THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) WITHIN THE CLIL CLASSROOM, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SPAIN

IMPORTANCIA DEL DESARROLLO DEL APRENDIZAJE EMOCIONAL Y SOCIAL DENTRO DE LA CLASE DE AICLE HACIENDO ESPECIAL REFERENCIA A ESPAÑA

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Abstract

The Spanish Law of Education (LOMCE)[1] of 2013 states that teachers and schools have the responsibility to foster students' personal growth and social integration (BOE 2013, Article 12886, p. 97858-9). Meanwhile, the progressive implementation of bilingual education in many autonomous communities within Spain, such as the Autonomous Community of Madrid, has necessarily shifted teaching towards approaches such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This article presents an argument for the compatibility and mutual inclusiveness of CLIL and the objectives of the LOMCE regarding social and emotional learning.

Key Words: CLIL; Social and Emotional Learning, personal growth, mindfulness, education.

Resumen

La Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (LOMCE) de 2013, expone que la educación debe facilitar el desarrollo personal y la integración social en los alumnos (BOE 2013, Artículo 12886, p. 97858-9). A la vez, la implantación progresiva de la educación bilingüe en muchas comunidades autónomas en España, como la de Madrid, ha hecho necesaria la inclusión de metodologías como el Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lengua Extranjera (AICLE). Ese artículo argumenta la compatibilidad y mutua inclusividad de AICLE y los objetivos de la LOMCE en lo que respecta al desarrollo personal e integración social.

Palabras clave: AICLE, aprendizaje emocional y social, crecimiento personal, mindfulness, educación.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) deals with acquiring and learning to apply the skills necessary to understand and manage our emotions. It provides us with the tools necessary to set and achieve positive goals and make responsible decisions. We learn to feel and show empathy for others, and to establish and maintain positive relationships (CASEL, 2018).

Traditionally in education, SEL has often been relegated to a distant second place after academic achievement. While the development of the cognitive domain is crucial in education, of equal importance is that of the affective domain (Lantieri & Goleman, 2014). In schools, our affective state plays a major role in our behaviour and performance levels (Zins, 2004) Indeed, emotional receptivity, humour and human warmth are powerful facilitators of learning (Seldon, 2010, p.4). In

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[1] *Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa, 2013.*

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both the professional and personal sphere, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence is essential for success: be it in the ability to develop and maintain relationships, friendships, to hold down a job, or to nurture future children. They are skills we need to develop to function successfully as individuals, in the classroom, in school, with our family, and within society (CASEL, 2003). Arguably, it is essential that schools, and therefore, teachers, accept a level of responsibility for helping children develop as fully functioning members of the society they live in. To achieve this, we must aim beyond *mere* academic performance.

Article 1 of the Spanish Law of Education[2] of 2013 (henceforth LOMCE), aimed at improving the quality of education, states that teachers and schools have the responsibility to foster students' personal growth and social integration, thus recognizing their individuality. The education our students receive as children and adolescents helps determine their aims and expectations throughout their personal and professional life (BOE 2013, Article 12886, p. 97858-9). Spain is not alone in this initiative. In the US, for example, the federal education law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)[3], also includes provisions for the teaching of social and emotional learning (CASEL, 2018). Likewise, The Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2015[4] allowed funded training in classroom instruction and schoolwide initiatives that enable students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills most conducive to social and emotional competency (Library of Congress, 2018).

As mentioned, the LOMCE (BOE 2013, Article 12886, p. 97858-9) makes specific reference to a pupil's personal growth as an integral part of education. We can, therefore, argue that, according to the LOMCE, a pupil's personal development is a curricular requirement. We could also argue that, aside from the curriculum, teachers act as mentors to their students every day. Thus, on an affective level, it behoves every teacher to take responsibility for, at least, creating *the possibility* for students' personal growth.

There are, however, challenges in its implementation. In the context of Spain, and especially Madrid, much of the content taught in schools is in an additional language. In recent years, regional governments within Spain have invested considerable resources into expanding bilingual education. In 2015-16, the regional government of the Community of Madrid had 221,077 students participating in the Spanish-English Bilingual Education Programme in state and *concertado* (privately owned, state-funded) schools. This does not include private schools and institutions, or other publicly-funded bilingual programmes (2016c). In the same year, there were 673 bilingual Primary and Secondary schools in the Madrid region (Comunidad de Madrid, 2016a).

