners rely on prior knowledge in order to understand the meaning of a message, they are using 'top-down' processes. Prior knowledge includes the knowledge of the topic, familiarity with the discipline, awareness of the listening context, the text-type, the culture or other information held in long-term memory. Top-down processing refers to how we use our world knowledge to attribute meaning to language input; how our knowledge of social convention helps us understand meaning. It involves "the listener's ability to bring prior information to bear on the task of understanding the "heard" language" (Morley, 2001).

'Bottom-up' processes are also used by learners when they rely on specific components of the L2 for aural comprehension. Meaning is constructed from morphemes to words to grammatical relationships to lexical meanings until, eventually, the message is decoded. "Bottom-up refers to that part of the aural comprehension process in which the understanding of the "heard" language is worked out proceeding from sounds to words to grammatical relationships in lexical meanings" (Morley, 2001).

Listening comprehension, according to Vandergrift (2002), is an interactive, interpretive process where listeners use both prior knowledge and linguistic knowledge in understanding messages. In other words, both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes are at work in the listening activity. It is a continuum where learners will lean towards one process or the other depending on their knowledge of the language, the topic or the listening objectives. If objectives are established before the listening task, learners have a purpose. They can

become selective and decide which of the two processes will be activated.

Some of the earliest theoretical developments in the listening field, as outlined by Kelly Congdon (2008), involved distinguishing between serious and social listening, as well as separating critical and evaluative listening from that centered on empathy with the speaker or comprehension of the speaker's message from the speaker's perspective. Although disagreement persists over the inclusion of this or that particular type and scholars continue to employ a number of different, overlapping names to connote slightly different types of listening, a general consensus exists that listening can be divided, according to listener purpose, into the following types: discriminative, critical (or evaluative), appreciative, therapeutic (or empathic), and self-listening.

Evelyn Pitre (2007) distinguishes between three types of listening: content listening, critical listening and emphatic listening. According to the author, the skills involved in content listening are threefold: identifying the key points; asking clarification questions and verifying content. For critical listening one needs to be able to listen for and test the content; evaluate the logic of the argument, the strength of the evidence, the validity of the conclusions, the implication of the message, the agenda of the speaker, etc. Empathic listening involves the following skills: ability to ask open questions; keep the speaker going; reflect on the content.

Another conceptual tool is suggested by Lyman Steil. Known as the S.I.E.R. model, each letter of the acronym stands for a phase in the listening process: Sensing the message, Interpreting (or understanding the message), Evaluating the message, and Responding to the message (Steil, Barker & Watson, 1983). One notable element missing in the S.I.E.R. model is remembering (memory/ retention) which plays an obviously crucial role in listening. Interpreting could arguably be understood as including retention but primarily means recreating the message in order to understand and give meaning to it. Process models, one of which is S.E.I.R., can serve as useful conceptual schemas for organizing and understanding the inter-relations between the various component skills involved in listening.

O'Malley and Chamot (1994) propose an educational model, the CALLA model, which incorporates modern pedagogical principles, academic content- and task-based language learning combined with explicit learning strategies instruction. The authors distinguish between 5 phases of strategy use in a model lesson: preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation, and expansion. Robbins (2000) suggests the following stages of a strategic listening comprehension task:

Before listening - setting a goal, planning, activating background knowledge, predicting.

While listening - selective attention, inferring, imagery.

After listening - clarifying, summarization, elaboration, personalization, checking the goal, evaluation.

Teachers can sensitize their audience by making their learners aware of useful listening strategies. Thus, listening becomes

an active skill developed through awareness of and repeated application of listening strategies

Thus we see that there are lots of theoretical models developed, the goal of which is to enhance listening skills. Still, the overall achievement depends very much on the successful process of learning where learners and teachers find the best practices in order to achieve these goals.

How to teach listening?

