The language of evaluation in the CLIL classroom: integrating SFL and pragmatic approaches

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While evaluation is an intrinsic part of language in general (e.g. Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Sarangi, 2003), evaluative language is especially salient in classroom contexts, where educational practices typically include evaluation. The role of evaluative language is a particularly crucial concern in CLIL, where the use of a foreign language entails that language resources used for evaluating may be less readily available for participants than when using the L1. This presentation explores teachers’ and students’ evaluative practices in CLIL classrooms, drawing on CLIL classroom data from different European secondary school contexts. Attention will be paid to how teachers and students evaluate the academic content but also to what role evaluation plays in how participants engage with each other. The study combines systemic-functional and pragmatic approaches; more specifically, it applies SFL-based Appraisal theory and discourse-pragmatic insights to explore the use of linguistic evaluative resources and their pragmatic functions. The results show that the use of evaluative practices varies across European contexts but differences are mainly due to interactional patterns being shaped by different classroom activities and by the type of subject (science/social science). This paper meets the core concern of this colloquium, integration, in two ways: a) by focusing on the use of language to evaluate academic content as evidence of content and language integrated learning, and b) by integrating different theoretical approaches in the study of language use in the CLIL classroom.


Keywords: CLIL, evaluative language, classroom discourse.