In state primary, secondary and *concertado* schools, children are taught up to 70% of their curriculum in an additional language, frequently English. Madrid's regional government states that all subjects may be taught in the L2, except Mathematics, Spanish Language and Literature, (BOCM, 2010, Article 15, 3 B). In this context, the bilingual classroom is becoming the norm, rather than the exception in Madrid.

Teaching and learning content through an additional language poses many challenges which have required the development of approaches that favour the learning of both content and language. This is especially relevant when we consider the complexities involved in fostering social and emotional learning in an additional language. The dual-focused approach of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) encompasses a wide variety of teaching practices that offer the students possibilities for academic growth with regards to both content and language (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010). Here, we will consider how CLIL may help resolve these challenges.

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[2] *Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa, 2013.*
[3] Passed in December 10, 2015.
[4] H.R.850 — 114th Congress (2015-2016). See: https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/850

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Why and how is personal growth and emotional intelligence compatible with CLIL?

CLIL offers opportunities both within and beyond the regular curriculum to enrich learning, skill acquisition and development (Coyle *et al*., 2010, p.28). The teaching methods incorporated into CLIL also support social and emotional development, and intrinsic motivation. These approaches include collaborative or cooperative learning techniques such as team work (promoting interpersonal intelligence and social skills); scaffolding activities (supporting diverse learning needs), and active learning, (fostering independent thought, as learners cease to be passive receivers of knowledge, and become responsible for their own learning). Effective learning cannot take place without active learning and participation (Coyle *et al*. 2010).

We could argue that the teaching practices encompassed by CLIL, specifically those of active and discovery learning, also offer a possibility for growth at an experiential level. When students actively participate and work out the concepts for themselves through their own analysis and evaluation, learning takes place experientially (Laevers, 2002; Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010). Experiential learning, where the student experiences both the processes and the result personally through their own thought processes, can also be considered *deeper learning*.

The National Research Council defines "deeper learning as the process through which an individual becomes capable of taking what was learned in one situation and applying it to new situations (i.e., transfer)" (2012, p. 5). Coyle *et al*. further defined it as involving the critical analysis of new ideas and connecting them to known concepts. This leads to understanding and long-term retention of concepts, so they can be used for problem solving in unfamiliar contexts. In contrast, surface learning is the acceptance of information as isolated and unlinked facts which leads only to superficial retention (2010, p.39). Below we can see an example of how SEL can be conceptualized as deeper learning:

Figure 1. Example of how personal growth can be conceptualised as deeper learning. Adapted by Author based on definition of deep learning in Coyle et al. 2010, p. 39
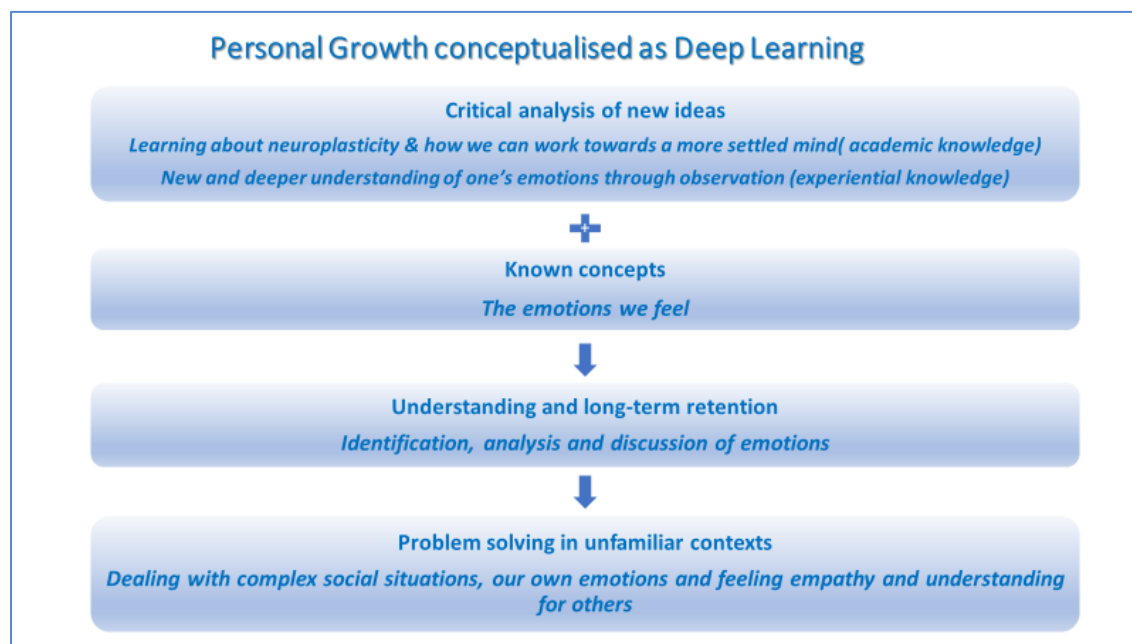

