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Building Bridges.
How secondary school pupils bring their informal learning experiences into a Content and Language Integrated (CLIL) classroom

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This article explores how students' informal language learning experiences with English find their way into the formal context of content-based language teaching (CLIL). The analysis is focused on stretches of classroom talk in which native Finnish-speaking students draw on their expertise of English-language popular culture, and use their knowledge as a semiotic resource for producing various types of actions. Based on the data, it is argued that the organisation of peer group talk in the language classroom provides students with affordances for participation that are characteristically different from whole-class interaction. In this environment, global popular culture and conversational humour intertwine with the official business of learning. Moreover, the findings are used to problematize a monolithic conceptualisation of 'classrooms' as a formal context for language learning within the dichotomy of formal/informal. Instead, it is suggested that many interactional practices in classrooms, such as those described in this article, share similarities with everyday interaction, the pedagogic implications of which are briefly discussed.

Keywords: CLIL, classroom interaction, formal and informal learning, affordances for learning, popular culture

1 Introduction

Research in the framework of second language acquisition (SLA) tends to make a distinction between naturalistic and instructed environments of language learning. This allows researchers to map specific contexts such as formal language and immersion classrooms, or study abroad stays (e.g. Collentine &

Freed 2004) against a dichotomy of naturalistic/instructed to investigate whether participation in these contexts lead to different learning outcomes. Although there have been proposals to broaden the database of language learning contexts to include settings which do not necessarily involve the identities of 'learner' and 'teacher', along with calls for rethinking traditional SLA concepts and methods to better highlight the role of social context for learning (see e.g. Firth & Wagner 1997), the juxtaposition between instructed and natural settings remains an organising principle in the field. Notwithstanding the obvious merits of such a dichotomy, it nevertheless appears to have the effect of pigeon-holing studies under either of the two macro-contexts, which means the relationship between language instruction and its use outside the classroom is 'under-theorized' (Higgins 2009). Thus, the question how learners' participation in both formal and informal settings together contributes to the increase of their interactional repertoires, and more specifically, through what kinds of practices it happens, is currently largely unaddressed.

As English is a global language of popular culture, ample opportunities for learning it exist outside the formal classroom context, and teenagers in particular can sometimes be quite knowledgeable about films, music and computer games. Consider the following excerpt in which the teacher of an English-medium history classroom is instructing a quiz activity called *Blockbusters*[1], which is to be used for revising previous course contents and involves the students answering questions designed by the teacher and gaining hexagon-shaped blocks after every correct answer. At this stage of the instruction-giving sequence, the teacher is explaining the game grid, which two students have just drawn on the blackboard.

Extract 1. Blockbusters

```
01 T        and there is a passage or pass.
02          SHIFTS GAZE TO THE STUDENTS
03          a:nd we're gonna play a game of blockbusters (0.5)
04          so that you answer questions=
05 Sakari   =gho[stbusters   ]
            {TURNS GAZE TO NEXT STUDENT, SMIRKS AFTERWARDS
06 T            [and (.) this] i-
07          >have you ever heard of blockbusters<
08 Sakari   [no]
09 T        [no] uh (.) ↑this is numbe-
10          team number one is on this side here?
```

As the teacher nominates the game to be played and begins to give instructions (lines 3-4), one of the students mentions *Ghostbusters*, a well-known film from the 1980s, in a turn that appears to be designed as a humorous commentary, or a 'toss-out' (see Aoki et al. 2006; Lehtimaja 2012: 185–190) to a fellow student based on the lexical similarity between the two popular culture items. The teacher, however, cuts off her instruction-giving immediately after the overlap, and instead attends to the student's turn as a possible expression of familiarity with the game by checking whether it is in fact known to the class (lines 6-7). Although the teacher addresses the whole class, Sakari, by virtue of having made the earlier commentary treats himself as the addressee and claims no

knowledge of *Blockbusters* (cf. Sert 2011). What this achieves is that the humour sequence is abandoned and Sakari re-aligns with the teacher's game-instruction agenda, which continues from line 9 onwards.

This is a fairly straightforward example of how students may draw on language or knowledge of popular culture in a manner that is difficult to conceptualise using traditional SLA research terminology on interaction. For example, it does not quite fit the bill for corrective teacher feedback (Lyster & Ranta 1997; Lyster & Saito 2010) after a linguistically erroneous student response, or negotiation for meaning following non-comprehension of linguistic input (Long 1983, 1996; Varonis & Gass 1985; Gass et al. 2005). Rather, it seems that in this stretch of interaction popular culture is being brought into the classroom by both the student, who draws on his knowledge of cinema to entertain the class, and the teacher, who uses a popular game format to revise history with her class. Before the students' turn, *Ghostbusters* does not feature in this language learning environment, whereas afterwards it may be referred to and used for other social actions (even if it is not in this particular case).

