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CLIL teachers and their (de)fossilized language competence

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Abstract

The article investigates traces of language (de)fossilization in a group of CLIL teachers. The data collected comes from an online self-check list including the most popular linguistic “troublemakers” Polish users of English experience on a daily basis based on an inventory compiled by Wysocka (2009). The sample consists of 10 teachers from two bilingual secondary schools in Upper Silesia, Poland. Each respondent is described in terms of their linguistic strengths and weaknesses and then an attempt is made to assess the level of their (de)fossilization, distinguishing three different concepts, namely fossilized language or emergent fossilization, localized fossilization or suspended competence and (de)fossilized language. Finally, some possible areas for future research are suggested.

Keywords

CLIL, language fossilization, CLIL teachers

Nauczyciele CLIL i ich (nie)sfosylizowana kompetencja językowa

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie stopnia (nie)sfosylizowanej kompetencji językowej u nauczycieli CLIL. Zebrane dane pochodzą z przygotowanej ankiety online zawierającej listę najbardziej dokuczliwych problemów językowych, z którymi borykają się polscy użytkownicy języka angielskiego (Wysocka 2009). W skład próby wchodzi dziesięciu nauczycieli CLIL z 2 dwujęzycznych szkół ponadpodstawowych na terenie Górnego Śląska (Polska). Prezentując wyniki badań, wskazano na językowo mocne i słabe strony respondentów, a także podjęto próbę określenia stopnia fosylizacji języka wyodrębniające trzy różne postaci zjawiska. W podsumowaniu znajdują się wnioski oraz propozycje dalszych badań w tym zakresie.

Słowa kluczowe

CLIL, fosylizacja języka, nauczyciele CLIL

1. CLIL definition

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a common term for a number of similar approaches in Europe to teach content subjects through a foreign language. Other terms used are Bilingual Content Teaching, Bilingual Subject Teaching, or Content-based Language Teaching (Wolff 2003: 211). The term CLIL is now the most commonly used and “it is based on the assumption that foreign languages are best learnt by focusing in the classroom not so much on language but on the content which is transmitted through language” (Wolff 2003: 11). The novelty of this approach is that classroom “content is not so much taken from everyday life but rather from content subjects, e.g., mathematics, biology, geography etc. conducted by CLIL teachers” (Wolff 2003: 211-222).

2. CLIL teachers

Following a EURYDICE report (2006), CLIL teachers are able to teach one or more subjects of the curriculum through a language other than the language usually used for tuition in a certain context as well as teach the language itself, i.e., to be a specialist in at least two areas. Apart from that, CLIL instructors are expected to possess a number of competences to support CLIL development in a variety of situations.

2.1. CLIL teachers' competences

Marsh, Maljers and Hartiala (2001: 78–80) divided the “idealized competencies” required of a CLIL teacher into the following:

- (a) LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION – sufficient target language knowledge and pragmatic skills for CLIL, – sufficient knowledge of the language used.
- (b) THEORY – comprehension of the differences and similarities between the concepts of language learning and language acquisition.
- (c) METHODOLOGY – ability to identify linguistic difficulties, – ability to use communication/interaction methods that facilitate the understanding of meaning, – ability to use strategies (e.g., repetition, echoing etc....) for correction and for modelling good language usage, – ability to use dual-focused activities which simultaneously cater for language and subject aspects.
- (d) THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT – ability to work with learners of diverse linguistic/cultural backgrounds.
- (e) MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT – ability to adapt and exploit materials, – ability to select complementary materials on a given topic.
- (f) ASSESSMENT – ability to develop and implement evaluation and assessment tools.

Andrews (1999: 163) claims that “the teacher of a language, like any educated user of that language, undoubtedly needs levels of implicit and explicit knowledge of grammar which will facilitate effective communication.” On the other hand,

[E]ffective L2 teaching requires of the teacher more than just the possession of such knowledge and the ability to draw upon it for communicative purposes. The L2 teacher also needs to reflect upon that knowledge and ability, and upon his/her knowledge of the underlying systems of the language, in order to ensure that the learners receive maximally useful input for learning. (Andrews 1999: 167).

