

INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CONTENT INTO THE CLASSROOM EFFECTIVELY

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Abstract. *In light of the importance being placed on internationalization by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), universities all over Europe have to find ways of introducing foreign language, particularly English, into their core curricular competences. Student mobility has become a central focus and universities are strongly encouraging students to study and work abroad in order to prepare them for the global world they will soon need to compete in. One of the methodologies currently in use for this is “Content and Language Integrated Learning” or CLIL. It is particularly successful in motivating students to want to learn English, as they are learning language through content they consider “more relevant” to their future. However, this methodology can easily fail, causing demotivation in teachers and students alike. This paper summarizes the CLIL experience at UEM (Universidad Europea de Madrid) from the time of its first implementation in 2005, to the present-day. It intends to give insight into how to integrate CLIL into the classroom effectively by studying activities used by professors, as well as feedback from both professors and students. Results will show that CLIL works when teachers have proper support and activities are engaging and compatible with student abilities.*

Key words: Internationalization, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), European Higher Education Area (EHEA), English, Language Learning, Universidad Europea de Madrid (UEM)

1. INTRODUCTION

Internationalization has become central in European higher education thanks to the EHEA, which considers student mobility paramount. The ability to communicate in a common language is a key factor. European universities are placing great importance on languages, particularly English. A methodology currently in wide use, “Content and Language Integrated Learning” (CLIL) has been successful in motivating students as they are learning language through content they consider “more relevant” to their future, whereas with General English, they commonly feel what they are learning is irrelevant and even useless (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Czdg8-6mJA>). Students today are

very pragmatic and graduate with a great deal of specialization. They are no longer engaged by traditional methods, and are more motivated when they perceive they are truly gaining valuable learning, and this is what CLIL offers. CLIL expert David Marsh, defines it as “...*situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content, and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language.*” (Marsh, D. 2002. Content and Language Integrated Learning: The European Dimension – Actions, Trends and Foresight Potential). However, although the student is easily attracted by the idea of CLIL, it is quite a challenge to make it work, especially for teachers. CLIL can easily fail, and when it does, it causes demotivation in both teachers and students.

2. OVERVIEW

2.1. Implementation

In 2005, Universidad Europea de Madrid set in motion a voluntary CLIL action with the intention of elevating awareness on the importance of English across the entire Villaviciosa de Odón Campus. The university offered professors from the five schools (the School of Business, Law and Economics; Health Sciences; Engineering; Sports Science; Communication and Humanities) the support of its Language Laboratory (UEM Lab) in preparing and teaching content-based classes in English. A team teaching model was adopted where a language expert, a UEM Lab English teacher, and a content expert, the professor of the class, came together to develop and teach a content-based activity in English. This was coordinated by a teacher at the UEM Lab, who organized the activities, documented them, and kept examples of them on file for possible future use. At this stage feedback was only collected by our language teachers.

2.2. Evolution

Over the years, the number of professors introducing CLIL activities into their classrooms increased. In 2009, the university made it mandatory policy, and all professors were required to teach a class in English in *every* course in *every* Bachelor's Degree. This changed the dynamics of how CLIL functioned at UEM, as the number of content classes being taught in English skyrocketed, making it necessary for UEM to hire on two people full-time dedicated exclusively to the now called “Activities in English” program. The two add-ons consisted of a Coordinator of Activities and an Activities Teacher. They were in charge of advising on what types of activities could be used, organizing them with professors, keeping track of all activities carried out on campus, documenting them, and ensuring that all professors carry through with their obligation of including an activity in English in each semester of their courses. Motivation played a key role, as professors were mostly Spanish speakers and in many cases had little or no prior experience introducing English language into their classrooms. In these cases, a team teaching model was used.

3. GOOD PRACTICES

Towards the end of the first year of the program, the data collected was used to draw up a good practices manual which included the purpose for introducing English activities into the classroom, the procedure to follow, examples of possible activities, and

feedback from the UEM Lab English teachers who had paired with content teachers in delivering the class. This manual was sent to the different schools as a guide for teachers who wanted to use CLIL in their classrooms. As the program grew, the good practices manual was broadened and made available to all teachers on an individual basis via the university's online learning platform, discussed further in section six of this paper. The updated manual (ANNEX 1) includes a description of activities that were successful, and those that were consistently not (i.e. the glossary, discussed in section 4.5).

