

The shaping of Spanish CLIL

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Abstract

ELT in Spain is witnessing the arrival of CLIL and English is changing from a goal-oriented school subject to a medium of instruction for content subjects. What is taking place in our system is influenced by what has previously happened elsewhere. Two research episodes have contributed to it: the Bangalore Project in India and the Canadian Immersion Program originated at the St Lambert School in Montreal. From the first one we learnt about the notion of task, as an innovative element for curriculum design at that time, and, consequently, about a new type of syllabus: the process syllabus. Task-based approaches and project-work founded its pedagogical principles on this type of syllabus. The Canadian Immersion Program has provided us with, at least, two psycho-pedagogical principles that are paramount in bilingual education: (a) the distinction between BICS and CALP, and b) the principle of *common underlying proficiency*.

Key words: CLIL, Task, Canadian Immersion

Resumen

La aparición de CLIL (AICLE, en español), como enfoque y metodología alternativa a las tradicionales clases de lengua extranjera está suponiendo un cambio radical en el sistema educativo español. Sin embargo, buscar parte de sus fundamentos psicopedagógicos nos lleva a prestar especial atención al Proyecto Bangalore y al programa de Inmersión Canadiense. Del primero hemos aprendido el concepto de *tarea*, como el elemento que articula todo el diseño curricular de tipo procedimental. La distinción entre los términos BICS y CALP y sus consecuencias metodológicas, así como la idea de la competencia común subyacente son los dos principios teóricos que apoyan nuestro aprendizaje de contenidos a través de las lenguas.

Palabras clave: AICLE, tarea, Inmersión Canadiense

1. Introduction

ELT in Spain has experienced a dramatic change during the last decade. ELT in the school system has moved from traditional EFL lessons –three hours a week in the best cases- to a variety of CLIL programs being administered by most education authorities all throughout the country. This assortment of CLIL programs provides learners with larger exposure to a second language, ranging from a few extra hours a week to almost fifty per cent of all teaching periods in a school timetable.

Both national and regional education authorities (Naves & Muñoz 1999; Centre de Recursos de Llengües Estrangeres 2006; Lorenzo, Casal, Moore & Afonso 2009; Pérez Vidal 2009 or Lorenzo, Trujillo & Vez, 2011, for example) are taking steps to set up innovative programs that are content-based and delivered through a second language. Most commonly, schools that are involved in this process are being labelled as *bilingual schools* in spite of the fact that the programs that are offered have little to do with bilingualism. To tell the truth, as above mentioned, we are witnessing a wave of content-based programs with different degrees of exposure to the L2.

Implementing a CLIL program implies challenges and innovations at all levels (Roldán Tapia 2007a; Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols 2008; Coyle, Holmes & King 2009; or Coyle, Hood & Marsh 2010). Changes never come alone and what is taking place in our school system is influenced by what has previously happened elsewhere. In this sense, CLIL is not simply a trend that European countries (Eurydice 2006) have designed to counteract American content-based or bilingual programs. On the contrary, CLIL relies on the knowledge and expertise generated by the implementation of a variety of programs in a large number of countries (Lorenzo, Trujillo & Vez 2011:182-187). At least, two research episodes have contributed to outline the teaching context we are immersed in: the Bangalore Project in India and the Canadian Immersion Program originated at the St Lambert School in Montreal.

From the first one we learnt about the notion of task, as an innovative element for curriculum design at that time, and, consequently, about a new type of syllabus: the process syllabus. In addition, we also learnt from the Indian experience in the Bangalore area that classroom-generated research is possible wherever we want to carry it out, with no need for laboratory conditions or else.

The Canadian Immersion Program has provided us with, at least, two psycho-pedagogical principles that are paramount in content-based and bilingual education: (a) the distinction between BICS and CALP as two different types of competences to be developed; and (b) the principle of *common underlying proficiency* (CUP), which explains how the acquisition of the first language benefits the learning of a second or any other additional language.

2. The Bangalore Project

Having been one of the most widely reported (Johnson 1982; Brumfit 1984a and 1984b) and revisited ELT projects (Roldán Tapia 2000), it ran from 1979 to 1984 under the full name of The Bangalore/Madras Communicational Teaching Project. The most comprehensive report of the project, Prabhu's publication, came out a bit later, in 1987, when its implementation was already over.