2.2. CLIL teachers in Poland

According to the latest regulations concerning teacher training standards in Poland, all graduates should have a command of a foreign language at the B2 or B2+ level of the Council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001). The former (Level B2) is intended to reflect the Vantage Level. This level refers to the fact that after having progressed slowly but steadily across the intermediate plateau, the learner is aware of the changes that have occurred and new perspectives that have been revealed because of these changes. The term *learner(s)* here refers to future teachers while *learner's competence(s)* reflects the language qualities prerequisite of future CLIL instructors.

Qualitatively speaking, the learner's language competence can be described in the following way:

Table 1

General learner competences: Level B2
(Council of Europe 2001)

<p>Range</p> <p>Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.</p>
<p>Accuracy</p> <p>Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.</p>

<p>Fluency</p> <p>Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he/she searches for patterns and expressions. There are few noticeably long pauses.</p>
<p>Interaction</p> <p>Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.</p>
<p>Coherence</p> <p>Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some “jumpiness” in a long contribution.</p>

More precisely, in terms of language production, the learners' abilities are viewed from several perspectives:

Table 2

Specific learner competences: Level B2
(Council of Europe 2001)

<p>General linguistic range</p> <p>Can express him/herself clearly and without much sign of having to restrict what he/she wants to say.</p> <p>Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints and develop arguments without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.</p>
<p>Vocabulary range</p> <p>Has a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to his/her field and most general topics. Can vary formulation to avoid frequent repetition, but lexical gaps can still cause hesitation and circumlocution.</p>
<p>Vocabulary control</p> <p>Lexical accuracy is generally high, though some confusion and incorrect word choice does occur without hindering communication.</p>

<p>Grammatical accuracy</p> <p>Good grammatical control; occasional “slips” or non-systematic errors and minor flaws in sentence structure may still occur, but they are rare and can often be corrected in retrospect.</p> <p>Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding.</p>
<p>Phonological control</p> <p>Has acquired a clear, natural, pronunciation and intonation.</p>
<p>Orthographic control</p> <p>Can produce clearly intelligible continuous writing which follows standard layout and paragraphing conventions. Spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate but may show signs of mother tongue influence.</p>
<p>Sociolinguistic appropriateness</p> <p>Can express him or herself confidently, clearly and politely in a formal or informal register, appropriate to the situation and person(s) concerned.</p> <p>Can with some effort keep up with and contribute to group discussions even when speech is fast and colloquial.</p> <p>Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker.</p> <p>Can express him or herself appropriately in situations and avoid crass errors of formulation.</p>
<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Can adjust what he/she says and the means of expressing it to the situation and the recipient and adopt a level of formality appropriate to the circumstances.</p> <p>Can adjust to the changes of direction, style and emphasis normally found in conversation.</p> <p>Can vary formulation of what he/she wants to say.</p>
<p>Turn-taking</p> <p>Can intervene appropriately in discussion, exploiting appropriate language to do so.</p> <p>Can initiate, maintain and end discourse appropriately with effective turn-taking.</p> <p>Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly.</p>

Can use stock phrases (e.g., “That’s a difficult question to answer”) to gain time and keep the turn whilst formulating what to say.
<p>Thematic development</p> <p>Can develop a clear description or narrative, expanding and supporting his/her main points with relevant supporting detail and examples.</p>
<p>Coherence and cohesion</p> <p>Can use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas.</p> <p>Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some “jumpiness” in a long contribution.</p>
<p>Spoken fluency</p> <p>Can communicate spontaneously, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression in even longer complex stretches of speech.</p> <p>Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he/she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.</p> <p>Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without imposing strain on either party.</p>
<p>Propositional precision</p> <p>Can pass on detailed information reliably.</p>

Level B2+, called a Strong Vantage performance, continues to focus on the argument, effective social discourse and language awareness which appears at B2 (Vantage). However, the focus on argument and social discourse can also be interpreted as a new focus on discourse skills. This new degree of discourse competence shows itself in conversational management (co-operating strategies) by giving feedback on and following up statements and inferences by other speakers, as well as helping the development of the discussion; relating one’s own contribution skillfully to those of other speakers.

