EXAMINING TEACHER ROLES AND COMPETENCES IN CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL)

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Abstract: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is increasingly widespread in educational institutions of all levels and sectors across Europe. Thanks to a burgeoning research base and subsequent publications, we are now, more than ever, in a position to confidently testify to the benefits of CLIL as a successful educational approach for this day and age. However, the popularity of CLIL should not be mistaken for something that is easy to implement and deliver. As with many an innovation, demand or desire to jump on the bandwagon often outweigh resources, which in the case of CLIL means teachers who possess appropriate levels of linguistic competence in the foreign language and knowledge of the subject specialism. Equally important is the need to adapt teaching methodology to cater for the integrated learning of both content and language. This entails a change in perspective about the foreign language as a subject to that of a tool in content learning. This paper addresses teacher roles and methodology in CLIL contexts and highlights the importance of teacher education for CLIL.

Keywords: CLIL teacher roles, teacher education, teacher competences, multilingualism, plurilingualism.

1 - Introduction

Supra-national entities such as the European Union have determined linguistic objectives in their policies which aim to make their citizens acquire a knowledge and command of foreign languages additional to their mother tongue (see the European Commission's White Paper, 'Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society', 1995: 47). *Multilingualism* and *plurilingualism* are terms which are now firmly entrenched on the European political agenda (European

Commission, 2003; Council of Europe, 2006), and member states are, in one way or another, attempting to implement educational programmes in order to fulfil these objectives (Marsh, 2000, 2002a, 2002b). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been seen as one such educational approach with this potential. CLIL is a dual-focused educational initiative which advocates the learning of academic content and a foreign language simultaneously (Richards & Rodgers, 2003: 201; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010: 6; Wolff, 2005: 11). The increased provision for CLIL in schools across Europe is an endorsement of how appropriate it is for the new generation of learners born into an already globalised world of integrated learning and immediate use of acquired skills (Lorenzo, Trujillo & Vez, 2011).

CLIL has been seen as a means of improving knowledge of and competence in foreign language learning and teaching, and of renewing interest and motivation among school children (Coyle, Holmes and King, 2009). And, in broader terms, it is seen as contributing to the enrichment of education in general: "experience with teaching content matter through more than one language is bringing new insights into improving general education programmes" (Baetens-Beardsmore, 2001: 10).

It is important to clarify that CLIL is a type of additive or functional bilingualism (Lessow-Hurley, 2000; Baker, 2001), which aims to add a new language to the student's mother tongue. According to Garcia (2009: 52), this is "a model under which the second language is added to the person's repertoire and the two languages are maintained". The main differences between bilingual approaches and CLIL are: the consideration of the second language as an individual subject in the curriculum which is taught at the same time together with the other content subjects; and the degree of collaboration between the content teacher and the language teacher, by which language teachers provide the necessary linguistic support for students in order that they may understand and assimilate academic content:

> CLIL programs have always tended to include the teaching of the target language as a subject parallel to its being used as a vehicle for content-matter learning […]. In many cases in secondary education, though not all, this involves different teachers who work in tandem, a language teacher and a subject teacher who conveys the content through the same language as that used by the language teacher.
>
> (García, 2009: 210)

There are similarities between the benefits attributed to bilingual education and to CLIL. García (2009: 94-101) highlights the benefits of bilingualism in the social dimension: the possibility of higher income or a better professional recognition, the opportunities coming from the ability to communicate in more than one language in a globalized world, the promotion of students' own identity, and the enhancement of cultural awareness in their own culture and in the culture of the additional language. Another important dimension that has to be considered is that of the benefits that are beyond the language itself, which are related to the

influence that the use of the language has on our mind and brain. New insights from the fields of psychology, neurology and neurolinguistics clearly state the different functioning of the multilingual and the monolingual mind (Marsh, 2009). In fact, it has been demonstrated that bilinguals/multilinguals have a better ability to memorise (in particular, short-term memory), a greater flexibility of mind, a better capacity for creative hypothesizing, the ability to avoid distraction from irrelevant information, and a greater ability to multi-task (Marsh, 2010: 4).

