

Post-graduate Training in the Competence Development of CLIL Teachers

Oksana Polyakova¹, Shona O'Callaghan²

¹ *Universitat Politècnica de València – Technical University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain*

E-mail: okpolnes@upv.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0575-2386>

² *Catholic University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain*

E-mail: shona.ocallaghan@ucv.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7831-0182>

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Abstract

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach has become one of the bilingual education pillars worldwide. Its application often relies on quality instruction; therefore, careful preparation of future CLIL educators will guarantee adequate CLIL implementation.

Despite the extensive research on the method used since the 1990s, little is known about the competence-based training process of content and language teachers. Through a multi-dimensional perspective of the current research, including qualitative and quantitative methods, the study authors attempt to demonstrate that CLIL competences can be adequately developed. In our project, we taught a postgraduate course on Delivering the curriculum through English to 26 educators and analysed the development of their professional skills. Pilot study results show that competence development is highly correlated with linguistic awareness, in-depth theoretical and applied knowledge of the CLIL approach and mutual support within teaching community.

Regardless of the fundamental idea of formative exploration, our study presents some findings deserving of thought by teacher trainers and policymakers currently applying CLIL methodology.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), CLIL teachers, post-graduate CLIL teacher training, CLIL teacher competences.

Последипломное развитие компетенций преподавателей CLIL

Оксана Полякова¹, Шона О'Каллаган²

¹ Политехнический университет Валенсии, Валенсия, Испания

E-mail: okpolnes@upv.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0575-2386>

² Католический университет Валенсии, Валенсия, Испания

E-mail: shona.ocallaghan@ucv.es

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Аннотация

Интегрированное обучение предметному содержанию и языку (CLIL) стало одним из столпов двуязычного образования во всем мире. Его применение часто зависит от качества преподавания, а тщательная подготовка будущих CLIL-педагогов гарантирует адекватное внедрение CLIL. Несмотря на обширные исследования этого метода, используемого с 1990-х годов, мало что известно о процессе компетентностной подготовки учителей CLIL. С помощью разностороннего подхода, включающего качественные и количественные методы исследования, авторы демонстрируют, что компетенции CLIL могут быть хорошо развиты. С этой целью был проведён последипломный курс «Преподавание учебной программы с помощью английского языка» для 26 педагогов, а затем проанализировано развитие их профессиональных навыков. Результаты пилотного исследования показали, что развитие компетенций высоко коррелирует с лингвистической подготовкой, теоретическими и прикладными знаниями о подходе CLIL и взаимной поддержкой в педагогическом сообществе. Независимо от основной идеи пилотного проекта, исследование представляет некоторые выводы, заслуживающие осмысления со стороны преподавателей и руководителей, применяющих CLIL.

Ключевые слова: интегрированное обучение содержанию и языку (CLIL), учителя CLIL, последипломная подготовка учителей CLIL, компетенции учителей CLIL.

Introduction

In our globalised world, solid linguistic competence and knowledge of several languages are increasingly meaningful in relation to international and EU cooperation programmes or job opportunities, programmes of international and EU cooperation or social interactions inside and beyond schools. Two major organisations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe, started a procedure of internationalisation and the dynamic advance of language improvement worldwide.

Moreover, Resolution 30 C/Res. 31, the UNESCO General Conference in 1999, embraced and propelled the idea of multilingual training or “linguistic pluralism” by alluding to the utilisation of at least three languages in education: the mother tongue, a second language and a modern international language (UNESCO, 1999, p. 35-36).

Two years later, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) focused on linguistic improvement on the social scale resulting in necessary help and appraisal of language skills. The CEFR framework has become a general reference for educational plans, teaching and learning methods (Council of Europe, 2001). It has also impacted the implementation of pluricultural and plurilingual values in European and non-European countries.

The CEFR, first published in 2001 and revised in 2018 (Council of Europe, 2018), was updated in 2020 (Council of Europe, 2020). The new features worth mentioning are mediation, online interaction added to the illustrated scales and a more extensive explanation of A1 and C levels descriptors, deconstruction of the native speaker ideal model and support of the “plurilingual repertoire” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 162), among others.

The use of plurilingualism will carry another social foundation wherein European citizens should grow new aptitudes and achieve additional language knowledge. To accomplish these objectives, European schools should impart pluricultural values and mediation to all nations and societies. Globalisation turns out to be, in this way, a pivotal component in spreading social and cultural qualities which can support and increase the value of teaching results.