A wish to change the teaching situation in the Bangalore area gave way to the project. At that time, ELT in the region was dominated by an S-O-S (structural-oral-situational) approach. This kind of approach and its subsequent syllabus was characterized by a planned progression and pre-selection of contents as well as by the use of form-focused activities; all these features being typical of type-A or product syllabuses (White 1988). This paradigm did not bring out satisfactory results in the sense that students who had been taught with it were unable to make an appropriate use of the language in situations of real communication outside the classroom.

Participating students in this project exceeded 200 and the teachers (Beretta 1990) summed up a total of 16, but it has been criticized that only four of them were ordinary teachers whereas the other twelve were especially recruited for the research program: they were a kind of elite; they used to work as teacher trainers and were closely associated with the British Council's office in Bangalore.

The Bangalore Project put an emphasis on the learning-centred approach to foreign languages, being linked in that way to the strong version of the communicative approach, which supported the idea of *teaching through communication* rather than *training for communication*. In fact, the notion of *procedure*, widely used by Prabhu and the Project reporters, states very clearly what kind of syllabus was going to be developed throughout the research period. The syllabus, actually called the procedural syllabus, is a task-based one and the intensive

exposure to the L2 caused by the effort to solve the different tasks becomes the necessary condition for language learning to take place.

The task is the element that articulates this teaching project; in fact, the syllabus itself consists of a series of tasks, which have to be solved. For Prabhu (1987: 24), a task is: “an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through a process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process”.

His definition of task hardly fits into one of the categories that have been described in academic research: on the one hand, imitating real communication outside the class is one of the goals of the project, but, on the other hand, the degree of control the teacher exercises on the learner reminds us of pedagogical tasks.

Real world tasks	Pedagogical tasks
Communicativetasks	Enablingtasks
Open-endedtasks	Closedtasks
Focusonmeaning	Focusonform

Abridged from Roldán Tapia (2007b: 125-126)

Willis (1996: 23) provides another point of view and estimates that: “tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome”.

The difference lies, precisely, in the little interest Willis's definition shows for the planning and selection of tasks. Apart from that, the differences are perhaps more relevant in as much as Prabhu's approach is more teacher- than learner-centred, and, therefore, it is the teacher who controls the tasks which are carried out in the classroom.

The use of tasks in the early eighties meant a breadth of innovation in the field of second/foreign language teaching, although the way they were presented in the classroom has not been exempt from criticism. On the one hand, lessons consisted of three different stages (Prabhu 1987: 24) which might offer a misleading conception of what a task was: first of all, there was a stage called perhaps erroneously "pre-task", in which the teacher exercised guidance and control; secondly, it was the "task" itself, featured by each learner's individual work; and finally, a third stage called "checking", in which students' work was marked on the basis of content, not language.

This threefold division has been maintained with considerable differences. Although broadly accepted, the taxonomy that has been coined is not exempt from extensive review and criticism. Scholars and researchers talk about pre-task, task and post-task, with a generous listing of activities that fall into each category (Lorenzo, Trujillo & Vez (2011: 248-253).

Among those scholars, Brumfit (1984a), Greenwood (1985), Clark (1987), Willis (1996) and Willis & Willis (2007) express their disagreement with Prabhu's threefold division because they feel that it may be easily confused with the kind of activities developed in a more traditional kind of classroom (grammar-translation or drill-based), in which a three-stage organization is made use of: that is, presentation, controlled practice and less-controlled production (PPP).

When reported, the list of tasks (Prabhu 1987:138-143) was extensive and included issues as varied as drawing, maps and timetables, *finding the odd man out*, listening to and reading stories, identifying errors, etc.

In fact, this variety was criticized by Greenwood (1985:269-270) because it included elements as diverse as *maps and plans*, which are materials; *listening*, which is a language skill or games such as *the odd man out*, which resemble very little real-world tasks (Long 1985, Nunan 1989, Kumaravadivelu 1993), for example.

Two positive aspects have to be pointed out about Prabhu's choice of task types: the first one is the preference for information-gap and reasoning-gap tasks over opinion/decision-making ones as the appropriate tools for the learning process. The second positive aspect of that list of tasks is that all those different elements (functions, skills, materials) covered under the notion of task implied an anticipation of what we have mentioned above and regarded as pedagogical tasks.

The task is the element which articulates the procedural syllabus, developed by Prabhu (1987) and, consequently, it has also been the constituent of the typology of approaches that have come out since then (for example, Willis 1996 or Littlewood 2004).

