

**Universidad de Oviedo**

**Facultad de Formación del Profesorado y Educación**

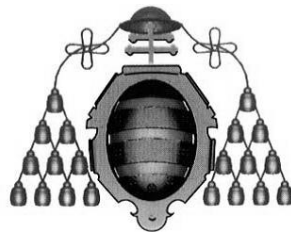
**Trabajo Fin del Máster en Enseñanza Integrada de la Lengua Inglesa y Contenidos: Educación Infantil y Primaria**

# **BOARD GAMES AS TOOLS TO FOSTER A COMMUNICATIVE ENVIRONMENT IN CLIL CLASSROOMS**

**Lorenzo Rodríguez Rivero**

**Tutoras: Gabriela García Teruel  
Marta Ramón García**

**Julio 2016**



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## INDEX

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	i
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. CLIL REALITY .....	3
2.1. HOW IS CLIL APPLIED IN SCHOOL? .....	3
2.2. THE CLIL CLASSROOM AS A COMMUNICATIVE ENVIRONMENT .....	4
2.3. GAMES AS A TOOL FOR CLIL CLASSROOMS .....	7
2.4. THE CLIL MATRIX: KEY ASPECTS OF BOARD GAMES AS CLIL TOOLS .....	8
3. BOARD GAMES AND CLIL INSTRUCTION .....	18
3.1. WHAT IS A BOARD GAME? .....	18
3.2. A PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION: ANALYSIS OF THE MECHANISMS OF BOARD GAMES .....	18
3.3. TWO FORESHADOWING EXPERIENCES .....	27
4. A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE: USING A BOARD GAME AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION IN A CLIL CLASSROOM .....	30
4.1. CONTEXT FOR THE EXPERIENCE .....	30
4.2. THE ADAPTATION .....	31
4.3. THE GAME: PREHISTORIC MAYHEM! .....	34
4.4. THE RESULTS .....	36
4.5. THE BOARD GAME AGAINST THE CLIL MATRIX .....	40
5. CONCLUSIONS .....	45
REFERENCES .....	48
REVIEWED LITERATURE .....	49
APPENDIX 1: A SEPARATE COPY OF THE CLASSIFICATION TABLE OF PAGE 26 .....	50
APPENDIX 2: CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE PROPOSED AGE OF ALL THE MENTIONED GAMES (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE) .....	51

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Board games have existed since the dawn of civilization (Ancient Egyptians, for example, played Senet; in the Middle Ages, Chess was introduced into the Western society; and dice originally were made of knuckle bones and stones that can be found all around the globe). However, since the 1980s there has been a boom of creativity, with hundreds of new games published each year, ever more complex and more strategy- and interaction-related. Contexts of play have also widened, from family and friendly reunions to public settings like tournaments, conventions, and, especially for our purposes, the classroom. Traditional games (those existing before this boom, like Chess and Checkers) are often used in education in one way or another. The classic games (those created in the twentieth century before or around the 80s, like Chutes and Ladders, and Monopoly) are nowadays the most known board games but they are not used in education. We believe these new games have multiple possibilities for education.

Games in general are a form of entertainment built into the culture of a society. Through games, children learn customs and behaviours of the adult world. Like rhymes and songs, games are a means of transmission of culture. In particular, the mechanisms of tabletop games enhance interaction and, therefore, communication; they are mini-worlds where players can practise social skills and develop successful strategies to build relationships and learn efficient communication.

However, as some of these games are too complex for non-gamers, board games are sometimes set aside and disregarded as possible tools for education. Still, we believe that they can be implemented in school practice with a little guidance. They are easily analysed and adapted to any age, and are fun. Our main thesis is that they foster a relaxing environment where the foreign language is practised naturally.

To analyse and use these games, we previously have to analyse the language learning situation in schools, in particular, bilingual education in Spain. In 2006, bilingual systems were implemented in Spanish schools. Later on, in 2010, the main guidelines of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) were published by the main developers of this approach: Do Coyle, Phillip Hood, and David Marsh (Coyle et al., 2010). In between these years, the practice of CLIL in schools had been intuitive and very little theoretically based. This situation led to a poorly developed approach that is sometimes considered inefficient. In this sense, this work provides a succinct analysis on the weak points of CLIL application in Spanish schools and how games can help develop a successful CLIL programme.

CLIL does not need new tools and innovative techniques to be efficient. On the contrary, the only considerations the CLIL developers include within their book are related to language and content integration and to the didactic applications of the approach. In that sense, we provide a brief analysis of the 4Cs Framework and the CLIL matrix in order to extract the main pedagogical points of CLIL and how games can be a tool to enhance them.

This work is divided into three sections. In the first, we develop the aforementioned analysis of the situation of CLIL in Spain and the main characteristics of this approach. In the second, we provide an analysis of the characteristics of tabletop games; we propose a table to help teachers adapt any game to their students' ages; and finally we review the possibilities of board games for language learning and education in general. In the third and last epigraph, we present an experience developed in a school and an assessment of the benefits the board game provided.

## **2. CLIL REALITY**

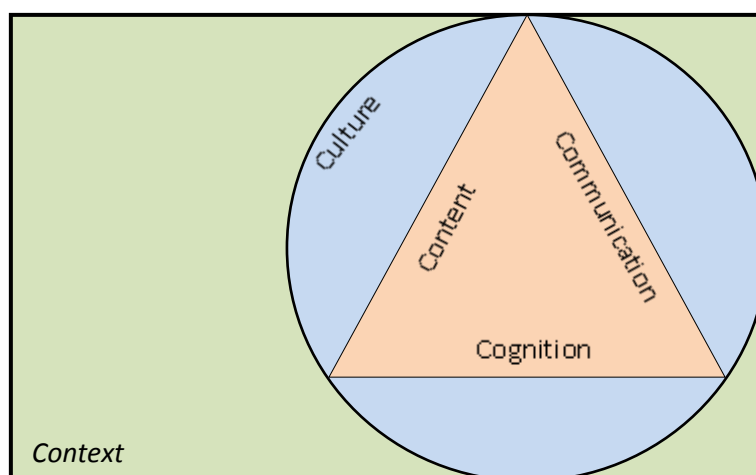
### **2.1. HOW IS CLIL APPLIED IN SCHOOL?**

Bilingual classrooms had existed long before the CLIL theoretical framework was developed. The CLIL matrix was published in 2008 and the main guidelines of CLIL were finally compiled in a book in 2010 (Coyle et al.). In Spain, Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque Country already had their own bilingual education systems to cater for local languages before CLIL in English was introduced in 2006. However, whereas programmes based on Spanish and a local language have proven generally successful, English-based CLIL programmes still have a lot of trouble feeling natural for children and teachers. This is mostly because English is not a language children encounter outside their classroom or practise with other speakers in other social environments. These problems lead to an imperfect application of CLIL principles and a lack of educational success. Nonetheless, Content and Language Integrated Learning is a well studied and structured educational approach. Most of the theories developed are innovative and provide excellent structure for teachers to develop true bilingual education, but CLIL has yet to be fully applied in schools.

The first consideration of this approach is that language and content have to be integrated together. CLIL is not merely teaching content in a foreign language. Firstly, children are faced with a language they are not familiar with and teachers have to consider new ways to make themselves understood. Secondly, language is also the culture and the community that speaks it. Therefore, to learn and use a different language, students need to know more than just its grammar and vocabulary. Thirdly, content has to be adapted to fit within the culture; it seems to make little sense for Spanish students to learn Spanish History in English, forcing unnecessary translations and cultural adaptations (do students have to learn the names of kings and queens in English as well?). Making English the language of instruction restructures the whole learning process. Language and content integration require new methods and tools of teaching.

To organise and structure these new tools and methods, CLIL theory proposes the 4Cs Framework (Fig. 1). Coyle et al. (2010: 41) consider four building blocks of CLIL practice: Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. They explain that all these Cs have to be integrated in the learning process for CLIL to be effective. The first two, Content and Communication, are usually overlooked and not integrated together. Culture is not considered when teaching either. And Cognition (the previous knowledge of the students, their difficulties and ways of overcoming them, etc.) is mostly addressed intuitively by teachers. In Spain, the

Law of Education and the curriculum provide a structured plan for content to be gradually taught according to the children’s stage of development, but, in the end, within the classroom, teachers are the ones that have to face the students. Although the teacher’s experience may sometimes be a good compass, oftentimes it can blind them (as it happens, for example, with the halo effect; when a student that is good on mathematics is expected to be good at every other subject). The 4Cs Framework, then, is usually poorly applied in CLIL classrooms.



**Fig. 1: The 4Cs Framework** (adapted from Coyle et al., 2010: 41)

But Coyle et al. (2010: 41) mention yet another C besides the main four. They state: «[The 4Cs Framework] takes account of integrating content learning and language learning within specific *contexts*». These contexts have to be educational contexts, but, just as using a different language entails a change in methodology, it also produces a change in the educational context; CLIL classrooms necessitate new environments that foster foreign language use in a natural, holistic way. This is the reason why CLIL approach asks for real-life situations, the development of professional and pragmatic skills, and intercultural awareness. A different non-traditional communicative environment has to be provided to successfully develop CLIL.

## 2.2. THE CLIL CLASSROOM AS A COMMUNICATIVE ENVIRONMENT

As stated earlier, learning a language requires knowing more than just its grammar and vocabulary. The CLIL approach considers these extra elements and provides a theoretical structure, not only with the 4Cs Framework but also with the so-called Language Triptych. The Language Triptych is a holistic view of language learning that considers not only the traditional aspects of language but also encourages the development of communication and pragmatic skills. As the developers of this approach explain:



This Triptych does not replace grammatical progression but rather enhances it. It supports learners in language using through the analysis of the CLIL vehicular language from three interrelated perspectives: language *of* learning, language *for* learning, and language *through* learning. (Coyle et al., 2010: 36)

These three perspectives of language learning are the key to develop CLIL practice effectively. The first one, language *of* learning, relates to the traditional considerations of language learning: vocabulary and grammar. It includes the language that learners will use and considers how they will use it (to talk about plants but also to describe them, for example). The second element is the language *for* learning and it is «arguably, [...] the most crucial element for successful CLIL» (Coyle et al., 2007: 62). It covers only the language needed to work within the learning context. These are the structures related to interactional communication among the students and with the teacher; for example, the language to ask and answer questions, the language to discuss ideas and build arguments, and the writing skills involved in these processes. The last element is language *through* learning, which is language that reflects about language itself. During the process of learning and the development of the lessons, new structures and vocabulary will appear and will need to be practised for students to acquire them. Language through learning centres itself upon those strategies that learners need in order to manage the new language: making use of dictionaries, receiving feedback, and using these structures in different situations.

This rethinking of the role of language in the classroom has been complemented by new perspectives on the communication process itself. Dalton-Puffer (2007) has reformulated the traditional Information Transfer Model developed by Shannon and Weaver in 1948 to take account of the peculiarities of the school as a communicative environment.