It is important in teaching listening to make the students aware of how to choose and practice the strategies that help to achieve good results. Pre-listening activities help the learners to make decisions what to listen for and to put the emphasis on the content meaning while listening. First, students need to activate their **knowledge of the topic**, second, a **purpose** for listening combined with specific listening tasks must be established. Thus the students are encouraged to look for the specific information they need to listen for and the degree of detail required. Using all the available information, students can make predictions to anticipate what they might hear.

A CLIL teacher should constantly provide the students with language scaffolding. Repetition, rephrasing, use of synonyms and antonyms, circumlocution, questions, elicitation and oral feedback are some examples of oral language support. Some examples of visual scaffolding are pictures, maps, charts, tables and other graphic organizers that help the listener to structure the information that one is listening to and pay attention to the key content. For advanced learners, who are listening to lectures, the listening material can be scaffolded by more complex forms of visuals, such as T-lists or Venn Diagrams, etc. The use and complexity of visuals depends on the age, level of language proficiency of the learners and the complexity of the content under study.

Among the basic principles of effective listening, emphasized by Kelly Congdon (2008), one could mention the importance of active attention. Listening involves mental activity, including cognitive and affective processing of received information. Consequently, educators enhance listening competence through diligent focus on the mental processes and skills involved in perceptive listening, such as memory, sense making, and evaluation. Listening is a variable communication activity that differs according to the purpose and nature of the listener and the speaker, the content and style of the message, the channel of communication, and the surrounding environment.

Application of listening comprehension strategies in a CLIL classroom

Teachers must be aware of the fact that listening in a CLIL environment is different from listening in a content lesson conducted in the mother-tongue and from listening comprehension tasks in language lessons. Several factors contribute to the difficulty of the listening task.

From a linguistic perspective the following factors can hinder comprehension in the foreign language: speech rate, complexity of language structures and lexis, phonological features (e.g. dialects or foreign accents, different speakers) lack of visuals, background noise and occasional lapses of concentration or hearing. From a subject (content) perspective

the background knowledge of the topic is very important. If the listener is not familiar with the subject it may hinder the process of understanding - the cognitive load the material presents may be too high.

In the language lesson listening materials tend to challenge the learners' language knowledge and skills and rarely put a burden on cognitive skills, whereas the material at a content lesson addresses thinking processes and apart from specific content-related terms the language is not demanding.

During the language lesson learners usually listen to recorded real-life situations, which demonstrate how the foreign language is used, e.g. a story-telling, a dialogue, a discussion, an extract from a film or a radio program. Listening materials in the content lesson concentrate on an academic context, the focus is on the information and the speaker is very often of secondary relevance. Moreover, the primary source of listening is the teacher himself or herself. Another common source is video material with explanatory text, which shows aspects of the subject which cannot be displayed in another way. Slight differences in the listening task necessitate the reconsideration of approaches and methods in the CLIL lesson.

Listening skills can be developed by the explicit instruction of general learning **strategies**, which are "methods of

approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information" (Brown, 1994, p.104). Specifically, listening comprehension strategies are steps taken by learners to help them acquire, store, retrieve, and/or use information (O'Malley, Chamot & Küpper, 1989).

Listeners use **metacognitive**, **cognitive**, and **socio-affective strategies** to facilitate comprehension and to make their learning more effective. **Metacognitive** strategies (e.g. *planning, note-taking, transfer, resourcing, self-monitoring, evaluation, selective attention, directed attention and parsing*) are important because they oversee, regulate or direct the language learning process. **Cognitive** strategies (e.g. *elaboration, inferencing, imagery, summarization, contextualization, grouping, repetition, problem identification, hypothesis testing, translation and predicting*) manipulate the material to be learned or apply a specific technique to a listening task. **Socio-affective** (e.g. *reprise, feedback, uptaking, clarifying, affective control*) strategies describe the techniques listeners use to collaborate with others, to verify understanding or to lower anxiety. Table 1 provides the list of activities corresponding to three groups of strategies, recommended to use by O'Malley, Chamot & Küpper (1989), in order to develop the skills of listening comprehension and to improve the overall learning process.