4. ACTIVITIES

4.1. Types of activities

The activities proposed in the Good Practices Manual (in both its former and current version) include: 1.) Working on an article in class and working on technical vocabulary, comprehension, or discussion; 2.) A preparatory class to work on specific vocabulary prior to a conference to be delivered in English by a guest lecturer; 3.) In-class student presentations in English (reserved for students with a higher level of English); 4.) A glossary of technical terms; 5.) A class prepared by the UEM Lab Activities Teachers, with material provided by the Professor, and team taught.

4.2. Article in class

This activity was the most commonly chosen one during the initial years of the program, and in many cases it was quite problematic. The professor chose an article related to something the students were currently studying in that course, and worked on technical vocabulary, comprehension questions, or class discussion. In the majority of the cases, support from the UEM Lab was requested, and feedback showed that in many cases the activity was unsuccessful for two reasons: 1.) the students hadn't read the article prior to the class, so too much time was spent actually reading the article in class; 2.) the article was too long or too technical for the students to understand. We therefore limited the article length for these activities to 3 pages and requested that it not be excessively technical in nature.

4.3. Conference preparation class

This was usually a School-wide activity that was requested when a guest lecturer was invited to the university to give a conference in English. However, due to the fact that there are only a few such conferences per year, it was not very common. The objective was to pre-teach students some of the vocabulary and topics that would come up in the conference so they were better prepared to attend. Students were asked to turn in a follow-up activity in English (usually a set of comprehension questions a professor from the School had prepared) for credit. It was successful in helping students be more prepared. However, it was very difficult to assess the follow-up activities, due to the high number of students turning in work, and the difficulty in monitoring that it was original work.

4.4. Student presentations

Though this activity was the least commonly used, as the activity calls for a very limited number of students in class who have time to present, it was very successful. In these cases, the professor gave the topic to be presented, and a UEM Lab teacher was present during the presentation to evaluate and give feedback to the student regarding both their English skills, as well as presentation skills. Therefore it was imperative that a language expert be present.

4.5. The glossary

Of all the activities, this was by far the most widely used and problematic. Although in its foundation it is a valuable activity consisting in students receiving a list of technical terms they must translate, provide illustrative sentences for, and/or explain to the class. The reasons for the widespread failure of this activity are mainly attributed to its abuse and/or improper delivery. Many professors saw this activity as the most useful activity, and one with little preparation required. Unfortunately, this led to many professors within the same degree program choosing it as their activity in English. This resulted in students attending the same activity over and over again throughout their courses. In many cases, as the terms from different courses were all related to the same field of studies, students were working on the same terms in several activities. Can you imagine having to create 5 or 6 (or more) glossaries with overlapping terminology in the same semester? Another concern was that this activity was not being delivered in a communicative way, which we consider fundamental in all the activities carried out. We began to receive a great deal of negative feedback from the students regarding the glossary, and therefore decided to advise professors in a more proactive way on its proper use.

4.6. Team teaching with the UEM Lab

These types of activities form the true basis of CLIL, and not surprisingly so, both professors and students give positive feedback about their experience (ANNEX 2). This team teaching model inherently requires a lot of planning, as the content professor must meet with the language teacher to map out activities and how they will be jointly delivered in class. The symbiosis between the content expert and language expert at the start of planning activities results in a class that is targeted towards the students' true language abilities, as well as based on content they tend to find interesting and valuable.

5. MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

As the program evolved it was obvious that both professors and students had mixed feelings about introducing English into their core classes. An important discovery was that in many cases professors and/or students lacked the confidence necessary for the activity to be successful. This was an important turning point in our approach to CLIL at the UEM. We realized the importance of motivating professors and students properly in order to break confidence barriers that were impeding the activities from being productive. This brought us to change our focus towards training professors in the area of CLIL, mainly through summer intensive training courses as well as the university's ongoing lifelong training program. Some of the barriers covered in the training include: professors overcoming their fears regarding their English level, strategies for managing mixed level groups of students in class, giving extra support and resources to professors

teaching in English for the first time, and advising on productive or non-productive activities, such as the glossary.

6. TECHNOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

At the start of the program, our technological support consisted of an Excel database where activities and feedback were recorded. Information such as professor's name and e-mail, course title, date and time of the activity, room number, UEM Lab language teacher assigned (if any), and feedback comments were stored on file. This database was sufficient while the number of activities carried out yearly were relatively low (fifty – seventy activities on average per year until 2009).

Once it became obligatory, the number of activities soared to 512, as table 1 shows:

AÑO ACADÉMICO 2005-06	AÑO ACADÉMICO 2006-07	AÑO ACADÉMICO 2007-08
ACTIVIDADES EN INGLÉS	ACTIVIDADES EN INGLÉS	ACTIVIDADES EN INGLÉS
30	44	53
AÑO ACADÉMICO 2008-09	AÑO ACADÉMICO 2009-10	AÑO ACADÉMICO 2010-present
ACTIVIDADES EN INGLÉS	ACTIVIDADES EN INGLÉS	ACTIVIDADES EN INGLÉS
41	512	798 (so far)

Total activities carried out in English in all Schools.

Due to the sudden increase, further technological support was required. A database was created using a template available within Moodle (the university's online learning platform) where professors could "register" their activities and request support online themselves. The database was tailor made to include information such as teacher name, course name, semester, time and date, room number, as well as any documents that relate to the activity chosen. These registered activities could then be exported to an Excel and analyzed individually by degree program. This allowed for a more effective system of tracking and following up on each activity. Each of the current Schools (School of Health Sciences, Biomedical Sciences, Sports Science, Social Sciences, Arts and Communication, Architecture, and Engineering) has a space online devoted to English Activities where professors can access the database. In addition, we have provided the Good Practices Manual, a feedback questionnaire, and a Bibliography of resources. Student feedback is obtained by e-mail request.

We are currently in the process of developing, along with the university's technological support team (NET UEM), our own webpage, accessible via the online learning platform. This will combine everything into one space, making it more easily visible to professors and reducing the administrative workload even further.

7. CURRENT PHASE OF THE PROGRAM

At the moment, we are currently entering the seventh year of the program, and our objective has shifted slightly towards empowering professors to carry out activities on

their own. This can be done thanks to the university's policy of hiring professors with a high level of English, and encouraging those who don't to undergo continuous English training as part of their yearly objectives. This has meant that professors with a low level of English at the start of this initiative, in 2005, are now much higher in level, in many cases.

The new aim of the program implies that professors be more responsible for the activities carried out in English in their own courses. Therefore, the UEM Lab's responsibilities in the program have become more heavily based on advising about activities that work better or worse (especially with new professors), providing professors with resources (online) and training (through the university's lifelong training program), and a great deal of administrative work regarding the recording and follow-up of activities.

8. RESULTS

Results from feedback collected from professors and students shows that they were both particularly happy when UEM Lab teachers were present in the classroom.

Eighteen students specifically stated in the comments section that they were happy with the UEM Lab's presence, which is quite significant considering this question was not posed to them in the questionnaire. Thirty students claimed their conversation skills improved, thirty-one made reference to being satisfied with the specific vocabulary they had acquired, eleven students said they enjoyed the article activity, and six students stated that they had learned to give presentations in English better.

Professors responded that they were highly satisfied with team teaching, that it was useful to their students, and that their students were engaged and interested in the activities done in English in their classrooms.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The CLIL experience at UEM has been successful in motivating students to want to learn English as well as giving professors greater confidence in integrating CLIL into their classrooms. Of all the activities presented in this paper, the one which received the most positive feedback was the team teaching model. Another activity that proved successful with proper planning was the article in class. Feedback submitted proved that students enjoyed and were engaged in article based activities, as they felt they improved their specific vocabulary. As far as presentations are concerned, students saw great value in them although they take up a great many resources for a small group of students. Concerning the presentation prep classes and the glossary activities, we would advise against them unless they can be made communicative and adequate follow-up can be employed. In any case, from our experience at UEM, we may conclude that CLIL is a valuable methodology to use when resources allow for proper planning, organization, and language support.

