

CLIL EXPERIENCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INNOVATIVE PRACTICE IN THE PSYCHOLOGY CLASSROOM

EXPERIENCIAS CLIL EN EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR: UNA PRÁCTICA INNOVADORA EN EL AULA DE PSICOLOGÍA

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1. Introduction

In recent years, we have witnessed a continuous growth of interest and concern for the domain of languages different from the native ones. We have seen how programmes and projects related to bilingualism have increased becoming more accessible to everyone.

The Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) initiative has experienced a considerable growth and is being integrated into curricula all across Europe. The domain of at least three languages is regarded as one of the basic skills that everyone should acquire in European educational spaces during the course of their

learning life. Although this teaching approach has been mainly practiced in basic educational levels, it is currently being displaced to Universities.

2. CLIL approach

CLIL is a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language with the objective of promoting both content mastery and language to pre-defined levels. CLIL has gained a tremendous success and its influence on practice is currently expanding quickly across Europe and beyond. The positive effects of CLIL demonstrated by recent research are highly notorious (Cenoz, 2009; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2007; Escobar Urmeneta & Nussbaum, 2011; Lasagabaster & Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010; Lorenzo, Moore & Casal, 2011; Salaberri & Sánchez, 2011). Unlike the traditional teaching methodology usually used in monolingual university classrooms, bilingual teaching requires a series of changes based on specific criteria in accordance with the CLIL approach. These most relevant principles could be summarized as follows (Marsh, 2000): learner-centered teaching; active role of students in classroom activities; cooperative learning; development of learner autonomy; task-based approach; process-approach; variety of teaching techniques with a variety of materials, including computer-assisted learning; context-based learning placed in natural contexts; development of different language skills; well-balanced approach to the teaching of content and language.

3. Objective

The aim of this study is to present an innovative practice in a bilingual Psychology classroom proposed to achieve a proper acquisition of content and language integrated learning. We will show how the use of multimodal resources may encourage the participation and motivation of students towards a content lesson taught in a foreign language.

4.1.Context

The present study stands at the University of Almería (South-East Spain), one of the pioneer Andalusian institutions implementing an official Plurilingualism Promotion Plan across its studies. It belongs to the course Psychometrics, a compulsory course entirely taught in English developed at the third academic year in the Degree of Psychology at the University of Almería, during the period 2010-2011. The sample was taken from a group of 91 students, 63 women (69.23%) and 28 men (30.77%).

4.2. Structure of the subject

The subject was divided into 4 didactic units, all of them taught in English.

UNIT I	UNIT II	UNIT III	UNIT IV
<i>Historical and Conceptual Introduction to Psychometrics</i>	<i>Introduction to Test Theory</i>	<i>Reliability</i>	<i>Validity</i>

Fig.1. Structure of the subject

One of the main features of the course development was the use of multimodal resources to facilitate the acquisition of content knowledge as well as linguistic competences, especially, the use of ICTs resources.

4.2.1. Assessment criteria

	Theoretical Part	Practice Part	Volunteering task
Maximum mark	5	5	2.1
Type of task	Multiple choice test (+ Attendance & Participation)	Research work in groups	Short Film

Fig.2. Marks distribution

4.3. Activity proposed

The task assigned to the students, of a volunteering character, was the creation of a short film in English based on the book “The mismeasure of man” by Stephen Jay Gould, closely related to the contents of the course under study. The preferable language for the

short was English. The book deeply develops some critical points in the program of the subject and we could identify, at least, one point in each didactical unit related to the content of the book.

