Specific English

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ABSTRACT
Although it is known that our current Educatve System, Ley Orgánica de Educación 2/2006, del 3 de mayo, promotes using the Communicate Approach to teach foreign languages in our schools, other recently designed approaches are also used to help students improve their skills when communicating in the foreign language. One of those approaches is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which is used to teach content of other subjects using the English language as the language of instruction. This approach improves the students’ skills in English as they learn content from other areas. To develop CLIL in our schools teachers subjects other than English, with a high proficiency level in English language, are sought. For this reason, many curricula have included courses of “Specific English” to facilitate that pre-graduates acquire the necessary knowledge in English to follow the lessons and teach their respective content courses in English. This calls for research, innovation and decision making to design the content, resources and materials used to teach the course “Specific English” in the Physical Activity and Sports Science Major, which is the main goal of this paper.

Keywords: Specific English, CLIL, Physical Activity and Sports Science, Physical Education.
1. INTRODUCTION

Although it is known that our current Educative System, regulated by the Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación, promotes using the Communicate Approach to teach foreign languages in our schools, other recently designed approaches are also used to help students improve their skills when communicating in a foreign language. One of these approaches is Content and Language Integrated Learning, also known as CLIL, which is used to teach content courses using the English language as the language of instruction. This approach improves the students’ skills in English at the same time as they learn content from other areas. To develop CLIL in our schools teachers of subjects other than English, with a high proficiency level in English language, are sought. For this reason, many academic curricula have included courses of “Specific English” to facilitate that pre-graduates acquire the necessary knowledge and competency in English to follow the lessons of their respective content courses in English. This calls for research, innovation and decision making to design the content, resources and materials used to teach the course “Specific English” in the Physical Activity and Sports Science Major (Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte – CAFD–), which is the main goal of this paper.

1.1. Description of CLIL Approach

CLIL means Content and Language Integrated Language. This approach makes reference to teaching subjects others than English, as science, geography, history, maths, physical education, etc. taught in the foreign language and not using the student mother tongue. This approach can be applied by foreign language teachers who develop contents from other areas in the foreign language class, and also by subject teachers, other than English, who develop their lessons using the foreign language as language of instruction. In both cases, students acquire specific contents of the area and the foreign language simultaneously.

The English term CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), was coined by David Marsh, from University of Jyväskylä, in Finland (1994):

“CLIL refers to any dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language contents”.

Using CLIL approach, students learn contents of different areas as they learn a foreign
language. David Graddol described the CLIL approach as:

“... an approach to bilingual education in which both curriculum content –such as Science or Geography– and English are taught together. It differs from simple English-medium education in that the learner is not necessarily expected to have the English proficiency required to cope with the subject before beginning study”.

Finally, Marsh, Marsland and Stenberg (2001), when defining CLIL also offer some reasons to use CLIL in the class:

“CLIL is about using languages to learn... It is about installing a ‘hunger to learn’ in the student. It gives opportunity for him/her to think about and develop how s/he communicates in general, even in the first language”.

CLIL also seems to contribute to the students’ motivation. How and in what way does CLIL approach motivate students more than tradicional approaches? Next, some reasons to use CLIL to motivate students are listed:

- It provides reasons to learn and improve the foreign language level as the contents to work with are compulsory.
- It focuses and assesses the subject contents, no assessment of the foreign language grammar but on the ability to use the foreign language.
- The students achieve real success because they write, talk and apply their abilities to acquire relatively complex knowledge using the foreign language.
- Typical textbook contents are not worked, boring contents that use the foreign language as an excuse to develop certain grammar structures, because the contents worked are important by themselves.
- Tasks have to be interactive and significant for the learners.
- Collaborative activities promote dialogue among students and offer opportunities to communicate in the foreign language.
- Team work provides a more relax atmosphere.

The research will be carried out at the University of Alicante during the academic year 2013-2014. With this research we will obtain results which will explain how the use of the CLIL methodology (Content and Language Integrated Learning) affects the communicative competence in English of students in “Specific English” course. DIALANG is the proposed method, which is an online diagnostic language assessment system created to determine the level of proficiency in 14 European languages based on the Common European Framework of
Reference for languages (CEFRL). This system will be used as pre-test and post-test before and after taking the course to measure the students’ knowledge in English. The results obtained will be of future analysis and further research will be carried out.

**Figure 1** Research development

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this paper is to reflect and design the research on how the use of the CLIL approach during the teaching of the course “Specific English” in the Major *Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte* can make students acquire the specific contents of the course as improve their English language competence.

To make the research on how the use of the CLIL approach influences the level of the students’ English language, students will take a pre-test before taking the course and a post-test at the end of the course, to check the students’ results before and after the use of the CLIL approach.

The pre-test and post-test will consist of taking the DIALANG evaluation. To contrast and compare the results obtained by the students in the pre-test and the post-test, students will write their answers on an answer sheet provided when doing the pre-test and the post-test, where students will write the results obtained in each of the items of the five language abilities tests assessed by DIALANG. Students will also answer a short questionnaire with questions about personal aspects such as gender, foreign language years of study, languages
2.1. Description of the DIALANG system.