In Shannon and Weaver's model (1948, in Dalton-Puffer, 2007: 67) content is sent in some form (the code) through a channel from a sender to a receiver. In traditional classroom discourse, the sender is often the teacher and the receivers are the students. The channel is the air of the room or the handouts and textbooks, and the code is mostly spoken and written language, usually accompanied by drawings and other supporting structures. When there are no disturbances in between the sender and the receivers, communication (the transmission of information) is successful. However, this model considers both sender and receiver to be at the same level; they share a similar cultural knowledge and language proficiency, which, in schools and other contexts, does not happen. In CLIL classrooms, this gap of knowledge level is wider as the foreign language is a completely different code than the one that students are used to. When this model of communication is put into practice, receivers are usually

unengaged, as they lose track of the information, and the sender has to constantly repeat the message and search for new ways to deliver it.

However, as Dalton-Puffer explains: «pure information transfer is not the normal case in naturally occurring talk» (2007: 68). This means that the aforementioned model of communication is an ideal that almost never happens. Forcing it upon the classroom discourse oversimplifies the learning process and leads to an unnaturally designed context where students are unable to learn effectively. The extreme interpretation of this model considers the children merely as knowledge recipients, and it is also the reason why there is too much content within the curriculum and textbooks are sometimes boring for children.

Furthermore, within the information transfer model some classroom speech acts may not be considered communication. Dalton-Puffer provides the example of a student answering a question: in this case, the teacher already knows the answer, so there is no new information transferred when the student responds; there is no communication happening in this exchange. This model is where unsuccessful CLIL practices happen, as language is considered only a means of transferring content.

Communication, then, has to be something more than a unidirectional transfer of information from sender to receiver: it is rather a constant negotiation where speakers construct together the meaning and content of the interaction. Therefore, *meaning* is not something given by the sender to the receiver within a message; rather messages are the *tools* sender and receiver use to shape meaning. Thus, every speech act is one building block on a whole communication event stretching longer than only one interaction among the participants (Dalton-Puffer, 2007: 68). In classroom discourse, a teacher is co-constructing meaning with the students through feedback, questions, tests, group work, projects, etc. This model provides a more natural way of understanding interactional communication in schools, as the communication events occurring in learning situations mirror those happening in other contexts; classrooms are another communicative environment with its own vocabulary and specific situations.

The CLIL approach fits perfectly within this model. As stated earlier, CLIL classrooms require new environments that enhance the use of the foreign language as a natural process. In addition, the 4Cs Framework and the Language Triptych both demand a more complex understanding of language learning. The Framework mentions the need for a specific communicative context that considers the culture of the language in use and the students' cognition; the Triptych provides reflection upon the rest of language considerations teachers

have to take into account in the classroom. CLIL relies on this model of negotiation of meanings in order to be effective. However, theoretical structure is not enough for teachers to develop a successful lesson. To create and manage these new communicative environments, some tools and strategies have to be used. And this is where board games can make a difference.

### **2.3. GAMES AS A TOOL FOR CLIL CLASSROOMS**

There are already some traditional tools that foster these communicative environments; the most widely used are games and songs. However, they are frequently misused, so they are considered ineffective. We believe that there is no need for new tools or IT-related strategies to create a successful communicative environment: the way to successful education is to fully understand and use traditional tools and strategies according to the CLIL approach and its principles. Board games are the perfect example, as they have been set aside for family reunions and only in the last decade have they really been considered as a possible tool for education, together with computer and role-playing games.

Firstly, tabletop games are highly adaptable. The teacher can change their mechanisms, rules and objectives to fit any age. The setting can also be easily changed to fit any content; for example, a game about the sea world can have the same system of play and be changed to become about the animals of the jungle (it has been made by game creators themselves: Ticket to Ride, a game about building train lines between different cities, shares the same mechanisms among all their versions set in different parts of the world: EEUU, Europe, Nordic Countries and Africa; Bang, a game in which players are either sheriffs or outlaws hunting each other in the Midwest, has a slightly different version set in feudal Japan). And the rules of the game can be adapted to the cognitive level of the students. Once the mechanics are learnt, the game can be adapted to multiple contents and used time and again with minimal explanations.

Secondly, tabletop games can be used to work on specific cultural topics. Games like Pergamon –in which the players are curators of a museum– or even Stone Age –where they are the head of a tribe– foster empathy and other cultural skills. Other games have content related to History and Geography that can be emphasized when presenting the game or developed later with other activities –Ticket to Ride: Europe, for example, lays out a map of Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which can be used to teach the differences through time in the

territory or in the means of transportation, for example. The adaptability and variety of games make them very useful tools to develop cultural awareness.

Finally, these games by themselves facilitate a communicative environment: playing inevitably requires interaction; language practice, thus, will naturally occur within games. They provide a relaxed, fun context where communication is a necessity. In this sense, fluency is more important than correctness, although, if students are provided with enough strategies, mistakes can be detected and corrected without pressure. Furthermore, the games' adaptability to different contexts and activities affords opportunities for children to use language in different authentic-like situations. Asking questions, for example, is different when the question is directed to an in-game authority, or when the players speak between themselves, or when they have a question for the teacher about the game. Practising these different situations provides children with strategies to communicate and develop pragmatic skills.

In conclusion, board games are effective CLIL tools. When playing a game, language can be practised in different situations while talking about other non-linguistic content. And games foster a communicative environment where the 4Cs are considered. Altogether, when used to their full potential, games are a remarkable option for CLIL classrooms.

#### 2.4. THE CLIL MATRIX: KEY ASPECTS OF BOARD GAMES AS CLIL TOOLS

There are two tools called CLIL matrix. The first one is an adaptation of the model proposed by Cummins in 1984 (Coyle et al., 2010: 43) to balance language and cognitive demands when developing a teaching plan (Fig. 2). Although it is interesting to help teachers assess their activities according to their students' knowledge, this matrix is not relevant to our work because it is more closely related to the Cognition than to the Communication elements of CLIL.

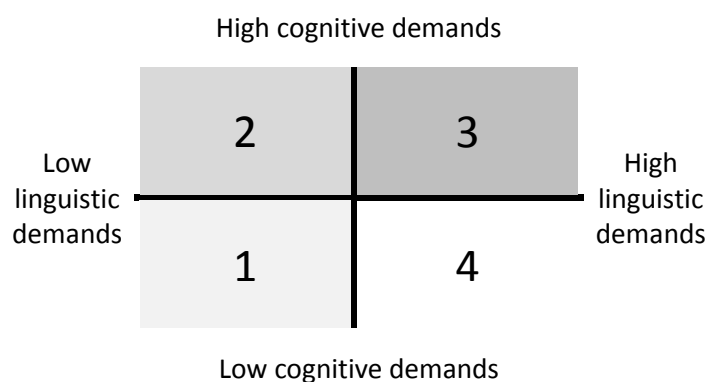


Fig. 2: Cummins' CLIL matrix (adapted from Coyle et al. 2010: 43)

From 2004 to 2007, the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML) developed their second medium-term programme: a series of books, studies, tools, and materials for language education. One of these activities was a second CLIL matrix (Fig. 3), coordinated by David Marsh. This CLIL matrix is a web-based tool for teachers to assess their performance in CLIL instruction (Marsh, 2007: online).<sup>1</sup> It can also be used as a blueprint of CLIL, as it proposes a series of questions based on the main principles of this approach. In contrast with the first model, the second CLIL matrix considers every aspect of the approach and provides structures for teachers to develop CLIL successfully. This is the matrix we will be analysing and using.

This assessment tool is divided into a 4 by 4 matrix according to the characteristics of CLIL: content, language, integration, and learning; and the parameters it affects: culture, communication, cognition, and community (similar to those in the 4Cs Framework mentioned above). The results are 16 key indicators of the CLIL approach. For each indicator there are a group of questions to assess that particular part of CLIL instruction.



Fig. 3: the CLIL matrix and its indicators (in Marsh, 2007)

<sup>1</sup>, Marsh (2007): *The CLIL matrix*, European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (in <http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/CLILmatrix/EN/qMain.html>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016).

As this thesis focuses on language learning, we are going to analyse the four indicators related to communication (and mention others related to language) to infer some of the characteristics of CLIL and review how games are related to them. For this purpose, the questions within each indicator will be used as a guide to gather some of the key points of the CLIL approach. These are the features we believe board games share with CLIL and the reason why they are an excellent tool for CLIL classrooms.

Some questions are repeated constantly throughout the different sections of the CLIL matrix; this is because some characteristics of CLIL (like the development of interactional communication) are more important than others. To avoid repetition, we will review them in depth the first time these questions appear and we will left them unmentioned the following times (they are marked with an asterisk).

CONTENT-COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS
1. The methods I use in my classroom lead to interactional classroom communication.
2. The amount of time given to student group/pair work in my teaching is generally...
3. My students are actively involved in activities such as giving presentations, designing posters, debating, etc.
4. In my CLIL classroom, students use IT.
5. My students use the foreign language when they communicate the results of their project work to their peers.

The first indicator relates to interactive learning and the way content is managed. Except for the fourth question, included probably because of an apparent obsession with new technologies, all of them relate to interactional communication. This is because CLIL instruction is supposed to focus on developing student-student communication through group work and debates. Content and language –as the developers of the CLIL matrix explain– are learnt faster when interaction among students is fostered. Presentations and other ways of interactional communication enhance learners’ usage of academic language and provide real life situations and contexts for students to use the target language.

The first question asks directly about methods to foster interactional classroom communication. This question is repeated in all the communication indicators of the CLIL matrix because is one of its main characteristics. CLIL aims for a more natural process of language learning: one that fits better with the model of communication as negotiation of meaning. The CLIL approach requires more interaction among students, as the language practice among equally proficient speakers is more natural and relaxed; children can use the

foreign language to speak with their peers, as all of them share the same imperfect code and there is no pressure if errors are committed. The teacher's role has to change from being a provider of information to an enhancer of opportunities for children to practise the language. CLIL requires teachers to be guides and experts who provide examples and ideas to the students. In this sense, board games are the perfect tool to enhance student interaction, as players have to work with or against each other. This provides more time for language practice, moving the traditional teacher-student flow of information to student-student communication. They foster interactional communication without the constant support of the teacher: they provide a set of rules and a structure for players to follow in their interactions with the game and the other players. Playing tabletop games switches the language learning focus to fluency, as students have to be efficient in their communication performance.

The second question asks for more time given to group work. This question is also repeated in the following indicators. To foster student-student interactional communication there have to be opportunities for children to exchange information among themselves: these are provided through group work. Board games are a tool to facilitate these group interactions. They are a fun, interactive way of developing team work in a more relaxed environment. This relaxing environment provides more opportunities for shy students to participate. And some games require group work to be played successfully. Within this positive environment errors feel natural and unimportant; the emphasis turns to communicating.