In line with this, the idea of employing a specific methodology for subject teaching in an additional language is moderately new. It has been applied to some new types of training, for example, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This approach's motivation is to address circumstances where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through an L2 (second language) with a double-focused perspective: studying content and the concurrent learning of an additional or foreign language (Marsh, 1994).

CLIL in Spain and Valencia

Far-reaching instructive projects upheld content plus L2 in Spain are plurilingual and bilingual networks or separate schemes mainly supported by regional education authorities. This administrative support is the crucial feature of the Spanish CLIL scenario applied to state-run schools (Ruiz de Zarobe & Lasagabaster, 2010). Moreover, practical method execution and specific courses for content and foreign language teachers are provided by policymakers, CLIL experts, education departments and universities. Furthermore, while CLIL in Spain has received much attention from researchers, it still needs to be studied in other countries (Graham et al., 2018).

The essential point of advancing and actualising L2 guidance at the tertiary level leads to educators' academic and expert improvement. Applying this data to the CLIL instructor preparation, we expect practical results for subject teachers' language capability. Additionally, the research of Pérez-Cañado (2018) gave seven significant competences of subject instructors and underscored the importance of a solid linguistic foundation vital for future CLIL mentors.

Subject and language technique in the Valencian Community (Spain) speaks to an essential context for this research study. The domain joins the requirement for plurilingual instruction in Spanish, Valencian and English languages with the stable institutional advancement of plurilingual arrangements. Concerning CLIL educator training, the first courses for government employee instructors were executed in 2012 and continue working. Likewise, postgraduate “Delivering the curriculum through English” courses (24 ECTS) offered plurilingual preparation in tertiary teaching from 2013 to 2020.

The current study addresses future content and L2 educators' competence development. Embedded in a postgraduate training programme, the researchers address several preparation and implementation aspects of the CLIL approach formulated in the following research questions:

RQ1: What level of linguistic confidence should teachers possess to deliver CLIL?

RQ2: What is the optimum competence standard for teaching with this new methodology?

RQ3: How effectively can colleagues support one another for sharing best practices?

Literature review

Plurilingualism

Implementing Content and Language Integrated Learning throughout education institutions across Europe (and internationally) has enabled pupils from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds access to language learning. With plurilingualism and pluricultural competences as a recognised aim of the European Council, CLIL provides the opportunity for all Europeans to flourish linguistically and culturally through exposure of different languages throughout their educational career (Coste et al., 2009; San Isidro, 2018).

While commonly taught through English, CLIL can also be found in German, Italian, French and Spanish throughout the UK (Coyle et al., 2010; Marsh, 2002; OFSTED, 2012) and in projects such as “Languages Other than English (LOTE)” (Coyle et al., 2010) and “Enseignement d'une Matière Intégrée à une Langue Etrangère (EMILE)” (Marsh, 2002). Therefore, CLIL is uniquely positioned within the plurilingual education agenda to reframe its potential as a pedagogic rather than a linguistic phenomenon, as Coyle observes (2018).

The success of CLIL as a “change agent” (Wolff, 2012, p. 105) for language education may depend on governmental development of educational policy, CLIL teacher training and linguistic abilities in the target language and “content-and language-learning outcomes realised in classrooms” (Coyle et al., 2010, p. 1). Therefore, it is imperative that “the heightened importance of CLIL as the answer to Europe’s need for plurilingualism” (Pérez-Cañado, 2018, p. 213) be recognised by teacher training institutions as an integral part of teacher education in modern-day Europe. It is believed that teacher training and education have a significant role in the continuation of CLIL systems (Coyle, 2011).

Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Learning bases itself on the 4Cs pillars of Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture (Coyle et al., 2010) intrinsically interlinked through Context. According to Coyle et al. (2010, p. 1), CLIL is a “dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for learning both content and language”. CLIL stems from the socio-constructivist Vygotskian style of teaching. It is a learner-centred approach where pupils acquire knowledge through interactive tasks with integrated, scaffolded strategies to promote curiosity, investigation and learner autonomy (Benson, 2012).

By centring on the action, interaction and application, an authentic experience is created where literacy becomes meaningful and comprehensible when placed in context (Moll, 1992). The use of authentic teaching materials is strongly advocated for the successful CLIL classroom (Mehisto, 2012). Both Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956) and the later revised version (Anderson et al., 2001) play a fundamental role in CLIL, where teachers act as the facilitators and actively support and guide learners through varying stages of progression in “Cummins Quadrants” (Cummins, 2000, p. 68) to access higher cognitive thinking skills and The Knowledge Dimension. The “Language Triptych” (Coyle et al., 2010, pp. 36-37) plays an ever-important role in focusing on the differing language elements which inevitably emerge and need to be planned and staged for successful acquisition.