DIALANG is an on-line system to assess the level of 14 European languages following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This system assesses the level of listening, writing, reading, vocabulary and grammar of each language.

DIALANG starts with the selection of the language for the instructions to follow the test. Next, the students choose the target language to assess.

Once the language has been chosen the students take a Placement Test to know the student’s level according to the CEFRL and to guide the difficulty level of the questions of each part of the test. The Placement Test consists of 75 “words”. Some of those “words” are real and some are invented, and all of them are presented as verbs. The student will have to recognize them as real or invented.

**Figure 2** Screenshot of Placement Test

![Placement Test Screenshot](image)

The results obtained in the Placement Test by each student will guide the difficulty level of the items of the tests shown by the system and inform the student about the level obtained according to the CEFRL.
Once the student has taken the Placement Test, takes one of the five abilities tests, choosing the order of the tests as they wish: listening, reading, writing, vocabulary or grammar. Before taking the listening, reading and writing tests, the students have to take a self-assessment test to know the ability level they think they have in each of those three abilities according to the CEFRL.

**Figure 3** Screenshot of Placement Test feedback

![Placement test feedback](image)

Once the student has taken the Placement Test, takes one of the five abilities tests, choosing the order of the tests as they wish: listening, reading, writing, vocabulary or grammar. Before taking the listening, reading and writing tests, the students have to take a self-assessment test to know the ability level they think they have in each of those three abilities according to the CEFRL.

**Figure 4** Screenshot of language skills tests

![Choose a test](image)

The self-assessment tests consist of 18 statements expressed as abilities (I can). The students read each one of them and mark if they think they are able or not to carry out those tasks.
Once the self-assessment has been done, the students pass to answer the items of the three abilities tests named previously. Each one of the above mention tests consists of 30 items of varied forms: multiple choice, writing statements, questions with short answers and drop down menu. The system provides the students feedback on their answers, when answering each item or at the end of the linguistic skill test, as the student wishes. When finishing each skill test, the system compares the level obtained during the student self-assessment and the level obtained in the correction of the test. If the real level does not match, the system advices the student how to improve the level following the CEFRL.

When doing the Listening test, the student takes the self-assessment previously and next, answers the 30 items of listening comprehension. To answer the questions the student is asked to read the question and possible answers before clicking on the audio of the listening. Among the 30 items of this listening test there are different answers forms:

- 29 items of multiple choice (16 with 3 possibles answers, 12 with 4 possible answers and 1 with 5 possible answers. In 2 items 2 questions have to be answered in each one of them).
- 1 item where the student has to write the most suitable word for the gap of the sentence.

Once the listening test is done, the system corrects the the student’s given answers and shows the right and the wrong answers and the aspect that each item works. The system
assesses 3 aspects of the Reading comprehension:

- Identifying the main idea (20 items).
- Making inferences (8 items).
- Listening in detail (2 items).

Lastly, the system compares the level obtained by the student in the listening self-assessment test previous to the listening test, and the real level obtained after the test. If the real level does not match the self-assessment level, the system advises the student how to improve it following the CEFRL.

Another test assesses the Writing skill. As in the previous test, before taking the Writing test, the student takes the Writing self-assessment. Once again the self-assessment test consist of 18 statements expressed as habilités (I can). The students read each statement and mark if they think they are able of doing them or not. Once the Writing self-assessment is done, the system gives the students the CEFRL level obtained with their answers in Writing.

This test also consist of 30 varied items. The types of items are specified next:

- 2 items where a text has to be read and then choose the correct answer from the drop down menu (4 possible answers).
- 6 items where the most suitable sentence has to be chosen for the gap.
- 5 items where the most suitable word or group of words has to be chosen for the gap in the sentence.
- 4 items where a word with a different style has to be located in a text.
- 2 items where a grammatical error has to be found in a text and then write the correct word to correct the mistake.
- 6 items where a gap has to be filled in a text using a word that corresponds with the given initial and definition.
- 3 items where given words have to be written in the gaps of a text.
- 1 item where a sentence has to be filled with a group of words using 2 given words.
- 1 item where a word has to be written in a gap using the given letter.

After doing the Writing test, the system corrects the students’ answers and informs about the items answered correctly and incorrectly, and the aspect of the writing skill that each item works. The system assesses 3 aspects of the writing skill:

- Appropriacy (8 items).
- Text organisation (9 items).
- Accuracy (13 items).

Figure 6 Screenshot of Writing test feedback

Then, the system compares the level obtained by the student in the writing self-assessment test previous to the writing test, and the real level obtained after the test.

