

Glyphs – A Way into CLIL

After TBL and towards a post-CLT approach, are we in the CLIL zone?

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is a version of bilingual education and subject teaching which simultaneously teaches the language required for school learning and which also promotes thinking and learning to learn skills (Brewster). The fact that it offers the opportunity to use language as a tool for L2 learning rather than act as the actual target of the learning context can be seen as one of its most promising characteristics (Marsh and Lange)

CLIL is now one of the new buzzwords, or acronyms, in EFL/ELT. However, CLIL is not a new thing in teaching. It is simply another name for cross-curricula content. (Tennant) At schools and educational centres all over the world it is being ushered in with some urgency to teach school subjects like math, social sciences, geography, history, PE etc. through the medium of a foreign language, usually English. It has sparked off a widespread debate amongst the most of distinguished scholars, ELT material writers, teacher trainers, publishers and teachers themselves discussing its advantages and drawbacks, benefits and constraints.

Seeing it as a new and resourceful concept and having no more than a couple of schools where bilingual education has been introduced, the ELT community in Serbia do not have to make an issue out of it but try to make the best of this approach by using and adapting it to suit the teachers' and students' needs.

CLIL starts where the children are and exploits their previous knowledge of certain school subjects as a springboard for the activities in the English lessons. Regular educational materials are used and students are given the opportunity to analyse, classify, measure, explore, discuss, strategise, reason, predict, interpret, conclude and reflect, compare and contrast among many other learning strategies from the Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking Skills. It provides a context as authentic as it can get with young children. Curriculum is taught through foreign language, but the language should be taught through curriculum as well. It is very important to bear the following criteria in mind before deciding to do some math, history or geography in English.

1. Content should always be connected in the most meaningful way possible with the aim of the English lesson. There should always be a very strong link between what has been or will be done in the English lessons and the CLIL activity because otherwise it is doing it just for the sake of doing it and an important part of its authenticity may be lost.
2. It is very, if not crucially important to have a very clear and precise language objective; to have the key vocabulary and language structures skillfully incorporated with the content objective. It is the English language we teach and by the end of the lesson students should have achieved a planned goal and mastered target language after all.

Children love doing CLIL in English lessons. Doing diagrams, charts, graphs, surveys, timelines and glyphs motivates them because it challenges them in more than one way. They function on multilevel bases and are able to work independently of the teacher. There is not one answer to what they do and they are not intimidated. It leads them to

think about what else they could do or find out by using the same method, material or apparatus. It is related to 'real' problems of their everyday life but is fun to do for itself. By choosing topics that students are already familiar with, currently studying or interested in, the hope is that they will learn more and learn it faster. It is felt that students often benefit from the focus being less on the language in terms of grammar, functions, or structures, and more on the content or topic. Students who struggle with grammar-focused materials may flourish when using CLIL materials.

Glyphs

Glyphs are a very good way to introduce and start using CLIL in ELT. Glyph is a symbolic figure or character, usually a picture that gives information. It is a fancy word for a shape.

Interpreting data is an important aspect of mathematics. By creating glyphs students will learn about reading charts and graphs and find ways how to do that. They are a fun way to figure out information about a person and help to interpret and describe data of many types. Being done during the English lesson they provide an opportunity to revise, recycle and/or practice target language. They easily fit into any part and stage of the curriculum. On top of that, glyphs can be used as a kind of self-assessment at the end of the unit, term or course (e.g. Appendix 1 on page 4, *End of Storyline Self-Assessment Glyph*). In this way a teacher can have a valuable insight and information of how much progress the students have made and diagnose if and where the problems are. Students are being assessed without any of their knowledge and awareness and therefore it is a perfect way to do it with no strain on them and stress connected to it. If put on a poster and exhibited on the classroom wall children pride themselves on their work and develop the feeling of ownership as well.

