FLIPPED CLASSROOM AND CLIL TO TEACH ENGLISH AND SUBJECTS RELATED TO TEACHING PRACTICE

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Abstract

Teachers of English trained at the National University of Education (UNAE) in Ecuador must graduate with a C1 level of communicative competence and they have to develop the professional competencies that characterize a twenty first century foreign language teacher during their teaching practice. For these purposes, most of the subjects from the first to the last term of their learning program are taught in English and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Flipped learning are two pedagogical approaches of choice to achieve this goal. Thus, the use of Flipped Learning and CLIL in the training process of these future teachers is the object of study of this research and the overall aim is to propose a methodological tool to develop the required level of communicative competence in English together with the desired professional competencies. A qualitative approach using intervention strategy was used to accomplish the declared goal. The authors followed an action research process to elaborate and propose the tool. To reach the overall aim, the authors propose a methodological tool to use Flipped Learning and CLIL to teach the contents of the teaching practice related subjects to the future teachers of English at UNAE.

Keywords: Flipped learning, CLIL, C1 level of English, professional competencies.

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Ecuadorian government has been investing heavily on the professional development of its English teachers. However, the number of English teachers is not enough, and this is exacerbated with the requirement of the 2016 Curriculum that mandates schools to offer English in public institutions for students from Year 2 of General Education until the last year of secondary school.

The National University of Education (UNAE), one of the four emblematic Ecuadorian universities, aims to develop human capital through the formation of educators who can respond to the challenges of a changing society. This type of formation is characterized in the University's pedagogical principle that necessitates that "teacher training requires a radical transformation of traditional approaches"[1]. To break free from the traditional training or formation paradigms in teacher training, teaching practice constitutes 40% of the undergraduate degree program in English Teaching curriculum and the theoretical component is a face-to-face instruction that comprises the 60%.

Relevance of teaching practice, diversity of teaching modes, cooperative expression of learning contents and priority to social commitment[1] embody the core of the University's pedagogical model that directs and shapes the undergraduate degree programs such as English Teaching.

The English Teaching Program has three components – basic, professional and the preparation of thesis, which are intended to promote the holistic formation of future teachers. In each semester, there is an overarching theme and a theoretical subject that students must use as springboard when they observe, explore and document their teaching practice in the cooperating Ecuadorian public schools. To integrate the target language, the observation sheets and reflection activities are accomplished in English. This is to slowly facilitate student's exposure to the foreign language due to their low proficiency level upon entry to the Program.

The common practice in Ecuador when a curriculum in EFL is developed is to include a lot of professional subjects in Spanish to accommodate understanding and to respond to student's low proficiency level; however, this has resulted to students not acquiring a desirable level at the end of the degree program. As part of the innovation, that the English Teaching degree program at the UNAE wants to explore is the creation of a curriculum where English is taught as proficiency subject and as a medium of instruction in professional subjects as early as the first semester.

To effectively integrate English, a methodological tool to develop the required level of communicative competence in English together with the desired professional competencies was introduced at the start of the semester to the first cohort of students in the Program. This approach consists of classroom teaching activities that integrate content and knowledge with the use of elements of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Flipped Learning approaches. These activities integrate English proficiency and professional subjects together to immerse students in an environment where they do not have an option but to accommodate the new code into their existing schema to achieve C1 level based on the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR)[2] and achieve professional competencies in teaching.

This paper presents the methodological tool, which is aimed at developing the required level of communicative competence in English together with the desired professional competencies expected of a twenty first century English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in Ecuador.

As emphasized in the preceding paragraphs, the teachers will graduate from the English Teaching Program with a C1 level of communicative competence according to the Common European Framework of Reference[2]. This is equivalent to a Proficient user or effective operational proficiency who can demonstrate the following competencies:

- Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning[2]

- Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions[2]

- Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes[2]

- Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices[2].

The professional competencies that the future graduates from the English Teaching Program have to develop are the ones stated in the UNAE pedagogical model. They have to exhibit and show competent performance by means of their capacities to: comprehend and diagnose situations; processes and educational systems; to design, evaluate the curriculum in a personalized way; to design and construct contexts and learning communities; and to learn to regulate themselves and to develop professionally along their lifetime[3]

The expected outcomes in the syllabi of the three subject matters included in the research that permitted the author to write this paper contribute to the aforementioned competencies. These subjects are English A1, which contributes to the students' foreign language proficiency, *Integrating Subject. Educational and Political Systems*, and *Diagnostic Approach to the educational policies in Basic General Education and High school*, which are the subjects related to teaching practice

In *English A1*, the students are expected to:

- Understand and use daily expressions and very basic phrases to explain concrete needs.

- Introduce different people and give personal information

- Ask questions about details such as where do you live, who do you know and the things he or she has

- Interact in a simple way in conversations and with other people in English

- Reinforce the competencies and skills to proceed to a higher level in learning English.