Following Papaja (2015), teachers are now obliged to specialize in a second subject. If they choose the combination “non-language subject plus a foreign language”, they have to reach

level C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in the case of the language subject (Eurydice 2006). Accordingly, Level C2, termed “Mastery”, does not imply native-speaker or near native-speaker competence, but a high degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language typical of proficient language users. The qualitative aspects of the spoken language used at the C2 Level are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

General learner competences: Level C2
(Council of Europe 2001)

<p>Range</p> <p>Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.</p>
<p>Accuracy</p> <p>Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g., in forward planning, in monitoring others’ reactions).</p>
<p>Fluency</p> <p>Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.</p>
<p>Interaction</p> <p>Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational clues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turn-taking, referencing, allusion making, etc.</p>
<p>Coherence</p> <p>Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.</p>

Communicative language competences of the C2 Level are more precise, refer to intuitive functional knowledge and control of the principles of the language usage (see Table 4).

Table 4
Specific learner competences: Level C2
(Council of Europe 2001)

<p>General linguistic range</p> <p>Can exploit a comprehensive and reliable mastery of a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity. No signs of having to restrict what he/she wants to say.</p>
<p>Vocabulary range</p> <p>Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.</p>
<p>Vocabulary control</p> <p>Consistently correct and appropriate use of vocabulary.</p>
<p>Grammatical accuracy</p> <p>Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g., in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).</p>
<p>Phonological control</p> <p>Can vary intonation and place sentence stress correctly in order to express finer shades of meaning.</p>
<p>Orthographic control</p> <p>Writing is orthographically free of error.</p>
<p>Sociolinguistic appropriateness</p> <p>Has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning.</p> <p>Appreciates fully the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by native speakers and can react accordingly.</p> <p>Can mediate effectively between speakers of the target language and that of his/her community of origin taking account of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences.</p>
<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to give emphasis, to differentiate according to the situation, interlocutor, etc. and to eliminate ambiguity.</p>
<p>Turn-taking</p> <p>Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his/her remarks appropriately in order to get the floor, or to gain time and keep the floor whilst thinking.</p>

<p>Thematic development</p> <p>Can give elaborate descriptions and narratives, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.</p>
<p>Coherence and cohesion</p> <p>Can create coherent and cohesive text making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of cohesive devices.</p>
<p>Spoken fluency</p> <p>Can express him/herself at length with a natural, effortless, unhesitating flow. Pauses only to reflect on precisely the right words to express his/her thoughts or to find an appropriate example or explanation.</p>
<p>Propositional precision</p> <p>Can convey finer shades of meaning precisely by using, with reasonable accuracy, a wide range of qualifying devices (e.g., adverbs expressing degree, clauses expressing limitations).</p> <p>Can give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity.</p>

This mastery of language, being far from a full native competence, may, in fact, resemble very different degrees of the teacher's language command, i.e., complete success in the case of one language ability, and an imperfect knowledge as well as realization of certain "inadequate" features in terms of another language ability. This incomplete perfection or perfection of I completeness with reference to the quality of a teacher's output is tantamount to fossilization or fossilized language competence referred to as "permanent failure of L2 learners to develop complete mastery of TL norms" (Bartelt 1993: 127).

3. Language fossilization

Explanations of the concept of fossilization reflect its diversity and complexity. To name a few, the phenomenon in question is perceived as:

"ultimate attainment" (Selinker 1974: 36),

"non-progression of learning" (Selinker 1992: 257),

“[...] cessation of further systematic development in the interlanguage” (Selinker and Han 1996),

“[...] regular reappearance or re-emergence in IL productive performance of linguistic structures which were thought to have disappeared” (Selinker 1974: 36), or

“the long term persistence of plateaus of non-target-like structures in the interlanguage of non-native speakers” (Selinker and Lakshmanan 1993: 197).