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY/WORKS CITED

Marsh, D. (2002). Content and Language Integrated Learning: The European Dimension—Actions, Trends and Foresight Potential. Bruxelles: The European Union.

ANNEX 1.

UEM LAB--Internacionalizando las aulas

PORQUÉ REALIZAMOS ACTIVIDADES EN INGLÉS

El Proceso de Bolonia destaca que la educación Europea debe ser “Internacional” y los estudiantes deben ser “Móviles”. Especialmente en España, debemos impulsar a los alumnos para que no estén en desventaja en comparación con otros países de la UE, principalmente en el área de conocimientos de lenguas extranjeras. Es importante que motivemos a nuestros alumnos para que el camino de aprender el inglés sea más ameno y más fácil. Si logramos juntos motivar a los alumnos, estarán más preparados para competir en el mundo laboral actual. La UEM está apostando fuerte por la “Internacionalidad” y la “Movilidad” de nuestros alumnos. En este aspecto, creemos que entre nosotros, (profesores de lengua) y vosotros (profesores de contenidos) podemos ayudar a los estudiantes a no temer el inglés, sino a verlo como parte natural de sus estudios profesionales. Se incorporará una actividad en inglés en cada asignatura de las carreras de Grado Simple en cada semestre.

PROCEDIMIENTO

Incorporar una actividad en inglés en el aula requiere cierta planificación, tanto por parte del profesor de la asignatura, como por parte del UEM Lab.

- Se necesitan dos semanas para programar a un profesor del UEM Lab si el profesor de la asignatura solicita apoyo lingüístico. En ese tiempo, el profesor de la asignatura puede buscar una actividad adecuada*.

*¿Qué es una actividad adecuada? Una actividad adecuada es una que sea relevante al contenido que están estudiando los alumnos en la asignatura, y en el caso de un artículo, uno que no sea ni demasiado largo (2-3 páginas) ni demasiado técnico. Se trata de que los alumnos tengan contacto con el inglés en sus áreas de estudio, pero si no es asequible, los alumnos solo se frustrarán.

- Las actividades tendrán una duración de una hora.
- La actividad no contará como una CLASE COMPLEMENTARIA, ya que es un requisito que la universidad ha implantado en todas las asignaturas de Grado Simple.

*Las CONFERENCIAS ofrecidas por la facultad a cualquier alumno del mismo, si se podrán convalidar como Clase Complementaria.

- El profesor de la asignatura debe hacerse cargo de escoger una actividad y de informar a los alumnos (con tiempo) de lo que deben hacer para llevar a cabo la actividad. Los alumnos deben ser avisados y estar preparados para la actividad (lectura, vocabulario, presentaciones, glosarios, debates, etc....)

- El día de la actividad, el profesor de inglés acudirá a la clase. Durante la actividad es imperativo que ambos estén presentes. El trabajo del profesor de inglés es

trabajar cuestiones de lengua y el del profesor de contenido explicar cuestiones relevantes al contenido (lo cual puede hacerse en español).

Sí hay alguna duda o se precisa de ayuda para buscar una actividad adecuada, por favor contacta a: crisrina.bamond@uem.es

ANNEX 2.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF STUDENT FEEDBACK

****Original feedback document can be provided upon request.***

1. 18 students left a positive comment about their CLIL experience when team taught, both with their class professor and an English language teacher from the UEM Lab.
2. 30 students submitted positive comments about how their conversation in English had improved due to activities in English.
3. 31 students submitted positive comments explaining their improvement of specific vocabulary related to their fields of study.
4. 11 students submitted positive comments about their work with articles as an English activity in their course.
5. 6 students submitted positive comments explaining how delivering presentations in English has helped them.

BREIF SUMMARY OF PROFESSOR FEEDBACK

****Original feedback document can be provided upon request.***

1. A very high level of professor satisfaction has been recorded for team teaching activities (CLIL).
2. A high level of professor satisfaction has been recorded when asked if they thought the activity was useful for their classes.
3. Professors responded positively when asked if they thought the students were interested in the activity in English.