Talk in the CLIL classroom

Discuss

1 As a teacher, how often do you ask your learners *real* questions?
2 When do you do this? e.g. at the beginning of the lesson? at the end?
3 How *genuinely* communicative are you in the classroom?
4 How long do you wait for an answer to your questions? 1 second? 3 - 4 seconds?
5 How much learner-learner interaction do you *create* in your classes?

Different types of questions

Display questions

"Display" questions = questions to which the teacher already knows the answer.
T: What is the past of "go"?
S: Went.
T: Good.
Teachers use these questions to test learners. Learners display what they know.

Note:

1 We rarely ask display questions in *real* life.
2 Learners are not surprised that teachers use a lot of display questions – they even
   expect it!
3 Display questions make it clear the teacher is in charge of everything and has the power.
4 Even when teachers ask real questions, they sometimes do not listen to the content of
   the response:
T: What did you do at the weekend?
S: I broke my leg.
T: Good.

IRF

Here is a typical classroom interaction:
T: What season comes after autumn?
S: Winter.
T: Good.
This type of interaction is called **IRF**:
I = **Initiation**
R = **Response**
F = **Feedback**

What are the limitations of IRF?

This type of interaction can be useful in some contexts.
However, there are many drawbacks.
1 The teacher talks two-thirds of the time.
2 Learners only answer questions – they do not initiate topics for discussion or ask questions.
3 Learners speak for a very limited time.
4 The teacher is the fount of all knowledge.
5 It implies a purely *transmission theory of learning.*
6 Learners do not listen to one another or learn from one another.
7 Learners engage in a very limited type of discourse, e.g. they do not make suggestions,
   disagree, negotiate, ask for repetition, ask for clarification, give explanations, etc. And
   yet these types of discourse are *essential* for learning to take place.

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So what can be done to avoid the limitations of IRF?
One thing teachers can do is to ask learners to clarify and expand on what they say, e.g.

- Can you try saying that again?

- I don't quite understand. Can you say that again?

- Tell us more about that.

- Can you just expand on that a little more?

- What do you mean when you say ...?

- Can you explain it again?

Another thing teachers can do is ask *referential* questions.

Referential questions
"Referential" questions = questions to which the teacher does not know the answer.

T: Where did you go at the weekend?
S1:   I went to the beach. It was great.
T: Where was the beach?
S1:   Brighton.
S2:   I love Brighton. We went there last year but the weather was not good. And you?
S1:   The weather was bad, but it was still funny.
T: How was it funny? Did it make you laugh?

What is the effect of using referential questions?
1   Learners produce longer and more complex utterances.
2   Learners engage in turn-taking.
3   Learners ask more questions for clarification.
4   There is more learner-learner interaction.
5   Learners begin to nominate topics for discussion.
6   Teacher and learners *negotiate meaning*.

Waiting time
Teachers often wait only 1 or 2 seconds and then answer their own questions, maybe because of a fear of silence in the classroom. If the teacher waits several more seconds, e.g. counts silently from 1 to 10, then three things usually happen. There are:
1   more learner responses.
2   longer learner responses.
3   more learner-initiated responses and questions.

In other words, allow learners more time to answer before helping them. This gives them time to express what they want to say in a different way, i.e. time to *reformulate*. Other learners can also be invited to help them express their ideas. The teacher can support learners by reformulating what they are trying to say and by providing the language to do the task, i.e. by providing *scaffolding language*.

Interaction in the classroom
Content learning and language development take place when learners have a task in which they interact in a genuinely communicative way, either in pairs, in groups, or with the teacher. Therefore CLIL teachers need to design and include communicative activities in lessons – e.g. using *information gap* materials and by adopting a *task-based approach* to learning.