The type of syllabus designed for the Project played an important role in the development of the broad category of type-B syllabuses (White 1988), so fashionable since the late 1980s and early 1990s: (a) the process syllabus (Breen 1987; Candlin 1987), characterized by its wider educational goals (beyond language learning) and by the importance granted to the process of negotiation; (b) the procedural syllabus, informed by Prabhu himself; and (c) the task-based syllabus (Long 1985; Long & Crookes 1993 or Nunan 1993), with its emphasis on the distinction between real-world and pedagogical tasks.

The implementation of the procedural syllabus also influenced the growth of ESP teaching throughout the world, with an increasing use of the task-based approach for curriculum design.

Its influence has also reached Spain in two different waves: in the 1990s, tasks became the pivotal element for the reform of our national EFL curriculum and, in the 2000s, CLIL methodology is not understood without the use of tasks.

In the early nineties, *LOGSE* provided a considerable shift in terms of curriculum design and implementation; tasks were presented as the new paradigm of curriculum design. Project work, or so-called long-term tasks at that time, became the key stone in terms of classroom methodology. This wave of task-based learning was, somehow, a kind of content-based approach to teaching, but delivered by foreign language teachers with a focus on language learning.

Since early this century a second wave of content-based teaching is noticeable and all foreign language policies are geared towards its implementation. This second wave comes in the shape of CLIL, which, in contrast to the former, is delivered by content teachers. English is no longer just the goal of learning, since it has acquired the role of medium of instruction. Tasks are carried in a second language and they are designed to close the existing gap between the classroom and the real world. Integration and collaboration of different school subjects is required to fulfil these tasks.

In addition to the use of tasks for curriculum design, the Bangalore Project was also an example of research on second language learning in school contexts. With the discussion about research terminology being set aside, classroom-based seems to be the label which best describes the research done by Prabhu and his colleagues.

Classroom-based research is never easy to carry out because of the external factors which have an influence on it and which constraint it (Hawes 1997: 7-8): (a) classroom teachers are consumed by working long hours

and find very little or no time to conduct or even read research; (b) they also have few incentives, either administrative or economic, to get involved in research; (c) teaching, in general, has become an underestimated job which is not being appreciated by society; as a consequence, research on teaching is even a step behind; and (d) many teachers perceive that research is inaccessible to them because it seems such an intellectual activity that only academic scholars are capable of it.

Even though several constraints seem to undervalue this type of research, the Bangalore Project turns to be an extremely valuable piece of classroom-based research because of the economic, social and educational circumstances of a country such as India, where it was carried out.

The Bangalore project originates out of a real teaching situation and tries to sort out some deficiencies observed in a particular teaching context. It is a large-scale project, extending for some years and involving a considerable number of students; these circumstances never make things easy if we consider the number of external factors, which affect both the design, and the process of research. Probably, such a piece of research might have been easy to conduct in a Western country rather than in India and therefore it deserves the praise of all the scholar and teaching community.

In closing, the race towards the achievement of an ideal curriculum design will go on for many years. In any case, the Bangalore Project is not perfect but, at least, has already become a turning point for curriculum designers, teachers and education authorities; and, hopefully, the role it has played for closing the gap between theory and classroom reality will have to be taken into account in this new era of teacher education.

3. The Canadian Immersion Program

The term Canadian immersion came into stage in the late 1960s, to make reference to the innovative programs which were using French as a medium of instruction in elementary schools (Lambert & Tucker 1972; Lambert 1981; Genesse, Lambert & Holobow 1986; Genesse 1995; Cummins 2000b or Baker 2003) in that country. These programs provided opportunities for the learner to add a second language to their repertory with no cost to their cognitive academic development.

With the growing importance of French as the main working language in the Quebec area and increasing dissatisfaction with the linguistic barriers between English and French Canadians, a group of English-speaking parents in St Lambert, outside Montreal, began to meet informally in the early 1960's to discuss the situation and see what kind of response they might find in the school system. Two years later, the school district was sensitive and responded to their demands: St. Lambert School was going to implement an experimental kindergarten immersion class; it was September 1965.

With this project, the children were expected to (a) become competent in speaking, reading and writing French; (b) reach normal achievement levels throughout the curriculum, including the English language; and (c) appreciate the traditions and culture of both French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians.

In short, the aims were for children to become bilingual and bicultural without loss of academic achievement.

