Tateo: A School- and Action Research-Based Continuous Professional Development Model for Experienced/Senior Secondary Teachers New to CLIL

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Abstract

Strategies for helping experienced/senior teachers develop professional competences and skills to start teaching in CLIL require further research. Experienced teachers often cannot return to training colleges, where 1- or 2-year programmes cater for younger/non-qualified teachers. Yet, they often request specific support. This paper aims to contribute to the debate about professional development for secondary teachers new to CLIL by illustrating a continuous professional development (CPD) model for experienced/senior teachers teaching the 11-17 age group. The model has been applied in Trentino, an autonomous province in Italy. In Italy: (i) secondary school teachers are qualified to teach either a foreign language (FL) or a “content” subject; (ii) most subject teachers still struggle with FL competence and would not be able to teach in a FL; (iii) FL teachers often take over in CLIL, creating covert conflict or open resentment in subject colleagues. In this context, a CLIL model was developed and applied (Lucietto, 2008a) which involved teaching teams (T-Teams) comprising of a FL teacher, a subject teacher and an external consultant working together with a dual aim: (i) planning and implementing quality CLIL modules; (ii) establishing effective professional dialogue (TAlking To Each Other: TATEO). This chapter highlights the principles and constitutive elements of the CPD model, an incremental framework flexible enough to respond to local differences and needs. It also shows a planning grid that was offered as a planning tool. Because of the dual nature of CLIL, planning and running CLIL modules can be inherently complex. Therefore, this TATEO model could be transferable both to countries where similar constraints exist, as well as to countries where the teaching practice of “content” teachers in CLIL could benefit from professional dialogue with FL colleagues in order to increase awareness of effective CLIL methodology.

Keywords: CLIL teacher training; CLIL professional development; CLIL teacher education; CLIL action research; CLIL reflective practice; CLIL support

1. Brief review of CLIL TT/TD issues

If CLIL is to achieve all that politicians and scholars alike expect of it, i.e. enabling learners to develop high competence in two European languages other than their own (Maljers and Marsh, 1999; Marsh, 2002; European Commission, 1995; 2003; 2007), many researchers see effective CLIL teacher training (TT) or teacher development (TD) as a priority issue. The difference between CLIL pre-service education for future/prospective teachers and in-service teacher development for experienced teachers new to CLIL, however, is not always easy to distinguish in the literature. The same difficulty arises in determining who is meant by the “CLIL teacher” - a subject teacher? A FL teacher? A team of both? A “new” teacher with dual education?
The views of some authors vis-à-vis CLIL TT/TD are presented in the following paragraphs. Far from being exhaustive, the review casts at least some light on the issue as it has been and is currently being debated in Europe.

One of the aims of the CEILINK Think-Tank Symposium (Strasbourg, 1998) was to indicate the priorities for the new millennium. TT and TD were recurring themes, mentioned by many experts. They stressed that CLIL be incorporated into teacher education (TEd) in several formats, e.g., a session, a seminar, a one-week course, a year-long course and that CLIL would benefit from a Master’s course (Perez Vidal, 1999); that TT/TD should adequately prepare teachers for a deep understanding of the principles and practice of bilingual education (Baetens Beardsmore, 1999); that universities and TT institutions should develop pre-and in-service programmes for future CLIL teachers, balancing scientifically grounded research and expertise with practical concerns, and that graduates should be given specific certificates as a basis for job selection (Wode and Burmeister, 1999). Only Wolff (1999) underlined that the main issue in CLIL was that the debate still seemed to be restricted to language teachers, with subject professionals being effectively excluded. On the contrary, he advocated the full integration of subject teachers in CLIL. In the discussion on whether the future CLIL teacher should be a subject teacher trained in a foreign language or a language teacher trained in one or two subjects, he reported that the latter view seemed to prevail among the participants. This obviously cast a new light on who CLIL TEd should address and how it should be organised.

More recently, it seems as if the idea of collaborative work among teachers, often - but not necessarily - from different professional backgrounds, has become more prominent in CLIL discourse. Again, this raises questions about the nature of TT/TD best suited for teachers currently working in the profession. In the Italian context, Serragiotto (2003) considers collaborative work between FL and subject teachers as one option, where the role of the FL colleague is mainly to ensure the conditions for learning through comprehensible input. He emphasizes that this approach must be organised in strict synergy by teachers and requires frequent meetings to plan, choose appropriate methodology, define teachers’ respective roles, reflect on classroom findings, and find suitable solutions to problems. However, he does not give guidelines as to how this process can be initiated or managed: when mentioning teacher training, he seems to advocate programmes where language teachers are supported in their quest for competence in “content”, while content teachers get linguistic and methodological support.