Most of these benefits are similar to ones we can find in CLIL settings, hence, social, cognitive, and those specifically related to an increase in linguistic competence. Among the social benefits, it has been demonstrated that students in CLIL classes develop significantly more positive attitudes towards language learning (Merisuo-Storm, 2007); that they are more interested, motivated and autonomous, have reduced anxiety levels and are less inhibited to speak the second language (Arnold, 2011); and that CLIL classes can exert a positive influence on a student's desire to learn and develop their language competence in the foreign language (Marsh, 2000). Among the cognitive benefits are that CLIL boosts risk-taking, problem-solving, vocabulary learning skills, grammatical awareness, spontaneity in using the language and motivation (Marsh, 2007); that receptive skills, vocabulary, morphology, creativity, risk-taking, fluency, and quantity outcomes benefit more from CLIL (Genesee, 2002); and that CLIL students show greater awareness of language patterns, and a more efficient (strategic) use of the resources at hand to facilitate discovery (Moore, 2006). In terms of linguistic gains, CLIL has proved to be an effective way to increase the linguistic level of students participating in these kinds of programmes (Admiraal, Westhoff & de Bot, 2006; Merisuo-Storm, 2007; Dalton-Puffer, 2007b; Marsh, 2007; Lasagabaster, 2008; Lorenzo, Casal and Moore, 2009; Dobson, Pérez & Johnstone, 2010; Navés, 2011).

2 - The new roles of teachers in CLIL programmes.

CLIL is no easy undertaking for the teachers involved. This has all too often only been recognised in practice as its flexibility of form or type and specificities of context make features of implementation difficult to determine. What *is* understood across most contexts is that CLIL is demanding for teachers in terms of adjusting practice and developing competences, and that prior training is essential:

> Teachers undertaking CLIL will need to be prepared to develop multiple types of expertise among others in the content subject; in a language; in best practice in teaching and learning; in the integration of the previous three; and, in the integration of CLIL within an educational institution.
>
> (Marsh *et al.,* 2010: 5)

The essential questions about CLIL are who should be responsible for teaching content through the second language and how this should be done. CLIL

programmes may take different forms. They can lean more on content-based instruction, where language teachers are responsible for bringing content matter to their classes, or they can be of the 'language-sensitive type', where content teachers bring the foreign language to their classes (Pavón, 2010: 34). There is no single recipe for CLIL and its success depends on a thorough analysis of context, an evaluation of needs, and the resources, human and material, which are available. What is vitally important for the implementation of these programmes is they have to be understood, chosen and owned *in situ* by all stakeholders, not only teachers (Coyle, 2009: vii; Mehisto, 2009). However, in the majority of cases, implementation of CLIL programmes requires the content teacher to be responsible for teaching content subjects through the foreign language.

Unfortunately, many content teachers are unsure about the way they should perform in the CLIL/bilingual class because they are not aware of the methodological changes required in these contexts (Pavón & Rubio, 2010: 50), or because these methods differ from the way they have learnt languages and from the way they have been trained to become regular teachers (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: 134). In theory, the teachers of content material should have sufficient linguistic competence to be able to pass on academic content in a second language as well as an in-depth knowledge of their own subject. A lack of adequate knowledge of the language can create great unease among teachers which has led to the suggestion that it would be a better option to train foreign language teachers to teach specialised content (Bowler, 2007). However, as Nikula & Marsh (1999) state, native-like competence is not an obligatory characteristic for the content teacher. The pedagogical qualification of teachers giving instruction through a second language and the accuracy of the language itself is of paramount importance for the success of these programmes (Frigols, Marsh, Mehisto & Wolff, 2011) although unfortunately decisions are not always based on those criteria. García (2009: 213-214) reports that in many countries the selection of teachers to use the foreign language as a medium of instruction is not normally based on of their professional qualifications in the content-matter or in the second language.

The success of programmes involving the teaching of content through another language does not rest solely on whether the teachers responsible have a high level of linguistic and subject competence, but also on the collaboration between those teaching content subjects and languages. For example, foreign language teachers can provide invaluable linguistic support to students in their language lessons. It is not enough to increase the content teacher's basic knowledge of the second language. These teachers need to develop a language consciousness that triggers their awareness of their own foreign language input as well as expected output from students. This is what will take their language competence to a new 'pedagogic' level. This is a highly skilled procedure, for not only does it imply a heightened awareness of the potential of language, but also an adaptation of teaching methodology and a more strategic use of teaching aids and materials:

> The teacher of whatever material is being taught in an L2, should not only update his linguistic knowledge to a standard and recognized level of fluency but should develop a different linguistic sensitivity to be able to adapt the contents to the new language and develop teaching procedures that make it possible for the student to learn.
>
> (Lorenzo, Hengst, Hernández & Pavón, 2005: 18)