Moreover, any form of learning creates new synaptic connections in the brain. Research has shown that these tenuous connections need reinforcement and repetition to become long lasting (Siegel,

2007). Deeper learning, by drawing on existing knowledge (schema) and applying that knowledge to a new situation, would appear to reinforce the learning process.

The relationship between the 4C's and social and emotional learning in the CLIL classroom

CLIL integrates four contextualized building blocks, known as the 4C's: Content (the subject matter), Communication (language learning and using), and Cognition (the learning and thinking processes). The fourth, Culture (developing intercultural understanding), permeates, or envelops, the other three, as all necessarily take place within a certain cultural environment. Coyle et al. furthermore emphasised the symbiotic relationship of these four building blocks (2010, p.41).

Figure 2. The 4C's Framework. Coyle et al. (2010, p. 42)
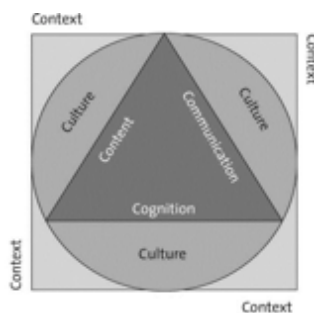
If we accept this symbiotic relationship of culture, content, cognition, and communication within CLIL, the 4C's become interconnected and mutually inseparable. If we take the premise that *conceptualisation* of any form requires Culture, Communication, Cognition, and Content, then equally we could posit that this same premise applies to social and emotional development. We can argue therefore that exploring and developing the affective growth of our students in a CLIL classroom require the 4C's to be fully explored for conceptualisation, as the concepts involved in emotional development are highly complex and abstract. Below, we have a possible interpretation of how the 4C's can be applied to SEL:

Culture as the central pivot of the 4C's.
The 4C's include Culture as being central to CLIL. Our culture is in many ways inseparable from the society in which we live. Coyle et al. further make a distinction between the macro (societal values) and micro (academic) level of culture (2010). SEL in the classroom is arguably the epitome of both levels of culture. It integrates the values of the society we live in, the classroom environment and individual understanding, and consciously teaches the values that can help us function optimally at all levels.

Cognition. The cognitive demands of developing one's inner awareness.
Cognition involves developing the ability to recognize, understand and evaluate complex thoughts. The affective domain deals with attitudes and emotions. Developing the ability to recognise and label emotions we feel without becoming caught up in the emotion connects both the cognitive and affective domain e.g. I recognize [cognitive] that I am angry [affective]. Once we recognise that we feel anger, we can manage that anger rather than just feel the anger and deal with its possible consequences later. Fostering social and emotional growth can also be seen as metacognitive knowledge in that it develops self-knowledge and knowledge about cognitive tasks (Anderson, Krathwohl & Bloom 2001, as adapted by Coyle *et al.*, 2010, p.31).

Communication- language to link understanding, knowledge, and cognition.
It is a truism to say we think in words. Language is essential to deepening our understanding and conceptualization. Naming and discussing our emotions are essential elements in coming to understand, and then internalize concepts.

Content- a mix of academic knowledge and experiential learning.

Academic knowledge encompasses learning about anatomy of the brain and functional neuroplasticity (the processes by which brain structure and function develop and change in response to our experiences in life). This can be enriched when combined with experiential learning as a form of active discovery learning (learning to meditate and observe the breath- how can I use this information to help me relax/concentrate/calm down?).