Even if sequences such as extract 1 tend not to be analysed in mainstream SLA research on classroom interaction, it does not mean 'learning' would not be taking place in and through such sequences. The kind of co-ordination of diverse resources, or affordances (van Lier 2000, 2002), upon which the teacher and the student are drawing forms the basis for some accounts of human learning and cognition (e.g. Hutchins 1995: 287–316; Churchill 2007). Moreover, although the mechanisms through which language learning in one context translates into proficiency and knowledge beyond the original domain are considerably less well known and studied in SLA, they do appear under the lens of learning transfer research (cf. Lobato 2006; Marton 2006). Thus, the aim of this paper is to provide an initial exploration of how pupils in classroom use their previous informal learning experiences as a semiotic resource in a formal learning context. In other words, the article probes how 'bridge-building' between everyday life and formal instruction may be achieved in interaction. I use interactional data from the context of Content and Language Integrated (CLIL) teaching in Finland, a society where students have a decent degree of access to English language outside formal education (see Leppänen & Nikula 2007; Leppänen et al., 2011). Drawing on conversation analytic methodology (CA), my focus is on analysing sequences of talk where pupils make clear that they are bringing into classroom interaction either language or content knowledge they have previously acquired outside the classroom. These can be used in my data to conduct a variety of social actions, such as language play, affiliative teasing and accounting for knowing.

Far from offering a definitive list of all language functions and social actions for which the focal practice can be used, it is nevertheless hoped that the approach will further our understanding of the interactional organisation of language classrooms, as well as contribute to research on language learning affordances by problematizing the notion of 'environment', and the dichotomy between instructed and non-instructed contexts.

2 Background

The dichotomous distinction in language learning research between non-instructed and instructed learning environments (Freeman 2007: 896) echoes a more general dichotomy found in education between informal and formal settings (Eurostat 2006), in which different learning activities are seen to be taking place. In SLA, the distinction is essentially based on differing conditions of exposure to the target language between the settings (Howard 2011: 71–72), being related to yet another conceptual distinction between *acquiring* a language in naturalistic environments and *learning* it in instructed settings (Krashen 1976). In this framework, foreign language classrooms, or at home (AH) settings (Collentine & Freed 2004), fall under the heading of 'instructed environments', and stay-abroad periods, or growing up in a bilingual family, are seen as naturalistic settings. Accordingly, previous studies in classroom contexts have shed light on how teacher-student exchanges of corrective feedback, such as recasts (Lyster & Ranta 1997; Lyster 2004), negotiation for meaning (Foster 1998), or form-focused episodes in meaning-oriented classrooms (Spada 1997) have consequences for students' subsequent learning of the focal language items, as set by the teachers. Recently, research has begun probing the role of informal contexts in order to investigate what kinds of resources everyday interaction provides for language learning (Kääntä et al. 2013; Lilja 2010; Piirainen–Marsh & Tainio 2009a, 2009b), but any individual studies have a tendency to examine speakers separately in either informal or formal context instead of probing how participation in different types of speech events might work together to produce learning (although see Sahlström 2011; Slotte-Lüttge, Pörn & Sahlström 2012, as examples of studies that follow speakers in a variety of contexts).

At the same time as more research on language learning is being conducted outside classrooms, these informal contexts have also undergone a change, which is especially salient with English in the Finnish society. This change is part of globalisation-related processes, the effects of which for languages are being probed within a new 'sociolinguistics of globalization' (Blommaert 2010), which has described how the English language is involved with translocal and transcultural flows (Pennycook 2006: 5–8), largely mediated by new technology and various media. As a consequence, English has become more widely accessible in Finland, where survey evidence shows that younger cohorts have plenty of contact with English in their free time, often in the form of playing video games, chatting online, or interacting with electronic media (Leppänen et al. 2011).

Such use of English outside the traditional learning context of a language classroom – also known as 'extramural English' (Sundqvist 2009) – has been presented as a possible reason for why, contrary to other foreign languages in Finland, Finnish boys nowadays tend to do better at the English-language matriculation exam, which is sat at the end of upper secondary school. For example, in 2009 and 2010, the percentage of male students receiving any one of the top three grades (*laudatur*, *eximia*, or *magna*) was higher than the equivalent percentage of female candidates (Ylioppilastutkintolautakunta 2011a: 41–43, 2011b: 43–45). According to a popular lay theory, boys play more computer games, which, as it involves the use of English, increases their language proficiency (see e.g. Savon Sanomat 2012). In Finland, there is some survey

evidence linking the amount of time spent playing video games and secondary school grades in English (Uuskoski 2011); moreover, in Sweden, which is in many ways a comparable society to Finland, Sundqvist (2009) found a significant positive correlation (p < .01) between time spent on outside-the-classroom activities involving English and vocabulary size as well as oral proficiency in secondary school students.

Differing from a somewhat simplified view of context as an environment where certain interactions takes place, conversation analytic work on (language) learning has highlighted the ways in which contributions to interaction are both context-shaped and context-renewing. This line of research emphasises the contingencies for possible learning of local, sequentially-developing interaction (see e.g. Hellermann & Doehler 2010; Lee 2010; Mori 2007) instead of considering context as an *a priori*, independent macro-level variable, or 'something only embedding a learning event' (Martin 2009: 134). Following such work, this article wishes to problematize a conceptualisation of 'formal' and 'informal', or 'naturalistic' and 'instructed' contexts as given states of affairs, and focus more on what kinds of contextual features students make relevant when producing action in classroom. Theoretically, it draws on the notions of contextual configuration (Goodwin 2000) and affordances, the latter having originally been introduced by James Gibson (1979) and later utilised by Leo van Lier in his ecological theory of language learning to refer to the relationship between an organism and the environment as an alternative for linguistic input. According to van Lier (2000: 253, 2002: 147, 2004: 91–95), the environment is full of language in the form of 'pre-signs' and 'action potential' that provide opportunities for individuals to relate to the world once they are perceived.

