

# CLIL teacher development: Challenges and experiences

## Desarrollo profesional de docentes de AICLE: retos y experiencias

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### Abstract

*Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is regarded as an innovative or alternative approach to communicative language teaching (CLT). Stakeholders, researchers, and other actors involved in teaching foreign language embrace CLIL in the hope that deficiencies in foreign language learning can be overcome so as to meet new socio-economic needs. However, CLIL is not only about benefits. This article, firstly, outlines some of its challenges and drawback particularly in reference to teachers and teacher development since other difficulties may be rooted in how teachers are prepared to respond to the new issues that CLIL seems to raise. Secondly, it describes pre- and in-service CLIL teacher development opportunities partly based on personal experiences at the University of Warwick as well as other personal experiences of workshops in Argentina. Finally, the article suggests possible ways of incorporating a CLIL understanding in Argentina as an example of an EFL context.*

**Key Words:** CLIL teacher education; pre-service teacher development; in-service teacher development; teacher professional development.

### Resumen

*El aprendizaje integrado de contenido y lengua extranjera (AICLE) es considerado un enfoque innovador o alternativo al enfoque comunicativo. Administradores, investigadores, y otros actores involucrados en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras se unen a AICLE con la esperanza de responder a las deficiencias en el aprendizaje y a las nuevas demandas socio-económicas. Sin embargo, AICLE no supone beneficios solamente. El presente artículo principalmente describe algunos beneficios y retos de AICLE en relación a la docencia y a formación profesional, y analiza las situaciones referentes a la forma en la que los docentes están preparados para afrontar los desafíos emergentes en AICLE. El artículo continúa con la descripción de instancias de formación profesional inicial y en servicio en la Universidad de Warwick como así también de experiencias personales en Argentina. A modo de conclusión, el artículo sugiere posibles caminos para la incorporación de conocimiento sobre AICLE en Argentina como un ejemplo de contextos donde el inglés es una lengua extranjera.*

**Palabras Claves:** formación docente en AICLE; formación docente inicial; formación docente en servicio, formación docente profesional.

### INTRODUCTION

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL), mostly implemented in English (Dalton-Puffer, 2011), is regarded despite some reservations (Bruton, 2011) as an innovative or

alternative approach to communicative language teaching (CLT). Stakeholders, researchers and other actors involved in teaching foreign language embrace CLIL in the hope that deficiencies in foreign language learning can be overcome so as to meet new socioeconomic needs (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010). However, CLIL is not only about benefits.

In this article, I will first outline some of its challenges and drawbacks—particularly in reference to teachers and teacher development, since other difficulties may be rooted in how teachers are prepared to respond to the new issues that CLIL seems to raise. In other words, training teachers should be a priority (Hillyard, 2011).

Secondly, I will describe pre- and in-service CLIL teacher development opportunities partly based on personal experiences at the University of Warwick and then I will describe other personal experiences of workshops in Argentina. Last, I will suggest possible ways of incorporating CLIL understanding in Argentina as an example of an EFL context.

## CHALLENGES IN CLIL IMPLEMENTATION

Based on Mehisto and Asser (2007), Mehisto (2008, p. 99-100) notes that one of the issues to address in CLIL implementation is the lack of knowledge stakeholders have with regard to aims. In order for administrators to implement CLIL programmes responsibly, serious needs analysis (Butler, 2005, p. 233-236; Ruiz-Garrido and Fortanet-Gómez, 2009) must be carried out before any actions actually begin. This lack of awareness or knowledge among administrators is intimately linked to those who are in charge of implementing CLIL: teachers.

Teachers sometimes do not know what it is expected from them, especially when CLIL means putting content and foreign language teachers working together. For instance, Mehisto (2008) found out that those CLIL classes which were only taught by content teachers featured second language support mostly through unnecessary translation. This also led to the discovery that teachers saw themselves as either content teachers or language teachers, a view which affected team teaching or a full integration of components. This reticence was found even in teachers' unwillingness to incorporate materials coming from content or language classes. Overall, the author suggests that team teaching is one of the major drawbacks in CLIL (also Cammarata, 2009, p. 569-574; Coonan, 2007; Coyle, 2007; Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010, p. 44; Feryok, 2008; Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008; Yassin et al., 2010).