Figure 7 Screenshot of Writing test results

If the real level does not match the self-assessment level, the system advises the student how to improve it following the CEFRL.
Figure 8 Screenshot of CEFRL levels

Reading is another of the language skills assessed. As in previous test, before taking the Reading test, the student takes the Reading self-assessment. Once again the self-assessment test consist of 18 statements expressed as abilities (I can). The students read each statement and mark if they think they are able of doing them or not. Once the Reading self-assessment is done, the system gives the students the CEFRL level obtained with their answers in Reading.

This test also consist of 30 varied items. The types of items to test Reading are specified next:

- 20 items where a text is read and then the correct answer is chosen among the 4 or 5 from the menu.
- 1 item where a question is chosen to fill in the gap in an interview.
- 3 items where the most suitable sentence is chosen to fill in a gap in a text among the given sentences.
- 4 items where the most suitable title has to be selected for the given sentence among the given ones.
- 1 item where the most suitable word for the gap has to be written using a derived word from a given word.

After doing the Reading test, the system corrects the students’ answers and informs about the items answered correctly and incorrectly, and the aspect of the reading skill that each item works. The system assesses 3 aspects of the Reading skill:

- Inferencing (20 items).
- Identifying main idea (9 items).
- Reading for detail (1 item).
Then, the system compares the level obtained by the student in the Reading self-assessment test previous to the writing test, and the real level obtained after the test. If the real level does not match the self-assessment level, the system advises the student how to improve it following the CEFRL.

Vocabulary is another skill assessed by this system. For this test, there is not a self-assessment test taken before the test.

Among the 30 items of this Vocabulary test there are different answer forms:

- 6 items where the most suitable word is chosen to fill in a gap in a sentence.
- 7 items where the most suitable word is chosen to fill in a gap in a sentence using the given initial.
- 5 items where incompleted words of sentences have to be completed.
- 2 items where a word has to be chosen correspondent to the given definition among the 4 possible options.
- 3 items where a synonym of the given word has to be chosen among 4 possible answers.
- 1 item where a word has to be written using the given initial that corresponds to the given definition.
- 1 item where a word has to be written using the given first letters of a word to fill the sentence gap.
- 1 item where the antonym of a word in capitals in a sentence has to be written.
• 1 item where a word has to be written to fill in a gap in a dialogue.
• 2 items where the derivate of a word has to be written to fill a gap in a sentence.
• 1 item where a gap has to be filled in with a missing word.

After doing the Vocabulary test, the system corrects the students’ answers and informs about the items answered correctly and incorrectly, and the aspect of the Vocabulary skill that each item works. The system assesses 4 aspects of the Vocabulary skill:

- Word combination (6 items).
- Meaning (11 items).
- Words formation (7 items).
- Semantic relations (6 items).

Figure 10 Screenshot of Vocabulary test feedback

The last test is about Structures. For this test, there is not a self-assessment test taken before the test. This test also consist of 30 items of different types. The questions to assess structures are of diverse forms:

• 15 items where the most suitable word has to be chosen to fill a gap in a sentence:
  o Among 3 possible options (12 items).
  o Among 4 possible options (2 items).
  o Among 5 possible options (1 item).

• 5 items where the most suitable group of words has to be chosen to fill a gap in a sentence:
  o Among 3 possible options (2 items).
  o Among 4 possible options (3 items).
- 2 items where a sentence has to be written using:
  o 3 given words (1 item).
  o 6 given words (1 item).
- 2 items where a derivate of a word has to be written to fill a gap in a sentence.
- 2 items where a verb in the correct tense has to be written to fill a gap in a sentence.
- 1 item where the irregular plural of a noun has to be written to fill a gap in a sentence.
- 2 items where the most suitable group of words has to be written to fill a gap in a sentence.
- 1 item where a word has to be written to fill a gap in a sentence.

After doing the Grammar test, the system corrects the students’ answers and informs about the items answered correctly and incorrectly, and the aspect of the Grammar skill that each item works. The system assesses 6 aspects of the Grammar skill:

- Miscellaneous word grammar (5 items).
- Parts of speech (5 items).
- Pronouns (4 items).
- Adjectives and adverbs (1 item).
- Nouns (4 items).
- Punctuation (2 items).

**Figure 11** Screenshot of Grammar test feedback

After several years of teaching experience in the *Innovación y Formación Didáctica* Department of the Alicante University, teaching the course “*Idioma extranjero y su didáctica*” in English language in the different specialities of the Teaching Career (Music
Teacher, Physical Education Teacher, etc.) with a high percentage of success, the authors of this article are very optimistic with the results expected to be obtained when this project is developed.

Specifically, information and qualitative and quantitative results are expected to be collected that show that “the use of the CLIL approach during the course Specific English in the Major Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte improves significantly the communication among the students in English language as they adquiere the contents of the course”.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The results and facts obtained along the investigation will be useful to improve the teaching process quality. The development of the investigation will facilitate the familiarization of the students with the technological tools that will let them continue learning in an autonomous way, guiding and informing them about their correct answers, failures, mistakes, as they obtain information about how to progress and move forward, turning into quality education engines and long life learning.

4. REFERENCES