Although affordances in van Lier's work refer to a relationship between what appears as a 'fixed' environment and the language user, the concept has also been interactionally elaborated. Drawing on conversation analytic work, Forrester (1999) argues that talk contains important affordances which make possible the co-ordination of human action. As opposed to 'natural constructs' (ibid., p. 41), these social affordances are in the form of sequential and structural properties of talk for accomplishing talk itself and its communicative aims. To give an example, by virtue of the turn-taking organisation, speakers are able to recognise typical first pair-part actions, such as questions and invitations, to be making relevant a particular range of participation categories, such as answering or accepting in this case. Thus, when speaking a language we do not know particularly well, we may still be able to understand that our co-conversants are asking a question from us even if we do not understand the exact words being conveyed. It is in this sense that the contingencies of talk, together with physical properties of the environment, can be seen to afford subsequent action and participation.

Examples of affordances, as discussed by van Lier tend to at least implicitly refer to situations in which one single organism, be it a human being or an animal, is conducting some sort of action on its own in the 'environment'. However, often when we do something, we do it together with other humans, whether that something is gossiping, watching a football match or teaching a foreign language in classroom. It is in this sense that interaction is the 'primordial site of sociality'(Schegloff 1992) through which social life and its institutions, such as formal education, are enacted. To this end, another perspective on how the environment figures into the organisation of multi-party

human action is offered by Charles Goodwin (2000), who argues that speakers build action by continuously co-ordinating multiple semiotic fields, i.e. 'different kinds of sign phenomena instantiated in diverse media' (p. 1490). As they do this, they construct specific contextual configurations of semiotic fields which are the result of the speakers' orientation at any given moment in time – or their 'perceptual world' (p. 1503) – which Goodwin sees as the starting point for research on action-production.

Although the two frameworks for human action in the environment discussed above certainly contain differences, there is common ground too. For example, Goodwin's (2000) account resonates with van Lier's (2000) view on affordances being created through an organism's perception, although it is not a point that Goodwin (2000) himself makes. A clear difference, however, seems to lie in the conceptualisation of 'environment': Goodwin (2000: 1519), by stating that 'context is not…presupposed', and Forrester (1999), by focusing on structural properties of talk, emphasise the role of interactants in constructing the specific context which can then afford action. Van Lier, however, seems to consider 'environment' as a more separate construct from the organism, as opposed to something that the organism can shape, although in later writings he (2004: 94–95) recognises that talk between language users and 'words' can become affordances. Drawing on Goodwin (2000) in particular, this article describes how students in a bilingual classroom actively construct their interactional context in which they perform particular actions by introducing semiotic fields that are not 'present' in the classroom environment before they bring them in. The argument is that when students are bringing into classroom language from their free time, they are making relevant experiences and domains that do not necessarily involve 'being a student', but instead portray the speakers as competent users of English-language entertainment industry.

Lastly, although research focused on learning in classroom interaction, both SLA and other paradigms, generally treats teacher-student exchanges as possible triggers for subsequent learning – whether 'learning' is conceptualised using the metaphor of acquisition or participation (Sfard 1998) – which can then be supported by some sort of evidence from a later point in time, the focus of this article is somewhat different. My claim is not so much that interactions such as excerpt 1 would be clearly definable moments where somebody *begins* to learn something, as implied by research on the acquisitional merits of corrective feedback by teachers. Instead, I view them as having more to do with previous learning experiences having created possibilities for action-production in a new context at a later point of time. Such connection-making across time and space can then be seen as instances of 'doing learning transfer' (Lobato 2006; Marton 2006), rather than the start of a completely new learning trajectory from scratch. Being a complex interactional environment, not all the actions produced in the language classroom making use of previous experiences necessarily orient to learning – the playful remark in extract 1 being a case in point. Even an explicit orientation to learning in students' group talk is often embedded in other activities, such as doing humour, which is in many ways similar to everyday conversation (see e.g. Kääntä et al., 2013). This discrepancy between the official business of classrooms – i.e. the production of knowledge and learning – and the often humorous language functions which students come across in their free time may be why it is sometimes suggested that the knowledge these two settings produce are somehow incompatible, or, as van Lier (2002: 158) puts it,

the everyday knowledge is 'not "legitimate" in the language classroom'. However, as the data reported in this paper suggests, the 'everyday' is there, and it is being used by the students for a variety of purposes.

3 Data and method

The data used in this article are video-recorded history lessons taught through English to 14–15-year-old students at a lower secondary school in Finland.[2] The lessons represent an elective module that was offered as part of the school's bilingual programme to native Finnish-speaking students, taught by an experienced native Finnish teacher who is also fluent in English. During the course, the students were sitting in five fairly permanent groups of three or four students at each table, where they would work on their individual and group tasks as well as participate in regular teacher-led lesson activities. Both English and Finnish were used in the classroom: most of the time, the teacher maintained a monolingual English-only norm in the whole-class talk, however, the students would also use their first language, Finnish, in group talk alongside English.

The lessons were recorded with three classroom cameras and portable voice recorders at each table in order to capture students' group talk as fully as possible. From a database of 16 lessons, a loosely-defined collection was created where students appear to be using 'informal English'. From this collection approximately 30 cases were selected where speakers make explicit that they are using either language or knowledge that originates in popular culture. These interactions form the basis of this article.

The data extracts presented in this paper have been transcribed and analysed using conversation analytic (CA) methodology (see ten Have 2007 for an introduction). In addition to a standard Jeffersonian notation, the transcripts either verbally describe or illustrate through sketch drawings based on video screenshots those embodied actions which the speakers are treating as relevant for the on-going interaction (see Appendix for the transcript symbols used). Moreover, turns that contain Finnish language units have been idiomatically translated into English.