The third question asks about activities where interaction and communication are the protagonists: presentations, debates, poster designing, etc. These are other methods to foster interactional classroom communication. Playing could be included in this list as games are one form of *interactive* entertainment. Interactional communication, as has already been discussed, is one of the main characteristics of the CLIL approach, as well as the main mechanism of board games. During a game, players have to communicate to explain their actions and negotiate with each other. Without interaction, board games cannot be played.

The fourth question advises the teacher to use IT. We consider that it is included because any innovative approach to education is believed to take new technologies into account. However, as we have already discussed, CLIL does not need new tools to be effective; this approach aims for a new methodology in language learning, and some tools to foster CLIL already exist. This is the case of board games.

The fifth question asks about the students' usage of the foreign language when communicating the results of a project work. We believe this refers to task-based learning. CLIL fits better with this methodology than with didactic units: although these can include projects and task-based activities, project work considers students as investigators and developers of their own knowledge. Task-based learning fosters the aforementioned switch in teacher's role: children are encouraged to work by themselves, leaving the teacher as a guide in their explorations. Board games can be integrated within projects as they can be created or adapted with the students' participation. In this sense, they can be one of the tasks of the whole project or the final result of a project. They can also be the means of communicating the experience to the students' peers: board games can contain the information the children learnt while developing the project, and playing can be the way of recovering and sharing that content. Board games, then, can be a tool to foster interactional communication and a means to provide content; therefore, the perfect instrument to implement CLIL in schools.

LANGUAGE-COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I achieve richness of target language communication in my classes.</li> <li>2. The methods I use in the classroom lead to interactional classroom communication.*</li> <li>3. The amount of time given to student group/pair work in my teaching is generally...*</li> <li>4. In my CLIL classroom, I use the target language.</li> <li>5. In my classroom, when my students communicate, they use the target language.</li> <li>6. The (support) materials I use encourage students to communicate in the target language.</li> <li>7. During interaction I correct students' linguistic errors.</li> <li>8. I consider that my learners are developing not only the target language, but also communication skills in this language.</li> <li>9. I select a class I taught yesterday. With that class my input took the following percentage of class time...</li> <li>10. Today, with that same class, my input took...</li> </ol>

This indicator relates to language use and the opportunities students have to develop varied communication skills, focusing again on interactional communication but also on language richness and teacher input. From these questions it can be inferred that CLIL aims for a rich L2 usage, focusing not only on grammar or vocabulary, but also on communication skills. Thus, as stated before, teachers have to foster interactional communication. This can be done by reducing the time of teacher-student communication but also by making it more complex and centred on other aspects of communication beyond vocabulary and grammar.



The first question asks about language richness in the communication events of the classroom. Although CLIL aims for fluency instead of accuracy, the teacher should provide students with the best example possible of language production. Teachers should be experts on the content but also master the foreign language. In this sense, board games can be used to provide these examples through written language in the boards, cards, and instructions; they can be used to practise language structures and vocabulary. Tabletop games are set in different time periods and places; they are easily adapted to classroom topics, and most of their mechanisms work around basic language acts (asking questions, trading cards, tokens, etc., describing objects and actions...). Their adaptability to content and language variations makes them perfect for CLIL.

The fourth question asks for the teacher's usage of the target language. Although CLIL practice promotes *interlanguaging* –using the students' mother tongue to explain some difficult concepts, introducing content or as a guide, for example, in glossaries– the main language input in CLIL lessons should be in the foreign language. The teacher offers a model of language production. Board games can be used to provide examples of language production. However, we believe that their mechanisms allow students to participate with reduced teacher intervention: teachers would be the introducers of the game's procedures and rules, and the experts who are able to solve the players' doubts. Eventually, once the game is known by all, they would be players as well. Board games, then, do not foster the teacher's language use alone, but that of all the players.

The fifth question asks about the amount of students' language use and the sixth question asks for «support materials teachers can use to encourage students to communicate in the target language». In order to be learnt, a language has to be practised; therefore, students should use the foreign language as much as possible in CLIL lessons. Teacher's talk time should be reduced for the students to be able to talk more. For this reason, the CLIL teacher has to provide plenty of opportunities for children to use the foreign language. We believe that one of the possible tools to do this are board games. Their relaxing environment can facilitate language production and their easy-learnt mechanisms can reduce the teacher's talk time.

The seventh question asks whether the teacher corrects their students during their performance. Teachers are the guides of the interaction; they should provide advice and corrective feedback to the students. However, as CLIL aims for fluency, and games do as well, we believe these corrections should be made at the end of the interaction. If errors are still committed, troublesome grammatical structures should be practised separately so that

children can assimilate them and correct themselves in the future. Board games can be a tool to practice these difficulties in a fun environment.

The eighth question advises teachers to foster the development of other communication skills, as students of the foreign language should learn more than just its grammar and vocabulary. Because of its importance, this question is repeated in the next indicators. Communication and pragmatic skills are the skills that allow speakers to understand and produce metalinguistic utterances like non-verbal communication and metaphors, as well as distinguishing the register (formal-informal) they should use depending on the context. As the developers of the matrix explain: «These skills help us to avoid misunderstandings, to negotiate meanings, to jointly build up content, to regulate interactions (turn-taking), and to close interactions».<sup>2</sup> The CLIL approach aims for complete and integrated language learning. We believe board games provide more means for students to communicate and develop these communication skills; they can be adapted to different situations and have different settings that can be used to practise pragmatic skills. The equipment of board games and their mechanisms provide different means for players/students to explain themselves and communicate. Tabletop games not only foster more interaction among players but also offer students different means of communication: kinaesthetic, visual, and social (Collins et al., 2011: 14).

The last two questions ask about the teacher's input. As has been noted above, the CLIL approach aims for student-student interaction, as learning is believed to be more natural among equally proficient speakers. In this sense, teacher input has to be enough to provide new information and guidance to the children, but also to offer opportunities for students to practise and manage these pieces of information. As discussed before, board games afford situations to balance this input-output ratio as they create a relaxing and fun, communicative environment where teacher's input is the minimum needed for children to be able to play.

INTEGRATION-COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS
1. The tasks that I use with my students lead to interactional communication.*
2. In my classroom, students interact with each other and the teacher.*
3. As a teacher, I use project work.*
4. In my classroom, I also encourage students to use transactional communication in order to promote skills they need in their professional life.

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<sup>2</sup>In the Learning-Communication example of the CLIL matrix (Marsh, 2007: online): <http://archive.ecml.at/mtp2/CLILmatrix/EN/qMain.html>, accessed July, 4<sup>th</sup> 2016.

This indicator relates to the diversity of means of communication, providing students with different 'languages' to explore the L2 and learn among themselves, and once again mentions interactional and student-student communication. The aim of CLIL is to teach content but also reflect on the diversity of contexts where language is used: to talk with friends and peers, to speak in front of an audience, to ask someone a favour... CLIL, then, proposes learning to communicate in different environments ranging from informal registers to formal lecture-like situations; this indicator addresses the need to produce varied discourse settings and situations (Dalton-Puffer, 2007: 263). Most of these questions have already been reported in the previous indicators.

The fourth question requests the teacher to provide opportunities to develop students' communication skills they will need in their future professional life. CLIL considers language in its complexity and aims to develop every one of its characteristics. For this reason, language learning has to be useful to everyday life and other professional situations. The diversity of content and language board games provide can be used to practise different real-life situations, as their setting can be changed to any the teacher decides: for example, players can interact with a bank and be renters or lessors (as it happens in Monopoly). And tabletop games by themselves use a series of mechanisms that emulate authentic situations: the turns and rounds, for example, provide players with a system similar to a conversation (sometimes chaotic, sometimes long and complicated). These mechanisms help children interiorize complex communication processes unconsciously.

LEARNING-COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS
1. In my CLIL classroom, I help students develop different features of good and appropriate forms of communication.*
2. I help develop students' skills in reading and writing, alongside verbal and non-verbal communication.
3. In my CLIL classroom, I teach students different ways of conveying messages.*
4. In my CLIL classroom, I provide different types of situations in which students need to communicate in the target language.*
5. I teach my students ways to approach texts in order to better understand them.
6. I rate my work in teaching my students oral communication skills as...*
7. I actively support language and content learning by encouraging skills like communicating, writing, reading, listening and speaking.
8. I provide ways in which students can receive feedback on their individual and group communication skills (e.g. through video, and other means).

The last indicator relates directly to pragmatic skills. This indicator also focuses on developing the four basic communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and on the feedback and strategies given to students to improve their performance. Apart from the traditional skills-based approach, the main focus of CLIL seems to be fostering a diversity of contexts and situations, as well as different ways to communicate messages. This indicator, consequently, gives much importance to developing pragmatic skills, focusing most of its questions on the students' own performance and forms of communication. Some of these questions have been analysed in the previous indicators.

The second question advises the teacher on developing the students' writing and reading skills, and on providing opportunities for verbal and non-verbal communication practice. CLIL aims for a complete language learning, as in their adult life, children will need to use all the communication skills. Board games can develop these skills through their mechanisms: for example, games like Pictionary and Scrabble imply the reading of cards and constructing words, and these common mechanisms can be implemented in other more complex games (as it happens with Monopoly in which oftentimes players have to draw cards and perform the actions written in them). The non-verbal communication practice has been commented on the previous indicator.

The fifth question requests the teacher to offer different «ways to approach texts in order to better understand them». To fully take part in communication events, participants have to be able to understand all messages. However, comprehension is much more than just hearing words accurately. Words happen within a discourse filled with metalinguistic events; the cognitive process involved in comprehension is very complex and cannot be reduced to reading, hearing and providing a response. Board games demand more subtle processes than traditional tools: their mechanisms require following rules and directions, picking up clues, collecting information, negotiating with other players and other strategies that consider language in its complexity.

The eighth question asks about ways in which students are given feedback on their own language productions. CLIL considers reflection upon language as a part of language learning. For this reason, identifying the main errors children commit and making them aware of these errors is a main point of the CLIL approach. Although board games cannot be used to register errors and provide feedback, they can be used to work on difficult structures and common errors. In the communication model discussed above, meaning is negotiated among the participants. Errors impair communication, as meaning cannot be fully discussed. The goals of

board games may act as motivation to ensure that communication happens: if the players cannot make themselves understood, they may not succeed in the game.

In conclusion, CLIL instruction, although using some traditional tools and ideas, focuses on developing pragmatic skills, interactional communication and real-life usage of language to foster a more natural way of learning a foreign language. In this sense, CLIL approach searches for new tools and contexts to provide this learning. We believe board games are one of these tools. They have mechanisms that foster language and content integrated learning. They facilitate a relaxed environment where pragmatic and other communication skills can be developed. And their adaptability is a key factor to be considered, as they can be used mostly in any context. Altogether, tabletop games are a very interesting tool for CLIL practice.