Figure 3. Conceptualization of our emotions as based on the 4C's by Coyle et al. (2010). Adapted by author.
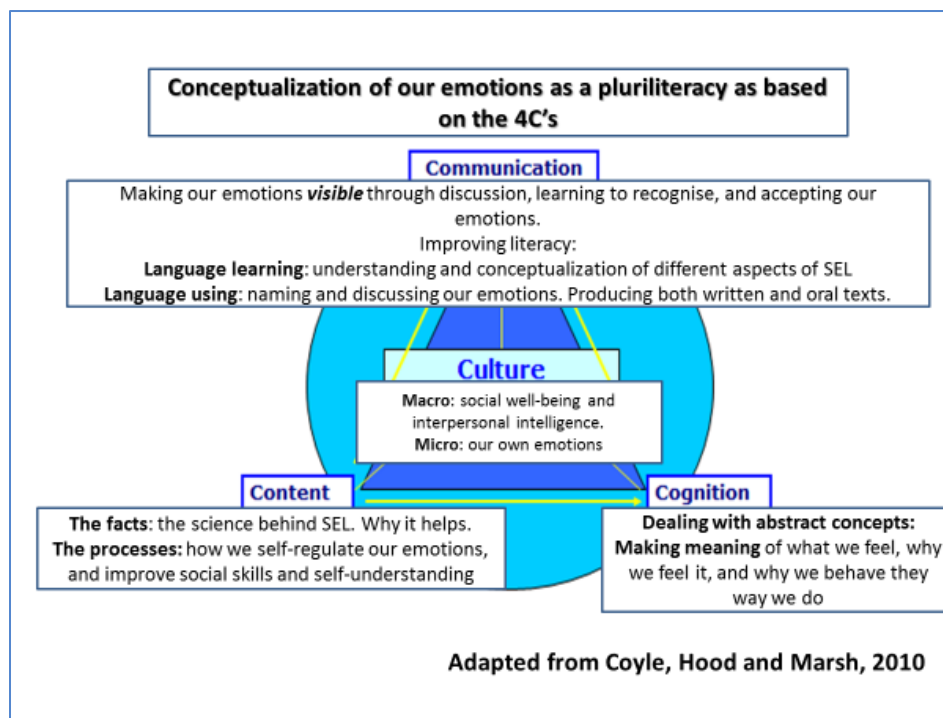
Social and Emotional Learning Frameworks

Social and emotional learning may take many forms in the classroom. These may be individually put together by each teacher, as deemed pertinent to the moment. When implemented in schools as official policy, SEL is often taught within a framework. SEL frameworks may vary slightly, but generally they deal with five core competences: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness, such as that by CASEL (2018) as seen in figure 4. Like CLIL, SEL includes intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competences.

Figure 4: An example of CORE SEL competences. Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), (2017)

According to CASEL (2018), effective SEL approaches often incorporate four elements, **Sequenced** (connected and coordinated action**), Active** (active learning)**, Focused** (focused on developing personal and social skills) and **Explicit**. These are represented by the acronym

Sequenced: *Connected and coordinated*
Active: *Active forms of learning to help students master new skills and activities*
Focused: *A component that emphasizes developing personal and social skills*
Explicit: *Targeting specific social and emotional skills*

SAFE:

CLIL is compatible with the development of emotional intelligence on many levels, and effective SEL approaches can be closely linked to the core objectives of CLIL. Below (see figure 5) we can see how the specific aims of SAFE within the SEL core competences correlate with the teaching approaches promoted as part of CLIL:

Figure 5. A possible correlation between the competences encompassed by SAFE and CLIL. Adapted by Author from the definition of SAFE in CASEL (2017).
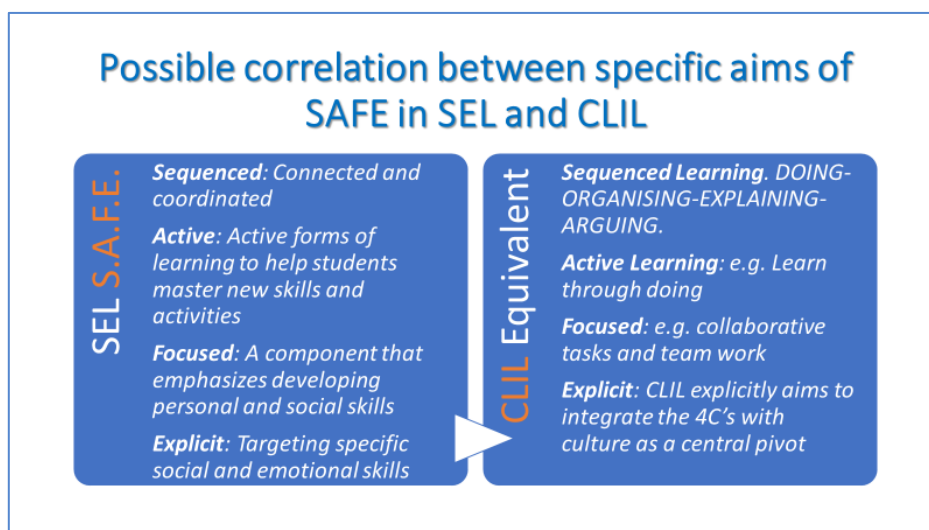
The need to teach Social and Emotional learning (SEL) in our classroom