4 Analysis

This article is concerned with sequences of talk in which students in an English-medium classroom bring into classroom interaction language or knowledge from the domain of popular culture (such as films, music, etc.). Although my interest in analysing connections between formal and informal is somewhat broader, the analysis is limited to sequences in which students make the connection to informal language learning domain clear to other speakers, so that they hearably orient to a mutual shift in the current contextual configuration of semiotic fields (Goodwin 2000). This means that something in the interactional context is perceived in such a way that the introduction of the new language or knowledge is a possible and meaningful next action. In my data, these sequences tend to be quite playful and occur in group talk, often during task boundaries. As we shall

see in this section, the language that students introduce into interaction can be used to do a variety of social actions, including, but not limited to, language play, affiliative teasing and accounting for knowing.

4.1 Using an English-language song to do affiliative teasing

Excerpt 2 illustrates how students in a bilingual classroom may draw on their knowledge of popular culture to do teasing, in a manner similar to everyday interaction. It takes place after the students have arrived to the classroom, and are seated at their table having tea (as was customary in this particular class once a week) before the official lesson begins. One of the students, Konsta, has taken a fair amount of sugar lumps in his tea, which he announces to others at line 1 (*näistä*, 'these'). This gets a response from Mauri, who initiates a somewhat jocular teasing sequence, which culminates in a song about *Spider-pig*.

Extract 2. Spider-pig

```
01 Konsta  toivottavasti mää en liikaa innostu näistä
            I hope I won't get too excited by these
02 Mauri   no e:thän sää.
            well no you wouldn't
03 Konsta  mm £hmhm[hm£
04 Mauri          [sää nyt jo juokset <seini[lle> ]
                   you're already bouncing off the <walls>
05 Juuso                                     [£hhh£]
06 Riku                                      [£hhh£]
07 Konsta                                    [£mhmh]mh£
08         [melkee.
            almost
09 Mauri   [♪spider pig spider pig does what[ever a spider pig does= ]
10 Riku                                      [♪ever a spider pig does=]
11 Mauri   [=can he swing (.) from a web (.) no he cannot=]
12 Riku    [=can he swing (.) from a web (.) no he can't =]
13 Mauri    [=♪he's a pig look o:ut he's a spider pig♪]
14 Riku     [=he's a pig look o:ut he's a spider pig♪ ]
```

Konsta's turn at line 1 conveys a possibility that something might happen as a result of his having all that sugar, and at the same time, makes him the centre of the interaction. He declares this possible course of events as undesirable, which, at line 2, receives a response that lexically appears to affiliate with Konsta's stance (no e:thän sää, *well no you wouldn't*). However, Mauri's turn is prosodically exaggerated; there is a marked stress on the first syllable of the word 'e:thän', making the turn hearable as an ironic statement, a mock-affiliation with Konsta's stance, which projects the beginning of a teasing sequence.

How do the speakers achieve this? The first two turns both contain off-record markers, which are regularly used to signal turns as doing teasing (Keltner et al. 2001). By describing a state of affairs that is generally perceived as positive (i.e. being excited) as something undesirable, Konsta indicates that nonliteral interpretations may apply to his turn. Mauri's turn at line 2, on the other hand, achieves 'off-recordness' by elongating the first vowel in the negation word (e:thän) as well as stressing the word-initial syllable. In terms of the sequential

organisation, the evolving tease in excerpt 2 begins with – as teases in everyday interaction regularly do – a second position response to a previous turn that contains 'minor conversational transgressions' (Drew 1987). In this case, Konsta has made himself the centre of the attention for the group by toying with the idea of a forthcoming sugar-rush.

At line 3, Konsta receives the first teasing turn and goes along with it by providing a laughter particle, towards the end of which Mauri goes further in his jocular mockery (Haugh 2010) by delivering a blatantly exaggerated assessment of Konsta's current action (juokset seinille, *bouncing off the walls*). Interestingly, Mauri's playful assessment 'juokset seinille' (literally 'running on the walls') is not quite as formulaic as 'hyppiä seinille' (literally 'jump on the walls') would be in Finnish. Nevertheless, it is a typical tease insofar as it is 'recognizable as an exaggerated or extreme version' (Drew 1987) of the previous action. The last word of the turn is uttered more slowly, which makes it more salient than its environment. This second teasing turn is treated as humorous by the two other students at the table (lines 5–7), and Konsta, who plays along with the tease by accepting the assessment at line 8. As no-one else self-selects to take a turn, Mauri continues the teasing activity by switching from talk to singing at line 9. The song he initiates is a verbatim representation of the song *Spider-pig*, which features in the Simpsons Movie, and which itself is a parody version of the original *Spiderman* theme.[3] Crucially, in order to be able to conduct the action this double-layered intertextual reference is doing – i.e. teasing – and be recognisable to the speakers as such, the song has to be part of a shared repertoire. And indeed, as Riku joins in the song at line 10, the duo proceeds quite fluently till the end of the sequence.

What are the interactional affordances, or contingencies, that make the introduction of *Spider-pig*, a non-present semiotic field, relevant to the unfolding activity? By beginning the song immediately after his teasing assessment, Mauri makes it part of the humorous frame (Boxer & Cortés-Conde 1997) that has been set up. This sequential juxtaposition of the assessment turn and the song lyrics thus builds a similarity between *Spider-pig*, the protagonist of the song, and Konsta. That is, the song is designed to be heard as a song about Konsta. This connection begins to be established by the lexical choices of the assessment turn (line 4), which resonate with a scene in the Simpsons Movie in which Homer walks the pig along the ceiling in their house, which is not quite 'bouncing off the walls' but a comparable course of actions.