More teacher-related concerns are reported in Pena Díaz and Porto Requejo (2008), whose research project followed the implementation of bilingual-CLIL programmes in 150 primary schools in Madrid. In order to understand the factors that impinge on CLIL teachers' practices in this setting, an unspecified number of teachers were interviewed with structured questionnaires. Results showed that teachers believed their practices could be enhanced should they develop a more proficient command of English, a concern also reported in Pavón Vázquez and Rubio (2010, p. 51) and in Butler's (2005, p. 236) study, which adds that teachers' lack of content and language knowledge affects CLIL success. In other words, teachers may equate CLIL success to their own level of English and curricular content understanding. Surprisingly, given the fact that the participants in Pena Díaz and Porto Requejo (2008) lacked formal training on bilingual education methodologies, they nevertheless did not consider that they needed theoretical training on such methodologies. They expressed a reliance on working with content teachers and the practical knowledge, not defined in the article, of their subjects. Put simply, another concern that recurs across contexts is how to organise pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes that could also contemplate CLIL settings as possible sources of employment for future teachers.

Continuing with a focus on teachers, Mehisto's (2008) article also includes a review of interviews with teachers who were asked about what factors helped achieve CLIL programme success. Among the factors mentioned, training opportunities, support by Immersion Centres, and teaching materials were ranked (in that order) with regards their central importance in CLIL programmes. Addressing such factors is paramount for quality assurance in CLIL (Coyle, 2007). However, when interviewed, school managers admitted that these factors were rarely addressed in practice. Such inaction caused distress as well as further resistance to innovation among teachers. This fact should remind us of what happens when implementations occur from the centre to the periphery, where the implementers (that is, the teachers) are not fully equipped by adopters and suppliers (Waters, 2009, p. 437). Nor is there development of CLIL teacher training programmes, content materials or instructional resources (Lyster and Ballinger, 2011, p. 286; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2008, p. 62). In Germany, however, in a trend that could be imitated by other countries, universities have started to offer an additional CLIL teaching qualification (Vázquez, 2007, p. 102-103). Similar initiatives may also be found in Italy (Hillyard, 2011, p. 8-9).

With reference to materials, Ballman (1997, p. 183-184) claims that publishers need to produce course books that are related to learners' lives in their contexts. This lack of CLIL materials is also one of the major drawbacks encountered by educators, as it implies a greater workload for teachers (Alonso, Grisaleña, & Campo, 2008, p. 46; Cammarata, 2009, p. 562; Coonan, 2007, p. 628; Maley, 2011: 391; Moore & Lorenzo, 2007, p. 28-35; Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008, p. 22; Ricci Garotti, 2007, p. 134-135; Vázquez, 2007, p. 103).

Another cause of disjuncture among teachers is the issue of examinations (Serragiotto, 2007). While CLIL looks at, in theory, language and content holistically, national exams (other than language exams) are solely focused on content, creating a fracture in the system. In other words, while the educational process has one set of aims, examinations seem to be guided by a different agenda. With reference to this concern, to my knowledge, there are no research studies which investigate complete teaching and learning processes so as to see what principles and decisions are to be found in classrooms. The point I am advancing here is that there is a urgent need to investigate the classroom practices that evidence what teachers do, from introducing new content and language topics until assessment is carried out, and what materials scaffold these processes.

From a research perspective, the lack of rigor may affect how CLIL is evaluated overall. Because of the design of some research (Bruton, 2011), CLIL education may be perceived as elitist because, sometimes, the best learners from mainstream classes are the ones placed in CLIL classes. This, needless to say, may skew possible research results, for such learners have achieved good levels of performance in both content and language before starting CLIL. This fact also reveals a need to study classrooms in which learners have *not* been placed according to their previous foreign language performance or overall academic grades.

As Mehisto (2008) rightly claims, stakeholders, especially school managers, must exercise a prominent role when CLIL is adopted as a result of a top-down process. In such a case, one of the challenges that school managers seem unready to explore is faculty development, which assists both subject and language teachers so that they may collaboratively teach subject-matter for which they have not been initially trained. If this is not achieved, content teachers, who usually lack linguistic expertise (Vázquez, 2007, p. 106), may tend to stress content and neglect both language learning and the language teacher (Creese, 2005, p. 194; Kong, 2009, p. 236). In situations like these, a CLIL coordinator can act as a liaison among learners, parents, and content and language teachers (Pavón Vázquez & Rubio, 2010, p. 54). A

CBI-CLIL coordinator may be in charge of ensuring the proper balance in content and language supported by methodologies and materials which help construct this integration, especially when teachers may find it difficult to team teach.