More specifically, ultimate attainment stands for the end state that advanced learners reach well on their way to learning a language, denoting, at the same time, the lack of potential for further development. This inability to improve and/or develop in the language recurs under the label of a widely-understood non-progression or cessation of learning. Crucial as these notions are to the phenomenon of fossilization, they are not the only ones. As can be seen in the last two explanations, much of the onus also falls on a permanent retention and reappearance of (correct and/or incorrect) language habits and forms within the fossilized language competence.

The aforementioned descriptions clearly demonstrate that fossilization is subject to changes, modifications and verifications. And, more precisely, it can be referred to as temporary, tendentious and regressive in character, resulting in language blockage and impediment, as well as incorrectness.

Following Han (2004), the sources of fossilization are numerous, and consist of cognitive, psychological, neuro-biological, socio-affective and environmental dimensions. Cognitively speaking, it is the *lack of access to Universal Grammar (UG)*, *failure of parameter resetting* and *non-operation of UG learning principles* that are most frequently reported to bear an influence on the actual state of knowledge of the TL. This is particularly true of adult learners, whose lack of access to a full range of UG directly contributes to their incomplete L2 ultimate attainment. Stripped of those aspects of UG not incorporated into the L1, and deprived of *UG learning principles*, the learners have a limited knowledge of the TL and their process of learning is effortful and time-consuming.

From a psychological point of view, it is the learners' *reluctance to take the risk of restructuring*, their *natural tendency to focus on content, not on form*, and *transfer of training* that contribute to fossilization. In the first case, the learners give up and do not say words instead of making an attempt to form reformulations and language alterations. In the second, as Skehan (1998) claims, the meaning priority, especially evident in the case of adult learners, relegates the form of language into the category of secondary importance. This momentarily results in learners' tendencies to "say less but mean more", without exhaustive analyses and the use of the structure of an already deviant language. As long as communicative effectiveness is achieved, the erroneous structures are doomed to survive and stabilize, usually becoming nothing but syntactic fossils. And, finally, *transfer of training*, be it the actual examples of a teacher's bad language, or the result of textbook content and method, it is considered to be the source of misused and overused forms, constituting an "overture" to fossilized competence.

Taking into consideration the neuro-biological constraints triggering fossilization, much of the onus falls on *age* and *maturational constraints*. What is at issue is Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), which, in its second version under the name of the Maturation State Hypothesis, holds that "early in life, humans have a superior language capacity. The capacity disappears or declines with maturation, i.e., even when it is used normally for L1 acquisition" (Long 2003:497). Once a speaker has reached this stage in life, their learning process becomes explicit and does not take place without a great deal of effort invested on their part. In addition, the lack of brain plasticity, which reduces its capacity for new forms of learning, leads to a non-fluent and non-native language construct.

As far as the socio-affective account of fossilization is concerned, *satisfaction of communicative needs* is given priority here. As can be seen from the evidence provided by Selinker (1974), a learner's self-confidence and perceptions of his/her language proficiency as sufficient to communicate in L2 stop him/her from learning. Even though the learners might be

aware of the language inconsistencies and deviant forms fixed in their linguistic repertoire, they usually do not make any effort to restructure them since the language they produce meets their expectations. Communicatively efficient as the language may seem to its actual users, it is, in fact, moving towards regression, on account of being used fragmentarily, and/or being abused.

The relationship between the environment and language fossilization rests on the *amount* and *quality of input* the learners are exposed to in the classroom. Typically, classroom input is very much limited and lacks in language variety. Most often, it comes from the teacher talk, student talk, and language materials at hand. Teacher talk, like foreigner talk, consists in adjustments at all language levels, and, by definition, is unnatural and artificial. In a similar vein, student talk is given undesirable attributes on account of its unnatural development. Lastly, the language materials widely-used in the classroom are non-authentic ones, hence the input they provide is confined, more often than not, within the contents of the coursebook, causing fossilization.