To summarise, extract 2 describes the students exploiting their cinema knowledge to perform a song to do affiliative teasing. Although classroom research tends to predominantly see students as 'learners', playful and teasing language use have an important role in the maintenance of the social relations in the classroom, as illustrated by Lehtimaja (2012: 128–139) in the context of Finnish as a second language teaching. Here, executing the song in English involves an orientation to other speakers not only as competent users of the language but also as aware of the intertextual references being made.

4.2 Drawing on computer games for knowledge construction

As suggested by Pennycook (2006: 6), the global transcultural flows involve the appropriation and use of English to construct and refashion various identities and imagined communities in a plethora of contexts. In the language classroom, knowledge of English that is acquired in an informal context, as opposed to being a result of conscientious 'studying', may be used to make relevant the kinds of identities which are favourable to social relations among peers. To illustrate this, consider the following extract in which three students are working independently on a written task when Inka misreads aloud a text that is somewhat illegibly printed (line 1).[4] Consequently, she pronounces the word 'dagger' as 'dogger', which becomes a source of knowledge management in the ensuing interaction, as the students first resolve which word the text actually contains, and then establish a local meaning for 'dagger'.

Extract 3. Dagger

```
01 Inka     no s:chool-ar (.) shall wear a (.)
02          dogger or any other weapon ((READS ALOUD))
03 Susanna  dagger
04 Inka     QUICK GLANCE TO SUSANNA, THEN SHIFTS GAZE TO TEXT
05 Sakari   dogger (0.6) [dog
06 Inka                  [no täällä lugee
                          well it says here
07 Sakari   se [o dagger
            it is dagger
08 Inka        [oho
                whoops
09 Susanna  yes but it is (.) spelled like <dagger>
                  {INKA LEANS CLOSE TO THE TEXT
10          (0.8)
11 Inka     dagge:r
12 Susanna  [(yes)]
13 Inka     [onks ] se ↑dogger vai (.) [(dogger)] (.) [vai dagger]
            is it       dogger or       (dogger)     or dagger
14 Susanna                             [dagger  ]
15 Sakari                              [dagger  ] (.) da[gger    ]
16          <da[ggeri> ]
17 Inka        [what is] a dagge::r
                  {GAZE TOWARDS SAKARI; SHIFT TO SUSANNA
18 Susanna  it is an (.) [err (.) th]at kind of,
19 Sakari                [knife     ]
                  {'STABS' WITH RIGHT HAND
20 Inka     [(net) ]
21 Susanna  [knife,] (0.4) err, (0.8) they-
22          there are err that [kind   of    in      R:unesca]pe
                                {GLANCES AT SAKARI
23 Inka                        [>meat knife< (.) >meat knife<]
24          (2.0)
25 Susanna  I wouldn't know [it if I would not have not] err,
26 Inka                     [r::::::↑u↓ne:::            ]
                                {GAZE TO TEXT
27 Susanna  played Runescape
```

As Inka has finished reading the text aloud, Susanna delivers an overt correction (line 3) of the former's pronunciation by uttering the noun 'dagger' with no explanation. The third member of the group, Sakari, also orients to 'dogger' by repeating it and engaging in a word association play (dogger-->dog). Inka then refuses Susanna's claim of knowing the pronunciation of the word better than her by making the text relevant to the interaction and using it as an epistemic authority (line 6). At this stage, there exists a 'reality disjuncture' (Pollner 1987), as the speakers have two competing versions of 'the objective world', i.e. whether 'dagger' or 'dogger' is the appropriate part of the sentence Inka has just read aloud. As Sakari aligns with Susanna to maintain 'dagger' as the correct word, Inka delivers the particle *oho* (line 8), which can be used to display surprise in Finnish (VISK § 1218), and which here – together with Inka's gaze being fixed on the text – appears to be 'doing noticing'. This action, together with Susanna's turn-initial *yes but* at line 9, which responds to Inka's claim that the text says 'dogger' (line 6), and which acknowledges the possibility of incorrect spelling being the reason behind the confusion, works to repair the disjuncture in the speakers' conflicting versions of reality and sustain the 'mundane reason' (Pollner 1987).

The repair of the reality disjuncture manifests itself in Inka's downgrading of her epistemic stance (Heritage 2012) regarding the 'correct' form of the word in the text from line 6 to line 13, as she uses an alternative question format to request from the two other speakers whether the word in the text is 'dogger' or 'dagger', thereby positioning herself as unknowing and the others as possible knowers. Susanna and Sakari align with the initiated information-seeking activity by providing 'knowing' answers precisely at the point when Inka is projected to utter the 'correct' version of the word (dagger) over lines 14-15. Sakari makes the disputed word conform to Finnish morphological system by adding a word-final vowel to it at line 13 (see Pitkänen-Huhta 2008 for the same practice in EFL context).