Due to the permanent update of CLIL pedagogies, we can now mention the updated 5 Cs framework based on Content, Communication, Cognition, Community and Competences (Attard Montalto et al., 2016) and pluriliteracies. A pluriliteracies approach to teaching for learning puts subject literacy development in more than one language at the centre of education (Coyle & Meyer, 2022; Meyer et al., 2015). This method focuses

on assisting students in becoming literate in content subjects or themes and empowering them to effectively and respectfully express their knowledge across cultures and languages.

CLIL teacher competences

Over the past decade, most research in Content and Language Integrated Learning teachers' competences has emphasised the importance of combining different capacities within the CLIL instructor's profile.

In this study set out to determine the initial joint overview "The CLIL Teacher's Competences Grid", Bertaux et al. (2010, pp. 2-3) stipulated the express need for all CLIL teachers to be competent in "BICS [Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills], CALP [Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency], the language of classroom discourse, the language of teaching and the languages of activities". The grid provided an extensive and detailed range of competencies essential to CLIL teachers.

According to Wolff (2012), all teachers should be educated as CLIL teachers to facilitate the appropriate support for classroom discourse. He expresses the fundamental need for teachers, CLIL or not, to be equipped with skills to help guide classroom discourse for every learner who is essentially dealing with "an additional language" (ibid, 2012, p. 108) every day in the form of formal academic register and subject specific jargon.

Furthermore, Coyle et al. (2010) mentioned that CLIL teachers need to have confidence in their linguistic and practical ability to deliver quality lessons and share best practices throughout their schools. This confidence can only stem from high-quality teacher training for new and established teachers (Di Martino & Di Sabato, 2012).

The recent analysis by Pérez-Cañado (2018) has recognised the value of teacher training for the success of CLIL, highlighting seven key areas which stand out from all considerations for CLIL teacher competences, namely, "linguistic competence; methodology; scientific knowledge; organizational, interpersonal, and collaborative competence; and ongoing professional development" (ibid, 2018, p. 212). What becomes evident is the emphasis the author puts on language competence. Nor should we become complacent with regard to how *key* linguistic competence is represented, at any school level, for the success not only of CLIL but, more importantly, the education of our children.

While communicative competence proves to be one of the most important elements of CLIL teacher training, so too is the effective implementation of the methodology. The emphasis moves from teacher-led passive learning to student-led active and interactive learning. Collaborative group work occurs with teachers guiding the learning through thematic cross-curricular projects (where possible) and the use of information and communication technology (Madrid-Fernández et al., 2019).

Overall, these studies outline the critical role of the dual nature of CLIL teacher training: the knowledge of content-delivery methodology and L2 communicative competence. It must be noted here that, according to Pérez-Cañado (2020), rather than expecting the instructor to be a native speaker of the target language, it is more important his/her degree of linguistic and intercultural competence alongside their teaching ability. What is clear is the high standards that are demanded, and rightly so, from teachers who are preparing to and currently delivering content and language integrated lessons.

Methods and procedures

Motivated by the need to ensure a high level of professional development, we have designed a procedure to address CLIL teachers' competences. We hypothesise that the revision of actions, reactions and interactions during a professional development course might answer the monitoring and refinement of participants' CLIL capacities.

For this purpose, an experimental study was carried out during a training course “Delivering the curriculum through English” offered by the Catholic University of Valencia in the academic year 2019-2020 to 26 students. This pilot study is a new experience for the scholars, lecturers and participants because it is the first time we have implemented the hands-on action research approach.

Delivering the curriculum through English course

Postgraduate teacher training is given a special place in the professional development area. It requires specific methods, competences and preparation to be shared with in-service and pre-service educators. A better understanding of the system of content and language approaches, its adequate and timely application, teaching programme adaptation and learning materials design are the pillars on which effective schooling in L2 is based.

Delivering the curriculum through English course offered at the Catholic University of Valencia (Spain) is a postgraduate course of 24 ECTS credits to provide a core aptitude for teaching in a foreign language. It leads to a considerable improvement of the proper skills needed to teach any subject in English aligned with the linguistic requirements of the B2 level of English, as per the CEFR. This course is designed for an audience of education professionals, in-service and pre-service teachers or plurilingual project coordinators and participants.