### CLIL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK: PRE-SERVICE ENDEAVOURS

The University of Warwick is one of a few UK-based universities interested in meeting the challenges that CLIL teacher education entails. The Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL) at Warwick University hosted a B.Ed. TESOL programme in partnership with Ipoh (Malaysia). The B.Ed. consisted of a strong foundation for the different areas of degree study in Malaysia and was followed by a three-year course at CAL before participants returned to Malaysia for the practicum component of the course. In the second year of studies, the Malaysian cohorts attended a course called *Content in the Language Classroom (CILC)*. This module aimed to develop trainees' knowledge of, and skill with, using content in the language classroom to promote language learning. This module was part of the programme given the spread of CLIL in Malaysian education, which has generated research on CLIL teacher development, positions in favour of, and positions against the use of English as a medium of instruction.

With regards to team teaching and in-service programmes for continuing education in Malaysia, Feryok (2008) provides a descriptive and evaluative account of a programme through which content (math and science) teachers were trained in TESOL principles and methodologies, as education had shifted from a Malay-medium to an English-medium of instruction, a change which did not produce fruitful results and has recently been abandoned (Paran, 2010). This programme consisted of a series of lectures on task-based learning and the development of tasks mostly concerned with information, reasoning, and opinion-gap activities. Conclusions indicate that participants rated the workshops as extremely useful in terms of integrating content with English language learning (Feryok, 2008, p. 129). However, there seems to have been a failure to design or explain how the participants' L2 proficiency was improved, which could be due to the rather general methodological procedures employed by Feryok. This uncertainty can also be found in Yassin et al. (2010, p. 47), who report that Malay teachers feel CLIL is very difficult, as they are supposed to master the content knowledge through science discourse in English.

In order to provide future teachers with useful academic and hands-on tools, the CILC module sought to help trainees gain an awareness of the potential value of the CLIL approach for English language teaching in general, as well as for their own future and specific teaching contexts back in Malaysia. With this purpose in mind, the module was divided into two terms. Term 1 dealt with theory and practice of content-based English language instruction. Conversely, Term 2 focused on developing practical skills in teaching CLIL oriented lesson material by experiencing how literature, fiction, and non-fiction could be used to teach CLIL-oriented lessons. Both terms were divided into lectures and seminars.

Lectures in Term 1 tended to be tutor-centred, but there was room for reflective tasks and group work activities in order to realize the sociocultural nature of CLIL (Moate, 2010). Trainees received input about the following topics as the term progressed:

1. CLIL: definitions, reasons, aims, benefits, CLIL contexts, and challenges.
2. CLIL curricular models, factors influencing the choice of curricular models, and the CLIL Matrix.
3. Approaches for content selection, rationale from Sociocultural Theory and Multiple Intelligences.
4. CLIL in language and cognitive skills, grammar, vocabulary, and functions.

5. Lesson planning and CLIL.
6. CLIL task types and task purpose.
7. Selection and adaptation of resources and materials for CLIL with an emphasis on multimedia and visual organisers.
8. Scaffolding in CLIL: definitions and techniques.

With regard to tasks, these consisted mostly of reflective tasks that asked trainees to bring back their memories and experiences as learners. In addition, lectures featured group-work activities that promoted discussion, the exchange of ideas, and design of activities. Readings usually came from three core textbooks: Bentley (2010), Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010), and Mehisto, Marsh, and Frigols (2008). Seminars, on the other hand, stressed group-work activities through scenarios, task development and material adaptation, and—above all—micro-teaching sessions in which students had to realize the contents and readings covered in the lectures. At the end of the term, trainees had to submit an essay-type assignment in which they had to discuss aspects of CLIL in their context.

Lectures in Term 2 continued to be tutor-centred, and experiential activities were increased by encouraging reflection, discussion and short activities that helped trainees synthesise the contents covered in each lecture. This term started with an overview of the first term, giving way to a combination of topics on literature teaching and ways that literature could be infused into the ESL curriculum. Trainees received input about the following topics:

1. Deconstructing CLIL: content and language.
2. challenges in CLIL: team teaching, materials, and assessment-
3. The role of Literature in ELT.
4. Fiction and non-fiction as Literature.
5. The use poetry, short-stories, novels, and plays in CLIL-Literature.
6. Lesson planning and syllabus design for CLIL-Literature.