Adolescence is a time when the brain undergoes considerable change in the neural pathways that have existed hitherto as children (Blakemore & Mills; Mills, Lalonde, Clasen, Giedd, & Blakemore; Siegel 2014). Essentially the brain is "rewired", generally between the ages of 12-14, with considerable new myelin formation resulting in more efficient and faster *linkage*. Furthermore, the brain undergoes *differentiation*. This is referred to as the "pruning process", where the brain circuitry becomes more specialized by breaking down many existing neural pathways, forming new connections (Siegel, 2016). This is an essential process to prepare the dependent child for an independent adulthood. The child who seeks, and needs, his parent's protection must develop into an adult capable of rational and independent thought and actions: a fully functioning individual able to respond to diverse needs, responsibilities, and burdens.

By teaching personal growth and fostering emotional maturity, we can empower our students with the knowledge that they are largely in control of their brain's development and rewiring. The study of functional neuroplasticity shows how the brain changes in response to experience, as our experiences affect the neural pathways formed in our brain. Writing about adolescents, Siegel (2014) states:

"If we come to see adolescence as a period of time, and adolescents as individuals, filled with untapped potential, we are much more likely to see the realization of that possibility and power in positive directions. When we empower adolescents in this way, we can inspire them to enable integration to unfold in their neural development."

Adolescence represents a period of brain development during which environmental experiences-including teaching-profoundly shape the developing brain. Moreover, the social brain and social cognition undergo a profound period of development in adolescence (Blakemore, & Mills, 2014). As a result, teachers need to provide tools for their pupils to cope with the pressures of schooling, the onset of adolescence, and prepare them to successfully function as members of society. One of the ways to do this is to foster personal growth by developing their interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence.

The use of mindfulness techniques as part of SEL

The use of techniques such as mindfulness meditation in the classroom can complement SEL. Meditation, such as that practiced in mindfulness is increasingly being used in schools as a way to provide pupils and teachers with tools to foster personal growth (Weare, 2013; Sanger & Dorjee, 2016).

While mindfulness meditation needs to be taught experientially, it can also be taught academically. Experientially, it can lead to internal recognition and understanding of how we feel inside, and react to complex social situations, such as an argument, tapping into the whole spectrum of the affective domain. It is a highly abstract process, and on a cognitive level requires a variety of lower and higher order cognitive skills. On an academic level, experiential learning can be remembered, understood, analysed, and evaluated through discussion and projects. Models, pictures, and diagrams of the brain can be used and created to deepen understanding and analysis. We can use a combination of visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic elements to appeal to different multiple intelligences within our class. In such a way, academic knowledge and personal experience can mutually complement, deepen knowledge, and motivate. Realising that our experiences shape our physical brain and mind, and that we can work towards a calmer, more balanced and content self can be a highly intrinsically motivating experience.

As individuals, we are all influenced by those around us, and their attitude to us. For learning to take place, it is essential that the learner believes in his or her ability to succeed. It is, therefore, crucial that the class atmosphere be one that encourages self-belief in each individual and does not create fear of failure. Studies highlight the importance of motivation for effective learning to take place (e.g. Dörnyei, 1994, 2013). Motivation lowers anxiety, and the affective filter, making the learner more open to the acquisition of new knowledge (Krashen, 1982; MacIntyre, & Gardner, 1991). It also stimulates the retention of new knowledge beyond the capacity of short-term memory. This is especially true of intrinsic motivation, where the motivation and desire to learn comes from within, rather than from external factors (such as improving one's grade). Intrinsic motivation can also lead to improved behaviour- a child that is motivated to learn is less likely to become disruptive, which in turn can enhance the possibilities for learning to take place for both the pupil concerned, and those around him. Thus, the importance of stimulating and harnessing a child's motivation becomes of the utmost importance in the classroom.

