

English through Music: effective CLIL lessons for Young Learners

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Brief outline

What potential does CLIL have for language development? This talk began with a brief introduction to content based approaches and then looked at reasons why music is particularly suited to CLIL. We all took part in a variety of activities for children that not only teach basic musical skills and concepts but also fulfil conditions that are likely to promote language learning. Even if, as a teacher, you know nothing about music, or have no musical skills yourself, participants said afterwards that they felt that English through music could be both fun and achievable.

Summary of Powerpoint presentation

I started by summarising generally agreed principles behind CLIL, mentioning some projects where CLIL has been successfully introduced with young learners.

So why is music especially suited to CLIL? To answer this I demonstrated seven different types of music activity to show how music helps learners develop acute listening skills, respond to the ranges in tone, pitch and expression in the voice and concentrate hard on details of pronunciation, stress and rhythm; singing helps children to memorise words and phrases and to develop familiarity with the sounds, rhythms and structure of English. Above all, children enjoy making music and engage with the processes involved.

Music lessons offer three distinct sources of language input:

- general classroom management and language used for setting up musical activities
- the process of attaining the music aims leading to a performance, (sample classroom data, audience participation in rhythm games and use of home-made instruments)
- the actual words and phonological features of songs, rhymes, chants, musical stories, (audience participation and CD).

In addition, teachers can focus on specific language features and/or further develop topic areas, broadening into cross curricular subjects. Some examples of 'language extension' ideas were given.

The main message was that music making and learning about music makes the whole process of learning English fun and enjoyable. And also that you, as teacher, don't need any special musical skills to teach this way.

See also my Power Point presentation