In the Helsinki CLIL 2006 post-conference publication, Mehisto (2007: 67, 72) mentions the importance of teamwork and training non-CLIL, as well as CLIL teachers. He emphasizes that “the road from theory to practice is long”, and that “CLIL teachers will need support in applying in the classroom what they have been taught during in-service training”. Chopey-Pacquet and Amory-Bya (2007) report in detail on a system of interacting top-down and bottom-up strategies for piloting and supporting the long-term CLIL development in Catholic secondary education in Belgium. Since 2004, certain schools wishing to start CLIL have been required to complete a project proposal following a planning tool based on Coyle’s (1999) “four Cs” and Baetens Beardsmore’s (2003) ‘macro-logical variables’. Among others, two measures are interesting for the theme of this paper. The CLIL-EMILE Piloting Committee mentions the following measures: meeting and supporting schools’ CLIL workgroups, question/answer sessions with school staff during in-service/continuous professional development days, and participating in information meetings for prospective parents/pupils. The CLIL-EMILE Pedagogic Committee, on the other hand, whose mission is “to connect the principled planning framework to the practitioners” (Chopey-Pacquet and Amory-Bya, 2007: 85), among other actions has (i) provided in-service training sessions in CLIL fundamentals and methodologies for mixed groups of both content and language teachers who are often pioneering CLIL in their schools; and (ii) organised co-constructive workgroups of pedagogical advisors and CLIL teachers for materials development within a framework that respects existing curricula. In her concluding remarks, Langé (2007a: 353) reports on how conference participants “focused on the need to lay down foundations for CLIL teacher education and training in classroom-based praxis”.

2. Context and background

2.1 CLIL in Trentino

In Trentino secondary mainstream education, CLIL started to gain a foothold when Italy devolved responsibility for school management to the schools themselves in 2000-01 (DPR 275/99; DPGP 1999 n. 13-12/Leg). Typically, CLIL consists of short modules (15-20 hours) organised and taught by FL teachers working alone, quite often during their own FL lessons (Ricci Garotti, 2004, Zanoni e Schir, 2006). Since CLIL is depicted as one way of promoting plurilingualism in the EU, it is still perceived by the general public and FL teachers alike as pertaining to FL teaching. That is why FL teachers almost invariably start CLIL and are not always ready to open up to “content” colleagues or to consider their points of view and contributions as crucial to successful CLIL. In spite of only being qualified to teach FLs, many teachers choose to offer short CLIL modules delving into “content” topics they might touch upon in their own language classes, e.g., food and food education (presenting it as “Science”), colours (as “Art Education”), British/American history (as “History”), geography of English-speaking countries (as “Geography”) without involving their subject colleagues. As a result, subject teachers are on the one hand increasingly more resentful, as they see FL colleagues invading their “professional territory” without feeling entitled to intervene, and end up complaining in the staffroom as they consider their status and posts in jeopardy. On the other, even when they are convinced they should be involved, they do not often dare to step forward, as they usually have insufficient FL competence – or feel they do, convinced as most are that CLIL teaching means giving lectures in a foreign language, which they often lack the confidence to do.

2.2 CLIL TT/TD in Trentino, 2000-2007
Langé (2007b) briefly outlines some teacher training (TT) opportunities for experienced teachers across Northern Italy who wanted to start CLIL. She lists special regional projects: ALI-CLIL (Lombardy, since 2001); Apprendo in Lingua 2, (Veneto, 2002-2004); Lingua, Cultura e Scienze in lingua straniera (Piedmont, 2001-2004); Tutor Europeo CLIL (Emilia Romagna, since 2003); RETE CLIC Udine (a provincial school network in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, since 2001). With the noticeable exception of Apprendo in Lingua 2, most activities addressed primary teachers (who are qualified to teach any subject in the curriculum) or secondary FLs teachers, and were organised centrally. ALI-CLIL also comprised blended training.