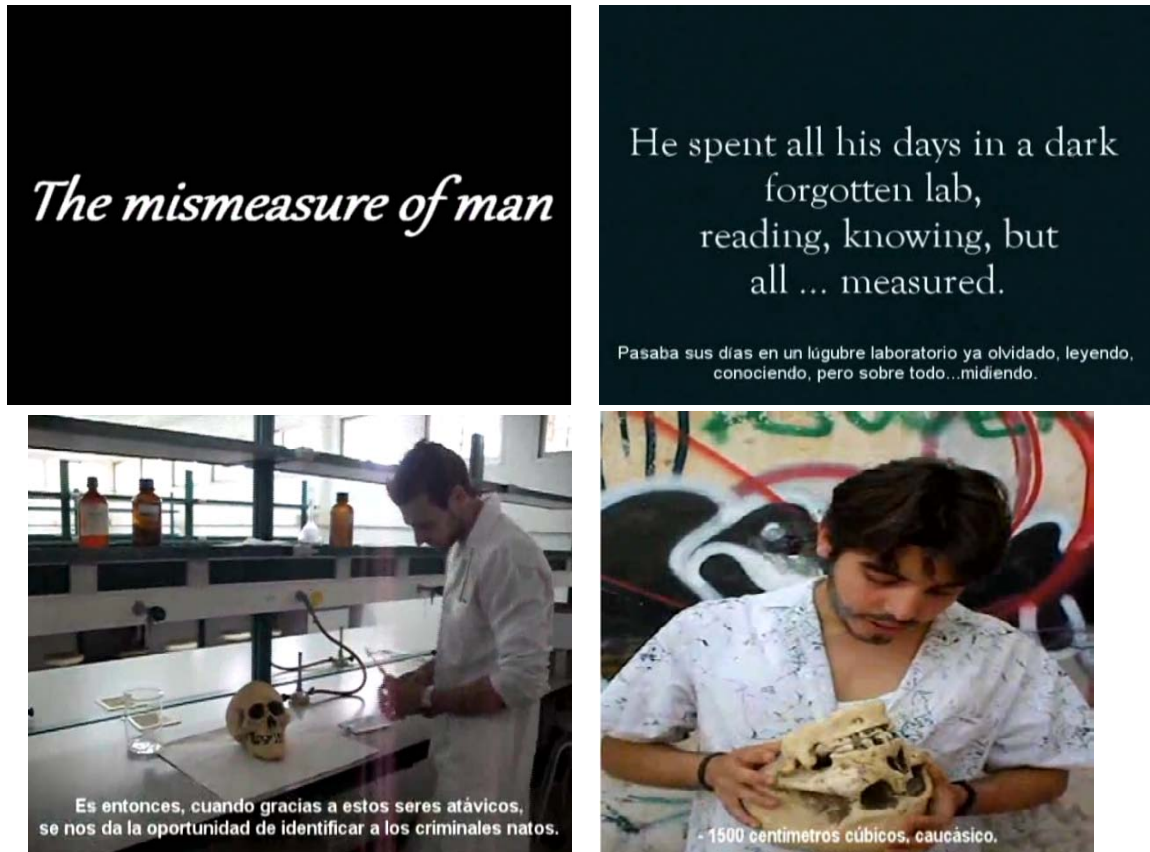


Fig.3.

4.3.1. Objectives of the activity

The central objective was to encourage students to work in groups, to develop skills to cooperate in an unstructured task and to develop a preference for team work. Additionally, the task was designed to promote class participation using a second language. With regard to the content and language learning, the main objective was to facilitate the acquisition of specific lexicon and content knowledge related to the test development tradition in the last century. Secondly, students were thought to learn important terms and concepts related to the problems on psychological measurement using tests.

5. Results

A 27-minute short film in English with Spanish subtitles was finally created, despite the little interest in the proposal arisen among the students at the beginning. Specifically, 64 students participated in the short, which represents 72.72% of the total group. Although the fact of passing the subject seemed not to be related to the participation in the short, a negative biased distribution of marks was observed (see Fig.4 and 5 – adapted from López, 2011).

5.2.Content and language knowledge acquired within the task

The task allowed students to learn specific contents included in units I to IV. With regard to the CLIL principles, the task successfully developed the following aspects: it was undoubtedly a learner-centered activity where the interaction among mates was actively promoted. Students kept an active role in the whole process which was always based on a cooperative learning. As they had to define roles for each participant, they had to develop a high responsible autonomy. The activity allowed students to become the main characters of their own development, training and learning. The use of ICTs was present throughout the whole task, from the recording of the scenes to the subtitling process.

6. Conclusions

Results show that the development of this task enabled the achievement of the course objectives. It unexpectedly increased the students' participation and motivation towards the course, remarkably lacking at the beginning. The present paper evidences the usefulness of multimodal resources to facilitate the simultaneous acquisition of content and language knowledge in a bilingual university setting. This experience is intended to be useful for professors trying to implement programmes based on the CLIL approach.