Table 1. Listening comprehension strategies and practice activities

Activities for metacognitive strategies	Activities for cognitive strategies	Activities for socio-affective strategies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preview the content in different forms. 2. Rehearse the pronunciation of potential content words. 3. Establishing the purpose for listening. 4. Practice perception regularly. 5. Take short notes of important content words. 6. Check current comprehension with context of the message and prior knowledge. 7. Continue to listen for clarification in spite of difficulty. 8. Evaluate comprehension using contexts, prior knowledge and external resources. 9. Determine potential value of subsequent parts of input. 10. Listen selectively according to purpose. 11. Listen for gist. 12. Determine the potential value of subsequent parts and vary intensity of attention accordingly. 13. Memorize words or phrases for later processing. 14. Pay attention to discourse markers, visuals and body language, tones and pauses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use prior knowledge and knowledge about the target language to elaborate and complete interpretation. 2. Infer missing or unfamiliar words using contextual clues, familiar content words, visual clues. 3. Draw on knowledge of the world. 4. Apply knowledge about the target language. 5. Visualize scenes, objects, events, etc. being described. 6. Reconstruct meaning using words heard. 7. Relate one part of the text to another. 8. Relate limited interpretation to a wider social/linguistic context. 9. Assess the importance of problematic parts and decide whether to ignore them or actively seek clarification. 10. Find L1 equivalents for selected key words. 11. Translate a sequence of utterance. 12. Predict general contents before listening using contexts and prior knowledge. 13. Predict details and unfinished utterances using contexts and prior knowledge. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paraphrase what speakers say to check understanding 2. Ask speaker for clarification and repetition. 3. Learn to relax before and during listening. 4. Encourage oneself to continue listening.

Based on O'Malley, Chamot & Küpper (1989), Young (1997) and Goh (2000, 2002).

Research shows that skilled listeners use more metacognitive strategies and are more flexible in the use of them than their less-skilled counterparts (e.g., Goh, 1998). It seems

that the proficient listeners are able to select from a large list of strategies and use the appropriate ones selectively and flexibly in accordance with the task demands, whereas

the learners with less proficient language skills use fewer strategies and they fail to choose appropriate strategies for the appointed task. As Graham (2006) notes, one of the difficulties in strategy instruction is the nature of the skill of listening: it is ephemeral and non-visible, which is likely to affect students' low assessments of their listening skills and consequently to low motivation and poor success in foreign-language listening comprehension. The results of strategy instruction are controversial, but there is some evidence that consistent, long-term strategy instruction is able to improve learners' strategic activity and lead to better learning outcomes (Graham & Macaro, 2007; Graham et al., 2008).

In sum, it is likely that students who have been exposed to the foreign language of instruction for a long time and are used to focusing on content in the acoustic input are better equipped with listening strategies than those students whose exposure to language is more restricted. A CLIL environment provides students with opportunities for the development and use of listening strategies, which makes it possible for all students, but especially for the less successful strategy users to develop core comprehension strategies (prediction and identifying core vocabulary (Graham & Macaro, 2007)) as a by-product of content learning during a relatively long exposure to aural input.

Listening is an important skill in a CLIL context, as provision of comprehensible input is central for implicit acquisition of language. In addition to teacher talk, other means of providing aural input should be used, such as videos, podcasts, films and documentaries, in particular if the teacher is a non-native speaker of the target language. Such authentic content-related listening materials provide accurate and up-to-date information about the theme studied, provide samples of different speaking styles and thus offer practice for the students to learn to understand individual and regional varieties of the target language. In addition, authentic samples of content-area listening (viewing) materials provide samples of linguistic features typical of the register and display models of the academic register for the students to adopt.

Obviously, the teacher will have to adapt the materials to be optimal for the target students. While it is not possible to adapt the original video or audio materials in the same way as one may modify written materials, the teacher can provide scaffolding tasks to accompany the materials, such as pre-listening, during and post-listening activities and pre-teaching of core vocabulary. Another option for increasing students' learning potential is strategy instruction.

