

The effects of genre-based instruction on report writing with 4th-year children in a CLIL Science class

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Interest in writing as a means to learn subject matter is gaining ground in content-based language (CLIL) programmes currently implemented in Europe. However, research evidence so far has been limited to the comparison of CLIL and EFL learners' texts or to tracing how secondary school CLIL students naturally develop their meaning-making resources in the course of time. There is a need therefore to gather information on how learners can explicitly be instructed to incorporate writing as an integral part of learning both content and language. In an attempt to fill this gap, the present study analyzed how a group of EFL Spanish children in a CLIL science context responded to an instructional sequence based on genre-oriented writing strategies and an inquiry-oriented approach to science. Working in cooperation with the researchers, a year-4 primary school teacher implemented a three-week teaching sequence on levers with forty 9-10-year-olds at two levels of L2 proficiency. The sequence, which was intended to make the children aware of the demands involved in understanding (content goals) and expressing as written reports (rhetorical goals) how levers work, scaffolded their activity, from item-based writing to the production of full texts, with the aid of the teacher's explanations and problem-solving activities, as well as graphic organizers, guided writing activities and teacher-led whole class feedback. After the sequence had been implemented, the children independently wrote a report on levers, and subsequently evaluated their own texts and a text of one of their peers. Children's guided and autonomous written productions were analyzed from a functional language perspective, and their evaluations explored as additional indicators of genre awareness. The results of these analyses will be discussed in terms of their significance for CLIL writing with young learners.