Accordingly, the course contains three modules mixing theory and practice to create inspiration for cooperatively learning alongside the expert community. The following is a more detailed explanation of these modules, highlighting the importance of valuable experience:

(a) Module 1. Methodology for plurilingual education and foreign languages acquisition (6 ECTS). The module offers instruction on the CLIL method and the official teaching framework in the Valencian Community; active use of English as an open communication vehicle inside the school linguistic undertaking is usually at the forefront of this innovation.

(b) Module 2. Assessment and continuous professional development course (6 ECTS). This module teaches how to design viable assessment and evaluation cycles to check students’ initial preparation, learning progress and results achieved at the end of the training.

(c) Module 3. Materials and resources in plurilingual education (12 ECTS). This module supports the choice and production of instructional materials and assets in a CLIL learning and educating setting. While introducing course participants in a new perspective on teaching materials, it encourages teachers to adopt a more open-minded and inclusive outlook to complement future CLIL application with active methodological tools and methods.

The structure of every module is separated into four specific parts:

– Instructor-led classroom lectures combine theoretical background, presentations, group discussions and interactions.

– On-campus practical sessions offer collaboration and team workspace additionally called upon various joint projects with interdisciplinary information and open turn of interaction.

– Individual student work done at home is directly related to classroom advances on different projects, templates, worksheets, essays, papers, reports, among others; these tasks should be presented in on-campus practical sessions or submitted to the virtual platform.

– Assessment planning deals with progressive diagnostic, formative and summative assessment design applied to an individual didactic unit organisation.

Since the postgraduate course included various aspects of content-language instruction methodology, self-reflective professional growth might take more work to promote. Therefore, we have chosen to combine course materials with thought-provoking questionnaires to reshape the mental background and stimulate CLIL methodology acceptance within real-life scenarios.

Study procedure

As a first step towards reaching our research goals, we designed a pre-test questionnaire to detect consolidated abilities and potential areas of improvement. Further, the training process was based on three pre-designed modules (spanning across 20 weeks). Although the primary attention is focused on the content in L2 methodology, the course lecturer can still personalise it and add specific activities targeting students' needs. Next, we examined achievements by receiving feedback from both learners and the lecturer.

Providing a heuristic focus for the qualitative study design, we consider the following methodological procedures (see Figure 1):

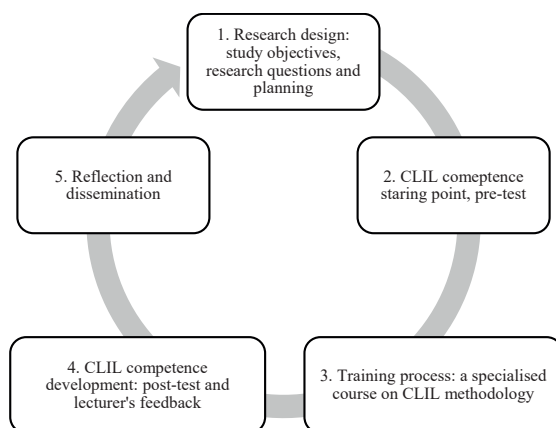


Figure 1. *Five stages of the study*

Figure 1 illustrates five steps or stages embedded within a specific set of actions planned:

1. Defining research questions, structure and participants.
2. Tackling students' CLIL method understanding, linguistic confidence and active dissemination of this approach among educators.
3. Teaching a consolidated CLIL training course split into three modules.
4. Measuring the effects of the training process by conducting the second questionnaire and checking the feedback offered by the course lecturer.
5. Centring on the study results and consequences for future content tutors' professional expertise and proposed course activities. Apart from the preceding, the dissemination options will be analysed (recommendations, best practices or publications).

Given the importance of quality research design, both questionnaires used in stages 2 and 4 were validated by two experienced teacher-trainers and two scholars, all belonging to the research group "PLUS" (*Plurilingüismo Socioeducativo*) of the Catholic University of Valencia.

Results

Training and follow-up are necessary to ensure the complete and adequate acquisition of CLIL methodology in English. For achieving these purposes, we conducted two surveys throughout stages 2 & 4, tackled the initial preparation and understanding

Referring to pre-test question 1, almost 60% of course participants had no CLIL background, even though approximately 40% of them listed a variety of CLIL-related Erasmus training options, specific university and formal training courses taken in Spain and abroad. Many respondents highlighted the importance of previous CLIL instruction for their professional development and a new perspective on applied teaching methods. Additionally, we verified the most frequently used words in the respondents' comments and detected that such concepts as "course", "experience", "learning" and "teaching" orbit around the CLIL idea.