Although Selinker and Lakshmanan (1993) clearly state that there is no precise list of fossilizable language structures, it is presently believed that, despite the prominence given to pronunciation, namely, so-called “foreign accents”, fossilization is expected to occur at phonological, morphological as well as syntactic levels. While foreign accents and examples of bad pronunciation in general are to a greater or lesser extent observable among FL learners irrespective of their L1 background and language, fossilizable language structures at the level of morphology and syntax are more L1 specific, and their frequency of occurrence is likely to differ depending on a given FL learner.

4. Study description

The present study aims to examine the quality of teachers’ linguistic competence as is apparent in CLIL classrooms, specifying the level of language fossilization. In particular, the area of investigation is the command of English the CLIL teachers are

“equipped with”, and use on a daily basis while teaching general secondary school subjects.

4.1. Study participants

The study sample consisted of 10 secondary school CLIL teachers, 5 of which represented II LO in Sosnowiec (Group I), and the remaining 5 were affiliated to V LO in Dąbrowa Górnicza, Poland (Group II). Table 5 presents their full profiles.

Table 5
Sample description

Category	Gender	Age	Education and subject taught	Teaching experience	CLIL experience	Command of English
T1	F	29	History (MA)	5	2	B2
T2	F	33	Biology (MA)	10	5	B2
T3	F	33	Geography (MA)	11	5	B2
T4	F	49	Chemistry (MA)	25	6	B2
T5	F	56	Social Studies (MA)	30	8	B2
T6	F	31	Biology (MA)	7	7	B2
T7	F	38	Chemistry (MA)	15	7	B2
T8	F	38	Geography (MA)	14	5	B2
T9	F	41	Social Studies (MA) English Philology (PhD)	15	6	C1
T10	F	45	History (MA) English Philology (PhD)	20	6	C1

As seen from Table 5, the sample included female teachers with varied teaching experience, ranging from 5 to 30 years, including a number of years of CLIL teaching in each case. As regards the subjects taught, these overlapped with the respondents' education and the programme from which they graduated. The level of English was B2, except for two teachers representing two

disciplines, namely general education subjects and language.

4.2. Study tools

Starting with a short Internet interview centred on background information, such as age, sex, education, employment, teaching experience, including experience of CLIL teaching, and command of English, the study focused on language and was organized around a check-list designed by Wysocka (2009). This checklist was based on symptoms of fossilized language competence observed among advanced language users of English as an FL (see Appendix). Divided into two sections, the inventory allows for the “scanning” of all the components of linguistic competence, and commentary upon language with reference to both speaking and writing. The former encompasses grammar, lexis, morphology, phonology and fluency-related issues. The latter is organized in a similar way, operating in the same areas in the case of the first three, replacing phonology with punctuation and spelling, and fluency with text-coherence. As each section is sub-divided into several parts, each corresponding to the language areas affected by fossilization, completion of the table provides a possibility to raise not only teachers’ language awareness, but also their awareness of fossilization. Due to its clear structure and content, the tool can be used individually and outside of the classroom environment, with no reference to a particular language course or form of instruction. Owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and time restrictions, the self-check was conducted online, with the help of the MS Teams application.

4.3. Study results

Teacher 1 (a history teacher) – she does not assess her English spoken competence well, ticking almost all of the grammatical inaccuracies on the list as true for her. The only one left aside in this category included double negations. As for lexis, wrong words, as well as wrong phrases and expressions are indicated, which overlap with wrong prefixes and suffixes from the morphology section. Phonologically speaking, the teacher has problems with pronunciation (especially proper names), and stress. As regards fluency, she complains about too many silent pauses, numerous forms of repetitions and reformulations, as well as many unfinished sentences. Writing, surprisingly, gained a very good rating. The first three sections were not ticked by the teacher since they were treated as non-existent problems. The reason for this may be the teacher's situation, that is, she teaches history and provides almost no written information to students. The only facts given in writing are rewritten from the original (English) sources, and are always perfectly correct. Still, the teacher finds it difficult to spell and punctuate on her own, and marks all of the contents of these two sections as regular occurrences.