Readings continued around the core textbooks mentioned above but the tutor incorporated articles from the *ELT Journal*, the *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, and the (no longer active) *International CLIL Research Journal*. Similar to the seminars in Term 1, trainees were provided with opportunities for micro-teaching. In addition, they were exposed, as secondary school learners, to lessons on literature in which the tutor employed teacher-developed materials for CLIL-literature in foreign language contexts. Other tasks included more individual activities, such as reaction papers, individual evaluations of materials, or creative writing explorations through ekphrastic and concrete poetry (Banegas, 2010). The term included a mandatory assignment in which students had to demonstrate their understanding of one literary genre or work of (non-)fiction in relation to how it could be used within a contextualized CLIL-literature model.

In general, the CILC module provided pre-service teachers with opportunities to understand CLIL through a combination of explorations as learners, explorations as teachers through micro-teaching, and explorations through discussion of and reflection on CLIL theoretical framework and research perspectives.

## CLIL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK: IN-SERVICE ENDEAVOURS

In a report about the outcomes of a collaborative action research project, Hunt, Neofitou, and Redford (2009, p. 113) describe the training that Modern Foreign Language teacher trainees received during their 1-year PGCE course. The training involved awareness raising of CLIL practices by analysing examples of good CLIL practice, followed by detailed sessions about



CLIL rationale and lesson planning. The end product was the development of CLIL lessons to be taught during trainees' final placement. In this journal, Hunt (2011) provided an account of a European project called ECLILT (e-based Content and Language Integrated Learning Training), with partners in Italy, Slovakia, Poland, Spain, Austria, France, Greece, the UK, and Turkey. The aim of this project was to develop a blended, trans-national model training course (on-line and face-to-face) for CLIL teacher trainers and pre-service and in-service secondary school subject teachers in CLIL adaptable to different countries. In the UK, the project was carried out through classroom-based action research. The participating teachers planned and taught CLIL lessons which involved different curricular subject in languages such as Spanish, French, and German. In order to study the impact of the programme, data were collected through a questionnaire featuring open questions. Results showed teachers welcomed the face-to-face part of the training but were less positive about the on-line part due to lack of time.

What these two experiences seem to stress is that pre- and in-service opportunities for CLIL teacher education may be based on collaborative action research (CAR). In this sense, CAR could be a win-win situation for teachers, researchers, and teacher-researchers, provided that the project is the result of disinterested needs analysis and that teacher development needs are initially shaped by the teachers involved. Besides practical implications for teachers, this type of endeavour may help teachers grow professionally as they begin to acquire tools to research and reflect on their own practices (Somekh, 2010; Rainey, 2011). Such opportunities may become even more fruitful, as through the experiences teachers may be developing their own materials (Cammarata, 2009; Wyatt, 2011a, 2011b).

## CLIL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN ARGENTINA

With regard to the limited opportunities for CLIL teacher development, Pistorio (2009, p. 39) claims that the lack of such opportunities may affect teachers working at bilingual institutions. The author suggests that universities and tertiary institutions should run courses that provide trainees with theoretical and practical aspects of CLIL—much as in the CILC module described previously. However, it is my view that this assertion may fail to consider two important aspects of bilingual education in Argentina, following Banfi and Day (2004) and Banfi and Rettaroli (2008).

Bilingual education in Argentina is run privately, and it seems that most of the teachers employed in this sector usually graduate from both state and private teacher education programmes. In this light, I would contend that if the private sector claims lack of CLIL teacher development, then this same sector should create opportunities to meet their own demands. In addition, I would add that not all teachers currently working in Argentinean bilingual schools hold a teaching degree in either a content subject or in EFL. On the other hand, Pistorio's assertion that teachers may be ill-equipped applies to both content teachers teaching their subject in English (or any other foreign language) and foreign language teachers teaching a non-language subject or non-language content (with the exception of literature).

Lastly, Pistorio (2009, pp. 40-42) puts forward a list of teaching strategies, learning strategies, and learning styles that are aimed at CLIL teacher development. However, through a careful analysis, these well-meant strategies do not, or should not, differ from regular foreign language teacher education programmes, regardless of their CLIL aims. In other words, the strategies identified by Pistorio should be featured in any teacher education programme in EFL contexts. The difference the author introduces lies in the fact that teachers should be equipped with subject-matter knowledge and the tools to carry out successful didactic transpositions (Duy-

Thien, 2008) in both content and language. The strategies Pistorio adds could be realised in the CLIL module above and the personal in-service opportunities I have led, to which I will refer in the following section.