At this stage, the speakers have come to an agreement that the illegibly written word in the text is 'dagger', not 'dogger'. As Susanna and Sakari have been established as knowledgeable speakers regarding daggers, Inka presents yet another information request at line 17, switching the code to English to enquire what the word means.[5] Again, both speakers co-operatively construct an answer that claims to be knowledgeable. Susanna begins a turn (line 18), which breaks off and is marked with non-lexical perturbation *err*, something regularly used to show that a word search is on-going (M. H. Goodwin & C. Goodwin 1986; Helasvuo et al. 2004). This is attended to by Sakari, who provides a synonym (*knife*) for daggers at line 19, coupled with an embodied stabbing action, at a syntactically appropriate position with regard to Susanna's turn. Susanna then incorporates 'knife' into her phrasal response, and elaborates the definition of 'dagger' as a knife by saying they are the kinds of knives found in *Runescape*, an online role-playing fantasy game (lines 21-22). This action treats the semiotic field of computer games as relevant and essential to an understanding of what daggers are. Interestingly, the only time Susanna lifts her gaze from the desk is when she does this, as she uses it to address *Runescape* to Sakari, the other 'knower' in the group. This, and the later explicit account for knowing dagger at lines 25 and 27 on the basis of having played this particular game, may be ways of re-claiming epistemic primacy (Heritage & Raymond 2005) after the previous word search sequence.

Both *Runescape* and *Spider-pig* were within a shared territory of knowledge (Heritage 2012) between the students in question, insofar as the turns which used these semiotic fields were not only designed to treat these items of popular culture as unproblematic and familiar to the recipients, but were also received as such. Whereas *Spider-pig* was used to do teasing, *Runescape* was employed in matters related to knowing. In conversation, speakers not only display what they know and how they came to know it (see e.g. Glenn & LeBaron 2011; Heritage 2012; Sidnell 2012), but they may also manage issues of (classroom) social order, as illustrated in excerpt 3: in her account for knowing the word 'dagger' (lines 25, 27), Susanna treats her knowledge as a by-product of gaming, as opposed to owing to course books or other school texts. Treating the domain of gaming as a legitimate source of knowledge involves the mobilisation of out-of-school experiences, which may mitigate the risks of knowing 'too much' in the classroom, and of being perceived as a 'teacher's pet' or a 'swot' as a result.

4.3 Using knowledge of films to explain an unknown word

The previous extracts have shown how students introduce semiotic fields (Goodwin 2000) that originate in popular culture into bilingual classroom interaction in a way that treats these fields as legitimate and shared sources of knowledge for the talk at hand. The final data extract describes how this knowledge may also be used by the teacher as a pedagogical device aimed at building connections between students' experiences in the everyday domain. It shows a situation in which a student (Konsta), who is not seated in the focal group, has been nominated to read aloud a text describing how Yorkshire puddings were cooked in Stuart time England. As the student is reading the text, teacher's gaze is on the overhead projector screen on which the text is also displayed. After the read-aloud is completed, the teacher checks whether the class understands a word ('rotating spit') which is mentioned in the description, and goes on to explain it by drawing on students' presumed knowledge of films.

As the read-aloud comes to an end, the teacher changes the focus of the activity from describing Stuart time food to explaining a possibly unfamiliar word. By addressing the class and checking whether they have understood 'rotating spit' over lines 6-8, she makes it a learning object (Lee 2010), and initiates a teaching action. This action orients to the previous cut-off and the subsequent 1.5 second pause (lines 1-2) in the student's read-aloud before he uttered the target word, which in itself was delivered at a slower pace than the surrounding talk, as being indicative of comprehension trouble.

The teacher's comprehension check invites an epistemic display from the students. More specifically, it calls for a display of a whether or not type of understanding (Koole 2010) of the word 'rotating spit' in this particular context, which the teacher constructs by attending to the overhead projector display of the text at line 8. At this stage, Inka provides an embodied claim of understanding (Mondada 2011: 543–544; see also Sacks 1992: 137–150, for the difference between claims and demonstrations) by nodding, being one of the two students in the classroom who visibly do this sequentially preferred action. These two claims are, however, not treated as sufficient evidence of the understanding of the whole class of 'rotating spit', as the teacher launches an explanation sequence at line 11, whereby she defines the problematic item using

talk and gesture, as well as by drawing on the students' putative knowledge of films. This kind of framing of a learning episode as building upon something previously occurred can be seen as a way of producing learning transfer in the classroom (Engle 2006) by making opportunities to bring in everyday experiences.

Extract 4. Pirates of the Caribbean

```
01 Konsta   this dish was originally cooked (.) in a tin (.)
02          under the r- (1.5)
03          <rotating spit> on which roast beef was cooking.
04          the juices from the meat dripped onto it giving it a
05          delicious flavour. ((READS ALOUD))
06 T        >yeah< okay (.) sorry now-
            {FACES THE CLASS, POINTING RIGHT-HAND INDEX FINGER UP
07          did you understand what this,
08          (.) uh rotating spit means
            {GAZE TO OHP CANVAS, THEN 'SWEEPS' T
09 Inka     SHIFTS GAZE TO THE TEACHER AND NODS
```



```
10 T        (oh) it's a-
11          it's a stick and they put meat there and it was went around
```



```
12          err ↑you've seen the films
13          in the from medieval times [where they-]
14 Inka                                [↑mmmh      ]
                                       {SHAKES' BODY
15 T        around and the[n the (me- dripping it  ] went)
16 Inka                   [Pirates of the Caribbean]
                          {GAZE TO HER GROUP
17 T        and the Yorkshire pudding was
18          [under so it (--) (.) ↑okay
19 Sakari   [meillä ainaki kämpillä (vejetään) vielä]
            at least at my place we still do that
                           {ROTATES A 'SPIT'
20 Inka     [siinä se menee sillee (.) @krlt khht@
            there it goes like this (.) @krlt khht@
                          {STRETCHES AND PULLS WITH BOTH HANDS
21 Sakari   ei oo uuniin varaa ni pistetään liekki (ke- koloon)
            can't afford an oven so we light a fire in a hole
22          TILTS HEAD, MOUTH HALF-OPEN, ROTATES HIS WRIST MINIMALLY
23 Inka     hhh (.) he[hehe   ]
24 Susanna            [hehehe]
```

