SCAFFOLDING THE SCAFFOLDERS!
TEACHER TRAINING AND CLIL IN A PRIVATE CATALAN UNIVERSITY

POSAR BASTIDES A LA BASTIDA!
LA FORMACIÓ DOCENT I L'AICLE EN UNA UNIVERSITAT PRIVADA CATALANA

JANINE KNIGHT

janine@cir.uic.es

UNIVERSITAT INTERNACIONAL DE CATALUNYA, BARCELONA

Keywords: Catalan university, pedagogical training for CLIL teaching, didactic strategies, classroom experiences

Paraules clau: universitat catalana, formació docent per a l'AICLE, estràtegies didàctiques, experiències d'aula

1. Point of departure

As a response to the challenge of improving the integration and presence of English in Catalan universities posed by educational authorities[3], in 2009, the Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (UIC) supported professors to teach in English by approving a proposal which had dual objectives. Firstly, it aimed to support professors' spoken production and interaction in English and secondly, to offer pedagogical training for CLIL teaching.

For the purposes of this paper, we focus on the second objective materialised through a course entitled: 'Introduction to Teaching English using a CLIL approach'.

---

[3] L'*"Estudi sobre les mesures adequades per aconseguir una millor integració i presència de la llengua anglesa en l'activitat acadèmica del sistema universitari català"* http://premsa.gencat.cat/pres_fsvp/AppJava/notapremsavw/detall.do?id=90609

We present the objectives of the programme, look at its development and evaluate the successful and less successful elements of its implementation and finally, outline the current situation.

2. Context

The professors who participated in the course came from a variety of curricular areas including Business, Humanities and Audiovisual Communication. Taking place over 12 weeks for 2 hours a week in the UIC's Barcelona campus, all professors had demonstrated a minimum B2.2 level in a speaking test, based on the Spoken Production competencies in The Common European Framework[4].

3. Development, didactic strategies and materials elaborated or used

The objective of the course was that professors were exposed to both theoretical and practical elements of a CLIL approach. That is to say:

- Become familiar with reasons for CLIL, different CLIL approaches, contexts and theoretical frameworks, as well as language education theories which CLIL is influenced by (e.g. Task-based learning, The Communicative Approach, Social Constructivism, etc.).
- Be able to apply some CLIL strategies by creating their own resources related to subjects they teach and practise using CLIL teaching strategies. In this case, create their own subject-specific resources and microteach a mini lesson using 'scaffolding' techniques (adapted texts, frames, mind maps, etc.)

In terms of the didactic strategies and teaching materials used, I undertook a conscious strategy to *model* CLIL teaching strategies throughout the course. That is to say, I used visuals, guided reading and supported writing strategies and provided resource/network support web-links, pre-course reading materials, lesson and course planning guides.

---

[4] The spoken production test was designed by the author based on the CEF.

4. Evaluation of classroom experiences

Based on my observations alongside feedback from professors, I have identified the most successful, partially successful and least successful elements of the course:

Successful:

The most valuable aspect was undoubtedly the microteaching and peer feedback. But this was at the very end of the course with only 4 weeks dedicated to it. In addition, creating personalised, subject-specific resources such as glossaries were immediately useful, practical and applicable to their context.

Partially successful:

Understanding the reasons for CLIL as an approach was useful but too much time was dedicated to it.

Some professors viewed some CLIL/language teaching approaches as "childish", e.g. *matching activities*, *fill in the gap*. Not everyone was convinced that the 'game'-like activities inherited from ESL teaching were 'appropriate', 'adult' or 'academic' enough for a university context – a perception that these activities could undermine formal 'delivery' and by implication, the importance of what was being taught.

Some professors believe that just by talking ('teaching') in English, students would understand and learn. Some were not really convinced of the idea of "negative stress"[5] for example and others felt that students just needed to 'get on with it' or 'manage'.

Less successful:

The 'planning' paper work, e.g. lesson plans, schemes of work, were not completed and were perceived as an overwhelming task for professors and hence a disincentive to adopt a CLIL approach. These tools and habits were unfamiliar to the professors.

---

[5] Negative stress relates to the simple fact that listening, reading, speaking in an additional language is tiring until we get used to it. http://www.clil-axis.net/potential_clil_about_faqs_1.htm

'External' paperwork could be seen as an 'imposition' from Europe. As one professor said, "We are being asked to do what we have always done but now put it on paper".

A lack of official recognition for the course meant that it had less validity or status: professors could take seriously some of the contents but not all. In addition, the value of research over pedagogical knowledge or successful classroom practice influences how teacher training is perceived and valued in universities and by academics themselves.

5. Conclusions

Presenting professors with a CLIL approach does not deal with their genuine worries about their ability to teach in English. In fact the thought of the amount of work involved (a change in methodology & being proficient) can make it 'worse'. As one professor said, "to teach my classes in English would be enough (of a challenge)". This has significant implications: it is feasible that professors choose to teach in English *without* using any CLIL strategies at all. Therefore CLIL-use in classrooms needs to be incentivised. Incentives at the UIC exist but it is an incentive to change the language you teach in but *not* necessarily your methodology. In addition, it is easier and more prestigious at the moment, I would argue, to say that you are teaching in English than to say that you are teaching using CLIL. It is hard work and to do it well requires a lot of planning and training. This means a wider institutional culture shift towards supporting a change in methodology.

Finally, there is using CLIL and using CLIL *well.* For the latter to happen professors need personal and practical support and encouragement, networks, individual feedback, updates, input, sharing of experience, institutional support. It should also be part of institutional Quality Assurance processes.

6. 2011 and beyond

As a follow up to this experience, the UIC is developing a new support system for professors teaching in English. In addition to supporting communicative competences in English and providing initial training for teaching content in English, the new proposal

includes collaboration between language and subject specialists following the initial training and the promotion of action research in CLIL.