The vast amount of research generated since then has provided scholars, trainers and teachers alike the theoretical foundations for many subsequent L2-medium programs: in this sense, the distinction between BICS

and CALP together with the coinage of the common underlying principle (CUP) turned to be two of the assets gained from this wealth of research.

The acronyms BICS and CALP make reference to the distinction set up by Cummins (1979) (1999) (2000a) between *basic interpersonal communication skills* and *cognitive academic language proficiency*. The distinction lies on the very different time spans required by an immigrant child to acquire conversational fluency in the L2 as compared to academic proficiency that enables him to cope with his learning process in the new language. Whereas BICS take about two years to acquire since the initial exposure to the language, CALP may need about five years since that same moment.

If the distinction between BICS and CALP is translated into an EFL school context, the time required to achieve both levels may vary considerably because of the far shorter time of exposure to the second language.

	In an immersion context	In an EFL school context
BICS	About 2 years since arrival in the country	About 7-8 years, with a communicative approach to EFL
CALP	About 5 years since arrival in the country	Only attainable by following a CLIL program

Abridged from Roldán Tapia (2007b: 38)

This distinction between BICS and CALP explains why, traditionally, our EFL students were unable to go any further than simulating some real life communicative situations after completing their compulsory secondary education. EFL had become just one more subject within their school curriculum, stripped of any instrumental role that might contribute to some sort of non-linguistic cognitive thinking.

In the same way, Cummins (2000b) set up the scene to exemplify the concept of *common underlying proficiency* with a clear case of two languages that have little in common: that is, in a Japanese-English immersion program in Japan, all instruction that develops literacy and skills in English contributes significantly to the development of literacy in the first language, in this case Japanese.

In our brain, all the thinking skills that are activated for the learning of one language are useful for the same process in any other language the learner is trying to acquire. The distance between languages does not necessarily mean a hindrance to the process.

Why does this co-development of languages happen? The answer has to do with the existence of a common underlying principle. In this respect, Swain & Johnson (1997), Cummins & Swain (1998), Cummins (1999), Cummins (2000c) and Baker (2003), argue for a common underlying proficiency or interdependence hypothesis, in which cross-lingual proficiencies can promote the development of cognitive, academic skills. Common underlying proficiency refers to the interdependence of concepts, skills and linguistic knowledge found in a learner's brain. It is stated that cognitive and literacy skills established in the mother tongue, L1 or whatever the language of instruction is will transfer to the second or third language of the learner. Both languages are distinct when uttered but are meant to share, at a deeper level, concepts and knowledge derived from the cognitive and linguistic abilities of the speaker.

The way in which CUP functions is the best example to illustrate how linguistic knowledge is stored in the brain. In other words, the use of the first or second language is independent, but the concepts and

linguistic codes are stored as underlying proficiency. It may, therefore, describe language proficiency in terms of surface and deeper levels of thinking skills. It is argued that the deeper levels of cognitive processing such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation are necessary to academic progress, no matter what the language of that academic activity is.

This notion of *common underlying proficiency* provides the theoretical background that supports the idea of an integrated curriculum. This integrated curriculum is the document that articulates CLIL in the schools where these programs are being implemented. Many education authorities are encouraging their schools to design their own integrated curriculum to cater for a competence-based learning of languages together with an acquisition of non-linguistic contents by means of a second language, other than the L1. This type of curriculum design is not standardized across regions and some of them just include English –most common L2– and the content subjects, whereas education authorities in Andalusia are asking for the integration of the mother tongue as well as the L2 and L3. With no doubt, apart from the contribution of key competences in education, the *common underlying proficiency* is at the root of this CLIL-oriented integrated curriculum.

4. Conclusion

CLIL in Spain has not come out of thin air or has not been a rabbit let out of the hat; on the contrary, there has been a wealth of previous research and knowledge in the shaping of its current state. Research is the key element in this whole picture in as much as it originates in the classroom and findings have an impact in the school system afterwards. In the first case, the notion of task and its role in curriculum design has jumped from the field of foreign language teaching to the realm of content-based language learning. In the second case, the Canadian experience has shown us the difference between learning a language and using a language for a real communicative purpose as well as the potential the human brain possesses to store and activate other additional languages a person may learn throughout his/her life.

The Canadian Immersion program was set up about fifty years ago and still goes on, whereas Spanish CLIL has been just a decade with us. Classroom-based research and extensive analysis of its implementation are the bench marks to prove that it works and overcome reluctant attitudes.

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