### 3. BOARD GAMES AND CLIL INSTRUCTION

#### 3.1. WHAT IS A BOARD GAME?

A board game is an activity that involves the placing or moving of markers along a path according to a set of rules. In the game each player is attempting to reach a specified goal (Bruni & Silverman, 1975: 172).

Board games have existed throughout history. In fact, some of the first games invented by humans are board games related to sowing –for example, the Mancala games from Africa– or conquering land –for example, a game every person in the world has, at least, heard about: Chess.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays, there are hundreds of new board games created every year, most of them using similar mechanisms but different themes and ideas. However, we will limit our taxonomy to those whose characteristics are relevant to CLIL instruction.

A game is a type of interactive entertainment with a set of rules and specific aims in which the players have to solve some conflict emanating from the game itself, sometimes from the other players. They are different from toys and stories because they have objectives and rules, which give games a meaning and a structure. They differ from puzzles because they present the player with opposition and require deliberate interaction. And finally, they are distinguished from competitions because players are able to interact with each other.<sup>4</sup>

Board games can be defined as a subcategory within the broader field of tabletop games. This latter term refers to games played around a table or a flat surface, from Monopoly to Poker, but also Dungeons and Dragons and Risk. Board games share similar strategies and mechanisms with other kinds of tabletop games (moving or placing tokens, for example), but they are distinctive in that they require the use of a board. Our classification will take tabletop games as a reference (using the terms *board* and *tabletop* interchangeably), although many features may be made extensive to other types of games.

#### 3.2. A PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION: ANALYSIS OF THE MECHANISMS OF BOARD GAMES

There are many classifications of board games. This work only provides a framework for teachers to evaluate games and adapt them as a tool for learning. Our classification will be

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<sup>3</sup> An excellent overview on Ancient games is made in the second instalment of Crash Course Games, a series of Youtube videos explaining the origin, history and usage of games (Crash Course, in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1lv3cOmlzM>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016).

<sup>4</sup> This definition is an elaboration of our own from Chris Crawford's taxonomy explained in Volume 4 of *The Journal of Computer Game Design* (1990-1991), available in Crawford's web (Erasmatazz, in <http://www.erasmatazz.com/library/the-journal-of-computer/jcgd-volume-4/my-definition-of-game.html>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> July 2016).

centred on three characteristics: the equipment required to play, the dynamics developed within the game, and the mechanisms. The first, the equipment, provides the ground for a basic taxonomy and some structure to the other two. The remaining two, dynamics and mechanisms, are the most relevant to education, and so will be the focus of this analysis. We will classify tabletop games into different groups according to these characteristics; for each one we will discuss their educational applications so teachers can find out what to expect of each group of games. At the end of the epigraph, a classification table is proposed to analyse any tabletop game teachers may encounter and assess whether it is suitable for their own students' age.

#### a) THE EQUIPMENT

The equipment of a game refers to its tangible parts, the items players use. In a tabletop game there is a large variety of these: boards, tokens, cards, figurines... Most games have more than one type of item, but this classification considers the defining pieces, the most characteristic item. The equipment sometimes is related to the game system and mechanisms; a board game, for example, will always require tokens moved in, out or through the board. Therefore, knowing the kind of equipment will often also provide information on its mechanisms and dynamics. New games are created every year, and this classification does not attempt to be conclusive. However, for educational purposes, we will divide tabletop games according to equipment into role-playing games, miniature games, board games, card games, dice games, and tile-based games.

Role-playing games are based on communication and have numerous applications for education. However, as they are completely different from the other tabletop games (dice and boards are used sometimes, but they differ in everything else), they are not discussed in this study. Miniature games, played with figurines representing the 'forces' each player has, also have their own system of play and they can be interesting for education; painting the miniatures requires artistic skills, and playing enhances mathematical and strategy development skills. However, we are leaving them outside of our work too, as they require too much time, hours dedicated to painting and long playing times. The remaining types of tabletop games share most of their dynamics and mechanisms and all of them will be considered in the next classifications. Board games, card games, and dice games are self-explanatory. Traditional games like Checkers, Solitaire, or Poker Dice respectively are some

examples. Tile-based games are those whose board is made up of tiles, for example Mahjong or Dominoes.

Knowing the equipment of a game gives some information about its difficulty. Board games usually have a board and many other items, whereas dice and card games use mostly their main equipment, and only on occasion other tokens. Having elaborate equipment may make a game too difficult, as the mechanisms may become too complex, with many actions needed to control every item in play. However, certain games are complex despite only having one type of item because they are used for various actions; for example, Samurai Sword has separate sets of cards for roles, actions, and objects. Knowing the equipment of a game is only the beginning: although card and dice games can be easier than board games, their mechanisms have to be analysed to know how complex they are.

#### b) THE DYNAMICS

We give the name 'dynamics' to the relationships players have among themselves. These depend on the objective and rules of a game, but also on each player's strategies and personal objectives within the game. According to their dynamics, games can be divided into competitive, cooperative or collaborative (Zagal et al., 2006: 25).

In competitive games, each player's strategies directly oppose each other. The rules of the game demand only one winner and, therefore, the players have to defeat each other. Traditional games like Chess or Monopoly are competitive games. By contrast, collaborative games require the players to work together towards the same objective. Players act as a team trying to beat the obstacles proposed by the game. Finally, in cooperative games the objectives are different or the reward changes from player to player. In these games, players may need or wish to play together to reach a particular goal, and they may have to share some of their strategies or resources, but, in the end, the reward and the winner are individual.<sup>5</sup>

Although any tabletop game fosters communication, the ones with collaborative dynamics are more conducive to creating a positive learning environment. This is because all the players share a common interest and have to work together. Cooperative games are also relevant to language learning, as they allow situations for players to negotiate and exchange

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<sup>5</sup>This classification is not closed as there are possible combinations of the dynamics described above. Some games, for example, have teams of players competing against each other; they are competitive games but with collaborative dynamics within the groups.



resources and opinions. Altogether, we believe collaborative and cooperative dynamics are the best ones to be implemented in CLIL approaches.

### c) THE MECHANISMS

In the previous sections of this epigraph we have discussed the differences among tabletop games according to general characteristics like their equipment or dynamics, but what differentiates one collaborative board game from another? At first sight, one answer could be the setting where the players are acting. A game can be about fishes trying to go up the current or about Neil Armstrong in his first mission to the moon. However, these differences are relevant to content rather than to cognition, and so they are not the most significant for the purpose of this study. To find these differences we will have to look at the game system, at the elements that make a tabletop game function: the mechanisms.<sup>6</sup>

A possible concrete definition of this term is provided by Zagal et al. (2006: 27): «A *game mechanism* is a physical artefact, rule, or type of interaction that implements an action in the game». This explanation includes the equipment of the game and its rules. However, it can be argued that rules are the *delimitations* of the mechanisms and the equipment is a *requirement* of the mechanisms (if you have to place a token on a board, you need a board to play on). Therefore, we consider mechanisms as the interactions happening within the game, whether they are among players or between the player and the game. Some mechanisms are simple, like drawing a card; others are more complex, like having to put a token in a certain spot of the board to get a specific benefit.

The mechanisms of a game are prearranged by the *rules* and set in motion by the *objectives*; the *actions* implemented in the context of these mechanisms are organised and performed during *turns and rounds*, and the players usually develop some *strategy* to reach the objectives. To analyse the difficulty of a board game we will take into account all of those characteristics.

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<sup>6</sup>One of the first questions when asking for the game system is ‘What are its mechanics?’ That is because sometimes the word *mechanism* and *mechanic* are used indistinctively in a generic sense to describe any characteristic of a board game –including the dynamics and equipment. To avoid possible confusions we will refer only to the mechanisms and leave the rest of characteristics outside this classification.

(i) *Objectives*

The objective of a game is what the players have to achieve in order to win. It is what sets the game in motion, giving the players a destination to move towards. The objectives of games are usually very simple: getting to the finish line first, collecting a specific number of victory points, obtaining the best combination of cards...

The difficulty of the objectives comes from the dynamics they generate, already discussed above. If every player has the *same objective*, the game can be easily explained and played, and can be used even in the lowest levels of primary education and elementary school. However, if some of the players have *different objectives*, more complex strategies have to be developed as confrontation will happen. If all the players have different (and often opposed) objectives, players have to be mature enough to limit the confrontations only to the game and to perform complex strategies to meet those of the opponents. Consequently, as the distribution of objectives gets more complicated, the overall difficulty increases, and so the game has to be reserved only for upper levels.

(ii) *Rules and obstacles*

A game is made up of players looking to achieve a goal by overcoming obstacles while attending to a set of rules. The rules are statements that regulate the game mechanisms, the degree of difficulty of the objective, each player's possibilities and actions, and the obstacles they have to overcome.

The level of complexity of a game comes from characteristics like turn systems and strategies developed, and from the *restrictions and obstacles*. All these characteristics are described by the rules. When a game has a very short set of rules it is an easy game, as, for example most traditional board games; it can be explained in a short time and the mechanisms may be understandable by children from lower levels of primary. The longer the set of rules, the more mechanisms, obstacles, and restrictions the game will have, and the more challenging it will be. For example, not being able to talk with other players in a collaborative game makes it very difficult because the players have to guess what the others are thinking and anticipate their actions.

The most difficult obstacle a player has to overcome is a direct opponent. Sometimes, competitive dynamics are difficult and frustrating not because of the obstacle but because the opponent is another person. On the other hand, collaborative dynamics may have even tougher obstacles, but teamwork provides motivation for the players to go on. Adding

collaborative dynamics to a game often makes it easier to play as they help in creating a relaxing environment.

### (iii) *Turns and rounds*

During a game, times and mechanisms are organized into playing turns. A turn is a period of the game in which only one player is carrying out their tasks, while the other players are waiting for their own turn to begin.

However, not all games have a structured *turn-by-turn* system. There are some which have *no turns* at all. Most traditional action-reaction card games fall within this group, as well as the recent 'party games' –short, quick, easy-to-play games like Ghost Blizz, Dobble or Jungle Speed. Having no turns can be chaotic sometimes, but these systems are considered to be easier to play for the lower levels of Primary. In these games mechanisms may occur at the same time, for example when players are competing to get the answer first. In other games, mechanisms may function as a reaction, for example when players have to move a piece back home when eaten in the Spanish traditional game Parchís.<sup>7</sup> These games have turns, but some movements and actions are performed at the same time. However, there are also games with *very complicated turn systems*; Settlers of Catan or Carcassone are two known examples. They have beginning, middle or final interruptions, trading rounds, or moments of stopped action dedicated to exchanging 'resources' among players or with the 'bank' (sometimes called resource management mechanisms). Most of these systems are too complex for ages 6-9 but can be tried in upper levels.