Biology: internal organs

Student A

Pronunciation   Practise saying the words below:

heart /hɑːt/	brain /breɪn/	kidneys /ˈkɪdnɪz/	pancreas /ˈpæŋkrɪəs/
lungs /lʌŋz/	liver /ˈlɪvə(r)/	stomach /ˈstʌmək/	bladder /ˈblædə(r)/

Exercise 1
Ask your partner questions to complete the table below. Do not look at your partner's sheet.
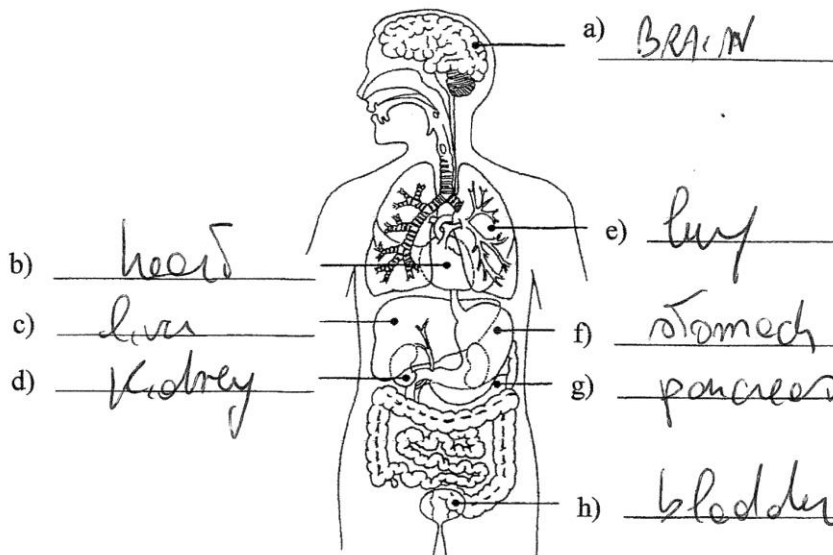
Useful language
What does the / do the ..... do?
What do you call the organ(s) which ..... ?

ORGAN	FUNCTION
heart	
liver	cleans your blood
	separate waste liquid from your blood
brain	controls your thoughts, feelings and movements
	are used for breathing
stomach	is the place where your food is digested by acids and enzymes
pancreas	
bladder	is the place where waste liquid is stored before leaving your body

Exercise 2   Work with your partner to label the diagram below.

a) BRAIN

b) heart
c) liver
d) Kidney

e) lung
f) stomech
g) pancreas
h) bladder

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Biology: internal organs

Student B

Pronunciation   Practise saying the words below:

heart /hɑːt/	brain /breɪn/	kidneys /ˈkɪdnɪz/	pancreas /ˈpæŋkrɪəs/
lungs /lʌŋz/	liver /ˈlɪvə(r)/	stomach /ˈstʌmək/	bladder /ˈblædə(r)/