Teacher 2 (a biology teacher) assesses her speaking skills as mediocre. She speaks English in a very mechanical way, most often reading from slides or handouts, never producing language on her own. The exception to this “classroom rule” is reactions to learner's questions. Then, she experiences many problems, such as omission of articles, lack of subject-verb agreement, wrong word order and misuse of prepositions and examples of wrong tense use as well as misuse of conditionals in terms of grammar. Subsequently, vocabulary appears to be equally difficult for her as she indicates all the possible inaccuracies placed in this category. The same is true of morphological and phonological entries, which are also all ticked. What seems less troublesome for the teacher is fluency. She considers repetitions, reformulations and unfinished sentences exclusively, although occasionally she claims to be afraid to speak. As far as

written English is concerned, the teacher restricts herself to spelling and punctuation problems. She justifies her choice by stating that she has very few occasions to write in class and has no hesitation to do so, yet in a very limited way (only proper names that she is familiar with).

Teacher 3 (a geography teacher) is very skeptical about her spoken competence, signalling it next to every single entry within the scope of grammar, lexis, morphology, phonology and fluency. The opposite situation emerges from the data collected with reference to writing, where the number of linguistic items ticked by the teacher increased considerably, covering all grammatical, lexical and morphological problems, excluding spelling, punctuation and text-coherence and related difficulties. She justifies her fears of formulating English structures by having no time for reading as well as limited access to most of the English texts necessary for her work. Instead of the professional literature, the teacher bases her knowledge on excerpts only and/or simplified versions. What the teacher feels competent at is reflected in the specificity of the subject taught, namely, many proper names regularly used in the classroom, and geography-related terms.

Teacher 4 (a chemistry teacher) evaluates both her speaking and her writing poorly, choosing all the linguistic items from the list, and classifying them as difficult and of priority in terms of constant language practice. Some other comments given by the teacher in the case of speaking involved extremely weak grammar, a very limited range of vocabulary, insufficient knowledge of morphological rules, and problems with pronunciation. As a result, she admits to having difficulties with fluency while talking to students, reflected in repetitions, reformulations and a multitude of pauses. Writing appears to be equally problematic for the teacher, although she stresses the fact that rewriting information from original sources makes it much easier to function in the classroom.

Teacher 5 (a social studies teacher) is satisfied with her level of English in general. This is shown by the fact that she only marked a few areas of language loss and teacher despair. As

regards spoken competence, she is aware of article omission, wrong prepositions, problems with comparison, as well as the use of wrong phrases and expressions while speaking. In writing, her self-check results seem to be even more optimistic, showing only problems with spelling and pronunciation. The explanation given here is determined by classroom conditions, notably, relying on English sources exclusively, and rewriting from original texts accompanied by, at the same time, certainty that everything is linguistically correct.

Teacher 6 (a biology teacher) evaluates her command of English in a negative way. With regard to speaking, the teacher emphasizes the fact that she is afraid to reply to students when asked unexpectedly. She has no problems with the material that she is prepared to teach, but any attempts at “free speech”, as she names it, are stressful, effortful and imperfect. The self-check list reflects the teacher’s linguistic problems in the way she goes through it, classifying all grammatical and lexical items as difficult and susceptible to language deformity and deconstruction. Deformation is also the result of the teacher’s morphologically-based utterances. Also, whenever she comes across new items, she has problems with pronunciation, and, more often than not, resorts to all types of pauses. No other forms of disfluencies are mentioned. As far as writing is concerned, the teacher ticks all the entries from the list commenting that she experiences all these problems when writing on her own. The exception to this rule is the situation of rewriting specific information during the lesson, which is far from being incorrect.

Teacher 7 (a chemistry teacher) does not complain much about the quality of the language that she uses in the classroom. The greatest difficulties are marked next to lexis, covering all the entries mentioned in the self-check list. What she “suffers from” is a lack of vocabulary which could be used in the classroom, excluding specific terminology that the teacher is well-equipped with. As regards written competence, the teacher admits that she does not write much in English. On the one hand, this is the reason why some of the linguistic areas are chosen as problematic by the teacher (mainly spelling and morphology-

related ones). On the other, she is aware of the fact that she does not read much either, which makes the situation worse.