These complex mechanisms, as well as turns, are organised in rounds. A round is normally defined as a period of the game where every player has had their turn and the first player's turn is up next. However, as the complexity of the game increases, special in-game rounds are introduced in between turns. These rounds are used to trade cards and resources or to develop some of the actions started in the players' turns. A player's turn consists in, for example, moving a token and taking a card, but then all the players can exchange their cards with each other: this is a special 'trading' round. The most widely known game to have these special rounds is Settlers of Catan, but more complex and adult-oriented games exist, like Puerto Rico or Terra Mystica.

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<sup>7</sup>Although Parchís is a traditional Spanish game, its origin is India, where it is called Parchisi. Other games have derived from this traditional Indian game, like Ludo. All of them share a similar board and some of their rules, and are designed for two to four players.

#### (iv) *Actions*

Most game mechanisms fall into this category, as these are the players' ways of interacting with the game, and they are very varied in number and complexity. They include simple actions like rolling the dice but also intricate strategies like building up the player's number of farmers in order to produce more food, to raise life conditions in the player's village, so the villagers are able to build stronger tools to mine more valuable ores from the ground.

An action is anything a player does that changes the circumstances of the game. These changes can be done on a player's piece or in the game ground or even only in behaviour. Examples of these actions are: moving a token according to a dice roll; a bridge collapsing on the board because of a card drawn; or agreeing to an exchange of goods after negotiations among players. In tabletop games, these actions are mostly forced by the rules and the game system of play.

The difficulty of a game depends on the number of actions players have to do within their turns. If there are too many actions during one player's turn, the game becomes slow and long for children. However, difficulty also depends on the actions performed outside the player's turns and on the result of these actions. If results happen *in the moment*, the game can be played in lower Primary education. By contrast, if results are deferred to the *long term*, strategies and plans have to be developed to win, which makes the game too complex for young children. And, finally, if actions and results happen outside the turn system altogether, the game is even more difficult, as players have to react and anticipate other players' actions while playing their turn. The easiest games are the ones that require one action and its result on the same turn, two if some special conditions are come upon. These games are, for example, any quick, easy-to-play, party game, as they only have action-reaction systems.

Most board games have more than one compulsory action per turn, and some of their consequences are medium to long term. Traditional board games are the best example. In Monopoly, players that buy a street may receive rent much later on. A turn in Monopoly consists in throwing the die and moving a piece, but then players can buy the street they fell in; or may have to pay another player (or the bank) a fee; they get money when they pass through the starting square; or they may have to take a card, etc. These actions depend on whether their piece falls into one square or another, but they are required, so players will have to perform more than one action each turn and even be focused on every other player's actions, as some of them may affect all the players.

(v) *Strategies*

Much more interesting for education purposes are the strategies players develop during a game and their complexity. A strategy is a planning of the actions a player has to do to achieve their objective.

Dice and card games often have simple strategies or *no strategy* at all, which make them easy to play; sometimes, board games fall into this category as well: these are usually the party games, as they only require action-reaction structures and players cannot plan their movements in advance. These games are also easier to understand and most of their mechanisms are quickly interiorized by the players. Consequently, a tabletop game with no strategy can be played from the lowest levels of education to the highest.

Games with long-term results, grand final objectives, and/or plenty of actions and reactions per turn, force the players to develop a strategy to win. The same way plans are made in real life, players have to look ahead to future benefits and obstacles. Some games need *a strategy* to overcome the possible difficulties and get more rewards at the end of the game. And a few of them even require *rethinking* the strategy during play to adapt it to new conditions created by the players. Therefore, the more complex the strategy required, the more difficult the game is.

The classic game within this category is Clue/Cluedo.<sup>8</sup> Though it has a basic movement system (throwing the dice and moving your piece), players need some strategy to successfully reach the goal. The players have to find out who murdered Mr. Black, where it happened and which instrument was the murder weapon. Complex mechanisms are put in practice every time a player enters a room: asking questions, exchanging cards, writing down notes. All of the discoveries a player makes force them to rethink the possible suspect and plan the next move accordingly. In addition, to unmask him/her, the player has to be in the room where the crime was committed; they have to be very clever not to uncover the location and move discreetly towards it. All these characteristics make Cluedo one of the most complex traditional board games developed in the twentieth century. These complexities make it too difficult (and sometimes boring) for children to play.

Cluedo is one of the most complex traditional board game of the twentieth century, but even its complexities have been superseded by the new Eurogames (games, usually developed in Europe, with a complex system of rules and many pieces and actions per turn). Players in

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<sup>8</sup> The name of the game changes depending on editions and countries. In Europe it is known by its original name, Cluedo, whereas in America it was renamed Clue. Some characters, rooms, and items are different, but the mechanisms and the system of play is the same.

these games need a considerably well thought-out strategy in order to win, from the simplest Ticket to Ride, to the complex Puerto Rico. A few of these games can be played in school – most of them in the upper levels– and some of their mechanisms can be extracted to create new simpler games. It is the teacher who has to analyse these mechanisms and strategies to select the appropriate game. To this end, the following table is proposed.

d) *A classification table*

From all the characteristics mentioned above, we have developed a table to allow teachers to analyse any board game and adapt it to their students’ age (Table 1). From this table, teachers should be able to extract some of the characteristics of the game and modify them to adjust their level of difficulty. Although the table has defined spaces for each characteristic, the complexity of games is a continuum and some mechanisms fall in between the limits proposed. Every characteristic has to be considered separately, as some of them make the game too difficult just by themselves. For a game to be suitable for a certain age, most of its characteristics have to be within the column of that age or lower. If some characteristics are in higher-level columns, teachers should try to simplify them to fit in a lower level.

<b>DIFFICULTY</b>	<b>EASY</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>HARD</b>
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	One clear objective	Different objectives for each player	Direct opposition among players
<b>RULES</b>	Short set of rules	Many rules Some restrictions	Long list of rules Many restrictions Many special situations
<b>URNS</b>	No turns	Turn-by-turn	Complex rounds
<b>ACTIONS</b>	Action-reaction	More than one action per turn Some medium term results	Interrupted actions Long term results
<b>STRATEGY</b>	No strategy	Intuitive strategy	Complex strategy Rethinking
<b>PROPOSED AGE</b>	3-6	7-9	10-12

**Table 1: Proposed classification table** according to the complexity of mechanisms (own elaboration)

### 3.3. TWO FORESHADOWING EXPERIENCES

Alejandro's engagement in playing the game was another example of the opportunities the activity provided him to practice his use of different languages. [...] Alejandro drew a card from the deck, looked at it, and announced, «Toucan go to red». When Margarita [his partner] didn't respond, Alejandro took the lead: [...] «Toucan go to red. (Points to the squares on the floor) Uno, dos, tres, cuatro» (Collins et al., 2011: 17).

Tabletop games are believed to have many educational benefits. However, there have been very few studies about them and most of the advantages of games as learning tools have not been proved. Nevertheless, this work will attempt to enumerate most of their educational possibilities based on previous works and experiences. Pictionary, Monopoly and other already existing games, as it was noted in the CLIL matrix part of this thesis, have features that can be used in a classroom. However, if they are too complex for the children, analysing their mechanisms and eliminating some of them can make a game easier without sacrificing the ideas or the dynamics of the game itself. The wide variety of topics and systems of play makes board games the perfect tool for the CLIL approach, as they can be adapted to teach mostly any content, enhance student-centred communication and develop cognitive and social skills.

Games in general –not only board games– are fun to play. This is the main reason why they are included in classrooms and used as learning tools. In this sense, according to Hromek & Roffey (2009: 630): «[games] stimulate creativity as the brain moves from a cognitive, rule-bound state to a more fluid relaxed state where the whole body is engaged in problem solving». Some proof to that is in the study carried out by Bunge et al. (2011): children from 7 to 9 years old were trained with board and computer games during 8 weeks, one hour a day, two days each week. They demonstrated that games improved their performance IQ by 10 points on average. Fun provides a positive environment for learning, reduces the stress of classroom practice, and fosters participation among students.

Games have long been considered practice fields for social learning (Piaget, 1962 in Hromek & Roffey, 2009: 632). Board games provide life-like situations as most of them have real life contexts or can be adapted to them. Furthermore, some of the skills developed during play are used outside the game as well, such as turn order, planning and predicting actions (Bruni & Silverman, 1975: 172). The mechanisms of games and their settings enhance situations where students can make decisions and evaluate their consequences. This means they can develop social skills in a closed and safe environment; skills that they will use in their day-to-day life. Board games are an efficient tool to construct socially sound citizens.

Some practices like the one presented in this work already exist that provide proof to the statements above. The first one corroborates the benefits of collaborative games for

education. The second one is the experience of Kristine Carithers: she designed a board game with her students to study the biodiversity of the rainforest. This experience motivated this whole thesis and served as a basis for the game implementation described in it. In the following paragraphs we will review these studies focusing on the benefits of board games for CLIL education.

Kyle Pepler and his colleagues (2013) created a board game called *Hivemind* and played it with 40 children from 6 to 9 years old in groups of 4. Their intent was to discover whether collaborative dynamics were more effective for learning than competitive ones. Thus, they made two different versions of the game: one with individual scores and one where the group scored together. Although the game had a collective objective (getting enough nectar for the beehive to survive winter), during the competitive game, children focused on the scoring and competed against each other. The result was bored and disengaged students, usually talking off topic and paying less attention to their classmates' movements. In conclusion, during competitive play there was less content-related talk. By contrast, the collaborative version of the board game provided more chances for students to work together and speak with each other. As Pepler et al. observe: «students helped one another read the cards out loud and played active listeners when the science [of the bees' behaviours] was being read» (2013: 697). Therefore, during collaborative play, children were more engaged and their speech acts were more content-related. This study demonstrates how competitive dynamics in games can undermine learning and why collaborative games are an excellent tool for language practice and content learning.

In 2011, the experience of Kristine Carithers, a Californian school teacher, was published on Volume 66, Issue 2 of the magazine *Young Children* (Collins et al.). She had created a board game with their first grade students within a 12-week project. The game was about the animals of the rainforest and the main objective was reaching the finish line. Children played in pairs and represented an animal. They had to create their own masks (as it was a life-sized board game in which they were the pieces), and move through the board according to the indications of their partner. For Carithers, the purpose of introducing this game was to give opportunities for some of her children to engage socially with their peers, as she had a very diverse classroom: approximately three-fourths were Latino and half were dual language learners (Collins et al., 2011: 16). Their objectives were fully reached. Children were provided with a context that was conducive to positive social interaction, but they were also engaged in meaningful reading (of the cards of the game and the books used to get the information for the creation of the game), and exposed to new vocabulary and to social structures like turn



taking, which provided them with authentic opportunities for conversations. In conclusion, creating and playing this board game gave the students more chances to construct knowledge and relationships within a positive communicative environment.