On the other hand, to shift the emphasis of listening practice from product to process and the responsibility of learning from the teacher to the student, the learners should be involved in peer interaction and be motivated to speak, listen, react and discuss the problematic issues under study. Project work could be very useful here, as the learners may be involved in practical application of listening strategies and integrate them with the knowledge of the subject under study. The best integration could be reached with the advanced language learners, but it could be practiced with the learners who have the intermediate language skills as well.

To be actively involved in the peer interaction, to practice listening comprehension and speaking, combined with the practical application of different CLIL strategies, presentations in the class of different subject issues performed by the students, using different media, e.g. PowerPoint, could be very useful. Students become involved and motivated to learn because activities and tasks are related to their future professional life. Tasks provide opportunities to attend to relevant language features while maintaining emphasis on meaning. Tasks that derive their content from a specific discipline are related to discipline-specific thinking, and the language output in turn reflects this discipline or subject-specific thinking. In content-based teaching, task complexity may be defined as the level of the combined cognitive load and related language output. Thus not only listening comprehension, but also speaking and content skills are integrated.

Conclusion

In conclusion it should be said that listening competence is a complex skill that needs to be developed by practice. Teachers should provide their learners with opportunities to reflect on their listening processes and practices. The role of the teacher is very important, as the teacher not only guides the students through the process of listening, but also motivates them and puts them in control of their learning.

The success of CLIL methodology in developing listening skills is evident. In the language lesson listening materials aim at developing language knowledge and skills and less attention is devoted to developing cognitive skills, whereas the material in a content lesson addresses thinking processes. In a language lesson learners usually listen to different recorded situations, which demonstrate how the foreign language is used. Listening materials in the content lesson concentrate on academic contexts, the focus is on the information. In a CLIL environment both cognitive skills and language skills are integrated and developed simultaneously. Studying the subject, the learners improve their language proficiency.

Developing good listening skills is an inherent part of the whole learning process. It cannot be taken apart and analyzed as a separate skill without the general context of CLIL or any other educational methodology. But as previous research indicates (Liubinienė, 2008), from the language point of view, CLIL students develop better oral communication skills, they improve listening skills, they also develop reading skills and academic writing, as well as acquire the skills of presentation and develop ability to answer spontaneously to questions. Thus they definitely improve both subject and foreign language competence.

From the subject point of view, they gain better access to subject-specific foreign language terminology, which leads to easier comprehension of texts in the target language. They acquire the skills of understanding the content with the help of context or extra-linguistic information. This fact increases learner motivation and prepares for future studies and work.

If learners learn about the processes of listening they are likely to become more autonomous in their attitudes and behavior when presented with listening material. It is also

likely that they will seek listening opportunities more readily, beyond the classroom, as they will view listening as a process as opposed to a product. In this light, the contribution of CLIL cannot be overestimated since learners explore languages in a variety of cognitive and communicative contexts.

References:

1. Brown, H. D., 1994. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. 3rd edition.
2. Goh, C. C. M., 1998. How ESL Learners with Different Listening Abilities Use Comprehension Strategies and Tactics. *Language Teaching Research*, 2 (2), pp.124-147.
3. Goh, C. C. M., 2000. A Cognitive Perspective on Language Learners' Listening Comprehension Problems. *System*, 28, pp.55-75.
4. Goh, C. C. M., 2002. *Teaching Listening in the Language Classroom*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
5. Graham, S., 2006. Listening Comprehension: The Learner's Perspective. *System*, 34, pp.165-182.
6. Graham, S. & Macaro, E., 2007. Designing Year 12 Strategy Training in Listening and Writing: From Theory to Practice. *Language Learning Journal*, 35 (2), pp.153-173.
7. Graham, S., Santos, D. & Vanderplank, R., 2008. Listening Comprehension and Strategy Use: A Longitudinal Exploration. *System*, 36, pp.52-68.
8. Congdon, K., 2008. Introducing Listening. Available at: <http://teachingfsem08.umwblogs.org/files/2008/05/introducing-listening.doc>
9. Liubiniene, V., 2008. Has CLIL Got the Future in Engineering Education Curriculum? *Global Cooperation in Engineering Education. ISI Conference Proceedings*. Kaunas: Technologija, pp. 42-46.
10. O'Malley, J. M., Chamot, A. U. & Küpper, L., 1989. Listening Comprehension Strategies in Second Language Acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*, 10 (4), pp.418-437.
11. O'Malley, J. M. & Chamot, A. U., 1994. *Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Morley, J., 2001. Aural Comprehension Instruction: Principles and Practices. In: M. Celce-Murcia, ed. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, 3rd edition. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
13. Pitre, E., 2007. Three Types of Listening. Available at: <http://www.cob.unt.edu/mgmt/pitre/mgmt3330/Types%20Of%20Listening.pdf>
14. Robbins, J., 2000. Teaching Listening and Speaking Strategies in Japan - CALLA style. *Explorations in Teacher Education*, 8 (2).
15. Stiel, L., Barker, L. & Watson, K., 1983. *Effective Listening: Key to Your Success*. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
16. Vandergrift, L., 1997. The Strategies of Second Language (French) Listeners: A Descriptive Study. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30, pp.387-409.
17. Vandergrift, L., 1999. Facilitating Second Language Listening Comprehension: Acquiring Successful Strategies. *ELT Journal*, 53, p.6.
18. Vandergrift, L., 2002. 'It Was Nice to See that our Predictions Were Right': Developing Metacognition in L2 Listening Comprehension. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58, p.75.
19. Vandergrift, L., 2002. Listening: Theory and Practice in Modern Foreign Language Competence. Available at: <http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/goodpractice.aspx?resourceid=67>
20. Young, M. Y. C., 1997. A Serial Ordering of Listening Comprehension Strategies Used by Advanced ESL Learners in Hong Kong. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7, pp.35-53.

Vilmantė Liubiniene

Klausymo įgūdžių lavinimas taikant IDUKM metodologiją

Santrauka

Integruotame dalyko ir užsienio kalbos mokymo (IDUKM) procese ypač svarbus vaidmuo tenka kalbiniam gebėjimams, nes kalba yra labai svarbi priemonė tinkamai prasmei konstruoti ir perteikti. Kalba ir prasmė – neatsiejami komponentai. Lavinant kalbinius įgūdžius, plečiasi ir dalyko suvokimo ribos. Nors visi kalbiniai gebėjimai IDUKM sistemoje yra vienodai svarbūs, šio straipsnio tikslas – išanalizuoti, kaip IDUKM metodologija gali padėti tobulinti klausymo įgūdžius.

Sėkmingą klausymo įgūdžių lavinimo procesą užtikrina tam tikrų mokymosi strategijų parinkimas ir taikymas, kuris išsamiai aptariamas straipsnyje. Straipsnyje analizuojami teoriniai klausymo įgūdžių tobulinimo modeliai ir praktinės klausymo strategijų taikymo galimybės.

Mokymo(si) strategijų taikymas teigiamai veikia mokymosi rezultatus. Tačiau geriausias būdas klausymo įgūdžiams ugdyti yra nuolatinė praktika. Taikant IDUKM metodus, tobulėja kalbiniai įgūdžiai, plečiasi dalyko žinios, tuo būdu įgyjama dalykinė ir kalbinė kompetencija. Labai svarbu išmokti klausytis. Akcentuojamas pats procesas ir besimokančiojo indėlis jame.

Straipsnis įteiktas 2009 11
Parengtas spaudai 2009 11

About the author

Vilmantė Liubiniene, Dr., Assoc. Prof., Kaunas University of Technology, Faculty of Humanities, Centre of Foreign Languages.

Research interests: sociolinguistics, CLIL, translation studies, language and culture.

Address: Kaunas University of Technology, Faculty of Humanities, Centre of Foreign Languages, Gedimino Str. 43, LT-44240 Kaunas, Lithuania

E-mail: vilmante.liubiniene@ktu.lt