Making 'rotating spit' an object of learning and relating the subsequent explanation to the semiotic field of films have created an affordance for the students to relate to, and indeed, Inka takes this up and introduces the film *Pirates of the Caribbean* in the interaction (lines 14, 16). This is not designed to be a contribution to the teacher-led whole-class discussion, but rather a commentary on the topic of teacher's turn, addressed to her peer-group. After *PoC* has been made part of the contextual configuration of this group's talk, both Inka and Sakari do a rotating gesture but for different purposes: Inka appears to demonstrate how a massive spit was rotated in the film (line 20), whereas Sakari launches a self-denigrating mockery (Boxer & Cortés-Conde 1997) by telling a story of how rotating spits are still used in his home (line 19). This culminates in a somewhat unenthusiastic version of the teacher's original gesture, in which Sakari minimally rotates his wrist keeping the rest of his body unmoved (line 21) and adopting a very particular facial expression to entertain the other group members. Both Sakari and Inka thus relate in different ways to the same affordance for learning created by the teacher, which demonstrates the complex nature of interaction in classroom, particularly in interaction between students.

This section has investigated empirically how knowledge of English-language popular culture can be used for action-construction in content-based language instruction. Most of the time, references to popular culture are made relevant in students' talk to their peers, which is not necessarily preoccupied with 'learning', but often orients to social relations in the classroom. Nevertheless, as the final two extracts demonstrate, informal, out-of-school contexts can also be attended to for knowledge construction, not only in group talk, but also by the teacher in order to provide ways for the students to relate the pedagogic content to their everyday experiences. As extracts 3 and 4 illustrate, a focus on knowledge construction or learning does not mean joking and humour would necessarily be set aside, but rather playful undertones may provide a lamination to interactions which deal with the official business of classrooms.

5 Discussion

This article has aimed to provide an initial, interactionally-grounded exploration of how everyday experiences with the target language may be used as a semiotic resource for producing action in the formal learning context of a bilingual classroom. The analysis has focused on sequences of talk where students make clear that they are bringing into classroom interaction either 'language chunks' or content knowledge they have previously acquired outside the classroom, usually in the form of intertextual references to popular culture. This involves a reconfiguration of the context to include new, non-present semiotic fields (Goodwin 2000) into interaction. Sequences involving this particular practice often have playful undertones, and as I have shown, are vehicles for various action categories, such as teasing and mockery, language play, as well as accounting for knowing something. In the data reported here, these turns appear not to be directed at the teacher but instead occur in group talk when the teacher is not present in the interaction (extracts 2 and 3), or are used to comment on whole-class talk to fellow students (1, 4). In this sense, extract 1, in which a student addresses *Ghostbusters* to another student is an interesting case, as it

permeates the boundary between whole-class and peer talk: the teacher hears the comment and picks it up in her game-instruction. At the same time, it is the only extract in which the action (a humorous 'toss-out' attending to lexical similarity of two items) being done by the student is not recognised and aligned with by the teacher, who instead carries on with the game-instruction. It seems, therefore, that in this institutional context, the organisation of group talk offers a possibility to use a foreign language in a way that is not readily available in whole-class interaction, which appears to be reserved for more serious business. From a pedagogical viewpoint, it is important to be aware that these opportunities exist in content and language integrated (CLIL) classrooms, as proficiency and participation in what closely remind everyday interactional practices may be left unrecognised by teachers and exams in programmes which privilege academic genres of language use.

Besides describing a particular classroom practice in students' interaction, the aim of this article has been to problematize static notions of 'learning environment' and 'affordances' in a bilingual classroom context by analysing interactions which raise the question what exactly the configuration of a particular formal learning 'environment' is. As opposed to taking context as a given state of affairs in which affordances can be perceived, the analysis suggests context is something the speakers create in interaction by drawing on various semiotic resources (Goodwin 2000), some of which need not even be physically present in the location. It is in this sense that the particular learning context created by students and the teacher is a members' concern, or 'a result of our interpretation of that place', as suggested by Pennycook (2010: 2). As such, any particular 'formal' learning context may well involve the kind of language and topics, as well as patterns of turn-taking, which we might habitually associate with the 'informal' domain, such as films, gaming or everyday conversation, if they represent valid resources for the speakers to do specific actions. This raises an important question to which extent language learning processes – or conversely, social actions which are not about learning – in 'informal' and 'formal' settings may actually have something in common (Rampton 1999), even though research regularly treats them as dichotomous.