In the Integrating Subject. Educational and Political Systems, the students are expected to:

- Reflect on the teaching of English in the ELT classrooms

- Know and evaluate the educational policies in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context

- Analyse the possible challenges of the contemporary society, taking the digital era into account, the sociocultural crisis of values as well as globalization and its influence on education

- Understand and plan programs to solve the challenges of the immediate socio-educational environment in the English as a foreign language teaching learning process

In Diagnostic Approach to the educational policies in Basic General Education and High school, the students are expected to:

- Diagnose educational problems: phenomena, subjects, contexts and educational systems in ELT
- Know and understand public educational policies and their relationship with the phenomena, situations, processes and educational systems particularly in ELT
- Diagnose the incidence of public policies in situations, processes and educational systems in ELT
- Observe and find out how the ELT process develops in institutional units of the Ecuadorian educational system
- Characterize the contexts, subjects and educational phenomena that intervene in the ELT process.

The content of the subject matter English A1 provides the students with a very basic level of communicative competence in the language. On the other hand, the expected outcomes of the subject matters Integrating Subject, Educational and Political Systems and Diagnostic Approach to the educational policies in Basic General Education and High school demand a higher foreign language level to incorporate the integrating thread of the term: Diagnostic Approach to Public Policies in Education and Good Living (problems in the educational institutions in the dimensions of academic organization and infrastructure) For this reason, it is difficult for the students to write their Knowledge Integrating Project essay in English and present it orally in this foreign language.

Then, based on the author's experience and research, CLIL and Flipped Learning are the preferred ELT approaches to achieve the expected outcomes and to develop the desired competencies that future English teachers are expected to achieve as graduates of UNAE.

Every kind of language learning in which a target language is used for teaching students non-linguistic content can be called CLIL[4]. As a result, CLIL becomes an umbrella term for all dual-process educational contexts[5]

CLIL is an approach, which involves the development of social, cultural, cognitive, linguistic, academic and other learning skills, which in turn facilitate achievements in both content and language[6].

Coyle proposes the 4 "Cs" framework[5]. These 4 "Cs" stand for communication, cognition, context and culture. More recently, Attard Montalto expands this proposal and adds "C" for competence. These 5 "Cs" framework (content, communication, competence, cognition and community) and adds the categories of scaffolding, autonomy, interaction, scenario and evaluation to complete the framework presented in "The CLIL Guidebook"[6]:

"CLIL is very popular at present at the international level". This author analyzes the following statements: CLIL leads to a greater level of linguistic competence; CLIL increases motivation; and, CLIL is appropriate for students who have different skills, CLIL enhances inter cultural comprehension[7].

The aim of CLIL is to develop proficiency in content as well as in foreign language, teaching not **in** but **through the** foreign language[8].

These theoretical referents justify the use of CLIL as an important element of the methodological tool that is been proposed to teach English A1 to contribute to the students' foreign language proficiency, Integrating Subject. Educational and Political Systems, and Diagnostic Approach to the educational policies in Basic General Education and High school, which are the subjects related to teaching practice.

Flipping the classroom or "inverted teaching" emphasizes the idea that class time can be used to engage students in learning through active learning techniques, rather than through delivering lectures alone. Flipping the classroom is the process of replacing traditional lectures with more student-centred learning strategies, such as active learning, discussions, problem based learning and other forms of group work and peer instruction. Content delivery is moved outside of the classroom, for example through videos, or pre-class readings[9,10].

The flipped classroom is a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed. Short video lectures are viewed by students at home before the class session, while in-class time is devoted to exercises, projects, or discussions. The video lecture is often seen as the key ingredient in the flipped approach, such lectures being either created by the instructor and posted online or selected from an online repository. While a pre-recorded lecture could be a podcast

or other audio format, the ease with which video can be accessed and viewed today has made it so ubiquitous that the flipped model has come to be identified with it[11].

The notion of a flipped classroom draws on such concepts as active learning, student engagement, hybrid course design, and course podcasting. The value of a flipped class is in the repurposing of class time into a workshop where students can inquire about lecture content, test their skills in applying knowledge, and interact with one another in hands on activities. During class sessions, instructors function as coaches or advisors, encouraging students in individual inquiry and collaborative effort. 'Flipping the classroom' has become something of a buzzword in the last several years, driven in part by high profile publications in The New York Times[12], The Chronicle of Higher Education[13] and Science[14].

One of the UNAE University's pedagogical principles is to promote flipped learning[3]. In order to be consistent with this pedagogical principle of the university, Flipped Learning is another essential element of the methodological tool that is being proposed to teach English in integration with the contents of the teaching practice related subjects.