The authors' intention is to provide colleagues with some tips that facilitate their work and that can be reinforced by further contributions so that a major methodological plan that cover lesson planning procedures as well as certain teaching strategies that meets the needs of the increasing number of bilingual learners can be established.

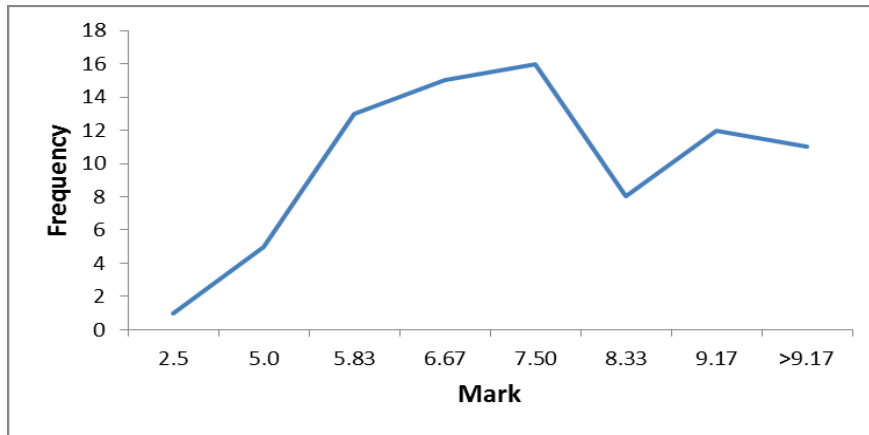


Fig.4. Distribution of marks

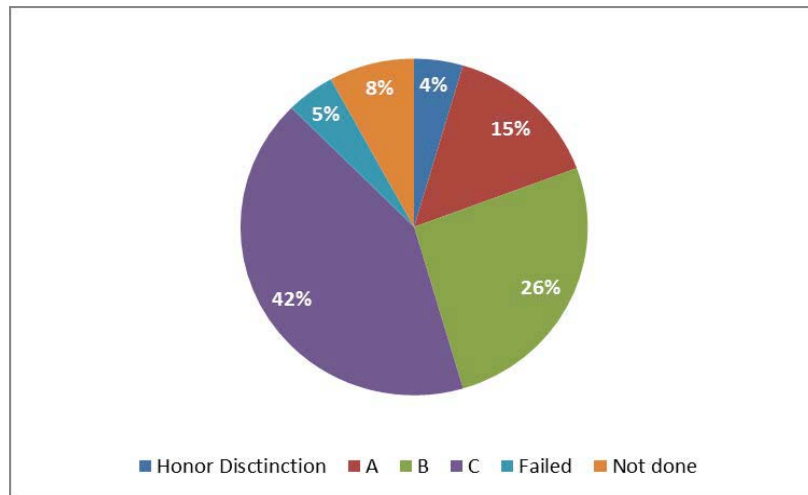


Fig.5. Distribution of marks

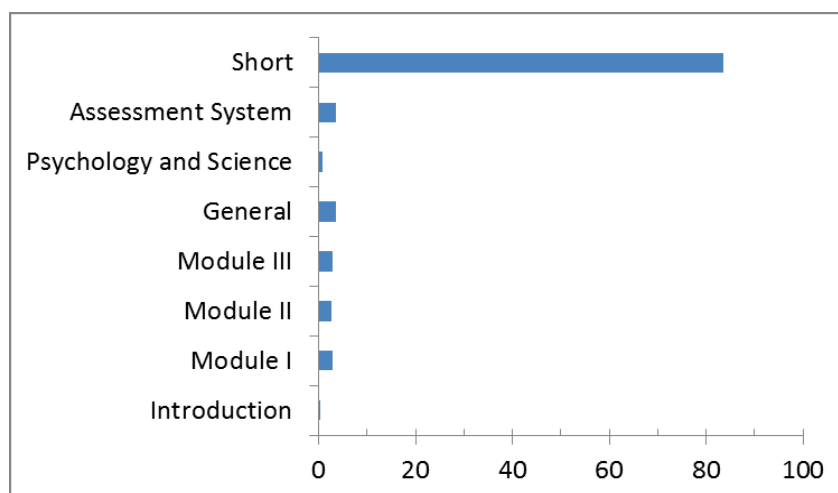


Fig.6. Percentage of post in the virtual forum

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