However, if the role of motivation in learning, especially intrinsic motivation, is crucial, how can we stimulate it? Cultivating intrinsic motivation in our students can be considerably harder than using extrinsic motivation. A threat of "be quiet and listen, or you won't go to the break," is easy to utter and administer, but is of limited value if we want our students *to want to learn.*

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Likewise, it is also of little use if we want our students to understand and truly grasp the importance of why learning is so important. This does not refer to achieving high grades, going to university, or getting a good job, which many students know at an intellectual level. Rather, it refers to the feeling of satisfaction and achievement which invariably comes from knowing we have done well, whatever the task may be, academic or not. This is a feeling that normally all of us would like to repeat. Our job, therefore, as teachers, could also be seen as one which encourages our students to strive for achievement, creating a feeling of success, and fostering intrinsic motivation.

As educators, we need to work on improving skills at all levels. While the Cognitive Domain (thinking skills) is undoubtedly valuable, as teachers and educators we must not forget the importance of the Affective Domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1973). This deals with emotions, values, attitude, and motivation, relating to interpersonal relations, emotions and attitudes. The lowest level of the affective domain, that of receiving phenomena, deals with listening to people with respect - a critical social and emotional skill. These, arguably, correlate well with CLIL. Skills such as internalizing values, which deals with characterization, are improved with collaborative team work. Other attributes, such as attitude also play a major role in education in multiple areas:

> "While a person may have the competency to perform a task, that does not mean he or she will have the desire (attitude) to do so correctly. In other words, competencies give us the ability to perform, while attitudes give us the desire to perform." (Clark, 2010)

Research into SEL concludes that well-planned and well-executed programmes can positively affect a broad range of students' social, health, behavioural, and academic outcomes (Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004, as stated in Education Development Center, n/d).

Exploring our emotions, accompanied by techniques such as meditation leads to the creation of new neural pathways and enhanced brain integration (Siegel, 2007). It may lead to considerable positive cognitive change. These practices are therefore both highly cognitively demanding, but also cognitively "rewarding". Knowing you can create a healthier brain and mind, can motivate you to work towards the goal, and the task can become self-motivating, furthering intrinsic motivation.

Changes are multiple, from improved attention (Van den Hurk, Giommi, Gielen, Speckens, & Barendregt, 2010; Baijal, Jha, Kiyonaga, Singh, & Srinivasan, 2011; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005; Semple, Lee, Rosa, & Miller, 2010) to changes in the brain's pre-frontal cortex leading to improved executive functions and the ability to focus (Chiesa, & Serretti, 2010), and self-regulate emotion (Roemer, Williston, & Rollins, 2015; Tang *et al*., 2010; Van den Hurk *et al*., 2011).

The amygdala is found within the limbic system, which is also referred to as the emotional centre of the brain. This is generally considered more primitive, and it is where strong emotions, such as fear and anger, are processed. Clinical trials have demonstrated that the amygdala becomes less activated, (Desbordes *et al.*, 2012) and reduced in size (Hölzel *et al*., 2010) through mindfulness meditation. This can increase an individual's ability to respond, rather than react, to a complex situation. In contrast, the hippocampus, which is critical for learning, memory, and regulation of the amygdala, becomes more active (Goldin & Gross, 2010). Mindfulness can improve classroom management as it can lead to a more harmonious atmosphere with more empathy for others (Schonert-Reichl *et al*., 2015), less recrimination and conflict (Barnes, Bauza, & Treiber, 2003), and reduced negative affective responses (Brown, Weinstein, & Creswell, 2012).

*Figure 6 How mindfulness changes the brain. Source: Mindful Schools 2017*
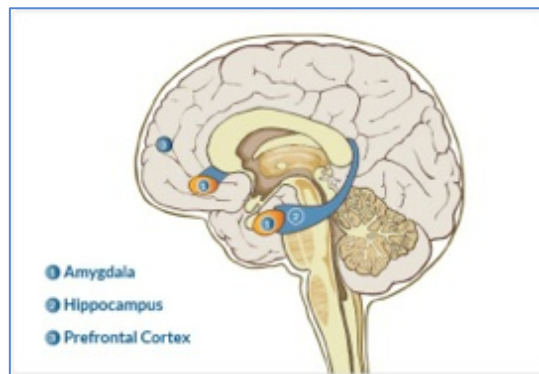
A drawback? SEL with limited linguistic competence.

