Using WebQuests

A WebQuest, as defined by the originator of the activity, Bernie Dodge, is *'an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet'*. Essentially, students are given a task or series of tasks to do, which requires them to collect information from different internet websites and process and organise this information in order to create a final product. This could be anything from the answers to a list of questions to an essay. Dodge developed the activity in 1995 and it has since become popular with teachers in many different disciplines. So what is the structure of a good WebQuest, how useful is this type of activity in the language classroom, and is it feasible to create your own?

The structure

Introduction

A good WebQuest will begin with an introduction, which motivates the students, introduces the topic, sets the stage for the whole activity and provides any necessary background information.

Instructions

The students have to be told what the end result of the WebQuest will be, what task they must perform and what their end product should be. The instructions, therefore, need to identify clearly the steps the students should go through in order to accomplish the final task and should provide scaffolding for organising the information gathered during the activity.

Resources

A clear list of the online resources the students will need to access in order to perform the task needs to be provided. Given that websites often disappear, the teacher needs to check before the WebQuest begins that all the sites required are still current.

Evaluation

Students should be told in advance how their performance on the WebQuest will be evaluated.

Conclusion

A final summary should set out what the students have accomplished by completing the WebQuest. This may also provide information on additional opportunities for extending the activity or doing further reading or research.
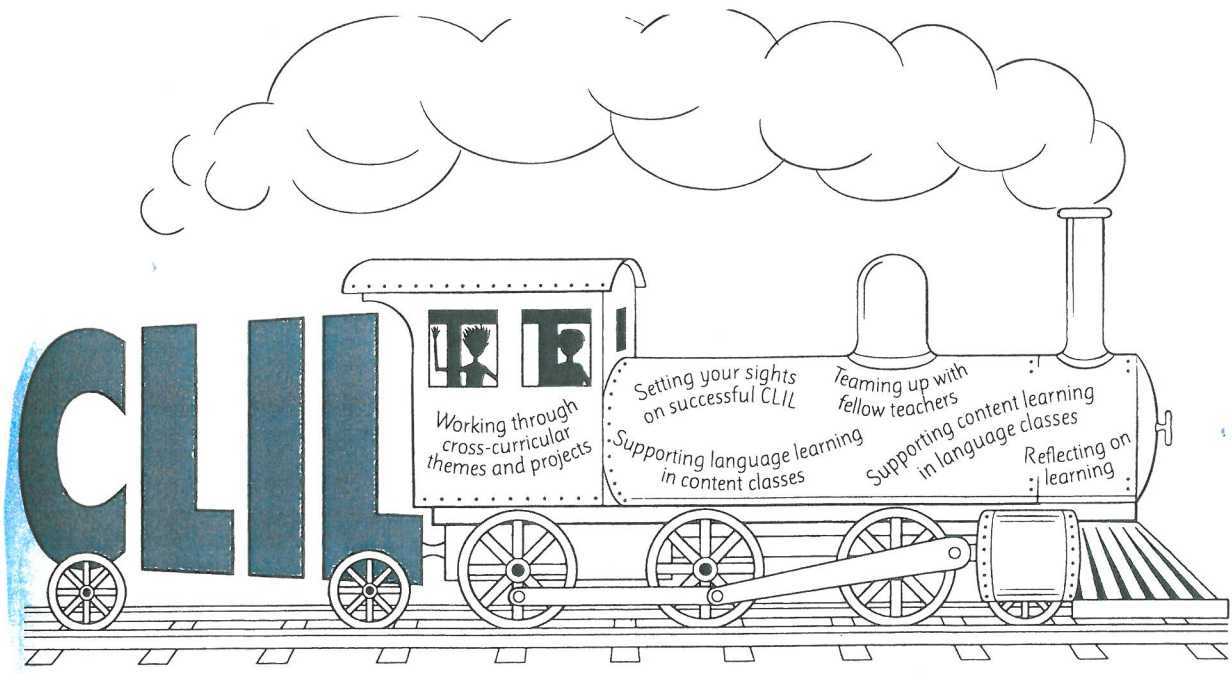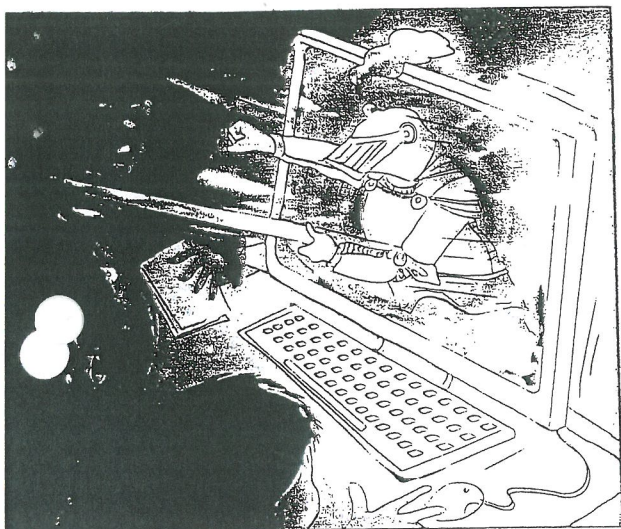

CLIL — Working through cross-curricular themes and projects · Setting your sights on successful CLIL · Supporting language learning in content classes · Teaming up with fellow teachers · Supporting content learning in language classes · Reflecting on learning

'CLIL refers to any dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content.'

The key word is *dual-focused*: CLIL is about learning language and content together. Whereas language teachers' aims are usually purely linguistic – eg grammar points or skills work – CLIL incorporates a further focus on learning real-world information or skills, whether that be mathematical formulae, recipes or map-reading. Beyond this core concept of 'language plus subject knowledge', CLIL can actually be interpreted and applied in many ways. There are, correspondingly, a number of

There is obviously a lot to think about in CLIL, so teachers should not undertake it lightly. On a practical level, switching to CLIL could mean a great deal of extra preparation, especially in the early uncharted stages. Teachers need to be sure that CLIL gives their learners a significant advantage in the classroom. The following benefits of CLIL are often cited.

CLIL is intrinsically motivating. Few learners are interested in language per se. Yes, there are people who drool over the past continuous and fantasise about phrasal verbs, but they are probably mainly confined to dusty corners of university libraries! Most learners want English in order to do something, for example understand a pop song or fill in an application form. CLIL gives a rationale for the language, which is based on function not form. In

this sense, the aim of a lesson is transparent because its outcome is directly observable in what the learners know or can do afterwards.

CLIL makes language more meaningful and memorable. Content is a natural context for language. Context provides a framework for the learners to organise their thoughts and makes the linguistic analysis fuller. It is claimed that by operating on two levels, language and content, simultaneously, learners' cognitive skills are enhanced.

CLIL is better preparation for outside the classroom. There are very few scenarios where language learning is purely an academic activity with no real-life applications. The learning of content makes language immediately relevant and puts the learners in a position where they can practise life

CLIL develops autonomous learning. The enhanced challenges posed by CLIL over a pure language approach compel learners to draw on their own resources. For example, a class geography project may involve assigning different roles to the learners and may encourage a degree of independent investigation.