The Trentino local education authority (LEA), however, did not organise any in-service CLIL courses/programmes for teachers between 2000 and 2005, leaving newly-autonomous schools to take full responsibility for training. Only in 2005-06 did they organise a traditional-type open-enrolment course, repeated almost unchanged in 2006-07 and 2007-08, which aimed to inform teachers through plenary sessions with CLIL “experts” and experienced teachers. In spite of being advertised as being for FL teachers, the course was open to subject teachers as well. In this context of limited choice, the Provincial TT Institute (IPRASE) launched a politically-commissioned TT programme for FLs teachers in 2004 (Alis, Apprendimento delle Lingue Straniere). Immediately, some schools asked for CLIL support. Rather than organising an open-enrolment, traditional in-service training course, IPRASE negotiated with schools a model that was more financially demanding for the Institute, but potentially more effective, i.e. free continuous professional development (CPD) CLIL consultancy in individual schools.

3. The CPD consultancy model
The model was applied in three schools - two istituti comprensivi (6-14) and a vocational school (14-17) - from 2004 to 2006, with the aim of developing CLIL competences in teachers new to CLIL (Lucietto, 2008b). Amongst its many innovative elements, IPRASE was offering for the first time free-of-charge individual consultancy which catered for different school needs; secondly, IPRASE insisted that the consultant would work on real CLIL projects, applying action-research principles; thirdly, that she would work with T-Teams of FL and subject teachers together, thus respecting both the dual nature of CLIL and the legal constraints of existing legislation regarding teacher qualifications and recruitment. Those requests were a novelty both for subject teachers, who had been used to being cut off from CLIL, and for FL teachers, who had long taken for granted that they could organise and run CLIL on their own.

The model was incremental and flexible, rather than imposed as a take-it-or-leave-it whole package, i.e. schools could specify their needs and negotiate with IPRASE before signing protocols. In the first school the consultant became a full T-Team member, involved in all CLIL phases, including materials production, classroom observation, feedback, and module evaluation; in the second she was involved at all stages except for classroom observation; in the third, a school very distant from Trento, her role...
3.1. Consultancy stages

3.1.1. CLIL lead-in time

The first visit to a school would typically take place in early spring, which left time for three-four meetings before the summer holidays to (i) illustrate CLIL principles and methodology, its main practical issues and the reasons for T-Teams; (ii) to discuss organisational issues, i.e. what T-Teams were possible and which classes and subjects would be involved the following year. In two of the three schools, where the head teacher participated for at least part of the time, institutional support was much greater, as evidenced by teachers obtaining specific support for starting CLIL (e.g., time off for planning and materials development, paid extra time for CLIL-related activities). The identified T-Teams would then spend the summer making choices about which portion/s of the subject curriculum they would do in CLIL and, given the shortage of off-the-shelf CLIL materials, creating a materials bank from different sources (native speaker textbooks, the internet, authentic materials, Italian textbooks containing CLIL sections). Sometimes decisions were made that had to be reassessed the following autumn, if non-permanent teachers were moved elsewhere. Staff continuity proved in fact to be an issue in schools far away from the capital city, where teacher turnover is great.

3.1.2. CLIL planning

September-January (Semester 1) proved to be just adequate as planning time. T-Teams new to CLIL need to process a lot: they need/have to (i) establish professional dialogue (which in the Italian context is not widespread, and often seen as a threat); (ii) get accustomed to working together and compare teaching strategies pertaining to their two very different professional worlds (FL teachers usually being more accustomed to getting their students actively involved, whilst subject teachers still preferring lecturing classes); (iii) learn “the CLIL approach” (see e.g. Mehisto et al., 2008); (iv) make choices about how to subdivide the module into smaller chunks (units), and within each unit organise the learning tasks and activities; (v) decide what and how to assess. It was agreed that the subject teacher would make overall decisions about module content and objectives, as content learning should not suffer due to CLIL, whilst the FL teacher would advise on the use of task and activity formats, and anticipate the language difficulties students would encounter. Assessment would be planned together, but “content” should take precedence in the marking scheme. A CLIL unit planning grid was offered by the consultant not as a straightjacket, but as a way of helping T-Teams to stay both focused and productive, and keep TAlking To Each Other (TATEO) (Dahl, 2000). Table 1 represents the A3 planning grid as it stands now, modified over the years to accommodate more elements as T-Teams became more experienced. Typically, T-Teams would meet and plan at times negotiated with the head teacher, and the consultant would go in and work with them every two-three weeks. Different versions of materials and tasks would be produced and compared until everybody was happy with the results. For inexperienced T-Teams, planning would typically require 60-70 hours for a new 20-h module.