There are two main problems in the use of the second language by content teachers. The first is that the lack of a high level of competence in the language could lead to compensatory tactics whereby lessons conducted in the second language become those that simply "summarize" content which has already been explained in the mother tongue. This is to ensure that academic content is assimilated and not prejudiced because of the low linguistic competence of the students in the foreign language. This is an option that, without a doubt, reveals certain linguistic benefits, above all those related to the consolidation of vocabulary, but it is totally against the principles of the integration of content and language. The great challenge that teachers of non-linguistic areas face is the change in favour of a methodology that emphasizes the use of activities that promote the linguistic competence of students with a communicative end goal, and whose objective is not to teach "things", but to teach to understand, retain and use. A second problem might be that content teachers may want to help students increase their knowledge of the language by providing linguistic explanations, which results in the content lesson becoming a language lesson, thus consuming time needed for the transmission of content:

> The image that is provoked is that of content teachers having control of linguistic development […]. This only adds to the tremendous pressure on teaching staff who, in many cases, have difficulty manipulating the foreign language and, for that reason, they should not be asked to assume such a difficult role.
>
> (Pavón & Rubio, 2010: 46)

When we talk about integrating language and content, and think of content teachers who use a foreign language to teach their subject matters, we assume that these teachers become teachers of the language too, although the real integration of the language has to be defined in clear terms otherwise it can lead to less than successful results. It may be wrong to assume that a traditional teaching of the language based on teaching structures and grammar in general should be part of the teaching of content. Thus, it would be wrong to consider that 'Communication', one of Coyle's Cs (Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture) (Coyle, 2007) as the way through which we contribute to the description of the new language. However, Coyle (2007, especially chart on p. 551) defines 'Communication' as the ability to use the language appropriately in content classes making students actively participate in the negotiation of meaning. In this

way, the language becomes an instrument and not a goal in itself. Therefore, to be a 'teacher of language' in the content class is related to facilitating students' use of the language, helping them to use it effectively in all the language skills when dealing with content and not becoming a language teacher in the traditional sense.

It would be a mistake to think that the content teacher should work on specific grammar points, and on establishing linguistic objectives different from "the ability or capacity" to do something with the language, without focusing on the strategies to make students understand and express themselves. This would be to ignore that principle of language as a medium of instruction and not an end in itself. The content teacher should not be fully in charge of teaching the language; their role is not that of 'policing the language' but of facilitating its use for academic purposes.

3 - Changes in the methodology of content and language teachers

The 'new' role of teachers does not only involve prior collaboration, but also entails a complete change in the pedagogical strategies used in the classroom which is sometimes difficult to achieve. The first important consideration is the change from instructional to participative classes. It would not be effective to teach the same content, the same way, with another language, but to make students gain understanding of content through its manipulation and use. In addition, the change to more participative lessons should not only include teacher-student interaction, but should also try to foment student-student interaction through cooperative and collaborative work. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the presence of BICS (*Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills*) and CALP (*Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency*) is of paramount importance in the bilingual/CLIL class (Cummins, 2000, 2008a, 2008b). The ability to use the language for communicative purposes and the capacity to use the academic language of content matter should be treated in parallel, and content teachers, for example, should develop the correct strategies to make students employ them appropriately.

As there is no template for planning CLIL lessons, because each subject and context is highly unique, the above-mentioned 4 Cs framework (Coyle *et al.,* 2010: 41) is a good starting point for raising teacher awareness as to what should be considered when teaching CLIL classes. The interrelationship between the 4Cs (Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture) is thought to lead to effective CLIL. When used as a tool for planning, it is clear to see how useful this framework can be especially in terms of constructing aims, devising tasks and designing materials. For example, for 'Communication', the teacher would need to consider the language *of, for* and *through* learning for a given lesson. *Language of learning* refers to the key content language of the subject; *language for learning* is the language around the key content language which includes functional exponents/structures to describe, analyse, hypothesise (depending on the demands/orientation of the subject); and *language through learning* is that which students need to express their

understanding of new knowledge and concepts. It is easy to see how useful prior planning for recognition and use of this language would be in a CLIL class. This would obviously facilitate teaching and learning.

It could be said that CLIL has led to a re-examination of the 'centredness' in classroom teaching. We are all too familiar with the expressions, 'teacher-centred' and 'student-centred'. While CLIL can contain elements of these, it is above all else, 'thinking-centred'. As it is participatory and dialogic, it involves teachers and learners in thinking about ways of 'reaching' content and the means of expressing an understanding of it. It demands self-awareness and self-regulation as it involves conscious thinking about learning processes. Like good practice in education, CLIL is not just about the transmission of knowledge, but also demonstrating and understanding that knowledge, applying it, analysing it, synthesising it, and evaluating it (see Bloom, 1956; Anderson and Krathwolh, 2001). This requires a consideration of student output – of expressing understanding and use in and beyond the classroom. A lot of what goes on in the CLIL classroom involves practical application of knowledge through problem solving tasks and cooperative learning. Teachers must aim to achieve a balance of cognitive and linguistic demands when designing materials and tasks whilst ensuring the quality of subject concepts as well as providing opportunities to demonstrate and develop thinking skills. These, in turn, will be opportunities for teachers to check the success of their teaching and the extent of student learning. The above are decisions teachers have to make before they enter the CLIL classroom and could be termed as the 3 Ms (medium, methods and materials).