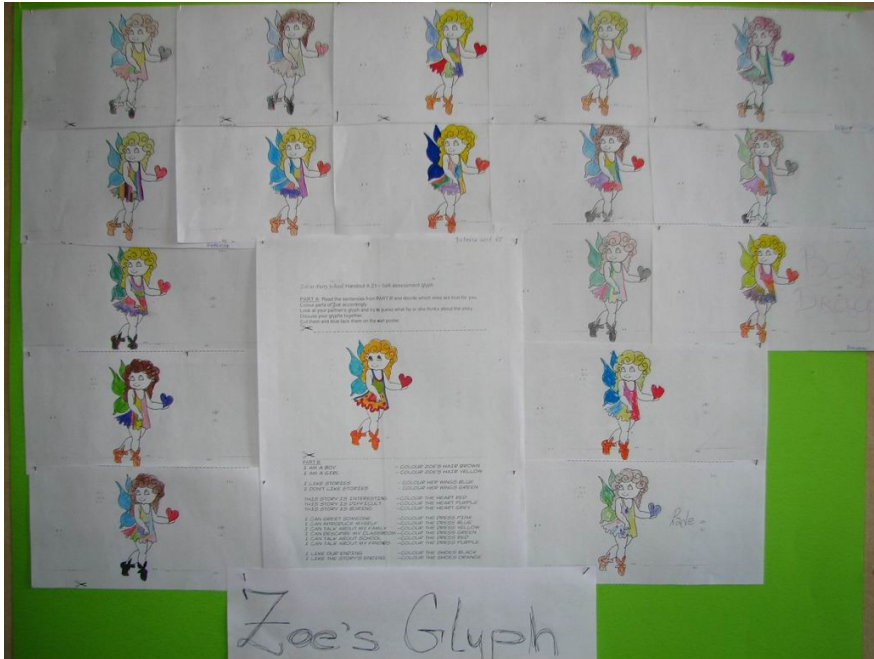
The curriculum tie is mathematics, the general objective being to collect, organize, read, represent, and interpret data using tables, graphs, and charts etc. including keys (glyph interpretation sheet) and make predictions based on a data display.

Here is a way how to do a glyph.

1. Teacher makes his/her own glyph and shows a completed teacher glyph. After the initial guessing part, students use the [Glyph Interpretation Sheet](#) to explain what they have learned about the teacher.
2. Materials are passed out for students to make their own glyphs.
3. Students create their own glyphs and have a partner interpret it.
4. When they are finished, place students in small groups and have them interpret and compare glyphs to discover things that are the same and/or different.
5. Finally, all the glyphs are glued or blu-tacked on a poster for a display.

Topics and language focuses are innumerable with using glyphs. They can be created for and adjusted to literally anything a teacher or students wish to do in their English lessons and therefore glyphs are a very good way to start experimenting with CLIL. If we care and dare to try something new and interesting in our classes and enjoy that at the same time, our enthusiasm may rub off on our students and enhance what we want to achieve in the first place.

(Nada Purčić, Novi Sad)



*End of Storyline
Self-Assessment
Glyph done with
Ivana Kokar
at Žarko Zrenjanin
Primary School in
Novi Sad (see
page 4)*

Appendix 1 – End of Storyline Self-assessment glyph

PART A: Read the sentences from PART B and decide which ones are true for you. Colour parts of Zoë accordingly.

Look at your partner's glyph and try to guess what he or she thinks about the story. Discuss your glyphs together.

Cut them and blue tack them on the wall poster.





PART B:

I AM A BOY
I AM A GIRL

- COLOUR ZOE'S HAIR BROWN
- COLOUR ZOE'S HAIR YELLOW

I LIKE STORIES
I DON'T LIKE STORIES

- COLOUR HER WINGS BLUE
- COLOUR HER WINGS GREEN

THIS STORY IS INTERESTING
THIS STORY IS DIFFICULT
THIS STORY IS BORING

-COLOUR THE HEART RED
-COLOUR THE HEART PURPLE
-COLOUR THE HEART GREY

I can greet someone
I can introduce myself
I can talk about my family
I can describe my classroom
I can talk about school
I can talk about my friends

-COLOUR THE DRESS PINK
-COLOUR THE DRESS BLUE
-COLOUR THE DRESS YELLOW
-COLOUR THE DRESS GREEN
-COLOUR THE DRESS RED
-COLOUR THE DRESS PURPLE

I LIKE OUR ENDING
I LIKE THE STORY'S ENDING

-COLOUR THE SHOES BLACK
-COLOUR THE SHOES ORANGE

**Zoë's dress can be colourful if many or all outcomes have been achieved*