Thus, the use of Flipped Learning and CLIL in the training process of the future teachers to be graduated at UNAE is the object of study of this research and the overall aim is to propose a methodological tool to develop the required level of communicative competence in English together with the desired professional competencies

2   METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach using intervention strategy was used to accomplish the overall aim of the research.

The intervention strategy was based on action research. It started with the literature review that allowed the author to identify the scientific foundations in the use of CLIL and Flipped Learning to teach English and the teaching practice-related subjects. Then, there was an application phase that first started with the integration of the fours Cs: communication, cognition, content and culture proposed by Coyle[5]. These allowed the students to start learning to communicate in English, to develop their linguistic skills - speaking, reading, writing and listening comprehension and to relate the acquisition of the contents related to the subjects in question with the Ecuadorian culture but it was not enough to for the students to achieve the expected outcomes of English A1, Integrating Subject. Educational and Political Systems and Diagnostic Approach to the educational policies in Basic General Education and High school. Then, the second application phase was based on the five "Cs" proposed by   in "*The CLIL Guidebook":* content, communication, cognition, community and competence. This phase allowed the students to learn the contents of the subject matters, Integrating Subject. Educational and Political Systems and Diagnostic Approach to the educational policies in Basic General Education and High school in English while they communicated integrating the four linguistic skills with other high order thinking skills such as explaining, diagnosing, evaluating, etc while they integrated the findings from the observations in the teaching practice community to the contents of the subject matters in English. This integration enhanced their communicative competence and helped them achieve the expected outcomes for the A1 level of communicative competence stated in the CEFR. However, the researcher was not completely satisfied with the results and decided develop a third phase of action research introducing the other five essential elements of CLIL: scaffolding, learner autonomy, interaction, evaluation and scenario to complete the methodological tool. These elements were also taken from Attard Montalto, S[6.] Finally, after the CLIL cycles were completed, a fourth phase integrating the use of CLIL and Flipped Learning was carried out and this concluded the action research process that allowed the author to propose the following methodological tool to use Flipped Learning and CLIL to teach the contents of the teaching practice- related subjects.

3   RESULTS

As the result of the action research process carried out by the author to accomplish the overall aim, the following methodological tool to use Flipped Learning and CLIL to teach the contents of the teaching-practice related subjects to the future teachers of English at UNAE was obtained and it is presented and discussed in the following section of this paper.

3.1 Discussion of the methodological tool to use Flipped Learning and CLIL to teach the contents of the teaching practice-related subjects to the future teachers of English at UNAE

The methodological tool to use Flipped Learning and CLIL for teaching the contents of the teaching practice-related subjects to the future teachers of English at UNAE is based on the categories stated by Attard Montalto, S in the aforementioned guidebook - the five "Cs" framework (content, communication, competence, cognition and community) and the categories of scaffolding, autonomy, interaction, evaluation and scenario[6]. It also includes elements of the Flipped Learning approach to put into practice one of the pedagogical principles of the university where the research was done.

3.1.1 The five "Cs"

1 **Content**: Teachers prepare lessons around a logical development of the area the students have been working on. Teachers develop lessons around what the students already know. In this way, students build their content knowledge constructively where one knowledge is built on previous knowledge. In this methodological tool, the contents that the students have to learn are related to school and classroom infrastructure and academic organization. Then, the tasks assigned in the first observation sheet are very simple while they become more complex as the term advances. The students construct their knowledge, skills, values and feelings as they observe the infrastructure and academic organization in the school where they do their practicum and they relate these contents to authentic school life.

2 **Communication**: With this CLIL element, teachers talk less than students do, because the students do not have enough of the language to learn. Instead, students study together and work in groups, talking to each other as well as to the teacher, using as much of the new language as they can. With this methodological tool, the students communicate in pairs and in small groups while they describe in English the school and the routine of teachers and students in the cooperating school to complete the tasks assigned in the observation sheets. They integrate the four language skills when they discuss in class what they have observed.

3 **Competence:** "**Can do**" statements describe the **outcomes** of the lesson. CLIL teachers think of the "can do" statements they want their students to be able to do after the lesson, either about lesson content and skills –or about the new languages. With this methodological tool, the students develop their communicative competence in English as they do pair work to discuss the observation results in their observation sheets. They transfer what they learned in their teaching practice to the university classroom discussions in English.

4 **Cognition:** A student using the methodological tool that is being discussed, will soon have learned to think about probing questions such as "**Why? How? and What evidence is there?;** and, so will have practiced some of the thinking skills characterized by Bloom as High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). With the use of this tool, students develop high order thinking skills as they describe, analyse, compare and explain the infrastructure and academic organization problem, case or situation that they identified in their practicum.

