Ylva Sandberg

Common denominator: CLIL-teachers’ beliefs and practices in history, biology and mathematics


The study uses a combination of three tools for construction and collection of materials; semi-structured interviews with teachers, lesson observations, artifacts from learning and teaching (Barnard & Burns, 2012). The material was constructed and collected over a two-year period in the early 2010s at three different upper secondary schools.

The material is currently being interpreted and analysed by means of qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2013, Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), most recently also using an adapted version of the analytic framework developed by Ivanic (2004).

Preliminary results indicate similarities in reasoning with regard to ‘what’ and ‘why’ across the subjects disciplines, whereas the differences with regard to ‘how’ English is being used vary considerably. For example, while the content teachers view English as a resource in terms of ‘accessibility’ and for ‘clarification purposes’, the practices employed by the teachers take different forms, ranging from the use of smartphones for instant translation of biological terms, to the use of English Wikipedia and YouTube clips for enhancing understanding of historical concepts or mathematical formulae. The bilingual mode is on the whole found to be scaffolding learning and teaching, although the teachers account for several dilemmas they have encountered throughout the years together with their students in their bilingual content classrooms. Despite lack of specific training in CLIL methodology, they have managed quite well in their teaching and learning efforts, according to their own estimation.

With regard to the issue of teacher identity, the teachers speak of themselves as content teachers, not as CLIL teachers or bilingual teachers.

55