Content and language integrated curriculum design: the potential of cognitive discourse functions

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Graduates from upper secondary schools all over Europe are increasingly expected to be proficient users of English – not only of general English, but also of English that is field- and content-specific. To meet these demands many secondary schools have introduced CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) programmes. The challenge of designing truly integrated language-and-content curricula has frequently been noted (e.g. Nikula et al. forthc.). A recent promising suggestion has been made by Dalton-Puffer (2013) in the form of a construct of Cognitive Discourse Functions (CDFs) that establishes a zone of convergence between content and language pedagogies and thereby allows genuine content-and-language integration. This presentation will introduce a CLIL curriculum designed on the basis of said construct.

In the first part of the presentation, the CDF construct, which explains in a coherent and theoretically explicit way how cognitive processes concerning subject-specific facts, concepts and categories are verbalised in recurring and patterned ways during classroom learning, will be introduced. In the second part, I will report on a teaching and research project where a content and a language teacher collaborate on creating a new bilingual school subject. I will explain how Cognitive Discourse Functions are being employed in the formulation of goals, pedagogical design as well as the actual teaching of science to upper-secondary students. Examples from the first teaching cycle will be presented, which show that Cognitive Discourse Functions cannot only be utilized as a valuable instrument in curricular planning, but also enable students to use English to act on and communicate science content.

References:


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