## 4. A PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE: USING A BOARD GAME AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION IN A CLIL CLASSROOM

### 4.1. CONTEXT FOR THE EXPERIENCE

The experience was put into practice in two groups of Grade 4 (ages 9-10). In group A there were 12 students and in group B there were 14. There were no students with appreciable learning difficulties in either group. Most of them had been in the bilingual program since kindergarten and they had complementary English lessons outside school. In general, most of the students were fast learners, as most of the slower ones, those with more difficulties in English, did not attend CLIL lessons and so were not part of these groups. However, although these groups had very little diversity, Kristine Carithers' experience reviewed above provides evidence that in groups with more diversity, these games may work as well (Collins et al., 2011).

The topic was 'The periods of Prehistory'. The teachers were using a traditional textbook-based methodology but were open to less conventional activities. Most of the ideas (for example, the periods of Prehistory themselves) and the vocabulary, were already known to the students. The game proposal and its adaptation were easily introduced, as the teachers seemed very open to using different teaching methods and innovative strategies.

The original game used within this experience was Hanabi, a very complicated collaborative card game, winner of the prestigious *Spiel des Jahres* in 2013. The objective of this game is to arrange cards according to their number (1-5) and colour (blue, white, red, green, or yellow) (Fig. 4).

The difficulties of this game come from the restrictions imposed by the rules. The players cannot see their cards; they have to show them to the other players and through hints given they have to guess which card to put on the table. In Hanabi the clues given are limited to a number or a colour and can only be given turn by turn up to five turns in a row. After that, a card has to be put on the table or discarded. If three cards are misplaced the team loses and the game is over.



**Fig. 4: the cards of Hanabi**, five different colours numbered 1-5. Hanabi means fireworks in Japanese (extracted from Boardgamegeek.com)

The basic mechanism of this game is the same as the traditional game Who am I: each player has a card in their forehead facing the rest of the players, and by asking questions every player has to guess which historical character they are –the name written or drawn in the card. In the case of Hanabi there is more than one card, and instead of questions asked, clues are given directly.

#### **4.2. THE ADAPTATION**

To successfully use the board game and teach the corresponding contents, both had to be adapted to fit the students' ages and previous knowledge. Some of Hanabi's mechanisms were maintained, but grammar and vocabulary were simplified, and setting and rules were adapted to fit the topic of the didactic unit.

The language and content of the topic within the textbook were considered by the teachers to be too complicated for the children. We decided to change some of the grammar and the vocabulary to fit the children's level of English. The language adaptation was agreed with the teachers: they decided, for example, to use present tenses instead of past simple, as their children had never studied past tenses. The content and the game mechanisms were adapted with the children's input through brainstorming and practising some of the mechanisms of the game separately.

The content and vocabulary were also developed with the students' collaboration. Instead of making the students read the textbook and provide them with a handout to memorise, they were the ones that developed a table for each period of Prehistory with the activities prehistoric people performed and the tools they used. Through brainstorming, they called a series of items and the teacher wrote them on the blackboard. Sometimes guidance was provided, for example through questions like "What clothes do they wear? What are they made of?" These ideas and phrases were the ones that ended up on the game.

After reviewing each period of Prehistory, the children drew illustrations for these tools and activities during the next session of the Arts and Crafts schedule. These drawings were used to design the board and the cards of the game: we scanned the drawings and digitally edited the pictures to create card-sized drawings that fit a designed board (Fig. 5). We decided to construct the game with student-made materials as being a part of the creation of the game improves the motivation of the children to play and learn. It also improves the children's involvement in the lessons which leads to better language and content acquisition.

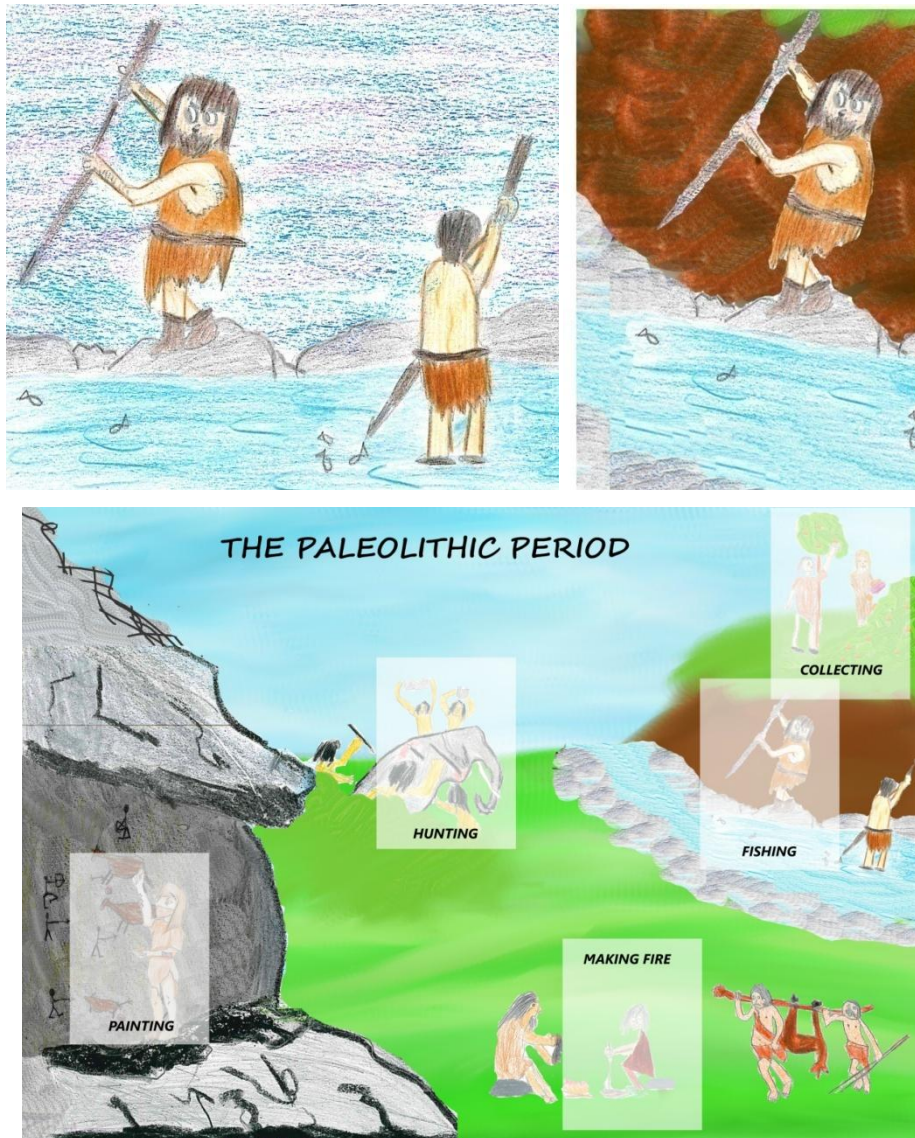


Fig. 5: The original drawing by the student (up left), the designed card (up right) and one of the final boards where that card fits.

The game adaptation was made through the aforementioned table. The original game, Hanabi, was considered to present the following characteristics:

DIFFICULTY	EASY	MEDIUM	HARD
OBJECTIVES	<b>One clear objective</b>	Different objectives for each player	Direct opposition among players
RULES	Short set of rules	<b>Many rules</b> Some restrictions	Long list of rules <b>Many restrictions</b> Many special situations
TURNS	No turns	<b>Turn-by-turn</b>	Complex rounds

<b>ACTIONS</b>	Action-reaction	More than one action per turn <b>Some medium term results</b>	Interrupted actions Long term results
<b>STRATEGY</b>	No strategy	Intuitive strategy	<b>Complex strategy</b> <b>Rethinking</b>
<b>PROPOSED AGE</b>	3-6	7-9	<b>10-12</b>

**Table 2: Characteristics of Hanabi** catalogued according to the proposed table (own elaboration)

To make the game age appropriate, the strategy mechanism and the restrictions would have to be simplified. In this case, reducing the set of rules simplifies the strategies, as most of the rethinking and the complexity come from the restrictions imposed (having a limited number of hint-giving turns, having specific colours and numbers to match). The game may be made easier by changing the number of groups the cards are divided into or their variety. Colours and numbers can be substituted by only colours, or families, or any set of pictures sharing a common characteristic, in this case the periods of Prehistory. Instead of numbers and colours, we used the actions and materials that differentiate the Palaeolithic from the Neolithic and the Metal Ages. The game is simplified even further by eliminating the hint-giving turn limit or increasing the number of turns.

The game was only planned to be played during one session as a conclusion of the Unit. The content and language involved and the card designs were developed during the four weeks before the game. The whole process occupied the Science and Arts and Crafts sessions (1 hour and 45 minutes) during five weeks as follows:

- November 5<sup>th</sup>: *Science* – Introducing the Prehistory and the Palaeolithic period
- November 5<sup>th</sup>: *Arts* – Drawing scenes from the Palaeolithic period
- November 11<sup>th</sup>: *Science* – Introducing the Neolithic period
- November 13<sup>th</sup>: *Arts* – Drawing scenes from the Neolithic period
- November 18<sup>th</sup>: *Science* – Introducing the Metal Ages
- November 20<sup>th</sup>: *Arts* – Drawing scenes from the Metal Ages
- November 25<sup>th</sup>: *Science* – Introducing the game system and the description structures
- November 27<sup>th</sup>: *Arts* – Finishing up the drawings
- December 5<sup>th</sup>: *Science* – Let's play the game!

Once the children had developed the vocabulary and content and drawn the cards, we practised some of the mechanisms of the new game and assessed the right level of difficulty to make the game challenging but still fun. First, we played with only one card and unlimited number of hints, and then we tried letting the players ask questions and talk among themselves. This allowed them to get used to collaborative dynamics and learn the mechanisms of the game. According to the result of these tests, we developed some rules and provided a grammar structure for the children to give the clues. In the end, the new game – now called Prehistoric Mayhem!– had these characteristics:

<b>DIFFICULTY</b>	<b>EASY</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>HARD</b>
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>One clear objective</b>	Different objectives for each player	Direct opposition among players
<b>RULES</b>	<b>Short set of rules</b>	Many rules <b>Some restrictions</b>	Long list of rules Many restrictions Many special situations
<b>URNS</b>	No turns	<b>Turn-by-turn</b>	Complex rounds
<b>ACTIONS</b>	Action-reaction	More than one action per turn <b>Some medium term results</b>	Interrupted actions Long term results
<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>No strategy</b>	Intuitive strategy	Complex strategy Rethinking
<b>PROPOSED AGE</b>	3-6	<b>7-9</b>	10-12

**Table 3: Characteristics of Prehistoric Mayhem!** catalogued according to the proposed table (own elaboration)

#### **4.3. THE GAME: PREHISTORIC MAYHEM!**

Below we include the finished game instructions given to the students. These are included as part of the main work and not as an appendix as we believe they are needed to provide a quick view on the finished product teachers can give to their students:

*Oh, no! All the prehistoric people have their tools mixed! You are a group of 4 historians. You have to put every card in its place. But only your colleagues can see your cards. Listen carefully to their descriptions to arrange the cards correctly.*

a) GAME CONTENTS

- A set of 12 cards
- Three boards: *The Palaeolithic period, the Neolithic period, and the Metal Ages.*

Note: each team have their own set of cards and boards with their corresponding colour (Fig. 6)

b) RULES

*Cards are divided equally among the players. You cannot look at your cards! Each player holds the cards facing the other players. During one player's turn, the others have to give him/her a description of one of his/her cards. When the player knows what card it is, he/she has to put it on the white space of the boards he/she believes is the correct one. If he/she misses, the card is discarded. If he/she is right, the card is left in its position until the end of the game. Each guessed card gives the team one point. The game continues turn by turn until the cards run out. To give hints you should use the following structures:*

- Something prehistoric people use for...
- Something prehistoric people do at/in/on... with...