How content teachers modify their language to make themselves understood is extremely important. Richards & Lockhart describe teacher talk as: "[…] essential support to facilitate both language comprehension and learner production" (1996: 184). In the CLIL class we can add 'comprehension of content' to this description. Teachers may modify their language in many ways such as speaking more slowly, using synonyms or antonyms and altering the length of pauses, the latter being especially important in the CLIL classroom to allow time for processing both language and content. A lot of classroom time is spent with teachers asking questions. To facilitate understanding of content and language and promote the development of thinking skills, teachers should vary their use of question types to include simple closed display questions and referential ones which require more thought. Dalton-Puffer (2007a: 98) suggests a specific typology for questions in the CLIL classroom which includes questions for facts, explanations, reasons, opinions, as well as meta-cognitive ones which encourage learners to be aware of their own cognitive processing. All of these question types are dependent on subject content.

The dual focus on content and language in the CLIL classroom makes learning and teaching more demanding. CLIL forces students and teachers to be more cognitively engaged. This engagement comes from attempting to gain understanding of subject matter/content/concepts or rather, de-coding messages

transmitted through another linguistic code and then expressing understanding of those messages. The success of this depends on the ability of the CLIL teacher to get their message through the students effectively without 'dumbing down' the subject content, over simplifying concepts/principles or worse still, omitting them altogether. All of this demands a consideration of language use (verbal and non verbal) and a review of teaching methods and strategies so that the teacher's input may be as comprehensible as possible. The teacher must consider a range of strategies to scaffold their input. This could involve the use of visuals – static or animated, graphic organizers, textual support through glossaries, highlighted key words/expressions and technology, which may not have been necessary when giving lessons in the mother tongue. The teacher's use of the foreign language, how they express themself, the speed of delivery, stress on key word, their type, use and frequency of questions, gesture and body language, to name a few, are all important strategies that are essential to communication in the CLIL classroom.

Content teachers may use a variety of communicative functions in the classroom depending on the subject they are teaching. In the CLIL class the teacher may need to use language exponents for describing, explaining, exemplifying, summarizing, consolidating. They may also use a range of strategies for checking learning of content and language and giving feedback. This is important for both teachers and learners as both need to know the extent of the learner's understanding and progression. These checks will add to the momentum, increase motivation and drive the learning forward. As highlighted above, it is important that the content in CLIL lessons is presented in ways which make it more manageable to learners. Complex information is best broken up into smaller parts and presented to learners using concrete examples, visuals and realia.

With regard to language teachers, we should not necessarily be talking about a change in their methodology but rather a change in the perception of their role in CLIL contexts. Language teachers may be sceptical about the implementation of CLIL programmes for two reasons. Firstly, for many language teachers the most sensible model would be *content-based instruction*, where language teachers bear the responsibility for transmitting academic content. Secondly, because working in a programme in which content teachers are responsible for incorporating the foreign language into their teaching could make language teachers feel redundant or that their role is secondary. As stated above, the teaching of language and content is based on the integration of both, and the language teacher performs just as important a role as the content teacher because it is he/she who is responsible for helping students acquire the necessary linguistic competences to assimilate content. The change to a new methodology in the language classroom should be labelled, thus, as a shift from a traditional methodology to a more communicative, participative and interactive methodology.

4 - Teacher education for CLIL

Given that CLIL is now more widespread, there is more readily available information about it in practice which has contributed to publications from the Council of Europe on how teachers may prepare for teaching in CLIL contexts. Teacher Education for CLIL across Contexts: From Scaffolding Framework to Teacher Portfolio for Content and Language Integrated Learning (Hansen-Pauly *et al.*, 2009) suggests eight areas of CLIL teacher competence: learner needs, planning, multimodality, interaction, subject literacies, evaluation, cooperation and reflection, context and culture; The European Framework for CLIL Teacher Education (Frigols *et al.*, 2011) declares itself 'A framework for the professional development of CLIL teachers'. In addition, the very comprehensive 'The CLIL Teacher's Competences Grid' (Bertaux *et al.*, 2010), emphasises the seriousness and complexity of CLIL as an educational approach. In the area of foreign language teacher education, The European Profile for Language Teacher Education: A Framework of Reference (Kelly *et al.*, 2004: 77) suggests that CLIL be a part of initial teacher education even if student-teachers do not intend to teach in CLIL contexts in their future teaching careers. It cites the benefits as improved competence in the foreign language, better understanding of language use in CLIL and non-CLIL contexts, improved notion of social, culture and value issues in teaching, and encourages cooperation between teachers.