3.1.3. CLIL delivery and on-going evaluation

Modules were usually implemented between February and May (Semester 2). The first module unfolded naturally within this timeframe, and it proved so effective that it was as applied in the other two schools. It has become a de facto routine every time the consultant works with T-Teams to stay both focused and productive, and keep TAlking To Each Other (TATEO) (Dahl, 2000). Table 1 represents the A3 planning grid as it stands now, modified over the years to accommodate more elements as T-Teams became more experienced. Typically, T-Teams would meet and plan at times negotiated with the head teacher, and the consultant would go in and work with them every two-three weeks. Different versions of materials and tasks would be produced and compared until everybody was happy with the results. For inexperienced T-Teams, planning would typically require 60-70 hours for a new 20-h module.

3.1.4. CLIL module evaluation

T-Teams (including the consultant) also made decisions about how to evaluate the impact of the modules, and designed
questionnaires when appropriate. Pupils’ evaluations were collected through group interviews (with the consultant), or end-of-course meta-cognitive sessions (with their subject teachers), and/or through questionnaires. Parents filled in an end-of-year questionnaire, and T-Teams and one head teacher were interviewed. Data showed that the modules were considered very successful by most stakeholders, and everybody involved with the exception of one teacher wanted CLIL to continue (Lucietto, 2008c).

### 3.2. Consultancy principles

#### 3.2.1. Co-constructive CPD

The consultancy model assumed that: (i) human beings learn by co-constructing meaning with others (Vygotsky, 1962); (ii) all teachers have the right both to lifelong professional learning and to experiment with new approaches; (iii) experienced teachers also have the fundamental right to progress by building on their existing competences and skills (Richards, 1998); (iv) adults’ willingness to learn is encouraged when they feel valued and respected, and when they see the relevance of what they are doing (Knowles, 1973). This brief theoretical framework was at the core of the IPRASE request to work with teams on real CLIL modules.

#### 3.2.2. Reflective practice and action-research

To favour the process of professional development, reflective practice on classroom-generated data is seen as a major TEd tool (Schön, 1983; Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Data gathering and reflection are also at the core of action-research, i.e. teacher-initiated and -conducted research aimed to find and implement solutions to problems posed by (innovative) teaching practice (Hopkins, 1985; Pozzo e Zappi, 1993). That is why, in coherence with these TEd principles, IPRASE did not offer free open-enrolment courses to teachers from different schools, but responded to the specific needs of individual schools asking for support. In action-research the teacher-researcher works with colleagues from the same school. Sometimes, the group may include an outside researcher who, rather than being a “neutral expert” who tells the others what to do, is a peer among peers who listens to the group’s needs and works with them to find suitable solutions That is why the consultant worked with T-Teams feeling as part of the team and being accepted as such, and yet standing back, observing and noticing the process, and giving professional advice when appropriate.

#### 3.2.3. Talking to each other (TATEO)

Respect for different positions and active collaborative search for “new ways of doing” were at the core of the consultant’s pragmatic communication (Watzlawick et al., 1967). To be able to do collaborative work, teachers need to Talk to Each Other (TATEO), but this does not spontaneously arise when they come from different backgrounds of professional expertise. They fall very easily into a default model of “blame culture”, to the detriment of effective communication (Gordon, 1974). Thus, professional dialogue needs to be actively promoted, facilitated, nurtured and learnt. Here, the consultant acted as a facilitator and enabler, while creating the framework for effective communication by setting some basic behavioural rules.

### 3.3. CPD/consultancy evaluation

From formal end-of-year interviews, as well as from written documents and more informal data gathering, the CPD consultancy model has proven to be well accepted by T-Teams, as they found it responded well to their needs and contributed to their professional growth. In the words of one of the T-Teams “every time we had a planning meeting by ourselves or with the consultant, it was like being on a professional development course” (Lucietto, 2008c: 139).

### 4. Ways forward

In the school year 2008-2009, the CPD model is being applied in a 10-school network. With slight changes, it will also underpin a workshop-type course organised by the LEA for T-Teams from the whole province. It is hoped that the model, which has
worked well when dealing with one T-Team at a time, will continue to be fruitful under changed conditions.

References


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