Teacher 8 (a geography teacher) does not complain about language use at all. She does not signal any linguistic problems on the list. Instead, she offers a positive comment on her language competence. Among the most significant opinions related to speaking is the teacher's feeling that her English is fairly communicative and always well-received by her co-speakers. She gives examples of various trips during which she usually communicates with people very easily, and is praised by her interlocutors. This refers to her grammatical, lexical, morphological and phonological competences, and translates into her ease of communicating with students in the classroom. In a similar vein, the teacher is satisfied with her writing abilities. She claims that the source texts she uses on a daily basis constitute a solid foundation for presenting her own materials in a written form. In connection with this, she does not notice any obstacles in writing, feels comfortable in the classroom and forms a good rapport with her students.

Teacher 9 (a social studies teacher) shows self-confidence in English, in terms of both speaking and writing. This is indicated by the fact that she leaves the self-check unanswered. The only explanation given is the well-balanced "linguistic diet" the teacher is on, namely, constant contact with a native-speaker, and exposure to "living" English (thanks to her husband who is of British origin, and her bilingual children).

Teacher 10 (a history teacher) appears to be very self-confident about her command of English. It can be judged by comments placed next to the checklist items, giving information that everything "is OK". The teacher feels "safe" with both spoken and written modes of language as she has just completed her PhD thesis in English studies, and is exposed to a wide range of vocabulary as well as grammar. This helps her in day-to-day communication with students during CLIL lessons.

5. Discussion of the results

First, referring back to the Council of Europe Common European Framework and its language learning outcomes in terms of language use, the teachers do not fully represent the competences ascribed to the B2 level. Most frequently recurring problems involve grammar (article omission), morphology (prefixes and suffixes), spelling and punctuation as well as pronunciation. As a result, the language produced lacks the control, confidence and spontaneity typical of that stage.

As far as the C1 level is concerned, it is difficult to relate its linguistic requirements to the two participants from the study who claim to be proficient in English and have no complaints about it.

Second, based on the data received from the study, it is clear that three different profiles for CLIL teachers emerge: dissatisfied with his/her present command of English, having mixed feelings about his/her competences, and self-confident about his/her level of English.

The first category includes four teachers who were subjects of the research (1, 3, 4 and 6). They assess their English skills in an unenthusiastic manner, pointing to a multitude of spoken and written imperfections, which may translate into a fossilized language competence: a process in which incorrect linguistic features become permanent in connection with the way a person speaks or writes a language and which also involves relative stability in the errors produced. It may be surmised that emergent fossilization can be observed here defined as a gradual growth of language problems and/or decline in the language.

The second type of teacher (2, 5 and 7) is representative of so-called localized fossilization comprising both ongoing errors that show little or no change and some linguistic areas that are still successfully realized. Yet another term for the situation exemplified here may be suspended competence understood as a zone of incapability referring to certain linguistic items (often erroneous) that make it difficult for teachers to perform in the target language.

The third teacher profile is represented by two teachers from the study (9 and 10). These study participants differ from the rest of the teachers in that the constraints imposed by the language are not for them. The evidence from the research confirms their feelings of being free from the language's limitations and, at the same time, an inability to produce the L2 target. On the contrary, the subjects, having unlimited access to native speakers, and concentrating on approximation to native-like proficiency, feel they are unlikely to fail.

6. Conclusions

On the whole, bearing in mind the three different types of teachers revealed by the research and the ways they evaluated their own language, the study self-check list may be treated as a useful tool. Its clear structure is likely to encourage potential users to return to the contents of the list at intervals so that they can compare the results achieved and thereby monitor the quality of their linguistic competences.

Of course, the tool is not limited to CLIL teachers and may be used by any language users on the path of interlanguage development.