One of the challenges often found with CLIL is the teaching and learning of complex concepts in a child's L2, in which children usually have a lower linguistic competence than in their L1. SEL poses a further challenge in that it is also highly demanding for the affective domain, and complex intangible concepts must be internalized to become *meaningful*. If not, we risk discussing emotions, and personal and social issues purely at an intellectual level, without relating the content to personal experience and knowledge. This scenario would likely *not* result in effective learning. For personal growth to be successful, the concepts must be felt experientially- as we must be able to relate to them. Talking about your emotions, or arguing, or swearing in one's L1 as compared to one's L2 produces a different level of understanding- we fail to feel the strength of the word, as we only understand it at an intellectual level. Words in our L2 do not carry the same emotional charge as in our L1. Hence, learners often swear with more ease in situations that may not be socially appropriate. This is especially true if our linguistic competence is limited in that language. Careful scaffolding in SEL in CLIL is therefore essential to facilitate learning.

CLIL recognises the importance of language *using*, as well as language *learning*. By using the L2 as the language of instruction to discuss personal growth, and providing support and scaffolding, we are using the language to create meaning, a fundamental requirement of CLIL. Teachers should provide a language framework to support language using. This is especially important due to the intangible and complex nature of the concepts involved. Scaffolding, and careful planning regarding language support is therefore essential for effective learning to take place.

The Conceptualizing Continuum, as developed by the Graz Group (2015), illustrates the critical role of language as an integral part of the learning process, as language and conceptualization interact, and are mutually inseparable.

Figure 7. The Conceptualizing Continuum, as developed by the Graz Group (2015).
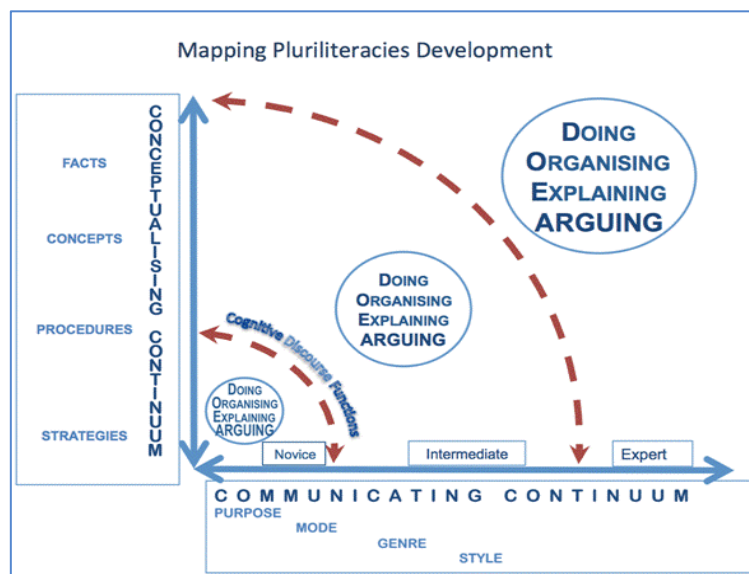
Learning becomes more visible with the increased ability to express deeper understanding. Likewise, increased language skills promote deeper understanding and conceptualisation. Moreover, personal growth through techniques such as mindfulness provides authentic contexts for language learning.

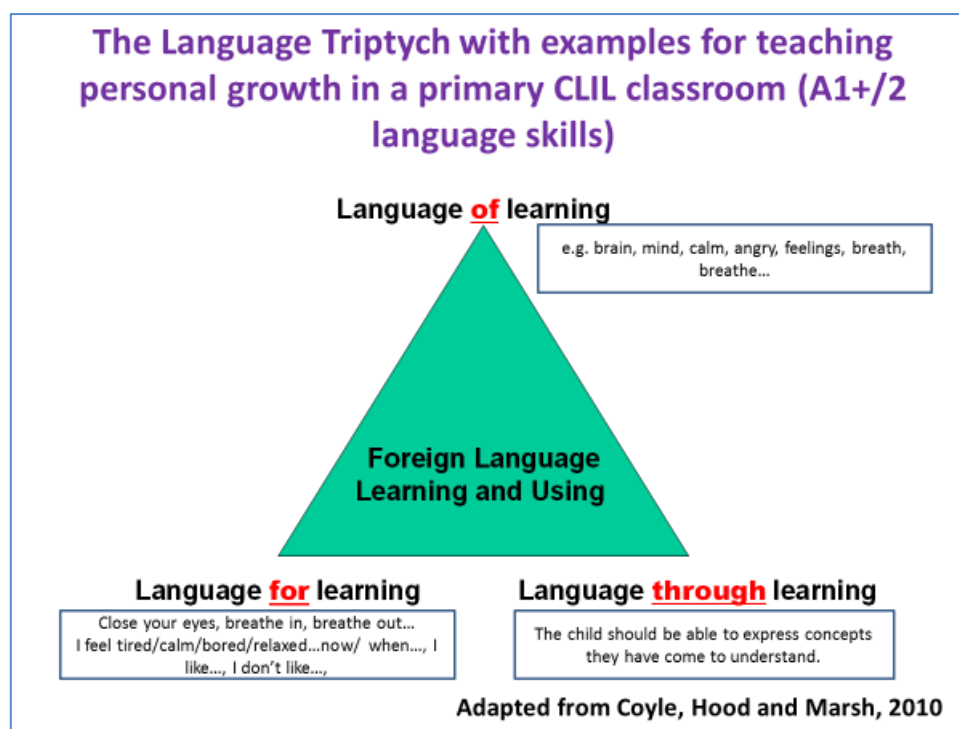**The Language Triptych – how can language of, for, and through learning be helpful?**