## FACILITATING IN-SERVICE EXPERIENCES

In 2011, I was asked to facilitate an in-service teacher development workshop that I subsequently replicated in different parts of Argentina as a result of teachers and ELT coordinators' need to be introduced to and experience CLIL in the state sector rather than the private sector. The workshop took place over the course of two days, and around thirty teachers attended, most of them working at secondary school level. In addition, there were also teacher educators interested in updating their theoretical and practical knowledge in current specific didactics.

The workshop I developed was divided into two sections. The first section aimed at providing participants with instances of experiential learning. The participants experienced three language-driven CLIL lessons:

1. Population density and pyramids.
2. The history of rock music.
3. Addressing environmental issues.

In order to scaffold learning, I produced a hand-out containing a collection of activities I had developed for my secondary school learners as part of a language-driven CLIL project in state secondary education in my local context. The worksheets featured activities to practise the four language skills through authentic input sources such as YouTube videos, documentary extracts, Wikipedia articles, pictures, and graphic organisers. The lessons and their activities were sequenced according to linguistic and cognitive demands so that they could be seen as instantiations of the CLIL Matrix (Coyle, Hood, and Marsh, 2010, p. 43), Mohan's knowledge framework for activities (Mohan, 1986, pp. 25-46) and Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

In the second part of the workshop the participants discussed how they had felt during the experiential part, what they had noticed with regard to my lessons, stages, the materials used, and the level of interaction developed. Based on their reflections, I introduced CLIL theoretical underpinnings such as sociocultural theory, the role of language awareness, CLIL models, examples of CLIL implementations in Argentina and Europe, and strategies for CLIL materials development for a language-driven model. The participants evaluated CLIL sections in current marketed textbooks and my worksheets so as to arrive at principles for adapting and developing materials. I conclude this part of the workshop by asking them to give me written feedback about the workshop. Most participants signalled that they valued the experiential aspect of the workshop and my inductive approach to introducing CLIL; in other words, they seemed to have benefited from the scaffolding process I facilitated and how the practical part was the basis for the theoretical framework addressed in the second part. Ultimately, I attempted to show an example of congruent teacher education; that is, my performance reflected how CLIL could work among secondary school learners. These pre- and in-service experiences may help us better understand how teacher education programmes could open up spaces for CLIL pedagogies.

## TOWARDS CONGRUENT TEACHER EDUCATION

Because there are concerns about developing effective and; I shall add, critical practices for a CLIL approach, especially now that school curricula in Argentina suggest CLIL as a teaching

approach for ELT (Banegas, 2011, pp. 45-46), teacher education programmes must be revisited. In my view, all teacher education programmes should be instances of congruent methodologies (Swennen, Lunenberg, & Korthagen, 2008). In Argentinean teacher education programmes, the content knowledge strand is usually comprised of modules such as History, Culture, Literature, or Geography among others (Banegas, 2011, pp. 38-40). These modules are the best examples of CLIL because the content is taught in English. It follows that the teacher educators in charge of those modules may need to revisit their practices and syllabi so as to ensure they are examples of good CLIL practices. In so doing, future teachers will personally experience CLIL rather than being lectured about it.

What a teacher educator may do is incorporate the creation of spaces for systematic reflection and evaluation so that trainees can evaluate and reflect about pedagogical implications, needs, challenges, and possibilities about the teaching of English through a curricular subject or *vice versa*. These explorations could then be taken by trainers in the pedagogical content knowledge strand of the programme so that bridges are built between theory and practice.

## CONCLUSION

Needless to say, CLIL models and pedagogies are initially based on the very same principles as are communicative language teaching and task-based learning. The difference is that contents/topics acquire a more prominent role, particularly in content-driven CLIL such as bilingual education. In this sense, teacher educators may opt for either developing a CLIL module or deepening the bridges between theory and practice through their own practices. The challenge the former poses is that in order to lead a CLIL module, teacher educators themselves need to be qualified to teach CLIL at higher education level.

Any innovation presents both benefits and challenges. What is important in implementing CLIL as an innovation is that it should be part of a negotiated enterprise amongst administrators, curriculum planners, and teachers—and it is this last group that will be responsible for the success of CLIL implementation. This may show that top-down decisions need to be carefully engineered so that changes and decision-making processes begin by addressing teacher development first rather than last in the educational system.

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