7. Further studies

As regards suggestions for the future, a larger group of respondents, namely CLIL teachers, from secondary schools, should be taken into consideration. Additionally, it would seem a good idea to supplement studies using the questionnaire with observations allowing for a deeper insight into the classroom communication that occurs, including both the spoken and written output of teachers. Data collected in this way is likely to shed light on the quality of teacher English, tracing its stronger and weaker points, as well as potential (de)fossilizable language areas.

What may also be of interest for further study is the environment of primary school teachers and a comparison between

CLIL teachers at primary and secondary levels. The results obtained here may show similarities and differences in terms of language used in the classroom and provide plausible explanations of the possible symptoms of (de)fossilization.

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Appendix

Table 6

The study self-check (see Wysocka 2009)

CHECK-LIST	
PART I ORAL PERFORMANCE	
Read the following list of items, and put a tick [x] next to those you happen to produce/experience/use when speaking. A blank space has been left at the end of each section for any items not included which are true for you.	
GRAMMAR	
omission of articles	
misuse of articles	
lack of subject-verb agreement	
lack of noun-pronoun agreement	
lack of subject/object-pronoun agreement	
wrong word order	
wrong structures	
wrong verb patterns	
wrong verb forms	
verb omission	
double verb	
omission of verb inflections	
subject omission	

wrong prepositions	
misuse of prepositions	
overuse of prepositions	
omission of prepositions	
problems with plural/singular forms	
wrong conjunctions	
omission of conjunctions	
wrong pronouns	
overuse of pronouns	
pronoun omission	
wrong use of relative pronouns	
omission of relative pronouns	
double negations	
problems with determiners	
problems with direct/indirect questions	
misuse of quantifiers	
wrong tense	
problems with reported speech	
problems with comparison	
problems with conditionals	
object omission	
other...	
LEXIS	
wrong words	
wrong phrases/expressions	
wrong phrasal verbs	
non-existent words/phrases	
other...	
MORPHOLOGY	
wrong prefixes	
wrong suffixes	
other...	
PHONOLOGY	
stress difficulties	
problems with pronunciation	
other...	
FLUENCY	
silent pauses	
vocal pauses	

double repetitions of language sequences	
triple repetitions of language sequences	
quadruple repetitions of language sequences	
all-purpose words	
reformulations in the form of synonym substitution	
reformulations in the form of information shift	
reformulations in the form of structure change	
reformulations aimed at self-correction	
reformulations resulting in deviations from TL norms	
fixed expressions	
unfinished sentences	
meaningless sentences	
other...	
PART II WRITTEN PERFORMANCE	
Read the following list of items, and put a tick [x] next to those you happen to produce/experience/use when writing. A blank space has been left at the end of each section for any items not included which are true for you.	
GRAMMAR	
omission of articles	
misuse of articles	
lack of subject-verb agreement	
lack of noun-pronoun agreement	
lack of subject/object-pronoun agreement	
wrong word order	
wrong structures	
wrong verb patterns	
wrong verb forms	
verb omission	
double verb	
omission of verb inflections	
subject omission	
wrong prepositions	
misuse of prepositions	
overuse of prepositions	
omission of prepositions	
problems with plural/singular forms	
wrong conjunctions	
omission of conjunctions	

wrong pronouns	
overuse of pronouns	
pronoun omission	
wrong use of relative pronouns	
omission of relative pronouns	
double negations	
problems with determiners	
problems with direct/indirect questions	
misuse of quantifiers	
wrong quantifiers	
wrong tense	
problems with reported speech	
problems with comparison	
problems with conditionals	
problems with passive	
problems with modals	
object omission	
other...	
LEXIS	
wrong words	
wrong phrases/expressions	
wrong phrasal verbs	
non-existent words/phrases	
other...	
MORPHOLOGY	
wrong prefixes	
wrong suffixes	
other...	
SPELLING	
too many letters in a word	
too few letters in a word	
letter substitution	
wrong order of letters	
small letters where capitalized are required	
word separation	
other...	
PUNCTUATION	
omission of apostrophes	
wrong use of apostrophes	

omission of commas	
wrong use of commas	
other...	
TEXT COHERENCE	
fixed expressions	
other...	

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