In the upcoming question 2 pre-test part, a common understanding of the CLIL methodology before the training process is suggested:

Table 1. Pre-test and post-test results: underpinning CLIL

Question 2. How far do you feel you understand the components underpinning CLIL?	Pre-test		Post-test	
	respondents	%	respondents	%
a. Adopting an approach to CLIL				
<i>Excellent</i>	4	15.4	10	38.5
<i>Very good</i>	10	38.5	12	46.2
<i>Satisfactory</i>	12	46.2	4	15.4
<i>Fair</i>	0	-	0	-
<i>Poor</i>	0	-	0	-
b. Integrating CLIL into the curriculum				
<i>Excellent</i>	4	15.4	8	30.8
<i>Very good</i>	13	50.0	12	46.2
<i>Satisfactory</i>	9	34.6	6	23.1
<i>Fair</i>	0	-	0	-
<i>Poor</i>	0	-	0	-
c. Target language competences for teaching CLIL				
<i>Excellent</i>	4	15.4	7	26.9
<i>Very good</i>	11	42.3	15	57.7
<i>Satisfactory</i>	11	42.3	4	15.4
<i>Fair</i>	0	-	0	-
<i>Poor</i>	0	-	0	-
d. Designing a CLIL course				
<i>Excellent</i>	4	15.4	8	30.8
<i>Very good</i>	9	34.6	13	50.0
<i>Satisfactory</i>	13	50.0	4	15.4
<i>Fair</i>	0	-	1	3.8
<i>Poor</i>	0	-	0	-
e. Partnerships in supporting student learning				
<i>Excellent</i>	5	19.2	9	34.6
<i>Very good</i>	4	15.4	15	57.7
<i>Satisfactory</i>	17	65.4	2	7.7
<i>Fair</i>	0	-	0	-
<i>Poor</i>	0	-	0	-

While analysing responses to the question above (How far do you feel you understand the components underpinning CLIL?), one might perceive the general satisfaction level. The survey participants described different levels of method components' understanding for launching a content-language teaching initiative. By mainly increasing "very good" and "excellent" intensities of agreement, course trainees decreased "satisfactory" judgement. Specifically, the highest positive post-test values correspond to the following categories:

(a) adopting an approach to CLIL is viewed as a process that mainly occurs in a very good (46.2%) and excellent (38.5%) manner at the end of the training process.

(b) integrating CLIL into the curriculum process is seen as very good (46.2%) and excellent (30.8%) in the post-test results.

(c) target language competences for teaching CLIL are reported to be higher by as very good (57.7%) and excellent (26.9%) scores rise.

(d) designing a CLIL course capacity is also valued as very good (50.0%) and excellent (30.8%).

(e) partnerships in supporting student learning increased in terms of very good (57.7%) and excellent (34.6%).

Next, the researchers decided to look in depth at the CLIL competence the trainees initially had and the ways it was affected by the course. The question 3 comparison reveals the competence advancement in connection with teaching practicalities:

Table 2. Pre-test and post-test results: setting CLIL in motion

Question 3. How confident do you feel 'setting CLIL in motion'?	Pre-test		Post-test	
	answers	%	answers	%
a. Integration				
Very confident	4	15.4	9	34.6
Quite confident	9	34.6	17	65.4
Fairly confident	13	50.0	0	-
A little	0	-	0	-
Not at all	0	-	0	-
b. Implementation				
Very confident	3	11.5	4	15.4
Quite confident	9	34.6	20	76.9
Fairly confident	12	46.2	2	7.7
A little	2	7.7	0	-
Not at all	0	-	0	-
c. Second (additional) language acquisition				
Very confident	4	15.4	10	38.5
Quite confident	12	46.2	12	46.2
Fairly confident	6	23.1	4	15.4
A little	4	15.4	0	-
Not at all	0	-	0	-
d. Interculturality				
Very confident	4	15.4	13	50.0
Quite confident	10	38.5	11	42.3
Fairly confident	9	34.6	2	7.7
A little	3	11.5	0	-
Not at all	0	-	0	-