*Watch out: If you speak Spanish your team loses points! (One point each time)*



**Fig. 6: The boards and cards of the game**



#### 4.4. THE RESULTS

The game was short (less than 20 minutes) and easy enough to be played twice in one session. We started by revising the grammar structures and writing them on the blackboard. Then, the game was presented: the equipment was introduced in both Spanish and English, so that students could associate the names of the parts of the game in both languages; next, we explained the process of play as a revised version of the simplified game we had played in the last lesson. The students seemed very motivated to play the game; they were surprised when they saw their own drawings in the cards and the boards. Once the students had understood the game and had no more questions, we began to play. As the experience in the two groups was slightly different, the details will be reviewed separately.

In group A there were 12 students and three teachers: the English teacher of the group, the intern teacher (developer of the game, guide in the process of implementation, and the author of this thesis), and his University tutor (also supervisor of this work). We organised three groups of four players according to the considerations of the English teacher: she believed it would be interesting to mix girls and boys, as they usually segregated themselves, and to put the most talkative of the students in different groups; the shyest ones were also mixed across the groups. This distribution was very interesting for the purpose of this work, as we believe games are an equalising tool to foster interaction among diverse students. In spite of the introduction of a new teacher (the University tutor) and the different group distribution, children participated and played as usual and the results gathered were very similar to those of group B.

In group B there were 14 students and two teachers: the English teacher of the group and the intern teacher. However, in spite of having one less teacher and more students, the game was organised similarly and played twice as well. The results were also very similar to those of group A. We organised students into four groups: two groups of four players and two other groups of three. The distribution was agreed with the English teacher. She believed that the shyest children should be distributed throughout the four groups so the rest of the players might encourage them to participate and so they might have more opportunities to take part in the game.

To assess the children's results when playing the game, we used a double-entry table where the teachers wrote the name of the students of a team and recorded how well they performed the different aspects of content and language (table 4). We also assessed the efficiency of the board game in fostering collaborative dynamics and creating a communicative



environment where children spoke in English. Teachers wrote three different signs in each cell according to the children’s performance: good (+), poor (-), or average (~).

Student	Grammar use ( <i>Something you do/use...</i> )	Vocabulary	Automatic English	Teamwork

**Table 4: assessment** for grammar and vocabulary usage, use of English when playing the game, and efficiency of the collaborative dynamics (own elaboration)

The first column of this table aimed to evaluate whether the children used the grammar structures, improvised their own, or were entirely unable to use them. We believed the board game might make it easier to produce these structures as the children were involved in a more relaxing activity than, for example, a test or a textbook exercise. In this sense, a good result would be when the student used mostly the provided grammar structures or, from that base line, produced more complex utterances; an average result would be when the student was able to use the structure but often forgot it or substituted it with a simpler one, and sometimes asked for or needed help; and a poor result would be when the student did not use the grammar structures provided, and needed help in most of their interactions.

The second column aimed to assess the vocabulary usage and whether the students understood the contents of the game: the names of the tools, the materials, the parts of the land where prehistoric people lived, and the periods of Prehistory. In this part, a good result would be when the student used the vocabulary without hesitation and committing few or no errors; an average result would be when the student sometimes asked for help or committed errors; and a poor result would be when the student did not use the vocabulary, and needed help in most of their interactions.

The third column aimed to assess whether the students used English in their interactions or changed to Spanish frequently. One of the rules of the game was to use English always as using Spanish was penalised; we believe this is a good balance between the positive motivation the game provides and the negative feeling of losing points. In this sense, a good result would be when the student used or tried to use English in all their utterances; an average result would be when the student occasionally had to be reminded of the English-only rule; and a poor result would be when the student did not use English at all.

The last column aimed to evaluate whether the game enhanced group work and positive interaction among students, this is, whether the collaborative dynamic worked and motivated children to help each other when playing the game and using the foreign language. For this reason it is assessed at group level. A good result would be when the group worked well together and helped each other in most of the cases; an average result would be when the group helped each other in fewer occasions or occasionally left someone behind; and a poor result would be when the group never helped each other or even argued among themselves.

The rest of the contents and the efficiency of the game were assessed through the game itself. The students' ability to identify the different periods and distinguish them according to their characteristics was assessed when the students put the cards in the correct places on the board. As all the groups finished the game with few to no errors in card placement, we believe the children understood and were able to manage the content in the foreign language. The recorded results were compiled in the following table:

	Grammar structures			Vocabulary			Automatic English			Teamwork		
	A	B	Total	A	B	Total	A	B	Total	A	B	Total
<b>GOOD</b>	8	5	13	9	8	17	9	8	17	3	2	5
<b>AVERAGE</b>	1	8	9	1	4	5	1	2	3	0	2	2
<b>POOR</b>	3	1	4	2	2	4	2	4	6	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	12	14	26	12	14	26	12	14	26	3	4	7

**Table 5: results obtained** during the game play (own elaboration)

As this table demonstrates, the results were mixed. Although grammar use was not as successful as expected, vocabulary and automatic English results were mostly good, and teamwork was exceptionally successful. Fifty percent of the students were able to use the grammar structures without help and created their own complex structures to provide information. Around two thirds of the students (65.3%) used the vocabulary and performed every interaction in English. As regards teamwork, five groups out of seven performed excellently; only two performed at average level; and no group fell into the 'poor' teamwork category. The degree of success in the game was high. Only two groups committed errors when putting the cards on the boards; the remaining groups scored all the cards. On the second round, the game was quicker, and fewer errors were committed.

If we look deeper into these results, we can see some interesting facts. Group A performed better than group B. This is because each team in group A had a teacher helping them at all times whereas in group B the teachers changed group frequently to cover the four teams. Group A had more teacher attention, and thus was able to work more frequently on the grammar structures. These differences, however, do not alter the overall results. Grammar structures were too complex for the children and the game did not facilitate their use. However, grammar and vocabulary are probably external factors to the use of any tool: they depend on the time spent and the emphasis laid on them. Nonetheless, this board game does not seem to have provided enough motivation for children to practice these structures further. What it clearly enhanced was the teamwork. Students participated actively and worked together to describe the cards and helped each other with the structures and vocabulary.

Apart from these results, we encountered many interesting situations while playing the game that lead us to think this board game was also successful in creating a communicative environment.

Firstly, the mechanisms were quickly understood and we were able to play a second time. Games are easily introduced in the classroom dynamics; if they are carefully selected and/or adapted, they consume little time. Children were motivated to play several rounds. And they asked the teachers if they would be playing the game once again in the next lesson. This suggests board games are a motivating tool that can be used to introduce and/or practise content and language without children becoming tired of performing the same tasks. And even if games become boring, they can be easily modified to renew their settings and mechanics.

Secondly, although many students were not able to use the provided grammar structures and some of them committed vocabulary errors, all of them created their own means of communicating information adapted to different contents (for example, describing actions with their own structures: “when you go to the woods to get food”; or making signs with their hands). Some of them improvised questions (“In what period?”). And some expressions were used instinctively (for example: “it’s my turn!”). In general, they demonstrated much fluidity and diversity in their language use. The board game left more room for children to use the foreign language and increased the time and amount of language practice.

Thirdly, this game encouraged student-student interactional communication and reduced the teacher’s input. The teacher was only a guide in introducing the game and solving the players’ doubts. The board game changed the role of the teacher to that of a game and

language expert. Teacher-student interaction changed from the teacher being a deliverer of content to students being the requestors. When players found difficulties in the game, in using the structures or in using the vocabulary, some of them asked the teacher for help directly. But in most occasions players helped each other. As it has been discussed above, this is because the board game enhanced the feeling of being a team. The shared objective of finishing the game with no errors led them to help and collaborate with each other, providing more opportunities for shy and slower children to interact with their peers.

In conclusion, this board game was successful within the communication considerations laid out in the first section of this work: children practised negotiation of meanings through the descriptions and explanations given during the game and interactional student-student communication was fostered. However, more studies are needed to prove more benefits of board games as tools for CLIL. We consider that board games are a very useful tool for CLIL lessons: they are quickly learnt and put in practice; they provide opportunities for children to produce their own language; and they foster a more equally proficient student-student interaction. In conclusion, they have a great potential to foster new communicative environments to practise a foreign language.

#### **4.5. THE BOARD GAME AGAINST THE CLIL MATRIX**

As explained earlier, the CLIL matrix is a tool for teachers to assess CLIL instruction. Therefore, we will use it now to evaluate whether this board game is an appropriate tool for CLIL teaching. As before, the assessment of the board game will be carried out within the communication section of the matrix, in order to test whether the game fosters a real communicative environment. For this purpose, the key points of the CLIL approach contained in the questions in the first section of this work will be used to analyse the benefits of this game.

From the five questions of the Content-Communication indicator we can extract the following principles of the CLIL approach:

CONTENT-COMMUNICATION CHARACTERISTICS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CLIL aims for interactional classroom communication.</li> <li>2. CLIL places great importance on pair and group work.</li> <li>3. CLIL requires active interaction and participation through activities such as giving presentations, designing posters, debating, etc.</li> </ol>

4. CLIL uses activities involving IT.
5. CLIL fits better in task-based project and long-term activities.

This board game has proved effective in the development of the first three points of this indicator. The game definitely fostered interactional classroom communication, as all the children tried to use English to provide information to their peers. It also enhanced group work; as the only way to win the game was playing together, all the players participated (and helped each other, as seen above), and all the teams finished the game with very few or no errors. In this sense, it is an activity that fosters interaction and participation. The students are the ones constructing phrases (descriptions) to communicate meaning to their classmates (the content of the card). This mechanism follows Swain's 'comprehensible output theory'. According to it «the production of language pushes learners to process language more deeply» (Lightbown & Spada, 2006: 48). However, this act of autonomous production does not usually happen within classroom settings, as these are typically led by the teacher, even in CLIL approaches:

CLIL/immersion students are not very often required to encode full propositions, because the structure of teacher-led whole-class interaction is such that it is enough for students to provide individual labels, items, or concepts while the teacher does the job of spelling out the specific semantic relations between them (Dalton-Puffer, 2007: 261).