What do the sequences described in this article tell us about 'learning'? Recent conversation analytic work on learning (especially in CA-for-SLA) tends to conceptualise learning as changing participation of individual speakers over time (e.g. Hellermann 2011; Markee 2008; see also Martin 2009), which means longitudinal data is required in order to support claims concerning that change and its stability. As suggested in the introduction, interactions such as extract 1 and 2 are difficult to conceptualise as loci for new learning as an oriented-to phenomenon to begin to take place, at least in the sense of individual change. However, what this article has described is a classroom where speakers are actively establishing connections and creating relevance between semiotic resources in different domains and earlier experiences. This very production of similarities and differences across domains and time can be seen as an 'actor-oriented' (Lobato 2003, 2006; Marton 2006) – or in CA terms a participant's – perspective on learning transfer. From a learning transfer viewpoint, extracts such as 3 and 4, in which previous knowledge is employed to solve knowledge gaps concerning particular word meanings, shed light on the kind of interactional classroom work which 'permits the instruction to go on' (Macbeth 2011), and can be seen as part of learning as a social action (Sahlström 2011; see

also Lee 2010) in its own right. Whether this is something any official pedagogy can systematically tap into is nevertheless a different matter: insofar as these playful associations represent a way of activating non-school related experiences, it may well be that when teachers begin referring to *Spider-pig*, it loses its appeal for students' identity work.

Most of the interactions presented in this article contain playful undertones, whether in the form of affiliative teasing, self-mockery or humorous remarks, which are phenomena that relatively rarely figure in theoretical discussions concerning the educational merits of language classroom interaction (although see Bell 2009; Cekaite & Aronsson 2005; Forman 2011). In fact, it appears that as Finnish students get older, their beliefs related to learning English as a foreign language at school appear to become more and more related to stereotypical school structures, such as textbook chapters and exams (Aro 2009: 114–116). Drawing comparisons between different research paradigms and learning contexts is obviously not straightforward, but it may well be that students in EFL or CLIL do not see playful language use as being 'language learning'. In other words, these kinds of events may go unnoticed but they are part of the social life of classrooms, even if their extent and interactional organisation may vary across pedagogic settings. For example, Nikula (2007) has suggested on the basis of a comparative analysis of whole-class IRF sequences in EFL and CLIL classrooms that CLIL students may have more 'space for interaction' around the three-part teaching exchange, as the way it was executed in CLIL lessons appeared less tightly-knit than in EFL. This article has not examined IRF sequences, nor has it compared any two settings, but the analysis portrays a picture of peer talk as a complex interactional environment where popular culture and curricular content co-exist, which may be part of global trends related to late modern schooling (cf. Rampton 2006) and the nature of English as a transcultural language (Pennycook 2006). Seen this way, key variables in making these kinds of interactions possible may be students' access to and interest in English-language popular culture, as well as a possibility to peer interaction in lessons, rather than whether the institutional context is EFL or CLIL. However, as most of the bridge-building sequences either completely take place in peer interaction, or are comments addressed to fellow students, it may be that the types of tasks (i.e. group work that is not preoccupied with linguistic form) which afford them are more common in CLIL than in EFL classrooms.

This article represents an initial exploration of how students learning English may use their informal language learning experiences in bilingual classroom context. What I have investigated here – i.e. sequences where speakers make clear they are referring to their out-of-class knowledge, such as popular culture – is likely to only represent the 'tip of the iceberg' of the effect of the informal context on students' all-round proficiency in English. Often in this classroom, students would use English in their group talk in a very idiomatic and conversational way, ranging from mild expletives (such as 'damn you') and frequent expressions ('oh my god') to repeating words such as 'awesome' with different accents. Although beyond the scope of this article, further research looking at these kinds of language use events may provide new and invaluable insights into how language learners make sense of their linguistic environments, not only at school but elsewhere, and at the same time, it can also tell a great deal about any specific environment.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

1. Blockbusters was an American game show airing in the 1980s. A UK version followed shortly, and was shown during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although the word 'blockbuster' is regularly used to refer to films and books that are commercial hits, the Oxford English Dictionaries (n.d.) suggest the etymological origin of the word is in massive WWII aerial bombs which were capable of destroying a whole block of streets. In this classroom, however, the teacher does not introduce the cultural origins of the word; for the students, it is likely to simply be a name for the activity they are about to play, whereas the similarity of the activity to the TV series suggests it is at least to some degree familiar to the teacher.
2. The dataset was jointly collected by the Centre for Applied Language Studies and the Department of Languages, University of Jyväskylä during 2010-2011. The lessons were taught as an elective eight-week module to students registered in the bilingual programme (Content and Language Integrated Learning, CLIL) at the school. The names of the speakers have been anonymized.
3. A video of the original Spider-pig can be seen at: http://simpsons.wikia.com/wiki/Spider-Pig_(song)
4. The text contains a selection of Tudor time school rules, one of which is: 'No scholar shall wear a dagger or any other weapon. They shall not bring to school any stick or bat, only their meat knife.'
5. Notice how Susanna has been sticking to English throughout the sequence. It may be that Inka's code switch at line 17 is orientation towards Susanna's implemented language policy.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions follow those developed by Gail Jefferson (2004) in a slightly simplified and adjusted form. Symbols that have been used in the data extracts are listed below.

wo::rd	prolongation of the preceding sound
(.)	a 'micropause', i.e. a silence less than 0.5 seconds
(1.5)	length of silence either within or between utterances
(--)	unrecognisable/unintelligent items
(word)	uncertain transcription
wo-	cut-off
[ ]	onset and offset of overlapping talk
word	English translation of a turn
{TILTS HEAD	embodied actions and their placement relative to talk
<word>	segments delivered slower than surrounding talk
>word<	segments delivered quicker than surrounding talk
♪word♪	singing
↑↓	significant change in pitch height
<u>word</u>	increased emphasis, either through loudness or pitch
?	rising intonation at the end of a prosodic entity
£	smiley voice, spoken with 'suppressed laughter'
@word@	altered voice quality