e. Learning environment management				
<i>Very confident</i>	4	15.4	9	34.6
<i>Quite confident</i>	13	50.0	16	61.5
<i>Fairly confident</i>	9	34.6	1	3.8
<i>A little</i>	0	-	0	-
<i>Not at all</i>	0	-	0	-
f. Learning skills focus in CLIL				
<i>Very confident</i>	6	23.1	14	53.8
<i>Quite confident</i>	14	53.8	10	38.5
<i>Fairly confident</i>	6	23.1	2	7.7
<i>A little</i>	0	-	0	-
<i>Not at all</i>	0	-	0	-
g. Learning assessment and evaluation in CLIL				
<i>Very confident</i>	2	7.7	9	34.6
<i>Quite confident</i>	10	38.5	13	50.0
<i>Fairly confident</i>	10	38.5	4	15.4
<i>A little</i>	4	15.4	0	-
<i>Not at all</i>	0	-	0	-
h. Lifelong learning				
<i>Very confident</i>	2	7.7	10	38.5
<i>Quite confident</i>	8	30.8	13	50.0
<i>Fairly confident</i>	14	53.8	3	11.5
<i>A little</i>	2	7.7	0	-
<i>Not at all</i>	0	-	0	-

Therefore, based on the outcomes presented above, the course participants enhanced their level of confidence regarding the process of setting CLIL in motion and the responses beneath reveal the generally higher end-process values:

- (a) integration: very confident (34.6%) and quite confident (65.4%).
- (b) implementation: very confident (15.4%) and quite confident (76.9%).
- (c) second (additional) language acquisition: very confident (38.5%) and quite confident (46.2%-no change).
- (d) interculturality: very confident (50.0%) and quite confident (42.3%).
- (e) learning environment management: very confident (34.6%) and quite confident (61.5%).
- (f) learning skills focus in CLIL: very confident (53.8%) and quite confident (38.5%-lower).
- (g) learning assessment and evaluation in CLIL: very confident (34.6%) and quite confident (50.0%).
- (h) lifelong learning: very confident (38.5%) and quite confident (50.0%).

The information collected was truly insightful as it helped the lecturer understand the learners' progress. It also showed the utter need for CLIL educators' professional development.

Assessing training quality

Finally, by getting back to the course structure, the research team also monitored perceptions of the training received, and the need for improving the efficiency of existing training course materials. In the post-test questionnaire, we also encouraged our learners

to evaluate the overall quality and usefulness of instruction. The results, as shown in Table 3, indicate quite high satisfaction levels:

Table 3. Quality training rating

Question 4 (post-test). How useful would you rate the training you received on the course on a scale of 1(the lowest) to 10 (the highest)?	Answers, quantity		%
	“1”	0	
“2”	0	-	
“3”	0	-	
“4”	1	3.8%	
“5”	0	-	
“6”	1	3.8%	
“7”	1	3.8%	
“8”	6	23.1%	
“9”	10	38.5%	
“10”	7	26.9%	

The following course assessment tasks also served as markers of otherwise less visible educational transition and progressive learning on the five-point Likert scale:

- Module 1 [question 5, post-test]: mindmap design and group presentation (57.7% agree and 38.5% strongly agree) as well as didactic unit draft and individual presentation (38.5% agree and 57.7% strongly agree) ranked first and second among four main activities.
- Module 2 [question 6, post-test]: seven more tasks were included in this content section and the choice of course participants proved the vital necessity of cooperative and CLIL-oriented activities such as: worksheet design (38.7% agree and 46.2% strongly agree), 4D rubric design (23.1% agree and 73.1% strongly agree), didactic unit assessment plan (19.2% agree and 76.9% strongly agree).
- Module 3 [question 7, post-test]: here, the group teaching simulation assignment (19.2% agree and 80.1% strongly agree) and final didactic unit materials presentation (19.2% agree and 80.1% strongly agree) occupy the leadership positions.

Finally, [question 8, post-test], while asked about new professional opportunities that emerged through the course, many respondents highlighted the importance of the course for their “daily lessons at school”. Besides, many positive comments underscoring the value of CLIL methodology are given below:

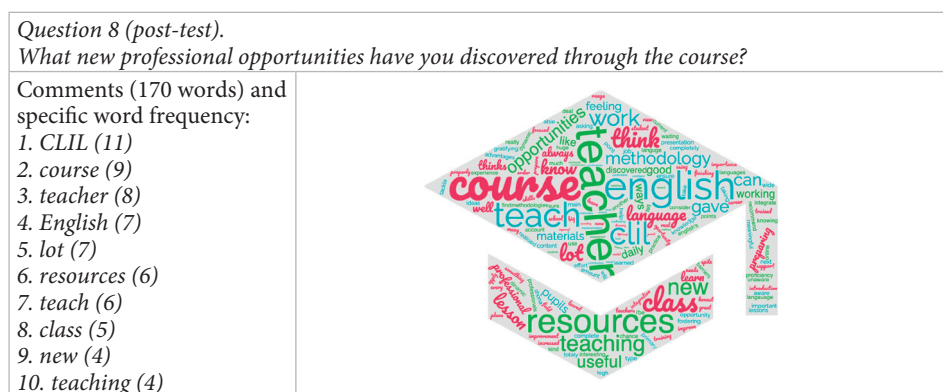


Figure 3. CLIL methodology and new professional opportunities.
Source: designed by authors using wordcloud.com tool