CLIL programmes involve a considerable number of decisions in many areas concerning the organization of teaching, the curriculum, and above all, adopting a common methodological approach, fundamental for attaining the successful achievement of objectives (Richards & Farrell, 2005). This kind of teaching requires specific competences that are related to the knowledge and use of the language and to the utilization of particular methods and techniques. This should be the starting point for designing pre-service and in-service training programmes for CLIL teachers in which the training objectives should include the coordination between content and language teachers and the opportunity for collaborative work, both aiming towards a common pedagogical goal.

As we have seen, one of the first decisions is to identify who should be the most appropriate teacher to transmit content in a CLIL programme. But this is a decision that has to be taken initially by considering a crucial fact related to the language itself. Therefore, training programmes should be defined and organised to adapt to the characteristics and necessities of one or another group. If we opt for a type of CLIL programme that puts the responsibility for teaching on the shoulders of content teachers, then it is obvious that their linguistic competency will determine the characteristics of the training programme. This should include either the certification of a specific linguistic level or the taking of an entry test to ensure that all the teachers possess that necessary linguistic level. In CLIL programmes where content teachers are already in service and their competency is low, these teachers should be given the opportunity to take language lessons

in order to boost their linguistic competence, as is the case in CLIL programmes where implementation is gradual and the percentage of time devoted to the teaching of content through English increases in tandem with the increase of the teachers' linguistic competency (Pavón, 2010).

It is clear that the specific training of CLIL teachers must bear in mind the implications and challenges that teaching content through a foreign language entails. As depicted by Marsh *et al.* (2010), education of CLIL teachers should cover some key areas: personal reflection, CLIL fundamentals, content and language awareness, methodology and assessment, research and evaluation, learning resources and environment, classroom management, and CLIL management. Of all them, we consider personal reflection, CLIL fundamentals and methodology and assessment the most important dimensions that a training programme for CLIL should cover, as some of the others might well be include in these three. And, obviously, the CLIL teacher should acquire a sound knowledge of how the language works:

> [T]he future content - subject and CLIL teacher will have to acquire a basic knowledge of how learners learn languages in a CLIL context. She needs to be acquainted with the developmental stages of learner language, with the main SLA theories, with the factors influencing second language learning, and with the differences between first and second language learning.
>
> (Wolff, 2012: 112).

5 - Conclusion

CLIL teaching may involve content teachers teaching subject material through a foreign language or language teachers teaching academic content in the foreign language classroom (or the CLIL classroom). What is essential is that both content teacher and foreign language teacher work together towards the common objective – content and language integrated learning. This involves a high degree of collegiality, to mutually support and learn *from* and *with* each other. Support from the foreign language teacher may be two-fold: providing linguistic support in a consultative/advisory capacity to the content teacher within or outside the CLIL class; developing content terminology/lexis, functional exponents and skills in the language class that students will need when in the CLIL class. This is a type of 'language rehearsal' for later use.

Both content and language teachers stand to gain from observing each other teaching their specific subject. Good CLIL teaching is a fusion of what is best practice in each of these areas. For example, the content teacher may learn how the language teacher sets up communicative tasks and task-based learning, which may be adapted to fit the subject material of the CLIL class. The language teacher may learn about the intellectual demands of the content subject, what is expected of the student in classes given in their mother-tongue, the type of questions asked

and level of thinking required to answer them.

Neither teacher needs to start from scratch. Each must examine what they have and do that is worthy of transfer or adaptation to the CLIL classroom. Both of them require certain qualifications and specific competences, as well as a change in the way pedagogy is considered and brought into the classroom. It is essential that teachers make use of methodology that is appropriate to understand content matter as well as the use of the language they will need to manipulate it, to perform tasks which require them to analyse, describe, compare, summarise, and so on. In addition, teachers need to provide contexts which support the use of this language and which encourage other language to be produced and developed *through* the act of learning itself. And, obviously, training programmes should be designed to take into consideration the competences that will adequately prepare content teachers and language teachers for this. Any teacher who becomes directly involved in a CLIL programme should consider it an extension of professional development, for as with any experiment involving new methodologies or techniques in the classroom, the experience inevitably leads to further reflection on beliefs, values and practice which leads to change and professional growth.

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