Board games in the CLIL classroom: New trends in content and language integrated learning

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Stands out as a particularly promising technique, which harnesses the engaging and interactive nature of games to boost both language acquisition and content mastery. Despite its considerable potential, there remains a significant gap in research regarding the effectiveness and implementation strategies of game-based CLIL (Lister, 2022; Prakash & Spoorthi, 2022). This gap underscores the urgent need for investigation to fully understand its impact and establish best practices to ensure that educators can maximize the benefits of this approach in diverse learning environments. The book, *Board Games in the CLIL Classroom: New Trends in Content and Language Integrated Learning*, edited by Thomai Alexiou and Athanasios Karasimos, serves as a timely response to this need by exploring the innovative use of board games within CLIL settings.

The preface, written by the editors, offers a clear overview of the application of board games in education, highlighting common myths, benefits, and impact factors, while also setting the context for the 10 chapters that follow. In the first chapter, Thomai Alexiou delves into incorporating board games into the CLIL framework, introducing core CLIL features, reviewing pertinent studies, and presenting classroom evidence. The chapter emphasizes the advantages of using board games in various subjects and the educational, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional benefits. It also examines the challenges and future perspectives of this method, which serves as a resource for educators to improve classroom dynamics and provide a comprehensive learning experience.

Chapter 2, authored by Marina Mattheoudakis and Niki Panteliou, investigates the effectiveness of board games in teaching Greek as a Second Language to adult learners. Their study, conducted with B1 level (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) students attending Greek classes in different schools across Greece, found that students involved in game-based CLIL performed better in grammar and vocabulary compared to those taught by traditional method, and this approach also fostered enjoyable interpersonal communication among students.
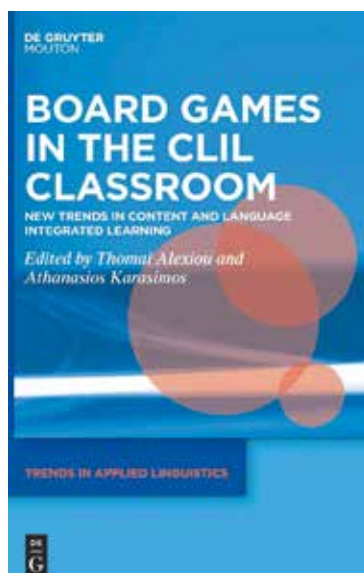
In Chapter 3, Ifigenia Kofou and Athanasios Karasimos examine the use of a storytelling board game as an alternative assessment tool in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes for senior high school students in Thessaloniki, Greece. Utilizing an online questionnaire, the study revealed that the game effectively enhanced vocabulary acquisition, speaking skills, and interpersonal and soft skills, while also providing a practical context for alternative assessment methods.

Chapter 4, written by Pascale Manoilov, explores university students' perceptions of a game-based CLIL framework aimed at enhancing EFL learning and pedagogy. Implemented at a university in France, the framework includes four phases: Elicitation, Mediation, Experiment, and Peer-Review. Using self-reflexive journals, the study investigates cognitive and metacognitive learning processes and motivation and shows that game-based interactions significantly improve knowledge and language skills.

In Chapter 5, Sabina A. Nowak focuses on the use of reflective learning journals as an assessment tool in CLIL settings, particularly focusing on board games. Conducted at a Polish university with B2–C1 level students in English classes, the study aims to validate game-based learning assessment methods within CLIL. The research emphasizes assessment for learning, learning-oriented assessment, and evidence-based learning, which suggests that integrating board games in CLIL can enhance higher-order thinking skills and improve student performance through self and peer observation and inquiry.

Chapter 6, by Styliani Chytiroglou, Evanthia Gouliaberis, and Despoina Avramidou, probes into the potential of games to increase motivation in a CLIL classroom and to connect language learning with enhanced motivation through game-based instruction. Their research, involving students from grades 7 to 9 in a secondary school in Greece, showed that game-enhanced CLIL instruction significantly boosted students' intrinsic motivation, fostered positive attitudes towards subjects, and reduced anxiety levels.