Lecturer's field notes

Once the course was over, we also asked for the course lecturer's opinion to judge the knowledge of the approach studied and CLIL competences achieved by the group. In this respect, the upcoming part is genuinely revealing, as it offers a space for the instructor's analysis and reflection on the training finished.

Over time, the lecturer's reflections fell into two main categories for improvement: methodology, technology and linguistic ability.

Methodology

Regarding methodology, it was found that students needed help comprehending Assessment for Learning and implementing it well. Differentiation and scaffolding learning began as alien concepts and had to be reviewed and demonstrated several times. This linked to the struggle to adapt lesson objectives from the main formal curriculum to broken down, progressive, pupil-friendly objectives. Students tended to list many objectives directly from the overall curriculum and some found it difficult to break away from this to a more socio-constructivist, step-by-step approach.

An additional challenge that remained present throughout was the ability to include dual-focused objectives which were more than just vocabulary related. Over time this improved but a clear split in the group became evident as students who were stronger linguistically, in English, were able to give a clearer progressive syntactical focus. In contrast, others remained in the more familiar area of essential vocabulary for the topic being delivered.

Technology

Besides, it is worth drawing particular attention to the enhanced aspects of technology-based preparation. Students were particularly apt at applying effective and successful use of IT in the classroom. Lessons became creative and innovative for many students by the end of the course. They were able to produce exciting and creative videos, presentations and kinaesthetic games to keep pupils engaged and learning. Many successfully incorporated cross-curricular links throughout their didactic units in a creative and interesting way. Establishing consistent support for Special Education Needs (SEN) pupils became a strong point for most students as they became more familiar with the concept of socio-constructivist methodology.

Language awareness

An additional area for improvement, which became glaringly apparent, was the need for students to improve their linguistic abilities in English. The focus for many students remained on topic-specific vocabulary and even phrases for successful delivery. However, it was noted by the lecturer that all students needed to work on not only their CALP but also and maybe more so, their BICS skills. Students needed to have the correct syntax for many basic classroom instructions and were sometimes reliant on direct translation. For example, in one practical lesson, the instruction was given to "paint in books" when the meaning was "to colour in", another "everyone up and over to there" when the clear instruction would have been "please get up and line up over there". Instructions tended to be context reliant rather than clear through syntactic accuracy.

The lecturer reflected that if teachers were to deliver lessons to children and teenagers alike, their level of English would have to be a constant focus for improvement. Passing the B2 or C1 exams is not enough. When teaching children, they will have to have accurate English, or the result will simply be the passing on of ingrained errors over time.

Discussion

Three basic questions were posed as the aim of this research. We will address and discuss findings for each question separately to ensure transparency and accuracy.

When addressing part of underpinning CLIL, students reported that target language competences for teaching CLIL were equally satisfactory and very good (same 42,3%) and excellent (15,4%) before the training. This same question posed again at the end of the course in revealed an improvement in target language competences for teaching CLIL (15,4% satisfactory, 57,7%, very good and 26,9% excellent). Students felt that by attending and participating fully in the course with English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), they had become more confident in their ability to deliver CLIL lessons through English. It would be logical that through exposure to the target language with a focus on English for the classroom for a sustained period of six months, students' English competence had improved and therein their linguistic confidence. This shows that continued professional development (CPD) courses taught through English can be linguistically beneficial for pre-and in-service CLIL teachers. With the aim of developing language and teaching skills and moving towards 'deeper learning' (Coyle & Meyer, 2022, p. 157) for both teachers and learners' long-term benefits.

The lectures' notes concur that more exposure to English and language support is needed for CLIL teachers. Without the societal support of English teachers, they may never advance in their language learning. Classroom discourse has been highlighted as needing improvement, specifically in the area of BICS, where a higher level of fluency is required in order to accurately deliver instructions. The lecturer comments that without continued language learning and progression for CLIL teachers is essential otherwise, language errors and direct translations may become ingrained in pupils' everyday language producing an incomprehensible English output.