Exercise 1
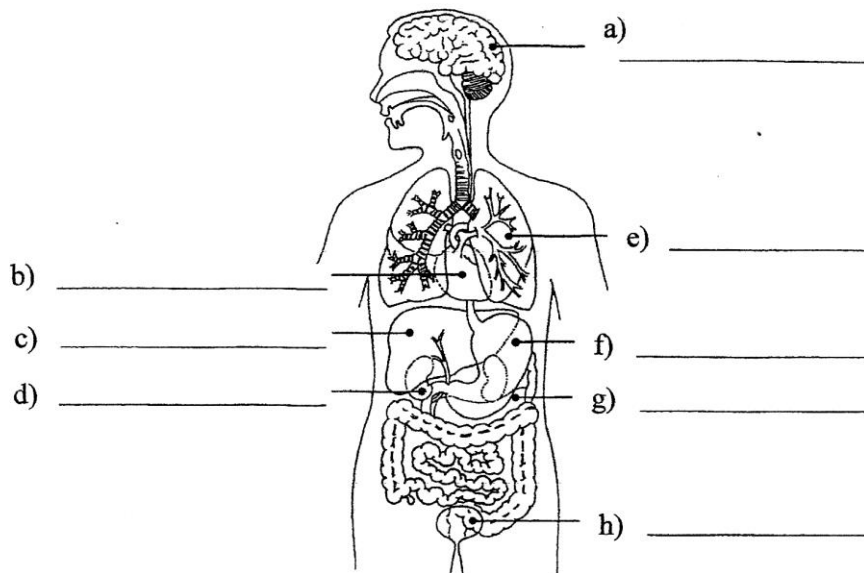Ask your partner questions to complete the table below. Do not look at your partner's sheet.
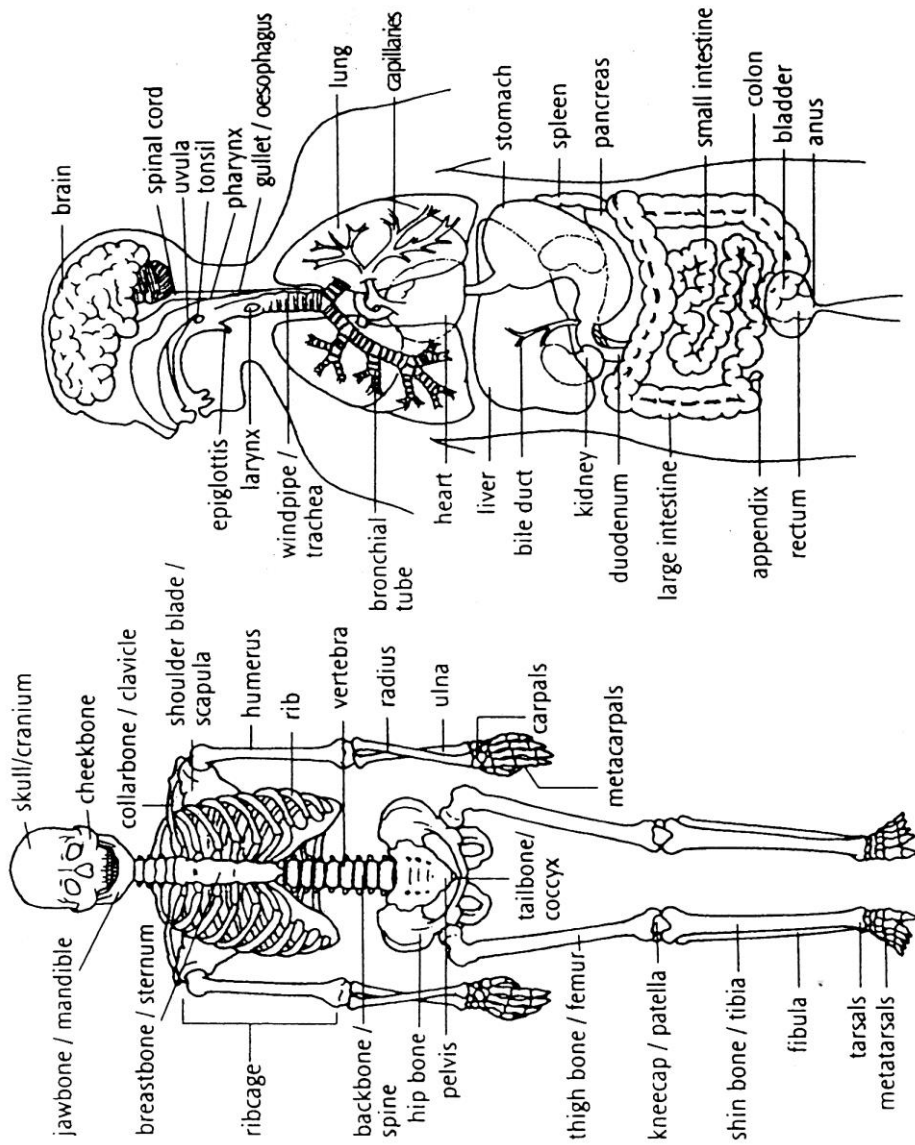
Useful language
What does the / do the ..... do?
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ORGAN	FUNCTION
heart	pumps blood round your body
	cleans your blood
kidneys	separate waste liquid from your blood
	controls your thoughts, feelings and movements
lungs	are used for breathing
stomach	
pancreas	produces enzymes that help to digest the food you eat
bladder	

Exercise 2   Work with your partner to label the diagram below.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

e) _____

f) _____

g) _____

h) _____

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the skeleton

skull/cranium

cheekbone

jawbone / mandible

collarbone / clavicle

shoulder blade / scapula

humerus

rib

vertebra

radius

ulna

carpals

metacarpals

breastbone / sternum

ribcage

backbone / spine

hip bone

pelvis

tailbone/ coccyx

thigh bone / femur

kneecap / patella

shin bone / tibia

fibula

tarsals

metatarsals

internal organs

brain

spinal cord

uvula

tonsil

pharynx

gullet / oesophagus

lung

capillaries

epiglottis

larynx

windpipe / trachea

bronchial tube

heart

liver

bile duct

kidney

duodenum

large intestine

stomach

spleen

pancreas

small intestine

colon

bladder

anus

appendix

rectum