However, this board game, as many others, forced players to interact with each other. Group work was the main form of interaction in the game. The reason for playing in small teams was providing opportunities for shy children to speak and take part in teamwork, as students seem reluctant to engage in interactional communication within big groups (Dalton-Puffer, 2007: 260). Moreover, as explained before, collaborative games like this enhance a positive interactional communication environment for students to convey meaning together and even, as Dalton-Puffer explains, creating opportunities for meta-talk to develop accuracy in language production. This happened when some of the students asked for help in the production of the grammar structures and the vocabulary, for example.

The board game is not equally effective in the last two points of this indicator. It was not developed to use new technologies, although some games can be implemented on ITs if the teachers decide it. And the game was in some way integrated in a project, as children developed their own cards and constructed the content that ended on the board. Nevertheless, we do not consider these last characteristics as important as the previous three and so we believe this game fits the main points of this indicator.

From the questions of the Language-Communication indicator we can extract the following principles of the CLIL approach (we have omitted the repeated characteristics):

LANGUAGE-COMMUNICATION CHARACTERISTICS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CLIL aims for richness of target language communication.</li> <li>2. CLIL, although promoting <i>interlanguaging</i>, requires teachers to use the target language.</li> <li>3. CLIL requires (support) materials to encourage students to communicate in the target language.</li> <li>4. CLIL reduces the teacher's input to foster more student-student communication.</li> </ol>

The board game fits perfectly within these characteristics. Although, in this case, it did not develop richness in language production, a few improvised grammar structures by certain students lead us to believe that this game could foster fluidity in the production of grammar structures. Some other games and situations, and more usage of the board game may improve the quality of language production; as we have already addressed, language richness is related to the time put into the language practice, not to the tools used.

The second and third characteristics are an essential part of this board game. During the introduction of the game *interlanguaging* was implemented. In the rest of the teacher's explanations English was always used. The reason for this switch to Spanish was already explained above: through *interlanguaging* teachers could make students associate the words they already knew with the new words in English.

Finally, as the game was easy to understand and play, the teacher's input was reduced. As reviewed above, the teacher became an expert that presented the game and solved the players' difficulties. Most of the content and language was managed by the students during the creation of the game and when playing it. This board game, and arguably games in general, enhance the students' participation and interaction with their peers as they require interactional communication to be played. They reduce the teacher input and foster student-student communication.

From the questions of the Integration-Communication indicator we can extract the only two new principles of CLIL, as the remaining have already been noted:

INTEGRATION-COMMUNICATION CHARACTERISTICS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CLIL develops transactional communication in order to promote skills needed in professional life.</li> </ol>

2. CLIL aims for the development of other communication skills.

This board game did not promote direct transactional communication. Through the implementation of vocabulary definitions, children acquired a basic command of some skills such as listening for information, classifying, making decisions and collaborating; skills that they will use in their everyday life. This game developed communication skills such as turn taking and re-elaboration. The mechanisms of the game provided students with communication structures that were acquired through play. Therefore, as the players developed their turns, they were using and learning complex listening and speaking techniques. They are also encouraged to use different means of conveying meaning as it has been proved by the students using signs and questions during the game. All these communication skills will be reviewed again in the following indicator.

From the questions of the Learning-Communication indicator we can a few more principles of CLIL:

LEARNING-COMMUNICATION CHARACTERISTICS
1. CLIL develops different features of good and appropriate forms of communication and different ways of conveying messages.
2. CLIL develops reading and writing skills, alongside verbal and non-verbal communication.
3. CLIL requires different types of situations in which students need to communicate in the target language.
4. CLIL develops oral communication skills.
5. CLIL requires feedback for students to recognise and autocorrect their errors.

This board game fits most of these characteristic, although to fulfil them completely, more opportunities to use the game and complementary activities are needed. The game provided chances for students to practise appropriate forms of communication, as in the group every player had to use a grammar structure to provide descriptions and also listen carefully to the descriptions offered by other players. This game developed oral skills, as the main form of communication was spoken language. It also encouraged children to use different ways of conveying messages, as noted before, through the use of kinaesthetic and visual means. It did not develop writing skills, but there were other activities within the whole project that addressed this aspect. However, the board game could be used for this purpose, for example, if communication among players had to be in written form. In this sense, most of these skills can be developed through other tools. Board games like this are important because of their

adaptability: the children were playing historians describing prehistoric tools and activities, but the same game could be rearranged to be set in a repair shop, where they would be assorting the vehicle parts, for example.

In conclusion, this board game is an efficient tool to address these indicators of the CLIL matrix, although it needs complementary activities to be fully implemented. It clearly fosters interactional communication between students; it reduces the teacher's input and enhances student-student communication; and it develops other communication skills and provides a variety of means of conveying meaning. Therefore, this game and board games that share similar mechanism are tools that can be considered when developing CLIL lessons.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The CLIL approach is rich on language learning theory, providing, for example, the 4Cs Framework, the Language Triptych, and especially the CLIL matrix. And all these theoretical outlines are being slowly introduced in school practice. Through their analysis, we have provided the characteristics that make CLIL an efficient approach for bilingual education: when teaching in a foreign language both language and content have to be integrated together, there has to be space for cultural and cognition considerations, language has to be taught in its complexity, and the classroom has to be managed as a new communicative environment. Other communication and pragmatic skills also have to be developed within CLIL practice, as learning to communicate involves more than just grammar and vocabulary.

Board games are an effective tool to use in CLIL classrooms because they provide a communicative environment. As it has been reviewed in the CLIL matrix part, they fit almost perfectly with a few characteristics of CLIL. Content and language are at the core of the game: without a setting, information to get and share, and communication, a game cannot be successfully played. Therefore, they are an integrating tool of both language and content. Furthermore, as it has been discussed, they foster student-student interactional communication and provide opportunities for children to communicate through other means like kinaesthetic and visual ones. They also help students to create their own means of communication and enhance the production of spoken language.

In the second part of this work, we have offered a review and classification of the characteristics of board games and provided our own method to adapt them to the classroom situation. We have also laid out the results of an experience adapting and using a board game within the CLIL classroom practice. All the previous facts lead us to some final conclusions.

Firstly, tabletop games may not be useful for traditional language learning. They do not improve grammar production, as the results of the experience have shown; children did not use the grammar structures often and their vocabulary management was not significantly better. This is because the traditional considerations for language learning do not depend on the tools used; it is an approach centred on repetition and memorisation of structures. Board games may be useful in making these repetitions more fun or relaxing, but the learning will again rely on memorisation. To study these possible benefits, it would be interesting to develop a comparative experience between board games and other tools to see how well board games perform in facilitating the memorisation of vocabulary and grammar.

By contrast, board games are very useful for the CLIL approach, as it aims for language-in-use learning; language as a means to share information and content. It is centred on the student's language performance and practice. Board games provide more opportunities for students to use the foreign language and in longer communicative events. As has been proved, they encourage children to participate and foster the use of the language. In this sense, we can affirm that board games create a communicative environment.

Secondly, board games have great capability of adaptation to any age and content. Although they take time and effort to be analysed and adapted, we believe the table and study developed in this thesis can help teachers to understand the mechanisms of games and adapt them to their own purposes. As the experiences gathered in this work show, board games can even be developed with the children's participation. They are very malleable tools: there are a lot of possibilities for them to be used. It would be interesting to try adapting the same game included in this work to other levels of primary or test how malleable games are, how many times a game can be used before becoming tiring or boring for the students.

In spite of their adaptability, board games are not the perfect tool for CLIL. Characteristics from the CLIL matrix related to writing and the use of ITs, for example, were not developed with the game in the experience and some of the objectives (those related to grammar) were not met. However, tabletop games provide the motivation and environment to work on some CLIL requirements like the interactional communication practice or the development of oral production. No single activity can fit all the CLIL characteristics; this only means that board games have to be used in combination with other tools and within a broader teaching project.

And finally, there is one last thought we would like to address: CLIL is a difficult approach to develop. The students of the school did not have problems identifying the periods and other characteristics of Prehistory; they already mastered the content of this topic but they had problems using the foreign language. Then, how can we assure that content and language were being developed in integration? In reality, as we have discussed in the first part of this thesis, the assessment of the students (in this case and in many others) is only centred on language (grammar and vocabulary) as the CLIL principles have yet to be fully implemented in school practice. In particular occasions (for example, when CLIL lessons share a topic with foreign language lessons, as happens when discussing the animals of the forest, the water cycle, or the buildings of cities), CLIL practices may resemble foreign language lessons with more complex vocabulary.

However, CLIL considers content to be the means to develop language and, at the same time, regards language as the means to learn content. And for this intricate balance to work opportunities have to be provided to discuss content in diverse situations. Board games facilitate this integration as they make the content the information to be exchanged during play and the foreign language one of the means of conveying this information. They are one efficient tool to integrate both content and language in the same activity.

This work is only the beginning. It gives a succinct view on tabletop games as a tool for CLIL education, provides a possible way to analyse and adapt them, and reviews some of their possible benefits for language learning and education in general. Although more studies are needed, larger in participants, longer in time, and more detailed, to truly discover the full potential of games and their possibilities for CLIL, we have proven a few strong points for their implementation in school practice. We hope this can be only the first step towards reconsidering the tools we use as teachers to foster new environments for a more holistic, integrated education.

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**APENDIX 1: A SEPARATE COPY OF THE CLASSIFICATION TABLE OF PAGE 26**

<b>DIFFICULTY</b>	<b>EASY</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>HARD</b>
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	One clear objective	Different objectives for each player	Direct opposition among players
<b>RULES</b>	Short set of rules	Many rules Some restrictions	Long list of rules Many restrictions Many special situations
<b>TURNS</b>	No turns	Turn-by-turn	Complex rounds
<b>ACTIONS</b>	Action-reaction	More than one action per turn Some medium term results	Interrupted actions Long term results
<b>STRATEGY</b>	No strategy	Intuitive strategy	Complex strategy Rethinking
<b>PROPOSED AGE</b>	3-6	7-9	10-12

**APENDIX 2: CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO THE PROPOSED AGE OF ALL THE MENTIONED GAMES (in order of appearance)**

<b>GAME</b>	<b>PROPOSED AGE</b>
Chess	10+
Checkers	10+
Chutes and Ladders	3+
Monopoly	10+
Bang!	10+
Samurai Sword	10+
Pergamon	12+
Stone Age	12+
Ticket to Ride: Europe	8+
Mancala	6+
Poker	10+
Dungeons and Dragons	12+
Risk	12+
Solitaire	6+
Poker Dice	8+

<b>GAME</b>	<b>PROPOSED AGE</b>
Mahjong	8+
Dominoes	3+
Ghost Blizz	8+
Dobble	6+
Jungle Speed	8+
Parchís	10+
Settlers of Catan	10+
Carcassone	10+
Puerto Rico	12+
Terra Mystica	12+
Clue/Cluedo	10+
Ticket to Ride	8+
Hanabi	10+