While we know that Non-Native Speaking Teachers (NNST), once qualified are perfectly capable of teaching through their L2/3 and that World Englishes, is a growing acceptable approach to English, as according to Canagarajah (2013, p. 6), "To be really proficient in English today, one has to be multidialectal". However, incomprehensible English is not acceptable. Teachers are asked to achieve the B2/C1 CEFR levels to qualify linguistically to teach CLIL. Conversely, no maintenance courses are required. Could this then call into question the validity of the B2/C1 qualification after a specified period? Would teachers and, therefore, pupils not benefit from language maintenance and progression courses for CLIL teachers?

When asked to describe their CLIL learning or previous experience, students replied that 58% had no prior CLIL knowledge and 42% had some/little CLIL knowledge. Additionally, setting CLIL in motion issue (Table 2, pre- and post-test comparison) was targeted by Question 3 "How confident do you feel setting CLIL in motion?" The answers given demonstrated improved confidence in all areas from integration (65,4%, quite confident), implementation (76,9%, quite confident), learning assessment and evaluation in CLIL (50%, quite confident), to learning skills focus in CLIL (53,8%, very confident). The lecturer's notes remarked on improvement by many students to deliver dual-focused, kinaesthetic child-centred and interactive lessons.

Some remained challenged with the concept of active learning for the secondary classroom, but this was the minority and was noted as a "shift in methodology from memorisation to application of knowledge for understanding". Furthermore, the dual focus remained an obstacle for some with weaker linguistic skills and therefore relied more on key vocabulary rather than syntactic development for pupil progression. The risk of staying in your "comfort zone" may be an area for further analysis.

Students and lecturers alike express greater confidence in the preparedness to teach in this new methodology. In post-test questionnaire (Figure 3), one student commented that they now “know how to integrate content and language during [my] lessons and how to work them properly with my students, always taking into account their needs, abilities and fostering their skills”. However, to examine to what extent teachers are now effectively delivering CLIL, we would have to carry out observational research to validate implementation fidelity (Carroll et al., 2007).

Throughout the course, students made progress by acquiring new knowledge and skills for their classroom practice. Post-test Questions 5, 6 and 7 highlight the strength in active learning for CLIL teachers as they “strongly agreed” developing a didactic unit, three successive lesson plans and presentation of these, supported building CLIL teachers’ competences. Moreover, they emphasised developing a 4D rubric (Ibáñez & Polyakova, 2019), summative test designs and group teaching simulation as some of the most useful activities for “future task as a teacher”. In general, as previously examined, all learners noted a significant difference in confidence in all areas of the CLIL methodology.

While the lecturer noted areas for further development such as student-friendly objectives, Assessment for Learning and linguistic competence, other areas such as ICT in the classroom, pupil-centred learning and SEN provision were highlighted as particular strengths. According to the lecturer’s field notes, in-service teachers adopted new classroom strategies with enthusiasm and interest. Thus, sharing of best practices following on from this course would seem to be a probable, positive, and productive step for teachers providing implementation fidelity is adhered to.

Conclusion

In this project, we implemented a competence-based development model for content educators in L2/3. In addition, we developed a new heuristic approach for enhancing the postgraduate course “Delivering the curriculum through English” and promoting methodological and linguistic awareness of its participants.

In this study, students progressed in CLIL competence development and were quite confident in their ability to deliver CLIL lessons by the end of the course. The combined academic and practical components worked well to prepare students for content and language-integrated curriculum delivery. Students ameliorated their teaching and linguistic skills and consequently gained confidence in their own abilities as teachers.

We also confirmed that running a symmetric project structure (a training course and a research study) is compatible with increased activation of participants’ self-reflection and self-esteem. Continuing with the rationale, we showed that not the homogeneous content-integrated method is essential, but so is linguistic confidence to teach in the L2/3.

What has been uncovered is that more than one stand-alone course may be needed to support CLIL teaching skills and so CPD and maintenance courses would be particularly important for both curriculum delivery and linguistic progression. For this reason, one significant benefit of our research is fieldwork (surveying and observation) that accounts for a better understanding of competence development; we plan to widen this scope by editing guidelines, manuals, and online courses in future work.

Thus, reinforcing teaching skills and outstanding standards for pupil education might become future priorities for national policy-makers. Further investigation is necessary to validate implementation fidelity and ensure adherence to teaching competences.

Finally, our teacher training approach can be successfully imitated by holding smaller-scale seminars on specific programme parts such as CLIL Methodology, Assessment or Materials and resources.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding this study.

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