5 **Community:** CLIL can help students relate what they learn about the world around them. Students see what they learn is not just a school subject, but also something, that relates to "the real world". With this methodological tool, classroom reflection is made on the case, situation or problem that the students identified in the community, i.e., the cooperating school. Then, they bring to the university classroom the case, problem or situation that they have identified there.

3.1.2 The other five elements of Attard Montalto's framework that are also included in the methodological tool are scaffolding, learner autonomy, interaction, evaluation and scenario.

1 **Scaffolding**: Scaffolding is used to describe how to help learners achieve the objectives, which they are not ready to do on their own. This help is only temporary. It is removed gradually as the learner gains the necessary knowledge and experience to be independent. Scaffolding implies support for learning both content and language. Although the teacher often provides scaffolding, a more proficient peer or group of peers can also provide it. Once the learner is confident on how to say what they want in a situation, they will be able to use their linguistic knowledge in other situations, without scaffolding. With this methodological tool, scaffolding is present when the teacher gives the students observation sheets, which move from simple tasks regarding

language and context at the beginning of the term to more complex tasks at the end of the term. The students are given more support to complete the tasks in observation sheet 1, when they only have to draw and write based on the drawing. Then in the last observation sheets, they have to collect data by conducting interviews, a task that demand more "language independence".

2   **Learner autonomy:** A major aim of CLIL is to help students to work independently, to solve problems and develop their own knowledge and skills. With this approach, there is a need to pass some control over to the learners. With this methodological tool, the students develop their autonomy as they complete their observation sheets alone in the cooperating school classrooms while they do their practicum. They attend the cooperating school with a classmate, but they have to complete the observation template individually, without the help of the teacher.

3   **Interaction:** Through interaction, learners build on their existing knowledge as they compare it with, and discuss, new content and new language. They become aware of what they still need to do. For language learning especially, interaction provides an opportunity to both learn and improve. This interaction can be achieved by means of pair work and group work. Pair and group work are the focus of the content integration approach. With this methodological tool, students first complete the observation templates individually in their teaching practice session but later they discuss their findings in pairs, in small groups and then report them to the whole class. This process enhances their communicative interaction as they integrate the four language skills in the discussions.

4   **Evaluation:** In evaluating students using the content integration approach, it is important to take into account both the content and the foreign language. This evaluation has a double aim. Both the content and the foreign language that is being studied have to be evaluated. The evaluation should focus on the objectives of the CLIL lesson including competences, knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors. If content and the foreign language are not evaluated, the double aim of content integration is lost. With this methodological tool, there is self-evaluation when each student evaluates how he/she completed the task assigned in the observation sheet. Co-evaluation and hetero-evaluation are done where the students do oral presentations and they write their Knowledge Integrated Project.

5   **Scenario**: The scenarios describe how to teach content integration-based modules in teaching a foreign language. With this methodological tool, there are two scenarios involved: the university classroom where the students reflect on the findings they did in the cooperating schools and the cooperating school classroom where they do their practicum. The classroom implementation phase takes place in the university classroom when the students discuss the Educational and Political Systems in their Integrating Subject and Diagnostic Approach classes in English.

3.1.3   Elements of Flipped learning

In order to complete the methodological tool that is been discussed, the following elements or stages of the Flipped Learning approach were introduced as an innovation of the Flipped Learning approach introduced at ENAE.

Flipped classroom I- Before the lesson (out of class)

Students prepare to participate in the activity. The teacher records lecture and the students tune in and watch videos any time before they come to class.

Flipped classroom II- During the lesson (in class)

Students arrive to class ready to engage and participate applying key concepts with feedback in active learning activities.

Flipped classroom III- After the lesson (out of class)

Students check their understanding and extend their learning.

The students record videos when they do their observations in the teaching practice schools. As they attend the teaching practice in pairs or triads, they discuss these videos with their peers before they come to class. Then, in-class time is used make a deeper discussion of the observed lesson for the students to develop their high order thinking skills and then, as homework the students have to write an essay about the reflections they made of their observations.

4   CONCLUSIONS

The author of this paper arrived to the following conclusion. The methodological tool to develop the required level of communicative competence in English together with the desired professional competencies discussed contributed to the students' development of communicative competence in the foreign language as they gradually improved their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in integration. These skills developed while the students were engaged in communicative language practice all the time when they analyzed and discussed the results of their observations in English following the orientations in the observation sheets to complete the teaching practice tasks in the cooperating schools. On the other hand, they developed their professional competencies as they observed in-service teachers teaching English as a foreign language in authentic Ecuadorian contexts. These communicative competences in the foreign language and the professional competencies were developed thanks to the sequence and integrating mechanism of all subjects woven together. This facilitated an understanding of how each subject contributed to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and value, which is considered key in the professional formation of future English teachers. The binding element and the medium that facilitated the integration of the elements was the use of English to promote communicative competence and interaction.

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