Chapter 7, by Betül Çimenli and Bekir Güler, analyzes how interactional competence can be improved through playing a science board game. Over three months, Turkish participants, including primary and secondary school students and their families, played the game in their second language, aiming for mutual understanding. The authors inquired into various communication strategies used by participants, such as switching to their first language, using visual cues from game cards, and acting out verbal expressions. The findings suggest that board games facilitate meaning-making and support learning science subjects and English language skills.

In Chapter 8, Jill Kay Partridge Salomon and Sandrine Marie Simon present a game-based project for pre-service teachers at the Teacher Training Institute for Primary Education in Limoges, France, aimed to introduce trainee teachers to the CLIL method for teaching EFL and to incorporate board games into their teaching strategies. The establishment of a game club at the training center allowed participants to play board games in English and explore teaching mathematics in English using these games. The study outlines the necessary steps for selecting and successfully incorporating board games into EFL contexts and suggests that this experience helped pre-service teachers reflect on the effectiveness of CLIL-based instruction while boosting their self-efficacy.

Chapter 9, by Stavroula Antonopoulou and Athanasios Karasimos, addresses the intersection of language pedagogy, CLIL, educational technology, and board games for both young and adult learners. They focus on integrating multi-genre board games, both physical and

digital, into language teaching. Cooperative board games are highlighted for fostering team-work and collaboration, while competitive games offer stimuli beyond linguistic knowledge. The chapter introduces escape room-like board games, detailing selection criteria, integration templates, and game creation. Data from 110 Greek subjects (teachers and students) tested with these games are presented, along with extensive information on transitioning from physical to digital escape rooms and teaching specific language skills in a CLIL context.

In the final chapter, authors Julia Edeleva, Martin Neef, Martin Scheidt, Gina Do Manh, and Yue Xu present research from Braunschweig University of Technology in Germany. They introduce a word-guessing game designed to facilitate peer-to-peer scaffolding by focusing on basic terminology used in a training session about railway operations. Their findings demonstrate that the word-guessing game encouraged participants to use linguistic adaptation strategies and enhanced their language skills, showcasing the potential of such games to promote peer-scaffolding in educational settings.

Overall, this book is a praiseworthy addition to the field of educational research and pedagogy. It not only addresses a significant gap in the existing literature on game-based CLIL but also provides practical, evidence-based insights that educators can readily imple-ment in their classrooms. A notable strength of the book and its chapters is the coverage of a wide range of age groups, spanning from primary and secondary school students to university students and adult learners. This effort makes the book a valuable resource, which showcases the broad applicability of game-based learning across various age groups and challenges the notion that game-based learning is only beneficial for young CLIL learners (Anggraini et al., 2023). Moreover, the book establishes sound evidence of the benefits of game-based CLIL, extending beyond traditional expectations of language and content learning outcomes (Sari et al., 2024) to include cognitive gains and socio-emotional development. This comprehensive approach highlights the multifaceted impact of game-based learning on learners (Habeb Al-Obaydi et al., 2023).

One potential limitation of the book could be its reliance on case studies and research conducted in specific cultural and educational contexts, particularly in Europe. The findings and recommendations presented may not be universally applicable or easily adaptable to all educational settings, particularly those with different cultural norms, educational systems, or resource availability. This context-specific focus might limit the book's practical applicability for educators working in diverse or under-resourced environments, thereby necessitating further research and adaptation to address varying needs and conditions globally.

Despite this, the book remains a valuable resource for educators engaging in game-based CLIL and researchers seeking to explore this innovative pedagogical approach. Its readability is enhanced by the inclusion of visuals, which help illustrate key concepts and findings and contribute to the accessibility and engagement of the content. By charting a new perspective for future research, the book invites further investigation into the implementation and benefits of game-based learning across various educational contexts.

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