Coyle *et al.* (2003) use the Language Triptych to provide a framework for linguistic support. Below (see figure 9) we can see how the Language Tryptic can help us plan for the language requirements for a brief session of mindfulness meditation of observing the breath, to connect with our present emotional state.

Language of learning: the core phrases and vocabulary needed for understanding content. These could include the basic vocabulary of the emotions we feel.

Language for learning: the instructions used and repeated by the teaching during the meditation, and phrases that enable the students to express how they feel and think before, during and after the meditation.

Language through learning: While the language produced here is spontaneous, we can aid production through providing frequent opportunities for unplanned spontaneous speech throughout the activities. In SEL much of the learning occurs through discussion and sharing of ideas.

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Figure 9. Examples of how the Language Triptych (Coyle et al., 2010) can be applied in a primary CLIL classroom to teach SEL. Adapted by Author.

The Language Triptych with examples for teaching personal growth in a primary CLIL classroom (A1+/2 language skills)

Language of learning

e.g. brain, mind, calm, angry, feelings, breath, breathe…

Foreign Language Learning and Using

Language for learning

Close your eyes, breathe in, breathe out… I feel tired/calm/bored/relaxed…now/ when…, I like…, I don't like…,

Language through learning

The child should be able to express concepts they have come to understand.

Adapted from Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010

Conclusion

It could be argued that the ideal CLIL classroom already supports personal development through techniques such as active learning (as pupils take responsibility for their learning, they are developing intrapersonal skills), and collaborative and cooperative learning (which develop interpersonal skills). While arguably the case, the isolated use of these techniques would seem insufficient. Rather, SEL needs to be consciously implemented at classroom and school level, and more teachers should be incorporating, and weaving that content into their classroom. Rather than being limited to one teacher and one classroom, the whole school should become involved. Teachers from all subjects, whether it be in L1 or L2 should be part of the initiative; thus, students can become pluriliterate, able to understand themselves and those around them in complex social situations, better mimicking real life and the varied circumstances surrounding us, in both their L1 and L2. Through discovering techniques, such as self- regulation of emotion through breathing, pupils develop first-hand knowledge of the procedures and strategies involved in SEL. This integrative approach is both recommended in SEL, and the pluriliteracies model in CLIL (Meyer, Coyle, Halbach, Schuck & Ting, 2015).

The LOMCE states that secondary schools should offer either *Valores* (social values) or Religion. It is possible to some extent that SEL is covered in these two subjects. However, this would limit learning to either one subject or the other. Here, we could argue the benefits of the pluriliteracies approach. The development of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are transferable skills that permeate many aspects of a person's learning. As SEL content can be taught explicitly, so too can it be incorporated implicitly, like CLIL, into any subject in any language, as teaching strategies such as scaffolding, motivational tools, and classroom management techniques.

The atmosphere created by the teacher should be one of support, encouragement, and belief in each, and every, student's ability to learn. As educators, we must strive for our teaching practices to

promote deep thinking and reflection. Likewise, it is critical that the learner develops their level of understanding of their own emotions and of those around them. We can see how the teaching of social and emotional growth, and CLIL correlate on many levels, and are mutually compatible and even desirable. The use of both CLIL and SEL in our classroom can deeply enrich the learning process.

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